

***Hindi Television News Media (HTVNM): An Inquiry about Domineering Studio Journalism.***

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**Abstract**

Hindi television news media is in a developing and growing stage. Although it might have been inspired or influenced from western TV media, but nowadays it has become an influential medium of mass communication among large Hindi speaking society of India. Studio Journalism is a prominent and critical characteristic of Hindi TV news media. Are abundance of talk shows, domination of anchoring over reporting, aggressive i.e. often quarrelsome discussions making society more argumentative and negative than constructive and creative? Does this Hindi TV news media is sensationalizing the issues disproportionately and making society more talkative and obsessively problem loving than solution seeking? Is this media ready to seriously bear social responsibility or is it only interested in getting TRP i.e. the way to earn money through advertisements from market? Studio Journalism as a main characteristic of HTVNM needs to be analyzed. Is the domineering studio journalism narrowing the role of HTVNM to excluding and limiting the issues among some arbitrarily chosen experts/panelists and audience? Is it also establishing the anchor as an authority to dominate and snub the participants in any discussion and manipulating the issue towards his/her own prejudices or preoccupations? Is this domineering also making media exclusive and arrogant than inclusive or people-friendly? The proposed paper will try to enquire into the above mentioned questions.

Keywords: Hindi Television, News Media, Inquiry, Domineering, Studio Journalism

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## Television

Television has emerged not only as a powerful medium but it is now established as powerful phenomenon by which anybody can become too close to the things, persons, happenings and events as much as far they are to him or herself. This phenomenon was identified several years ago as:

“Television means literally vision at distance. It is a complete word derived from the Greek tele – at a distance and the Latin verb video “I see” This mixing of Greek and Latin is repugnant to classical minds, and several letters have operated recently in the press objecting to its use. These objections however have come too late; the word ‘television’ is already part of English language and may be briefly defined as vision by telegraphy. With Television we see what is happening at a distance while it is happening.”<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning of the era of economic globalization, the realistic approach to this medium was analyzed as below:

“We can call television an essentially realistic medium because of its ability to carry a socially convincing sense of the real. Realism is not a matter of any fidelity to an empirical reality, but of the discursive conventions by which and for which a sense of reality constructed.”<sup>2</sup>

Television has created a wider platform and scope for interpersonal communication or conversation and its very capacity to make conversation visible and public has become a greater contribution to the process of making society democratized.

“We live in the age of conversation. It is one of the unquestioned goods of the moment and a normative ideal of how the media are expected to work in a democracy.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand the Media is allegedly known for its very nature of being responsible for eliminating the power and scope of actual conversation in the society.

“If conversation is good thing, then its absence is a bad one. The notion that media have usurped our powers of conversation is one of the stock images of how the twentieth century went bad”.<sup>4</sup> The above argument had also been understood more clearly as the following explanation:

“The quantitative pressure of modern knowledge has been responsible for the decay of oral dialectic and conversation. The passive reading of newspapers and newspaper placards and the small number of significant magazines and books point to the dominance of conversation by the newspapers and to pervasive influence of discontinuity, which is, of course, the characteristic of the newspaper, as it is of the dictionary.”<sup>5</sup>

Television as visual medium has the power and capacity to represent real and artificial both simultaneously.

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Dinsdale, 1926, *Television: seeing by wire or wireless*, Sir Issac Pitman and Sons Ltd. London, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> John Fiske, 1988, *Television Culture*, Routledge, London, p.21.

<sup>3</sup> James Curran and David Morley (eds.), 2006, *Media and Cultural Theory*, Routledge, p.115.

<sup>4</sup> James Curran and David Morley (eds.), 2006, *Media and Cultural Theory*, Routledge, p.115.

<sup>5</sup> James Curran and David Morley (eds.), 2006, *Media and Cultural Theory*, Routledge, p.116.

“We must now consider television coverage of another phenomenon which contributes the actual and artificial, which is both a significant feature of real life and a kind of playful fiction: sport”<sup>6</sup>

And at last Television was considered as the power of socio-political change with certain ideological effects:

“We can enumerate some of the major ways in which thinking about television’s power has moved beyond the simple behavioristic conceptions:

1. From a focus on the effects of television in terms of changes in isolated aspects of individual behavior, attention has shifted toward ‘ideological effects’
2. Structuralist theory apart, the source of television’s power is no longer isolated to television’s message. Rather television works in conjunction with other forces, and derives much of its power from its socio-political context.
3. It is no longer considered appropriate to conceive of televisual messages as embodying isolated stimuli properties. Message are now treated as more complex phenomena, often as ‘coded discourses’
4. Again, certain structuralist accounts notwithstanding, it is widely acknowledged that individual audience members may variously interpret television’s coded discourses.
5. More theoretical attention is given to the fact that the individual is subject to a wide range of potential influences other than television and the mass media.
6. Attention has been drawn to television as a commercial enterprise, involved in, and integral to, the practices of capitalist enterprises.
7. Attention has been drawn to ways in which television serves the interests of the state and dominant groups by projecting a dominant ideology”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Andrew Crisell Palgrave, 2006, *Forms of infotainment*, ‘Study of Modern Television: Thinking inside the box’, Macmillan, New York, p. 97.

<sup>7</sup> Page 29, studying the power of Television, “The Power of Television”, Conrad Lodziak,

Frances Pinter (Publishers), London.

## Television in India

Television, the powerful medium of mass communication and socio-political change, has become a big industry in India. The terrestrial television had begun in India on 15 September 1959. Now 167 million households out of 234 million households of India have televisions sets. As per one data, India has a collection of over 823 channels of which 184 are pay channels. There are several 24 hour Hindi Television channels in India.

The prominent Hindi TV channels are:

1. Aaj Tak
2. ABP News
3. Zee News
4. DD News
5. India TV
6. NDTV India
7. News Nation.
8. IBN
9. News 24
10. Delhi Aaj Tak
11. India News
12. Sudarshan News
13. A2Z News.
14. Live India.
15. Rajyasabha TV
16. Loksabha TV
17. Tez
18. Zee live.

Other than these, there are several regional channels also that are running as 24 hours Hindi Television News channels.

These five Hindi News TV Channels are being considered as the top five Hindi TV News Channels in India, as per BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council, India) ratings:

Rank	Channel name	Weekly ratings Sum Week 24 (2016)
1.	Aaj Tak	70126
2.	India TV	66035
3.	ABP News	46554
4.	India News	42324
5.	News Nation	38299

## **Domineering studio Journalism in HTVNM**

Hindi Television News Media has rapidly changed its character from reporting based or field based journalism to Studio Journalism from its beginning. In the beginning Anchors or News readers were often experienced reporters or Editors but after some time this media replaced the experience and journalistic sense by so called glamour.

एंकरिंग में महिलाएं ही आ रही हैं और सुंदरता को छोड़ भी दीजिए तो शायद वैसे भी महिलाओं को देखना अच्छा लगता है। लेकिन हो यह रहा है कि छोटी उम्र की लड़कियां दिखने लगी हैं सारे चैनलों पर एंकर के रूप में।<sup>8</sup> (Only women are coming as anchors and even if we leave the point of beauty, it seems good/satisfactory to look at them. But what is happening is that the girls that are appearing on all the channels are of a lesser age group)

Actually the whole understanding of journalism is based on the dissemination of the information in order to represent, reveal, express or transmit the truth or reality to the public or masses. This understanding is challenged when the experience of HTVNM is being narrowed as providing prominence or dominance to studio activity in the place of searching, researching, smelling, sensing or getting the news directly from public or field. As far as the case specific observation about HTVNM is concerned, the role of reporters and editors has become least important and the dominance of anchoring has been established as the hard fact to be tolerated.

### **HTVNM is Talk show centric**

It appears as if the obvious outcome of increasing dominance or prominence of studio journalism is shifting the paradigms of news media, as HTVNM has become talk show centric - the space of the news is being limited. Very often the news is read so speedily that not only the news becomes secondary, but it also challenges the audibility of audiences or receivers. Sometimes this kind of news slot in HTVNM is named as speed news.

The myth has become established among the media fraternity of HTVNM that talk shows are earning both- popularity and money, in terms of getting TRP. The need arises to examine the necessity, role and importance of these talk shows through which a myth has been created that media persons are more interested in convenient, comfortable, secure, soft and glamour full anchoring than inconvenient, insecure, hard, discomforted, glamour-less life of reporters. This need automatically questions the objective, perspective and purpose of journalism in the specific context of HTVNM.

### **Talk shows are Anchor centric**

Initially, the talk shows were based on the issues and sometimes on the quality of discussion related to the panelists. Gradually they have become dependent on the name, persona and style of specific anchor. Now the fact applies on most of the Hindi TV channels that the talk

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<sup>8</sup> Punya Prasun Vajpayee (Well Known Anchor of HTVNM, presently working for Aaj Tak Channel), 'Breaking News' (Hindi book about HTVNM ), Page 64, Vaani Prakashan, New Delhi, 2006

shows which are to be transmitted on their screen whether they are live or recoded, are Anchor Centric.

### **Anchors are I-specialists**

The basic sense of journalism advises someone to refrain from using 'I' in writing and speaking, because the entire art or duty of disseminating information called journalism is only an art or duty of mediation. It needs more catalytic approach than a role of active and aggressive participant to hammer a position or a side as an advocacy.

Nowadays HTVNM is passing through a phase in which the anchors are using 'I' several times in the talk shows without any moral and technical hesitation. The fact which is more contradictory to the sense of mediation is that the talk shows are named after the names of particular anchors and the anchors are announcing proudly and prudently these shows as 'My show'.

### **Anchors are often preoccupied with their ideas, opinions or perceptions**

The observation of this writer is that almost all anchors are having their own ideological, political, social or individual preoccupations about the topic of the discussion during the talk shows. An anchor is only assigned a role to mediate or moderate the discussion (not to manipulate the issue or discussion as per his perception or opinion). Paradoxically, before applying make up to change themselves in the role of anchor they do not wash off their mental occupations, prejudices or dogmas but they knowingly or unknowingly misuse their role of anchoring in establishing or endorsing their own pre-occupations by manipulating the opinions or information during the discussions.

### **Anchor Dominates**

The basic sense of journalism does not allow anchor to dominate the discussion or other panelists as the anchor is there only to mediate and moderate the discussion with modesty, honesty and objectivity, but anchors in HTVNM relish their dominance when they pose themselves as an authority on every issue. They usually carry judgmental approach as to give the last line about almost every issue, which they have chosen for their show. They usually relish the capacity to hold, turn or close (sometimes abruptly) the discussion as per their whim.

### **Anchor Shouts**

Television is a medium which is generally used in households in India. It is a part of normal practice in Indian families that they often watch television with family members. It is a well known fact that in the recent times TV sets are controlled by remote control and every remote control has the capacity to control the volume of their sets. The TV viewers often observe that during the commercial break the volume suddenly increases and then they have to adjust the volume through their remote controls.

This family audience of HTVNM feels helpless when the anchors shout aggressively during talk shows. The whole household gets tense while they watch these shows collectively in their houses.

## **Anchor Snubs**

The style of aggressive anchoring becomes more indecent and irritating when anchor snubs the invited panelists abruptly. This style of anchoring can be considered as the need or necessity of these talk shows as it is the responsibility of the anchor to create a balance among expressions of the opinions during the discussion, but often it happens without any reason or need but out of their habit to dominate the show. The psychological side of this behavior can be analyzed as an inherent weakness of a person who is in the role of anchor. This weakness may surface because of deficiency of genuine confidence which inhibits the anchor's quality and capacity to moderate the discussion in nice and decent way. The writer of this paper is more convinced with the later than the previous analytical view after observing these kind of talk shows regularly several times with an objective view.

## **Anchor obstructs the natural flow of the discussion**

The natural flow of any discussion implies spontaneity, freshness, openness, originality of ideas and freedom to discuss the issues in the complimentary manner. The conflict loving sense of modern media sometimes inherently compels the anchors to obstruct this natural flow instead of cherishing, nourishing and encouraging this very sense of purposeful and meaningful discussion towards the solution of the problem on which the particular discussion is going on. This obstructionist approach of any anchor may get appreciation from some sort of viewers or fans but actually this approach fails to create any satisfaction for the entire panel along with the anchor him/herself and also for the viewers in the long run. This very approach or behavior of an anchor to obstruct the flow of the discussion could create a conflict or quarrelsome atmosphere during the show among all participants or panelists which may attract the viewership temporarily but the long term effect of it is observed as negative as it defeats the whole perspective and purpose of duty and art of mediation.

## **Anchor behaves abnormally**

A normal behavior with gumption and natural conscience is required from the anchor for an art of mediation. Contradictorily, it is being observed by this writer as a normal viewer that the anchors in HTVNM are behaving abnormally and are being dramatic, sarcastic and unnecessarily aggressive and offensive during the talk shows or discussion.

It is known that anchors are not playing 'other's' role during the shows as anchors but they are playing their own role. If it is so, then it is genuinely required that the best part of their personality or best version of their journalistic capability must be presented or expressed there.

Unfortunately when they react in a dramatic and sarcastic manner then they themselves deteriorate from their own best qualitative expression then how can they enhance or upgrade the quality of the show or discussion?

## **Anchor Manipulates**

Manipulation of the information is part of any media propaganda. The real purpose of media is to mediate only without any manipulation at all. Manipulation is a dangerous in the sense that it destroys objectivity of Media and makes it incapable to be received by all.

Unfortunately it is observed in HTVNM that anchors are manipulating the information and opinions as per their perception or may be as per their channel's unsaid policy.

### **Anchor curbs, concludes discussions arbitrarily**

It is also observed that as a general tendency the anchors in HTVNM often curb discussions when it goes beyond their expected ends or boundaries. When they feel that discussion is not turning as per their line of thinking, they take a break or they conclude the points, opinions and even close the discussion arbitrarily without giving any clarity to the audience. This kind of behavior makes anchors whimsical, arbitrary, arrogant, and more indecent, especially when they appear to take audience foe granted.

### **Talk shows confuse the audience**

In HTVNM, the maximum part of the process of talk shows is engaged in making the whole atmosphere hot or quarrelsome or full of conflict and contradictions. The element of sensation gets priority in dissemination of information or inviting the opinions rather than doing an effort to get or search a rationale or an element of understanding from the discussion. The entire approach is based on the intention of making short-term influence or impact than on the objective to create long term clarity among audience about the particular issue.

### **Talk shows orchestrates, manages public opinion**

The terminology which is being used in Talk shows in HTVNM is often posing these shows as real and authentic representative of the Nation. Sometimes they gather a group or a crowd as the representative audience in a studio or at the artificially constructed sets, and they pose that the entire representation of country is there in their shows. Often they ask invisible audience to send opinions through SMS and sometimes they also ask studio audience to give their opinions. Actually this type of exercise can be considered as orchestrated form or managed form of public opinion, because authenticity of this type of exercise cannot be checked or proved by any objective agency or institution. The Hindi TV channels are not feeling any moral or technical need of declaring or disclaiming anything about the authenticity or orchestrated nature of this kind of so called democratic exercises during the shows.

### **Anchor behaves as celebrities**

The obvious outcome of these Anchor centric talk shows in HTVNM is that the anchor gets popularity due to their maximum onscreen visibility and automatically they start to behave like a celebrity. They hesitate in going to public places and become selective and cautious in interaction with common or ordinary people. They often show tantrums and attitude of arrogance in their public behavior. This kind of development, which is generally observed in the personality of anchors, cannot be considered as a responsible journalistic personality.

The above analytical study is based on the general observation of the writer of this paper about Talk shows and anchors in HTVNM. This study is presented here as the 'Seed Thought' to debate on this topic to examine and explore the basic sense of anchoring in terms of a wider perspective of journalistic duties and responsibilities to the entire society. This

observation based analysis is also as an initiative towards intense study and research about the domineering nature of studio journalism which is almost grabbing the space of field based journalism as far as HTVNM is concerned.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

The study about domineering studio journalism could be summed-up with the following conclusions and suggestions:

1. The trend of domineering studio journalism is not a healthy or progressive step in the journey of HTVNM.
2. The role and scope of reporting must be explored and enhanced.
3. The quality of discussions in the talk shows must be sought and ensured.
4. The role of anchor must be improved as the moderators or coordinators of the discussions instead of manipulative, arbitrary, attention seeking, visibility centric, narcissistic, obsessively offensive, un-journalistic dramatic character as a ring leader of a talk show.
5. The panelists should be decided objectively and qualitatively as per the demand and scope of the issue.
6. Audience involvement in the discussion must be natural and unmanaged.
7. It should be coordinated well for the smoothness and decency of the discussion and must not be orchestrated or managed behind the screen.
8. The 'sample size' and limitedness of public opinion must be declared.
9. The 'I' specialist approach of anchors must not be acknowledged, encouraged or appreciated.
10. The parameters of judging a talk show must be improved from the flat standards of numbering of viewership as TRP.
11. Balance of the discussion, meaningful-ness and solution centric approach, quality of questions and sharing of ideas could be considered as parameters of a good discussion in place of aggression, snobbery, judgmental approach, prejudices and preoccupied adamancy and quarrelsome behavior of anchors.
12. The talk shows must gain/awake the confidence of viewers as the source of giving them new ideas, problem solving, solution seeking approaches and invitation-cum inspiration to participate in the socio-political and cultural life open-mindedly and with open eyes instead of making them closed, confused, prejudiced, intolerant, aggressive and sensation seeking.
13. The dominance and prominence of studio journalism in HTVNM must be checked, challenged and replaced by trustworthy, truth-seeking, effortful, hardworking, courageous, change- seeking, positive and affirmative reporting or journalism for which Hindi Journalism is known and famous.

This paper aspire a candid and critical examination to be continued about HTVNM in order to enhance and explore the potential, quality and capability of HTVNM as the agent of change in the diverse but diligent population of the biggest working democracy of the world i.e. called Bharat in Hindi.

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