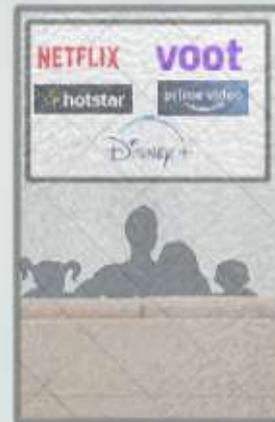
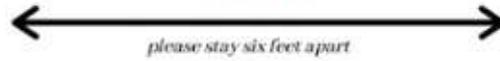


# Communiqué 2021

EDITION XVIII, 20 PAGES  
APRIL 2021



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# Is Protecting Privacy A Losing Game Today?

By Preeti Bhattacharyya

The onset of the pandemic created a frenzy among all government structures globally.

With countrywide shutdowns happening globally, all modes of work shifted to online digital platforms. Within a couple of months, people were engrossed in working remotely and studying online. While the technological advancements happening over the decades have largely facilitated this shift which is pretty reasonable given the current scenario, however, some alarming security and privacy concerns also came with this shift.

We largely live in a **digital algorithmic age**, the technological advancements have helped the governments of various countries and their scientists to come up with vaccines, diagnostic tools, symptom tracking software, etc. Steps have been taken to contain the further spread of the virus, on a digital level. However, these developments raise serious concerns. For instance, **real-time geographical location** data from mobile phone companies and various applications are shared with the government to detect a pattern of spread of the virus and to ascertain if people are complying with the safety precautions. Such technologies have placed people smack under the **state's microscope** to be scrutinized and surveilled.

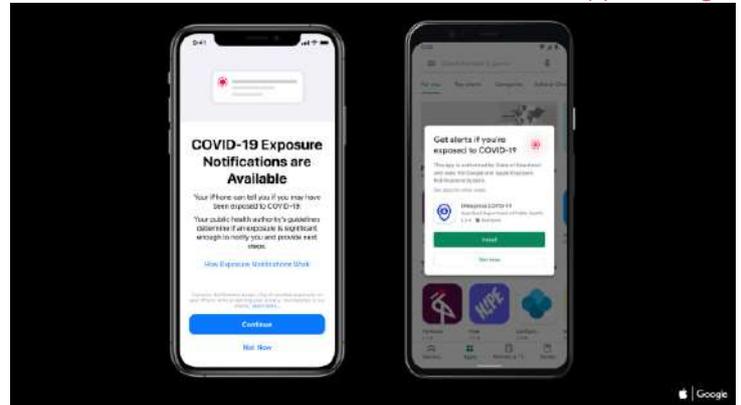


Source: Shutterstock

The corporate industry has amassed an enormous collection of data which they use almost like commodities to enhance their business endeavours. Reportedly, the governments have made efforts to implore tech companies to deliver the personal data of the citizens in the veneer of healthcare concerns. While application designs try to a certain extent to create a façade of anonymity and decentralization

of personal data, the most predominant method that has been adopted to fight the virus is tracing it first; and no tracing could ever uphold the ideals of privacy. Thus, costing us our right to privacy. The online shift has increased the amount of digital data that corporations hold. Scientists and corporations like Google and Apple develop tracking systems that give utmost importance to user's data privacy and security concerns, it still does not lessen the impact of a global government-sanctioned mass data collection practice for data privacy.

Source: Axios / Apple, Google



How badly will commodification of data impact our fundamental and human rights? Given the statistics of the pandemic, the governments felt justified in overlooking the privacy concerns that came hand in hand with these new technological developments. The very nature of these technologies is hinged on obtaining personal data and then using and manipulating it for purposes like generating revenue, increasing user interface, etc. However, there is a wide discrepancy in the distribution of this data and the pandemic has only reinforced it.

It is imperative that we progress within the lines of personal freedom and liberty. The past year has witnessed laws and legislations being made and amended to keep up with the changes happening in the digital sphere. In the Indian context, the Supreme Court had already granted privacy rights to every Indian citizen in 2017. However, with the recent changes, we need more stringent laws to protect data confidentiality and venture into less intrusive alternatives for gathering information about the spread of viruses.

# Hello Trauma, My Old Friend!

*By Ekshita Arora*

When COVID-19 knocked at the door of a nation that comes to a halt when rain touches the ground, India surely wasn't equipped or prepared for a deadly pandemic. Well, no nation was but ours is home to 1.7 billion people.

The Indian media did a fairly good job of keeping the citizens busy. Ranging from Instagram challenges and trends to re telecasting crowd favourite shows. But the media did go extremely awry in one context - Trauma Representation. What media, social, OTT and mainstream, did was represent Covid in an extremely **flowery way**, heavily **capitalising on the 'silver lining'** part of this deadly cloud.



*Source: The Guardian*

During Lockdown, it was mandated to stay at home, even for the people without one. The ones without a home were left stranded on the streets. Social media, online and mainstream news channels were busy lauding people and corporations making use of their privilege for helping out with food, clothes and other amenities. There is no problem in showcasing something kind but the problem arose when the media decided to exclude the terrible plight of migrant labourers from its narrative. The media did represent the migrants but more in a pitying sense and as possible virus carriers. They completely excluded the narrative of getting bleached when they entered new cities or getting lathi-charged for wanting to go back home which in turn traumatised the migrants enough to either commit suicide or make statements where they pledge to never come back to cities to work again. The only thing one could see was **pity**, glorification of the bare minimum and being homeless or on the streets was somehow seen as the fault of migrants.

When a nation, with 75% of its population living in a 2BHK or less, was forced shut inside confined spaces. Social media was quick in showcasing how this unending family time is a chance to reconnect. But the media completely forgot to mention the **toxic brown household** that welcomes toxic masculinity, unfair division of chores, physical and mental abuse due to lack of autonomy. There was coverage of mental health issues but no coverage as to why it was happening.

When work from home became the norm and so did losing jobs. And due to the alleged abundance of time, workplace toxicity too came home. Work from home meant being free 24x7. There were narratives on social media that 'how lucky' we are to have the privilege to work from home while frontline workers were endangering their lives to protect us. The privilege needs to be acknowledged but not at the cost of toxicity. The media completely forgot to represent the trauma inflicted due to **unemployment and recession**.

Although the media wasn't solely responsible, they allegedly were in control of the narrative. But what was going on behind the closed doors was a narrative of money, power and privilege. We, the people with loving families, lower degree of toxic masculinity, flourishing work environments or enough space, mentally and physically are also to be blamed. We were the ones to represent that the entire population was flourishing when 70% of them were struggling. It was not just the 'right' kind of media, it was also us!

# Trial by Media: “Guilty Until Proven Innocent”

*By Ashi Kanojia*

On the night of 30th April 1999, a twenty-year-old man with political affiliations air shot for the first time to scare a barmaid who refused to serve alcohol after midnight as the bar ran out of alcohol. Upon being asked to act scared, the girl refused to be intimidated, he shot her in the head and she died on the spot. This was when the episodes of ‘media trial’ were gaining momentum in the country. This was the time when **Jessica Lal’s murder case** had come to light. While the media took credits for its intervention in favour of justice for Jessica, one can’t deny that media trials are an offshoot of the toxic love triangle between viewership, ratings, and revenue. It has played a crucial role in interrupting justice through trials such as the **O.J. Simpson, Arushi Talwar case**, etc. At the same time, it influences general opinions of the public and subverts the fairness of investigation by police and court.

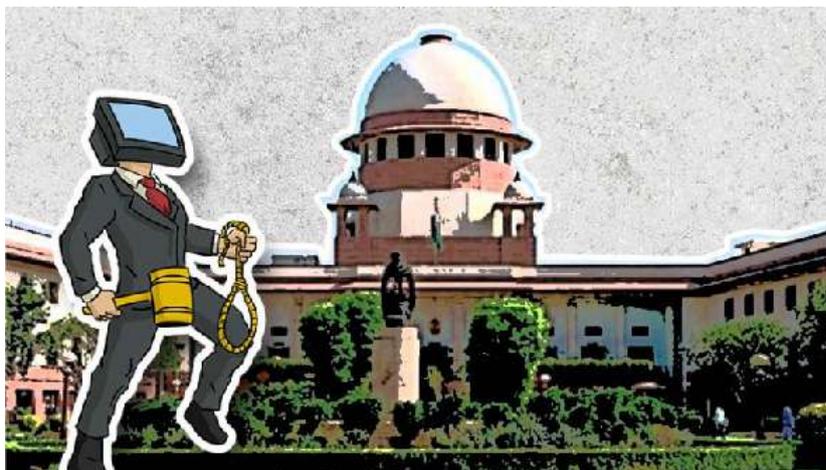
A very recent example of this can be observed in **Sushant Singh’s death by suicide case**. His girlfriend, **Rhea Chakraborty** had been proven guilty even before the judgement of the Supreme Court. She was being pushed and shoved by camera persons with no regard to social distancing and respect for private space - a total vilification of a young woman.

It was astonishing how meticulously the media had changed the angle of the case from suicide to murder. The initial and most significant contributor to this murder mystery plot was the Republic TV whose tactic was soon followed by channels of such as the Times Now, Aaj Tak, India TV among other mainstream news channels.

During this, Chief Justice Dipankar Datta had remarked that the media should not be throttled from criticising, but the Programme Code must be followed simultaneously and should not cross the professional boundaries. The scariest part was that while everyone was busy hunting answers for Rajput’s death, India had over four million cases of Coronavirus, a daily ticker for our mortality, and the nation was facing an explosive border standoff with China. India was enveloped in mishappenings from both outside and within but the story dominating television news was how Rhea Chakraborty supposedly drove her ex-boyfriend to suicide and drugs.

Pandemic had shrunk not just salaries but also job opportunities. Migrant labourers were still the worst-struck of all, amidst pandemic. Shortage of food, starvation, the exodus to hometowns, many were killed and left injured with no immediate medical help. The economy had contracted to an unprecedented 23.9% - one of the sharpest GDP contraction. But the political parties like Bharatiya Janata Party were running a **#JusticeforSushant** campaign in East Bihar where the thirty-four-year actor was born.

There have been many instances where the media had pretended to be crusaders of justice and had blamed the government for authoritative failures. Sensation above sense has become the new blueprint of these media houses for larger viewership and it’s no surprise that it’s almost always the powerful benefitting at the cost of the marginalised.



Source: Kartavya Sadhna

# OTTs - Our Over-The-Top Coping Mechanism During Pandemic

*By Dimpal Gulwani*

The COVID -19 pandemic stimulated **binge-watching behaviour** in almost every individual's life for the initial months when the lockdown was announced. Constantly checking our phones for social media applications and corona updates, we had taken small steps towards a bittersweet friendship with the screens back then. (It seems to be a one-sided friendship now!) The ever-emerging 'Over The Top' (OTT) platforms got yet another boost when the world was indoors.

Lying in bed, bingeing over snacks, and drawing entertainment from screens seemed to have comforted most of the people back then. We immediately got into the loop of working on something productive being online followed by a much-deserved break of watching something engaging, online. **The solution for 'I don't feel good today' was suggestions from friends and family to 'binge-watch something nice' on Netflix and other OTT platforms.** Instagram stories and memes kept suggesting to watch shows like 'Money Heist', 'Dark' and whatnot, thus the entertainment culture was witnessing a change.

We soon saw the release of certain movies on such platforms since reviving the theatre culture seemed mostly uncertain now, OTT platforms attracted a large audience and for longer hours this time. **The audience number magnified** so broadly that the platforms had to lower the streaming quality in order to cater to the entertainment needs of a lot of subscribers. As per the report of CII-BCG, the number of OTT subscriptions surged to about 100-125 million in 2020, up nearly 55-60% from 49 million subscriptions in 2018.

The Bollywood movies scheduled for theatre releases shifted to OTT platforms because of the demand for online content and the uncertainty of theatres opening up or doing well after the lockdown.

'Gulabo Sitabo' was one of the first Bollywood movies released online leaving multiplex owners in despair of their future business.



*Source: Laffaz*

Movies like 'Shakuntala Devi' and 'Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl' were released on OTT platforms as well. 'Dil Bechara' proved to be a rather emotionally heavy release for the audience in the Bollywood industry. The release of 'Laxmii' earlier faced threats from Hindu fringe groups for allegedly hurting religious sentiments when it was named 'Laxmi Bomb'. Some obvious series for binge-watching, 'Paatal Lok' and 'Mirzapur' season two, were the crime thrillers that engaged the audience. 'Special Ops' and 'Scam 1992' was appreciated heavily. Moreover, series like 'Indian Matchmaking' and 'Masaba Masaba' also went trending on Netflix.

The growth of the OTT platforms was so high that Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival Awards saw the introduction of an **OTT awards category** as well in 2021 with the Best Series award going to 'Scam 1992'. The Best Actor Award in a web series, female and male, was awarded to Sushmita Sen (for 'Aarya') and Bobby Deol (for 'Ashram') respectively.

Now since the audience is well accustomed to the concept of viewing movies in their homes. The question is whether the magic of theatre screens will charm us again or watching movie releases via online platforms in the comfort of our homes will become the new normal?

# Viral Instagram Trends That Helped Us Survive 2020

By Spenta Jassawala

It's not just the virus that went viral in March 2020 but our Instagram habits too. While we were stuck indoors (or should have been), these trends and challenges became the lifelines of our time in social isolation. It took our minds of the world (literally) coming to a standstill and all the uncertainty that came with it by giving us something to engage and connect with. From the Dalgona coffee challenge to the viral 'pawri' video, let's recount some of the creative (and sometimes bizarre) ways we shook off our boredom during the pandemic.

## Dalgona Coffee (March 2020)

There is no way you haven't seen the whipped peaks of Dalgona coffee (or made it) while quarantining. This absolutely delicious trend with its 2 tones (very aesthetic!) look makes it super instagrammable & the perfect quarantine coffee fix.

## Safe Hands challenge (March 2020)

This brainchild of the World Health Organization is a public health-focused viral challenge aimed at educating people around the globe about the best way to wash your hands to stay safe during the pandemic. The best part? You don't need to wait to get nominated.

## Quarantine Pillow challenge (April 5, 2020)

Cover your body using a pillow and belt and ta-daaa! you have yourself a red carpet look (quarantine couture edition!).

## Instagram Reels (July 2020)

Reels are the hottest trend on Instagram right now.

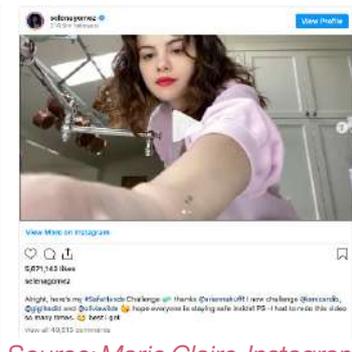
Source: Instagram



Source: Instagram



Source: Instagram



Source: Marie Claire, Instagram

With its easy yet advanced editing tools, we can now make fast & 15-second clips which honestly, are taking over our social media lives.

## Yashraj Mukhate (20 Aug 2020)

This young sound engineer became an overnight sensation after his "Rasode Mein Kaun Tha" music melody took Instagram by storm. For those who are unaware, he turned a scene from our fav soap "Saath Nibhaana Saathiya" into a quirky song which triggered a whole lot of uproarious memes. His latest quirky music creation is on Shehnaaz Gill's famous 'Sadda Kutta Kutta' and 'Biggini Shoot'. We can't wait for more.

## 'Main Tera' Edits (Aug 2020)

And just like that the Indian version of the 'Playdate' trend (made popular by one of my favorites-@qualiteaposts) became an instant hit. Watching our favourite food, celebrities, fictional couples (#MondlerForever) gave us all the feels but also called us single in 100 different ways ( ) \*sings mein tera mein tera mein tera mein teraaaa, huddled under my quilt\*

## Which One Are You? (Sept 2020)

We all love a personality test and the best place to know which One Direction member is going to be my soulmate? \*drumroll please\* INSTAGRAM! The new Instagram filter feature tells you what you are based on the filter you choose. Want to know which Disney Princess, FRIENDS character, or dog breed you are? Instagrams' got you covered.

## The Random Photo Dump (Jan 2021)

Yes, this trend literally requires you to \*dump\* your photos onto your feed. They can be photos of your dog, the sky, you on a bad hair day... anything. From Kylie Jenner to Karan Johar, this trend definitely took Instagram by storm.



Source: Pinterest

### PAWRI HO RI HAI (6 Feb 2021)

Unless you live under a rock, you just said: 'Yeh humari car hai , Yeh hum hain, aur yeh humari pawri ho ri hai' in exactly the same tone as Dananeer did in the video. Giving their own twist to it, desi netizens have created memes and reels capturing myriad moods and situations. The results? HILARIOUS! From Deepika Padukone to Mihira Khan, this video has not just given us something to binge on between our online classes but also brought Indian and Pakistani celebrities together.

# The Fundamental Problem with Everything Digital

*By Atulya Jain*

**“Nothing vast enters the life of the mortals without a curse.” – Sophocles.**

The tech industry has always been under scrutiny. If you ask someone about what's wrong with the internet, with social media, they'll give you a plethora of answers, ranging from addiction to polarisation. The one root cause of all our problems with the internet lies in understanding its mechanism.

Let us begin by analysing the biggest illusion created by social media, **'the illusion of choice'**. Taking an example of a young 22-year-old girl, Kriti, say she opens up Facebook and interacts with her feed. Now you would assume that what Kriti is watching is a result of her choice however, that is devastatingly untrue. Algorithms are designed to show you as much relatable content as possible, but does that content coincide with your actual goal? That's where the manipulation comes in.

These **algorithms** which supposedly monitor one's input and output to deliver relevant content are just creating rabbit holes, which ensure that more and more hours of one's life are being devoted to such platforms. They have formulated several such "rabbit holes" for you and the one which is most similar to your interest is served in the form of your news feed. Naturally, the next question which may pop up is why do these algorithms operate in such a way?

The answer is simple—they operate with a mindset of **"profit at all costs"**, and the product they capitalise on is your attention!

What we assume as free services provided by the internet are not free, as the famous saying suggests "if you're not paying for the product, then you are the product". Working on an attention extraction model, the appalling reality is that the creators of these platforms are very much aware of the **psychological manipulation** that goes into it but are still not doing anything to resolve this ethical conundrum.

Having established all of these facts, one may think that why should one pay attention to it now, when so much damage has been done already? Why care about what Kriti is watching? Why bother now?

One word- Pandemic. This is the reason why we need to educate ourselves. In pre-covid times, we still had access to the outside world, activities to engage us apart from social media but now, we have been cooped up in the four walls of our house. We are in our most vulnerable state. Each one of us is presented with a different feed, put that in perspective with a population of two billion people, this is the rate at which this mechanism is isolating us from each other's perspective. Every recommended video you click on is robbing you of your right to chose.

We are dealing with a technology that is way more advanced than our brains; it has surpassed the stage of being a tool, this technology has a life of its own and it demands from us our freedom. Thus, it becomes imperative to demand a humane alternative, to not treat human thought as a product without free will, and this is the fundamental problem with everything digital.

# How New Media Harbours Selective Exposure

By Mansha Dhawan

The sky is orange, if that's your favourite colour, then it surely is. We often tend to consume the information we like and discard those which contradict our pre-existing set of beliefs. This is what we not-so-commonly call "selective exposure". We, neither have the time and energy nor the desire to look at everything. Thus, we tend to **select our information**.

Now, this information is intentionally selected so that it matches our belief system. Before you call it propaganda, you must know that there's a theory within the practice of Psychology that explains this as something else. In 1957, Festinger first talked about 'selective exposure' in his cognitive dissonance theory. When we encounter contradictory information, we suffer from **uneasiness** and an undesirable feeling which is called cognitive dissonance. Further, processing congenial information is much easier and our brain falls into the trap. Interestingly, selective exposure is so ingrained that out of the several explanations of the term, I selectively choose a few considering them "important". Horrifying, I know.

Selective exposure is most commonly associated with the media. Citizens expose themselves to the kind of news they favour on the sides of the issues they prefer over a specific medium and obviously like-minded messages. It's interesting how we categorise some news channels as **less authentic and biased**. We switch the channel, redirect the page, or simply ignore the news which doesn't favour our pre-dispositions. How we call some sources 'unimportant' and portray others as proof.



Source: Shutterstock

Moreover, how we listen to the channels, we perceive the coverage of 'important' issues and ignore the websites or viewpoints of the opposing party and how we

term a piece of news as fake and blindly trust the other.



This problem of selective exposure has worsened with the advent of the internet. It offered more choices on the huge plate and we could relish the information we agree with. Research shows that as the media choices increased, people encountered less diverse content in the media. The **social media algorithm** almost limits the opposing viewpoint. The new media giants, like YouTube, monitor your search history and give you suggestions supporting your side. For example, if you are a supporter of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and went to the search bar with keywords around the term, then the algorithm will bookmark your interests and will suggest like-minded videos, and pages to follow.

The easiest experiment is to surf the Instagram or Facebook of a leftist and a rightist. It will correctly show how people are allured towards selective exposure. The earlier issue of human psychology has become a business model of the dynamic and **horrifying new media**. How little we realise; we have been exposed to selective exposure for quite some time now. If it leaves you with doubts about every decision you have made, every piece of news you have consumed, every ideology you supported, then welcome to the club. I have successfully served my motive.

# Brush Strokes Art amidst the chaos

## *Motherhood in all it's glory*

By Riya Pandey



Materials used - A4 Sheet, Charcoal  
Pencils



Materials used - A4 Sheet, Watercol-  
ours

## *Inara - the shining light*

By Anisha Reddy  
Materials used - A3 Sheet,  
Acrylic Paints and Black  
Marker



## *Asteria - goddess of dreams*

By Anisha Reddy  
Materials used - A3 Sheet,  
Black Marker



## *Ahlum - a woman's dream to be free*

By Mehak Bothra  
Materials used - A3 Sheet, Pencil Colours and Soft Pastels.

# Tête-à-Tête with Nidhi Suresh

Nidhi Suresh is a reporter at *NewsLaundry* and a former programme officer at *Quill Foundation*. She covers issues related to policy, politics, and gender in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Her aim is to report, re-imagine, and re-define quality journalism. It was due to her keen interest that she joined a Masters programme of Conflict and Human Rights Studies at Utrecht University in 2018, a year after the completion of her graduation. This impressive media professional brings a young approach of diversification in not only news reports but also the newsrooms.



## *How did you end up in Journalism?*

Nidhi Suresh (NS): I did not grow up in a politically aware family, never read politics, or had any conversations on caste or religion, which in the current scenario reflects our privilege. Also, I did not have a habit of reading newspapers or watching TV news. But *I did* enjoy writing stories and fiction from a young age. I have always been interested in people. After taking a year off from school, doing my dance diploma, and then realising it was not for me, I did my undergrad in English, Psychology, and Communication from Mount Carmel College, Bangalore. I have been a journalist for three years now.

## *Tell us about your first story as a journalist.*

NS: In my last year of college around June 2016, the death of Burhan Wani happened, which was the infamous killing of a Kashmiri militant. I knew something was happening in Kashmir but was not clear about it. Then we had a class discussion on it, which prompted me to think about politics. I just could not understand the idea of **people saying they were not Indian or they do not want to be part of this country**. I started speaking to a lot more Kashmiris in Bangalore and made a short college documentary. After college, I went to Kashmir to know for myself—it seemed like the best way to start journalism

## *What challenges did you face while reporting during the pandemic?*

NS: Just on the periphery of Delhi it was a whole different situation like nobody cared about it. But you know, we met families whose children – minors, three, five, four, thirteen-year-olds who had been raped or gang-raped. And it made you wonder, *is it the pandemic that's the biggest issue in the country?* It was hard because a lot of ground reporting on violence especially sexual violence... is a difficult conversation. To offer some sort of comfort which cannot be offered without human touch, I think that was my biggest challenge.

And then the farmers' protest was something else. When we came to Delhi things had eased out a little more by then. It was different for the farmers' protest because they saw COVID-19 as a state weapon, they did not see it as a health issue, as a real thing. They said **'If you believe Modi, you believe this Covid. And we don't believe it.'** So it was a very simplistic analysis, but initially, it was scary. From the office, we have clear guidelines that whenever we are on screen or presenting, we have to wear masks.

## *As readers, we tend to move on from stories but as reporters do that equation sort of changes?*

NS: Yeah, I feel that the news cycle is about breaking news every day. And I remember it was John Stewart who said that you only have a 9/11 in once a decade, but the news cycle is such that you feel there is a 9/11 every day.

So you keep constructing your own '9/11's'. **You are forced to move on from stories and do different ones to capture the nation's imagination.** I find myself leaning towards stories of sexual violence, and it seems to come more naturally to me. One, because I got a chance to cover it quite a few times, so you tend to develop an eye. But also, I was sexually violated as a child as well. But generally, I started following Hathras story not because I thought it would be a good journalistic piece, but because in that one week of reporting for them – I did sort of develop a relationship with the family.

**You referred to Hathras's victim as "Asha" even though her real name was public. Are metaphorical names the best we can do as alternatives when law and ethics bind us?**

NS: The name "Asha" just happened. We hardly put much thought into it, and after some time we realised it meant "hope". But sure, a friend asked me what is this romanticisation? It is a pretty hopeless situation of Dalit violence and making this up as if she is the hero, no she is not. But you know, it's nothing but a hope that keeps you going and wanting to fight the case. I am not saying that it's not important to check ourselves and make sure that we aren't romanticising. But at the very core level, the family is tired and exhausted, but there is some sense of hope. If not, why would they go to court, or ask for an investigation after being defeated all their lives because of their caste, skin colour, for having a daughter, for living in a place they do, and for daring to study? There is still hope and it's worth holding onto. Excuse my language, but I think it's a little more of intellectual masturbation that we pass on in our privileged circles.

**Journalism hit new lows especially in the pandemic, but at the same time, there was a desperation to stay relevant from the competitors. Where do journalists draw their line for ethical moral high ground if there is any?**

NS: Before joining *Newslaundry*, I worked at another journalistic organisation, that I don't want to officially name, for two weeks which was traumatising to me as a person. It was not the kind of journalistic workspace I wanted to be in. At that point, there were one or two stories that I did which I am extremely ashamed of.

I feel, we, at *Newslaundry*, tried to stick to what journalism is and should be. People have such low standards for it that when you do actual journalism, they're like "oh wow, you're doing something amazing". I have the advantage and the privilege to say that I'm not going to compromise on my morals, this is not what I want to do, and I quit. I see journalists who are very well off in their lives and career doing terrible work and that could include **Arnab, Rajdeep, Navika, and Rahul Shiv Shankar- they all do a disservice to the community!**

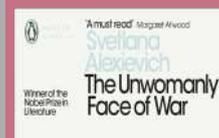
We could impact journalism but we don't because we are overshadowed by the loud noise of bad journalism. There are so many young journalists now whether it's people like Asmita Nandi, Aishwarya Iyer, Saumya, Vijayata at *the Scroll*, etc. That said, apart from these privileged journalists doing a disturbance, I also know a lot of journalists working with hotshot media houses who have to conform to these standards to gain success in their career after **all morals can't feed your family.**

**Journalists getting assaulted and violated is disturbing, do you de-stress or take care of your mental health in any way?**

NS: Journalism can take a toll on you and I think we need to take care of ourselves. It's been a year now since I have been doing therapy. I make sure that I don't live a very sedentary lifestyle. I take a walk, hydrate, and eat my food on time. If you talk to older journalists about mental health, they'll laugh at you. There is a very romanticised idea of journalists leading horrible lives, unable to maintain anything because they are so disturbed and destroyed. It is traumatising but it is your problem, you have to take care of it, and you have to build your support system.

Interviewed by Umaima Khanam  
Transcribed by Srishti Chaudhary and  
Simran Das

## Nidhi Recommends!



Source: Penguin Books Australia

***The Unwomanly Face of War* by Svetlana Alexievich**

*Alexievich chronicles the experiences of the Soviet women who fought on the front lines, on the home front, and in the occupied territories.*



Source: IMDb

***Frances Ha* (2012)**

*A dramatic comedy written by Noah Baumbach and Greta Gerwig, about two best friends tracing ambitions and dreams.*

# News Coverage by Women - Walking on a Sword

By *Simran Das*

Among many targeted assaults under the pandemic, **Neha Dixit** (independent reporter and author) had her home intruded on by a vigilante, January of this year. Relentlessly stalked and threatened both physically and online since September 2020. Her narrow escape gained vehement protest from advocacy groups and peers. A registered complaint sits with the police.

Dixit later took it to Twitter and urged the world to start paying attention to violence beyond the online world. Additionally pointing to an adage honed into journalism training – ‘the reporter is not the story,’ and that this should not be solely about her. Indeed, this is a putrid plight broader than individual instances. Given that not a single journalist’s murder in the country has been solved in the past 10 years, records **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)** Asia. Constitutional provisions do not grant freedom of the press; only the malleable framework of the right to freedom of speech and expression paints some sheen of moral authority.

*Source: Youtube.com, Khabar Lahariya Reporter*



An arguably damning indication of this is the ravenous barrage of abuses, threats, unsolicited pictures of male genitalia faced by reporters from minority and denotified backgrounds. **Arfa Khanum Sherwani**, senior editor at digital media house The Wire, mentioned to the Scroll “It terrifies me, it unsettles me.” The journalist has heavily exercised her concern against religious fundamentalism. Yet, her Muslim and gendered identity are enough for social media handles (often) with national flag emojis to unleash incompetent displays of rage at her. Predominantly, this reactionary tirade comes from Twitter mutuals of the Prime Minister and fellow media people with verified accounts. Examining states with the ruling alliance further shows a stark picture. Nipa Kakoty, a correspondent for a regional



*Source: The Ladies Finger, Malini Subramaniam*

newspaper in Assam “Amar Asom,” was verbally and physically attacked while posing questions at the Guwahati Press Club during the launch of a new film on North East earlier this year. A male organiser pulled her out of the event by her arm, as other attendees spat insults at her. With two of the assailants charged, the director and another organiser both procured bail without any investigation into the FIR.

Prakash Javadekar, junior information minister, tweeted on World Press Freedom Day in May 2020, “Media in India enjoys absolute freedom.” In an information ecosystem muddled by historical revisionism and fuelling doublethink to justify contradictory statements, this solidifies a catastrophic truth: press freedom is for the few thunderously lauding or echoing the ruling establishment. And publications that are practical vehicles for ads and obituaries. But amidst systemic repression and incoherent rhapsodies of officials, intrepid reporting by women has persisted, mainly in the form of independent news organizations. One such monumental example is Khabar Lahariya an entirely Dalit women-run news agency. ‘Writing with Fire’ a feature-length documentary that premiered in international film festivals in January celebrates the publication and its acuity, trailing two of its reporters as they cover everything from infrastructure disrepair and electoral politics to malpractices in healthcare and violence against women. It is an incisive portrait, standing as a testament to the power of conviction in the face of a clampdown escalating on remote and urban women journalists.

# Scared In My Own House

*Photographs by Vani Singh  
Story by Malavika P.M*

XX/XX/2020

Today marks the 24th day of the lockdown. It has been 24 days since I have stepped out. It has been 24 days since I have seen my parents. It has been 24 days since he last went to the office. It has been 23 hours since he hit me, again.

We have been married for 25 years and not a day has passed when he hasn't hit me. The reason I learnt to do makeup is to hide the gifts he gives me every day- a black eye, bleeding lips, bruised arms. They say time heals all wounds, but I still flinch whenever he reaches to get something near me.

Every time he raises his voice at me or beats me to a corner, I want to turn into a 5-year-old child who can go running to their parents and cry till they fall asleep in their arms. I used to tell my parents everything but now they have no idea what he puts me through. I smile for them at our daily video call sessions, those are the only 10 minutes of the day I am smiling. When the screen turns black, so does my day.

I am scared to fall asleep at night. I wake up scared every day. I am scared in my own house.

*Yet another victim of shadow pandemic...*



# The Blot of ‘Corona Jihad’ and Its Pioneers

By Subiya Yusuf

## TW: Islamophobia

The media’s role in the scenario of a pandemic comes under increased scrutiny. Lockdowns around the world encourage people to know what is happening, especially information related to the coronavirus. Initially, due to the rise of covid cases, a large number of victims were found among Muslims who attended a mass religious congregation ‘Tablighi Jamaat’. Following which a new term was coined in the series of ‘Jihad’, ‘**Corona Jihad**’ that refused to retire from television news tickers, credits to Zee TV’s ‘Daily News Analysis’ anchor Sudhir Chaudhary.

After the revelation of all the cases found among Jamaat members, social media saw the circulation of hashtags like #CoronaJihad, #coronaterrorism, #coronabombtablighi, and #tablighivirus. The Whatsapp forwards also chanted that the Muslim community is responsible for whatever is happening in the country at the period. The mainstream media and their banners portrayed Muslims as the super-spreaders of the virus.

The hate was especially visible on Twitter, with volumes of **Islamophobic tweets**. Cartoons helped to carry the message too.

Source: The Wire



In one Twitter post, a Muslim man was shown as a suicide bomber using coronavirus as explosives. Along with common citizens who continued posting, few prominent reporters, and BJP leaders also shared disturbing tweets.

Many videos caught the media frenzy, showing the Jamaati members deliberately performing unsafe acts to spread the virus. One video showed a Muslim man coughing at people. Another video showed a Jamaati member wandering naked in a hospital. Both of these videos were found to be doctored and misleading, falsely claiming the men in videos as members of the Jamaat.

The first video turned out to be from Indonesia and the second from Pakistan. One news channel claimed that the Jamaati members threw away food when they did not get non-vegetarian food. The report was widely shared on social media but was later proven to be wrong.

A 22-year-old man was attacked by people after they accused him of spreading the coronavirus. In another case, four Tablighi Jamaat members, Suhail Tambooli, Aslam Ather, Sayyed Layak, and Nizamuddin Qazi faced attacks while travelling to Ambajogai. They were brutally beaten up by the goons. The media played a crucial role in maintaining this hate-mongering. Islamophobia prevailed at the time of a public health crisis too. In the end, an order issued by the Bombay High Court revealed many of them (the Jamaat members) were not even present at Markaz and had been picked up from different areas in the city.

It can be concluded without hesitation that an entire community must not be treated as such, we cannot blame the entire surge in pandemic on a single religious or ethnic function. Many in India were up to careless behaviour and some even refused to believe in the virus itself. Each **discourse is accountable**. It’s not just a joke or callous reporting. It has consequences and the minority is mostly at the receiving of this hate and violence without proper judicial function in place.

# The Audacious Act of Oppression of Dalit Voices

By *Srishti Chaudhary*

**TW: Casteism**

The deep-rooted caste privilege prevails in the mainstream media and has successfully murdered the **awareness quotient of Dalit issues**. Along with it, the bigotry of the upper castes in the newsroom has done the same for Dalit Journalists. Most of the news organisations are run by the upper castes which often recruit employees belonging to the privileged class. The pandemic has been majorly harsh on the minorities but the media ignored the preponderant quandaries which exist at the very grassroots of society. Our struggles have been romanticised. Major instances could be the struggles of migrant workers during lockdown or glorification of rapists from the Hathras rape case. The mainstream is all about power and domination, but not for the weaker sections of the society. India witnessed one of the biggest protests with farmers revolting against the farm laws, however, the participation of Dalit labourers/farmers remained negligible. The Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Committee (ZPMC) reported about the oppression by the upper caste in acquiring the assigned Dalit's land in Punjab, harassing Dalit women, and exploiting Dalit workers on the field. The media hid the reality of the job loss and the suppression of the minorities while glorifying the struggles of the upper caste farmers immaculately.

**Dalbir Singh**, a Dalit journalist and a YouTuber based in Delhi was murdered while he was out to collect groceries during the silence of the pandemic. His death is still a mystery. Though the case was brought up to the attention of the state and the police, however till date no investigation has taken place.

**Ahan Penkarp**, a journalist from *The Caravan* was brutally beaten by the ACP on his way to report a Dalit girl's rape case in North Delhi. He was forced to delete the videos and the photos that he took and later his phone was seized by the Delhi Police.

The abuse of Dalit journalists has been hidden from the general public and is intentionally avoided by the mainstream. **Dalit Activist Nodeep Kaur** was not only arrested for protesting against the State regarding contentious farm laws but tortured and sexually harassed as well. However, mainstream carried the headline with the word alleged. So much for being a woman and Dalit in this society!

**'Dalit Camera'**, a news organisation taking up the issues of the minorities was intimidated by the state power and the police. Employees and their families received threatening phone calls by the police falsely accusing them of breaking the laws which can cause life imprisonment. The popular news channels made a statement of **'Dalit Camera'** being an organisation which only talks about the depressing social sections of the society to defame the government and 'Hinduism'.

The pandemic exposed the loopholes in the system deliberately carved for the minorities as the employment rate for SC and ST/OBC fell from 39% to 34% and 40% to 26.5% respectively. The media is muzzling up the facts on crimes against Dalits and suppressing the organisations like Veli Vada, Dalit Camera by calling them out as **"a threat to Hinduism and Indian cultures."**

Source: Youth Ki Aawaz



# Privileged Politics in Global Mass Movements

By Danita Yadav

While the world was fighting to live on with the deadly Coronavirus taking lives every day, in May 2020, George Floyd, an ordinary man making his daily trip to the grocery store succumbed to his death at the knees of police officers. The events leading to his death were huge indicators of the presence of **institutionalised racism and bigotry in our society against people of colour.**

Floyd's death led to **nationwide protests in the United States of America.** The country was already tense because of the rising COVID-19 cases and also with the Americans desperate to vote out now former President Donald Trump in the Presidential Elections. The "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) movement once again revived in May 2020. The people of America demanded justice for George Floyd. The movement soon went global condemning the existence of institutionalised racism in the 21st century. The protestors demanded a better system that would be inclusive and equal for all people and didn't label people as criminals based on pigments. Many celebrities, influencers, and people in general poured out on the streets to join the mass protests and provided first-aid to those who became victims of police brutality. A section of the society also came under fire for '**slacktivism**' with tone-deaf posts like "#blackouttuesday" and your cliché "all colours are beautiful" quotes.

If we were to move across the map and come to India, many Indians, celebrities, also jumped in on what has come to be called the "**BLM bandwagon**" to condemn institutionalised racism entrenched in America's system.

However, fellow Indians were quick to point out the genuine supporters for the BLM movement. One major instance of this was when we called out our celebrities and politicians for their hypocrisy about speaking up about the BLM movement. The backlash was centred on how these celebrities spoke up about the inherent systemic racism present in America but failed to recognise the same racism, colourism, casteism, classism, and religious bias in our systems. What added fuel to the fire was that many of the celebrities and influencers that spoke out have been and were affiliated with skin lightening products such as *Fair & Lovely*, *Garnier*, and *Fair & Handsome*. This happened at a time when India, itself, was (and still is) trying to fight a major discriminatory law, crimes based on religion, lynching, and a massive migrant crisis- the biggest the country had ever seen.

The era of globalisation and all the technology that comes with it has made the whole world, as McLuhan puts it, a "global village". While it is not wrong to talk about global issues at a local level, we must learn something from them. While we question the USA on their problems with racism, Indians must not forget to address the **rampant Islamophobia** and mob lynching that happen in their own country, in the name of "God", **the Brahmanical system of caste and patriarchy**, the rampant discrimination and **crimes against Dalits** and lastly, the **racism faced by citizens of Northeast India.** It's important to draw parallels from global movements to your own country because if we wish to address the issues of the world and make changes, we must begin to work on our immediate surroundings.



Source: The Week

# “Where the Mind is in Fear and the Head is Held Low”

By *Umaima Khanam*

The scope of Journalism here? If you're phenomenally good at it, it is **death**, and this thought lives in my brain rent-free. Despite being a popular choice among students, the subject remains infamous for other reasons. Students ink pages with what constitutes 'news' and then seeing unworthy items being pushed to sell makes us feel like either learning a lie or having to live a **lie afterwards**.

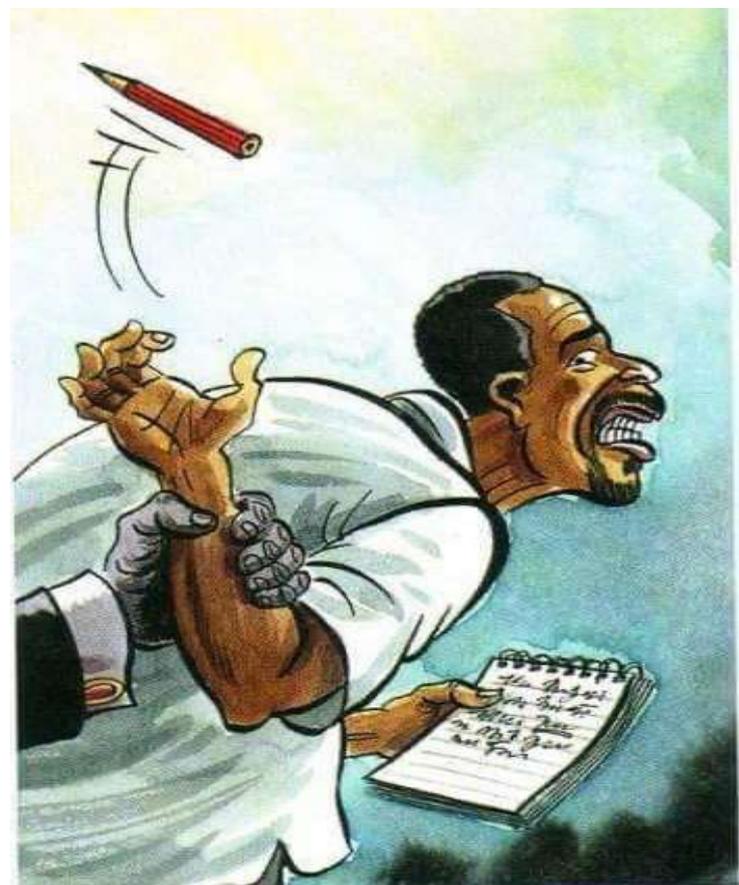
“As a final year student, it's high time to decide what I want to do in the next year, it's like, either I have to sell my ethics and morals or forget about my passion.” expressed a final-year undergraduate student from Delhi University. Students of journalism, coming from differing social, economical, and political backgrounds are insistently reminded of their identities and **not in an empowering way**.

“I am from Kashmir, and it's a conflict zone. It was my first year in college when article 370 was scrapped and the communication blockade happened. I dropped my scholarship and chose Journalism above any other course. However, I can't tell you how toxic I feel now. There is a huge institutional failure that no one is talking about. In Kashmir the press is censored, whatever happens, the reality doesn't make it to the mainland, and journalists are imprisoned,” said a second-year female Kashmiri student of Journalism from Delhi University.

Kashmir has been reported with utmost insensitivity in the news media. From Ajit Doval's pretentious sharing of Biryani on Eid to dismissing the unrest and protest that happened and calling it fake by Arnab Goswami, it was only the international media like the BBC, Al-Jazeera, Reuters, etc. which covered the issue in fairness. The modern Newsroom **lacks diversity**, any cultural representation like wearing of Hijab ( an Islamic headscarf) is unwelcomed. The persona of a news anchor is limited to 'Male, pale and stale.' The Telegraph, The Hindu, The Times of India, and many other organizations either furloughed or laid-off their employees in the pandemic. **Unemployment** was predicted, and many students of journalism are in a dilemma. The News Industry is so uncertain that it is mind-boggling for media studies students to build a career in journalism. The fear doesn't end here. From being India's daughter to realizing it's a **no woman's land**, many young girls fight their families

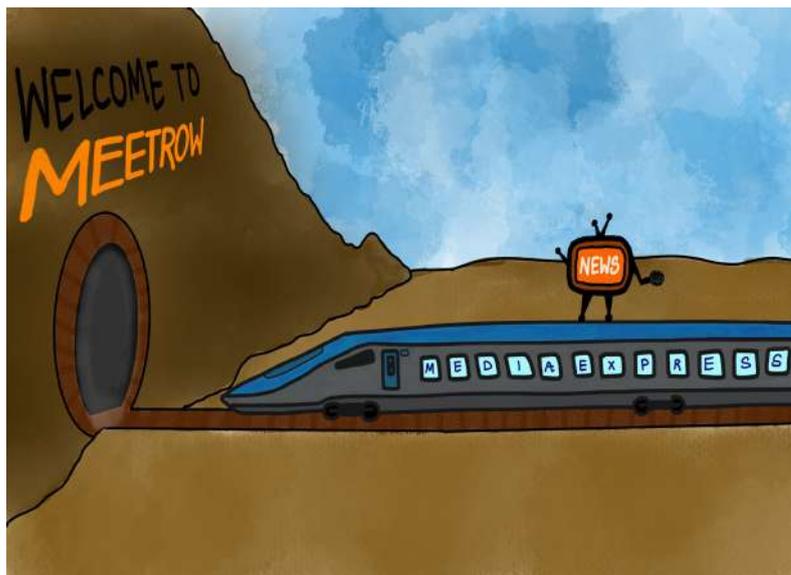
to come and pursue Journalism. “Women still combat gender stereotypes and sexism in News Industry. Belonging to a middle-class family especially from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where journalists go missing, assaulted, etc my parents are in a constant state of worry about my future which makes me more anxious.” Said Ruchi, a second-year student of Journalism from Delhi University.

The age meant for learning, exploring, and experimenting is making students rethink their chosen field of study altogether. They haven't even started working as reporters on real stories, and the state of Journalism in this country is already making them **uncertain**, and it's not because they internally feel so, but because of the external forces. Students of journalism— and other fields as well— deserve a free environment where they can expand their creativity and not live within a lurking fear and anxiety of having their minds in fear and heads held low.



Source: *Mamos Media*

# Illustrator's Corner



“Media Express” by Bhawna. Drawn and Digitised by Mannat Narula



“The day and age of Godi Media” by Mannat Narula



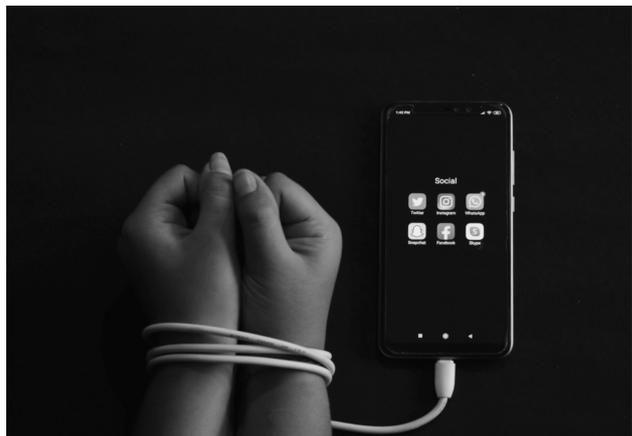
“To be news or not to be news” by Neha Sharma Sangma. Drawn and Digitised by Danita Yadav

# Through the Lens



Caged.

Sneha Agrawal



Can't break loose

Kunjika Thakral



The poor are immune to COVID.

Spenta Jassawala

Ekshita Arora



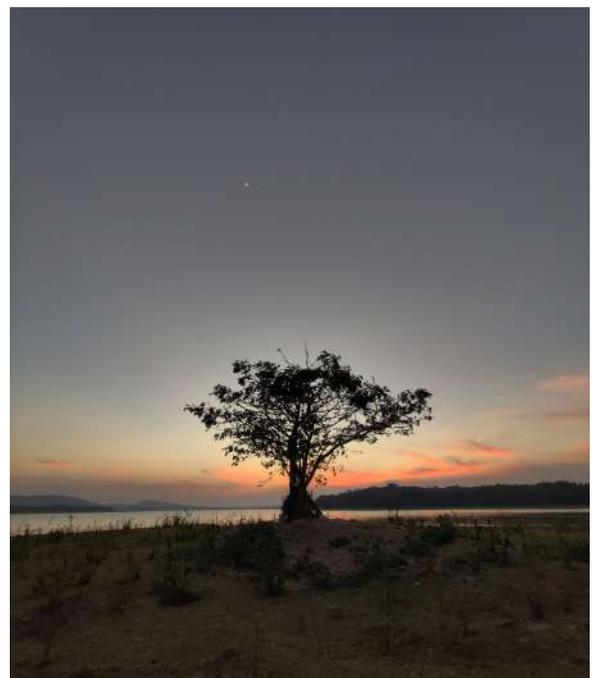
The noise of adjacent parallels.

Himani Christopher



Masked.

Anisha Reddy



Sturdy in Solitary..

## Editor's Note

With having won an election and a post dedicated to you on Instagram, comes great responsibility, which morphed us from novices to (just about) experts in many ways. From being hopeful that our article will make the cut for the newsletter to editing and selecting articles, from believing the ability to use MS-Paint made us computer-literate to spending days on end on Adobe InDesign, being a part of the Communiqué team has been an immense honour and a truly enriching experience.

In the array of emotions, we encountered, from smugness when we struck upon a great idea, to gate-closing panic as we heard deadlines whizzing past us, one untranslatable feeling remained constant, best discoursed by the outlandish word, 'arbejdsglæde'; work gladness. The feeling of gratification and joy was omnipresent among all six of us.

We present to you Communiqué'21 which with all its endearing columns and soul-bearing art, is our heartfelt contribution to the already enormous and rich culture of our department. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the amazing writers, artists, illustrators, photographers and editors who made Communiqué much more than a 20-page newsletter. We hope that this edition stays a little more radiant for as long as it is remembered

Signing off on behalf of Team Communiqué,

Malavika P.M  
Editor-in-Chief (Communiqué 2021)

## Volunteers

Atulya Jain  
Bhavya Gupta  
Dhriti Malik  
Jhankar Grover  
Sanya Gupta  
Simran Das  
Srishti Chaudhary  
Spenta Jassawala  
Subiya Yusuf

Cover Design - Danita Yadav

## Team Communiqué 2021



*Malavika P.M*  
*Editor-in-Chief*

*Danita Yadav*  
*Design*  
*Editor-in-Chief*



*Umaima Khanam*  
*Editor*

*Mannat Narula*  
*Design Editor*



*Ashi Kanojia*  
*Sub-Editor*

*Ishita Banerjee*  
*Design Sub-Editor*

