
UNIT 17 DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Structure

- 17.0 Introduction
- 17.1 Learning Outcomes
- 17.2 Understanding Concepts of Democracy
 - 17.2.1 Basics of Democracy
 - 17.2.2 Democracy and Media
- 17.3 Linkages between Democracy and Digital Media
 - 17.3.1 Elections and Digital Media
 - 17.3.2 Political Parties and New Media
 - 17.3.3 Social Media and Politics
- 17.4 Avenues of Linkages
 - 17.4.1 Mainstream Media
 - 17.4.2 Alternative Media
 - 17.4.3 Genres of Alternative Media
- 17.5 Citizen Journalism and Social Change
 - 17.5.1 Tenets of Citizen Journalism
 - 17.5.2 Forms of Citizen Journalism
 - 17.5.3 Digital Media and News Values
 - 17.5.4 User Generated Content
- 17.6 Experiences of Interplay
 - 17.6.1 Global Trends
 - 17.6.2 Indian Experiences
- 17.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.8 Keywords
- 17.9 References and Further Reading
- 17.10 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

17.0 INTRODUCTION

Democracy is centred around the ideas of power to the people whereby they decide what the policies which are right and appropriate for them so that their rights can be safeguarded. Digital media has a role to play in ascertaining such democratic freedom to the people and securing their rights. It then becomes essential to understand how digital media can enable a greater democracy by encouraging greater participation of people in it. This Unit covers the aspects of how the Internet is changing and how people are participating in movements for democratic rights, reforms, and freedom. This Unit also includes certain case studies about social media movements that gave rise to greater participation by people in democracies around the India's

Experience with the Internet world that have altered the systems of governance in countries. Social media has brought several people together under a single leadership in ways that could not have been envisaged by mainstream media or political parties. In this Unit, we shall discuss a few global and Indian experiences of digital media and democracy and how these can affect us in making our society more responsible.

17.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the fundamental relationship between democracy and digital media;
- elaborate on the different avenues of digital platforms for democratic participation;
- explain the users' participation in democracy;
- understand various definitions around democracy and digital media; and
- draw linkages between elections and digital media.

17.2 UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY

According to Susan D. Moeller (2010), 'democracy is a system in which everyone has a voice and all voices are heard.' Further to that Moeller states that democracy is not just a political term that stands for 'power to the many' or 'greater participation' of people as that would merely be a hollow description of the word. The true meaning lies in how and in what ways are the various voices being heard. Thus there is a need for an aggressive and independent 'fourth estate' as that can be a vital and significant tool in making 'democracy' a truly vibrant one with diverse opinions, voices, views, and concerns. However, the fact of whether those concerns will find a proper hearing and will have an impact and effect on policymakers is a subject of debate.

17.2.1 Basics of Democracy

You might have heard about the term democracy is derived from two Latin words- 'Demos' and 'Kratos' where 'demos' means common people of an ancient Greek State and 'Kratos' meanings power. Thus, the 'power of the people' is what democracy truly means. Dahl (1971) identifies seven main criteria that should exist in a country to be called a 'democracy' or a 'polyarchy' (power vested in many).

These criteria are:

- control over government decisions;
- frequent and fair elections;
- universal adult suffrage [right to vote];
- right to run for public office;

- freedom of expression;
- access to alternative sources of information that have not been monopolised by a few; and
- freedom of association

Hence we see that a democracy needs to be vibrant and dynamic with Democracy and Digital Media voices of people being heard. This is possible only when diverse voices are raised through various media platforms, different channels, and sources of information. The Internet seems to be bridging the gap, which seems to have existed for a long time in the field of media.

This brings us to the section on what exactly is the interplay between democracy and digital media and what all does it include.

17.2.2 Democracy and Media

Digital media includes all such content and form that uses technology and is coded, modified, and distributed on digital electronic devices and platforms. It includes not just websites of mainstream media organisations but also blogs, Wikis, YouTube and Instagram, etc. These days the micro blogging websites are doing valuable work on keeping mainstream media on its toes.

However, there are different challenges and numerous goals related to the state of media within a digital landscape. One of the most significant challenges is to keep up with the changing face of modes of production, use, and practices related to online technology. There is a need to strike a balance between theory and practice. The practices mainly include reform or changing policy and legislation around ownership and concentration, or the establishment of grassroots and independent news channels. Another aspect of digital platforms is that it helps you to understand how independent channels are revolutionising and engaging the Internet and masses.

Activity – 1

At this juncture of the Unit, it would be a good idea for you to take stock your relationship with media systems. What kind of media habits do you have and how much of it do you use to engage with the outside world?

- How many hours do you spend on your mobile phone?
 (regularly)
(hourly/occasionally)
- What political websites do you read or use daily on the Internet?
 - regularly
 - occasionally
- Do you have a blog/social media account? Yes No
- Do you write on democratic and political issues? Yes. No.

5. How often do you write for your blog/social media account?
- Daily - Regularly - Occasionally

6. What democratic issues do you write on?
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Have you produced similar content for any other online platform?
[] Yes / [] No.
If yes, how many likes, comments, shares have you received?
.....
.....
.....

17.3 LINKAGES BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL MEDIA

The media needs to become more accountable in a democracy by holding those in power accountable to the public. They freely question or are at least supposed to ask questions to authorities based on their framing of events. In order to assist in the functioning of a healthy democracy, it becomes imperative that the media itself is free, independent, and accountable. With the proliferation of new voices, the responsibility is on the media of putting information across with accuracy. In this regard, ‘digital media’ has made sure that such voices have emerged but with what consequence is the larger question. Here we will assess how those diverse voices that find a platform online can be heard with effective outcomes and meanings for elections, political participation, and democracy in general.

17.3.1 Elections and Digital Media

Williams and Delli Carpini (2011) argue that among other things, what is considered “political” has widened with digital media beyond what was set out by traditional media. Another theory that is prominent and that focuses on individual media is agenda-setting theory (McCombs et al., 2013) which tells us those specific political topics are fore grounded in the media and force us to think about them instead of others. It is said that India and China account for one-third of the world’s online population. In India, however, Internet penetration is still low, and the use of digital media is heavily skewed towards the elite. The debates around new media and politics have, however, focussed on two broad themes-democracy and the public sphere (Habermas, 1982) and how capitalism skewed politics towards powerful economic elites (Castells, 2011).

17.3.2 Political Parties and New Media

When we study the scenario vis-a-vis political parties, it raises concerns about whether the media contribute to more responsiveness by the government, or the opposite—more elite control? Here one notices that there has been strong collusion between political and economic elites which also indicates that in the Indian media system autonomy is weak. However, the Internet has been a strong force among a small, mostly young and urban population. Although smartphones are yet to reach the majority of the population, online politics is shaped by how smartphone adoption fits into the broader-skewed-media landscape.

Most political parties now have thousands of WhatsApp groups and social media accounts to reach a wider group of citizens. However, the reach is limited to the urban elite. Among various political parties, political ideologies arise from the public, and they are articulated within parties and in the media and the contest for legitimacy and power. Even without widespread Internet penetration, new technologies can be vital for politics, and this is illustrated via the use of mobile phones in an Indian election.

Online activism increasingly influences politics in recent times, more so because it provides an alternative to entrenched political power and its nexus with the traditional media.

17.3.3 Social Media and Politics

There has been a meteoric rise in social media platforms and citizen journalism with examples ranging from leaked photos of Abu Ghraib to a cellphone video of Saddam's hanging, the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, and London bombings of July 7, 2005. There are pictures clicked by ordinary citizens that are being used by mainstream media to depict a variety of voices which is seen as a measure of 'publicness' (Heikkila & Kunelius, 2002). There are many instances where it can be shown that social media has affected social change in unprecedented ways. These changes are visible in the way politics is done by political parties and how governments are run—both in developed and developing countries.

In the recent parliamentary elections in India, it is pointed out that parties were strategically engaging in new and old media to maximise their reach and information was being shared digitally in large numbers which have now become a potent way of political involvement. In a study in Norway it was found that as individual candidates took part in Twitter campaigning individually for themselves and their parties, they were likely to exercise more influence than those who did not take up such online campaigning on the micro blogging site (Karlsen & Enjolras, 2016). Valeriani & Vaccari (2016) suggest through a survey study in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom that social media serve as a virtual platform to bridge the gap between the political parties and the public and those who are not party members but are party loyalists engage in online activity to reach out to people. Thus, Chadwick & Stromer-Galley (2016) argue that digital culture is changing how parties reach out to the people telling them about their ideology, social work and election campaign.

Check Your Progress: 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What are the two main debates around new media and politics?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Give two instances to indicate that social media is being used for political purposes.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

17.4 AVENUES OF LINKAGES

This brings us to the section where we will draw linkages between mainstream and alternative media on the online spheres - are these complementary to each other or are they contesting each other for media space vying for audience attention?

17.4.1 Mainstream Media

A lot has been talked about media reform, activism, and resistance on the Internet where such political movements have been presented as networked forms of communication at the transnational level (Castells, 2004). However, at another level, these are just tools and technology not more than a plane of interaction. In recent times there is a clamour among mainstream media organisations to vie for online space for their news content. Simultaneously, there is also a trend towards using social media as ‘vox pops’ within the media dialogues that take place on-screen or in newspapers even as online media are converting into ‘multimedia newsrooms’. Social media has created such a competition for the mainstream media that specific progressive mainstream media organisations are struggling to come to terms with blogs, wikis, and other content management systems making it more participatory within the journalism conversations (Gillmor, 2003) and making such audiences as equal partners and collaborators in the news process.

Despite such voices one being heard within mainstream media, it is the alternative media which is more participatory and redefines a publicness by altering the nature of journalism so that the facts are determined not by a handful of journalists or reporters or editors in an organisation but by highlighting the discursive, dialogic and deliberative nature of public engagement with the news.

17.4.2 Alternative Media

As we continue to debate whether participatory journalism and traditional journalism collide head-on or complement each other (Lasica, 2003), let us discuss here a few of instances that go on to indicate how the meaning of empowerment and information are being redefined through independent media.

Alternative media, on the one hand, makes significant contributions to the social and political life of amateur media producers, on the other hand, these also challenge the structures of mass media. In more ways than one, they have played a role in empowering the people who have used them, at the same time making efforts to bridge the 'digital inequality'.

The Sao Paulo Project, in Brazil, for one has brought together grassroots undertakings towards bridging the digital gap by working with computer recycling and using Linux so that activists/artists collective, independent media, and the institutional segment who work with the marginalised and poor people access to the digital age and can come to the fore (Rosas, 2004b). It has created a network of Brazilians who had not previously met, and it has laid the conditions both for the organisation of the event and for future collaborations.

There are also examples of the American Indymedia and South Korean Ohmy News which point to the early successes of alternative media. Instead of becoming simply PR tools for opposition groups, such media promote activism and reform.

This brings us to the question of what are the different forms of alternative media. Let us discuss that in the next section.

17.4.3 Genres of Alternative Media

Alternative media as we know by now (as we have discussed it in detail in the course MJM024) question the dominant cultures and themes and are viewed as 'counter-hegemonic' if viewed from the lens of Antonio Gramsci.

These forms of media may include anything from print, radio, video, film, Democracy and Digital Media Internet to street art, performance, and music.

As far as the genres of new media and their role in alternative media projects are concerned, there are few main types, e.g. culture jamming, participatory journalism, alternative computing, mediated mobilisation, and shared knowledge. Culture jamming comes in the form of Internet memes and marketing and is a commentary on popular culture, advertising, and such art forms dealing with issues of consumerism and capitalism. Participatory

journalism refers to radical news on web-based sources which are mainly critiques on online news services and blogs. While alternative computing deals with the material infrastructure of information and communication technologies (hacking, open-source software and file sharing are few examples), mediated mobilisation refers to communication practices that ignite social movements or cultural projects. Common knowledge provides alternatives to top-down creation and dissemination of knowledge (Wikipedia being one such example).

Alternative media has also recently come to be an umbrella term that includes such media as tactical media, second-tier media, DIY (Do-It Yourself) media, and independent media. Tactical media talks about a form of media activism that promotes temporary media alternatives to permanent alternative media outlets. First-tier sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are quite popular but recently second-tier social media sites (Meebo, Tumblr, Pinterest) have been gaining popularity as they house information that can connect back to the first-tier sites. DIY media may be defined as the use of Web 2.0 applications, specifically in terms of allowing users to become producers and not merely consumers of media.

Activity – 2

Visit two websites-one may be a mainstream news organisation like CNN, BBC, or that of The Times of India, and another of an independent media like Indymedia.org or OhmyNews.org. Compare there two media platforms based on their news coverage.

Check Your Progress: 2

Note: - 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Enumerate the differences between mainstream and alternative media.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What are the different genres of alternative media?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

17.5 CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Citizen journalism and social media management to bring about social change, but what about its access, equality, and outreach in a world dominated by capitalism. Ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation come to take place within technological networks which make us question its efficacy for most of the world's people (Dean, 2005). Communicative capitalism mentions that capitalism can be viewed in the broader context of network and communication technologies where the citizen is missing. Machesney (2013), in this regard, says that capitalism and democracy vie for opposite outcomes-the former creates massive inequality, and the latter is premised upon political equality. On similar lines, Khiabany (2016) notes that the Green Revolution did not bring much change in Iran, but it was perfect for Twitter's business. This also brings us to the debates around democracy and democratic freedoms.

Let us now talk about what are the central tenets of citizen journalism and its forms, how it affects the Internet, and how such forms of journalism promote democratic participation.

17.5.1 Tenets of Citizen Journalism

There are many essential principles or tenets that open journalism should follow, and these are transparency, responsiveness, substantive participation, collaboration, and networked presence.

Transparency is coming up as an essential hallmark of citizen journalism where there is freedom of expression and space where diverse views are shared more openly and without any inhibitions and pressures. News gathering and disseminating of information become more responsive to various needs. There is a lot of debate and discussion around it on multiple platforms. Many reporters and editors are using such platforms to diversify opinions and participation. The information-sharing level is high on this platform, from fan communities to blogs and digital community-building that takes place. Citizen journalism, however, can take up many forms.

17.5.2 Forms of Citizen Journalism

It can be opportunistic when there is a bystander, and a citizen just happens to be present at the place, and the incident occurs. They are there as witnesses and click photographs, or create an account of what happened at that point. What the person does with the information is his/her own choice-they may post it on their social media accounts or work with the media to get the message across.

The other form is where the journalist has placed himself purposely in that sort of situation in order to capture an event as it unfolds to communicate it to the rest of the world. The individuals would not have any journalistic training or background and therefore get classified as citizen journalists, an ordinary person reporting like 'professionals'.

17.5.3 Digital Media and News Values

Regarding some fundamental news values on digital platforms, Mark Lipton says that “One can argue that the sociability of new web processes is producing new pathways for ‘truth’. Truth is the main guarded principle around which journalism functions.” Boler (2010) says that if we go by this definition of truth, then there are two ways of viewing it—that truth is being constructed by mainstream media and truth as being constructed by other forms of media and sources available on the Internet, on blogs, wikis, Instagram posts, Facebook, to name a few. Whenever you begin to doubt the dominant discourses within the mainstream media and the ‘social construction of reality’ by the dominant media with the help of public relations and ‘spin,’ we are often accused of being paranoid conspiracy theorists. However, the Internet offers several ‘facts’ in addition to those being presented in mainstream media. Thus, while the credibility of mainstream media organisations is at stake here, on the one hand, on the other, the bigger question is how far can the online news be trusted?

It thus becomes essential to understand how alternative media, independent media, citizen journalism, etc. create agendas, and how are they performing the function of agenda-setting online? Boler (2010) says that there are three main issues to think about around such media spaces—the idea of space as socially constructed, the concept of the flow of ideas, and the role of imagination in the construction of ‘subjectivities’. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) argues that symbolic power is the power to construct reality. Alternative media, thus, constructs a reality that opposes the conventions and representations of mass media. The challenge, in no small extent, what is out there on channels, on your radio set, and in your newspaper. However, the credibility question of these online news sources also looms large. While the journalists and publicists can manipulate both the element of change and relevance to a story to maximise its strength for the audience, there is little scope for such manipulation in the blogs and independent media. There is also a lesser chance of bias creeping in media platforms online. Even if there is subjectivity around a blog, the audience is free to reject it and move on to some other more credible source of news. However, there is still greater participation by citizens in countries around the world in online platforms and its usage for meaningful change and for promoting ‘deliberative democracy’.

Let us now expand on what is user-generated content, yet another term used in the context of digital media.

17.5.4 User Generated Content

User-generated content is a term applied to mean that consumers or customers are no longer passive receivers of information, whether it is on sites like YouTube or blogs, products featured on e-commerce sites, etc. These interactions take the form of product reviews and other consumer initiated contributions.

This form of content points to the increasing form of media pluralism and indicates that the content we have access to is more diverse than we have

India's Experience with the Internet ever had in the past. There has, however, been recent concern regarding the dominance of a few platforms in many democracies (Twitter in Japan, Naver in the Republic of Korea, Instagram and LinkedIn in Africa, Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe, and We Chat and QQ in China).

Such content has been incorporated in mainstream journalism and in marketing where it is said to build more trust for the brand and organisation, encourages more participation, encourages more traffic to the brand websites, increases follower count, and ensures that the purchase decisions are maximised. Thus, we see there are many benefits of such content, including personalisation which is a welcome trend.

Activity – 3

You should create an account on any of the platforms of citizen journalism. Post a picture or upload a video or generate content and see how many likes and comments you get.

Check Your Progress: 3

Note: - 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How is digital media engaging audiences, for better or worse?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

17.6 EXPERIENCES OF INTERPLAY

There have been instances in India and abroad that indicate the growing use of digital media, social media in particular, for political and social activism. Many cases are reported from Africa, Asia, and the West that have shown the growing importance of online activism and politics, especially during

elections. Some cases from India, China, Sweden, and the United States of America have been discussed below.

17.6.1 Global Trends

For example, in February 2003, millions of people worldwide were mobilised to protest against the Bush administration's push for war against Iraq. The Arab Spring of 2010 can be cited too. Another example is the Egyptian revolution of January-February 2011 where thousands of protestors, demonstrators, and youth decided through online methods to meet at Cairo's Tahrir Square and protest against the high-handedness of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and his regime which was fraught with corruption, electoral fraud, unemployment, state-of-emergency laws among other such practices. This resulted in the overthrow of the Mubarak government. So digital media cannot be undermined.

Larsson & Kalsnes (2014) found that Twitter and Facebook are used Democracy and Digital Media extensively by politicians in Sweden and are used more by politicians who are 'underdogs', tend to be younger and non-incumbents and outsiders rather than prominent insiders. Regarding the scene in the United States, the debate is that digital media leads to political polarisation. However, Messing & Westwood (2014) show that endorsements of news items via social network sites (Facebook likes, for example) prompt more people to read these news items. Some Congressmen, however, use Twitter more for self-promotion rather than engaging with the public.

In the case of China, Pan (2016) argues that Baidu (Google equivalent), WeChat (Facebook or Twitter equivalent) and Alibaba's Taobao (Amazon or eBay equivalent) better meet the needs of the Chinese markets but face problems finding inroads into foreign markets due to policies or legal loopholes. Regarding online protests in China, Yang (2014) says "Although hundreds of Internet protests occur every year, the main issues focus on corruption, social injustices against vulnerable persons, abuse of power by government officials."

17.6.2 Indian Experiences

Similarly, India Against Corruption movement in April 2011 was seen as a 'social media revolution' when Anna Hazare decided to go on fast unto death at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi demanding enactment of the longpending Jan Lokpal Bill.

In India, Doron and Jeffrey (2013) point out that the use of mobile phones was a crucial factor in the victory of Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh state legislative assembly elections in 2007 although influential newspapers and television channels were disdainful of her party, the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) and hostile to Dalit politics. The other parties, they argue, lacked such mobile-phone-based mobilisation through which irregularities were reported to the Election Commission and mainstream media was bypassed.

In India, there is significant concern around internet penetration and digital exclusion which presses us to discuss the topic of 'digital inequality'.

Digital inequality is a term that refers to how technology and its usage and non-usage can create divisions in society as ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. There is still a section of the society who are left out of the benefits of technology. This itself leaves those marginalised communities outside the gambit of ‘democracy’ where the real action is taking place in terms of politics, social change, protests, and movements. If the infrastructure is not provided to the poor for their fullest development through technology and ICT (information and communication technology), then how can social and economic growth take place, this is a pertinent question before scholars.

17.7 LET US SUM UP

It may thus be concluded that digital media takes up many forms where there are mainstream media with their web portals vying for media space and audience engagement; at the same time, there are various alternative media with opposing voices and voices that redefine meanings of various issues.

India’s Experience with the Internet In the form of digital media, social media is becoming a more prominent player who is redefining even news and journalism. There are ways in which social media is allowing democracy to reshape the future and assist citizens in being a more active part of it. The recent case of mob lynching incidents on social media in Indian cities is an example to show how there is a close relationship between social media and democracy. Such media becomes a mediated platform for struggles, crimes, movements, protests, and dialogue by various groups, organisations, communities, and people that are marginalised. It is believed by some that despite such activity out there on the Internet, these struggles have less meaning for the ones who do not have access. Hence, digital media platforms generate debates around inclusion, access, privacy, openness, and diversity.

17.8 KEYWORDS

Alternative Media: Such forms of media that are not in the mainstream and are more participative and accommodative of audience voices and perceptions. It provides a sense of ‘empowerment’ and ‘identity’.

Mainstream Media: It is also used interchangeably with the word corporate media, which means news that is being produced with a profit motive.

Media Reform: This essentially means the change in policies and agendas of media in a way that it is more catered to public needs and away from corporate or other bias.

Net neutrality: It means internet service should be provided equally to all for use instead of differentiating or discriminating between users.

Open Source Software: It is a type of computer software in which the copyright holder grants it for use and distributes the software to anyone for any purpose.

Tactical Media: It is a peculiar term that implies expressions of dissent through artistic and do-it-yourself approaches which are readily available, including cheap technology.

Web 2.0: This term usually means user-generated content, participatory culture and interoperability of media (mainly blogging, wikis and syndication).

17.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

1. Boler, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hard times*. MIT Press.
2. Castells, M. (2011). *The rise of the network society* (Vol. 12). John Wiley & Sons.
3. Chadwick, A. and Stromer-Galley, J., (2016). Digital media, power, and democracy in parties and election campaigns: Party decline or party renewal? *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), pp. 283-293.
4. Doron, A. & Jeffrey, R. (2013). *Cell phone nation: How mobile Democracy and Digital Media phones have revolutionised business, politics and ordinary life in India*. Hachette UK.
5. Heikkilä, Heikki, and Risto Kunelius. (2002). Access, dialogue, deliberation: experimenting with three concepts of journalism criticism. *The International Media and Democracy Project*, July 17. http://www.imdp.org/artman/publish/article_27.shtml.
6. Karlsen, R., & Enjolras, B. (2016). Styles of social media campaigning and influence in a hybrid political communication system: Linking candidate survey data with Twitter data. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), 338-357.
7. Khiabany, G. (2016). The importance of 'social' in social media: Some lessons from Iran. *The Routledge companion to social media and politics*, 220-249.
8. Larsson, A. O., & Kalsnes, B. (2014). 'Of course we are on Facebook': Use and non-use of social media among Swedish and Norwegian politicians. *European Journal of Communication*, 29(6), 653-667.
9. McChesney, R. W. (2013). *Digital disconnect: How capitalism is turning the Internet against democracy*. New Press, The.
10. Messing, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2014). Selective exposure in the age of social media: Endorsements trump partisan source affiliation when selecting news online. *Communication Research*, 41(8), 1042-1063.
11. Moeller, S.D. (2010). 'Media and Democracy' in Boler, M. (ed.), *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. Pp. 167-196.
12. Neyazi, T. A., Kumar, A., & Semetko, H. A. (2016). Campaigns, digital media, and mobilisation in India. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), 398-416.
13. Valeriani, A., & Vaccari, C. (2016). Accidental exposure to politics on social media as online participation equaliser in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 1857-1874.

17.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. The two main debates around new media and politics relate to:
 - a. Democracy and how a public sphere is created around it based on the theory propounded by Jurgen Habermas. He thought that public opinion should be a product of informed deliberation among citizens in a democracy.
 - b. Capitalism skewed towards politics and powered economic elites. It is indicated that the 'political economy' of the Internet puts pressures on users so that the social media platforms are used more by the powerful and financially strong rather than the marginalised.
2. Two main instances to indicate that social media is used for political purposes:
 - a. Leaked photos of Abu Ghraib prison where atrocities being carried out on the prisoners were shown to the whole world. It created a furore and changed public opinion against the US Army.
 - b. India Against Corruption Movement under the leadership of Anna Hazare was a significant turning point in the history of social movements in India where the social activist made undue pressure on the government for the Jan Lokpal Bill to be promulgated which would end corruption. He garnered substantial public opinion in his favour through social media platforms.

Check Your Progress: 2

1. Significant differences between mainstream and alternative media are:
 - a. Alternative media is more around connecting local cultures, news and information that pertains to a region; while mainstream deals even with a global news event or item.
 - b. There is more tolerance for individual freedom and social differences in alternative media while there is less censorship of ideas and speech. This is not so in mainstream media.
 - c. There is also among alternative media an eagerness to report on community issues and those areas that get neglected by mainstream media organisations.
2. The different genres of alternative media area
 - a. Culture jamming, which comes in the form of internet memes and marketing and is a commentary on popular culture, advertising and such art forms dealing with issues of consumerism and capitalism.
 - b. Participatory journalism, alternative computing, mediated

mobilisation and commons knowledge. After culture jamming comes Participatory journalism which refers to radical news on web-based sources which are mainly critiques on online news services and blogs.

- c. Alternative computing deals with the material infrastructure of information and communication technologies (hacking, open source software and file sharing are few examples)
- d. Mediated mobilisation refers to communication practices that ignite social movements or cultural projects; and
- e. Commons knowledge provides alternatives to top-down creation and dissemination of knowledge (Wikipedia being one such example).

Check Your Progress: 3

1. Some of the significant strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism are:

Strengths:

- a. It bridges the gaps that exist within mainstream media where people can fact-check, augment or create media themselves.
- b. It empowers local communities.
- c. It generates more interactivity and better dialogue on a single platform.

Weaknesses:

- a. Credibility is a significant issue as audiences are left wondering what to believe.
- b. Such works published have only limited audiences, such as friends on social media.
- c. Even though the news is sometimes circulated here, it can generate false hype and encourage rumour-mongering.

2. Digital media is most definitely massively engaging the audiences as people are losing interest in mainstream media as it is functioning under various pressures of time, space and editorial leanings. Therefore, people are increasingly turning to digital media as a news source and for information. They think the news on some sites such as Indy media are more credible and they can become news producers as well.