



Emergence of Media Information Literacy: A Study

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Abstract

There has been an unsatiated thirst for knowing about the unknown among humans since ages. The advent of Mass Media has tried to quench this thirst but it went on increasing with every bit of information. Print Media provided information in a published and visuals supported manner which can be read and reread as it was possible to keep the printed information in one's personal file. But its biggest drawback was that it was meant for the literate only and the illiterates used to be at the mercy of whatever the literates would tell them. Radio conquered this disadvantage of Print Media. As a medium of voice, it enabled listeners belonging to all strata of society to listen to whatever was broadcasted for the public. It had an added advantage of being quite cheap in price. Compact transistors added the convenience to carry it anywhere. Short Wave radio signals could cover longer distances as compared to Medium Wave signals. Television satiated human desire to see the things as they happen. Satellite TV Channels and demassification brought a vast variety of information and entertainment providing channels and that too at a very nominal cost. Cinema, of course, kept on enthralling, entertaining and, at times, educating the cine-goers as it is an Art form that is a combination of a number of arts. Cinema has the capacity of impressing upon the vulnerable minds of its audience. The digitalization of camera, sound and editing paved the way for the production of some wonderful movies. As it was not enough, Digital Media has come with a bang.

Key Words: Unsatiated thirst, Information, Satellite TV Channels, Demassification, Digital Media.

I. Introduction:

This internet oriented medium rendered it the advantage of being an interactive medium where people were not just readers, listeners or passive spectators. Digital Media has provided its users the opportunity to upload whatever they want to upload in every conceivable format anytime and from anywhere. In fact it has taken the people in its stride all over the world. Virtually every variety of information, knowledge and entertainment is available on Digital Media platform as and when one desires. Digital Media never sleeps. There are no shifts and no off days or holidays. The same stands true about its users. They keep themselves busy on surfing or getting information through various Digital Media Apps. Digital Media has changed the life style and thinking patterns of people.

The warmth of emotions and age-old traditional mores has been uprooted. The old-generations laments at the destruction of deep rooted cultural and moral-ethical values. While the young generation celebrated the freedom the Digital Media provides to them. If there is liberty to read, watch, listen and download any information available on Internet, the users are at liberty to upload whatever they wish to upload. There are no restrictions and no barriers. There are no rules and regulations. Humanity has never seen this type of unbridled liberty ever before. There are no checks or cross checks. There is no censorship. Digital Media provided the users with another significant platform and that is social media. People can remain in touch with their friends, colleagues and family members 24x7. They can share their views, information or emotions in textual, visual, audio, audio-visual or any other mode they deem fit.



Source: <https://kiaradyla.school.blog/2016/12/11/media-information-literacy-as-freedom-of-speechexpression/>

Media Information Literacy is aimed at developing ability among people to think logically, critically and wisely. Once achieved, people will be able to get maximum benefits from Digital Media. At the moment, most of them don't know what to do with the information available at Internet. They have become blind followers of Digital Media and trust whatever comes their way. This unflinching trust in uncensored medium is loaded with potent dangers. Media Information Literacy tries to develop competency among people so that they can get maximum advantage and minimize the possibility of harm. It enables them to think critically and use Digital Media wisely. Everybody knows that diverse type of content available on digital platform is not dependable. Hence developing the capacities of critical and logical thinking among people have become indispensable for all regardless of their ages or backgrounds. Regardless of one's education, social background, income group, position in society, occupation or skills he possesses, one needs to keep growing soft and technical skills. One with information Literacy Skills is always an asset for his organization, society and country. Information Literacy skills are often referred to as media literacy skills which encompass the ability to identify, assess, organize, utilize and communicate in any format. They prove particularly valuable when evaluating the quality and credibility of a website, attributing credit to the source, obtaining new knowledge, solving a problem, taking a decision or develop critical thinking. This critical thinking is the shield to safeguard oneself from potent harms of disinformation and misinformation.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is referred to a "combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to access, analyze, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge in creative, legal and ethical ways that respect human rights" (Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, 2012).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines it as the "set of competencies to search, critically evaluate, use and contribute information and media content wisely; knowledge of one's rights online; understanding how to combat online hate speech and cyber bullying; understanding of the ethical issues surrounding the access and use of information; and engage with media and ICTs to promote equality, free expression, intercultural/interreligious dialogue, peace, etc." (UNESCO, 2016).

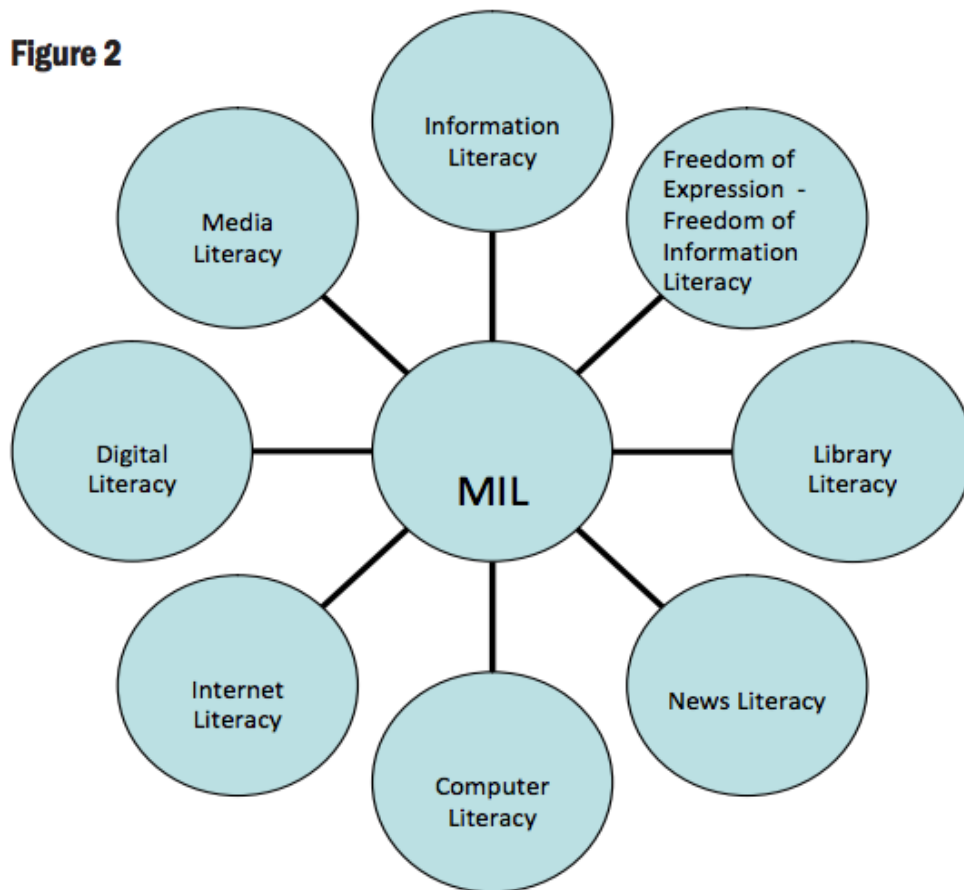
Critical thinking is of vital importance for people the gather requisite information from reliable sources, assessing its reliability, assess sources and decide whether the information can be relied upon or not. There is abundance of unreliable data and false information available online. As the pace of information delivery is unmatched so one needs to chisel MIL skills to look for reliable information from the debris of disinformation. MIL is required to develop critical and logical thinking, self-expression and distinguish between truth and falsehood which is vital for strengthening a democratic society. Knowledge and information is being created on digital platforms in all forms and formats. In this booming era of data and



information, media and information increase everyday and the abundance of information found everywhere is nothing short of information explosion. It will be appropriate to state that we are living in an era of data and information explosion. It is of utmost importance as to how we deal with information and misinformation. Each and everybody has the right to express himself, put forward his opinion and express his ideas in the form and style he deems fit. He has full control on

the content of his ideas and information. This right has to be respected in letter and spirit. There shouldn't be any malice or prejudice regarding this. Digital Media is based on this principle only. But it depends on listeners, readers and audience to decide what to trust and what to discard. MIL teaches us to make use of information and media content in an ethical, efficient and effective manner: Media and Information Literacy can be well understood from the following diagram:

Figure 2



Source: <https://bryanalexander.org/digital-literacy/a-powerful-media-and-information-literacy-project-from-unesco/>

Information literacy is the need of the day as most of TV News Channels, Politics-tilted Newspapers and Digital Media are replete with disinformation and misinformation. One needs to cross check the information before believing in it. One should also verify the sources of such news items. Fact checking tools can be of great help in this regard. Article 19(1) a of Indian Constitution is about Freedom of Speech and Expression to the citizens of India. One may express one's views and opinion on any topic one deems fit. Everybody has

the freedom to express himself. But this right is not an absolute right. There are certain restrictions. One cannot speak anything which may endanger the communal harmony, unity, peace and integrity of the country. Libraries are loaded with books and journals. People need to be aware about the methods of collection of desired information. Usage of catalogue may save their time. There are different racks for books on different subjects. One may visit the appropriate rack and find the book one needs. Then there is need to learn how to read a book. Every author and philosopher has his own line of



thinking and style of expression. It is because same phenomenon can be expressed and viewed from divergent angles. One may read many authors on the same subject and then decide which author appeals him the most. Regular visits to the libraries develop literary habits which may give birth to budding writers.

One needs to be vigilant so far as consumption of news media is concerned. There are Media Houses which run Media business. Hence, one should understand that News dissemination is not a service of mankind, it is a business. These media houses have political inclinations and they are associated with one or the other political party. They give more importance to the news items which propagate the political philosophy of their party. The news items involving opposition are often underplayed or dropped at gate keeping level. Hence, one need to understand that what a particular TV News Channel, a particular News paper or a particular Internet News Site disseminates is not always news in the strict sense of the term. It may well be propagation of a particular party's political philosophy which is aimed at brainwashing of the audience or readers whatever the case may be. So, one must be very vigilant about Media as everything that is presented on media has a number of connotations. Many-a-times facts are left far behind. Media has its own compulsions which come in the shape of certain pressures and pulls.

Functional knowledge of computer is indispensable in modern times. Knowledge of MS Office is the basic need. Then there are so many short cut commands which may prove to be time saving. One thing is crystal clear that one must acquire and learn typing skills. Though Google Inputs have made the task easier for people but typing is necessary for making use of computer or other computerised gadgets. Internet Literacy has its roots in computer literacy. One should know which search engine is safe and which site can be trusted and which not. Internet is the storehouse of information virtually on any subject under the sun. People should know how to visit internet sites, search requisite information, download the information, save it in MS Word and create folders. These are the basics of Computer and Internet Literacy. Digital Literacy is ought to be disseminated to enable people search required information from a huge variety of websites.

An old dictum says, 'Seeing is believing.' But it does not stand true in case of Digital Media. There are billions of adulterated, filtered and edited photographs which may be misleading for those who have the habit of taking everything for granted. The same stands true about information available in the shape of Audio as well as Audio-Visual forms. Audio and Video editing can do which one cannot imagine in his wildest dreams. Hence, Digital Media along with Social Media needs to be handled with utmost care. It is already discussed that any TV News Channel or News Paper shows just one side of the story. Media is a platform for publicity and propaganda. Media players use it in very clever manner. No TV News Channel, News paper or News Website should be believed before verifying its facts and cross checking the content.

Mind you, Media is a business and it does not necessarily present factual information. There are so many pressures on the producer and news editor which include organisational pressure, advertisers' pressure and governmental pressure to name a few. Sacredness of the news is often gets crushed in the grind of pressures. Then there are fictional and non-fictional programs. One must distinguish between real and reel life. What we watch on TV in the form of soap operas is pure acting and has nothing to do with the realities of life. Media has undertaken a long journey from 'Mission' to 'Commission'. 'Watchdogs' of yesteryears have become 'Lapdogs' now. They don't bark at anything unusual. They are happy with whatever is fed to them by their masters. Hence Media Literacy is of vital significance.

Apart from this there are certain other types of Media Information Literacy forms which need special mention and attention. They are as follows:

1. **Basic Literacy:**

People are ought to be literate all over the world. While school education is compulsory attaining and developing certain basic skills are of great significance. Earning and holding a piece of paper in the form of Degrees or Diploma earned from a College or a University is of little value if the person does not have skills to put the acquired knowledge into practice. Basic literacy constitutes a group of fundamental skills which everybody must possess. Soft skills come at the fore front. Soft skills are those skills which enable a person to accomplish his task at hand quite efficiently. Soft skills are just as essential as hard skills for tech professionals. The



right personality traits can help you excel at work. Highly valued soft skills include communication, time management, network building, empathy, critical thinking, being proactive and self-awareness. Then there are those soft skills which one must strive to acquire at any cost. These include communication skills. These skills enable a person to be in consonance with people around them and enable him to accomplish his tasks with great precision and efficiency. These skills include Reading Skills, Writing Skills, Listening Skills and Speaking Skills. One who is efficient in writing and speaking skills is saluted everywhere and leaves an everlasting impression on the minds of whomsoever he comes across. Speaking skills are fundamental for interviews, interacting with people and develop as a commendable orator. Then there are basic arithmetic and statistical skills. One must be able to comprehend whatever comes across him. This comprehension demands one to be a voracious reader and a patient listener. One having basic skills earns a great rapport for himself and contributes to his personal development, social development as well as national development.

2. Early Literacy:

This type of literacy is not taught in any school or formal place of education. These are inculcated among the children by their mothers and other family members. It is the mother who helps the child develop his skills. He is helped to learn how to crawl, how to sit and how to walk. Mothers perform this important task as most of the mothers are house wives and they spend their quality time with their kids. Even working women are granted Child Care leave for looking after their small kids and inculcate in them the family values. It is the mother who makes her small kid utter words. That's why the word a child often utters as his first word happens to be "Maa" i.e. mother. Slowly and steadily he learns to identify objects around him and starts called them by name. Bringing up a child is a collective effort in which all the members of the family contribute their little bit. As the child grows up he is taught about certain do's and don'ts of life. Family and social values are inculcated in him. Till the time a child starts visiting his school he is able to identify almost all the vegetables, fruits, utensils, relatives and other objects around him. Basically, this is the age in which a child learns the most. Those children whose mothers and other family members don't care to teach him these early skills often grow up as dull and antiquated-lacking youngsters. They don't often know what to speak

and what not. They know little about their choice of words. Sometimes such kids start using filthy and abusive language and slangs at a very early age. Their parenting and upbringing is responsible for their ill manners. Hence, early skills lay sound foundation of what type of personality the child will develop when he grows up as an adult. It must also be noted that providing early literacy is not the duty of mothers only. Fathers also need to share their bit of responsibility.

3. Social Literacy:

Family is the smallest unit of society. A number of families constitute a society. Society is defined as a number of families residing at a particular piece of land. Man is a social animal and he cannot live without society as he depends on so many people for his needs and necessities. Communication happens to be the basic requirement of man. He may live without food, water, home and clothing for some time but he cannot live without communication. Giving vent to his feelings, desires, needs and sharing of ideas, emotions and information is necessary for him. One may develop depression in case he is left alone for a period of time. Social literacy includes mannerism. One must know the basic mores of his society. He is expected to obey the traditional rules and regulations prevailing in the society. These regulations include sense of dressing up, sense of communication, knowledge about his immediate environment, updating about latest activities happening around him, and cultural ethics and values. A person who is able to develop such skills is revered in the society and is considered as a person with great upbringing. His parents earn respect in society as he performs his social duties diligently and honestly. In fact, social behaviour of a person determines his personality. More than the outer outlook it is the inner qualities which form an integral part of his personality. A person who possesses civic or social literacy can contribute in a better way in the development of his community and society. Society must take the responsibility of inculcating social values among teen-agers and the youth. If the youth indulges in anti-social activities it means that the society has not performed its duty well. Youth also needs to be responsible and behave in a way that is expected of him.

4. Digital Literacy:

Basically India is an agrarian country with its economy heavily dependent on agriculture and agro based industry. There used to be sleepy rural



pockets in the country knowing little about busy lifestyle of urban areas. But Mass Media and then the advent of Digital Media have awakened the people out of their deep slumber. Now we are living in Digital era. Ways and modes of life have undergone a sea change in just a few years. Life have become very fast owing to the digitalised communication gadgets. Personal Computers, Laptops and Smart Phones have become the need of the day. Virtually everything has gone digitalized. Nobody writes personal letters. Social Media Applications have made communication quite easier for people. It is very easy to remain in touch with our friends, relatives, colleagues and others throughout day and night. Digital books and journals have flooded the markets. Digital Media has become the store house of virtually every sort of information. Online Admissions, online classes, online examinations, online downloading of Details Marks Cards, online interviews, online booking of bus/railway/air tickets, online booking of hotels, online shopping, online banking, online marketing, online transactions, online gaming, and online availability of Mass Media have changed the living patterns of society. This 'online culture' is made possible by internet driven Digital Media. While everything is digitalized, Digital Literacy attains great importance. One must have computing skills along with typing skills. Communication skills are a must in modern age. One need to understand that there is a lot of garbage on Digital Media in the form of Information. There is abundance of disinformation and misinformation in the guise of information. One needs to think many times before trusting in the information available on Digital Media. Fact checking is quite important. MIL can enable people to find truth in the garbage of disinformation. Hence, Digital Literacy forms an integral and vital part of Media Information Literacy.

5. Financial Literacy:

As it has already been discussed virtually everything has gone online. E-commerce has ensured digital banking, digital marketing, digital money transfer, digital billing, digital entries in ledger and digital record keeping. It means all the commercial activities have been digitalized. One needs to have basic and working knowledge about various financial services which involve common man. Now-a-days, one needs not to visit banks for withdrawal or deposition of money. Online banking has ensured that one may perform all such financial activities through his smart phone while sitting at home or anywhere else. ATMs can be found in

every nook and corner of urban localities. Payments can be made by Credit or Debit cards. If one needs to have some cash in one's pocket ATMs are ready to fulfil that requirement in just a minute. Online shopping is fast picking up. More and more people are turning towards online shopping. Apart from Credit or Debit Cards, these sites accept payments through Gpay, BHIM, Paytm or Phone Pay. One can opt for Cash on Delivery option also. But all these transactions are password protected. Credit or Debit cards need to be operated carefully. Passwords should never be disclosed to anybody at any cost. Otherwise there are potential threats of becoming a victim of fraudulent people. One must have strong passwords and should keep on changing them at regular intervals. Transactions must be made by self only. Only this much of financial literacy can save your hard earned money.

6. Health Literacy:

Modern day man has become very cunning and selfish. He always keeps thinking how to ditch others. Climbing the stairs of success is no more the dividend of hard work but those who have approach get it done quite easily. Money and approach play a major role. As a result the modern man thinks too much. In fact he has become a busy person who does not even know that he has developed the habit of over thinking. This over thinking is the first sign of a person for a plethora of mental disorders to follow. Fast, Junk and packed food has destroyed his digestive system. Therefore there are enormous cases related to food consumption. People treat their stomach as if it is dust bin. There are rules for food consumption. The ignorance or careless attitude have resulted in disturbed stomach and slowing down of metabolism. It has resulted in a glut of ailments which have their roots in disturbed digestive system. From gastric and acidity to Liver disorders, diabetes, vision problems, bladder stone, Kidney failures, obesity, spinal cord related problems, impotency and other sex related problems, hypertension, nervous disorders, PCOD, joint pains, uric acid, tuberculosis, Cancer etc. health problems have made the man unhealthy. The list of diseases is rather big to be mentioned here. Almost every human being is suffering from one or the other health problem. That is why one finds a number of Private Hospitals, Nursing Homes, and Super-specialty Hospitals over and above government run civil hospitals and dispensaries. The wards in hospitals are loaded with patients. All this is happening due to the lethargic life style and being unaware about health literacy. One must know that



over thinking is the breeding ground for mental disorders and psychological problems. Civil hospitals organize free health check up camps but people have no time to even come for their check up. Those who get the tests done find that they have one or the other health issue. It makes the spread of health awareness essential, imperative and very crucial.

7. Legal Literacy:

Legal literacy does not mean that one should try to earn a LLB degree for knowing about various laws. One must have the knowledge as to what leads to a crime and how to approach a police station or court of law. Most of the people have little legal literacy. They don't know that the eve-teasing is a crime and eve teasers can be brought to the book. Domestic women continue to suffer at the hands of their husbands or in-laws family knowing little that they can approach the police to get them booked under Domestic Violence Act. The same is true about customers. Many of us don't know that there are consumer courts to protect the rights of customers. Shopkeepers cannot befool people by selling impaired, undersized, defective, vicious, infelicitous, tainted and dicky goods. One can always approach Consumer Courts which are there to protect consumer rights. Consumer courts exist at all district head quarters. Similarly, consumers can not be charged more than the MRP in any case. Selling adulterated goods is a crime and the shopkeeper can be booked under appropriate law. The same stands true about exaggerated, lofty and false claims made in TV, Print or Digital advertisements about their products. Drugs and Magical Remedies Act is there to book advertisers for making false claims. But there is an urgent need to spread awareness among people. Legal Awareness is not, of course, confined to consumers only. It encompasses all the human activities people are involved in. Police is there to help people when in need but it has earned great notoriety for being corrupt and yielding to the people in power. There are laws under which cases may be registered against corrupt police personnel. Corruption in any office by anyone is a crime. Ignorance of law is no excuse. So spreading Legal Literacy is quite necessary. Legal Awareness Campaigns and Legal Aid Camps should be organized. Anyways, legal literacy is essential to save innocent people from the evil designs of fraudulent.

II. Conclusion:

Succinctly speaking, Media Information Literacy must be provided to one and all in all parts

of the world. People in developed countries may possess skills which guard them against the perils which come with Information Communication Revolution. But there is great dearth of MIL in developing and under developed countries. People are poor and most of their energy and time is spent in earning their livelihood. But when they are victimized and denied their rights as enshrined by Constitution of India, one feels the need of the spread of Media Information Literacy. Even well educated people having earned degrees from different universities are found to be lacking MIL. Governments and Non-Government organizations should join hands in accomplishing this herculean task. Inculcating MIL among 140 million people is a tough task. But it has to be done otherwise one will witness the yawning gap between the privileged and non-privileged. MIL will decide the fate of the person in future. Merely possessing academic degrees is not enough unless and until one becomes apt in Media Literacy.

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