

Journalism In An Emerging Power:
How The Roles Of Journalists Are Evolving In India

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Abstract

Aware that independent journalism is at risk in their country, seven Indian journalists from different cultural and professional backgrounds discuss how they perceive their role in India's current political and economic climate, what challenges they face and what purpose they think journalism needs to serve in the emerging democracy.

Despite the commercialization of the news, these professionals fight to tell the truth and engage communities around difficult, often heart-wrenching issues. They take the risks to expose scams and corrupted officials, travel to the most remote villages of India to raise awareness about hunger and poverty, and challenge social norms to talk about child marriage, female infanticide and acid attacks. Some journalists are guilty of nothing more than working for greedy, corrupt owners who use their editorial platform to highlight or ignore issues to suit their interests, but the professionals featured in this piece care about the job they do and do it the best they can.

To borrow the expression from Sam Miller, a former BBC correspondent in South Asia, Indian journalists are ‘undergoing an acid test’ in which they are expected to prove their commitment to the ordinary people and to the basic objective of the profession itself. While striving to remain grounded and true to their goals, they have adapted their journalistic practices to the realities of India’s bedlam, often flirting with activism and

redefining the journalists' code of ethics.

They know that without a stronger ethical stance, a better technical and editorial training, a significant impact from watchdog work and an effort in spreading media literacy, they will not be able to serve the purpose of their profession — advancing democracy.

This article aims to understand where Indian journalism currently stands, and more importantly, where it is heading.