

‘Embedded Journalism in 21st Century: Torsion and Distortion of War News’

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ABSTRACT

Embedded Journalism became more popular during Iraq and Afghanistan war. Embedded journalism is a practice where journalists travel with the military to cover the war. In embedded journalism journalists covers only one sided story. They build up only one sided prospective and not seeing the both side of coins. Suppose if the journalist is associated with or covering with the country specific army then they must be on the country specific coverage. Journalism is a profession in which ethical coverage of news and views are above all but such type of practices degrades the profession. 21st century decided many benchmark as well many new trends for journalism. But apart from this profession also get infected from many new threats and embedded journalism is the example of such type of infective journalism. This research will bring many aspects of embedded journalism in the new context.

Keywords: *Embedded, Journalism, military, distortion, war reporting*

Introduction:

The course of the war is now a day used to play by big powers. In a multi polar world every nation is concerned about its image in world forum. In case of invasion and planned interference in the geopolitics of other nations embedded journalism is comprehensive tool. “Embedded journalism began during the Persian Gulf War. Journalists and media outlets were frustrated by their inability to provide news coverage of the conflict; they were often forced to cover events long after they were concluded. Some journalists asked to travel with military units and were granted permission to do so, although most of the resulting coverage had to be approved by the military before reaching the public in order to protect military assets and tactics. Thus, a very controlled amount of media coverage was attained, but the results were unsatisfactory.”¹

Iraq and Afghanistan were witness of widely used embedded journalism. “The larger troubles of the news business are complicated, but this problem is simple: We can't understand what we don't see; we can't explain a conflict if we hear from only one side.”²

Embedded journalism is not a new phenomenon in ancient times the journalists with different nomenclature of their profession i.e. poet were accompanying the armies. Like in Indian context we can refer the case of Prithviraja III, popularly known as Prithviraj Chauhan was an Indian king from the Chahaman dynasty and he always accompanied with his poet (now a day Journalist) in the battlefields and it was an ancient example of embedded journalism.

Sometimes embedded journalism is the demand of circumstances. “Many allegations against the system of "embedding" journalists, mainly with the American or British military, are unfair. Accompanying armies in the field is usually the only way of finding out what they are doing or think they are doing. Nor is there an obvious alternative way for correspondents to operate today. Given that al-Qa'ida and the Taliban target foreign journalists as potential

¹ <https://www.openschoolofjournalism.com/distance-education-program/courses/embedded-journalism-jg140>

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/30/AR2010043001100.html>

hostages, it is impossible to roam around Iraq or Afghanistan without extreme danger.”³ This research paper is an effort to find out various twists of embedded journalism and its recent approaches.

Objective of Research:

- Role of embedded journalism in 21st century
- To examine whether embedded journalism is responsible for distortion of war news?
- To examine whether embedded journalism is the demand of time?
- To examine the consequences of embedded journalism?
- To examine whether the embedded journalism is type of infective journalism.
- To examine the role of military of superpowers in embedded journalism.

Importance of Research:

The importance of research is that in the era of globalized war nexus where few nations are holding the status of superpowers and invading the territories of others for their own interests in such context this research will find out new facts about embedded journalism. This research will bring many aspects of embedded journalism in the new context.

Review of Literature and Data Collection:

Primary data collected from research methods and techniques and secondary data collected from various sources like from libraries, various research journals, books on war reporting and reports of several e-portals and blogs.

Hypothesis:

Embedded journalism is affecting the original taste of war coverage and there are possibilities of emerging new trends. There are also chances that one-sided coverage of war stories may bring the news in very much distorted and in selective manner near to global audience. The practice of embedded journalism in war reporting has given a new momentum to such type of journalistic practices. This is possible due to change in journalistic ethics and practices in 21st century. Assumption about this research is based on several new developments in world communication order as well as in world strategic order. Therefore, this research will trace the possibilities for embedded journalism in the new context.

Research Methodology:

The main research methods were non-participative observation and experimental. The research techniques adopted were questionnaire interview and schedule interview.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Embedded journalism started during the Gulf War. News channels were unable to flash news coverage of the war zone. Media personals instructed to travel with military units. Media was only in the role of observer as a deep and dump as all the command regarding publications of war zone events were in the hand of military units. Embedded with the military developed certain rules for embedded journalists. In due course of time it had been observed that only controlled media coverage was resulted and the result was totally unexpected. It was also observed that the nature and amount of news which was reaching near the target audience was inefficient, incomplete and unsatisfactory. We can also say that it was totally distorted in nature.

The course of the war is now a day used to play by big powers. In a multi polar world every nation is concerned about its image in world forum. In case of invasion and planned interference in the geopolitics of other nations embedded journalism is comprehensive tool. “Embedded journalism began during the Persian Gulf War. Journalists and media outlets were frustrated by their inability to provide news coverage of the conflict; they were often forced to cover events long after they were concluded. Some journalists asked to travel with military units and were granted permission to do so, although most of the resulting coverage had to be approved by the military before reaching the public to protect military assets and tactics. Thus, a very controlled media coverage was attained, but the results were unsatisfactory.”⁴

³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/opinion/embedded-journalism-a-distorted-view-of-war-2141072.html>

⁴ <https://www.openschoolofjournalism.com/distance-education-program/courses/embedded-journalism-jg140>

The Iraq invasion was the milestone and provided an experimental platform for embedded journalism. US Defense allowed huge number of journalists to cover war story with military units. These journalists trained in very tough situations and were skilled with various military training skills like fitness, first aid, how to survive and how to work in tense and fear circumstances.

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Embedded journalist always enjoys less freedom but lots of reasonable restrictions regarding media coverage. How to use a flash light during war or in which circumstances it is fully restricted, use of night vision camera, to look overview or to come outside from tank for coverage are also a restricted aspect for coverage. These restrictions are in the name of safeguards but it affects very seriously to the journalistic ethics and norms. This idealistic profession is mainly based on certain journalistic values and philosophy and this new form of journalism is very dangerous for the profession as it provides only one sided story. In few cases, we can trust and treat some coverage as fair but in most of the cases it is monopolized and distorted.

Iraq and Afghanistan were witness of widely used embedded journalism. "The larger troubles of the news business are complicated, but this problem is simple: We can't understand what we don't see; we can't explain a conflict if we hear from only one side."⁶

In embedded reporting life of a journalist is always in a risk. Media personals are bound to cover stories under military umbrella and this puts their life at risk on daily basis. When the life will be in a threat then there is chances of loss of objectivity, loss of ethics, loss of values, loss of philosophies and loss of journalistic ideology. Because embedded reporters are only covering the war areas from the one-sided coin. This may formulate utmost biasness, propagate stories, monopolized and polluted stories.

It has been also seen that military are most of the time using media generally for propaganda purposes. Once James Augustus Hickey said that 'We are open to all but influenced by none' but the concept of embedded journalism is this 'We are open to propaganda and influenced by military. In this format of Journalism, a media personnel losses his own ideology and naturally adopts military supervision. This is the reality of embedded journalism and profession.

Conclusion:

Embedded Journalism provides controlled media coverage It has been also observed that the nature and amount of news which was reaching near the target audience was inefficient, incomplete and unsatisfactory. We can also say that it was totally distorted in nature. This idealistic profession is mainly based on certain journalistic values and philosophy and this new form of journalism is very dangerous for the profession as it provides only one sided story. In few cases, we can trust and treat some coverage as fair but in most of the cases it is monopolized and distorted. In embedded reporting life of a journalist is always in a risk. Media personals are bound to cover stories under military umbrella and this puts their life at risk on daily basis. When the life will be in a threat then there are chances of loss of objectivity, loss of ethics, loss of values, loss of philosophies and loss of journalistic ideology.

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