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## UNIT 12 MEDIA AND CYBER ETHICS\*

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### Structure

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12.2 Ethical issues in Media and Cyberspace

12.3 Ethical Issues in Print Media

12.4 Ethical Issues in Electronic (television) Media

12.5 Ethical Issues in Cyberspace

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit attempts to,

- explore all the fundamental ethical issues and debates pertaining to the media.
- explore the emerging concerns of cyber-space, which arose after the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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\* Mr. Mohammad Irshad, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi.

The term 'Media' has always been considered in a broader context and conceptual landscape. It includes newspapers, television, advertising, radio, telephone, magazine and internet. (Unit has considered the concept of 'media' in a far broader context instead of confining it to the conventional understanding of media.) Media is a major source to generate, sustain and disseminate information and knowledge, hence, it is conceived as a vital instrument to inform and educate people. It is a substantial epistemic unit of knowledge. It, therefore, has to play a critical function. It must neither peddle the propaganda nor work as a publicity machinery for government and corporate organisations. Humans, historically, have had started from print media, due to the upsurge of technological age, a unique and peculiar kind of media in the form of cyber and digital media came into effect. Quite recently in human history, we are considerably exposed to the abundance of information at an accelerating pace. It empirically becomes explicit; media has taken a leap into the digital world, which fundamentally differs from traditional print and electronic media. Digital media disseminates information more rapidly than any other forms of earlier media developed so far. It is easily accessible, cost-friendly and substantially reduces the distance of the world. It has changed the notion of space and time.

Media, irrefutably, has become a major and dominating source of our information. It, however, cannot be beyond ethical questioning. We must develop certain codes, principles, and rules to steer it in the right direction to actualise its real function of promoting accurate information to advance well-being in the society. It demands ethical investigation to bring authenticity, transparency and accountability. This chapter partly explores the nature and theories of media; however, it mainly caters to the normative accounts of media.

Media plays a key function of making people informed so that they can make more sound and rational decisions. Media persons shall not be neutral all the time, because sometimes an idea and opinion is innately irrational and rudimentary, therefore deserve to be ignored and rejected. Role of the media is not limited to just presenting the facts without locating them in a context to meaningfully inform people. Graham (1998, p. 162) argues "the purpose of serious news reports in the newspapers and on radio and television is not merely to recount what has happened, but to report events in a way that uncovers and explains their political, social and cultural significance."

Media has largely been discussed in the libertarian framework as a fourth pillar of democracy. It has certain liberties and justified duties to perform. Liberal framework in the

media aspires to hold the government accountable by substantially diminishing the intervention of government in all walks of life. More so, it does not allow the government to exercise authority to curtail the rights of people. Therefore, it speaks for autonomy, integrity, freedom to express and people's right to know. Human dignity and integrity have always been known to be unabated universal ethical values in libertarian framework of the media.

Media ethics attempts to address the ethical concerns encountered in the entire process and functioning of the media. In sum, much of what is discussed within media ethics is a debate on the function of the press and how best it can achieve this (Berry, 2008, p. 77). It is relatively a new discipline and pertains to a normative account of media, rather than limiting it to a descriptive one.

Media ethics is an applied area of ethics. Hence, we must see the application of basic ethical principles in practice. Being an applied discipline, it has huge social responsibility towards the society's welfare and well-being. There are a range of thinkers and ethicists, who have significantly pondered pressing ethical concerns in the media.

We as philosophers are in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (470 – 399 B.C.) brought ethics at the centre of human conduct. That was a remarkable shift from the natural philosophy of the pre-Socratic philosophers. For him, how to live a good, meaningful and worthy life was the major philosophical concern. Same concern could also be extended to the space of media, to understand what is required to advance the just and meaningful media. It is not the mere existence of the media is admired rather the values driven media is revered in any enlightened society.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.**

1. What is media ethics?

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## **12.2 ETHICS OF MEDIA AND CYBERSPACE**

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Media ethics is a vast subject of study. From choosing a topic for journalistic endeavour to production of news to sharing/dissemination of news involves some pressing ethical concerns. Media people/communicators have to deal with the ethical concerns at every stage of content generation/story. Recently mass media has become a highly admired profession; therefore, the pertinent issues encountered by the media professionals invariably vary in nature. Incorporation of ethics in the entire functioning of media professionals can further advance authenticity, truthfulness, transparency and integrity. Media ethics is vital to give moral judgement about what piece of information is to be shared and or not. Merrill (1999, p. 5) says “Media ethics is a branch of philosophy seeking to help journalists and other media people determine how to behave in their work. In its practical application, it is very much a normative science of conduct, with conduct considered primarily self-determined, rational, and voluntary.”

On the other hand, Cyber ethics covers a wide range of issues that includes copyright, financial frauds, spam, patent protection, digital identities, digital self, online piracy, cyber theft, cyber threats, anonymity, explicit pornography, hate speech and getting the material downloaded from some unregistered sites bypassing the owner of the content. Oxford philosopher Luciano Floridi persuasively identifies the ethical problem of ‘entropy’ in the entire information sphere/infosphere. Information sphere is equivalent to cyberspace.

Kieran (1998, p. 3) argues “Whenever we are offered information, whether by newspapers, television, the Internet or any other source, we have no option but to use our everyday intelligence to assess it for reliability. This applies as much to a depiction as to a word or written text.”

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## **12.3 ETHICAL ISSUES IN PRINT MEDIA**

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Print media conventionally known to be one of the most strongest and reliable means of communication. However, this may not remain true to this information age. Economic prospects in the media may stop authenticity and truth from becoming the main driver of its

functioning. Journalists who write the stories have to be transparent, objective and unbiased as professionals. They must take permission before getting the details of a person published in a story, exempting the cases of exposing corruption, duplicity and fraud.

Most of the journalists in print media to develop fresh and original stories/news do rely heavily on 'sources' whether the individuals, politicians, social activists, bureaucrats, lawyers, corporate leaders, office staff and many others personal reliable individuals to receive the knowledge. A considerable distance, nonetheless, must always be maintained from them to not let your stories be deflected by your emotional and friendly bond with them. Failure to do so may result in compromise on truth, honesty, impartiality and public interest, which are known as indubitable values of the media. It is important to produce a story, which in turn, empowers people and imparts right information to establish a well informed and knowledgeable society. Integrity and privacy of the other person must not be compromised during the generation and publication of a story to avoid tabloidization and sensational stories. Journalist ethics shall not permit them to present opinions and fictional stories under the garb of news.

The process of deciding to do a story, selecting what will be used, and expressing this material all impinge on ethics and affect the moral character of the media person (Merrill, 1999, p. 1). Print media has an active social role to play to provide truthful and authentic news. Mere existence of the media will not produce any good and meaning for us, as long as ethical standards are not exhibited in its practice. Ideological bias can stop the journalistic values like honesty and truth from taking the lead in the media.

Journalists have to fairly ask inconvenient questions to eliminate the social evils like caste system, religion, gender and sex based discrimination at every level, even within the institution of media. They shall not distort and misreport the fact intentionally; it may lead to disturbance and severe communal tension in the society. For example: A fake news by distorting facts and figures is promoted by person A belonging to a certain religion X, hurling abuses and dishonouring the other religion, however the fact of the matter is, Person A was drunk, broken and under the influence of alcohol and drugs behaving immorally, not intentionally. He was not in a normal and rational state of mind.

Responsibility of the ethical media is to present the news of person A by informing all the relevant facts about the concerned news, by ignoring the later part of Person A's story and

highlighting the fact that Person A was abusing the other religion X. Hiding of all relevant facts in a story/news can result in severe negative consequences for the society, it may most likely trigger tension and disharmony. This would be considered a case of unethical reporting in the print media.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.**

1. What key issues are to be ethically taken care of by the journalists in any story of print media?

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## **12.4 ETHICAL ISSUES IN ELECTRONIC (TELEVISION) MEDIA**

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Other than print media, people do heavily rely upon the electronic media to receive information about regional, state, national and international affairs. News travels faster in electronic media, whereas in print the medium speed of news is relatively slower. Electronic media could effectively reach out to those people who cannot read and write; therefore, spread as a more impactful medium of mass communication. Its audio-visual nature could cement it as a major tool to reach out to ordinary people. It, however, also brought considerable bias and manipulation of content, which partly resulted into the propaganda machinery for government, bureaucracy, and big business houses. People started to question its transparency and commitment to the larger cause of society. Corporate and big industrialists have seen a huge market in the media sector. As a result they have invested huge money to capitalise the noble field of journalism to develop it into a profit making industry. A moral trait is not innate and natural in humans as considered by Greek philosopher Aristotle. He effectively argued humans are capable of developing moral attitude

with constant habit of doing it rightly. If media does not deviate from the true ethical principles for a longer time, more often as a result, values would get easily be internalised in its organisational structure.

What is to be covered, broadcasted and illustrated through audio-visual graphics is a central part of major ethical concerns in electronic media. Electronic media also covers a great deal of ethical issues such as obscenity, vulgarity, casteism, racism, hate-mongering, explicit pornography, secrecy, privacy and homophobia. Sensationalism with the help of graphics can stop the true, authentic and meaningful stories from coming into existence. This, severely, undermines the people's right to know the truth.

Journalists are meant to provide the true information and to keep check on the political, social and economic structure of the society. They must always refrain from slandering people without trial because of their tilted ideological bias and favouritism. They have a huge responsibility of being the true conscience of the society to advance a just and egalitarian society. They are not legislators, executives and judicial authorities. If they resort to such activities, they can be termed as unethical.

Biased information telecasted by electronic media reached the masses, as a result an individual's integrity, modesty and privacy has to be extremely compromised. Such acts of media are counted unethical and unjust, hence, to be disapproved. Media must refrain from 'fake news' generation to gain monetary and political benefits with ulterior motives to please corporate giants and owner of media, who aspire to generate maximum monetary outcomes at the cost of truthful and transparent media.

A credible and responsible media does not deliver judgement before verifying and confirming the facts authentically as long as these are attested by official and credible record. Psychiatrists and media personnel can keep the secrecy of their 'sources' of information. However, in the democratic setup the media should not hide information to safeguard the government by violating the public's interest. Hacking, though widely regarded unethical, is also used as an ethical measure to expose the unjust practices. For example, in the early first decade of 21th century, founder of Wikileaks Julian Assange started to expose and reveal hidden information of public interest related politicians, big businesses and the government across the world, notably; it was used as a tool of activism to bring transparency, a large section of the media considered it ethical. Had Wikileaks exposed the personal data of

citizens by undermining the ‘right to privacy’ of people, it would have been naturally considered immoral for leaking the private information.

As the large part of the world, at the policy level, is shifting from socialist and welfare states to capitalist states. At the outset, we can’t afford to completely dismiss the introduction of corporate led media, the point is to convert it into value based and people centric media. Initially, there was no effective regulatory framework to make the media more accountable. Due to regular misuse, people are demanding to generate a more robust legal and ethical framework for media.

### **12.4.1 Political Agenda and Paid News**

Political propaganda and paid news are telecasted without much clarification to gain the monetary benefits and to deceive the audience. This is done by politicians to win elections by manipulating the content, big business to establish the good reputation of the product, private companies to give false hope to people. It is subtly done and carried forward as news. Elections are the best times to manipulate the consent of people by presenting news in support of a particular party, its leaders and policies by projecting it as authentic and truthful news. It is done at the cost of the media's integrity and revered ‘fourth estate’ of any democracy. Advancement of such practices has a severe adverse impact on the health of the society and democracy in general. It conceals the true information from people and stops them from forming sound opinions about a particular subject, party and policy. Consumption of the tilted news will make the society weaker and hollow.

It becomes more problematic in a society where a large section of the people is unable to read and write. They believe ‘pain news’ to be as they lack the intellectual capacity to identify obnoxious and tilted news. On the contrary, in a society where more people are educated, there is a far greater chance that people may be able to locate the fake news to a considerable extent. An aware civil society can only be assumed where the majority of people are educated and learned, in such a setup, fake news and paid news will not flourish and circulation would be comparatively lesser. A pioneer of philosophy of technology, Andrew Feenberg (1999) argues for the democratisation of technology. ICTs generated cyberspace must be democratised to actually serve the cause of the people and to incorporate the diversity in the entire gleaning architecture of media. As McNair (1998, p. 49) puts it, “free from the gaze of

electronic media, politicians and other elite groups could pursue their business relatively free from journalistic intrusion.”

### Check Your Progress III

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.**

1. What kinds of major ethical issues to be followed in electronic media? Explain

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## 12.5 ETHICAL ISSUES IN CYBERSPACE

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In the technology driven age, the quantity of information has been piled up in the information society/infosphere. Discussion pertaining to the issues of quality and health of information has been side-lined to a great extent. Not long ago, cyber space in an earlier growing phase had offered space for conversation and meaningful information sharing; mere growth of the internet with minimal normative codes generated the scope for business enterprises to make hefty money that, in turn, started to pollute the quality of content. We have been exposed to more content/information in the entire human history. Quality of content, however, has been considerably compromised in cyberspace.

The Internet has become the major driver of our lives. It has become an intrinsic part of our quotidian existence and impacts our reception of news, music, sports, groceries, meeting places, paying of bills, relationships, travel tickets. Google Maps has been incorporated to find out ways and destinations as an extra reliable mechanism. Everything could be done by sitting at home without going into the physical world. Digital cyber space has secured its separate existence. Lessig (2006, p. 83) maintains “Cyberspace, by contrast, is not just about making life easier. It is about making life different, or perhaps better. It is about making a different (or second) life. It evokes, or calls to life, ways of interacting that were not possible before.”

Digital shift of the world has immensely altered the world. A galaxy of thinkers attempted to characterise and interpret newly emerged paradigm by giving different names such as ‘Consumer Society’, ‘Surveillance Society’, ‘Networked Society’, ‘Technological Society’, ‘Information Society’, ‘Post-Industrial Society’, ‘Media Age’, ‘Cyber Society’, ‘Knowledge Society’, ‘Borderless Society’ and ‘Post-Capitalist society.’ We can pragmatically decide to choose any appropriate word to refer to the new society.

Cyberspace transcends the physical boundaries. It carries a trans-national character and changed the traditional understanding of space and time. For example, #BlackLivesMatter movement received global attention and people started to express solidarity with the movement in different parts of the world with the help of cyberspace. A regional issue of racial discrimination can become an international issue with the power of new digital media. A government, despite having some legislation, can't limit an issue to a local level anymore to protect its fake image, practices and policies. Cyberspace, to a great degree, promotes transparency and global response to end innately evil and discriminatory practices, which was a major missing point even in the heyday of print and electronic media. This naturally generates the scope for global ethical principles in cyberspace due to irrelevance of regional and multi-national ethical conducts. But, the internet's potential ethical threat can't be completely undermined. All the nations must collectively work to develop some ethical regulations and codes for the advancement of cyberspace. It can no longer be addressed by countries separately.

Our focus is to understand ethical issues of cyber society/age. Ethics is about our moral conduct and behaviour in real life to flourish the well-being of each other in the society. We must extend this to cyber space to understand the ethical underpinnings of the same. In cyberspace hacking, piracy, copyright is unethical as these negative values snatch away the right of the owner to use and market the content, she has decided herself to utilise. A notable ethical philosopher of cyberspace Lawrence Lessig (2006) has identified law, code, norms and market as four major factors to develop the ethical discourse of cyberspace.

In a restructured state of current media, according to Shakuntala Das (2011) “local” will remain the defining feature of global ethical principle, she uses the term “glocal” as an epistemic category to understate the new world order and nature of the media. Global and local are not contradictory rather complementary to each other in new space. Global space of

media must be socially responsible to foster integrity, human dignity, impartiality, and respect to culture as a unit, non-violence and truth.

In cyberspace, the issue of misinformation, disinformation and fake news has emerged as a serious subject that needs to be discussed and reflected. The rampant misuse to tarnish the image of an individual, group of individuals, community, sect and institution has become a severely crucial subject in cyber-ethics. Hate speech, trolling, bullying, threats, anonymous identities, and provocation of violence are felicitated in cyberspace. 'Net Neutrality' and 'accessibility' of cyber space to all is a primitive requirement to the growth of a just and egalitarian society.

Spinello (2021) argues that net's code supports and protects a highly libertarian ethos that gives primacy to the individual speaker/user. Despite the fact that an individual is the central point of libertarianism, it shall not promote violence, hate speech and child pornography. A selective approach shall not be adopted to target people during the execution and implementation of the laws; otherwise the whole purpose of ethical codes and conducts becomes hollow and meaningless.

Freedom of speech shall not be weaponized to peddle unethical practices and corporate interest. A new trend is witnessed on various platforms of social media, under the garb of free speech people hurl abuses and use derogatory language against a person, group, community, caste, creed, culture and religion. This counts as the sheer misuse and misunderstanding of the free speech, this must certainly be penalised. It is only the legitimate criticism under the right to freedom of speech shall be justified within the boundaries of civility. Otherwise hate speech will soon be defined as a valid ethical practice and defined as an integral part of the freedom of speech. This will give rise to conflicts and uncivilised society based upon the traits of the barbaric and inhuman society.

Even online games which promotes violence as norm, discriminatory towards a sex, gender, community and country and projects them in a poor light shall be disallowed and dealt with a legal framework. Intellectual property rights and patents of anybody must not be honoured because they are the product of extensive intellectual labour, whether the original creation of a music piece, creative art works, books, articles and original ideas. It is the moral responsibility of users to give adequate respect and monetary benefits to owners of the content.

## Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on key ethical principles of cyberspace.

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## 12.6 MEDIA, JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

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If the media is to be a part of the democratic process because of their role in the origination and circulation of information and opinion, then the quality of that information and opinion is going to be a vital issue (Belsey, 1998, p. 10).

In the global age of media we can't ignore the notion of justice from the discourse of media ethics. Philosopher John Rawls (1921–2002) says 'justice is the first virtue of social institutions.' Media is a social institution and justice must become the defining feature of media and cyberspace, this will allow media to emerge as an effective tool to transform the society. Fairness is the key component of justice. If a report is not fair in terms of facts and social truth then it will never serve the fairness principle of justice. Diversity at all stages of media must be maintained in terms of generating stories to include concerns and problems of the voiceless with more focus on marginal and vulnerable communities.

Whatever the differences of opinions within the broad scope of media ethics, all engage with liberalism, the idea of the fourth estate, and therefore the meaning of news and journalism and their relationship with democracy and society (Berry, 2008, p. 75). Communitarian approach in the media does argue that justice must be the central theme to keep society together. This approach promotes more harmony and peace, not individualistic greed of the people. This will nurture sound and lasting values of justice and peace in any democracy.

## Check Your Progress V

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.**

1. Could justice be eliminated from the discourse of Media ethics? Critically Evaluate

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## **12.7 FREEDOM OF PRESS, CENSORSHIP AND LAWS**

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Freedom of press can't be considered as an absolute right if it puts the life and dignity of an individual at grave risk. Freedom comes with some responsibilities; it is not an absolute freedom. In any case, if it disturbs the people's safety and remains a threat to national security, then, in a fair way, partly censorship of the negative use of freedom of expression could be justified. Also if we honestly and fairly see it as an enabler and potential threat of disturbance, violence, violation of integrity and dignity of an individual, group and community, then it could be restricted, monitored and regulated. However, restriction shall not serve as a legitimate reason to curtail the genuine freedom of speech by citing the threat to national and public safety for gaining political benefits. Government must execute the laws impartially to serve them in the serious interest of the citizens, instead of misusing it against ordinary citizens, opposition, and civil rights activists to criminalize dissent and fair criticism. Indecency, vulgarity, profanity, obscenity and blasphemy must be forbidden in thoughtful free speech.

Press Council of India (2020) has given certain directions for the journalists to maintain accuracy and fairness by excluding paid news. Shakuntala put it (2008, p. 162) "the PCI code suggests that while freedom is key to ethical journalism, freedom alone cannot be a guarantor of responsible journalism and that a free press must function with restraint." Freedom of the media is to be exercised to promote social and public good. Social, political, and economic justice to uplift the oppressed section of the society must be a desired objective of the press. Freedom of press can't be indifferent to the principle of justice in organising affairs and practice.

Hutchins Commission (1947) had presented a remarkable report on *A Free and Responsible Press*, which is still referred to in the course of media for generating guiding principles of fair and ethical media. It advocated for social, political, economic responsibility and free inquiry. It was formed in the wake of World War II. Legal and ethical values are crucial for any civilised society. Dignity, reciprocity, equity and diversity must be guiding values required in the formation of laws and codes in media.

### **Check Your Progress VI**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.**

1. Can 'freedom of expression' be considered an absolute right or not? Explain.

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### **12.8 LET US SUM UP**

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It is a herculean task to provide any conclusive remarks about the codes and principles of the ethical structure of the media and cyberspace. Collective values, nonetheless, mentioned above could offer a more robust and divergent set of values to locate the ethics in the entire functioning of media to foster a just, impartial and egalitarian space of media and cyber world.

It could be easily be derived from the Unit that Race, caste, religion, gender, sex, and linguistic discrimination must not be given importance in the ethical framework of the media. To identify the distorted facts and fake news in cyberspace, independent fact checking websites are referred to. Adherence to discussed ethical values will certainly allow journalists/individuals in the media to truly honour the genuine cause of media, which is to inform and educate people with true and authentic information, so that they can make sound and rational decisions.

Without following ethical principles, most likely, a reliable and justifiable media will never come into existence and adversely harm the society. Despite having diverse frameworks of ethical values in media, there always remains enough scope to explore more and new frameworks and approaches to make the media and cyberspace sincerely ethical. Also the possibility for more sound and viable ethical principles, codes, rules and values in future can never be rejected, which can be incorporated in the discipline of media and cyber-ethics with great admiration.

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## 12. 9 KEY WORDS

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**Media Ethics:** Media ethics as a separate discipline, which attempts to develop ethical codes, rules, and principles for the advancement of truthful, impartial and value-based media.

**Cyberspace:** Cyberspace came into existence after the advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Cyberspace could be known by various names such as digital space, information space, networked space etc.

**Cyber-ethics:** It aims at developing moral norms and standards for the digital/cyber space to generate a just and equal digital/cyber/information space.

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## 12.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

1. Media ethics is a broader subject. It aspires to evaluate the ethical functioning of the media. Ethics in media involved from the generation of news to dissemination of news. Media, being an important contributor to enhancing our information and knowledge, have some responsibilities; therefore some ethical standards are required to receive truthful and impartial news. It is an applied discipline; hence instead of elaborating on the conceptual nature of ethical codes, conducts and values, it is more devoted to practical significance and application of ethical theories in media. It further attempts to present a normative account of media, which can lay the ground for authentic, transparent and accountable media.

### Check Your Progress II

1. Print media is one of the earliest forms of media. People still rely more on written words than electronic media and digital/cyber media. In print media, to become ethical, journalists must choose a relevant case/story, not an artificial one which may not be useful to people. Stories must be authentic and original. Journalists must refrain from distortion, misrepresentation and partiality while writing about the story/news. News must be impartial and truthful. All the used 'sources' for the generation of news must be verifiable and justified. News must be objective and transparent to present the true account of an event.

### **Check Your Progress III**

1. In the electronic media issues related to false illustration of images, incorrect information, and distorted information are involved. Sometimes visuals are illusionary and journalists only present distorted visuals. It may have a negative impact on society. They could demean a person; race, sex, gender community and religion, therefore the content presented in the electronic media must more carefully be checked and executed.

### **Check Your Progress IV**

1. There are a varied range of ethical issues in cyberspace. Some of them include intellectual property, piracy, hacking, copyright, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, patent, trolling, hate speech, digital divide and bullying. All forms of discriminations, accessibility and accountability in cyberspace are the essential parts and parcel of cyber-ethics discourse. Ethical issues are involved with the very design of technology which enabled the rise of cyberspace.

### **Check Your Progress V**

1. Justice is the key part of social responsibility of the media. Ethics and justice are fundamentally connected with each other. Without justice and fairness, we can't honour the true cause and objective of the media, which is to bring the voice of neglected and vulnerable sections of the society into mainstream. If the media succeeds to actualise its objective by informing and educating people, it will inevitably help to develop a sustainable and just society.

### **Check Your Progress VI**

1. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human value. Human beings are rational creatures; therefore, they always have opinions and ideas to share. They must be allowed to do so without any interruption. Though, it can't be absolute in order to sustain the society. Nobody shall be allowed to abuse and threaten the people by using freedom of expression as an instrument for negative purposes. Freedom must be given to express their honest, original ideas and to do legitimate criticism, but not at the cost of human dignity, integrity, community, gender, sect and religion. Recently a trend is witnessed across the world that governments misuse it to stop and punish dissenters in the society, who don't agree with

government's decisions and policies. Though, it is notable that freedom of expression can't be absolute and comes with certain necessary restrictions; this does not mean that rules are unjustly used to avoid criticism and questioning. Identification of intention in the freedom of expression is very crucial.

