Editor’s Note

As I sat down to write for this space, a news alert flashed on the television screen. It read like this: US President Trump in his tweet calls Maggie Haberman a third rate reporter. Had a fortnight earlier Trump named Haberman, I like many people living in other parts of the globe, would have wondered who she was. But with Pulitzer Award winner list-2018 being declared just a week earlier and fresh in mind, there was no difficulty in placing her. Haberman was one of the awardees. Though Pulitzer awards carry a ‘by American, for American and of American’ tag, yet, they attract attention world over. Receiving a Pulitzer is the ultimate achievement for an American print media professional.

Can a third rate reporter make herself to the Pulitzer list? Commonsense rejects such a possibility. It is not that Trump lacks commonsense though he is a loose cannon. Perhaps, he was too rattled to keep his cool by Haberman’s insinuating stories published in the New York Times against him. Along with other factors, her series of stories on the Russian connection of Trump’s election team led to the special counsel investigation. The raid by the investigating team on the office, home and hotel room of Trump’s long standing personal lawyer Michael Cohen was the proverbial last straw that broke the camel’s back. The records seized from Cohen’s possession may or may not provide any clue about the Russian connection, but most probably they will throw more light on the alleged sexual escapades of Trump with adult film star Stormy Daniels a decade back and Cohen’s attempts to hush the matter up to save his client. The sexual misconduct allegation, if proved right, may not topple the Trump administration, but it will definitely erode his moral authority.

At whatever station may one be in one’s life; how mighty and powerful one may be; the Law of Karma (deeds) catches up. No escape from the consequences of actions—past or present. Trump would have never thought that a casual cohabitation with Stormy would create such a storm in his political life, that too after a decade or so. It is not with Trump alone. The Law of the Karma is universal. This year’s three other Pulitzer awardees Jodi Kantor, Megan Twohey and Ronan Farrow through their deep digging stories decimated Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein and Alabama’s former top jurist and Republican senator aspirant Roy Stewart Moore. Weinstein and Moore are reaping the fruits of their sexual predatory actions. Furthermore, these stories gave rise to #metoo movement through which a number of women shared their unsolicited sexual encounters with the wealthy and powerful people. This #metoo campaign toppled many high and mighty men from media, politics, entertainment and many other fields. TV host Matt Lauer, Democrat senator Al Franken, newsman Charlie Rox, actor Kevin Spacey turned out to be demi-gods with feet of clay. Past deeds caught them up with vengeance.

Sex is not life, but sex is inseparable from active and healthy life. It is like fire—the fourth most essential element for life after earth, water and air. Tamed, fire supports life in innumerable ways. Untamed and wild, it annihilates all. Similarly Sex is the nature’s way to propagate life. Except Homosapiens, other animals follow particular sexual regimen instinctively typical to their species. The regimen is cyclical, either somatic or seasonal. So, there is no rape among beasts and birds. Their sexual urge is controlled by biological clock. They mate only for pro-creation. On the other hand in human beings, besides procreation, sex has many hues and functions. On one extreme it is a medium of expressing love. On the other side of the spectrum it is a heinous tool of exploitation, subjugation and dominance. In between lie manipulation, gratification, trading and what not? Selling sex is the oldest profession of the world which still thrives in different forms. When the perceptions are so messy, it is easy to exploit the vulnerable from behind the garb of a benefactor, mentor. This is what a Weinstein or a Spacey always does.

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Sexual predators must be sent to gallows. There cannot be two opinions about it. However, no sexual misconduct allegation should be taken at the face value. They must be treated with a pinch of salt. Former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn’s case is a reminder that wild allegations could also spoil a career. A few years back, Nafissaton Diallo, a maid in New York Sofitel hotel alleged sexual assault on her by Strauss-Kahn and he was put behind the bars in America. Later the allegations were found to be wanting in substance and credibility. But Diallo’s allegations not only ruined the banker’s career, it also brought an abrupt end to Strauss-Kahn’s aspiration to become the president of France. So, to understand the sexual exploitation menace in a more comprehensive way, Media Watch is going to have a special issue in September this year.

The current issue of the journal is heterogeneous in thematic construction. The subjects dealt in different articles range from virtual reality to world of selfies; from impact of print media in language transformation to electronic media’s contribution towards democratic modernization of society; from the necessity of reigning in the videogaming urge in children to the need of having a broadcasting regulation to secure genuine public interest.

Santosh K Patro in his article “Intersubjectivity World of Virtual Reality: Facebook Users Behaviour...” gives a metaphysical touch to his assessment and interpretation of social media behaviour. His focus is on how interactions in social media like Facebook add fluidity to the notions of existence, self, identity, privacy, et al of a netizen. Self is the internal entity or what an individual in reality is. Identity is what others perceive him to be. Both the self and identity are always on the process of moulding each other. Multitude interactions through social media make them more amorphous.

Russians’ experiment with democracy and party politics has begun not long past, yet to complete three decades. But the initial enthusiasm seen in people during the anti-Soviet movement has not only subsided, a complete callousness towards politics has crept into the national psyche. The authors of “Political Activity: Current Trends and Resources of Media Influence” while presenting multiple, even contradictory perspectives given by different stake holders, have raised several searching questions.

The article “Transformation of the Functions of Kazakhstan Television in the Information Society” analyses the reach and depth of electronic media and their repercussions on society. The authors opine that no-control -model of broadcasting is ill-suited to this young nation. They juggle with the idea of social control over electronic broadcasting for the democratic modernization of society.

“Stylistic Features of Interview genre in the Russia-Language Print Media in Tajikistan.” focuses on the transformation of Russian language in the country. The authors say that scientific, technological advancements and general globalization bring in changes in languages. Russian language press in Tajikistan is adapting to changes. New words are being coined; new usages and sentence structures are being experimented with. As case point the authors have zeroed in on the changing style of interviews in Russian language media.

Naresh Chandra Rai in his “Discourse Analysis: How Bhutanese Issues are Discussed Online?” write-up delineates how the Bhutanese society, generally shy of integrating external cultures with their own, uses internet to champion the value of keeping their culture unalloyed. Though a nascent democracy and technological backwater country, in Bhutan the internet users show greater discretion while posting their views and reactions. Mostly in blogs they unflinchingly denigrate the government and its policies. This issue also contains other interesting and well researched write-ups on Kuwait, India and Indian Sub-continent.