

CIT Report – Indian News Reportage at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic

Session details:

Date: 22nd November

Time: 2 PM – 3 PM

Workshop for: MA MC Journalism batches of 2020-22 and 2021-23

Maximum Participants: 58

Objective of the session:

The objective of the session was to help students understand the nuances of Indian news reportage during the difficult and uncertain time of the pandemic. It will make the students aware of the difficulties that reporters undertook while covering the pandemic.

Brief of the speakers:

Ms. Vedika Sud is a reporter for CNN based at the network's New Delhi bureau. She is responsible for leading the editorial agenda and newsgathering in India and the region.

Ms. Sud has been a broadcast journalist for over 13 years in India. She has worked as a primetime anchor, reporter and producer with English-language national news networks. During the course of her career, she has covered a variety of stories, including environmental issues, national and regional elections, politics, terror attacks, and social and gender equality.

Report:

Ms. Vedika Sud shared her experience of reporting on ground during the pandemic. She started by talking about how like everyone else, she was affected by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that shock India in the months of April and May this year. “It was so difficult”, she said as she recounted losing colleagues and friends to the disease and the disturbing visuals in the hospital and crematoriums she came across while reporting.

Ms. Sud narrated how she and her team followed Covid-appropriate protocols at all the times. Since, for a long time, there was no vaccine, to ensure her family’s safety, she shifted to a hotel for 18 days. She expressed her gratitude for CNN international for looking after the needs of their reporters. On being asked about the difference of liberty between working for an Indian

vs. an International news organization, she said that Indian news organisations had limited resources and hence asked their reporters to not report on ground.

During those time, while reporting on ground, she and her team were asked to wear uncomfortable PPE kits at all times. Ms. Sud recalls thinking about the front-line warriors who wore PPE kits day in day out. She claimed that despite whatever is being said, she knows that there was a shortage of beds and oxygen in hospitals.

Ms. Sud emphasized on the need of journalists being strong in such hard times. She accentuated that it is okay to cry when the situation gets too overwhelming and said that she cried on air during those weeks.

Regarding presenting the reality to the viewers, Ms. Sud stressed on the need to ensure not to sensationalise things. While talking to people who have suffered, one has to extremely sensitive of the other persons mental, emotional and physical sufferings. She narrated stories of people she came across and how she made a decision to not interview, but present the story without disclosing their identity.

“Make sure you’re not faffing on air” said Ms. Sud adding that facts need to be presented first and anecdotes can follow later. Situations like these, she said, makes you learn and grow. She told the students that responsible journalism is the most important thing to consider and said, “Always persist, never give up, you get what you’re looking for”.

Screenshots from the session:





