

Born Again on the Mountain: Exploring the Role and Impact of the Media on Arunima Sinha's Life

^aShubha Mukherjee, ^bGitanjali Choudhary

^aAssociate Professor, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Matunga, Mumbai, MS, India

^bPh.D. Scholar, Department of English, University of Mumbai, Mumbai, (M.S.) India

Abstract

The globe has witnessed lots of changes in many areas over the past several years with the onset of globalisation. As India is not separated from the world, it has also noted numerous changes in diverse arenas like economic, political, medical, cultural, trade, information, communication, technology, etc. The media is not alienated from it and is going with the flow as it embraces the ongoing changes and develops day by day. Globalisation plays a notable role in modifying or the changing dynamics of media. The media is a significant part of our society as it impacts and influences human minds, thoughts, and lives. Being a member of Indian society, Arunima Sinha (the first lady amputee of Indian origin to win Mount Everest), the core character of *Born Again on the Mountain* (2014), has experienced the significant role of media after the train mishap of her life. She has encountered many hardships in her astonishing life. She has depicted many instances of the effect of media in her life story. Her life was intensely affected by the intervention of the media, since people project their views based on the information delivered by the media and react accordingly. The media is the greatest source of information, and people rely on it. The resonance of media plays a vital role for mankind around the globe. Therefore, the researchers aim to explore the role and impact of the media on Arunima's life in light of globalisation.

Keywords: Globalisation, society, Role and Impact of the Media, Arunima Sinha, Everest

Introduction

Media and globalisation are interconnected as both influence each other, and their impact can be seen almost everywhere in the world, whereas media refers to several means or ways of communication such as newspapers, radio, television, the internet, and so on. While globalisation refers to all significant changes like political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural, etc. Due to globalisation, media has turned out to be more potent in world scenarios. It connects and influences human minds and shapes human thoughts and emotions, and its reflection can be seen in various wings of society. *Born Again on the Mountain* portrays the role and impact of the media on a life of a young lady, Arunima Sinha. She was born in Uttar Pradesh and was a national-level volleyball player. She is the first young lady amputee who got victory over Mount Everest, the highest peak, and Mount Vinson. She earned the most prestigious Padma Shri Award.

It is observed in Arunima Sinha's life story that the media enters her life after the train tragedy and influences her life in many ways. The media presents her courageous and inspiring journey around the globe. Her journey from train tragedy to Everest victory attracted the media's attention, which impacted her life in several ways. After the train episode, the media pointed out the issue of passengers' safety, especially women's safety on trains. The media makes the people aware by introducing her story of the train tragedy. As a result, Arunima gets better medical assistance, care, treatment,

funds, etc. She also experienced the other side of the media that once suspects the train tragedy fact and raises several questions like it's a suicide attempt or "to having been attacked elsewhere and thrown by the railway tracks" (Sinha 74) etc. This news created controversy, sensation, and rumors that gave her extra pain and stress as she was already suffering from the traumatic train experience. There are many such instances depicted in her life story that reflect the media's role and impact on Arunima's life.

Discussion

In today's era, media is counted as one of the most significant or integral parts of human life, as it touches and influences almost every facet or angle of life and society. This one is the knowledge reservoir and greatest source of all types of information. It enhances our knowledge and understanding. As the **Impact of Media on Society** says, "Media becomes as important as our daily needs; it shapes the public opinion and strengthens the society. Today, the media is omnipresent and it caters to the need of people" (Agrawal et al. 956). The entire world connects, communicates, and interacts through the various forms of media, and it influences human minds positively and negatively as well. Similarly, www.ukessays.com writes:

Media refers to the different means of communication like radio, television, internet etc. It plays a very important role in shaping human mind... With the increase in the importance of economic, cultural and technological integration between countries, it has a great impact on our society's personal lives. It is because of globalization that today there is an increased access to a broad range of media. (www.ukessays.com)

Globalization has a great influence on the media and further its impact on us. The most visible effect of globalization is wide spread communication. The introduction of newspapers, magazine, internet and TV has immensely helped to spread information and has helped people to come together from all over the world. (www.ukessays.com)

Globalisation involves or deals with expanding or growing businesses, perceiving and imparting knowledge, flourishing cultures, science, and technology, strengthening political and economic growth, and connecting and communicating across geographical boundaries. News or information from any corner of the world can be transmitted in its original or manipulated form globally with the assistance of advanced technology, media, the internet, etc. The following definitions unfold the term globalisation:

Understanding Globalisation writes, "Globalisation is a complex and multi-dimensional concept which covers areas like politics, economy, society and culture, and technology" (15). It also pointed out that "people, information, goods and services are travelling at an intensified speed which accelerates social activity" (16). Further added, "the geographical borders become less relevant as internet and media bring the world to our homes. The happenings in one country are immediately transmitted to other countries through TV and online news" (16).

According to academic.oup.com Giddens defines, Globalisation is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local

happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' ”.(qtd. in Block 75)

education.nationalgeographic.org writes, “Globalization is a term used to describe how trade and technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place... ”.

Similarly, the writer says, “Globalization means the speedup of movements and exchanges (of human beings, goods, and services, capital, technologies or cultural practices) all over the planet. One of the effects of globalization is that it promotes and increases interactions between different regions and populations around the globe”(youmatter.world; byjus.com)

The above description makes it clear that people, culture, society, technology, and globalisation are intertwined, which affects human life. Arunima Sinha has given many instances of the role and impact of media in her lifestory. She depicted the challenging journey and the life-changing incidents of her life. She bears excruciating pain when she finds herself injured, alone, and helpless near the railway trackside as the criminals push her from the moving train, the Padmawat Express. She was in the general compartment, where she confronted the four or five robbers, who were trying to snatch her gold chain. She opposed them and fought alone, and nobody came to help her. While she was battling with them, they eventually threw her away from the train, resulting in her being severely injured; her body was lying close to the railway trackside, and her left foot was on the track. Arunima Sinha depicts, “I literally flew out of the train, still holding my mobile phone....I was mid-air... I flew right into another train that happened to be moving on the next track. My body hit moving steel and lobbed automatically in the air towards the other train-on which, seconds ago, I was travelling-on the rebound” (Sinha 14). Further she says, “The ping pong must have continued for several seconds before gravitational force pulled me down. I thud-landed perilously close to the railway track. Despite my efforts, my left leg fell on the track over which one of the trains was still passing” (Sinha 14, 15). She depicts that while the train passes through her left leg, the sound comes ‘Ghtchhh’, of her leg getting chopped, and there is no one to hear her intense, painful scream. The train ran over her left leg as the leg was on a rail track, and the rest of her body parts were set or rested there between two rail tracks. She spent all night there in that painful and heartbreaking situation. Her right leg was bruised and battered. It was a heart-rending night in her life as she endured the utmost pain; her body was soaked in blood; she bore the stink of human waste; and the rodents were pouncing all over her body. She depicts, “I WAS LYING BETWEEN TWO RAIL TRACKS” (Sinha 1). She added, “The night seemed deathly still...The end appeared to be just another train away...smell the stink of the human waste that got thrown from the moving trains near me...” (1). Further says, “I was-lying on the gravel-filled track-side space, shivering with cold and fear.. My body was soaked in my blood. My left leg had been run over by the train, the right was battered with numerous broken bones and severely damaged ligaments; both motionless...”(Sinha 1). She struggles for her life as her courage pushes her to live and win.

Pintu Kashyap, a young villager, was the first person to notice Arunima Sinha in this pathetic condition in the early morning when he came to defecate. He called and assembled other people from his village to help Arunima. She says,...*The youth who had first spotted me had alerted several of his mates, all of whom arrived wearing a quizzical look. (Sinha 18).* Further she writes “I later learnt that his name was Pintu Kashyap” (20). Pintu Kashyap asked or inquired about the phone numbers

of her (Arunima's) family members, her home address etc. as his purpose was to inform Arunima's family about her condition. She says, "*He was the man who asked me if I remembered the phone number of anyone in my family*" (Sinha 20). She remembered the numbers of the family members, but her 'voice choked with emotion' (20) because of severe pain, injury, and loss of energy. But somehow, she gathered her strength and whispered the numbers in Kashyap's ear. He informed Sahib (Arunima's brother-in-law) about the present situation of Arunima through the phone. Pintu Kashyap and some of the villagers helped her as much as they could from their side. Kashyap and villagers saved her, she writes, "*I was lifted from the side of the track and was about to be shifted to the cart, when a train arrived*" (Sinha 22). After that, she went through long official procedures to get her treatment. Before shifting to the Bareilly district hospital, when she needed emergency treatment, she was stuck with the procedures of police officials, paperwork, etc., and spent over an hour in the same situation. She writes, "*No one bothered to ensure that I was moved out of the platform. I kept lying there for a couple of hours*" (Sinha 23). She added, "*Had they forgotten that I was alive?...I couldn't help smile at the irony in our country where a dead body is accorded more respect than a live one!*" (23). After reaching the hospital, she again waited as her leg needed surgery, but there was no anaesthetist. So, the doctors were not ready to operate on the leg, but Arunima convinced them, as she depicts, "*'Sir, don't worry if you don't have an anaesthetist. Please go ahead with the operation without one,' ...*" (25). Thus, the doctors reluctantly agreed. Arunima's left leg was operated on, and they amputated the foot just below her knee. As the researcher, S.H. Ito writes in her thesis entitled *Representation of Disability in Indian English Writing: Identity, Subjectivity, Voices and Concerns*, "*To avoid spreading infection throughout the whole body, one of her legs is cut off without using anaesthesia which changes her entire life drastically*" (Ito 227). She also mentions the plight of Indian government hospitals, as they lack many essentials and facilities.

Arunima depicts her father's, Harendra Kumar Sinha's, mysterious death and her brother's, Ravi's, murder case as unsolved due to financial hitches or problems and a lack of influential connections. As Ito says, "*The police didn't find it appropriate to probe into the murder of her brother as they didn't have any resources and connections with media, politicians or bureaucracy which prove instrumental in ensuring the justice to the aggrieved*" (Shodhganga Repository 227).

These were the situations in Arunima's life before the intervention of the media in her life, and the nation was unfamiliar with her name. Several media platforms covered her tragedy, and she came into the limelight. Her story shook society. She says, "*THIS IS THE AGE OF OB VANS*" (Sinha 45). It is seen in Arunima Sinha's life story that Sahib initially or firstly deliberately quoted, '*she is a national player*' (45) when depicting her (Arunima's) tragedy to the local photojournalist. He wanted to catch his attention and publish the story to create interest, inquisitiveness, and cognizance among people. The story was published in the '*Hindi daily Hindustan*' on page two, and it also got a place in the English edition of the '*Hindustan Times*', and now the people are acquainted with Arunima's name. They were curious to know more about her. The news about her tragedy proliferated rapidly, and many influential local politicians came, including "*Bareilly mayor Supriya Aron, the former Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) MP and former union minister from Bareilly Santosh Gangwar, influential BJP leader from the region Maneka Gandhi among others*" (46). They expressed their solidarity, promising to support and

criticize the system. A. Sinha says, *“From page two, my story moved to page one of most newspapers. I was prime-time TRP material now”* (Sinha 46). Her tragedy taking a political turn as the present government of that time got blamed, and it increased the TRP. Her news was running repeatedly on TV channels. The media presents the hospital visuals of Arunima lying on the bed etc. Sahib’s packed punches of conversation, and many more. Arunima says, *“Breaking news is infectious. After one channel begins relaying it, others make a dive for it too. Some of them started doing live shows from outside the Bareilly district hospital, inside which I lay... I remember some of them even waking me up at night to get a ‘byte’... my story had begun to create a national outcry”* (Sinha 47, 48).

The reporters worked 24x7 to ensure that they wouldn’t miss out on capturing or covering any news regarding Arunima’s health. She was the pivotal point of the news; she depicts, *“Sucked into a media storm, I wondered where it would take me. Thankfully the impact of the blitzkrieg was positive. I started getting better treatment, more personalized care with some ‘big’ doctors beginning to visit me”* (Sinha 48). Her news spread all around, and people started to visit her, including ministers, Page-3 people, builders, engineers, sportspeople, etc. Everybody, from VIP to common, has shown their concerns toward Arunima Sinha. She says, *“thanks to the 24x7 media, the country was following me and sending me their good wishes”* (Sinha 57). Similarly, **Itoo** writes *“Moreover, the continuous running of the news made her the centre of attraction for politicians, bureaucrats and social activists”* (**Shodhganga Repository 228**). Arunima pointed out *“The channel reporters told us that the prime minister was on a tour of China where he was quizzed about my incident. The PM had reportedly got in touch with his railway minister on the issue. The Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi too was reportedly informed about my case”* (Sinha 48). The eminent leaders from most of the political parties visit her or send their representatives. The Railway Board chairman and senior officers came to file her statement. A fellow of the ‘State Women’s Commission’ gave a draft of one lakh rupees to Arunima on behalf of the U.P. government, which assured her that all costs of her treatment would be sustained by the BSP, the state government. Ram Achal Rajbhar gave fifty-one thousand. Akhilesh Yadav gives her rupees one lakh and a cheque of Rs twenty-five lakh. Uma Shankar Dixit, gives twenty-one thousand. Ajay Maken and others helped her. **Itoo** writes, *“She was even offered free treatment in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) by the then union Sports Minister, Ajay Maken, for which a journalist advised Arunima...”* (**Shodhganga Repository 228**). It is mentioned in **Born Again on the Mountain** that *“Uma Shankar Dixit, 60, a resident of Unnao, near Kanpur... came with monetary help of Rs 21,000”* (Sinha 55). He got to know about her news through the medium, the media. Arunima says, *“He said he had come to know about my tragedy through the media and couldn’t control himself from driving down 400 km in his jeep to meet me.”* (Sinha 55, 56)

Arunima’s news thrives through 24x7 coverage of the media, and she emerges as a prominent figure in the public sphere. She received the best doctor, VIP facilities in the hospitals etc. During the treatment at AIIMS, the administration started a daily bulletin on her health status. **Itoo** writes, *“It is said that even the common man like auto-drivers, roadside-vendors and young people began marching in the streets to gain support for her”* (**Shodhganga Repository 229**). Shahnaz Hussain, an icon in the realm of fashion and beauty, met Arunima in the hospital. She offered to let her complete the beautician course in the AIIMS hospital itself. She accepted and

completed it, and earned her certified diploma. In the shadow of the media, her links grew, which have supported her in getting financial assistance, the best treatments, other facilities, etc. **Ito** writes:

Almost all the TV channels started relaying her condition online and covered her from all angles. Media became the means to turn a local cry into a 'national outcry'. The media networking brought her the best treatment by specialist doctors which could have been otherwise impossible... the marketing of accident news through media mobilised all government and non-government agencies to empathise with Arunima Sinha in particular and women in general.(Shodhganga Repository 228)

Arunima Sinha depicts that the Government Railway Police, Bareilly, inexplicably started raising questions about the tragedy. Somebody was helping GRP by sending unknown letters that made lots of charges against her and tried to give a new twist to the story, like she had an affair, boarded the train without a ticket, jumped from the train to commit suicide, Sahib pushed her, etc. She writes:

...criticism started surfacing against me in the media.... They were the ones who helped the GRP give a new twist to the whole episode. They sent anonymous letters to them alleging that I had a dubious past. Allegations ranged from wild to wicked and were splashed across the newspapers... The same media that had stood behind me and supported me was used to spread vicious lies against me. Everyday new charges would be levelled against me. All of a sudden I was being portrayed as an opportunistic girl, who was out to garner money and sympathy too. Newspaper and TV channels branded me as a girl of easy virtue and my family members were variously described as murderers and even rapists.(Sinha 73, 74)

Arunima was too upset because of these accusations, and she was breaking from inside as these were false and pointless, but with the support of family members, she revived her strength, and she was ready to answer any inquiry as her tragedy was real. Again, with a media grip, her family members countered and reacted to all the charges with proof. She writes, “Once again we relied on the media to express our views. As the media began relaying our rejoinders and rebuttals, the opposition, which included some senior officials...and some acquaintances, started to backtrack” (Sinha76). Amongst all these, she was thinking of climbing Everest in the hospital bed, and after crossing the many painful phases, the day came for which she was dreaming. She depicts, “At 10:55 a.m. on 21 May 2013, I was on top of the world” (Sinha 192). She created a remarkable place in history by winning Mount Everest with her amputated leg and becoming the world's first young female amputee Everest achiever. The news of her victory reached the public domain or sphere due to the media, which magnetizes the world.

Sinha's journey to becoming a mountaineer with her disabled body was closely observed, documented, and presented by the media, focusing on her confidence, resistance, perseverance, determination, and resilience. She received support from various people from several regions because of the coverage of the media, like monetary help from the cricketers, Yuvraj Singh and Harbhajan Singh, and the artificial limb she received from the two brothers, Shailesh and Rakesh Srivastava—

who donated the artificial limb, which Arunima used to climb Mount Everest and other peaks too. (Sinha 214). After winning Everest, she became the world famous as her news was in the air because of the media. The media continued to follow and highlight her interest and efforts. It captures and celebrates her achievements. Her book, *Born Again on the Mountain*, her interviews, motivational speeches, etc. were covered and spread by the media, which helped her reach a greater number of audiences around the world. However, sometimes, the persistent media attention and interest disturbed her privacy and gave her extra pressure to achieve the goal.

Conclusion

Arunima Sinha experienced the positive as well as negative effects of the media in her life, as it reflects and impacts our society and our day-to-day lives. With the media's cooperation, her life's calamity and courage news reached and spread in the public sphere, which made or shaped her a prominent figure. From common to eminent, people reacted and helped. Many renowned personalities visited with stretched hands for help. Eventually, she received the best treatments and facilities, monetary help, etc. That resulted her to developed connections with the reputed personalities. Though the media criticized her also, which impacted her negatively for some time, later, it all faded since Arunima and Arunima's family, with the support of the media, were able to counterproof all the allegations. Her success on the Everest Expedition reached a global audience via the media. Thus, in her life, the positive frequency of media is greater than the negative. It's a fact that media influences human minds, which subsequently, or in turn, moulds or shapes society. Indeed, it is an obligation and a great responsibility to project reliable and authentic information without any prejudice. A human being, being a social animal, should think sensibly before reacting to any piece of information.

References:

- Sinha, Arunima. *Born Again on the Mountain*, Penguin Random House, India, 2014
- Agrawal, Adity, et al. "Impact of Media on Society", *IJCRT*, vol.10, issue.6, 2022, pp.956, <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT22A6128.pdf>
- *Impact of Globalization on Media*, <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/media/effects-of-globalization-on-media-media-essay.php>
- *Understanding Globalisation*, <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/76727/1/Unit-1.pdf>
- Block, David. Globalization and language teaching <https://academic.oup.com/eltj/article-pdf/58/1/75/1622345/580075.pdf> Accessed 6 March 2024
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/globalization/>
- <https://youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-globalization-definition-benefits-effects-examples/>
- *Difference between Globalization and Liberalization With their Comparisons* (byjus.com)
- Itoo S.H, *Representation of Disability in Indian English Writing: Identity, Subjectivity, Voices and Concerns*, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/330141> https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/330141/8/10_chapter5.pdf
- <https://literariness.org/2018/12/16/globalization-studies/>
- <https://www.vedantu.com/english/essay-on-globalisation>

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324495422_LITERARY_GLOBALISATION
- <https://educultureproject.org/study-of-globalization/#:~:text=The%20Study%20of%20Globalization%20aims,its%20effect%20on%20our%20lives.>
- <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/57215/3/Unit-16.pdf>
- <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/337252> ,Accessed 5 Feb.2024
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arunima_Sinha ,Accessed 5 Feb.2024
- **Bio note**

Dr. Shubha Mukherjee

Associate Professor G.N. Khalsa College, Mumbai

Email: shubhagm12@gmail.com ; shubha.mukherjee@gnkhalsa.edu.in

Dr. Shubha Mukherjee, an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Mumbai, is responsible for teaching English literature to UG and PG students under Mumbai University. She is also the Guide and Doctoral Committee Member for Ph. D students. She has published many papers in national and international journals. Her books are “*Delicate Desire*”, “*Glimpses of Indian Fiction in English*”, “*A Home Away from Home: A Study in the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri*” and “*Pristine Heights: An Analytical Approach to Few Noted Award-Winning Novels*”.

Gitanjali Choudhary

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Mumbai

Email-gitanjalichoudhary79@gmail.com ; gitanjalich151@gmail.com

Gitanjali Choudhary, a Ph.D. student in the Department of English, University of Mumbai, is working on Disability Life Writings under the guidance of Dr. Shubha Mukherjee, Associate Professor, Department of English, G. N. Khalsa College, Mumbai. She has completed her M.Phil. on Dalit autobiography under the guidance of Dr. Shivaji D. Sargar, Professor and Head, Department of English, University of Mumbai. She has presented and published the papers.