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“Only connect!”: In lieu of an Editorial

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Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.

(Forster, 1910, p. 133)

Famous for his monumental, *A Passage to India*, E M Forster incessantly approached the moral and existential importance of connection, connection that is able to transcend questions of class, race, gender, and nationalism and that enables individuals to affect the same. Later critics, however, contended that “Only connect” has personal overtones also, referring to “the difficulty of connecting our ordinary, conventional personalities with our transgressive erotic desires” (Kirsch n.p.). What is important to underscore in “Only connect,” vis-à-vis the increasing connectivity and collectivity offered by the Internet in the contemporary world, is the potentiality of connection, of communication, to transform and transgress, acts that require nourishment and discretion as well.

I started this short discussion (in lieu of an Editorial) with this famous Forsterian phrase to signal and summarize the writings that the present volume – the inaugural volume – of *Jahangirnagar University Journal of Journalism and Media Studies* accommodates. The eight articles are varied yet connected as all broach the

predicaments and potentialities of communication – through film, music, news, and education – in the increasingly complicated contemporary world. Naadir Junaid and Sadeka Sabrina Haque’s articles are similar in spirit; while Junaid, in his study of the cult film, *Ghuddi*, re-views the subversive potential of alternative films, Haque studies Beyoncé to underscore the way this American diva transcodes images of blackness. There are three articles – by Sheikh Adnan Fahad, Rakib Ahmed, and Pradip Kumar Panday and Mamun Abdul Kaioum – that broach the significance and impact of social media, especially Facebook, on journalism and human interaction. Related to but subtly deviated from these three is Arafat Mohammad Noman’s article on cyberspace that inquires if this celebrated space is politicized, catering to the interest of ‘power.’ Uzzwal Kumar Mondal’s article, aptly written in Bangla, has similar concern with power in its study of the representation of BDR Mutiny in the media. Syed Mizanur Rahman and Ejaj-Ur-Rahaman Shajal’s essay on the present and the future of media industry in Bangladesh is significant as it insists on taking quick steps to initiate sufficiently equipped and updated media education in Bangladesh.

That most of the articles and reviews in this volume address the changes – transformations and transgressions – that contemporary media and journalism have experienced, chiefly because of the almost-omnipresent Internet, testifies to the interests and concerns regarding the invasion of the Internet. Scholars and writers of the new media contend that cyberspace has the capacity of what we may call translocation. It is this potentiality that has left the Internet traversed by binary opposites: public/private, spontaneity/responsibility, passion/ethics, democracy/anarchy. The virtual space opens up and facilitates different versions of Habermasian public sphere as well as ‘counterpublic’ sphere and affects cosmopolitanism, but the same potentiality demands critical subjectivity and responsibility in disseminating and interpreting information as well as ability and awareness to locate, dis-locate and relocate the hegemonic, even colonizing, potential of such transnational connectivity. “Only connect” is cool, but it can easily

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degenerate into a dangerous frozen-ness which can both *freeze* and *burn*.

It is a matter of great pleasure that the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Jahangirnagar University has, at last, been able, almost after three years of its inception, to publish an academic journal of its own! Being the Editor of the present volume of the journal and the present Chair of the department, I would like to take this space to thank all teachers and staff of the department and all contributors who continuous support and enthusiasm has made the publication of the first volume possible. This thanksgiving is, however, not a kind of formality. This is *it* as publishing this journal was a daunting task and that it is published now is because these people wanted it to happen. One thing that I re-learned in my more-than-a-month experience in the relatively new Department of Journalism and Media Studies is that a problem appears intimidating when we consider it as a *problem*, an act that leaves us victimized, even fatalistic. We must take every problem as a *challenge* that gives us agency, the power to act and to “connect the prose and the passion” so that both are exalted.

References

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