

**BOOK REVIEW**

Open Access

**Fake News and Fact-Checking****Simplified Edition by Renu Nauriyal**

Reviewed by: Brij Mohan, Mira K. Desai and Preethi Rao

[swmoha@isu.edu](mailto:swmoha@isu.edu) | [mkdesai@extensionedu.sndt.ac.in](mailto:mkdesai@extensionedu.sndt.ac.in) | [preethi@nkc.ac.in](mailto:preethi@nkc.ac.in)**Renu Nauriyal****ARTICLE INFO***Article history***RECEIVED:** 4-Jun-23**REVISED:** 15-Jun-23**ACCEPTED:** 27-Jun-23**PUBLISHED:** 30-Jun-23**\*Corresponding Author**

Horizon JHSSR

E-mail: [CEE.Horizon@gmail.com](mailto:CEE.Horizon@gmail.com)

**Citation:** Renu Nauriyal (2023). Fake News & Fact-Checking. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 5 (1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2023.v5.n1.id1215.p211>



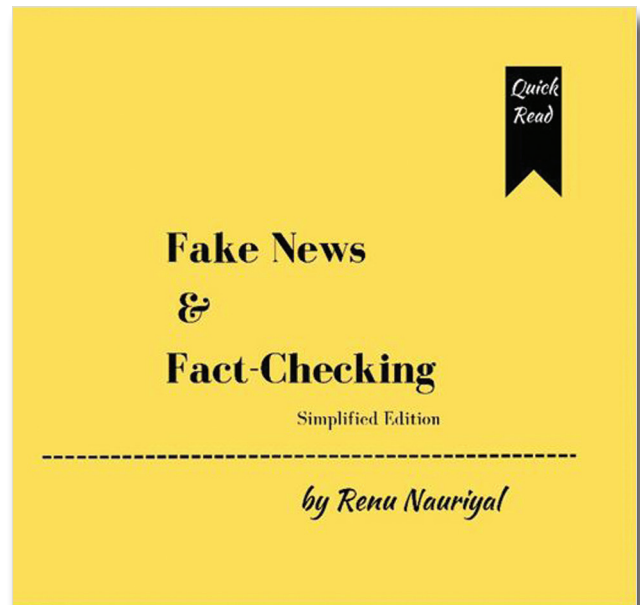
# review

**Introduction**

This book provides a simplified yet vital understanding of the threat of fake news to democracies worldwide and has been designed especially for first-generation English learners.

The term fake news means “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false” to manipulate people’s perceptions of real facts, events, and statements. It is “fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but lacks the news media’s editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information”.

This is a quick read on one of society’s biggest threats: Fake News. Fake News and Artificial Intelligence is a lethal combination. Fake News is majorly responsible for dangerously tilting the world’s power dynamics. A microscopic minority is getting control over the rest.

**Publication Year:** 2023 | **Publisher:** KDP, USA

Yes, dictatorship is fast sweeping the world. Our freedom is under threat.

**RENU NAURIYAL**, Visiting Faculty, Nagindas Khandwal College, Bhavishya Bharat Campus, Govindji Shroff Marg, Malad West, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India  
Tel: (+91) 9820629775; e: [nauriyalrenu@gmail.com](mailto:nauriyalrenu@gmail.com)

**Author’s Biography**

Renu Nauriyal is a journalist turned academician. She has been a visiting faculty for Journalism in several colleges of Mumbai University for the past twenty years. She was a Member of the University’s Board of Studies and the Committee for restructuring Bachelor of Mass Media undergraduate programmes at the University of Mumbai, Nagindas Khandwala College, and SIES College.

Prior to this, she worked for over a decade as a Feature Journalist in leading publications like The Indian Express and The Free Press Journal. Her emphasis has always been on viewing politics through the lens of social justice.



**BOOK AUTHOR:** Renu Nauriyal

In her spare time, she enjoys arm-chair travelling by watching YouTube vlogs and planning her next food outing.

**Book Review by BRIJ MOHAN, Dean Emeritus, LSU School of Social Work, Editor: Social Development Issues, Santa Barbara, CA 93105; e: [brijmohan128@gmail.com](mailto:brijmohan128@gmail.com) (June 6, 2023)**

*Ashwatthama* was an invincible warrior in Kurukshetra war<sup>1</sup>. Since he couldn't be defeated, Lord Krishna had an eponymous elephant killed. Distortion of reality is not a new scourge. Conscious misrepresentation, morbid lying, unabashed denial, and rejection of inconvenient truth have existed ever since *Homo Sapiens* found of *Neanderthals* conveniently inferior. This may have been the dark dawn of slavery. An inherent lust for power and neurosis of retaining it by hook and crook has given a bad name for politics. When the players of this soulless game weaponize their lies, *Fake News* is born. Falsification of unpalatable truth is ubiquitous in politics. The 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States could not accept his loss of election; every fact that legitimized his defeat became *Fake News* and 'witch-hunt.' On January 6, 2022, Donald Trump exploded a bomb of *white lies* that nearly demolished the foundation of American democracy. Insurrection became freedom; treasonous leaders became heroes. Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister, lately inaugurated the new Parliament Building on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's birthday, deifying a nefarious nationalist. Unmindful of the colonially designed Great Game, India's balkanization is blamed on Nehru and Gandhi<sup>2</sup>.

Fact-checking of Fake News is an inconsequential, feckless filter in a populist, increasingly authoritarian, culture.

<sup>1</sup> "Krishna hatches a plan for Bhima to kill an elephant by the name Ashwatthama while claiming to Drona it was Drona's son who was dead. Ultimately, the gambit works (though the details of it vary depending on the version of the Mahabharata), and Dhrishtadyumna beheads the grieving sage." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashwatthama> (6/4/2023)

<sup>2</sup> See Narendra Singh Sarila's book *The Shadows of the Great Game: The Untold Story of the India's Partition*. New York: Carrol and Graph, 2006.

In this context and *background*, I accepted the offer to review Renu Nariyal's book. I don't know the author. She is a journalist impassioned to educate the "learners." The future of democracies largely depends on how and what we instruct our children. In Florida politically insensitive books have been banned. RSS' *Swayamsevak* gangs of the *Hindutva* movement are rewriting India's history as envisioned by Savarkar, Godsey and Modi. The lethal power of misinformation, falsification, and vitiation is a malignant curse.

The book is organized as a Quick Read. *Contents* includes a list of XV categories with headings and sub-headings unfolding bullet-like points which speakers use in power-point personations in class, public meetings, and professional conferences. These are helpful notes prompting a presenter. Each 'slide' opens with an inspirational quote by an eminent authority from Mahatma Gandhi (p. 5), Moshe Dayan (6), Albert Einstein (6, 11), Abraham Lincoln (7) to Jean J. Rousseau (8,9), John Locke (10), and Garry Kasparov (28).

Each tablet—chapter? —emphasizes and decodes concepts, constructs, and their offshoots that signify *freedom, democracy, truth, and post-truth*. These abstractions and their perversions are manifested in events and phenomena that illustrate a) falsification of reality; ii) weaponizing lies, and iii) annihilation of critical thinking. Trumpian lies and their assault on democracy highlight the vile methods of his *patriots'* anti-woke villainy to "make America great again." QAnons emerged to legitimize Trumpism by vilifying American leaders: *Hillary Clinton helms Evil; governmental officials are "sex-trafficking pedophiles,"* etc. If one had tuned to Rush Lumba's regular radio rants, nothing would surprise in the muddy waters of spiteful nonsense which demonized Muslims, blacks, Mexicans, feminists, LGBT groups, and the liberals.

In her concluding notes, the author illustrates Global Freedom Status on a map showing free, partially free, and unfree regions in the world (77). It's a vaguely general depiction of freedom and unfreedom in three camps: the Western Euro-American, Latin American- Australian as free; much of North Asia (Russia, China, and Middle East as "areas of darkness", and India, Pakistan and other some other regions are "partly free." This is not a valid face of the diverse of humanity. South Africa is not a free country, for example. Ravaged by apartheid's nasty legacy, it may be shown as a failed state. The same can be said about Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan and many other co. Ask the poor, ill-equipped blacks in the violence ridden communities of the U.S.: *How free are they?* Murders of

George Floyd's and Jordan Neely's<sup>3</sup> will haunt conscience of a nation founded on the noble creed of equality and justice. The destiny Palestinians in Gaza and marginalized people in China is eclipsed by terror. The primordial free society, as Rousseau surmised, was destroyed by men who invented property.

Poisoned views about freedom and oppression will distort reality. Phenomenologically, *subjective reality* is one's own internalized world. Fallacy of objective reality— even though facts trump feelings—has demolished post-truth binaries of illusionary possibilities. In the age of AI, anger, and delusions, Trump is a metaphor for what he calls "American carnage." As Nietzsche would say, there is a difference between 'discovery' and 'invention.' Liars in these times have neither patience nor skills to *discover*, let alone *invent*. However, the Fake News industry perversely invents things that don't exist. Look at the scandalous state of Fox News. In a hostile world, the balance of power dictates short-cuts, propaganda tools, clichés of triumph, and above all the power of self-interest. In Afghanistan, the US invested nearly two trillion dollars which went back to the military-industrial establishment. Note how philosopher Amia Srinivasan observed:

"...[w]hen I look to the U.S., I see a country that systematically enacts violence against its worst sponsored policies of discrimination, exploitation, and disenfranchisement, often while paying lip service to noble ideals of equality and freedom. On my view, the U.S. fails to achieve its liberal ideals not through mere inaction, but through an ongoing legacy of active, state-sponsored oppression" (Srinivasan quoted by Matar, 2022: 105).<sup>4</sup>

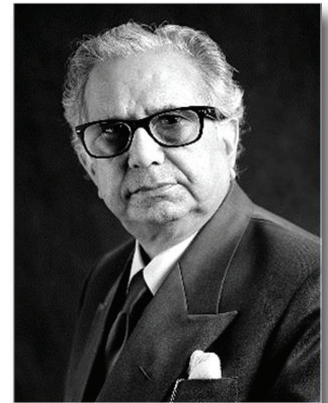
This reviewer did not find a single narrative in the entire 78-page text which might qualify this 'book' as a book. I made repeated attempts to locate flesh around the skeletal structure of its contents. When I noticed a 'Simplified Edition' label on the front cover, the reality unraveled itself: There was no beef.

This search for *rediscovery* continues. One can see how "image laundering cons" like —Noble Laureate Henry Kissinger and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas—employed lies and misinformation for their own ambitions—fueled by greed, undeserved ascendance, and pathetic impatience— at the expense of peace, truth, and justice. Shouldn't Kissinger be declared a war

criminal<sup>5</sup>? Likewise, the art and ethics of fact-checking make a compelling case against Thomas's removal and impeachment. I doubt if this will ever occur in a corrupt and sick society. When Nauriyal quoted Locke, Lincoln, Gandhi, and Einstein, she ought to have thought of Hobbes, Marx, Foucault, and Piketty. Media that profits from chaos and *Fake News* would never let it happen.

## About the Reviewer

**Brij Mohan** Dean Emeritus & Professor of Social Work, Louisiana State University, USA, is an internationally renowned Scholar with expertise in social philosophy, social welfare, public policy and international social development.



**BRIJ MOHAN:** Dean Emeritus & Professor of Social Work, Louisiana State University, USA.

He is the author of 24 books and over 400 articles, papers, and reviews. His most recent books include: *Development, Poverty of Culture and Social Policy* (Palgrave, 2011), *Climate, Economy and Justice* (Palgrave, 2015), *The Future of Social Work* (Sage, 2018) and *Social Policy on the Cusp* (Nova, 2020). Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith honored him with a Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) and the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India awarded him the *Life-Time Achievement Award*.

Currently, he is working on two new books, including his memoirs.

**Book Review by MIRA K. DESAI**, Professor, Communication Technology, SNDT Women's University, Juhu Campus, Mumbai, India. Cell: +91 22-26613550; e: [mkdesai@extensionedu.sndt.ac.in](mailto:mkdesai@extensionedu.sndt.ac.in) (May 22, 2023)

<sup>3</sup> A hungry and thirsty Michael Jackson impersonator was choked to death on train by another rider, a former Marine. Elie Mystal comments: "Jordan Neely's murder in the New York City subway is a horrifying symptom of our collective social rot," ('Our Sick Society,' *The Nation*, May 29-June 5, 2023: 6-7).

<sup>4</sup> Srinivasan, Amia, 'Political limits of compassion,' quoted by Anat Matar (2022) *The Poverty of Ethics*. New York: Verso.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Kissinger will be remembered as a mastermind behind genocides to mass murders. He sabotaged Paris Peace Talks and had Cambodia bombarded as an anti-communist crusader. Watergate and its infamous Plumbers, it may be argued, were precursors of January 6, 2022. Wearing the mask of a senior foreign policy expert, he misled President Johnson and won a Nobel for stopping the Vietnam war. The harrowing tales of murderous regime change have left scars from Vietnam to Chile. He founded a lucrative firm that delivered influence for its rich clients, inclusive of notorious Union Carbide which was responsible for unspeakable mass killing of four thousand people (and 1.5 million injured in Bhopal, India). See Greg Grandin, 'Kissinger Still at Large at 100,' *The Nation*, May 20-June 5, 2023: 16-19?

Twenty first century society has been challenged with misinformation, disinformation and 'fake' news. This book is a refreshing piece of work, lovingly put together, by a teacher for her students. But in the times and age that one lives, everyone is a student as far as fact check and fake 'news' are concerned. The book opens with an interesting remark about its potential readers, "my precious first-generation English learners like Sumit who attends college lectures from 7.30 to 11 a.m. and then does a 10-hour duty in a game-zone at a mall."; as noted by the author. The last page profiles the author who has seen media from close quarters as a journalist and now as a media teacher. The volume corresponds with her experience and insights. Published by KDP, Seattle, Washington, USA in March 2023 as 'Quick Read' it is actually a quick journey into myriad concepts of post-truth realities impacting diverse spheres of human existence.

Designed into 15 chapters including Preface the work takes the reader through concepts, English meanings of words, history and geography of world events and snippets like "the distinction between Truth and Falsehood, Right and Wrong was never as blurred as it is now" giving the complex concept of post-truth in brief. There are stories, told using facts, making the reader travel across the world and helping one see historical context in Germany, present processes in United States and Russia and future implications on democracy and freedom. The quotations and length of sentences does not allow the reader to deviate because it is crisp and clear and written to keep attention in the current attention deficit economy.

Usually, academic concepts and books talking about academic concepts are written in a certain way. Here is a volume of 80 pages that talks about the most contemporary threat of the present times- fake news, a term widely debated by few scholars who think that if it is 'fake' than it cannot be 'news'. But it illustrates and explains the menace of disinformation and misinformation for readers who may not be students of media and communication. It addresses the territory of the concept, explains the nuances of the ideas of freedom and democracy in simple words taking case stories largely from West. That may make Asian reader believe that they are not being part of global narrative of 'fake news' which is actually a false notion.

Another challenge with any academic work at times is, lack of solution. Most academic texts provide expanded view to the reader about the problem, but at times they fail to provide answers to the questions. Here, the author

has taken upon herself to introduce the readers with global attempts to fight the 'fake news'. She provides lists of tools, techniques, resource guides, and 'to do ideas' for anyone to recognise, understand, expose the 'fake news' using fact checking.

The only missing link that this book has is to elaborate few examples for 'local contexts' especially if it claims to have been written for Indian students. Another area that the book could do well is to guide readers to institutions and groups working in the area of fact checking. Google News Initiative is one such example. Though it does talk about MIL efforts and MIL landscape from Unesco. Interestingly enough after talking about verification tools and global attempts of fact checking, the volume brings to the fore few theories and explains them in simple words yet very briefly. It ends with visual of Global Freedom Index, taking the reader to identify and examine his/her local reality.

It is a must 'quick read' for anyone interested in life in and around social media. The book will help one not only recognise implication of 'fake news' that one has read/heard/watched but ignored casually but understand the consequences and costs of spontaneous forward that one may do on their social media walls. It helps the reader see connection between online processes and offline realities and responsibilities of digital/social media users of verifying and checking information. It empowers the reader with tools and resource material listed in bibliography.

### About the Reviewer

Mira has 30+ years of experience in social science research, content creation, audience reception research, higher education teaching, curriculum planning, assessment and evaluations.



**MIRA K DESAI:** Professor, Communication Tech., SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, India.

She has professional experience in mainstream print (newspaper), television (researcher, scriptwriter and anchor), Internet (content provider), alternate media (newsletter editor and documentary filmmaker) environments besides working for *Mahila Samakhya* Gujarat for rural women's education for empowerment programme for four and half years. She entered the



academia in 1997 with prior seven and half years research and communication experience.

She is at SNDT Women's University since 1997 and has been part of varied facets of public institution imparting higher education in Mumbai India. She is connected from local to global networks of media and communication education and research.

She also has print media, television production (researcher, scriptwriter and anchor), Newsletter editor and documentary filmmaker experiences behind her. Her interests are in Academia, Research, Teacher-Trainer, Writer.....open to opportunities to LEARN and UNLEARN.

**Book Review by PREETHI RAO**, Coordinator & Placement Officer, Nagindas Khandwala College, Bhavishya Bharat Campus, Malad West, Mumbai, India.  
Cell: +91 9892823456; e: [preethi@nkc.ac.in](mailto:preethi@nkc.ac.in) (June 6, 2023)

We live in challenging times. There is an explosion of information and this is now being delivered into the palm of our hands by a mere flick of a finger. As the world is getting busier the number of vetted and trained journalists are getting fewer. What goes viral and unverified but shared without much thought on social media is often called news. Decisions based on misinformation or deliberate falsehood is dangerous. There is an urgent requirement to bring home this point and the book under review attempts sincerely to do just that.

The author Ms Renu Nauriyal has brought to her writing her experience as a journalist who has wielded the pen for publications like the Indian Express for over a decade. Her love for teaching and making it easy for her students is seen in the content of the book which holds within its page's events told in a student friendly manner.

"Fake News & Fact Checking", Simplified Edition is true to its title. It makes a quick read and presents nuggets of news that made headlines from across the world -news that manipulated people's minds and in certain cases changed the course of history. The author also recommends methods that help in verification of information received.

The narrative is rendered in a conversational style. The language is willfully kept simple for final year learners

of journalism for whom English is not native or spoken at home. Word meanings are given which is useful not only to help in understanding the context but I am sure will go a long way in expanding the vocabulary of the reader. An interesting approach of the author which this reviewer finds refreshing is that at the start of every page there is a thought-provoking quote or an idea that kickstarts a range of ideas. The author appears to gently steer the reader towards the contents of the page through them. We are taken us on a journey of realization -of the emerging dangers to democracy in the form of uncontrolled use of social media complicated by the emergence of AI.

The reader is introduced to several forms of fake news and terminologies such as User generated Content, post truth and the role of Q Anons in the Insurrection post the loss of Trump in the presidential elections of America. Very contemporary in approach, the author delves into how troll farms sponsored by Russia sold a false narrative about the war with Ukraine. The author places before the readers fake news that led to Brexit and warns the readers of China's 50 Cent brigade. The anecdotes come with the headlines of the day that surely drive home the outrage caused by such manipulation.

The suggestions to identify fake news and prevent its spread is neatly explained and readers will find these steps useful which is a great take away.

What could have been a brilliant book suffers from improper usage of tenses in the initial few pages with the present tense and past tense getting alternatively used while analysing events. Thus, in some sections the storytelling appears uneven and distracting. In text citation of news headlines and the map that explains the Global Freedom Status would surely enhance the usefulness of this handbook for learners of journalism. An unversed reader may have to do independent reading to understand the context and meaning of certain words such as post truth and events such as what led to the insurrection that was sponsored by the unruly supporters of Trump. Hitler and his propaganda methods find space between the covers.

Those who pick up this book to read will surely find that the pages are filled with information that informs, warns, and educates. A must read for those who are concerned about the truth of the world that we live in.

### About the Reviewer

Preethi Rao has both corporate and academic experience. She started her career as a Public Relations Officer with a leading electronics firm. Currently she is the Coordinator of the Department of Multi Media and Mass Communication at



**PREETHI RAO:** Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai, India.

Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai, India, and is its Placement Officer.

She has authored a book for media learners, "20TH Century World and India through the Lens of Reporters and Photo Journalists-A Mass Media Perspective." ISBN: 978-93-5596-687-2

She received the AKS Education Award of the Outstanding Coordinator of the year 2022, and has received other awards at national conferences for her research presentations.