

# Dinesh C Sharma

## Overview

Dinesh C Sharma is an independent journalist and columnist based in New Delhi, India, with over 20 years' experience in reporting for national and international media on a spectrum of issues. He specializes in science and technology, environment, health and medicine, information technology, development and media issues. At present, a regular contributor to Indian and international media outlets including **Hindustan Times**, **Bangkok Post**, **The Lancet**, **Frontiers in Ecology and Environment**, **The Lancet Oncology**, **The Lancet Infectious Diseases** and **Your Health**. He is also a regular writer for the US-based **CNet News.com** network, which feeds to web editions of the New York Times, Business Week, The Globe and several other online outlets. He writes a column on new media issues for **Vidura**, India's media journal published by the Press Institute of India, New Delhi. From 1983 to 1998, Dinesh was employed with India's national wire agency **Press Trust of India (PTI)**, the **Observer Group (India)**, **The Telegraph (Kolkata)** and **CNBC Asia (Singapore)**, in varying capacities. Besides his writing activity, he serves as an invited speaker at media seminars and workshops as well as guest faculty at leading journalism and media training schools in India. Currently, he is the visiting faculty at **Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University**, Philippines.

## **Present**

## **occupation**

A regular contributor for The Lancet (UK), Bangkok Post (Thailand), News.com (USA), Hindustan Times, SPAN, The Statesman, Vidura, Invention and Grassroots. An invited speaker at media conferences and seminars; and training institutes imparting journalism and media education, and a regular contributor to various current affairs programs of All India Radio, India's public service broadcaster.

## **Professional qualification**

After graduating in science in first division, obtained Master's degree in Communication and Journalism (MCJ) from Osmania University in 1982. Osmania University is among India's oldest and most reputed journalism schools located at Hyderabad in South India. Worked under Prof S Bashiruddin, one of India's foremost journalism educators.

## **Major stories written in recent years**

**Toxic waste dumps under scanner:** Imported and domestically produced toxic wastes have been accumulating at several places in India for decades. The government and regulatory agencies have failed to take any remedial action. India's Supreme Court started taking action to get the country's hazardous waste situation under control. A series of legislative amendments have brought India's laws in line with Basel Convention requirements, and local committees are being set up to watch over industry. A monitoring committee established by the Supreme Court has ordered the closure of several polluters

and is requiring industries to pay for cleanup of their pollution. Published in **Environmental Health Perspectives**, June 2005.

**Using Bhopal to study chemical warfare:** After 20 years of the Bhopal gas disaster, American scientists are preparing to re-create the accident under controlled conditions in a bid to unlock some unresolved questions relating to the gas leak and also to study threat posed by chemicals as weapons of terrorism. The simulation of gas leak and use of surrogate tracer gases for monitoring will help in knowing chemical reactions that took place and toxic substances that got released at various times after the accident. This exclusive appeared in **Hindustan Times**, November 29, 2004.

**Illegal trials of Erythromycin:** The story unearthed illegal clinical trials of a drug, Erythromycin, as a fertility control measure in rural areas of West Bengal, India. It exposed that two Indian doctors had used 780 women as guinea pigs to test the drug's efficacy without taking any regulatory approvals. Published in **Hindustan Times**, January 2004.

**Continuing tragedy of Bhopal gas tragedy victims:** Victims of the gas tragedy at Bhopal in central India continue to suffer even after two decades. A series of stories exposed that even second generation of children are being born with congenital diseases and there is high incidence of cancer among children of gas-affected parents. The stories also highlighted the problems being faced by people in the vicinity of the closed Union Carbide factory, due to pollution of ground water because of seepage of toxic chemicals from the factory. Published in **Hindustan Times**, **The Lancet**, **People**, and **Bangkok Post** September to November 2002.

**Ecological fallout of interlinking of rivers:** The Indian government has drawn up a massive plan to interlink all major rivers to solve the twin problem of perennial droughts and floods. But the plan is fraught with dangers for the environment and people. The series of stories covered various aspects of ecological impact of the proposed plan. Published in **Hindustan Times**, **Frontiers of Ecology and Environment**, **Bangkok Post** and **Jansatta**. 2003- 2004.

**Functioning of grassroots democracy:** India finally has a system of democratically elected people's bodies functioning at the village level – the system of Panchayati Raj. In some parts of the country like Kerala in South India, the system is functioning very well with proper devolution of powers. But in other parts like Rajasthan, it is not working too well with several cases of corruption coming to light. Published in **Grassroots**. February 2003 and May 2004 (in print).

**Information technology for development:** A lot of hype has been created in India about the use of information technology at the grassroots level and a number of pilot projects are running to demonstrate that new technology can be used to bring in development. A new device called Simputer, developed by Indian scientists, is being touted as a panacea for all the ills. A series of articles examined this issue in detail to see what IT can actually

deliver. Published in Grassroots, Vidura, The Tribune, Jansatta, Sahara Samay during 2003-2004.

**Social and ecological fallout of IGNP:** In the Thar desert in Rajasthan in Western India, a massive irrigation project is under implementation for the past two decades. The objective of this canal project was to green the deserts, improved agricultural productivity and provide drinking water to urban areas. It has delivered all this, but has played havoc with the environment and people of the region. There is large-scale inundation, waterlogging, and salinity of the soil and resurgence of malaria. Stories published in Frontiers of Ecology and Environment, **The Lancet Infectious Diseases** and Grassroots. 2004.

**Millennium column:** This was a weekly column on science, technology, health, environment and people, which ran successfully in **Hindustan Times** from 1999 to 2001 and was popular with readers.

### **Professional experience (print)**

Have work experience of more than fifteen years in news agency and newspaper journalism, as well as reporting for the electronic media. Worked with the Press Trust of India (PTI) at Bangalore, Hyderabad and New Delhi during 1983-1990 in various capacities.

Joined the New Delhi-based Observer Group in mid-1990, covering ministries of science and technology, environment and electronics. Covered the **U N Conference on Environment and Development** (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, held in June 1992.

Moved to the Telegraph in its New Delhi bureau as Special Correspondent in January 1993.

### **Professional experience (online)**

**Cnet News.com :** Been working with this US based network for the past more than a year. Stories syndicated by this network appear in online editions of the New York Times, Business Week, Globe and other networks like Zdnet.com, Silicon.Com and others. Focused on the continuing saga of outsourcing of information technology services and its backlash in the US.

**Globalwirelessnews.com :** worked with this news portal focused on the wireless industry for three years from 2000 to 2003, till its amalgamation with RCRnews.com. Covered wireless industry of India, South Asia and South East Asian regions.

**CoreTeck.com:** Was consultant with this online business-to-business marketplace for software buyers from the US and information technology vendors from India – during 1999 to 2001.

**ConserveMedia.com:** Founded this online e-zine focused on science, technology and environment developments in India and ran it for a year during 1999-2000.

### **Professional experience (television)**

In 1994, joined **Television Eighteen** - the sole franchisee of CNBC and NBC in India, in its news programming division as a Special Correspondent.

Produced news capsules for “India Business Report” (**BBC World**) programme, the first television show to be outsourced from India by any international channel, as well as for This Morning’s Business (**Doordarshan**) – both produced by Television Eighteen.

Reported extensively for **Asia Business News** (ABNi) business news channel of Dow Jones and Wall Street Journal, from its launch in 1995 till its merger with the **CNBC Asia** in 1997-end.

Overseas reporting from **Germany** (construction boom in Berlin), Singapore and the US (technology shows) and Pakistan (post-coup situation in 1999).

Produced and directed a 20-minute film “Vimukti”, a documentary on the leprosy vaccine developed by Indian scientists (for the Department of Biotechnology); and a ten-minute documentary called “Golden Fibre of India” for the Development Commissioner (Handicraft), Ministry of Textiles.

Was Technical Director a four-part television series on books – “Bookmark” – telecast on Doordarshan (DD2).

### **Professional Awards**

**PII-Hunger Project Award for Best Development Feature:** Awarded a cash prize of Rs 5000 for the best feature published in “Grassroots”, a journal on development issues published by the Press Institute of India, New Delhi. May 2004.

**ACE Reporter's Award:** Was given a special prize for coverage of cancer in Indian media by the European School of Oncology, Milan, in 2003.

**Khasa Subba Rau Award :** Was given this award for best writings published in Indian media, by a journalism graduate student, by the Osmania University. 1983.

### **Academic publications and journalism teaching**

#### **Publications**

**Online Journalism in India:** This was a pioneering survey done for the Press Institute of India and was published in a special issue of Vidura dedicated to the advent of online journalism in India. Served as Guest Editor of this special edition. Oct- Dec 1998.

**IT at Grassroots and Media:** A special edition of Vidura, focused on how media has been covering the use of information technology at grassroots level as well as nurturing of grassroots innovators. Served as Guest Editor of the special issue. April – June 2003.

**Series on online journalism in India:** Wrote a series of articles covering different aspects of online journalism in India. Some of the titles are: War in cyberspace, In the realm of Cyber Democracy, Newsroom of the Future, The missing I in IT, Cyber Journalism and Ethics, The changing Role of a Journalist, E-news: digital divide widens, Dawn of Online Coverage and Changing Newsroom Profile. These articles were published in Vidura between 1998 and 2004.

**Technologies for the people: a future in the making** – a research paper published in "Futures" journal published by Elsevier. The paper discusses emerging Indian technologies that that could play a key role in social and economic development of Indian people. Published in March 2004.

### **Teaching assignments handled**

Been a guest faculty at Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, Bangalore; Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi; YMCA School of Journalism, New Delhi; HPS Journalism College, Hyderabad; and Staff Training Institute of All India Radio, New Delhi.

### **Workshops/courses attended**

Represented India at a seminar of journalism educators organized by the South Asia Media Association (SAMA) at Karachi, Pakistan. November 1999.

Undertook short course in photojournalism, conducted by the Press Institute of India in collaboration with the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. November 2002.

Attended Gemonic Policy Executive Course organized by the University of Toronto Joint Center for Bioethics and the Indian Council of Medical Research at Kumarkom, Kerala, India. January 2003.

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