# Analysing Grief on Twitter: A Study of Digital Expressions on Om Puri's Death

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## Abstract

Digital media, particularly social media, have changed the way we interact and communicate. New media technologies have expanded our connections with people on a global scale (Williams, 2007). Today we can communication with celebrities with ease. One of the ways to achieve this is through following them on social media; here one can interact with the celebrities posts and comments online (Sanderson, Cheong, 2010). This sense of attachment makes the mourning of celebrity deaths consequential in creating 'communities for mourning' (Gibson, 2007). It also sustains and extracts global attention. Hence, online platforms are increasingly influencing the way we grieve both in the case of personal loss and in mourning a celebrity death.

Grief is the most ubiquitous painful experience. With the advent of the Internet, online expressions of grief have increased considerably. The sensation surrounding the death of celebrities has increased in the online space post 2008. Om Puri[1] passed away on 6 January 2017. His unexpected death was at the centre of many discussions because of its untimely nature as well as a suspicious bruise that appeared on his head. The reports and various speculations surrounding his death were widely discussed on Twitter by news websites, blogs and other Twitter users. Through this optic, this study aims to explore the different categories of mourning messages about Om Puri's death on Twitter and to understand if social mourning mirrors the traditional eulogy. An inductive approach of qualitative content analysis is used to analyse the tweets in response to Om Puri's death.

**Keywords:** Grief, Online mourning, Social media, Twitter, Traditional mourning

## Introduction

Online has become a space for interacting with friends, support groups, and forums in attempts to cope with death. The collective is believed to have 'felt' the death more in recent years as the mourning has become viral. The sensation surrounding the death of celebrities has increased in the online space post 2008 (Davis, 2017). Today, social mourning online has become a norm in relation to celebrity deaths (Davis, 2017).

On 6 January 2017, the Internet woke up to the news of veteran Indian actor Om Puri's death due to a heart attack. The critically acclaimed Bollywood actor was known for his roles in Hindi cinema, such as Sub Inspector Anant Velankar in *Ardhsatya;* Ahuja in *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro;* Dukhi in *Sadgati;* Lahanya Bhiku in *Aakrosh,* etc. Om Puri 's work expanded beyond Indian cinema to Hollywood, British and Pakistani cinema. His unexpected death was at the centre of many discussions because of its untimely nature as well as a suspicious bruise that

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1A highly acclaimed Indian actor, with a career in cinema spanning 40 years.

appeared on his head. The reports and various speculations surrounding his death were widely discussed on Twitter by news websites, blogs and other Twitter users.

Online news websites, web pages, and blogs were writing obituaries and remembrances for Om Puri. Social media platforms such as, Facebook and WhatsApp were flooded with messages about his death. The micro-blogging site Twitter was trending with tweets from politicians and eminent personalities working in Hindi, Pakistani and other film industries. Their narratives focused on personal relationships and accolades on his work. '#OmPuri' was trending for 8 hours in India and 14 hours in Pakistan on 6 January 2017 ('Trendinalia India', 2017).

Prior to this instance of Om Puri's social media mourning, there have been studies to understand grieving on social media. For instance, the case of Steve Jobs (Holiman, 2013) and of Michael Jackson (Kim, Gilbert, 2009), where the social media platforms were transformed into digital memorial sites. These studies have analyzed the Twitter messages about celebrity death. However, this study aims to understand the varied responses to the death of Om Puri on Twitter, and how Om Puri's mourning connects to traditional mourning rituals.

## Literature Review
## Death and Mourning Practices

Grief is perceived to be an expected response to the loss of someone close. Grief and mourning are an important part of the process after death, which is an inescapable reality of life. Mourning takes place when an individual acknowledges and comes to terms with the death (Rando, 1993). Grief or acute grief reaction is an emotional, behavioural, communal and bodily reaction to the understanding of the loss (Rando, 1993).

Our highly mediated lifestyle and intimacies with digital gadgets has made death and its bereavement 'live' (Rajan, 2016). Contemporary society is obsessed with youth (Featherstone, 1982) and dying; death is perceived to have little economic or social value (Glaser, 1966; Turner, 1995). According to Walter (1991), dying and the grievers are isolated as they emphasize the physical vulnerability of the modern individual.

There are several theories of understanding death and coping. One such understanding is the five-stage process of coping with death: namely. denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally accaptance (Kübler-Ross, 1969; Kübler-Ross and Kessle, 2005). Stroebe and Schut (1999) describe another process called the dual process model, which is based on various kinds of coping such as loss, restoration and alternation. Walter (1991) outlined the following kinds of deaths: namely, traditional death, modern death and postmodern death. In traditional death, mourning was shared by the immediate family, which used to live under the same roof. and the larger community, which knew each other. Funerals helped in bringing the loved ones of the deceased together to share their common pain and to establish the death in the society (Dilmac, 2016). A modern individual is disconnected from his/her traditional roots, family and place of origin (Giddens, 1991); he/she lives in one place and works in another place, and his/her friends and family belong to a different place. So in case of their death, the mourners are all separated geographically and might not know each other. Talking about the modern mourning ritual in England, Walter (1991) says that death is experienced in private spaces, as a private family affair, with very few people attending the funeral. Grief is considered to be a personal emotion, which is not accessible to others. In India, for Hindus, the mourning period lasts for a period of 13 days and it comprises of rituals such as '*piṇḍadān*' (a mandatory religious practice

for the followers of Hinduism, which is performed to liberate the soul of the deceased so that they can achieve salvation), *tilānjali* (ritual of offering of rice balls), *panchagavya* (fire sacrifice to appease God), etc. It ends on the 13th day in the form of a feast, organised for friends and family members (Gupta, 2011).

The role of death is to affirm the complex network of relationships extending from family and workplace, to friends and the neighbourhood community. Gupta (2011) argues that with modernity, the modernist grief psychology emphasises on progressing; the primary message is to let go. However, this idea differs when looking at Eastern cultures such as China or Japan. The dead are transformed into ancestors, and the living move into their future with the dead (as ancestors) (Klass, 1996; Kübler-Ross, 1970). Walter (1999) stated that people in postmodern societies, as compared to traditional and modern societies, mourn differently. He argues that they grieve as a group through various informal bodies such as self-help groups. The focus in the self-help groups is on the similarity of the experience of death. The Internet has increased access to such groups and has transcended their physical limitations through digital connect (Rajan, 2015). This is contrary to modernity's dependence on professional experts to handle grief; postmodernity has sidelined the experts (Walter, 2007). Modernity and its attempts at reducing disruptions of daily life was considered to have sequestered death (especially in Anglophone countries) in places like hospitals, hospices, cemeteries, etc. (Giddens, 1991; Mellor and Shilling, 1993). Nonetheless, today technology is bringing back the sequestered death into our daily life, social media has provided alternative ways of living with the grief (Dilmac, 2016). The Internet and social networking platforms have brought the dead and the grievers onto our digital screens and into our living spaces (Walter et al., 2011).

## Online Celebrity Mourning

The Internet has changed our daily experiences immensely. It has become a part of our day-to-day life in seeking information, friends, entertainment and so on (Correa, Hinsley and Zúñiga, 2009). The Internet has also brought enormous changes in the practices surrounding death and mourning; for instance, coping with death through blogs, online help groups, virtual attendance at funerals, live streaming of funerals, digital memorials, etc. (Walter et al., 2011). Grief could be understood as a reaction to the loss embalmed in emotion. However, mourning is seen as the process where an individual incorporates the loss in their lives (DeSpelder, Strickland, 2015: 207). Social media acts as one of the facilitators for expressing one's grief. Sofka (2009) categorizes online memorialisation sites into grief-specific and non-grief-specific sites. Space for mourning on the Internet has existed since the 1990s in a stationary state. while social networking platforms have made it interactive (Boyd, Ellison, 2007). They have turned into the principal sites for honouring, remembering and grieving (Giaxoglou, 2013).

Hudson argues that the interactivity of Web 2.0 is synonymous with having an agency (Hudson, 2003). With the advent of the mourning space online, grieving with strangers has become a common tradition (Walter et al., 2011). The bereaved connect with strangers who they feel have experienced a loss of the same nature (Roberts, Lourdes, 2000). Campbell and Jamieson have noted that death becomes a collective experience through media (Campbell, Jamieson, 2008). Through social networking sites, mourning has re-emerged in the form of a collective experience (Brubaker, Hayes, 2011; Kasket, 2009). With social media, grief is re-emerging as a collective communal practice (Walter et al., 2011). The uniqueness of social networking sites is that they provide space for users to construct and make their online

presence more visible to others (Haythornthwaite, 2005). DeVries and Rutherford (2004) argued that the public create roles for themselves as mourners and extend the boundaries of who participates in the mourning process. Holiman (2013) claimed that social media allows private mourning in a public space, which is reflective of the fact that people find collective experience through traditional rituals of eulogy.

Another important phenomenon of online mourning is mourning for a public figure. It is not a new phenomenon but emphasizes on a public figures' death. For instance, the death of Princess Charlotte of Wales in 1817 led to mass mourning. Such deaths would have resulted in online mourning in contemporary times due to the media reach being instantaneous and global. So the death is now transformed into a global or partially global phenomenon, where at least half the world is harboring the same feeling together (Walter, 2007). Horton and Wohl (1956) have argued that modern mass media fosters 'intimacy at a distance,' which gives an impression of a real-time relationship with the performer.

Social media also makes people feel that they can communicate with their celebrities directly by following their Twitter account (Sanderson, Cheong, 2010). Thomas (2008) argued that mass media has given way to a new kind of social relationship as the world is shrinking into a global village. This new social relationship is where they feel that an intimate connection has developed with the celebrities. This 'intimacy' or proximity at a distance, which is enhanced and technologically mediated to overcome the actual distance, still has an effect on an audience that is already aware of it (Gibson, 2007). By offering a platform for the fans and the celebrities to interact, social media takes a parasocial relationship to previously unparalleled levels. This encourages the notion that people can feel close to celebrities as their friends (Brown, Basil and Bocarnea, 2003). Some celebrity deaths resonate in such ways in an individual's life that it leaves little distinction between 'reality and fiction' and 'public and private' (Gibson, 2007). Much of the research on virtual grieving is centered on established relationships, but social media presents a fertile ground to study 'parasocial grieving' (Sanderson, Cheong, 2010).

## Need for Mourning

The human need for expression related to death could be so persuasive that it makes a reaction inevitable (Jamieson, 1978). Mourning, grieving through eulogy, etc. can be looked at as such inevitable reactions. Emotional disclosure via writing can help in coping with the death (Cable, 1996). Writing to and about the death helps the bereaved to get a perspective of the loss (Roberts, Lourdes, 2000).

Therefore, social networks provide the required emotional and social support (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2006; Wellman, Gulia, 1999). Writing on social media can be looked at as deriving emotional support for death. The social media sites provide a platform to express grief on the death of a celebrity (Holiman, 2013). Going back to the definition of mourning and grief, posting on a social media network is argued to be a dire consequence manifesting from grief (Brubaker, Kivran-Swaine, Taber and Hayes, 2012).

In contrast to funeral homes or cemeteries, online grief allows individuals to craft responses in an open venue that is less constrained by social and cultural obligations. Even so, participating in online forums involves a display of grief that does not take place without spectators. The messages may manifest personal feelings, but they are subject to and are constructed and witnessed by social surroundings, which form an important part of coping (Lingel, 2013). Holiman (2013) talks about collective memory in context of online

memorialisation; he contends that collective memory has been democratised by the social media as traditional editors do not mediate the content or filter it.

Thus, social mourning serves as an outlet for grief in parasocial relationships. When one grieves the death of a relative or friend, the mourning usually takes the shape of attending or organising the funeral, visiting the loved one in the hospital or simply being present. In a parasocial relationship, one doesn't usually have access to these outlets and hence resort to mourning virtually, alongside millions of other fans. Sanderson and Cheong's (2010) study of the social media response to Michael Jackson's death found that people grieved over the death of their parasocial partner. They also argue that social media aided people to come to terms with Jackson's death by providing an outlet for their grief (Sanderson, Cheong, 2010).

Haverinen (2010) divides memorials into intentional memorials and unintentional memorials. This framework has been utilised to classify mourning in cyber cemeteries; specific sites created as grief sites are used for mourning, here it function is to create intended remembering. On the other-hand mourning in non-grief-specific sites or other social networks and gaming based sites function as intended remembering(Walter, Hourizi, Moncur and Pitsillides, 2011).

Intended remembering in the non-grief-specific sites could occur for the following reasons: a member in the site expires and the living members commemorate the deceased, or a living member uses the social networking site to indicate the mourner status (Walter, Hourizi, Moncur, and Pitsillides, 2011). Radford, Bloch and Mark (2013) discussed two other ways in which fans cope with a celebrity's death, namely, 'introjection' and 'incorporation'. The former is seen in instances wherein the fans wish to relive their experiences with the late legend. For instance, the examples of introjection would be the event organised by CINTAA (Cine and Television Artistes' Association) celebrating Om Puri's greatest works in Juhu, or the tribute given to Om Puri at the closing Gala of London Asian Film Festival 2017 and Om Puri's mention in the 'In Memorium' section of the 89th Academy Awards. Radford, Bloch and Mark (2013) defined incorporation as the feeling of loss to their extended self. It is incorporation when people own something belonging to the deceased to remember him or her and to keep the memories alive. Incorporation is the increased interest in the material objects connected with the celebrity (Radford, Bloch and Mark, 2013). This would include the sale of Om Puri film production products and personal artefacts associated with him.

Holiman (2013) connects the eulogy and epideictic rhetoric to analyse the social media grieving of Steve Jobs' death. The study uses the framework developed by Adrianne Kunkel and Michael Dennis, which considers the epideictic rhetoric, that critically examines the eulogies. The framework classifies eulogies or grief messages into messages whose main ideas are as follows: (1) forming reliability, (2) admiration for the departed, (3) self-declaration of feelings, (4) suggestions for how to cope through a problem focused framework, (5) feeling-focused coping, (6) declaration of intense past connection, and (7) continuance of interactive relationships (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003).

Establishing credibility is about acknowledging one's relationship with the dead (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). Praise for the dead is characterised by praise for the characteristics or activities of the deceased (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). Disclosing one's emotion on their own accord is exemplified by the griever announcing his/her mental or emotional state (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). Problem-focused coping places emphasis on actions, and in carrying forward the ideas, projects and ideals of the dead (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). Emotion-focused coping helps the audience restructure the connection with the deceased by offering an altered standpoint

(Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). It can be expressed as an indication to the afterlife, a gratitude to the relationship shared with the deceased, an indebtedness to the education and qualities learned from the deceased, and gratefulness towards the deceased's good life (Holiman, 2013). Assertion of the intense past relations reminds the audience of the mortality of the deceased person by reminding the flaws (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003).

Establishing an identity of the deceased is a pertinent aspect of the process of grieving (Harvey, Carlson, Huff and Green, 2001). Four identity-preservation strategies defined by Harvey, Carlson, Huff and Green (2001) are reinterpreting beliefs and memories; romanticising the deceased by redefining the negative; continuance of pre-death activities; and approving significant signs and symbols, such as sites of graves and more (e.g., a bedroom or a Facebook profile), which would suggest the character of the dead.

In the context of celebrity mourning, Thomas (2008) argues that the media plays a role in multiplying the private grief, in his analysis of the media response to Princess Diana's death. This sense of grief is achieved by showing images of the dead and talking about them repeatedly, adding to the sense of loss. Thomas again quotes from an interview where the audience accepts the feeling of personal loss because 'seeing her (Princess Diana) image so often in so many mediums created a personal loss' (Thomas, 2008). On the contrary, Linenthal (2001) argues that a 'nationwide bereaved community' is constructed that transcends beyond the various ways in which individuals are separated—religion, ideology, class, region, race and gender. Such kind of grief has been referred to as 'recreational mourning' or 'virtual grief,' and it is criticised as being voyeuristic (West, 2004). Mestrovic (1997) states that this kind of grief where the majority of mourners did not know the dead in person was not real grief but 'grief lite'—grief without pain, a feel good glow instead of unbearable agony. He also calls this kind of grief as the 'McDonaldization of emotions', a result of the culture industry centered around death and suffering in a post-emotional society.

Based on the discussion above, this paper aims to explore the following:

- To understand the different categories of mourning messages about Om Puri's death on Twitter.
- To understand if the social media mourning mirrors the traditional eulogy practices.

## Methodology

The study on one's experience linked to death on social networking sites can be found in the works of Brubaker, Douris, and Hayes (2013). They conducted an inductive and thematic inquiry of interviews and other information connected to it (Corbin, Strauss, 2008; Braun, Clarke, 2006), recognising markers and arranging them into certain categories (Brubaker et at., 2013). Holiman (2013) used a rhetorical analysis of the tweets to understand the parasocial mourning of Steve Job's death. Similarly, content analysis has been defined as a methodical and impartial way of explaining a phenomenon (Krippendorff, 1980; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Sandelowski, 1995). Mayring (2000) described qualitative content analysis as an approach entailing pragmatic and controlled examining of data. Qualitative content analysis can be inductive, ideas, concepts and categories develop from meticulous analysis and association of the data by the researcher. or deductive, where the concepts are generated from the previous studies (Zhang, Wildemuth, 2009). Mayring (2000) identified the step-by-step process to inductive methodology as the step model of inductive category development, which would

assist in the understanding of different categories of mourning messages and their correlation to the traditional eulogy for the present research.

This study used an inductive approach of qualitative content analysis of the tweets in response to Om Puri's death, as outlined by Mayring (2000). Each sentence of the tweet was taken as a separate unit of analysis. The tweets have been analyzed multiple times by the researcher and have been objectively categorised into different themes based on the message content. The evolved themes were then categorised within the framework proposed by Adrianne Kunkel and Michael Dennis (2003), which considers the rhetoric of the tweets and critically examines the eulogies. The framework classifies the eulogies or grief messages into the messages whose main ideas are as follows: (1) forming reliability, (2) admiration for the departed, (3) self-declaration of feelings, (4) suggestions for how to cope through a problem focused framework, (5) feeling-focused coping, (6) declaration of intense past connection, and (7) continuance of interactive relationships (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). Further, new classifications which emerged were added to the messages, which didn't fit into the framework.

## Data Set

For the qualitative content analysis, 170 Tweets posted from 6 January to 9 January, 2017 was analyzed. The data was collected for this time period as it was immediately after his death, and social mourning was visibly at its peak during these days. Tweets were included by using tweet filters with 'Om Puri' in the tag and from the geographical location of India. This filter provides the top trending tweets in the region with the tag. Pictures or links in the tweets were not coded. The tweets analysed were under the following hashtags: #OmPuri, #RIPOmPuri, #RIPSaheb, #Ardhsatya, #deeplysad #Legend #Yaadein.

## Analysis
## Themes of grieving on Twitter:

The following categories were arrived at based on the qualitative thematic content analysis of tweets:

## Self-reflective Interaction:

Within this theme, we will discuss and analyse how individuals were disclosing their emotion in response to the death of Om Puri. Words like 'miss', 'shocked', 'unbelievable', 'heart breaking' and 'saddened' were coded in this category. For instance,

> Greatest man, lovin character; Big actor and a good mate; I cannot believe this #OmPuri #OmPuri
> still unbelievable that Sir Om Puri no more with us; :(((( Feeling pain full

These are some expressions that are reflecting the theme 'Self-disclosure of Emotion' as developed by Kunkel and Dennis (2003). It is explained as a eulogizer's attempt at easing her/his grief by putting her/his emotion into language. Holiman (2013) explains that this strategy of verbalising emotions is an attempt by eulogizers to alleviate grief and make connections with other grievers.

These tweets are also very reflective of a fandom culture where associating with the rest of the online mourners is, among other reasons, a form of social capital. However, fandom is not a homogenous concept, Harju and Moisander (2014) discuss that fandom is multifaceted, and it is subjectively interpreted by researchers. For instance, one may be a fan of Om Puri's work and another a fan of the individual himself, irrespective of his work. These tweets draw from the hero narrative to frame the death of Om Puri. They reflect on his contributions as personally meaningful and in tandem with their values and ideals. It can also be seen as an extension of the self where it is a reflection of a fan's identity, beliefs and value system. This could include tweets like,

> #OmPuri lives in the hearts of million of Pakistanis and Indians for his memorable roles in films. He will remain in our hearts for long.
> The Best Actor in World, An inspiration 2 me & many, he was suppose 2 work with me in Manto. Deeply saddened by da news, RIP #OmPuri Saab _/\_

These tweets where fans are tweeting to express their sense of grief help in giving an insight into the depth of their anguish in the light of their favourite personality's death. Therefore, it is evident that the margin between the fans and their fandom (in this case, the loss of Om Puri) is expressed not as an extension of the self but as a part of the self. The following tweets were also reflective of a passionate emotional connection, which has the ability to shape the identity of the fan tweeting. and its effects are intensely felt.

> Farewell to one of the greatest actors ever in the world and one of my most fav-Om Puri Saheb _/\_ ;( #ompuri
> The great legendary actor is no more can't believe that one of our greatest actors #OmPuri is no more. Deeply shocked

This view of fandom and grief where the emotional bond is emphasized helps in understanding the intimate dimension of an individual's grief in the context of a personality's death.

## Changing nature of mourning
## Social media as a Legitimizing Space

This category has a sub-theme of remembering the dead through their work. Praising the dead is a part of the eulogy. This is a sort of post-death ritual, which fans engage in inside the social media space. This acts to ease the disenfranchised grief that happens from suffering a loss. It shows how Twitter in this research acts as a legitimate space for mourning. It acknowledges the deceased person and her/his values, characters, ethics, and achievements, and relationships shared with the deceased. The sub-theme, remembering the dead through their work, pays tribute to the dead by referring to their work:

> RIP #OmPuri! Another great actor has left us ;(;( #ripomPuri #OmPuriSahab #india
> Rest in Peace. A great actor and human being #OmPuri
> Farewell to one of the greatest actors ever in the world and on of my most fav-Om Puri Saheb _/\_ ;( #omPuri'
> Very sad news for Indian #BoLLYWOOD INDUSTRY.#RIP #OmPuri

Another interesting fact these tweets reflect is that of introjection, a concept introduced by Johnson (1997). It allows individuals to reinforce the positive memories of the deceased. Hence, fans would share the importance of their work or personal stories about their interaction with them directly or indirectly. Such as,

> A great and a versatile actor had a chance to meet him when he was shooting in Rajkot-rip #OmPuri
> My article in @ThedailyPioneer #newspaper regarding my experience workin wid #Shri #OmPuri#Icon#SeemaKapoor

These positive tweets also stand in stark contrast to the negative emotions as reflected in a few tweets:

> 'Controversial personalities like #OmPuri and #Jayalalitha leave behind controversies even after their death.
> What an irony ! #OmPURI'.

This shows the parallel existence of personal, collective and. at the same time. disconnected articulations of memory and emotions towards Om Puri. This disenfranchisement surfaces from the absence of sympathy and the moral superiority being constructed by the non-fans. Thus, there is a parallel existence of such negative emotions in the social media space trying to give legitimacy to non-grievers.

## Digital Affective Alignment

Doveling and Sommer (2008) explained digital affect culture as formed by the social media sharing of traditionally and discursively fashioned emotions. This emotional connection of the grievers online can be understood through the fundamental features of digital affect culture, namely, discourse, alignment and belonging (Doveling, Sommer, 2012: 7). Most tweets were reflective of this emotional and discursive alignment:

> Greatest man, lovin character, Bigactor and a good mate. I can not believe on this #OmPuri
> Legends never DIE…Their work continues to inspire & create value much after…#OmPuri
> Pretty sure that without #OmPuri in #EastisEast my first feature would never have been made. Thank you Om for the generosity of your talent!

This digital affective alignment is a co-constitutive emotional practice, which helps people connect with other grievers online, seeking legitimacy and a memorial culture for collective remembering.

Moreover, tweeters refer to a parasocial relationship with the celebrity by quoting their personal stories. Through this, they reiterate the importance of the parasocial relationship in their life and mourn the loss of the parasocial partner. This parasocial relationship describes the illusion of intimacy between an individual and a celebrity. In this digital age, it has been further made possible by celebrities acknowledging the presence of their fans and tweeting about their daily life. As Brown (2010) and Bae et al. (2011) stated, parasocial relationships sometimes also have an impact on an individual's prosocial behaviour. For instance, some of the tweets which are reflective of such relations are

Adieu dear friend! #OmPuri @Rajesh Joshi"
I just learnt of Om Puri's death. He was a great and legendary actor & I've always felt so much respect for him.#OmPuri:(
RIP OmPuri Sahab, salute to our president & insipiration to performers worldwide @CintaaOfiicial @FIA_actors@SagaChairman@sushant_says.

The tweets also mirror the traditional form of eulogy in social media by referring to the kind of relationship they shared with the deceased. This theme can be linked to the 'affirmation of past relationships': Revelation of private insights and unique relationship strategy (Kunkel, Dennis, 2003). It is to be noted that reference to close relationships might not be used in online memorials, given its reliance on personal relationships. In the case of Om Puri's death, this strategy was extensively used on Twitter to reaffirm the parasocial relationship of the actor with his audience. This is in agreement with the argument that social media has taken parasocial relationship to greater heights, with the audience feeling more connected to the celebrities (Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea, 2003).

It is pertinent to understand here that the collective mourning of people for Om Puri on Twitter is also reflective of the relationship of various actors who together mourn for a celebrity on the basis of his work and more. This collective mourning also gives space to everyone who wants to mourn in the digital space with their story.

## Mediatizing Emotions in Digital Space

Mediatizing emotions in the digital space sheds light on the interaction between an individual's affectivity and the commodification of emotions through sharing personal information. These tweets and hashtags allowed a topical engagement with the star post his death:

> #OmPuri's Last movie #SalmanKhan's Tubelight :( Sad OmPuri Won't be around to celebrate its success U will be missed
> Read so many beautiful articles abt #OmPuri!Many facets of his, which we never knew. Why do we value & celebrate humans, only when they're gone?

The tweets by grievers also reflect the mental state and the habits of Om Puri. It can be seen as grieving, leading to information exchange. Such as,

> #OmPuri was intoxicated & wanted to meet son before death, investigation reveals #nanditaPuri #IshaanPuri#RIPOmPuri #bollywoodnews"
> #OmPuri was suffering, his mental health was in Shambles. Naseeruddin Shah, '#OmPuri's post-mortem reports reveal he did not have a natural death

These tweets are personal, and they exchange information about the actor's mental health, his personal relationships and his habits, assuming other readers would read it. In addition to information exchange, Kunkel and Dennis's (2003) framework describes such tweets as 'affirmation of vivid past relations'. In this theme, individuals discuss the flaws of the deceased to remind everyone of the personality's mortality. This remembrance of the personality's mortality is through the social construction of the celebrity's past. Every fan considered it to be their duty to grieve while discussing the speculation around Om Puri's death to show their faithfulness. Few individuals tweeted with an intention to spread news or to add to the ongoing

discussion. The event of a death is looked upon either with the idea of spreading news or as a trending topic which one needs to contribute to. Some of the tweets that were a part of this discussion are:

> Did he die of heart attack , did he have an accident causing that head injury… or was he murdered? Authorities must answer..#OmPuri", "#OmPuri's death raises speculation of an accident.

The emotional construction and its digital display through hastags are reflective of a constitutive space for digital affective alignment, which has the possibility of creating systems of mediatized emotional resonance.

## Discussion

The paper set out to shed light on the various categories of mourning messages about Om Puri on Twitter, and to examine if the social media mourning mirrors the traditional eulogy. The included perspectives and findings offer insights into how the practice of social mourning has changed with the advent of the Internet. The research findings of online grieving of Om Puri's death has been classified into Self-reflective Interaction, Social Media as a Legitimizing Space, Digital Affective Alignment, and Mediatizing Emotions in Digital Space in this research. These themes showcasing the various forms and norms of grieving via Twitter mirrored the traditional eulogy and have fallen into the framework described by Kunkel and Dennis (2003). The research further suggests that death is increasingly being looked at as a news event with emotions attached to it, like a quicker version or 'grief lite' (Jack, 1997) of what was observed in the traditional death. As observed in the analysis, Twitter is a space for expressing emotions (in this case grieving and mourning for a celebrity) as well as for receiving/giving information. The use of the hashtags is indicative of the inclination towards participation in the collective mourning for Om Puri on Twitter.

Interestingly, the categories that evolved in this study mirrored a similar functionality of traditional eulogy in two distinct ways. First, Twitter acted as a means of social mourning across time and geographical boundaries/space. Apart from being able to physically pay homage to Om Puri, his fans, friends and colleagues used Twitter to share their comments and pay homage to him. Hence, Twitter became an added space for the visible and affective perpetuation of Om Puri. Second, Twitter is also a way of self-disclosure and self-presentation. Self-disclosure on Twitter provides a space for the fans, friends and colleagues to talk about Om Puri as a person, his work and more. In other words, Twitter is allowing people a digital space for visitation, collective remembrance and collective mourning. Having acknowledged this fact, one cannot deny that sometimes the negative emotions as mentioned above could possibly make the grieving process of the bereaved difficult. However, this paper did not dwell upon this aspect since it is beyond the scope of the present study.

This research also speaks of the salience of the disenfranchisement of grief in the online space. A fan-based relationship is based on affect—emotional relationships that a fan builds around his/her fandom and the object of the fandom. This alienation surfaces when the force of the relationship is not acknowledged. By grieving through personal anecdotes, he/she tries to establish him/herself as a 'genuine' griever by sharing some intimate details in order to be authentic. Through the study, it is observed that grievers discuss the popularity and political ideology of the deceased on social media and in the countries that grieve the deceased. The

analysis has helped in setting out to shed light on the functions of online mourning of Om Puri on Twitter. The tweets are reflective of how the online space of Twitter allows negotiation, legitimization and improvement of the disenfranchisement of grief. Further, this study opens up the possibilities of studying the concept of celebrity capital related to a celebrity's death on social media. It also attempts to note the influence of social media in handling death.

It is pertinent to note that social media platforms (in this case Twitter), with their limitations and affordances, form how public and collective mourning takes place. Thus, in certain ways, online mourning consists of as many meanings as offline mourning. This is because grieving/mourning does not stay static and reproduces meaning socially and historically with time. Hence, Twitter has provided a platform for people to construct and express emotions for a public figure in their own way.

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