

The Media's Social Duty to the Nation and the Democracy in India

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Abstract: *There has been much discussion over the function of the media in a democracy. India has the biggest democracy on earth with a significant media profile. Indian media outlets have recently been under heavy fire for how they have neglected their duty to uphold civic conscience. Media industry risky economic practises have impacted the foundation of Indian democracy. The preservation of diverse points of view is challenged by large industrial corporations in the media sector. Following liberalisation, international media companies have expanded their presence in India to serve their own national and international interests. This has occurred at the expense of the Indian media, that was previously seen as a force for bringing about social change via initiatives aimed at the underprivileged and marginalised segments of society. There is still more to be done, despite the fact that media has sometimes succeeded in acting as a watchdog of govt officials and in promoting participatory communications.*

Keywords: media, social responsibility, democracy, Indian media, Indian democracy

1. Introduction

In generally, democracy is seen as a system of governance where the people have the power to make decisions. It is fundamentally a kind of popular government, as opposed to monarchs or aristocracies. The liberty of speech and the space given to opinions from many facets of society are two of the greatest strengths of the democratic systems. Whenever the general populace participates widely in a democratic systems, that is not feasible without people being knowledgeable about numerous topics, the system may function to its fullest capacity. An essential component of any democracy is trustworthy information resources (Habermas, 2006). The media enters the picture here.

The many types of mass media have impacted human existence in the twenty-first century. They have mostly given people throughout the world amusement and knowledge. After dominating for a while, print media is now under challenge from television, that is altering many societal reactions. In addition to offering news and opinions, radio has also shown a talent for entertaining, which has helped it gain widespread appeal. There's also digital revolution, well with internet serving as its poster child. Worldwide real-time data and idea dissemination is now feasible because to the internet. Nevertheless, there is a reason for alarm amid all of these events. Does the media really uphold its social obligations? Is the democracy way of thinking threatened by a burgeoning globally mass media? In a nation like India wherein media has a bigger role to play than just giving news and entertainment, does it present challenges?

Media and Social Responsibility: The Normative Argument

According to the press's normative perspective, media behaviour must take into consideration public interests. The press freedom, variety in broadcasting, diversity in data, culture, and perception, assistance for the democratic system of government, support for civil order as well as state security, widespread reach, the calibre of data and culture distributed to the public, regard for human rights, as well as avoiding harm to people and society are the important public interest criteria that the media need to take into account (McQuil, 2005).

With the recognition of the media as the fourth pillar, a concept created by "Edmund Burke in England", the social obligations required of press in the public realm were firmly founded. The moral conscience of the media would become a hot topic for discussion with the 1947 establishment of the Committee on the Rights of the Press. It was created in response to the American press's perilous tendency toward monopolistic methods, unrestrained commercialization, as well as sensationalism. With regard to its perspective on socially responsible and the required journalistic integrity on the part of the media the findings of the Hutchins Committee, as it was known, was groundbreaking. The concept of social obligation that emerged from this commission was supported by a number of guiding principles, including the following: news media must be fair, impartial, relevant, and factual; there must be press freedom as well as a necessity self-efficacy; it must adhere to the specialist code of conduct and also ethics; as well as govt could include a duty to fulfill if under definite circumstances (McQuil, 2005).

Democracy, Media and the Public Sphere

The media ensures that democracy operates in line with its genuine principles by informing the populace about social changes and assisting them in making well-informed decisions. By stressing whether they have carried out the purposes for that they were appointed and if they have upheld their office oaths it also holds the elected officials answerable to the individuals who elected them. Govt and private influence over the media must be eliminated for it to function in an ideally democratic environment. In order to advance public interests, it must have total editorial independence. Additionally, in order for democracy to flourish, outlets for trustworthy voices and diversified media must be established (Parceiro, 1999). The idea that the media serves as the 4th estate in a democracy has previously been brought forth. Democracy gives people with different viewpoints a place to discuss them and come to decisions that will benefit society. The activities of political and economical institutions are given less weight than generally accepted standards (Barnett, 2004). In essence, this is similar to the idea of the political square, where intelligent public speech and discussion are valued. People may talk openly about matters that affect them all (Tsekeris, 2008). One of

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the key factors in the development of the public sphere is the media (Panikkar, 2004). Nevertheless, Barnett believes that in contemporary society, the fundamental meaning of the public sphere is being lost as public discourse media become platforms for expressing specific interests as opposed to broadly shared ones. This shows that the public realm, which is crucial for a healthy democracy, may actually be used to advance private interests at the expense of the common good.

Media and Indian Democracy

India's political structure is conceptually similar to that of a liberal democracy. The authority of the legislative, executive branch, and judiciary are clearly defined in the Indian constitution. The current party structure is competitive and offers freedom in how the administration and opposition are constituted. Additionally, there is media freedom, of speech, and of association (Pelinka 2003). The triumph of Indian democracy with in face of great obstacles has always garnered interest on a global scale and has led academics to analyse its secret. Despite not being a developed country, variety can be seen practically all across India. The issues of poverty and wealth distribution disparity have long been a source of irritation. However, democracy has persisted in the nation up to this point. In India, the biggest democratic in the world, the media's function goes beyond just broadcasting news and entertainment. Additionally, it must include public education for the benefit of society. The media must do developmental reporting in a nation with widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of development. It contributes to the creation of public opinion, which may compel political parties to confront the fundamental problems obstructing the nation's advancement. But entrenched interests may influence public opinion to further their own objectives (Corneo, 2005). The public opinion and subsequently the results of elections may be influenced by media fabrications of the truth and doctored ideas. It is very possible to do away with principles like impartiality and honesty in the way news and ideas are presented.

After Attainment of independence, public utility broadcasting received a lot of attention. It was a tool for bringing about social change. The public broadcasting broadcasters in the nation, including AIR (All India Radios) as well as Doordarshan, were tasked with producing instructional content in addition to news and entertainment. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the nation's public services broadcasting system had a tight relationship with the government. A monopoly media system governed by the state runs the risk of serving as the ruling class's spokesperson. The loosening up of the Indian economic in an effort to integrate well with global order was destined to affect the situation. It foreshadowed the formation of a media industry that was competitive, having public services broadcasters facing competition from commercial organisations. But this included the germ of a brand-new ownership issue.

The ownership structure of the media, both globally and in India, is troubling. Large corporate organisations are the owners of newspapers as well as television networks. The likelihood of media being seized rises with greater ownership concentration (Corneo, 2005). In this case, media freedom is

replaced by protecting the interests of the owners, who might not be fulfilling their societal obligations. Democracies are receiving troubling signals as the room for diversity of thought is being reduced. According to Bogart (1995), media ownerships has become dangerously concentrated in many democratic nations. He gave the explanations of Silvio Berlusconi's possession of the top 3 commercial tv channels, 3 pay Television stations, and numerous newspapers and magazines in Italy, which serve as his political spokespeople, as well as News Corporation's (37% sharing of Rupert Murdoch's holdings in the United Kingdom's major newspaper circulation). After liberalisation, India now has significant transnational media organisations operating there. These are large, global organisations that control a significant portion of the mass communication sector, which includes everything from papers to radio, television, and publications. Walt Disney, News Corp, Time Warner, Viacom, as well as CBS are the world's five biggest media companies. Big companies that control the media landscape in India include the Times Group as well as ABP. The Government has authorised 26% direct investment from abroad in news publications and 74% in non-news divisions in an effort to open up entire Indian market. The film business is open to 100% direct investment from abroad.

Production of t.v. software is likewise permitted to accept 100% FDI, subject to specific government regulations. FDI limitations for cable networks as well as FM radio networks are 49% and 20%, accordingly (FICCI as well as PwC, 2006). PricewaterhouseCoopers' analysis has shown the pattern of FDI investments in India's mass communication. The FM radio venture of HT media is one in which Virgin Media Asian has a stake. Business Standard as well as Financial Times (Pearson Group) have an agreement; Americorp Ventures, Mauritius owns an interest in Nimbus Communications, that deals in television and movies; and Reuters UK as well as Times Global Broadcasting, an Indian company, have an equity sharing agreement. As a result, there are now more alternatives for international homogenous material across all mainstream media. Fears about the exploitation of thoughts by a select few that would be harmful to the democracy fabric have been stoked by the expansion of media corporations and their strong influence. In order to reach a broader audience, the corporate juggernauts have also engaged in fierce rivalry among themselves, churning out news and material that is predominantly characterised by sensationalization, immorality, and glamour. The unsettling tendency in the current media environment is the use of the media in the conflict between competing political factions (Coronel, 2003). In reality, newspapers and news outlets in India are already engaging in this new phenomena by choosing sides while delivering the facts. The same incident may be covered differently in 2 newspapers or on two different television networks.

According to Coronel, encouraging hate speech instead of productive discussion and cultivating an environment of mistrust instead of social trust run the risk of making people sceptical of the democratic system, which might eventually lead to its collapse.

It is important to note that while considering the risks

brought on by media advancements, the Indian press has also played roles that have bolstered democracy. The media has exposed the democratic system's numerous flaws in its capacity as a watchdog. Journalistic integrity in print and broadcast media has aided in the exposure of widespread corruption that has devastated the country. The highlights of the Indian media have included the Bofors Scam, Money for Vote Scam, Adarsh Housing Society Fraudulent activities, as well as the Commonwealth Games Scam. Whenever the bureaucracy, court, or any public functionary breached the laxman rekha, voices were raised throughout newspapers as well as television channels. Attempts to support local media for residents to voice their grievances have also been made. This is a huge advance toward the use of alternative media that is independent of the established order. Participatory communication that starts at the local level is more important in this situation than top-down communications. Several television networks have also provided a platform for regular people to express their opinions as citizen journalists, fostering democratic involvement. Newspapers constantly educated the general public by keeping them informed about advances in science and technology. Additionally, they have made clear how strongly they oppose prejudice as it harms society. A lot of development-related news have also been broadcast on radio. It has become a powerful instrument for communicating concepts that are helpful to the public due to its relative cheap cost and widespread acceptance among disadvantaged areas.

Internet has shown to be more egalitarian than newspapers and television, despite being a more recent entrance in the realm of mass communication (Coronel, 2003). Citizens who are familiar with the internet now have the chance to voice their opinions on a variety of topics. Similar-minded individuals often create organisations where they discuss and argue about various government policies and look for fresh perspectives on the future. The recent changes in Egypt provide an easy way to evaluate the strength of the internet. Facebook as well as Twitter were utilised as social networking platforms to mobilise opposition to President Hosni Mubarak's government (Kuwait Times, 2010). Many non-profit organisations and public services companies have utilised the internet to spread awareness of their projects and those of the govt and other non-governmental groups in order to elevate society. The low communication hurdle on the internet contributes to the development of a participatory environment. Additionally, there is more user empowerment due to increased involvement and media channel freedom. The likelihood of the medium rests in its capacity to provide user-generated material, which allows it to be more customised (Flew, 2009). The risk of advertising dollars affecting media outputs still exists.

Those in positions of significant wealth have the ability to use the media to change public opinion in their favour. The Radia Tapes scandal in the 2G fraud brought to light the relationship between journalists, politicians, and industrial conglomerates (Jebaraj, 2010). Such developments damage the media fraternity and pose a danger to democracy. Current political campaigns now include advertisements in newspapers, on television, radio, and sometimes online. Better-funded candidates have an advantage over their rivals in the election because they can purchase newspaper ads and

significant radio and television time (Coronel, 2003).

2. Conclusion

In the republic of India, the press has a duty that is closely related to the socioeconomic situation. The situation as it stands now is not very positive, and several issues need to be resolved. The public must hold media organizations—whether in print, multimedia, radio, or online—more responsible. Monitoring is necessary to ensure that moral principles and professionalism are not compromised in favour of sensational actions. The people in the nation are fortunate to have journalistic freedom. Nevertheless, when manipulation takes hold, this benefit might go horribly wrong. Anomalies must always be stopped by media companies' self-regulatory systems, which must be robust. To stop the rot, organisations such as Media Indian Council must exercise caution. Significant threats come from large media companies. It is necessary to support pluralistic media organisations that are financially sustainable in order to address this issue. In a nation like India, the press should aim to promote community involvement.

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