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ROLE OF MEDIA IN INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

India is a developing nation which is constantly evolving with the spirit of development, of which progress is an integral part. In achieving the goal of development media plays a very important role. Starting from the days of Indian freedom struggle, the media or the press has played a very significant role in awakening of its spirit of independence. Democracy is commonly defined as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Freedom and democracy walk hand in hand. We live in society today where the media plays a pivotal role in how we see the world. Media acts as an interface between the common man and the Government. It is a very powerful tool with the ability to make and break the opinion of people. Media through its various means of newspapers, television and cinema is what rules the heart and minds of people. Transparency and accountability are a must for proper functioning of a democratic system. Media plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy. It is the backbone of a democracy. Media makes us aware of various social, political and economic activities happening around the world.

KEYWORDS: Documentaries, commercialization, barrel, gadgets, bombardment, democracy, consciousness

INTRODUCTION

Democracy refers to a form of government where people have the right to vote and elect their representatives. Media is just an instrument that helps in promoting the basic principles of democracy, which eventually aims at promoting the right of the citizens of a particular nation. There is no denying the fact that media has evolved in its own ways. It is a term that refers to the components of the mass media, such as print media, like publishing, news media, photography, cinema, broadcasting on radio and television, and advertising. Without free media or press, democracy cannot be successful. As we all know, democracy is the government of the people, for the people and by the people. Also, it is the voice of the people and an important source of information for them. Media is generally considered as the fourth pillar of democracy.

BACKGROUND OF MEDIA IN INDIA

Media in India has a very long history that expands from the colonial past in the 18th century to our present where we are living in 21st century in one of the biggest democracies of the world. The Indian freedom struggle was in a nascent stage, the newspaper during the 1700 was meant for British readers only. The story of Indian newspapers was started by an Irish man named James Augustus Hicky. He launched the first Indian newspaper known as “Bengal Gazette” in the year 1780. His paper was a bit tabloid and bit of a satire paper at the same time. In the year 1822, a social reformer named Raja Ram Mohan Roy began to awaken the Indian Public to be independent through his publications. He started this by his first vernacular newspaper in Bengali called Sambad Kaumidi and other newspaper Mirat-ul-Akhbar. He being a reformer used his publication to raise voice against evil practices such as “Sati”. The First newspaper in Hindi language was “Udant Martand” which was published first in the year 1826 by Pandit Jugal Kishor Shukla. In order to curb the voice of press of the native language, the vernacular press act was brought by the british government in the year 1878. Throughout the Indian freedom struggle several newspapers came into being, which were owned by Indian platforms, one of them was The Tribune, which was shut down after the coverage of “Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919” and its editor Kali Nath Ray was sent to jail.¹

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEDIA IN A DEMOCRACY

Media, in a democratic country, holds a lot of responsibilities. Some of them are:

¹ <https://www.ijlsi.com/wp-content/uploads/Role-of-Media-in-Indian-Democracy.pdf>

1. To provide citizens with fair and genuine information. Media shall not stain the evidences; they shall present them as they are. Their nature should not be manipulated by the media.
2. To motivate the people of a country to think more about what is going on around them, and they can do this only by providing them with information about the events taking place around them. In a country like India and other such countries where there is more illiteracy, it is the responsibility of media to make people aware and educate them in such a manner that they are able to mould their opinions.
3. To bring out matters of social, political or economic injustice that violates the rights of the people.
4. To cultivate a sense of harmony amongst the people and maintain their faith in democracy and judiciary. If the media submits to its responsibilities then the democracy will be appreciated in an actual sense by the citizens of the country.²

ROLE OF MEDIA

Media plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy. It is the backbone of a democracy. Media makes us aware of various social, political and economic activities happening around the world. It is like a mirror, which shows us or strives to show us the bare truth and harsh realities of life. The media has undoubtedly evolved and become more active over the years. It is the media only who reminds politicians about their unfulfilled promises at the time of elections. T.V news channels' excessive coverage during elections helps people, especially illiterates, in electing the right person to the power. This reminder compels politicians to be upto their promises in order to remain in power. Television and radio have made a significant achievement in educating rural illiterate masses in making them aware of all the events in their language. Coverage of exploitative malpractices of village heads and moneylenders has helped in taking stringent actions against them by attracting government's attention.³

IMPACT OF MEDIA

The impact of media is really noteworthy. Excessive coverage or hype of sensitive news has led to communal riots at times. The illiterates are more prone to provocations than the literates. Constant repetition of the news, especially sensational news, breeds apathy and insensitivity. For instance, In Dhananjay Chatterjee case, the overloaded hype led to death of quite a few children who imitated the hanging procedure which was repeatedly shown in most of the T.V. news channels. There is a plethora of such negative impacts. Media should take utmost care in airing or publishing such sensational news. Commercialization has created a stiff competition in media. In order to outdo each other print media has often gone one step further in publishing articles, cover stories, etc. on

² <https://indianlawportal.co.in/role-of-media-in-democracy/>

³ <https://iasexamportal.com/essay/An-Essay-Role-of-media-in-a-democracy>

sex. Media experts say this is one of the means of attracting readers who are glued to T.V. news channels, which have cropped up swiftly in a recent past and they believe this is a cheap form of journalism.⁴

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has played a huge role in setting up the limitation of news. The importance of particular news is now decided by social media and not the editors. Editors and journalist are following that news which are trending on social media. Due to this, the culture of ground reporting is now fading away.

This influence of social media on today's news affects those people who are not active on social media platforms. It's true that social media provides an opportunity for everyone to express their view. But then the trend of fake news has ruined the entire platform by spreading misinformation.

ROLE OF EDITORS AND JOURNALIST

The editors and journalist are behaving very irresponsible these days. In the era of instant news, none of the editors and journalist are following the ethics of journalism. In the process of delivering the news faster than other, no one is fact-checking what they are conveying the correct information or not.⁵

MEDIA AND PROGRESS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

During the period of Indian freedom struggle, print media was extensively used by our freedom fighters like, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru etc. It infused a spirit of Nationalism in the common masses oppressed by the British. It paved a way for the freedom struggle to reach from different regions and combine to become the national freedom movement. Today also, newspapers which are local bring forward the local issues on the other hand the national newspapers focus on national and international issues. Another medium i.e., radio has a wide reach in rural India. There are certain channels which are exclusively dedicated to Farmers and Fishermen, which help them by broadcasting weather related information. Radio is an inexpensive medium to create specialized program for particular regions. Radio is used by the Government to spread awareness among the people in the rural areas. The medium which has the most prominent impact among the masses is television the most important factor behind this impact is presentation, which is audio visual in nature. In the form of breaking news, people get to know about what is happening around the world within no time. Another point about television is that, it is the biggest form of entertainment today, which has a very wide range covering a variety of programs, from daily shows, news and movies etc. The latest medium which has the widest reach around the

⁴ <https://www.jagranjosh.com/articles/role-of-media-in-a-democracy-1314427766-1>

⁵ <https://pscnotes.in/role-of-media-in-indian-democracy/>

world itself is internet. A message circulated over internet can be seen by millions of people within a second. It has become one of the cheapest forms of media to bring any event into light. Our country India, being a developing country, where superstition, caste and class differences create a hurdle in the progress of society, it becomes the responsibility of media to bring awareness among the people in order to fight against these social evils prevalent in the society. Media acts as a tool to remove ignorance and spread awareness among the people. Media plays an important role to promote government policies in order to fight against diseases like Polio, AIDS, Cancer and the latest example COVID-19. Another important aspect of media is media-activism in some high-profile cases like Jessica Lal Murder Case⁶ and Arushi Talwar Murder case⁷ media went an extra mile to unearth the hidden facts in order to get justice for the victim. It was a highly appreciable task of investigative journalism. Furthermore, media a power to shape up the opinion of public related to politics, as well as other different issues. In the world of politics, media holds a great influence in order to bring about a social change. Media as a source of information, if used wisely, will reflect correct opinion of the society. While on the other hand, if the freedom of media is used in an unwise manner will result in framing of an incorrect opinion

CONCLUSION

Media act as a substance for democracy and development, helping to make public participation meaningful .If media is honest and committed in its job, democracy is bound to function more efficiently and the loopholes present in any democratic system can certainly be worked to the fullest satisfaction of the people. Media is like a watchdog in a democracy that keeps government active. From being just an informer it has become an integral part of our daily lives. With the passage of time it has become a more matured and a more responsible entity. The present media revolution has helped people in making an informed decisions and this has led to beginning of a new era in a democracy. On the contrary, if media is biased, corrupt and favours only a particular party or few individuals, it can prove to be very dangerous for the smooth functioning of democracy. No one can become perfect and one can only strive to become so. The same holds true for our media also. Certainly there is still a lot of scope for improvement by which the media can rise upon the aspirations of the people for which it is primarily meant.

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⁶ 6 Manu Sharma v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2010) 6 SCC 1

⁷ Nupur Talwar v. CBI, (2012) 11 SCC 465

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