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ABOUT US

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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF TRIAL BY MEDIA: WHETHER A THREAT TO OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM

AUTHORED BY - BHUMIJA KISHORE

ABSTRACT

Media is regarded as the fourth pedestal of democracy. It is the medium through which all other pedestals of democracy can reach the public. In a democratic structure, it is very important to keep people informed about the affairs of the state as well as the judiciary. Media plays a pivotal role in educating people about day-to-day affairs taking place in society. It is one of the most powerful entities because it has the power to influence the minds of people. People tend to believe what the media tells them to. However, in doing that, the media sometimes assumes the character of a judge and puts its opinions as verdict even before the case could be heard in courts. With the advent of social media, the dissemination of information from one end to another has become quite convenient which has in a way encouraged media trials which are absolutely against the norm of fair trial. Media enjoys an undeniable freedom of speech and expression, but such freedom is not absolute in nature. In exercising the freedom conferred upon it, media shall not intrude into the domain of judiciary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hambali Thalib, Sufirman Rahman, Muslim Mamulai, Hardianto Djanggih (2017) “This research is on Verification through electronic media in Criminal Judicial System which conducted at District court of south and central Jakarta and focuses on how technological advancements have ushered us into a new era of life. Teleconference investigation is similar to how conventional trial investigation was handled immediately and honestly. The function and purpose are related to the judicial process, which is to seek and establish the material truth. This study further suggests that Law No. 8 the year 1981 KUHAP should be revised with the changes taking into account the advancement of science and technology in order to restore the function and goal of the judicial process”.

Sangeeta Gahlot (2018) “In her research, she describes how the public consumes misleading, inaccurate, and exaggerated news which affects their decision making power. There are all sorts of injustices in this country, but the voice of the righteous is important. There have been instances where because of media trials public preconceived certain notions and effect the judicial decision. According to the scholar, media trials today investigate criminal cases with baseless evidence for the sake of proving their competency more in the eyes of the public. The result is defamation and destruction of the accused's personal life. Therefore, there should be a boundary line between freedom of media and right to fair trial”

V.V.L.N. Sastry (2019) “Studies about the influence of media on the public, lawyers, and judges and how media acts as the fourth inheritance of democracy (Ranjan and Kashyap, 2014). The impact of justice on critical cases is higher as it gains prominent media coverage overnight and it often includes public sentiments. Prior to this, there are many theories explaining how the media can affect people at the micro-level (individual) and there had been little scientific research on how the media affects the Indian criminal system. Existing literature and opinion of the scholar proved that media interference and trial affect the judicial system and there is a positive correlation between court verdicts, public sentiments and media coverage in India”.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

“A responsible media is the handmaiden of effective judicial administration.”¹

Media plays a fundamental role in formation of a modest society, however it is known as the fourth pillar of our democratic state. Though, “Lord Macaulay”, the member of British Parliament, first time introduced the term fourth pillar of Indian Constitution. Media became supportive to enlighten people to aware about the social, political, economic, cultural and legal ongoing events in the world.² Originally, the three pillars except media that are mentioned in our Indian Constitution are known as legislature, executive and judiciary. But, the fourth pillar ‘media or press’ was inherent in the article of Indian Constitution³ by the Supreme Court of India through various cases.

Media is widely known to be “fourth pillar of democracy” other than the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary. It has a significant impact on raising public awareness and changing people's perspectives. As a result, free and independent media are required to maintain democracy. Although Part 3 Indian Constitution specifically does not directly provide press freedom, however the Supreme Court of India has concluded in various judgments that the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution clearly encompasses media freedom.

¹ Fali S. Nariman, ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO FREE EXPRESSION IN THE INTEREST OF JUSTICE, Vol 4, CIJL Yearbook, (1995).

² Apoorva Sinha, Article: Media Trial from the Lens of Indian Constitution and Judiciary, LegalDesire, March 14, 2018.

³ Article 19(1)(a), The Constitution of India

1.2 Responsibility of Media

Practically, the Press Council concerned with the issue of press responsibility in terms of maintenance of standards and particularly with the adjudication of complaints about the press conduct but these frameworks done with the both i.e., freedom and responsibility of the press.⁷

The role of media in a democracy is to promote transparency and accountability, and there is no doubt that it performs this role eloquently. In India, the press has unearthed many scams like the 2G scam, Commonwealth Games scam, and Harshad Mehta stock market scam, and it should be appreciated for this. Media also plays a pivotal role in divulging corruption in the system and bringing out the government's inaction on many occasions to public notice, and eventually, actions taken. Nevertheless, conflicts arise when media transgresses its domain and indulges in irresponsible and unethical journalism. Freedom of the press should be utilized for a public cause rather than influencing their minds and usurping the judiciary's power.

The primary purpose of journalism has always been the same: to hold out a mirror to society, however ugly the sight is. With the rise of technology and mobile applications, newspapers in almost every regional language, and the emergence of the internet, news, and information is available to everyone through these different mediums. This tremendous influence makes people aware of the events happening worldwide and regularly informs them of public affairs.

The media also plays a crucial role in decreasing white-collar crimes, wealthy industrialists, corrupt officials, and celebrities trying to eliminate court trials by bribing officials. The media monitors this contemptuous behavior and plays an essential role in unearthing government or officials' huge scams. One cannot deny the role which media plays in shaping contemporary people's thinking. It has done an incredible job of getting criminals to justice in many cases, such as the Priyadarshini Mattoo rape case, Jessica Lal murder case, and Nitish Katara murder case. Due to media recognition, the games played by IPL (Matchfixing & Betting row) brought in broad daylight came to the public's conscience. In these situations, the media has undoubtedly played a positive role.

⁶ Indian Express Newspaper v Union of India, 1986 AIR 515

⁷ Zelman Cowen, The Responsibility of the Media, 298 British Medical Journal, 1508-1511 (1989)

CHAPTER 2 ROLE OF MEDIA TRIAL

2.1. What is Media Trial?

We all are very well aware about the quote of Abraham Lincoln that ‘Democracy is the government for the people, of the people and by the people.’ Here, the very essence of democracy is the opinion of the public and also the opinion of informed citizens. They are important because they are important protections against political leaders' despotism. “Press and Media spreads awareness amongst the citizens making it pillar of democracy.”¹⁰ According to the Supreme Court in *Benett Coleman & Co. & Ors vs. Union of India & Ors*, the drafting committee ever considered such a need to create an article explicitly for media freedom, but it is encompassed by the basic right to speak freely and expression, which is granted in article 19(1)(a) of the constitution.¹¹

Every democratic government needs accountability for its survival. We are aware of the fact that democracy has three pillars i.e., legislative, executive and judiciary but apart from this fact, press is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy and is also considered as the watchdog for democracy. It is seen as such since it allows for more public examination of all the other three main pillars. The public always gains from the press because it bridges the gap here between citizens and the people. Its goal is to use investigative reporting to unearth the reality behind contentious subjects.

In each situation, the media plays a critical role in molding public perception and attitude. In an endeavour to uncover the essential reality in topics of considerable concern, it employs actual journalism and communicates its viewpoint to the general public. The notion of such a media trial is indeed not unique, and it has posed a growing threat for others who seek to circumvent the judicial court system.¹² Media trial in simple terms means the effect of media on trial mostly in criminal proceedings or media coverage on any person's relation. Media built its own public court (Janta Adalat) has started to form public opinion regarding the verdict of the case. It goes against some of the important principles of criminal jurisprudence that is “presumption of innocence” and “guilt beyond reasonable doubt”. In the media trial, the media does the investigation, builds its own case and public opinion and comes out with its own verdict even before the court concludes its trial. In this way the media tries to create a presumption in the mind of the public and even the judges as a result of which accused is presumed criminal, without his rights and liberty addressed.

¹⁰ Lexlifeeditor, Media Trials in India, Lexlife India

¹¹ *Benett Coleman & Co. & Ors vs. Union of India & Ors*, 1973 SCR (2) 757

¹² Howell Collins & Marti Cecilia, Court of Public Opinion: How the Convicted Perceive Mass Media have Affected Their Criminal Trials and Personal Lives, Mass Communication, Paper 96, (2012).

CHAPTER 3 CONSTITUTION AND MEDIA TRIAL

3.1 Media Trial Vs Freedom of Speech and Expression

The Indian constitution guarantees our freedom of speech and expression. Our right to freely express our emotions, thoughts, and other kinds of expression in the open space is what distinguishes India as a democratic nation. The media has a significant impact on our life, both in terms of how we express ourselves and how we influence ourselves.

About freedom of speech and expression: Opportunity can connect with being impartial or coming up short on any type of control or deduction from any power, sovereign or in any case. Nonetheless, no opportunity can be significant assuming it is totally independent. Accordingly, in each situation, certain 'sensible limitations' apply. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration, adopted in 1948, and Article 19 of ICCPR, adopted in 1976, both include the right to freedom of expression and expression. Article 19 (1)(a) of India's Constitution provides that all citizens have the freedom to speak independently of conversation and expression. This includes the ability to express one's self views and opinions directly using speech, writing, printmaking, pictures, or other ways. As a result, it includes the connection of one's ideas across any open medium or apparent depiction, such as signals, signs, and so on. The Supreme Court of India have ruled that the phrase "the right to free speech freely of conversation and thought" should be understood broadly to include the ability to articulate oneself by words, writing, or other forms of media. As a result, it involves the ability to put themselves out by through traditional media or any other forms of communication, such as radio and television. This liberty, however, is subordinate to "reasonable restrictions," such as the preferences of India's sovereign rights and integrity, intelligence services, closer ties with foreign entities, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence, as stated in Article 19(2) of the Constitution.³⁵

Media's role in democracy: The terms press and media have been interchanged. They were created to identify institutions that are primarily responsible for gathering and disseminating news, which includes independent journals. As we all know, the media is an essential component

³⁵ Sharma Gopal, *Law of Freedom of Press and Media in India*, Dattsons; First Edition (4 June 2018)

of any democracy. It reports on economic, political, social, and cultural issues in a fair and balanced manner, free of government intervention. It is an absolute requirement for a thriving democracy. Each of our provisions was carefully considered, and it was a conscious decision not to grant the media any express authority through the Constitution. The people of India have the same power as the country's largest media corporations.

The Supreme Court emphasized in *Printers (Mysore) Ltd. v. CTO*³⁶ that, although media freedom is just not explicitly protected as a basic right, it is implicit in democracy and free speech. In all modern democracies, press freedom has long been a treasured privilege, and also the press is appropriately considered to this as the fourth branch of parliament.

Freedom of speech and expression through the press/media has long been considered an inalienable right, much like the right to life. It is a right that exists independently of the constitution and legal system. The media is becoming increasingly important as time goes on. Today's media isn't just about accurate reporting; it's about reporting first. Thousands of media outlets compete to break the news of who is guilty or innocent, with irate anchors, political spokespersons, Bollywood superstars, and a religious guru with a conspiracy theory, fumbling lawyers stepping into the discussion box. The more sensational the breaking news becomes, the more TRPs the channel receives, which has a direct impact on the institution's cash flow. We have seen open media trials staged by major channels proclaiming whether a person is guilty or not even before the police have completed their investigation in the last ten years. That is, in a sense, the one disadvantage. We've also praised the same networks for airing a story over 1,000 times and pressuring authorities to intervene and take positive action.

India requires positive improvements in the operation of the press or media, but essential precautions must be made to ensure that their freedom of speech and expression is not hampered. In other words, a legislative law replacing or strengthening the Press Council of India Act, as well as rigorous mechanisms for unjust media trials that run concurrently with the courts, should be adopted and monitored. Political sponsorship, or funding into any media agency by any political party or a member of that party, is likewise a source of heated dispute.

“A responsible media is the handmaiden of effective judicial administration³⁷”

³⁶ 1994 SCR (1) 682, 1994 SCC (2) 434

CHAPTER 4

MEDIA TRIAL – A THREAT TO JUSTICE

4.1 Effects of Media Trial

The procedure of trial is essentially carried out from the courts. The public prosecution is undeniably interfering with the administration of justice. The accused should be granted a fair trial, which is a crucial element of any legal system. India is a nation where citizens are interested in hearing about upsetting and greater instances. People create the case in their minds, and the media, by broadcasting its own interpretations of the events in papers, news websites, other news channels, satisfies the public's need for exciting cases.

Democracy refers to a social condition in which everyone has the same rights, regardless of inherited or arbitrary differences in rank or advantage. People may form and engage in a wide variety of activities, such as separate labour unions, nonprofit groups, and free journalism, in a really thriving democratic, all of which strengthen political and social cooperation.

The media trial poses a significant danger to the legal system because it can create a bias against the rule of law or deprive the accused a proper trial. In any instance, a similar inquiry by both the media might put unreasonable and excessive pressure upon that influence future, as well as obstruct justice. The press making a particular effort and assuming the role of judge to pursue the case and pass judgement on the defendant even before government can reach a verdict is completely contrary to the legal system. Furthermore, the media is indeed not permitted in conducting such investigative work outside the jurisdiction of the appropriate court since it contradicts the point of having an arbitration tribunal body in the first place. Because when media sensationalises a case, millions of individuals watching media sources or reading the paper become affected by the establishment's material and create their individual opinions on the case. As a result, one may argue that media trials infringe on the basic presumption of innocence, victim, eyewitness, and all parties involved in the case.

Public engagement and three prominent pillars of something like the judiciary, executive, and legislature are typical of a democracy. Nevertheless, with its increased potential to access every part of the country, the media has emerged also as central component. The media and government are so closely linked that one would be incomplete without one another.

A strong media is an essential aspect of a modern democracy since it serves as a conscientious custodian and watchdog of the country's organizations, attempting to address the flaws in our structure

by drawing them to light in the hopes of rectification.

The media freedom, just like all the other encourage students to explore guaranteed by the Constitution, is not complete and must be practised with prudence. The necessity for responsibility and competence in broadcasting in a republic cannot be underestimated, given its growing power and relevance. Currently, the media has the ability to shape public opinion and influence how people view particular events. "The hand that dominates the press, the radio, the television, and the widely circulated magazine, rules the country," stated J. Learned Hand of the United States Supreme Court, referring to the media's growing significance in today's globalised and tech-savvy society."⁶¹

The role of media in a democracy is to promote transparency and accountability, and there is no doubt that it performs this role eloquently. In India, the press has unearthed many scams like the 2G scam (Essar Teleholdings Ltd vs Regr.Gen.Delhi High Court & Ors⁶²), Commonwealth Games scam, and Harshad Mehta stock market scam (Harshad S. Mehta vs Central Bureau Of Investigation⁶³), and it should be appreciated for this. Media also plays a pivotal role in divulging corruption in the system and bringing out the government's inaction on many occasions to public notice, and eventually, action is taken. Nevertheless, conflicts arise when media transgresses its domain and indulges in irresponsible and unethical journalism. Freedom of the press should be utilized for a public cause rather than influencing their minds and usurping the judiciary's power.

⁶¹ Yashdeep Lakra, Choking Freedom of Press: The Death of Mainstream Media in 2020, ACADEMIKE, (Sept. 30, 2021, 1:16 PM), <https://www.lawctopus.com/academike/media-trial-ssr-20/>

⁶² WRIT PETITION (C) No. 57 OF 2012

⁶³ 1992 (24) DRJ 392, ILR 1993 Delhi 274

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The media are considered the fourth pillar of democracy after the legislative, executive and judiciary. It plays an important role in raising people's awareness and can change the way society sees things. Free and independent media are therefore needed to ensure democracy. Part III of the Indian Constitution does not specifically speak about freedom of the press. In a number of cases, however, the Supreme Court has found that the freedom of speech and opinion enshrined in Article 19(1) of the Basic Law includes freedom of the press. The role of the media is to inform the public. Today, however, the role of the media is often criticized, especially when it comes to reporting on crime. The media sometimes goes beyond its domain and begins to interfere with the functions of the court. Should the media therefore stop reporting criminal cases that directly or indirectly interfere with the powers of the court?

The media began to function as a public court. It is now conducting parallel proceedings with the court. It does not recognize the gulf between an accused, who is presumed innocent until proven guilty, and a convicted person, whose guilt has been proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

In the chapter related to Constitutional and Legal Provisions on Proceedings by the Media, it was explained that "media proceeding" or "proceedings by the media" is a term used to denote the negative effects of television and newspaper coverage of pending cases in court describe. The media often creates an atmosphere of hysteria in high-profile cases that begins with the investigation and continues through to the trial.

Details that are passed on to the media by investigative authorities often tend to influence the outcome of the process. Through public hysteria, a fair trial with logical conclusions often leads to public anger if it is detrimental to the perceptions created by the media and media makers. In a country like India, media-agnostic mob mentality is rare. It's not that all judges are swept up in the flood of media and spokespersons, but it does put them under pressure. Their judgment can sometimes be insensitively criticized if it contradicts media observations.

MP Lohia v. West Bengal State⁷⁵ is one of many cases in which the Supreme Court has heavily influenced the media hearing. It went like this: "Having reviewed the records, we find a

⁷⁵ Appeal (crl.) 219 of 2005

disturbing factor that we need to comment on in the interests of justice. Chandhni's death occurred on February 28, 2002 and the related complaint was registered and the investigation is ongoing.

Media which is being considered as the fourth pillar of democracy, unequivocally its role for building nation in all aspect of growth and development is praiseworthy. With the evolution of science and technology, the process of learning becomes smooth. Media plays a pivotal role to enlighten the general public with the affairs concerning people at large whether it is related to international news, local news or judicial news. It is a way to connect with the people at large.

The true essence of a democratic nation is that the people get to know all the affairs concerning their country and can actually take part in order to put their views through various media channels by conducting fruitful debates. It is the most powerful entities for it has the the power to influence the minds of people. The people is having a firm belief that whatever is shown via media is true and based on facts, but with the advancement of technology and evolution of social media platforms it is very difficult to manage and regulate those politically motivated channels whose sole agenda is to create a different mindset which ultimately hampers with the feeling of people at large.

Back in 90's there were hardly two or three media channels, the main work is to give the brief of all the affairs that had happened on a day to day basis but with the evolution of technology now we are having hundreds of channels which creates a sort of competition among them to show news which is completely fabricated and only polarizes the society and the nation at large.

The role of judiciary also come into picture when we are dealing with media regarding what to express, how to express. The constitution of india do provide its citizens a freedom of speech and expression but again it cant create a disharmony and affect the national interest of our country.

The newly evolved word 'Media Trial' is very must in action with whatsoever reason it is rapidly growing and hampering the true essence of judiciary which is the sole governing body to protect the fundamental basis of living. Media trial has significantly curtailed the reputation of media houses itself and also creates a challenge to the judiciary to tackle it as early as possible.

This research paper holistically aims to configure the encroachment of media in the affairs of judiciary and acts as a path breaker to deliver justice with ease.

Indeed, even Judges come extremely close to analysis which can either be on their legal directorlead in a simply private limit. However, it turns into an issue of concern when the analysis aboutthe Judges is poorly educated or altogether not on the establishment which might tend to sabotagethe confidence of individuals in the legal executive.

A Judge needs to shield himself from such media pressure which can 'unwittingly' impact the juries or the appointed authorities and as individuals, the adjudicators are inclined to some extentsubliminally or unknowingly to such roundabout impacts.

To some extent when we assess media in terms of knowledge it is par excellent to keep general public aware about day to day news affecting them. When we look at other roles being played by media we will configure that it highlights and exposes veracity of matter provided that it is not biased and not politically motivated act to come under limelight.so yes we can say that mediaplays a positive role in exposing veracity of matter.

A complete prohibition of media trial is not possible in this digitalized world but a partial ban onsuch non judicial judgments must be regulated and cannot be compromised.

According to the media brain research, the impact of broad communications on the activities, way, and considerations of people and crowds is called broad communications impact. This impact can be negative or positive.

The pessimistic impacts of broad communications on society can lead individuals towards destitution, wrongdoing, bareness, savagery, terrible mental and actual wellbeing problems and others as such extreme results. For instance, horde hitting honest people by going overboard fromthe bits of gossip spread on the web has been normal. These unapproved news titles are the greatest illustration of the adverse consequence of broad communications on society. Moreover,the instances of kids killing blameless people by procuring weapons are viewed as one of the significant pessimistic impacts of broad communications on the youngsters as they as a rule getsnatched up by inciting reports, activity motion pictures, and games⁷⁶.

Insightful columnists investigate data and do inside and out exploration to uncover reality and to reveal insight into manhandles. An analytical columnist checks current realities out. Frequently,he does as such for an explanation; he may, for instance, have gotten a tip from an informant

⁷⁶ 'How Mass Media Influence Our Society' <<https://www.nimcj.org/blog-detail/how-mass-media-influence-our-society.html>> accessed 10 May 2022.

inside an organization or government office. Or on the other hand the insightful writer himself might run over data that is apparently not OK and choose to examine it.⁷⁷

What an insightful writer needs generally to take care of his business, is admittance to data. There are many times regulations for this. In the Netherlands, the Public Administration Act (Wob) applies. This regulation accommodates the Right to Information. At the point when an analytical writer presents a Wob-solicitation, the person can gain admittance to a service's arrangement archives.

The media has now converted into a Janta Adalats, or 'public court,' and has begun meddling in judicial proceedings. The media entirely ignores the crucial gap between the convict and the accused by upholding the core principles of "presumption of innocence unless proven guilty" and "guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." What is now being witnessed is a second investigation conducted by the media, known as a media trial. It entails establishing public opinion against the suspect or accused even before the court takes notice of the matter, in addition to inquiry. As a result, the public is prejudiced, and the accused, who should have been presumed innocent, is presumed guilty, with all of his rights and liberties unrestricted.

There is a custom that the media shouldn't distribute news about a case while it is forthcoming, particularly on the off chance that it influences the examination. Yet, there are no limitations on distributing the news, which could influence the examination in regulation. Media preliminary is a demonstration that influences the organization of the legal executive is the assessment of the courts. The Supreme Court has denounced the media preliminary in different cases. However, on the off chance that there were no media requests as of now, the veracity of the different cases could never have come to court. For instance, in the Sathankulam occurrence, the courts are examining however then again different realities have become visible because of the media requests. Social activists are of the assessment that regardless of whether the court leads an examination concerning the significant case, then again the media will keep on distributing the request. Also, in comparative cases, when the media brings up that the contentions of the supportive of government police are not right, quite possibly the examination will go focused.

⁷⁷ Free Press Unlimited, 'Investigative Journalism: Unmasking the Truth' (*Free Press Unlimited*, 31 August 2020) <<https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/current/investigative-journalism-unmasking-truth>> accessed 10 May 2022