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ROLE PLAYED BY MEDIA/PRESS IN INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Without media or free press democracy cannot be successful. In simple words democracy is the government of the people, for the people and by the people. In this sense for the active and vigilant participation of free press is essential in a democratic society. It is voice of the people. It plays an important role in the shaping of a healthy democracy. Media is considered a heart of democracy society. As an important source of information it aware the people in all countries of the world. The media is generally considered as fourth pillar of democracy. It makes people conscious of different happenings from grounds such as sports, politics, economic, and social, etc. Media is like a mirror also which illustrates the basic reality and sometimes it may be harsh. The present paper is an attempt to examine the role of media in Indian democracy. To ensure the freedom of media, our constitution does not order to achieve the overall development of the nation. Provide any specific heading, but it provides Article 19(1) (a), which speaks about freedom of speech and expression, this freedom in itself is inclusive of freedom of press. There are certain limitations provided in Article 19 (2), which leads to the judicious exercise of the freedom of press. There have been many judicial instances where different courts, including the Apex Court i.e. The Supreme Court of India has established the right of freedom of speech and expression, which includes different aspects of free media in Indian democracy.

Key Words: India, Democracy, Media, Corruption.

Introduction:

Media is known as the fourth estate or the fourth pillar of the democratic society which comes after executive, legislature and judiciary. It has the supreme duty to establish a responsibility between the government and the people who are being governed by it. Media acts as an enhanced interface

between the government and the common man. Media in every form whether it is print media, advertising media, broadcasting media, cyber media or any other electronic media has become a part of our life. Media acts as an instrument of social transformation which brings awareness, awakening that brings into light the feelings, expectation and every important aspect of life of common man. It is media which provides strength to the democratic values and helps in the development of democracy. Media has evolved with time it was different when the Britishers were ruling our country during that period media was limited to print media but the journalistic practices during that period were a successful tool to boost up the freedom struggle of our nation. During the period of emergency, the freedom of media was curbed by putting different restraints on it. After the period of emergency the media acquired a new role of educating people along with providing information. With the advent of internet and other new advanced technology of media expanded to the farthest corner of the country. The new form of media known as social media came into being and has a great influence on society at large especially the youngsters who are the future of the nation. The freedom of media itself needs to be protected so as to ensure a free press.¹

In simple words Democracy is defined as a government of the people, for the people and by the people. Democracy and media walk hand in hand. The recent years saw a greater interface between the common man and media. People are mostly dependent on it for various wants including information and entertainment. Media keeps the people awakened and there is no denying the fact that it has become one of the major instruments of social change. Media largely influenced the India's freedom movement. Subsequently after India's independence, the responsibility and role of the media was improved but during the period of emergency (1975) the activities of media were strongly controlled. However, the role of media during the post emergency period strengthened again as well as it came much closer to the hearts of the common people. The political, social, economic and cultural areas of India were reflected in the newspapers which eventually paved the way for strengthening the democracy and the government of the people of India. Now-a-days, besides the print media, the electronic media, particularly, the television programs and internet brought revolutionary changes in the pitch of news broadcasting and scrutiny.²

¹ Madhavi Goradia Divan, Facets of Media Law (2013), EBC Publishing (P) Ltd., 34A, Lalbagh Lucknow.

² Ajun Kumar, "Role of Media in Democracy", available at

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/legadesire.com> accessed on 20-January-2019.

History of Media In India

Media in India has a very long history that expands from the colonial past in the 18 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.³

Constitutional Status of Press/Media in India

In this above mentioned context, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar the Chairman of Drafting committee powerfully argued that, “The press is simply another way of describing a citizen or an individual. The media has no superior privileges which are not to be given or which are not to be exercised by the voter in his separate capacity. The executive of press or the editor are all citizens and therefore when they select to write in a newspaper they are just exercising their right of freedom of speech and expression and in my decision then no special mention is necessary of the freedom of press at all”. Hence in Indian constitution the right to press was inserted in freedom of speech and expression i.e., Article 19(1) (a). Free press is the need of democracy and is more important for the huge democratic country like India. In India, in the

³ Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. VII p 780 (2nd December 1948).

absence of any exact article in the constitution for free press, it was the judiciary who promoted and safeguarded the independence of press.⁴

Role of Indian Judiciary in Protecting the Independence of Press/Media

The court in Romesh Thapar VS State of Madras⁵ case has alleged that right to circulation is as important as right to publication. In Sakal News Papers VS Union of India⁶ indirect effort by Government to restrict the freedom, by passing the Newspaper (Price and Pages) Act 1956, which empowered the government to regulate the space for advertisement, which was struck down by judiciary because it would have direct impact on circulation.

Role of Judiciary in Restricting Freedom of Press/Media

In India the judiciary protected the rights of press as well as constrained it in the interest of justice. The court in Bihar VS Shailabala Devi case speeches and expression⁶ on the part of an individual which inflame or boost to of ferocious crimes such as murder, etc. will undermine the security of the state. The court in the case of Dr. D.C. Saxena VS the Chief Justice of India alleged if preservation of democracy is the foundation for free speech, society equally is authorized to regulate freedom of speech or expression through democratic action. The cause is evident, e.g., that society accepts free speech and expression and also puts restrictions on the right of the majority.⁷

Responsibility of Median in Democratic Country

Some of the responsibilities of media in democratic country like India are as under:

1. To train the common man with fair information. Media shall not stain the evidences; they shall present

⁴ AIR 1950 SC 124.

⁵ AIR 1962 SC 305

⁶ AIR 1952 SC 329.

⁷ [(1996) 5 SCC 216].

them as they are.

2. To play vigorous role in expansion the thoughtfulness of people, through allowing them with information. In India like other country where there is major rate of illiteracy, it is the responsibility of media to carry knowledge and widen their opinions.
3. To play a key role in introducing the proper way against the people who are reproached of any antisocial activities, irrespective of any political connection.
4. To foster the essence of harmony and brotherhood among the people, and mount faith in democracy and justice. If the media obeys firmly to its duties then the democracy will be appreciated in factual sense by the citizens of India.⁸

Role of Media in Indian Democracy

Media is considered the backbone of democracy, it playing very significant role in Indian democracy which is as following:

1. The media works as a watchdog of the government and carry every report of the action of administration thereby keeping the people informed about the day to day happenings taking place around them.
2. The media is considered as fourth pillar of democracy. It makes us aware of various activities like politics, sports, economic social and cultural activities etc. It is also like a mirror which shows the bare truth and sometimes it may be harsh.
3. The media also exposes loopholes in the democratic society, which ultimately helps government in filling the vacuums of loopholes and making a system more accountable, responsive and democratic friendly. Thus the democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels.
4. Media acts as a bridge between the people and the government and also a very powerful tool with the ability to make and break the opinion of the people. It has the capacity to swing perceptions or evoke emotions. This is why it has gained faith of the public. Media, through its various means of newspapers, television and cinema is what rules the heart and mind of people.
5. The media has helped to shape the democratic society by giving emphasis to issues that are at one point in time, would have been considered strictly private such as child birth, child care, domestic

⁸ Hicky's Bengal Gazzette: Retrieved from Hindustantimes on 04 June 2021

violence, and sexual harassment.

6. Media in exercise of freedom of expression is essential to communicate the thoughts, views, ideas, philosophy, ideals and activities. Communication keeps society together and cohabitate. For healthy growth of civilization world, the free flow of information and ideas is essential.
7. Modern Methods of interpersonal Media communication include seminars dramas, public meeting and workshops etc. these are effective media methods to address small and medium gatherings, which can be used as grounds for advocating the Human Rights and building public opinion.⁹
8. Media technology has got a crucial role in everyone's life today. Media has got a great job of bringing social change in whatever the topic covers from entertainment to all the ongoing issues. Currently there exists revolution in fighting against corruption in the country. People started realizing the corruption is the element to be eradicated. Internet and social networking sites like Face book and Twitter, along with traditional media like print and electronic are powerful weapons that curb the menace of corruption and lead to greater transparency in public life by policing India's situation vis-a-vis economic and governance, highlighting ongoing corruption cases and applying pressure on corrupt organization and individuals. The free distribution and wide reach of the internet and social media channels is critical in the fight to reduce corruption and renew the social fabric. This can give rise to virtuous cycle of transparent policy making, clean government and faster economic growth.
9. In any democratic country the media plays a vital role in creating molding and relating public opinion. Over the years the media became so powerful that it soon acquires the status of forthstate as it was aptly described by the British politician Edmund Burke. It is become so indispensable for the democratic functioning that Thomas Jefferson who was the third US president (1801-1809) said, "Were it let to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers, without a government. I should not hesitate for a movement to prefer the letter".¹⁰
10. Media today touches almost every aspect of our public life. Media plays a very important and crucial role in enlisting and educating the people. The media can aid public involvement through advocating issues and transferring knowledge, skill and technologies to the people. Awareness about various rural development programs, propagation of family planning could be spread by using the media. It made farmers aware of the new and improvement methods of agriculture and protection of the crops. Media

⁹ Vaibhav Chakraborty, "Media's Role in Indian democracy", available at <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.mapsofindia.com> accessed on 21-January-2019.

¹⁰ Dr. Sukanta K. Nanda, Media Law (2014), Central Law Publications, Darbhanga Castle, Allahabad.

plays very emphatic role in awakening people against many evils prevailed in the society like child marriage, killing of female unborn child, the evil practice of child labor etc. though educational programs, it can cover many student in a single platform. The university Grant Commission telecast educational programs for the benefit of the school and college students all over India. Media can ignite scientific temper among the students for development of science. The government can use the media more effectively to make it an instrument of social change. Media has exposed a number of corrupt practices, hidden deals, thus putting a check on the cancer in the form of corruption in the society.¹¹

Conclusion

The Media is considered as fourth pillar of democratic society. For better working of democracy free press is must. But it does not mean an unrestrained press. The question here arises how and who to control press. The simple answer is there shall be an uplifting the standards of journalism can only be solution. Every reporter must honorably and willfully make an effort not to fall in any trap and raise the standard of journalism.

Media shapes the norms, beliefs in the multi-cultural society. In our country which is a developing nation media gets more responsibility to fight social evil and adopt the change with the changing world. The main duty of India is to supply information to common mass and develop a system so that people can access that information. Media is responsible to bring awareness among the people and this awareness helps in developing thinking i.e., an opinion among the masses. Once people are aware, they will have their own opinion which is necessary to shape up a democratic society. It about making people realizes their responsibility towards nation building. Change in the society cannot be brought overnight but small steps taken day- by-day can lead to a great change in society. In our country the responsibility of media is associated with social and economic conditions. Media in any form whether print or electronic is accountable to the general public at large. The self-regulatory mechanism in media organizations needs to be very strong so that the standards of professional integrity can be maintained.¹²

¹¹ Udant Martand: Retrieved from THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL on 04 June 2021.

¹² Madhavi Goradia Divan, Facets of Media Law (2013), EBC Publishing (P) Ltd., 34A, Lalbagh Lucknow.

Media is accountable to give its audience accurate information without misrepresentation. In addition to it media is like the mirror of the society which informs people and acts as a bridge reducing the communication gap between different sections of the society and further helps in integral feature of the growth of a developing democratic society. Finally, developing one's own opinion. Thus, media presents the outlook of the society which is an essential to have a free and unbiased media in order to achieve a successful democracy.

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