



## **The Symmetrical Functioning of Media and Democracy**

**Ayushi Tiwari**

Ph. D. Student, Mass Communication & Journalism at CSJMU

Email- [ayushi.tiwari70612@gmail.com](mailto:ayushi.tiwari70612@gmail.com)

**Akhilesh Dwivedi**

Ph. D. Student, Defence & Strategic Studies at CSJMU

Email- [akhileshdwivedi877@gmail.com](mailto:akhileshdwivedi877@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*The country has undergone various changes as time and taste have changed. Others had to adjust as some flourished and others dropped. Indian media was one of those things that changed over time to meet its demands as well as the needs of the people and the country.*

*Media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy withstanding that title given the responsibilities that come upon is a major challenge. Our Indian democracy has survived various challenges and hardships in history and one element that played a major role in sustaining this democracy is the media. From the time when India was under British rule and till its independence, the media's role was commendable.*

*With this comes another term i.e. Media Literacy and the purpose of this is for folks to engage in a process of inquiry to help them to think critically about the media and the information they consume. The people are well aware of what they have to consume and build retrospective thinking and accordingly analyse and act.*

*Whatever the media portrays and what it leads to becomes extremely crucial. The paper discusses all aspects of the media concerning our country, including how they collaborate and the impact each has on the other, as well as the changes that have occurred in the media as a result of political intervention and the mindset that has developed among our country's citizen.*



---

*“Just because something is not a lie does not mean that it is not deceptive. A liar knows that he is a liar, but one who speaks mere portions of truth to deceive is a craftsman of destruction.”*

– Criss Jami

## **Introduction**

Without independent media, democracy cannot succeed. Independent media is crucial since it is the loudest voice. However, the media will not succumb to financial or other temptations and will continue to serve the public faithfully. The Bengal Gazette was India's first news publication, founded by James Augustus Hickey in 1800. Since then, other forms of media have emerged. The media has a huge influence on how people think. The media has a significant impact on governance. It is referred to as the "backbone" of a democratic republic. It provides citizens with information that empowers them. The media regulates the discourse so that different points of view on the same issue can be expressed.

The Indian democracy has weathered many hardships throughout its history, and one element that has served as a crucial component in its survival is the media. The media played an important role in India from the time it was under British rule until its independence. The role of the media was universally considered critical to the successful functionality of the democratic republic during the mainstream media age: the media's ability to deliver unbiased information to all inhabitants ensured that everyone had fair opportunities in the democratic process. It was also considered to be the mirror of society and whatever was portrayed through the media was a reflection of the different activities that took place in our surroundings. The media transpired all those activities and helped people get to know the truth and take or make decisions. The media is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy.<sup>1</sup> It's simple to see how the information flow could be influenced and the media's authority misused. The current period appears to be dominated by the media. Fake news, hate speech, revenge porn, and other forms of technology are all too common in today's environment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kumar, R. (2021, August 24). *Biased media: A threat to Indian democracy*. LawBhoomi. <https://lawbhoomi.com/biased-media-a-threat-to-indian-democracy/?msclkid=f631ad5fae5711ecb9e092504c590283>



---

## **Media Before Democracy in India**

Media has a long history to delve into. The different phases that our country has passed is worth noting along with that came the role of the media at every level sometimes to show the reality and other times to tell what other people and the states are up to. India before attaining Independence was under the British Raj which prevailed from 1858 to 1946 as per our history books and ancient teaching, to look more deeply into the pages of the formation of our land it was the Mughals and the Mauryas who ruled the state as well as the people living here. So how did MEDIA take birth? What is Media? To answer this question and see the relevance of what it did in the past years that are being talked about we can elaborate on the end of the acronym itself I-interactive A-agents. Those agents helped the people interact among themselves regarding all the topics that prevailed and changed from time to time. Since there were rulers for so long came the authority of every ruling party. The authoritarian era prevailed in India for a long period and that applied to everything from land to person and occupation. Media, be it of any kind, was also tied up with these authoritarians.

During the rule of the Kings, the media men were produced under that kingdom and the only task they did was to pass the information of the ruler to the people living in particular areas where a kind of interaction took place, and unknowingly media was formed and working. The media had their recognition established when the Britishers stepped in and with that, they brought their printing houses or media houses that did the job of interacting or just ordering would be an apt word. The British were way too apprehensive over Indian media about the amount of press freedom that needs to be given to us. Several acts and laws were passed to suppress the working of the press and also its voice. Acts like the Gagging act, Vernacular press act, Censorship press act 1799, Metcalfe act, Indian press act, etc. Several regulations were also imposed on the media outlets regarding their licensing and registration of them.

All these ordinances handicapped media and the people working there to write what is true and benefit the country which is the work of any media but on the contrary, it was forced to act like a trojan dog and do what it was asked to do thanklessly. Despite such stringent curbs on Indian media it did not fail to show its audacity which could harm them (it did ) but still, the concern did not shudder for the well-being of the citizens of our country. The media and the people associated with that emerged out to be in their actual form during that period Fearless, Factual, Honest and Helping.



Papers like Sambat Kaumudi 1821 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Indian Mirror 1862 by Devendranath Ghosh, and N.N.Sen, Bangadarshana 1873 by Bamkin Chandra Chatterjee, Kesari and Maratha 1881 by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Yugantar 1906 by Barindra Kumar Ghosh and Bhupendranath Dutta, Bombay Chronicle 1913 by Pherozshah Mehta, BG Horniman, Young India a weekly journal in 1961 by M.K. Gandhi, Nav Jeevan by M.K.Gandhi, Harijan another weekly Journal by Gandhi in 1931, Hindustan Dainik 1936 by Madan Mohan Malviya, etc. These are some newspapers, journals, and magazines that were doing the work of fearless journalism and were facing challenges to achieve their goals but still the reformers that started these initiatives kept struggling and fighting but did not lose hope. Many presses got shut down, and many reformers got penalized for going and writing against the ruling British raj but still, they stood firm with the decision they had built in their mind to attain freedom and a democratic country where people are free to speak, write and express.

### **Media association with Politics**

Some things are formed to get associated with each other otherwise they won't look complete. Similar is the case with Politics and Media in our country. In a democratic country like India, the media has responsibilities such as providing citizens with unbiased information, empowering citizens with knowledge, fairly criticizing any action that is contrary to the spirit of justice or the essence of democracy, pointing out concept practices, and playing a crucial role in initiating the proper procedure against people accused of any antisocial activities, regardless of an individual's criminal record.

*“If Media is a bank, then politics is a huge investment that keeps benefiting the bank”.*

In a democratic system, the media reinforces democratic norms and principles while also speeding up progress. The most that are shown or told about is the politics, the people who run those politics, and a never-ending argument if the policies of these politics are right or not. If we dig into the pre-independence era of our country we can still see this association. The government used the media in all terms to let people know what they are up to. Jumping to the post Independence phase the role of the media was tremendous to build our country.

From the time Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru said, *“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom”*. The media helped people know that we are one free nation now. When the government does something for the nation the media must convey



that message to people and make them aware of those happenings and this is how the association helps one and all.

The fourth estate of democracy, the mass media, is meant to make a significant contribution to democracy. As a result, a democratic polity cannot function without a free, fair, and brave media. but sometimes these bonds can prove to be good and bad on both terms. When the Emergency was set down across the nation in 1975 under the rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the media was left with no powers, Freedom of Speech along with other civil liberties of the press was suspended and only that message was allowed to pass which the government wanted through the medium of radio. That was a phase when the press had to face a dark turn due to the government. This was one major example where the association did not feel worthy of being. As the situation began to settle down and powers were getting restored, once again media re-emerged as the watchdog of the government along with carrying out every aspect before the people.

Political culture and political communication keep on changing as the shifts in media-political relations vary. The elections that are considered a huge democracy festival are covered by the media and larger audiences do take interest in knowing about that through various forms of media be it print, electronic or digital.

Not only this, the formation of some mediums was only possible with the help of the government. Broadcasting service was established in Bombay and Calcutta under an agreement between the Indian government and a private firm operating under the name Indian Broadcasting Company Ltd. (IBC), followed by the IBC's closure and the government taking over their assets. Following that, the Department of Labour and Industries renamed itself the Indian State Broadcasting Corporation and began trial operations. Since then, India's radio broadcasting has been regulated by the government. As the state-run radio station, the corporation was renamed All India Radio – AIR – in 1936. All India Radio, the state broadcaster, was renamed "Akashvani" in 1956. (Voice From The Sky). Vividh Bharati (roughly translated, as Variety India) was started a year later, with film music as its core. The Indian radio landscape now includes AIR, private commercial radio stations (FM), and community radio stations.<sup>2</sup> Colour television appeared in India in 1982, thanks to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Different committees played a role in the identification of radio and

---

<sup>2</sup> History. (n.d.). Media Ownership Monitor. <https://india.mom-rsf.org/en/context/history/>



television such as the Verghese committee. Along with that interactive sourcing and performing are always done by the media in all terms. All this shows the long journey of an association sometimes well and sometimes not of both parties.

## Media Biases

We tend to become biased in many strands. Media faces the same stitches but at a certain level, it tends to forget its actual responsibility and inclines towards one side which leads to biased behaviour. Bias means leaning towards something or someone which doesn't account for bad or wrong behaviour individually but being in a position where people expect nothing but fair information makes you delinquent. In India, media bias was rampant in the country's main newspapers, and political pressures drove this prejudice. Political parties make use of this bias to sway public opinion and increase their power.

So, how is this BIAS harming democracy? A biased media blocks citizens from getting information that could be of critical importance for the common public and their well-being. Also, media bias creates a democratic relapse because somehow it doesn't hold the accountability of the government for the policies that are made to boost the democrat's power and belief. Another major reason seen for this one-sidedness is the holding power i.e. the ownership that has become prevalent in the media industry. They show what they are asked to show because the "*media works for common people*" has shifted to "*media works for the powerful people*".

There's nothing to hide that the major news organisations are owned by famous politicians or people who belong to some party or are on good and strong terms internally. The kind of information conveyed by them gives an idea of who they are favouring and also want us to favour. Some common names of the media houses and their owners are listed here such as NDTV- Prannoy Roy is the owner of NDTV. The organisation has a reputation for sympathising with communists. Roy is married to Radhika Roy, whose sister is CPI Rajya Sabha member Brinda Karat (M). Brinda Karat is married to Prakash Karat, the Communist Party of India's General Secretary (Marxist).

Zee News- is a division of the Essel Group. Subhash Chandra, an independent member of the Rajya Sabha from the Bharatiya Janata Party, owns the channel.

Republic Bharat & Republic TV- ARG Outlier Media Private Ltd runs and owns both Republic TV and Republic Bharat. Which is purportedly sponsored by Rajeev Chandrasekhar,





a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Rajya Sabha and the vice-chairman of the National Democratic Alliance's Kerala chapter.

Lokmat- Rajendra Dadra, Maharashtra's Minister of School Education, and his brother Vijay Dadra, a Rajya Sabha member, both of the Congress, manage Lokmat, Maharashtra's most popular Marathi newspaper.<sup>3</sup>

Dainik Jagran- Jagran is founded by the Gupta family through Jagran Media Investments Private Limited, and the owners have served as BJP MPs, thus the paper's pro-Hindu, pro-BJP stance. This is particularly a well-known newspaper throughout the Hindi belt.

These are some very prominent names in the media world and to view as a whole their contribution is phenomenal but also there is an ideology that is being run behind each of them and all of them. The famous activity of gatekeeping that is prevalent in the media industry which means to show what's of major importance and keep the latter away is also decided with a certain frame of mind.

## Media Literacy

The capacity to recognise various media and interpret the information they carry is known as media literacy. Youngsters obtain a significant amount of data from a variety of sources, considerably beyond the traditional media of most parents' youth (TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines). Emails and texts, cartoons, internet videos, social networks, computer games, marketing, and other forms of communication are all accessible. However, all media has one commonality: it was made by anyone.<sup>4</sup> It was also made for a cause. Knowing why is the foundation of media literacy.

Consumers' awareness and understanding of 'information' must grow in a culture where information is pervasive and phrases like "post-truth" are rapidly being the core of our narratives. While it is not unusual for information to be loaded with political, philosophical, socioeconomic, and social objectives, the rise of fake news in the digital era has become a cause of worry throughout political, ideological, economic, and social spectrums.

<sup>3</sup> Pandey, S. (2021, December 10). Top 9 media houses owned by politicians. News Leak Centre. <https://www.newsleakcentre.com/nlc-exclusive/top-9-media-houses-owned-by-politicians/>

<sup>4</sup> What is media literacy, and why is it important? (2020, June 4). Common Sense Media. <https://www.common Sense Media.org/articles/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important?msclkid=d4d2c73aaf6211ec9592f8d2d14827ac>



It is hard to stop the flow of the information through social networking sites and other omnipresent communications networks since large-scale information distribution is no longer just the realm of intellectuals or media sources. It is critical to provide customers with the capabilities to filter, analyse, and even discard facts in such an atmosphere. This approach must correspond to the timeframes of information inundation, which starts at an early age. As a result, it is critical for curriculum, pedagogy, and educational systems to stay up with the times and design strategies for separating factual information and cooked stories.<sup>5</sup>

Media literacy assists people in becoming more informed media consumers as well as responsible and ethical media creators. In a broader sense, media literacy creates abilities that enable individuals to collaborate by encouraging courteous conversation and developing citizenship skills.

### **What do we understand with all these aspects between the coalition of these two-**

People in India tend to believe things emotionally first and then rationally, so anything that is conveyed to them on a national level should be well-formulated and vetted. People tend to follow the media uncritically, thus it needs to fact-check things before showing them to us. One might be a proponent of any medium for a variety of reasons, including belief, thinking, personal attachment, ideologies, and so on, and so have blind faith in it. Keeping all of these facts in mind, the media must function in accordance.

Many famous examples of how the media is trusted and followed can be cited such as during demonetisation people heard the news and were blindly running here and there for the exchange of money without knowing the facts and ways that can be used to make things happen. Our boundary is surrounded by salt so in any case it cannot be finished but one fake news of salt availability to end led to the death of a few people in a mere hurry. The news of shortages and availabilities of equipment during the COVID-19 period was also to the notice by people and the data was regularly considered according to media coverage. The making and breaking of government are judged on the basis of what the media says. People look for job vacancies, land availability, and product buying all of these decisions of people are hugely

---

<sup>5</sup> Bhattacharjee, S. (2019, June 20). Media literacy – A need for the hour. ORF. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/media-literacy-a-need-for-the-hour-52210/>





dependent on media and so it is a clear responsibility of the media to showcase what's correct and not that which is of benefit to them.

Following an ideology is fine but also it should remember people trust a source for any particular reason and that should not be hindered in any sense. Despite the dangers of unrestrained information flow, the growing use of various media has considerably democratised information and expanded its reach, accessibility, and heterogeneity. The concern of being taken advantage of should not outweigh the interest in learning and be informed. Developing a tendency for information is a prerequisite for analyzing it. It's critical to realize that media literacy is not the same as media control. People must never be taught to rely on only a few sources of data while avoiding the remainder. The goal is to impart the potential of making such a judgment based on facts.

### Reference

- Kumar, R. (2021, August 24). *Biased media: A threat to Indian democracy*. LawBhoomi. <https://lawbhoomi.com/biased-media-a-threat-to-indian-democracy/?msclkid=f631ad5fae5711ecb9e092504c590283>
- History. (n.d.). Media Ownership Monitor. <https://india.mom-rsf.org/en/context/history/>
- Pandey, S. (2021, December 10). Top 9 media houses owned by politicians. News Leak Centre. <https://www.newsleakcentre.com/nlc-exclusive/top-9-media-houses-owned-by-politicians/>
- What is media literacy, and why is it important? (2020, June 4). Common Sense Media. <https://www.common sense media.org/articles/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important?msclkid=d4d2c73aaf6211ec9592f8d2d14827ac>
- Bhattacharjee, S. (2019, June 20). Media literacy – A need for the hour. ORF. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/media-literacy-a-need-for-the-hour-52210/>

\*\*\*