



Media as Opinion Framers, A Curtain Raiser pertaining 2014-2017 Elections

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ABSTRACT

Study investigating the effects of the media on voting behavior of elections. The present study showed that the role of the media in influencing election results is generally quite small. The power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the news media, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news. Newspapers provide a host of cues about the prominence of the topics in the daily news lead story on page one, other front-page display, large headlines, etc. Television news also offers numerous cues about prominence. In other words, the news media can set the agenda for the public's attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion forms. The following research provides a better understanding of what media framing is, what it is composed of and how it affects the way news is presented to its readers. The agenda setting theory states that the news media have a large influence on audiences. News companies and journalists have the ability to dictate what stories are considered newsworthy and how much prominence and space they are allocated the formation of words used in a news article creates a vehicle for persuasion that has the opportunity to form stereotypes and generalizations among the minds of its readers.

INTRODUCTION

Title Explanation

A study on "Media as Opinion framers, A curtain raiser". The study focuses on the role of media and how it is conditioning the public at the time of elections and how they are biased to a political party. The study also focuses on how media shouldn't condition the public at the time of elections.

Background

For an election to go well, it must be free and fair. There must be free speech so all citizens and all political candidates can speak without fear. The media must be free to tell everyone what was said without pressure to twist the truth. That is the job of professional journalists to fully inform citizens of the issues and their choices so they can decide for themselves for whom to vote.

Also, the election must be fair. There must be rules to ensure every citizen has a secret vote. All candidates must have equal rights and opportunities to campaign without interference. The rules must be enforced fairly and everyone must respect the results of the vote. Elections are a great challenge for the media. Journalists need to know the election rules. They must report fairly on all candidates, parties, and issues. The media should be the voice of the voters.



Media being an integral part of the various estates of the democratic system, it has got the role of a facilitator in an election. Whatever the ECI wants to convey to the public is brought to attention by media the message of election; instructions and announcements by the ECI; announcement of candidates by various political parties; manifestoes issued by political parties; various phases of election campaigns; the tug-of war between candidates and political parties; campaign tours of political parties; the voting euphoria; the announcement of results; and finally the formation of the Parliament, which culminates in the establishment of a new government. All these processes are to be facilitated and supported by the media. This is what is demanded from the media, and undoubtedly, that has been well performed by the media in various elections in our country.

The most important role of the media in an election campaign is to allow voters to be well-informed about their choices. Another role is to observe whether the election is free and fair. A third role for the media is to report on the strategies the parties are using to try to win votes. Voters deserve to know if a party is making different promises to different people. Voters need to know about party leaders but also party policy and the party's past record.

Objectives

1. How is the role of Indian media at the time of election
2. How is the Indian media conditions in the public
3. Is Indian Media biased towards the political parties
4. The real role of Indian Media as one of the fourth pillar of democracy

1.ROLE OF MEDIA AT THE TIME OF ELECTIONS

For an election to go well, it must be free and fair. There must be free speech so all citizens and all political candidates can speak without fear. The media must be free to tell everyone what was said without pressure to twist the truth. That is the job of professional journalists – to fully inform citizens of the issues and their choices so they can decide for themselves for whom to vote. Also, the election must be fair. There must be rules to ensure every citizen has a secret vote. All candidates must have equal rights and opportunities to campaign without interference. The rules must be enforced fairly, and everyone must respect the results of the vote. Elections are a great challenge for the media. Journalists need to know the election rules. They must report fairly on all candidates, parties, and issues. The media should be the voice of the voters. Journalists must adhere to professional standards of accuracy, impartiality, and responsibility. And they have to work amidst great excitement, under pressure from powerful interests, and with very little time.

1.1 MEDIA IN DEMOCRACY

Democracy is popular because it means the people make the important decisions through elections that are free and fair, and the government respects those decisions. In a free and fair election the people can choose political representatives who best stand for the voters' needs. Through the election process, the people choose which politician and political party they trust to speak up for them, and to deliver what the people want if the party becomes the government. In a democratic election, everyone has an equal right to elect or reject the government. This right is reflected in Article 21 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression without interference, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers.



1.2 MEDIA CONCENTRATION NEEDED ON

Media should keep an eagle eye on few aspects at the time of elections:

Most candidates who share the same ideas about how to serve the people, and are loyal to a particular leader, will belong to one political party. If elected by a majority of all the voters in the country, the party leader becomes the government leader, or president. Or the party that wins the most votes and members becomes the government and its leader becomes the prime minister or government leader. There can be several or even a large number of political parties trying to win the election. Some parties will not have candidates in every part of the country. But the media should provide voters with some information about every party. Some candidates will not belong to any party but they still want to be elected to serve the people. These are called Independent Candidates.

Each political party will have its own views about what is most important, what the party promises to do and why voters should elect that party. These views are called the party policies or party platform or party manifesto. There may also be issues that the people believe are important but that some politicians do not want to talk about. Or there could be statements some political candidates make that create controversy. A professional media will report these issues and ask the political parties to respond.

Information about the election rules and processes are necessary to assist people in participating. This information includes defining how voters can register; the length of the campaign; who will count the votes; how much money parties can spend on their campaigns; rules on advertising and media coverage; and who will impose penalties on parties or the media who violate the rules. The media must watch the process to see how well or if the rules are followed without corruption or favoritism to any one party, or abuse of any group of voters.

1.3 MEDIA ETHICS AT ELECTION TIME

Everything that is reported must be described accurately – the spelling of the candidates' names, the words they use and the precise numbers and descriptions of people, places and things. Candidates and voters can be emotional during elections. Their words must be reported carefully to accurately reveal their meaning, and to explain the context without exaggerating partial meanings. In the news business, reporters will rush to get it first. But their greater priority is to first get it right. Voters will not talk to journalists if they fear journalists will not report their words accurately, or will not describe things as they really are.

To be balanced is to include both sides. When one political candidate makes an accusation or a promise in an election campaign speech, a professional reporter will seek reaction from other candidates and include it in the report to create a balanced story. Looking for more than one opinion helps overcome the appearance of bias or favoring only one side. But the balanced report must also be fair. It may give more emphasis or more attention to one candidate over another in a news story because of the significance of the candidate's words or actions at that event, or at that time. At some other time, in some other story, the balance may change to fairly represent the significance of some other side. It requires more work to achieve a fair balance in every story, but it is essential in professional journalism.

Professional journalists do not accept bribes. Good journalism does no special favours for any politician or party. Good journalism is not for sale. Whenever possible, the media should pay its own way. These are the basic standards which produce journalism people can trust. It is called



professional or reliable journalism. All reliable reporting should be accurate, impartial and responsible. This applies to everyone involved in producing the news – assigning stories, editing copy or sound bites, writing headlines, directing, producing, or managing newsrooms. Any election story that contains information that cannot be verified or is not reliable should not be published or broadcast.

1.4 ROLE OF WATCHDOG

There may be pressure on the election commission from political or other powerful interests. The parties may try to do everything to win the election. It will be difficult for the election commission to catch every trick and abuse that may occur. But the election must be fair and honest if it is to have legitimacy with the people and the world. That is why a reliable media is needed as a watchdog against corruption and illegal activity in the election.

Also, there should be a policy and practice of equitable or fair news reporting about the political parties. This means all parties receive some amount of news reports about them, but the amount of reporting about each party should reflect the significance of the party in previous elections, as well as their significance in the current campaign. One good indicator is the number of candidates. Bigger parties will receive more coverage. This is a policy that the news media should practice as part of reliable journalism.

When the election commission advertises in the media to inform voters about election procedures, it should advertise in all media. Reporters should not show any political preference in their news reports. Their news reports should be accurate, impartial, and responsible.

1.5 POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAMPAIGNS

The most important role of the media in an election campaign is to allow voters to be well-informed about their choices. Another role is to observe whether the election is free and fair. A third role for the media is to report on the strategies the parties are using to try to win votes. Voters deserve to know if a party is making different promises to different people. Voters need to know about party leaders but also party policy and the party's past record.

Most election campaigns are composed of many speeches, party rallies and press conferences. At these events journalists should not just repeat all the words of the political candidate. They should also report details of where the speech was given, what was the reaction of the ordinary people, what did political opponents say later, and how this speech may affect the election. As professional journalists, we are not just repeaters or stenographers. We are reporters. We include other important information in our news stories.

The journalist reports it accurately and seeks someone else's opinion for balance. But it is a journalist's responsibility to report if the candidate is saying different things to different groups, or if the candidate is saying something different than last week. Or if other candidates in the same party are saying different things. Usually, the speech will be interrupted by cheering and clapping, by people who like the leader. Journalists do not cheer or clap because they must be seen to be impartial.

1.6 OPINION POLLS BY MEDIA



In some countries another big part of covering election campaigns involves reporting on opinion polls. Polls can be sophisticated ways of discovering what opinions the people have about the election and how many people hold the same opinion. Political parties use opinion polls to find out what people think about their issues and leaders in the election campaign. Sometimes parties change their policies and their leaders' words in response to the findings of polls. Political parties will also claim that their leader is very popular and urge other people to support the leader. Polls can influence how people vote because people like to know what their neighbours are thinking and may decide to vote the same way.

Opinion polls can make exciting news about an election campaign by showing the political party leaders in a race to be elected. But polls only present a brief picture of people's opinion at the time when they were asked. People's opinions could change in a few days if they learn new information. Opinion polls can get too much attention and may influence voters too easily.

In some countries publishing the results of opinion polls is banned for a period of time before the election because of the danger that inaccurate or biased polls will mislead voters.

1.7 PEOPLE'S VOICE

An election campaign places heavy demands upon journalists. The political parties try to create news and attract votes by giving speeches, conducting news conferences, making promises, and attacking each other's policies and advertising. But an election is not for the politicians. It is for the people. It is the voters who make the most important decisions about whom to elect.

Voters'-voice reporting is a source of news the political parties do not provide. It requires more work because more people must be interviewed, instead of just repeating the words of the candidates. But it is journalism people will trust, because they know it reflects their concerns. If people trust their media, they will also speak up for the media and defend it if the government or other interests try to silence good journalism.

1.8 INTERVIEWING POLITICIANS

Journalists are always asking questions to get information. But this practice is especially important during election campaigns when it may be necessary to interview a political leader and ask several tough questions. Good interviewing is all about asking the right questions.

Before interviewing a political candidate or leader, it is important to gather as much information as possible in advance. This preparation will allow you to understand what is missing in the interview and to recognise when the politician is saying something different than in the past. It is necessary to do research.

1.9 MONITORING THE MEDIA

There should also be monitors of the media, to ensure that the media meets its important responsibilities and that the election is free and fair. Voters want to know if they are well informed by the media. The election commission needs to know that the media provides equitable and fair reporting for all parties. Political parties want the same assurance.

International observers want to know that reporting is without interference by the government



or powerful interests so that the election has legitimacy. All of this is called media monitoring. There needs to be an independent organisation or independent officials to monitor the media.

Media monitoring must be done by respected and non-partisan persons or organisations with no personal gain or vested interest in who wins the election. Monitoring requires professional direction and trained persons to measure the accuracy, fairness, and freedom of media coverage in an election. It can be done by a university or non-governmental organisation or by an association of the media or a press council.

2.MEDIA CONDITIONS THE PUBLIC

Media conditions the public through a possible number of ways in Print, Television, and social media. Generally, we can understand this as, how media tries to push its will or opinion on the people. This can be seen especially at the time of elections. During the time of elections media tries to put its questions, opinions, and ideology into the public sphere by its broadcastings or publications.

Generally, the easy way through which media can put its opinion in public minds is by Exit polls or Opinion polls. What we can understand by this exit polls and opinion polls is what media wants to push into whom and what are their target audience and what are the result out of it.

2.1 EXIT POLLS & OPINION POLLS

A survey of voters in states which hold primaries that is conducted throughout Election Day. It is called an "exit" poll because voters are interviewed as they exit from a polling place. Voters are asked who they voted for, as well as for certain personal characteristics, such as age, race, and sex. (In states with a high number of absentee voters, telephone polls are also used to gather data on vote intention and personal characteristics and the results are then blended together with the interviews conducted on Election Day.)

An exit poll is conducted immediately after people have voted and assesses the support for political parties and their candidates. Distinctly missing in our election discourse this time are the infamous exit polls. The number of opinion polls and exit polls held during the last parliamentary elections was unprecedented and this time, the number was expected to be much more given the larger number of news channels.

However, the Election Commission (EC) finally got its say and imposed a ban which specifically states: No result of any opinion poll or exit poll conducted at any time would be published, publicised, or disseminated. From 48 hours before the first poll to until the last phase of polling. Even circulation by means of any pamphlet, poster, placard, handbill, or any other document is prohibited. The expression election matter in the notification has been defined as any matter intended or calculated to influence or effect the result of an election. EC further specified that panel discussions, debates and interview with political personalities might be telecast, provided they are not in the nature of an election campaign or promoting or prejudicing the prospects of any particular party or candidate.

There are two major reasons behind this move by EC. One is the influence that such surveys may have on voting behaviour. The second is the blatant misuse of such surveys by the media. Studies



on the role of pre-poll surveys by the Centre for Media Studies have established that they do affect voters and campaigns in several ways.

During the 2004 elections, we saw some news media present such surveys (specially exit polls) as an election before the actual election, thereby creating an atmosphere for influencing public opinion in accordance with the interests of the sponsors of the opinion polls and surveys. Another serious charge against the media's use of such pre-poll surveys is that it fixes the parameters of the political debate, bringing to the fore certain issues at the expense of others. Some also argue that these media-driven polls and surveys are an exercise in consolidating and feeding into the prejudices and cynicism that informs the middle class about the politics in our country.

2.2 RESTRICTIONS IN OTHER DEMOCRACIES

In most democracies, opinion and exit polls are common at the time of elections. However, restrictions are also imposed in many of these countries – Canada, France, Italy, Poland, Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, to name a few – extending from two to 21 days prior to polling. The opposition to the ban in India is mainly on the ground that freedom of speech and expression is granted by the Constitution (Article 19). One must remember that this freedom is not absolute and allows for 'reasonable restrictions.

Sixteen European Union countries ban reporting of opinion polls, with ban timeframes ranging from a full month to just 24 hours before polling day. Only Italy, Slovakia and Luxembourg have a ban of more than 7 days. A 7-day blackout imposed by France in 1977 was overturned by a court order that deemed it to be violative of the freedom of expression. The French ban has been reduced to 24 hours ahead of voting day.

In the UK, there are no restrictions on publishing results of opinion polls however, results of exit polls can't be published until the voting is over.

In the United States, media coverage of opinion polls is regarded as an integral part of free speech in elections, and publication is allowed at any time. The only restriction that exists not reporting likely outcomes from exit polls before voting is over on election day is one that news organisations commissioning the polls voluntarily impose upon themselves.

The dissemination of surveys is frequently forbidden immediately prior to the elections in countries that are politically as diverse as France and Peru. In view of the globalisation of communications though, it is getting more and more difficult to impose such prohibition. Its purpose is, however, clear: to permit the electoral organisation to order the rectification of surveys that do not meet the legal requirements before the elections are held.

2.3 RESTRICTIONS IN INDIA

Several restrictions have, in fact, been imposed by the IPC and the Representation of the People Act, 1951. For instance, there can be no campaign during the 48 hours preceding the end of polling. Personal attacks and appeals in the name of caste and religion are disallowed. The use of loudspeakers from 10 pm to 6 am stands banned. Exit polls were banned in 2008 by an amendment to the RP Act and this has not been challenged in court.



While the Constitution allows for reasonable restrictions on freedom of expression, the EC's mandate to conduct free and fair elections is absolute. The Supreme Court in a series of judgements has emphasised this requirement: "Democracy cannot survive without free and fair elections" (Union of India vs ADR 2003). "Free and fair elections is the basic structure of the constitution" (PUCL vs Union of India, 2013 (NOTA Judgment)). "The heart of the parliamentary system is free and fair elections" (Mohinder Singh Gill vs CEC of India, 1977). No one can argue that free and fair elections must be subjected to some restrictions. It is a non-negotiable requirement. Every election must be totally free and fair.

The Supreme Court heard the matter urgently, but did not stay the Commission's guidelines, making the 1998 Lok Sabha elections the only elections in the country in which both opinion and exit polls were banned for close to a month.

After the success of 1998, the EC tried to invoke these guidelines again ahead of the Lok Sabha polls of 1999. But sections of the media refused to follow it, forcing the EC to move court. The matter was referred to a Constitution Bench of the apex court, which expressed concern over the constitutional validity of the guidelines. After the Bench observed that the EC cannot enforce such guidelines in the absence of statutory sanction, the Commission withdrew its plans.

In 2004, the EC approached the Law Ministry along with the endorsement of six national parties and 18 state parties, seeking an amendment to the Representation of the People Act to provide for a ban on both exit and opinion polls during a period specified by the Commission. The recommendation was accepted in part, and in February 2010, restrictions were imposed only on exit polls through the introduction of Section 126(A) in the Act.

In November 2013, the EC held consultations with political parties to revive its demand to restrict pre-election opinion polls as well. All political parties with the exception of the BJP endorsed the suggestion to forbid publishing results of opinion polls from the date of notification of elections until the end of polling. The suggestion was sent to the Law Ministry, but no action has been taken on it so far.

2.4 CASES OF VIOLATION OF EXIT POLLS RULES BY MEDIA

2004

After the first phase of the polls on 16 April in 2004, The Economic Times, The Tribune, The Asian Age, The Pioneer and the Dainik Bhaskar carried columns or news prominently with predictions on the outcome, referring or attributing this to surveys.

This happened even on the television channels. For instance, NTV, a Telugu news channel, put out a 30-minute programme on 25 April with a forecast about the Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh state assembly elections and held a discussion around the surveys.

Similarly, after the second phase of elections on 23 April, NDTV did a review of the days polling with inputs from a professional polling agency. NDTV also features a special programme giving seat projections based on its reporters' feedback and a forecast by analysts. Of course, there was no mention of "exit poll" or even "survey".



2007

In February 2007, during Assembly elections in Punjab, the Commission had asked District Election Officers of 20 districts to file separate complaints against NDTV director Prannoy Roy on charges that the channel had broadcast exit poll-like projections during voting hours.

2017

CASE OF JAGRAN.COM

Many sins were committed when the owners of Dainik Jagran decided to run an exit poll on their website on February 12, 2017, claiming the BJP had a massive lead over its rivals in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

The publication and dissemination of the poll in the middle of a multi-phase set of elections was a violation of explicit guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India prohibiting the dissemination of any exit poll "at any time during the period starting from 48 hours before the hour fixed for closing of poll in the first phase of the election and till the poll is concluded in all the phases in all states." By publishing the results of an exit poll right after the first phase of voting in UP but well before the last phase, Dainik Jagran will-fully violated the EC's guidelines.

AFTER 2017 ELECTIONS

In an advisory sent to the media organisation, the poll watchdog pointed to Section 126A of the Representation of the People Act, which states that "no person shall conduct any exit poll, and publish or publicise by means of the print and electronic media, or disseminate in any other manner, whatsoever, the result of any exit poll during such period as may be notified by the Election Commission."

It observed that some of the TV channels telecast certain programmes projecting the number of seats likely to be won by political parties. This was done during the period exit polls were prohibited.

3.MEDIA BIASED TOWARDS POLITICAL PARTIES

In social structure, media has distinct place to form image about significant political and social issues. Media coverage has major impact on public when it characterises the whole event and provide reliable information about numerous issues such as environment, technology, and risk. Media is considered as a potent source of information and opinion for readers through newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the internet. Various studies have exposed that the public increases their knowledge base about science from the mass media. Therefore, it is important to scrutinise the injustice and misrepresentation of media coverage of serious issues.

3.1 DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDIA BIAS

In general, common of forms of bias arise when the media support or bout a particular political party, candidate, or philosophy; however, other types of bias exist such as advertising bias, corporate bias, mainstream bias, sensationalism, and concision bias. Advertising bias occurs when stories are selected or slanted to please advertisers; corporate bias refers to when stories are selected or slanted to satisfy corporate possessors of media; mainstream bias denotes to a propensity to report what everyone else is reporting, and to evade stories that will upset anyone.

Sensationalism is a category of editorial bias in mass media in which events and topics in news stories and pieces are over publicised to increase viewers. Sensationalism may include reporting about generally unimportant matters and events that do not influence overall civilisation, as well as prejudiced presentations of interesting topics in a sensationalist, trivial, or tabloid manner.

3.2 MEDIA BIAS BY OMISSION AND SELECTION

Media bias also occurs by omission and Selection. Bias by omission means the media leaves out one side of a story, or one aspect of a story. Bias by omission is often related with political news stories. Omission bias is the tendency to evaluate harmful actions as worse, or less moral than equally harmful omissions because actions are more understandable than inactions. It is argumentative as to whether this characterises a systematic error in thinking, or is supported by a practical moral theory. Sometimes the media reports a story from a generous political perspective, overlooking to include facts that support a traditional point of view. Or perhaps the media reports a story from a conservative political viewpoint, without including facts that support a liberal point of view. This type of media bias is often used to define entire newspapers or networks.

3.3 INDIAN MEDIA

An analysis by The Hoot, a South Asian media watchdog, found that although it is difficult to trace the complex paths of media ownership in India, political parties and individuals with political affiliations own and control increasing sections of the press. According to a 2012 report by Business Standard, more than a third of news channels in India are owned by politicians or political affiliates, who use their channels as “political vehicles” to influence the course of local elections.

This is particularly evident in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where regional politicians and their family members have launched television channels that are used for political purposes. Channels like Sun TV, Kalaignar TV, and Makkal TV, which all launched since 2000 and which are owned by local politicians or their families, have used news broadcasts to provide favourable coverage to one party or another. Some of these channels have also refrained from coverage of issues that may cast the party with which they are affiliated in a negative light. For example, during the run-up to the last major election, in 2009, Sun and Kalaignar avoided coverage of alleged atrocities against Tamils in nearby Sri Lanka, in an effort to shield from criticism the regional party to which they are tied.

Although India is heralded as the promised land of journalism, with more than 80,000 print publications and close to 400 news channels at a time when the media industry elsewhere faces



shrinkage and uncertainty recent events underscore that the huge number of outlets do not guarantee widespread independent coverage in the world's largest democracy.

3.4 BIASED SHOWN THROUGH OPINIONS

From March 6th to 10th "THE PIONEER" published a series of editorials on the Delhi University issue.

The article titled with "HOW TO WIN THE BATTLE, BUT LOSE THE WAR" --The writer of the editorial is the Managing editor of "The pioneer", has made an open statement as follows:

"While this writer still supports the Modi Government, it is also true that the dispensation should have a credible opposition to its policies and pronouncements. Yet, it is also apparent that those opposing Modi are hypocrites of the highest order. According to them, and their enablers in most of the English-language media feel that only their view counts as 'freedom of expression'. This is best encapsulated by Left-wing propagandists on social media who happily dub others as trolls, whereas they indulge in what is described as 'troll-bait' and spread misinformation and lies. They're usually no better than trolls themselves. In fact, many who claim to be subjugated by 'Right-wing' or 'Hindutva' trolls are trolls themselves, but because they are opposing the Prime Minister, they don't see themselves as such."

4.THE REAL ROLE OF MEDIA AS ONE OF THE FOURTH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

"The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses" - Malcolm X

4.1 4TH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

Today, media is considered the fourth pillar of the state all over the world; first and foremost, British Member of Parliament Lord Macaulay had given this status to the media. In any republican government system, there must be three administrative bodies, 1- Parliament, 2- Administrative department, 3- Judiciary body. In the absence of any of these three bodies, the government cannot run systematically, but now it is felt that one body more is necessary to be with them, that is 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 economical 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.

India is a country characterised by a diverse population comprising people belonging to different religions, castes, communities, sects etc. Though generally they can all be found living together in peace and harmony, the nation has from time to time also witnessed several instances of serious communal tension or conflict. In times of such conflict the onus is primarily on the Government and on various other agencies to try and restore normalcy in the country. Among all these agencies the Media is probably the most powerful single influence today, helping mould public opinion



with regard to the need of fostering friendly and harmonious relations between various communities and religious groups and thereby also promoting national solidarity.

4.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Media has been a major champion in promoting the cause of communal harmony in the country. Historically, right from the days of the British rule the Media (at that time limited to the print format) has been a very vociferous supporter of communal peace and harmony and the importance of getting united to fight the common enemy, the British. Role of Media in Promoting Communal Harmony on thinking of those times and the important role played by the Media then, the foremost example that comes to mind is that of the anti-partition movement launched by the Indians as a response to the administrative decision to partition Bengal in 1905.

The incidents which came as a major shock to this normalcy, however, were the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992 and the communal riots in Mumbai. Not only did they shake the foundation of Secularism in the country, but also presented a major challenge before the Media to prevent the building up of any more communal resentment and discord. The Media however did not belie these hopes and living up to the challenge, not only reported the actual demolition but thereafter also continuously condemned it to the utmost. The various TV channels and the virtual chat rooms became hotbeds of discussion through which the Press and Electronic Media tried to formulate some public opinion about the issue.

Later on too during incidences like 2002 Gujarat violence that followed the Godhra train burning, terrorist activities such as the 2005 Ram Janmabhoomi attack in Ayodhya, the blasts in markets in Delhi (when Eid and Diwali both were falling only one day apart from 'each other), the 2006 Varanasi bombings, the 2006 Jama Masjid explosions, the 11 July 2006 Mumbai train bombings, and more recently after the Ahmedabad and New Delhi blasts in 2008, the various agencies of mass media all condemned the incidents and made the utmost efforts to maintain communal harmony by going to the affected areas and bringing forth examples of people from different communities living together in peace, helping each other despite the prevalent communal tension etc.

4.3 DEMOCRACY: A BOON TO THE FOURTH PILLAR

It is a fact that a home is made up by the fourth pillar. Similarly, state of affairs is with the word "Democracy". Like a home, as we all know media is considered as a fourth pillar of democracy of the state around the world. The other three administrative bodies are Parliament, Administrative Department and Judiciary. In absence of any of three bodies, the government fails to run as it should be.

But today the media is with them for healthy democracy. Media plays a role as an instructive bridge in between the governing bodies and the general public. Thanks to The British Member of Parliament Lord Macaulay did give the status to the media.

4.4 IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN TODAY'S WORLD

Without the presence of thought provoking, mind dominating, opinion swaying media, we would as societies be lost and disconnected with each other. We have access to the media almost every



day by surfing the net, reading newspapers and magazines, watching television and by listening to the radio. In today's era of information technology, media has a deep impact on how we think and react. One can identify a leading role undertaken by media in Australia's multicultural society, where media actively publicise and celebrates national harmony day to foster communal harmony.

Media's role in modern society is unchallenged. What we need however is socially responsible media, "to contribute to a more cohesive, equitable and harmonious international society." One cannot rely upon a single entity to take decision for peace building but a significant role in this respect has to be played by civil society through communication and manual efforts, by technology that provides means to communicate, work, trade and share advance knowledge, above all by media that provides realistic interpretations of reality and a merge of these communication kinds through the advanced innovative approach for policymaking, crisis management and peacemaking.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that media should not be biased regardless to the personal opinion. Hying political agenda and polarising through opinion polls has been seen during the time of election. On the other hand, once a practice gets embedded, it's hard to root out. The incentives in journalism today, everything from getting a story to go viral to acquiring a reputation as a hard-hitting reporter, encourage journalists to engage in criticism and attack.

To be sure, changes in journalism are not the only reason that campaigns have become more negative. The party polarisation that has seeped into Indian politics during the past three decades has been accompanied by rising levels of partisan attack. But to claim that party polarisation explains the media's negative bent is to ignore the fact that the press's negativity is not confined to party politics. There's barely an aspect of public life that is not subject to intense criticism. Thus media should act like a watchdog and ignore public stunts to manipulate the news and the public.

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