



## THE POLITICAL MEDIA- A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT INDIAN MEDIA

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### ABSTRACT

#### Introduction

“The Press is another way of stating an individual or a citizen.”

#### B.R AMBEDKAR

In India, freedom of press is implied from the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. Media is being considered as the fourth estate and the fourth pillar of our democratic society after the executive, legislature and judiciary.

The media plays a vital role in a democracy; informing the public about political issues and acting as a watchdog against abuses of power.

#### Purpose

The aim of this paper to highlight that how the media is getting politicized and affected by getting into the hands of the political parties or specifically under the ruling party. And we will be analyzing the current India and the policies of the media as to how political the media has become.

#### Methodology

This study is based on critical analysis of past events and practices, various codes, acts and rules as well as on reading of public documents and research papers.

#### Findings

While doing this paper we have mentioned how back in history the media was controlled by the Britishers and at the time of emergency and how many journalists have fallen to the prey of the ruling government and a slight over view of the world which tells us about as the rule established has always made it difficult for the media to function independently.

#### Conclusion

If you control public communication you can control the way people think and how they behave.

Today most media platforms speak the same language. The society which falls within the ambit of their influence is left with very limited options to seek facts. For instance communalism has already been covered with the garb of nationalism. The media has now begun to present communal attitude as valid legitimizing them as nationalism.

#### INTRODUCTION

“The Press is another way of stating an individual or a citizen.”

#### B.R AMBEDKAR

This quote vehemently describes the importance of media i.e. to raise the voice of an individual to the state, and to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong independently. But currently the Media world has changed suddenly and has come under massive criticism as it is getting fully controlled by the political parties.

The former American Minister Malcolm X said; “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”.

Media is often regarded as the fourth pillar of the democracy. It has been vested with a lot of responsibilities to maintain a relationship between the Government and the people. The subjects are heavily dependent upon the media for the news.

The freedom of speech and expression is a Fundamental right which enshrined under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India and the freedom of press and media is implied under this statute.

Political parties have undermined and sorted out the ways to regulate the Media and even control the mind of the people so they have used all ways to capture media.

This has always been the case with media as they been always controlled and used by the political parties for their benefits. The high profile Republic TV, majority of the shares of the channel are being owned by the member of NDA. And if any channel tries to speak the truth or analyze the working of the political party or to dissent from any policy of the government, either it is banned for a day or two or is threatened on work, For E.g. NDTV India and journalist are not allowed to do their work as they are threatened now and then.

### **WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX**

The World Press Freedom Index is the measure of level of freedom available to journalists. It is of 180 countries around the world and it is being studied since 2002. There are various things which are taken consideration which assessing the data i.e. media independence, transparency, etc.

We slipped two ranks on the 2018 World Press Freedom Index (138 from 136) even below our rivals Pakistan. The reason for this downgrade is simple there has been many prominent killings of the journalist in 2017 as well in 2018. Gauri Lankesh was killed during this process. There nothing as such criticizing the government those who do suffer the example is Gauri Lankesh who was murdered and mocked over social media. Times have been very dark and for the press and the journalists.

### **HISTORY**

#### **STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE**

The British India was the period of strict control over media by British Empire. The British were well aware of the power of media and how it helped the masses rallying; this made the British Government fear the freedom of press. Hence, during the British rule several acts like Censor Act 1799, Licensing regulation Act 1823, Vernacular Press Act IX 1878, Newspaper Act 1908, Paper regulating Act 1942 were passed.

One such act was the Gagging Act which was passes by Lord Lytton to stop the uprising against the Government through words. The British Government tried all means to control the India Publications. The act made it necessary to apply for license from Government so as to make sure that the Indian Publications were not writing anything against the Government. The media, however, stood unaffected and this act did not stop the media from publishing the news. This made the Government to shift to more severe methods. The Government was now



more focused to regional vernacular publications.

One such incident was when the Bengali Weekly Publication, Amrita Bazaar Patrika's editor denied handing over the final approval of editorial content to Sir Ashley Eden. Such events made the Government pass the Vernacular Press Act, through which the British Government claimed stronger control over these regional vernacular newspaper so that the "seditious writings" in publications could be put to an end.

The Press Act of 1910 smacked the Indian Paper hard. Under this Act nearly 1000 papers were prosecuted. A number of editors were charged with Sedition. It did not take long for the Government to pass the Press Emergency Act of 1931.

At the time of World War II, when India was forced into the war, the Congress Party protested. The Government out of fear made censorship even more rigid and the punishment more severe. It controlled and filtered International News that was coming in and consciously manufactured news in propaganda. There was pre-censorship of media relation to certain matters. The media lost itself to the Government.

### **EMERGENCY OF 1975- INDIRA GANDHI GAGGING MEDIA**

Indira Gandhi knew that elections were due in one year. She also knew that she made promises in 1971 elections which were still bare. The only escape she could see was the declaration of the Emergency and media was its first causality. The Government enticed and threatened the media to become their mouthpieces.

A political leader and writer, Era Sezhiya was shocked to find out that most of the newspaper and websites made conclusion that the Shah Commission Report which contains the background of Emergency and all the investigations done to review specific cases and misuses of power during Emergency has disappeared, claiming that no copies exist. The disapproval of report by the media and the Government gives us a brief of attempts of the control of politics over media. All the attempts were made to erase the history of Emergency.

The Emergency of 1975-77 is the most shameful period in the history of media. It was controlled by the Indira Gandhi Government and had to submit to total censorship. Media at that time was printed i.e. it comprised of newspapers and magazines. To release the editions they depended upon electricity supply. The Government so as to cause delay or cancellation of newspaper for the next day, cut off the power supply in Bahadurshah Zafar Marg because four of the newspapers were located there: The Express, The Times of India, The Herald and the Patriot.

The then Information and broadcasting minister, Inder Kumar Gujral was slammed by Sanjay Gandhi even before the declaration of emergency because he felt that the "expected spin" to the news was not given by All India Radio and Doordarshan. He was also criticized for not telecasting Indira Gandhi's massive Club rally live on television by Sanjay Gandhi. The chain of criticism continued. Gujral was blamed to have forgotten to cut off the power of newspapers located at Connaught Place namely, Hindustan Times and Statesman. The Political leaders at no cost wanted any



news to slip off their hands Indira Gandhi demanded to see radio and television scripts of all news bulletins. Gujral protested and was soon replaced by VC Shukla who acted as a puppet of Gandhi family.

The government expelled foreign correspondents. Seven foreign correspondents were expelled and 29 others were banned from entering India. The Centre withdrew accreditation of 54 Indian journalists including six photographers and two cartoonists. Most of them were active in New Delhi and known for their critic of the government policies and action. More than 250 journalists had been put behind the bars during Emergency.<sup>1</sup>

### JOURNALISTS - A PUPPET

Journalist getting fired for showing the truth, Journalist threatened for exercising freedom of speech and expression, Journalist getting killed for speaking truth. This is prevalent in 'New India' people don't want to see the truth and well if someone is criticizing the Government policies and their working. Isn't dissent an option? Punya Prasad Bajpai reveals the story behind his exit from news channel his editor in chief called upon him and had a conversation that he should avoid mentioning the name of the PM Modi and stop aiming and criticizing the policies of the government the whole show was telecasted under surveillance and ultimately Punya Prasad was fired from his own show masterstroke.

### GAURI LANKESH

*"The idea that the IT cell of the BJP is using this episode as a tool to threaten other journalists is what is shocking."*

### -Gauri Lankesh

She heavily criticized the working, drawbacks and short comings of the government of the NDA Government and exercised her freedom of speech and expression. Then in Bangalore Gauri Lankesh was shot returning back home with four bullets. After her death she was severely mocked over the social media and the people who mocked her were followed by PM Narendra Modi on social media and she always stood for the truth and that might be reason for her death in New India.

### RAVISH KUMAR-FREE VOICE

Ravish Kumar in his famous book The Free Voice writes; "Rumors and fake news have always been the preferred weapons of fascists and majoritarian fundamentalists in democracies. By inciting mobs to fulfill their agendas, they use democracy to subvert and destroy democracy itself. Their perverse logic is this: if democracy is the will of the majority, is not a mob the majority? And which political party can afford to criticize democracy? They also know that a mob cannot be named, arrested, tried and convicted, so murder and intimidation can carry on unchecked".

And he further adds and critically states as what media has become? He says that "The web of lies, the motivated twisting of facts and the building of false narratives-none of this happens overnight. It is done over

<sup>1</sup> Prabash K Dutta, When media was muzzled: History retold, India today, 3 August 2018



months and years and on a large scale. It begins at the top, in the corridors of power. The results are seen in the streets. After months of malicious propaganda about cow slaughter, a man was pulled out of his house and lynched by a mob of several hundred people, many of whom had been his neighbors for years.”<sup>2</sup>

There have been various journalists who have been portrayed as the puppet of the ruling government who has always defended the shot comings of the ruling party and often taken a stand which has disrupted the social order of the country whether it is ZEE NEWS or AAJ TAK. Those who don't have their own tongues often they speak what they are made to speak this has destroyed the fundamental principles of journalism.

### **MEDIA TRIAL- A MOCKERY**

When the matter is sub judice, trial by media is not permissible as held by the apex court. The SC in the recent case namely in *Siddhartha Vashisht v. STATE (CT of Delhi)* reiterating their earlier observations cautioned the Article 19(1)(a) did not permit the media interfering in the administration of justice in matter sub judice.<sup>3</sup>

While the fourth and essential pillar of democracy, the media, every night at 9 p.m. seems to organize a debate, a panchayat or moreover a court which inculcates or even influences the audience that a person who is an accused yet to be proven guilty is a actually guilty.

If we look at the unfortunate Aarushi murder case the trial by media cannot be appreciated as they solely accused the parents for the murder but the CBI didn't find any clue

regarding that and the final sentence came after many years. Now if we go and search for recent example of media trial and if we look closely we will find some political motives related to the same and one such example is Kathua rape case.

### **KATHUA RAPE CASE.**

Dainik Jagran is regarded as one of the leading newspapers, while sipping tea in the morning majority of the people get the glance over the front page to know what's happening around the globe so this leading newspaper alleges that the eight year old Kathua victim wasn't raped.

And it even mentioned that there are two post mortem reports submitted by the doctors to the Jammu crime branch. The media portrayed it as communal issue even marches in support of the accused were organized and tri color was used in the march for a rape accused.

### **ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY**

On May 2 2019, the AMU students' union had invited former Vice-President Hamid Ansari, he reached the campus and he was suppose to be conferred with AMUSU lifetime membership, later ABVP and HYV members, escorted by policeman, marched towards the guesthouse with arms in their hands where the former VP was residing.

On the very day when this incident the students who gathered near the incident spot planned to file an FIR regarding the incident and demanded strict actions to be taken against the anti social elements who deliberately wanted to destroy the peaceful environment in the campus during this when the students moved towards the police

<sup>2</sup> Ravish Kumar, The Free Voice ,Pg 60.

<sup>3</sup> Dr.Sukanta K. Nanda, Media Law, Pg 24, 2014.



station to lodge FIR they were not lathi charged but brutally attacked by the police and that can be seen in the videos circulated later. Later in the evening all the media houses portrait this as AMU students protesting for the Jinnah picture which is in hanging on the walls of the union hall as they want to keep it but we meant it really very clear that Jinnah is a part of our history not our faith.

Media houses like NDTV India clearly pointed out that the students of AMU are protesting for the picture of JINNAH but later after a day or two when the picture was much clear AAJTAK clearly covered the scenario and reported the truth. The protest was against the anti social elements that came to disrupt the social order of the university and they have been targeting Aligarh Muslim University for quiet a time.

### NAVJOT SINGH SIDDHU CONTROVERSY

Navjot Singh Siddhu the former cricketer of India was invited for the oath taking ceremony of the newly elected PM of Pakistan, Imran Khan this beautiful gesture among the two former cricketers turned out to be quiet controversial as the Indian media criticized it as he shared a hug with the Pakistani Army Chief. Previously our late former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had travelled on the bus to Lahore. On the occasion of the birthday of the then Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unscheduled trip to Lahore in 2015, on his way back from an official visit to Afghanistan.

Later in Bihar court a case of sedition was filed against the former cricketer for insulting

the feelings of Indian Army by hugging the Pakistani chief. Twitter became trial courts and troll media was active destroying the image of the Former cricketer and Media trial was the only way to get Siddhu convicted.

### LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2014

Media astonishingly won the BJP and Narendra Modi the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 all over the news panels there were debates regarding that Modi are only the option to the new India in making. Social media had its own influence over the masses as it played with minds of the people while they were even playing normal videos on YouTube. Slogans like were given but later they only described as the persuasive jumlas which was used by the BJP to contest the elections. Advertisement, social media, fake news, IT cell all played crucial role in the making of new stand in Democratic India and all sorts of tampered history and WhatsApp created information's were all over circulated.

WhatsApp has become such a big disease that whatever the people are being told in the course of the day they believe it blindly and there was sense of fear created among the majority regarding the minority, issues were saffronised and communal discourse started prevailing over the tea stalls. We Indians always had an issue that apart from Our Gods we have often idolized the politicians when we idolize a politician we often lose the character of a citizen and we are only left with being a devotee of that particular person.

*“bade logon se milne mein hamesha fasla rkhna”*

*“jahan dariya samandar se mila dariya nhi rahta:”*



If you support anyone or you meet a person with a bigger personality always maintain a distance in between cause once a river falls into ocean is no more a river. In 2014, Narendra Modi became the second most-liked politician on Facebook.

### **DEMONETISATION A SUCCESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Demonetization was shown as a huge success by newspapers and news channels under the political influence. It was regarded as the bold step by the government by many top leaders but it soon turned out to be a failed step. And RBI Report revealed that 99% of scrapped currency notes came back. And further the ministers were given the homework to tweet #demonetizationsuccess. This political influence over the media created a Halo around this blunder called Demonetization. There was all over one sided debates on news channels like Zee News, Republic, India TV, News18 India to justify Modi's currency gamble.

Media went a step further and they even started declaring the people as anti nationals who dissented with the steps and put forth the argument that the army personnel who is guarding the border is also sacrificing for the country and you can't even make through the line for the wise step taken by our PM but it all turned out into a failed step. The daily wage earners had to let go of their daily earnings so as to wait in the lines to hide this failure the Government later came up with the defend that the aim of the move was to make India a cashless economy. The same made headlines in the news channels but recent RBI report shows that have again started to keep lots of cash as savings. Even

the increase in digital transaction is not enough to justify such an extreme move that weakened the Indian economy.

ANI is considered very close to the Government so they created a fake tea stall owner one of its own journalists which were later exposed by a twitter user of which they later apologized. . One thing common for both the rich and the poor was exchanging notes on discount. The only difference was the poor did it not to starve and the rich to get something out of their unaccounted cash. The media did not show this side of Demonetization.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD**

#### **OBAMA TOO FAMOUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Barack Obama, the former President of United States of America, is the third most popular person on twitter with around 103 million followers. Social Media played an integral part in the victory of Barack Obama in the United States Presidential Elections 2008 & 2012. His campaign was all over the social media networks like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Social Media strategy of Obama was crafted in such a way so as to bring transparency & accessibility, organized by a team of young people who presented the president in the desired way keeping the tone positive, articulate and appropriate on social media. The team gave directions to the president so as to grab opportunities to be win hearts of the masses. Media has always helped candidates in winning the Presidential Elections. For Thomas Jefferson, it was Newspapers for John F. Kennedy, it was Television and for Obama, Social Media



served the purpose of capturing the eyes of the masses.

### **VLADIMIR PUTIN IS A NEWS JUNKIE**

After assuming the presidency, Putin took control over major news mediums across the country. It was not only the State media that was under his command but privately owned broadcast media also came under Kremlin's control. Putin's Government suppressed the internal media networks which reached the majority of the population. News Channels regulated by the State are streamed with Kremlin's messages and the independent ones were pushed to extinction.

In the first days as President, the Government Security forces seized the documents of an independent news channel, NTV that was gaining popularity. Later the justification was given that owner of the channel; Vladimir Gusinsky owed his creditor \$300 million and did not pay them back. NTV now has been politically neutered or conforms near to Kremlin's point of view.

Putin's Government has been manipulating media's coverage of the happenings to influence people not only domestically but internationally. Media mirrors the state. Putin has turned media into a weapon to manipulate public opinion.

### **CHINA – CENSORING PEOPLE'S MIND**

Talking about political control of mass media there cannot be a better example than China. One such example is that of a student who gave her speech at University of Maryland. She compared the life at United States of America to that of China. She described how in her growing years she saw the control China had over the media and praised USA for the freedom here. She was called a traitor

for the speech and accused of going against the State.

Government's strategy to control minds of the people demands strict media control using monitoring systems and firewalls, shuttering publications or websites and jailing dissident journalists, bloggers and activists. Incidents like the clash between Google and Chinese Government Norwegian Nobel Committee's awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese activist Liu Xiaobo who was jailed fighting against this despotism over media led to increase of Global attention over this issue. In China, the media has no freedom of Speech. People see what the Government wants them to see. The people of China have been shut off from the world.

### **CONCLUSION**

Media has an important role to play in a democratic society. The job is to keep the society informed about the happenings which have a direct or indirect impact on it and draw conclusions. Where do we go? Without media democracy cannot function effectively. To make accountable to the people, an independent autonomous public institution like the Media Council is, therefore, a constitutional need. In some countries, it is established by the various constituents of media as a voluntary organization, while in other countries like ours, it is constituted by the Legislature under a statute. These bodies by whatever name they may be called whether voluntary or statutory evolve a code of conduct or of ethics for the media with regard to honesty and



fairness, duty to seek the views of the subject of any critical reportage before publication.<sup>4</sup>

Today most media platforms speak the same language. The society which falls within the ambit of their influence is left with very limited options to seek facts. For instance communalism has already been covered with the garb of nationalism. The media has now begun to present communal attitude as valid legitimizing them as nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

Various spokespersons of the ruling party get favored by the news anchor and even communal comments mixed with the view of polarizing the people are made and are often regulated all over the media even the various spokespersons are invited to organize debates on these channels they vow to stay impartial but unfortunately the family of politics they belong cannot be separated from them and all this has degraded the level of fourth pillar.

A powerful fear is created over maniacal debates on TV channels. Many news anchor swarm like fearsome attackers all over who ask questions. The common viewer of TV channels see this and starts losing confidence. He can see what becomes of those who raise questions. He feels that there is danger standing apart from the mob. This is how the politicization of media works and inculcates fear in the minds of the people.

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Sreenivasulu N.S. and Somashekharappa M, Media freedom- dimensions, Indian bar Review, Vol XLI (1), 2014, pg 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ravish Kumar, The Free Voice, Pg 39-40.