

## Role and importance of the press and media in Indian democracy

**Dr. Upasana Sharma**  
**Associate Professor**  
**(Pt. J.L. Nehru Govt. College, Faridabad)**

"I would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated press."

- Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

### **Abstract**

The role and importance of the press in a democracy is well recognized. Article 19(1) (a) of the constitution of India, which gives freedom of speech and expression includes within its ambit, freedom of press. Media is not only a medium to express one's view, but it is also responsible for building public opinion on various topics of regional, national and international agenda. Democracy is the rule of the people. A system which has three strong pillars. But as Indian society today has become somewhat unstable on its 3 legs. The executive, the legislature and the judiciary, the guarantee of Article 19(1) (a) has given rise to a fourth pillar i.e. media. (In a civil society no right to freedom can be considered absolute). The freedom of the media has to be exercised within reasonable boundaries with great power comes great responsibility. Similarly, the freedom under article 19(1) (a) is correlative with the duty not to violate any law.

In simple word democracy is the government of the people for the the people by the people without media and free press democracy cannot be successful. In democracy active participation of the people is essential. Voters express their views through press and media. So, for the active and vigilant participant of free press and media is very essential in democratizing society. It is the media which has become a part of the life of those people of India, who are mostly dependent on it for various things including information and entertainment.

Media and democracy are the complementary facts of each other. In a celebrated democracy like India, the media should reflect the ideology of the government policies to its subjects. The approach of the media should reflect cultural pluralism and act as a vigilant 'watchdog' in society. The role of the media should be instrumental in shaping democracy.

Media can play a massive role by being a medium for social change and acts as an influence. The media can perform ground-level research and epical work for the government and aid in formulating. His policies, the media can ensure public participation and this is the classic essence of democracy. The media should take care of the "Right to know" an exclusive right of the people so that effective right of the people so that effective public participation in the true events is possible.

This paper is an attempt to recognize the role the press's media is playing in our country and to highlight the areas of their factions where there is a requirement of legal regulations.

**Keywords** – Press Media, Freedom, Democracy, Constitution.

## Introduction

Democracy runs on the policy of – “of the people, by the people, for the people”. Democracy functions in its true spirit and helps inclusion of ideas for making, law for the betterment of the country and gives civil liberties to the people. It needs every citizen to take part in forming a strong political background of the country and media is an instrument that plays a key role in enhancing the process of democracy. People must be given the total scope to participate in the policymaking process and introduce their ideas. Mass media is a perfect communication tool in society. Media and democracy have a very complex and variable relationship. Media includes Television social networking sites, newspapers etc. In a democratized society media plays an important role where they enjoy a lot of power with fewer regulations. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru termed media has significant tasks to carry out as in anticipating the issues of the individual to the society. If the Media would have not existed, then the government would rule as per their wish without being accountable to the public for whatever they do. It may lead to failure of transparency and enhance a corrupted system.

## OBJECTIVE OF MY PAPER

- To study the role of press and media in India.
- To study the legal status of the press and media from a constitutional perspective.
- To study the actual role that the media is playing today.
- To study does Media quality affect the quality of democracy.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To write the paper, the data has mainly a concentrated and textual approach, books and article papers written on various national and international journals have been considered to do the framework of this paper.

Thus, secondary data has been used to write this paper.

## MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENT

**Media means communication** – whether written, broadcast or spoken. Generally the word ‘communication’ is defined as an exchange of information and message<sup>3</sup>. Media means by which something is communicated or expressed.

Today, the word media is used by the general public in all the spectrums of life. Under the grab of speech and expression the media is upon all the facts of life of an individual. The public also heavily depends on the media to secure information. In this scenario the question of an accountability of powerful media arises. Media has a fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression which can be used as per its whim or wish.

## WHY MEDIA IS ESSENTIAL IN DEMOCRACY ?

- **Media has developed as a very powerful tool-**

IN India however the media has developed and emerged as very powerful and influential tools in all matters.

Importance and power of the media can never be denied in democracies, media controls, media policies etc.

### **Media is a mirror of the society-**

Mass media and democracy are always related to each other. So that we can say Media is a mirror of the society and how democratic a society is can be represented through media.

### **Media has an influential role in strengthening democracy-**

Media and democracy have strong associations, countries which are strong democracies always have resilient and free media.

### **Media play the role of 'Watchdog' in India –**

The media can promote government transparency, accountability and public security of decision-makers in power and by highlighting policy failures, maladministration by public official's corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector.

### **Media act to formulate and organized public opinion-**

The role of the media as a public forum is vital. Media functions as an agenda setter, providing information about urgent social problems. The free press can strengthen the public sphere, by mediating between citizens' debate about the major issues of the day and informing the public about their leaders.

### **Media play an important role in social change-**

Through promoting programs like the betibachao, betipadhao, building and maintenance of clean toilets, Swachh Bharat, saving of water and saving of fuel etc. That the media is quite successful in promoting the environment to the same extent.

### **Media provides the help lines in the cases of adverse contingency-**

Media is also responsible to grant aid, assistance and help to the needy people<sup>3</sup> in the situation like any other catastrophe. If the channels of communication reflect the social and cultural pluralism within each society, in a fair and impartial balance, then multiple interests and voices are heard in public deliberation.

### **Media play an important role during election-**

Media role is particularly important during election campaigns as fair access to the airwaves by opposition parties, candidates and groups is critical for competitive, free and fair multiparty elections.

### **How is media and press freedom important for people participating in politics?**

People know very little about the political issues and activity in countries, where the government interferes with the media. Media extracts the facts and information from the institutes and makes it available to the people. And this role of the media makes the life of corrupt government officials tough. The media even at times release the secret files which may include the actual instance of corruption. So in countries where the government does not interfere with the media, people participate in the functioning of the governance more and the people can easily punish the corrupt politicians. So free media repeatedly reports the action of the government to the people and it puts everything in front of the people to decide whether it is right or not.

### **What happens if the media has no freedom?**

- If the media is not free, the information does not reach the people.
- People lose interest in participating in government functions.
- People become unwire about the details of political parties or candidates of the elections.
- Corruption will increase because the secret files will not be released by the media.
- People become ignorant of the political affairs of the country.

### **Role of media in bringing social changes –**

Media plays a great role in bringing change in the social life of people. In our society women were given less importance. Also gender discrimination lack of access to healthcare and gender discrimination, lack of access to healthcare and gender blesses violence are same reasons which was prevailing in the society. These are some of the main reasons for terrible crimes which used to dominate our country. So the awareness about such problems was communicated to the people by the media. Actually the information about their heinous crime was provided to the people through television drama, animated news packages, influential radio documentaries and persuasive films. New Government started using the media as a platform for eliminating social evils and bringing positive change. Finally the people reacted positively to it and now the cases of social evils are decreasing. Promoting equality is actually making an attempt to strengthen democracy. Therefore the media plays a very significant role in strengthening democracy in India.

### **What are the constitutional provisions which are relating to the media?**

A nation (democratic nation) can-not deal with democratic rule objectives without a free press. Before the appearance of LPG (Liberation, privatization, Globalization) strategy. The media was completely constrained by the administration which implied that individuals saw what the government needed them to see and the media was not free in this issue. A basic and individuals for democratic polity is the freedom of speech and expression which is enshrined in under Article 19 of the constitution. In the post constitutional time there have been sure changes in the connection among media and majority rule government, subject to the sensible limitation of 19(2) of the constitution of India gives the major right to speak freely of discourse and articulation which is referenced in part III of constitution of India. The opportunity of press is declining throughout the year which was found in world freedom press index India. India positioned 138 out of 2018 where in 2017 India was in 137<sup>th</sup> position. Looking into the democratic features of India, the second press commission said the press must not be the ruling party's ally but a constructive critic. For a diverse country like India, there does not exist any legislation for freedom of press but it is a fundamental right in itself.

## What Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian constitution says?

All citizens have the right to

### **Freedom of speech and expression-**

The first press commission in its reports said that:

“Freedom is stated in wide terms and not only includes freedom of speech of oral utterances but also freedom of expression where expression is communicated by written words. There can be no doubt freedom of press is a fundamental right guaranteed by our Indian constitution.”

Though freedom of press is provided as a fundamental right, the press in India faces a lot of harassment which is seen in several cases. In the Thelma case, [tehlka.com](http://tehlka.com) was ordered to shut down and the journalist were assaulted many times because they exposed the truth of the scam in the defense ministry but instead of so many difficulties in front of them, due to media's outcry several cases have been responded in the court and served justice.

(1). In the case state V. SiddartVashisth & Manu Sharma the facts were such that the son of the Haryana ministry. Manu Sharma who shot her dead in the bar where she was working because she refused to serve liquor. The case was turned down because of lack of evidence. But due to the public and the media. The case responded, the Delhi high court took over the case to the fast track court and trailed over a period of 25 days.

Finally Manu Sharma was held guilty and he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

(2). Shreya Singhal case decided the questions related to the fundamental right of free speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. The Supreme Court in RomeshThapar Case stated that freedom of speech lay at the foundation of all democratic organizations.

But, section 66A of the IT Act 2000 authorized the imposition of restrictions on the freedom of speech and expression' in language wide enough to cover restrictions both within and without the limits of constitutionally permissible legislative action. Therefore, the court held that Section 66A is unconstitutional.

## What is the role of social Media in democracy?

The time of digitalization utilizes the most remarkable weapon in India is social media. A great many people come to think about news from web based social networking more than some other type of media. It is an undeniable fact that the largest platform for democracy ideologies to be shown is social media. Social media makes it easier for the information to be transferred to the people to maintain the transparency of the government. Social media makes it simpler for the data to be moved to the individuals to keep up the straight for wordiness of the legislature and educate about the strategies taken by the government for making improvement. A few ideological groups have their pages in the online networking locates whereby they import the normal mass where they examine assignment surveys and spread dissent around barely any issues.

## What is the dark side of Social Media?

Some bogus and fake news spread out around various issues and if individuals live inside the information cocoon they at least will in general trust it.

The significant issue individual's face in the internet based life is that while setting up their political audits or any analysis against the administration. They face issues of provocation.

Social networking's tremendous growth has created a breeding ground for hackers. Cyber criminals are constantly looking for new ways to evade detection, often using social media to gain intelligence on unsuspecting users or to steal images to aid with impersonation scams and garner credentials.

## Suggestion to improve the role of media –

- The media as an institution and fourth estate is accountable to the public and responsible for its action.
- Media practitioners should stop thinking they are above the law. Let the media introduce an internal scheme of checks and balances. Undoubtedly, this is an uphill task.
- While conveying a big story, especially in the war 2 ones. The human sides of a conflict are often ignored by the general media.
- Presently media personnel are murdered, threatened, sacked and trolled for expressing their views. Freedom to media is the first requirement for refinement.
- Media personnel particularly working in local languages need to be given inputs to upgrade their skill and competence. Encouragement on presenting facts based on data collected from the field requires boost.
- Ground reporting should be encouraged more and more.
- There is a big need to put a full stop on different religion related debates which are just spreading anger in the people and is responsible for different mob lynching and communal riots.
- Government should promote freedom of Indian Media.
- Advertisement of any political party should not be encouraged on any of the news channels.
- A commoner should be administered to reach the media desk easily on any public concern.
- Prime Minister and other heads (CM of several states, MLA of particular areas) should answer live to the Indian audience.
- There is a big need to put a full stop on different
- There should be a criteria fixed to examine that the basic requirement of Indian people is the centre.

Topic for all news channels such as education, health, employment, poverty, etc.

## Conclusion

The importance and role of the media in a democratic system is debatable. India has the largest democracy in the world and it is widely accepted that the media has a powerful presence in the country. In the current scenario a lot of criticism for disregarding its obligation to social responsibility. Though the media has at times successfully played the role of a watch day of the government activities and has also aided in participatory communication a lot still needs to be done. Media should take almost care airing or publishing such sensational and powerful tools in implemental laws. Although the Indian constitution

does not have an exclusive act defining the liberty of the press, it is evidently included in the freedom of speech and expression under the article 19(1) (a).

The freedom of press in the country is a blessing for the people. No one is perfect in this world, still there is a lot of scope for improvement by which the media can raise up to the expectation of the public for which it is meant. We cannot think of a democracy without active and natural media. However the Indian media has its own serious critics, elitist, urban oriented, politically biased, under the grip of big industrial and business houses, using the politics and sensationalizing the news for economic interest, using communal and caste politics especially by the vernacular media.

When there is information, there is enlightenment. When there is debate, there is a solution, when there is no distribution of power, no rule of law, no accountability there will be exploitation, corruption, suppression and annoyance. Media does also monitors administration and keeps a check on corruption and bad administration. The fight against corruption has been largely fueled by the media. The present media insurgency has led to people making informed decisions and beginning a new era in a democracy. This study ends with the suggestion that this complex issue and its other dynamics need further investigation.

#### References –

1. [http://www.Issrjournal.org/iosr-jhss/papper/voliaissue 9/version7/H019975051.pdf](http://www.Issrjournal.org/iosr-jhss/papper/voliaissue%209/version7/H019975051.pdf).
2. [http://rocoblelegal.com/role-of-media-in-strengthening -democracy-in-India/-](http://rocoblelegal.com/role-of-media-in-strengthening-democracy-in-India/)
3. <http://swapsushias.blogspot.in/2009/08/essay-role-of-media-in-democracy.html#.WFXWUXOCWXE>
4. <http://www.humansrightinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/articles/undp-rti-2006/annex3-background.paper.pdf>
5. <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-meida-journal/commentaries/c%207%20%20%20%20soumya%20DUTTA>
6. [http://www.lawctopus.com/academike/media-trials-india/.](http://www.lawctopus.com/academike/media-trials-india/)
7. <http://bit.ly/3egizkc>
8. <https://fitnessfreak360.com/important-judgments-that-transformed-india-pdf-download-in-english-free/>