



Mass media and democracy in India

Vishal Sihag

LLM, Department of Law, OPJS University, Sadulpur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

The policy of liberalization, which is generally observed as the policy of the state to withdraw from economic activities and to leave it in the hands of private individuals and corporations in a free market economy, was considered as the product of internal and external economic compulsions in early nineties, and part of globalization package of IMF and World Bank, that inaugurated a new chapter in the history of the mass media in India. The first newspaper in India was published as late as in 1780. It was in the language of the colonizer, English and the person who was credited, as the founder of the first newspaper was an English man. The Indian Press has been a private, commercial enterprise from the days of its pioneers. Today, individuals, media organizations, joint stock companies, many industrial and commercial ventures, constitute the rest. About two and quarter centuries ago, from a small beginning, newspaper in India have come a long way.

Keywords: mass media, democracy, globalisation, World Bank, IMF, economy

Introduction

Media democracy allows people the right to participate in media, it extends the media's relationship to the public sphere, where the information that is gathered and can be viewed and shared by the people. The public sphere is described as a network of communicating information and points of view from people, which is reproduced through communicative action through the media to the public. The relationship of media democracy and the public sphere extends to various types of media, such as social media and mainstream media, in order for people to communicate with one another through digital media and share the information they want to publish to the public. Media democracy advocates that corporate ownership and commercial pressures influence media content, sharply limiting the range of news, opinions, and entertainment citizens receive. Consequently, they call for a more equal distribution of economic, social, cultural, and information capital, which would lead to a more informed citizenry, as well as a more enlightened, representative political discourse.

Post-Independence period and media

In free India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister and a leading personality of the freedom struggle, contributed substantially in shaping the Press. And the growth of the Press in India since independence has been consistent and healthy. In 1947 political independence came to a country that was socially and economically divided into hundreds of groups. Most of these groups, especially the upper class, upper middle class and to a great extent the lower class had come under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian national Congress (INC). During Nehru's tenure as Prime Minister (1947-1964), Indian media seemed to follow the democratic agenda. Most newspapers, even those owing allegiance to extreme political parties, believed that the multi-party system

of government had taken a firm root in the country and a free Press was integral to its success. In 1951, the government felt that there was a need to introduce a Press Bill which would be free from the objectionable features of the 1931 Act and be in consonance with the constitution of free India. Though the Indian constitution does not expressly guarantee freedom of the press, the Supreme Court has held in successive judgments that freedom of the press is covered by, and is an essential part of, freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by article 19.

"Freedom of thought and expression" is part of the Preamble to the Constitution thereby guaranteeing this to all citizens as a fundamental right. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was of the view that "I would rather have a completely free Press, with all dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated Press. In a vast, geographically and culturally diverse country with 16 official languages and more than 800 dialects, and great disparity in the levels of development, national media had a crucial role to play to develop a sense of Indianness.

Evolution of radio in India

This technology of mass communication started its journey in colonial India in the 1920s. Radio clubs began in Calcutta and Bombay in 1923. The British Indian Government had few established procedures to govern the emerging technology, and designed policy reactively, in consultation with officials grappling with the same issues in Britain. The radio-broadcasting network was seen as a means by which an indigenous Indian culture could be forged and disseminated (Ghose, 1996).

The story of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill is a good example of the paralysis that seized Indian political parties on gaining power. Even the very first committee that was set up in 1964 to enquire about future broadcasting possibilities, the Chanda Committee,

Recommended in 1966 that AIR be converted into a public corporation which was not implemented (Ohm, 1999).

Constitutional framework of media

The freedom of the media, therefore, is not absolute, and even during normal time, reasonable restrictions may be imposed by the state on the freedom of media. Under article 352 as originally enacted, emergency could be declared on grounds of war or external aggression or internal disturbance. Under article 358 as originally enacted, there was automatic suspension of the fundamental rights given under article 19 when an emergency was proclaimed (Bakshi, 2009).

A persistent attempt to curb the Press freedom, however, really began only after 1969. Indira Gandhi felt that the Press was too critical of her ways and Mrs. Gandhi sought to change its approach. Various threats were held out by Government and steps proposed to curb that section of the Press, which was thought to be the most independent.

Press media during post emergency period

In any event, after 19 months of national emergency and the control of the mass media, Indira Gandhi became so confident of her continued success that Mrs. Gandhi called for a parliamentary election in March 1977. Simultaneously, Mrs. Gandhi also removed press censorship. The results of the national election, however, turned out to be frustrating for Indira Gandhi, her son, as well as for some of her closest advisers. An overwhelming public outcry against the atrocities of Indira Gandhi's regime brought about a coalition government of several small political parties. With the imposition of 'the Emergency', the Indian Press was gagged, it may have been tempting to regard this as a minor but not wholly unexpected setback to liberty: India had merely fallen into line with most third World Countries, thus confirming the suspicious of those who always had some doubts about the genuineness of 'the world's largest democracy'. In fact, democracy is based on the opposite conviction: those human beings are not only capable of being responsible for them, but want to be so.

Restoration of democracy

Historic victory of Janata Party in the 6th Lok Sabha election was described as the victory of democracy in India against the authoritarian emergency regime of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Declaration of emergency in 1975 by Mrs Gandhi's government could be criticized on the ground that it was the violation of the spirit of the democratic constitution, however, the existing provisions related to declaration of internal emergency were not as such attracted so much criticism, but for the first time it was felt that the very language 'internal disturbance' as the part of Article 352 was problematic and lacks clarity and makes room for its misuse, hence, it should be amended with more clarity and preventive spirit. Under this historic responsibility the Janata regime took the job seriously and proposed number of constitutional amendments during its rule either to correct these amendments which were brought by the emergency regime to weaken the democratic institutions for the sake of rulers or to consolidate the democratic ideals for the future.

Press freedom in India and democracy

Freedom of the press is at the heart of all liberty. Where there is no free exchange of information and thought, no other liberty is secure. Freedom of the press is one of the pillars of a free society and a means of extending the frontiers of liberty. In a democracy, a free press has an inalienable right to an adversary role. It should be free to criticize authority at all levels in the general public interest, and to function as watchdog over the government's handling of the problems of the people and the country. A free press can be strangled through economic pressures. For instance, the government has no right to fix advertisement rates for individual newspapers or to use government advertising as a form of patronage or to canalize newsprint supplies through a state monopoly.

Globalization and mass media

Globalization could be understood as the process through which economic and cultural phenomena that had previously been mainly national in scope become increasingly internationalized. This process has accelerated in recent decades under the aegis of multinational corporations based in the United States and imperialist centers. At an ideological level, corporate globalization is bolstered by neo-liberal arguments about the merits of 'free trade'. Global Village (McLuhan, 1964:6) often goes to the notion of globalization in which the real facilitators are the information and communication technologies whose visual face is the mass media. However, critiques of globalization never forget in talking about the emergence of tendencies of cultural homogenization as a new form of hegemony-cultural imperialism.

Growth of mass media in India

Newspaper sale in the country increased by 11. 22% in 2007. By 2007, 62 of the world's bestselling newspaper dailies were published in China, Japan, and India. India consumed 99 million newspaper copies as of 2007—making it the second largest market in the world for newspapers. The country consumed 99 million newspaper copies as of 2007—making it the second largest market in the world for newspapers. By 2009, India had a total of 81, 000, 000 Internet users—comprising 7. 0% of the country's population, and 7, 570, 000 people in India also had access to broadband Internet as of 2009— making it the 12th largest country in the world in terms of broadband Internet users. India also ranks 8th in the list of countries by number of television broadcast stations by 1997 statistics.

Conclusion

This study finds that there is a very close relationship between the modern India's struggle for social and political emancipation and the growth and development of the print media (Press) in India. In the days of relaxation of emergency the press brought the truth of emergency to the notice of people and exposed the emergency regime. The study found that the role of the press was a political catalyst which helped the people to form their opinion against the emergency regime which ultimately led to the ouster of the emergency regime in the general elections and saved democracy. It found that after

The relaxation in emergency, the mass media, especially the print media played a very crucial role in exposing the abuses and misuses of state power by the government machinery, party leaders, and even individuals loyal to prime minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her politically ambitious younger son, Mr. Sanjay Gandhi. Media's role in raising the issue of corruption in political and public life is very effective and crucial in making the issue a core issue of concern in public life along with the civil society movements. Equally important of the media's debates on the issue of increasing criminalization of Indian politics

References

1. Asani MM. Broadcasting and the People. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1985.
2. Chandra Bipan. History of Modern. Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009.
3. Luthra HR. Indian Broadcasting. New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India,. 1986.
4. Drieberg Trevor, Jag Mohan, Sarla. Emergency in India. New Delhi: Manas Publications, 1975.
5. Jayal, Nirja G, Mehta, Pratap B. (ed.). The Oxford Companion to Politics In India, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
6. Anant Vi Kirusna. India since independence: making sense of Indian politics. Pearson Education India, 2010.
7. Hewitt, Vernon. Political mobilisation and democracy in India: States of Emergency. New York: Routledge, 2008.
8. Mehta DS. Mass Communication and Journalism in India. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1979.
9. Mooij, Jos E. The Politics of Economic Reforms in India. New Delhi: SAGE, 2005.
10. Tarlo Emma. Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003/.
11. Chatterjee PC. Broadcasting in India. Second Edition New Delhi: Sage, 1991.
12. Ghosh Sumit. Modern History of Indian Press. Cosmop Publications, 1998.
13. Gunarathi SA. Handbook Head of the Media in Asia. New Delhi, Sage, 2001.
14. Mitra A. Television and Popular Culture in India: A study of the Mahabharat. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1993/.
15. Parthasarathy R. Journalism in India from the Earliest Times to the Present. New Delhi: Starling Publishers, Pvt. Ltd, 2001.
16. Ray Dutta Sunanda K. India-Country Report in Media and Democracy in Asia. An AMIC compilation. AMIC publication, 2000.
17. Tharoor S. India: From Midnight to the Millennium. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1997.
18. Curran James, Gurevitch Michael. Mass Media and Society. USA: Bloomsbury, 2005.
19. Bhambhri CP. Democracy in India. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2009.
20. Nirja Jayal G, Pratap Mehta B. (ed.). The Oxford Companion to Politics in India, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.