MEDIA, SOCIETY AND POWER

EDITOR

Prof. Upendra Padhi

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EDITORIAL

This volume titled **'Media, Society and Power'** embraces some insightful articles and perceptible studies on public-interest issues, such as Media and Social Constructions, Media Analytics, Media Axiology, and Media, Power, and Privacy, as well as some others that impact us in our daily social lives. Whether one accepts it or not, mass communication—may it be through printed materials or digital data—is facilitated by the media, the fourth pillar of democracy. It acts as a watchdog by relaying, limiting, expanding, and reinterpreting information; provides the public and citizens with information to help them make decisions about leadership and policy; produces documentaries, dramas, current affairs programmes, and other types of programming for radio and television; and, most importantly, raises awareness of human rights while reminding States of their obligations to protect them. Its multi-nuanced role—that of being educative, interpretive, and informative—is fundamentally compatible with our knowledge-based society. It is undoubtedly a powerful forum for thoughtful conversations aimed at creating a well-rounded society defined by an informed citizenry, functional democracy, and accordant social justice.

The three-day conference's overarching theme of 'Digi-Tech, Media, and Democracy' is relevant enough to examine critically how the digital ecosystem influences, how society

and the state behave in areas of human activity as well as democratic processes in various contexts. The identified thrust areas incidentally lead us to insightful discussions on topics like media and society, culture, development, community media, and science communication. The corporate media, information flow, data journalism, digital capitalism, and psychological aspects of mediated communication are also dealt with seriousness. The area of study thus includes subjects like philosophy, morality, and citizen journalism and foregrounds aspects relating to law, data privacy, freedom, censorship, social responsibility, political economy, media and ideology, media and religion. The volume, inevitably, underscores the aforementioned issues and other equally appropriate subjects.

Media are often considered as constructions that use words, illustrations, photography, sound, and video to create representations of reality. Inevitably, media creators make conscious or unconscious choices about what to include, what to leave out, and how to present it. However, the social construction of reality explains how media does not treat daily occurrences in a balanced way. News coverage is often disapproved for lack of balance or equality between competing viewpoints. Media bias has long been a point of concern. Ideally, a media system suitable for a democracy should provide its readers/viewers with a coherent sense of the broader social forces that affect them.

Nevertheless, axiology (ethics and aesthetics) helps us understand how we communicate with others and what values we should have when we communicate with them. It directs us to explore what moral principles should guide our actions while addressing privacy, a fundamental right in India (The Indian Constitution endorses thus: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law"), keeping one free from unwanted publicity, and living

without undue interference from the government or any source in matters that the public is not concerned with. It also prevents unlawful disclosure of personal information and ensures privacy through human dignity, safety, and self-determination, allowing individuals to freely adapt the philosophy of life suitable to their mission and vision.

Eventually, Media analytics tracks audience engagement, content usage, and other metrics. Media companies thus use media analytics to attract new customers while retaining the existing ones and improving advertising offerings. Again, social media analytics, a subset of media analytics, gathers and analyzes data from social networks by tracking online conversations about products and companies through key metrics like reach, and engagements.

Since we live in an information age with ever-expanding connectivity; gathering, analyzing, and disseminating data is essential. This is particularly true in light of the emergence of social media, which helps people to connect with a world, "Where the mind is without fear …Where words come out from the depth of truth/ Where tireless striving stretches its armstowards perfection/ Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way/ Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit …" (Tagore, Gitanjali). Nevertheless, this new avatar of media encourages learning and enables businesses to grow their clientele and increase profits. Its regular usage is favorably correlated with social well-being, as well. Therefore, it is expected that we improve as communicators and adopt a balanced viewpoint to motivate and instruct the populace while demonstrating sympathy, empathy, and, if need be, antipathy. We would now conclude with the Gandhian remark: "The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the

whole countryside and devastates crops, even an uncontrolled pen serves to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many journals of the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? and who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil, go on together, and man must make his choice."

This volume, as expected, will contribute, a little at least, in making the exact and explicit 'choice'.

Happy Reading!

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Media and Power Relations: Convolution of Socio-Political Praxis

Prof. K.V. Nagaraj

The overly clichéd statement that information is power has its critics, attempting to locate the bloated borderlines of political power and the power relations between media and political mandarins. The Indian media, historically obsessed with politics, has donned the mantle of scrutinizing the political powerdispensation. Especially in a liberal democratic set up, discoursing political issues under the twinframes of freedom and accountability assumes a pantheon prerogative. Setting the political agenda of the nation is a bulwark of democratized media. This shall happen at both micro and macro levels of the polity. The expansion of public sphere and the inversion of power elites need not be of oppositional roles, if the power relations are concomitantly balanced between media, publics and power peddlers.If media themselves can become public sphere for democratic debates, such a platform can help construct meanings of the political projections.

The commonisation of meaning construction for both the hoi polloi and power elites has now become an integral task of the media.The interlinking of public citizens with mediated political messages may be normal but the structural analysis of power variables demands the intricate knowledge of political dynamics within a society. The conceptualization of power- 'who has itand how power is exercised'- for there can be direct or remote

control of political power. This has happened in Mao's China and India is no exception. In fact, the shadow players are more often powerful in political management. Equally important is that political communicators do want to exercise power through their writings, the cause of love and hate relationship between media persons and politicians. Political leaders always crave for positivepublicity in the media and any criticism is anathema to them, even when they err.

Political ideology is pivotal to capture power and establish power relations in any modern society. The strong bond between ideology and cultural grounds of the society does determine the nature of power relations. The western cultural practices enormously differ from the Asian cultural ethos and naturally the political power relations differ. Thus the cultural basis of political ideology amplifies the social construct of power and power relations as well. The power relations in any society starts from its micro unit of family where hierarchy of power is experienced all through. It confirms the existence of power structurethat moves upward to the political power system. Naturally, the media not only reflect the power structure but perpetuate it for its own benefits.

The systematized political structure is seen in the political parties with ideological underpinnings. With definitive agenda being set for the public sphere for discussions debates to create a favourable climate of public opinion, the political outfits use, misuse and abuse the power of media. The spin doctors are excellent manipulators of both semantic and semiotic messages and repeat them over time for maximum effect. The social media platforms are made use to the hilt by political Machiavellis without any remorse or hesitation. Whether democracies or despot-ruled countries, armies of spin doctors have unfettered access to communication channels, media or otherwise. The professionalization of spin doctoring is now an indispensable part of modern political communication. Propaganda machinery has acquired new means of communication to reach out to both individuals and masses in real time.

Even in democracies where brute majoritarianism holds sway the repressive political stereotyping becomes the order of the day. While the agenda revolves round the objective of power, it is also to maintain and continue to manage power forever. Lobbying or spin doctoring is legal in western democracies but is abhorred in the southern hemisphere that has a different value system. The political elitists and their control of media for sustenance of power relations is not a new phenomenon. Even though it is said that dissent is the bedrock of democracy, suppression of dissent is a common order even in mature democracies. Objective journalism is replaced by advocacy journalism tied to corporate interests. The political ideology becomes malleable according to the convenience of media controllers. Political ideology based hegemony in the democratic world is based on mass acceptance. 'Hegemony works through the state apparatuses (education, religion, the arts, media and operates best when those apparatuses are speaking in harmony with one another' (James Watson, Media Communication, p 19).[1]

Further, we must note that 'hegemonies differ at different times and in different circumstances, but what is common to them is the governing influence of ideology, the public expression of what in personal terms we describe as values' (Ibid).[2] These values are approved in the public domain with an intention to perpetuate the control of power elites. The role of power elites in any society is lip service to the collective welfare but mostly self-serving in reality. The public, as a result of the superficial actions of the political class has become contemptuous of the political personalities, even in a country like the United States. With politics emerging as a full-time and profitable profession devoid of any kind of accountability, negativism in the public domain of their role and status is increasing. The major effect of this cynicism is the support to an all-powerful person, leading to personality cult loaded with unwavering faith, loyalty and obedience. The danger of personality cult as seen in the United States and India, as particular examples, is violence-laden consequences. The mass hysteria of

projection of personalities as cult figures has not augured well in any part of the world.

Often the talk of benevolent dictatorship is heard in political circles of modern societies. It is only a shop talk and there is nothing like benevolent dictatorship. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. The image built on the manipulated credentials would not last long. It is linked to the stability of public opinion which is characterized by its temporariness. It is compounded by negativity toward politics and the political class. This is a natural phenomenon in any democracy for a permanent favourable public opinion is the characteristic of a fascist dispensation. The question whether popular opinion is a myth or reality is still being debated upon. The enviable task is to identify public opinion from its fluidity and shapelessness. The credibility factor in media operations is directly related to media control and performance. While the politico-economic fabric of the ideology has its role, the unbiased stance on crucial public events and issues would definitely enhance the media reputation. The media are undoubtedly powerful vehicles of persuasion. The publicists, propagandists, PR professionals, corporate communicators, advertisers and lobbyists make optimal use of media channels to reach the gullible masses with their messages. All this is done on behalf of the power mongers and for the perpetuation of powers-that-be.

Often the Indian political scene is muddied with unlimited production of falsehood and disinformation. The immediate years of independence had a semblance of decency and statesman ship in politics. Over the years, we have seen the moral turpitude gaining upper hand and a good number of law-breakers becoming law makers. It appears that the political power erases their past deeds. Physical force is often used to gain votes to ensure victory. The existence of a strong and unholy linkage between politics, power and violence is apparent and media have not been able to create a public opinion that detests such alliances despite the fact that access to media available across the country. In countries of controlled

expressions, media are compelled to side with the authorities. The non-stop manufacturing of propagandist information is the hallmark of such societies. Those who attempt to find out truth behind violence, political or otherwise, face hostile repercussions including imprisonment for months and years together, without trial. Violence against media persons are very common in Latin American, African and Asian countries. In order to avoid physical violence in the political arena, suggestions have been made to opt for e-democracy. The proposition has its own merits and demerits in a country like India where not many people are digital literates. Its practical application in rural India is a far-fetched reality as the digital infrastructure there is abysmal and perfunctory. The use of new digital technology is a welcome stride in an effort for e-democracy. However, whether e-democracy is possible in a large and diverse country like India is often debated and the foolproofness of technology is doubted.

USER GENERATED CONTENTS

Whenever the political contents of media are scrutinized, the publicist generated contents are found dominating. The political party-appointed publicists know the art of politicizing any type of communication and message creation. As such, media create their own audiences through their own messages, especially new media. In the words of Donald Ellis, 'New media have created new publics, and this is particularly true in the realm of political communication. Jurgen Habermas explained how the 18th-century salons and coffee houses became a forum for democratic discussion, a context where there was a greater equality among participants and conversation was subject to argument and reason rather than flattery and acquiescence to status. These public spaces created a type of communication, open up new problem possibilities, and were more inclusive. But new media reshuffle the boundaries of public life such that collegiality and commonality are disappearing, and aspects of democracy are threatened" (Donald Ellis, 2009).[3] The user generated media outlets are considered as a possible solution to removethe

one-sided harangues of the politically controlled mainstream media. The occupation of public spaces to denounce dissenters and discredit them is part of spin doctoring. As a natural collaborative strategy, media persons are converted into audiences for political framing. It becomes an unabashed and glittering desideratum to create false realities and a clobbered meta-narrative of convoluted political communication. Media persons will, namby-pamby, get caught in the web of manipulative politics. Media persons seeking luck in the vortex of active politics is evidentially common.

Government subsidy for media operations is another strategy of governments to influence the stance of media organizations. India has a long history of subsidization in the monopoly supply of newsprint through State Trading Corporation under a quota system. The discretionary use of government advertisements is another weapon to subvert the independence of the media. Prioritization in information subsidies has become the norm in the twenty-first century mediascape. The Indian political system is besotted with issues related to caste and religion and so also the media. The obsession of Indian media with politics is well-recognized and termed as pre-Independence legacy of struggle for political freedom. What H.Y Sharada Prasad, former information adviser to the late prime minister Indira Gandhi, said is worth pondering over. "So when we speak of the power of the press (media) it is well to remember that that power is a factor of the intention of the owner and the editor. If they want to educate, the result will be deepening of understanding. If they are detached and dispassionate, the journal will earn a reputation for seriousness and comparative objectivity. If they are out only to mislead and confound, the result is confusion. If they want to incite, the consequence may be arson and rioting. A false report, it is said, can circle the globe before the truth has put on its boots. The ability to create prejudice, to utter and circulate falsehood, is as much as the power of the press to create awakening and foster sincerity which (the latter part) Lokmanya Tilak avowed to be his goal" (H.Y. Sharada Prasad, 1976).[4]

Freeing upthe public sphere from the hold of government as well as market forces is well-nigh impossibility. The media are dependent upon market forces for their survival and in a crony capitalistic society like ours the market forces manipulate and manage the political economy of the country. The nexus between these two sectors end up in the politico-economic control of media much against the concept of dissent-based vibrant democracy. The need is for non-partisan media is an ideal proposition, far from reality. Advocacy has become the mainstay of modern day mass media.

"Power is one of life's facts to which Murphy's Law applies. This Law states: If things can go wrong, they will go wrong. It is rare for the possessor of power to be so circumspect in its use to avoid error or excess" (Ibid).[5] Like objectivity, power is a relative concept. In the same way, freedom too is a relative concept. For the reason only, rights and responsibilities are two faces of the same coin. Wrong use of political power has its own consequences. Of course, a band of critics has negated the very idea of media having power. For some of them, media have always been subservient to political power.In general, it is said that there are four forms of power, 'economic, political, coercive and symbolic,' as identified by J. B. Thompson. "Historically the media have served as the voice of the powerful than of the people. They have been classified by the French philosopher Louis Althusser as one of the prime ISAs, Ideological State Apparatuses, along with religion, family structures and education: that is, they are crucially important channels for the transmission of 'rules of conduct' in society; the guardians of a culture's dominant norms and values. They play a part in all power-forms, including – in a contributory sense, - coercive power" (James Watson, p. 15, 1998).[6] The social fabric of India has made the accumulation and division of power based not only on creed but also on the lines of caste and community. The parody is that the idea of a casteless society is the grabbing of political power by propagating the share of each dominant caste.

Partisan journalism is not new in India. The silver line was that in the initial years of Independence, the print media played a crucial role of a constructive opposition. Even the capitalist-controlled media houses showed the gumption of criticizing the government of the day, both at the centre and the states. Of course, freedom had its own price to pay every now and then. Slowly, newspapers supporting certain political ideologies appeared on the horizon, states of Kerala and West Bengal in the lead. Today, television channels supporting preferred ideological advocacy are on the air. Thus partisan media are a part of Indian political culture. The uncontrolled social media platforms have exacerbated the aggressive condemnation of other ideologies, sometimes reaching the inglorious heights of abuse and obscenity. In any political context, not only Indian, party affiliations rather labels help in taking decisions on public affairs. Thus, the ideological prism provides a short cut to reach definitive decisions. Fortunately, or unfortunately, often the party labels make the members blind to reality. They support their party without a reality check making ideology worse than opium.

It is well described that "Power consists of political actors' abilities to acquire, maintain, and exercise authority in governmental affairs and to influence relationships and policies. Political elites (elected officials, party leaders, legislators, and agency directors) possess the power to influence large populations because they create laws and sanction behaviours, convey and withhold social and economic benefits to citizens, and influence mass media sources. The power of citizens comes from their legal rights, knowledge of political processes, and ability and willingness to engage in deliberations about public policies. Because the public often depends on mass media for political information, media sources use this power as part of their agenda of telling people what and how to think about political elites are the trustees of public interests; they share visions and ideals, promote policies with the consent of those being governed, and justify policy benefits by

claiming they serve constituents' interests. The public assumes that the government will pay attention to their needs and problems and create beneficial policies. A keen awareness of the power of political elites and citizens is one reason that media sources frame policy leaders, issues, and policies. Political elites are the trustees of public issues in terms of public rather than organizational and material interests. It is common for political elites to infuse the content of their messages with justifications emphasizing public benefits. One impact is to reassure the public that their elected and appointed representatives are acting on their behalf. Another impact is less obvious; it is to enhance the personal credibility and authority of political elites" (Janice Schuetz, 2009).[7] The political elites in a way decide the political culture of a society as they dominate the economic and cultural resources of that society.

On the other, "political communication theory emphasizes how the content and flow of communication between political elites, the public and the media to create and reflect power, cater public interests and produce strategic interpersonal and mediated messages and interactions relevant to government decision making" (Ibid).[8] The political economy of the media does contribute to the power relations between media and the political class. In a country like India, democratization of power relations is fraught with too many obstacles. Power, wealth and freedom have a complex web of relations.

POLITAINMENT

The political developments often mirror the theatre of the absurd with comic parodies sprouting in the arena. Then the media coverage provides us with what is called as 'politainment.' The political entertainment does have a larger audience, because it is culture specific. Nonsensical political developments happen even in mature democracies. The immediate aftermath of presidential election in the United States was not only criminating but also comical. For neutral observers, the media coverage of the event was politainment to a certain extent. The destabilizing effects

of politainment cannot easily be under-estimated. The Indian parallels are when governments fall even seeking the vote of trust in parliament.One can also see a kind of patriarchy in power relations between the political class and media since both are male dominated. The tokenism of equal opportunity can be seen in postulations, not in practice. The commercial side of media shows the true face media when it comes to gender equity. Power and power relations have evolved through civilizational history and their cultural specificity of patriarchy has strengthened over a period of time, making the power relations stereotypical. Then the fortress of power remains enigmatically mysterious and the political power relations mythical. The media that walk in the corridors of power become cynically aligned to the political intrigues. As democracy becomes more and more corporate controlled, which is now a global trend, the shop talk of media freedom tends to be superficial.

To quote Alto Escobar, well-known critic of industrial society environment, "The corollary is that society has to be re-instrumentalized to satisfy the twin goals of conviviality and efficiency within a post-industrial framework. This goal requires facing head-on the threats that accelerated growth and the uncontrollable expansion of tools pose to key aspects of the human experience, including the following: humans' historical localization in place and nature; people's autonomy for action; human creativity, truncated by instrumentalized education, information, and the media; people's right to an open political process; and humans' right to community, tradition, myth, and ritual—in short, the threats to place, autonomy, knowledge, political process, and community. Anticipating de-growth debate. Illich spoke about the need for an agreement to end growth and development. To a world mired in ever-increasing production, while making this production seem ever easier, Illich counter posed not only the fallacy of the growth imperative, thus making its costs visible, but the cultivation of a joyful and balanced renunciation of the growth

logic and the collective acceptance of limits. What Illich proposed was a radical inversion, away from industrial productivity and toward conviviality. 'To the threat of technocratic apocalypse, I oppose the vision of a convivial society. Such a society will rest on social contracts that guarantee to each person the broadest and freest access to the tools of the community, on the condition of not hampering others' equal freedom of access. A plurality of limited tools and of convivial organizations would foster a diversity of modes of living that would acknowledge both memory and the inheritance from the past as creation' (2015, 26–28; emphasis added). This ethical position involves an alternative technical rationality; as we shall see, it lends support to the emphasis by social movements on ancestrality as the basis for autonomy, and by transition designers on futurality, or the creation of futures that have a future, as a fundamental design principle. As Illich adds, convivial tools will have to be efficacious in fostering people's creative autonomy, social equity, and well-being, including collective control over energy and work. This means that tools need to be subjected to a political process of a new kind. As science and technology create new energy sources, this control becomes all the more important. To achieve these goals, in Illich's view, it is imperative to impose limits on the expansion of production; these limits have the potential to enable the flourishing of a different kind of autonomy and creativity. At the end of the process, there might emerge a society that values sobriety and austerity, where people relearn dependence on others instead of surrendering to an altogether powerful economic, political, and technocratic elite. The process is eminently political" (Arturo Escobar, 2018).[9]

Otfried Jarren posits that "According to Bumler and Kavanagh, in this still emerging age of media abundance political communication is reshaped by intensified professionalization of political publicity, increased competitive pressures on political actors, diversification of political communication forms, and changes in how audience receive politics' (Otfried Jarren,

2008).[10] Its cognitive dimension is affirmed as: "Although cognitive political processing is an individual activity and a major part of human identity, it also has social components. For instance, people monitortheir social environment and alter their politicalcommunication to conform to the political norms of their society. People also alter their search of political information and their own political communication based on what they believe to be the majority or consensus political opinion" (Doris A. Graber, Gregory G. Holyk, 2008).[11]

Political communication of the day is now both a persuasive art and a 'coercive science'. The whole gamut of power relations between the political class and media is perfectly institutionalised. It is not a semantic gibberish, but a well-nuanced political ecology, often dotted with planned transpositions. The world needs a pro-people political culture and the media should support such initiatives. Sharada Prasad quoted the famous words of Thomas Delane, one of the great editors of The Times (of London): "The press can enter into no close or binding alliances with the statesmen of the day, nor can it surrender its permanent interests to the convenience of the ephemeral power of any government. The press lives by disclosure. The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian, to seek out the truth, above all things, and to present to his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth as near as he can attain it" (Sharada Prasad, 1976).[12]Truthful communication of politics, without malice, is a tall effort. For Gandhiji power with violence was taboo. He was empathetic to non-violent communication and wanted it to be part and parcel of human life. However, violence is an integral to political power and reverberates in political communication. Most possibly an inerasable evil.

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Media Regulation in India:
Issues and Concerns in the Digital Media Ecosystem
Prof. Sanjay Bharthur

Perceptions about Indian media vary and depend on your geo-location within the country or part of the Indian diaspora or established media outlets' view, often described as Western media. To Indians, the shrillness of TV news debates and the so-called diverse panelists' perspectives reflects one aspect of how liberal Indian media can be, as well as the tempered variations of the same in the daily newspapers of your choice. Intellectuals are worried and critical of such debates' skewed nature and proximity to the ruling political dispensation. Some express their views or concerns through write-ups in media outlets outside the country.

The growth of news media outlets sectoral, as in newspapers, radio, television, among others or converged as in the present digital ecosystem, is imbued within the media's relationship to forming and sustaining democratic structures and upholding freedom as an abiding principle. Indian media in the past has always been regarded as relatively accessible when compared to many other developing contexts and is now being debated as the shift from an editorial policy-driven entity to a platform-based content in a free-for-all all user-generated content has occurred not only in India but in other countries as well. The transition from explicit frameworks as laws and ethics to regulating social media platforms is dynamic as well problematic when weighed against

conventional notions for freedom of media. What, then, are some of the issues and or challenges in the Indian digital ecosystem?

A BRIEF HISTORY

India's colonial experience led to a unique system of press laws to recognise the impact of the English and Indian language press. The governance system responded to not-so-favourable content and initiated laws to ensure the press aligned with the first newspaper publication (Otis, 2018). The Vernacular Press Act was intended to curb the adversarial approaches of the Indian language newspapers that, in a way, partially hindered the growth of the language press despite the relatively better reach and influence it could have on Indians. (A. D. Mani, 1952).

Broadcasting began in India and was slated to grow under the private sector but could not sustain itself beyond a few years and lapsed into colonial state control. When the transfer of power took place on the eve of Independence, the Government, for various reasons, found it convenient to retain its control, a pattern that continued till media reforms and the Supreme Court ruling that airwaves are public property (MIB, 1995). While a set of laws and regulations concerning the legacy media have gone through processes and responses within the framework of freedom of the press and the democratic structures we wish to uphold, the advent of "new media" has opened debates about the patterns of relationship between the governing and the governed. As in the State, the governance system had a set of media laws (expanded press laws that were more pronounced and explicit) that could deal with any breach by the media concerning certain sacrosanct subjects such as national security, communal harmony, and relations, particularly with neighbouring countries. Article 19, which governs freedom of the press, was not absolute and had incorporated reasonable restrictions. "The provision brought reasonable restrictions on the grounds of 'the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or about contempt of court, defamation or incitement to

an offence'… Pt. Nehru again brought the Sixteenth Amendment to add 'the sovereignty and integrity of India' into the list of restrictions." (Khaitan, 2020). The courts have tried to separate advocacy and incitement in interpreting the provisions.

TELECOM AS DRIVER OF COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The institutional changes about media in the broadest sense are also necessitated by changes and reforms in the telecom structure, with clear-cut distinctions emerging between the early nodal ministry about the press, cinema and broadcasting, and Information technology institutional mechanisms like the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Thus, media ownership issues and the public sphere were articulated cohesively in their consultation paper, while the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had dithered over the diffusion of ownership for a long time (TRAI, 2014). The tactical and perhaps needed shift of media-related issues to the Telecom ministry expands our understanding of media to the larger context of social media, its spread, access and use in India. Digital media has become the fulcrum of discussions and debates about regulation.

Social media's better use leads to the emergence of the present polity (Sardesai, 2019), which is gradually being perceived as providing a host of opportunities for critiques, which is an underlying factor towards a relook and reformulation of regulation and articulation of ethics. The present discussions regarding the codification of digital media ethics (Gazette notification, 2021) expand the sensitivity of both the State and multiple groups in the diverse and plural landscape.

NEW FRAMEWORK

The notification is an exciting read that welcomes social media platforms to do business in India, but they need to follow the Constitution and laws of India. Social media platforms can certainly be used for asking questions and criticism. It is recognised that social media platforms have empowered ordinary users, but

they need accountability for their misuse and abuse. Ordinary users must be empowered through a mechanism that prevents misuse and abuse. The focus is more on self-regulation with a grievance redressal mechanism. Based on an analysis of publishers analysis, the preamble to the notification in 2021 notes that the user base of social media platforms is as follows:

- WhatsApp users: 530 million
- YouTube users: 448 million
- Facebook users: 448.8 million
- Instagram users: 252.4 million
- Twitter users: 17.5 million

√ Note: These numbers are significant, notwithstanding the often-critiqued dimensions of digital media. The growth is dynamic, and the Government of India put this figure out on February 25, 2021.These figures were provided as background to the Act.

√ India had 692.0 million internet users at the start of 2023 when internet penetration stood at 48.7 percent. For perspective, these user figures reveal that 730.0 million people in India did not use the internet at the start of 2023, suggesting that 51.3 percent of the population remained offline at the beginning of the year. A total of 1.10 billion cellular mobile connections were active in India in early 2023, equivalent to 77.0 percent of the total population.

√ India was home to 467.0 million social media users in January 2023, representing 32.8 percent of the total population. Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicates that Facebook had 314.6 million users in India in early 2023. Updates to Google's advertising resources indicate that YouTube had 467.0 million users in India in early 2023 (Kemp Simon, 2023).

CONSEQUENT CONCERNS

Of late, some alarming developments have been observed on social media platforms. The persistent spread of fake news has compelled many media platforms to create fact-check mechanisms. Rampant abuse of social media to share morphed images of women

and content related to revenge porn has often threatened women's dignity. Misuse of social media for settling corporate rivalries in a blatantly unethical manner has become a significant concern for businesses. Instances of using abusive language, defamatory and obscene content and blatant disrespect to religious sentiments through platforms are growing. This seems to be the reason for bringing in Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules 2021 (PIB, 2021).

The intermediary platforms, such as Twitter, FB, and others, have come into the terrain of jurisdictional conflict and their compliance with Indian laws. The more recent debates about Twitter (Rahul Srivastava, 2021) echo the more significant issue of global communication companies, their content management and differential attitudes towards countries. The face-off of Twitter with the Minister of IT (India Today, 2021) is likely to test the waters of the impending regulatory framework for new media in India and the more significant media freedoms and freedom of expression in India. Depending on the perspective one wishes to draw, it may play out to its full extent in the forthcoming general elections and elections to the largest State in India regarding parliamentary and legislative representation.

Many social media platforms or intermediaries are unhappy with the grievance mechanism and are dithering on compliance. For example, Twitter is using its legal and other forms of expression to defer compliance, and when it recently did, it decided to use the word "contingent worker" to describe its grievance officer.

Justice Rekha Palli of Delhi noted that while the rules mandated the appointment of a key managerial person or a senior employee as CCO, "Twitter disclosed in its affidavit that it had appointed a 'contingent worker' through a third party contractor. He (CCO) is categorical (in his affidavit) that he is not an employee. There has to be some seriousness about the rule. Some sanctity has to be given," the court remarked." The court added that Twitter had reservations about using the term 'contingent worker,' primarily

when it was unknown who the third-party contractor was. "What is this contingent worker? I don't know what it would mean. I have a problem with the word. The contingent is then a third-party contractor! What is this? I am not happy with the affidavit," the judge told Twitter (Mishra, 2021).

The standoff between the microblogging platform and the Government is yet to reach a mutually satisfying position. While it is more of a compliance issue and its legality, the critical responses by academics and a few media sections position it as a freedom of expression issue. The constitutionality of this law has also been challenged in many courts in India. The petitioners include a private law firm, a foundation for independent journalism, a news portal and an individual.

Recently, the Indian Government sought to amend the IT Act to make the Press Information Bureau (PIB) or any other agency authorised by the Government act as an agency to fact-check the content of what is published by the media. However, in deference to the opposition by the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) and the Digital Publishers Association, the move has been dropped for now. PIB has been doing a fact check but not formally as an agency to advise the media.

The opposition parties that had criticised this approach found it convenient to adopt, as in the case of the Karnataka government's recent move to initiate a fact-checking mechanism. Although intended to curb the rampant social media blitz of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the move may also intrude into aspects of press freedom. The minister's tweet captures the rationale behind the move: "The BJP IT Cell and their functionaries may have the blessing of their supreme leaders to spread hatred, but we have the blessings of the Constitution and the people to stop them"(Sayeed, 2023).

There have been well-publicised cases about court interventions in certain sections of the IT Act, such as section 66A (Akhil Reddy, 2020), about social media posts and the need to amend them.

The reality is that this was held unlawful in 2015 but was being followed, prompting the central Government to issue a directive to states to stop using that section (Kulkarni, 2021).

While the laws and regulations variously described as attempts to curb dissent purely from looking at it from the State perspective are going through debates and discussions, there is also a more significant issue of symbolic imagery and content in period films, Indian mythology and forms of expression that are accentuated with better access in the digital media spaces.

OTT PLATFORM CONTENT: MORALITY AND STATE RESPONSE

OTT content, increasingly attracting consumers' attention and incentivising content producers, has also gone through its share of protests, interventions, and concerns about OTT censorship. Tandav is cited as the first case in this category. Thus, user-generated and legacy content producers such as filmmakers contend with personal and creative freedom issues. Bowing down to several complaints that Tandav hurt the religious sentiments, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) proposed action. This case, too, is one of the reasons for the new code. However, the petitioner used the term Heckler's veto to describe the Government's action as seriously affecting the freedom of the press in India. "A publisher shall consider India's multi-racial and multi-religious context and exercise due caution and discretion when featuring the activities, beliefs, practices, or views of any racial or religious group" (IFF, 2021).

India has sub-continental dimensions concerning language, religion, caste and sensitivities across and between states on the border and sharing resources such as water, making it immensely complicated for any creative person to balance. Thus, we have seen protests about period films, fiction that has often turned violent. In some instances, the sheer magnitude of law and order maintenance might overrun the State's intention to uphold both creative and related aspects of freedom of expression. However, the courts have

not necessarily shared such limitations to curb creative freedom. The spread of information rumours, trolls and volatile messages is instantaneous in the new media ecology.

FAKE NEWS AMIDST FRAGILE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS

A related issue concerning news content is the spectre of fake news (Alisha, 2018; Sanjay Bharthur, 2018; Tewari, 2018). The legacy media claiming its credibility lies in the integrity filters it has to check fake news is also one reason for its sustenance and continuity despite reported obituaries of print media elsewhere. Reuters recently highlighted a point in its trustworthy sources report (Rick Edmonds, 2021). In March 2023, Statista released an assessment based on an India study among 86 K respondents and found that nearly 43 % of the respondents consume news via WhatsApp that is unsubstantiated or fact-checked.

Related to fake news is the recent inclination of the Government of India to make necessary amends to the IT Act to notify the Press Information Bureau (PIB) or any other designated government agency to act as a fact-checking mechanism before anything is published in the media. This move has been put on hold owing to considerable opposition from mainstream media entities and the digital publishers association (Scroll Staff, 2023).

Another aspect that comes in the framework of affecting freedom of choice to view content is the move by the Government of India (the matter is sub judice) to block access as well as the screening of a recent two-part BBC documentary in India (Mitra, 2023). Amidst protests, political parties and a few student groups across India have been screening the documentary.

How relevant is it to make an omnibus assessment of media or communication laws within the nebulous distinction between legacy and new media? The shifting terrains of professional practices in journalism based on integrity and credibility and a certain amount of institutional responsibility to that of a passing phase of citizen journalism that the media found very convenient

and attractive to prevent the need to expend their resources have eroded the perception. The spread of social media (pointed out earlier) adds a dimension of content that falls within the ambit of freedom of expression (it may be pointed out that freedom of the press or media is not explicit in India). Such digital spaces are now sought to be regulated in the new laws. A paradoxical demand has come from legacy media that they not be covered under this as they are working within the ambit of a host of other laws.

The regulatory domain is another area where the Ministries of Information Technology and Information and Broadcasting intersect their interests and concerns. Academic debate is the larger question of freedom in diverse and plural societies where fixed flash points of differences can come to the fore through social media, echo chambers, etc. A one-shoe-fits-all framework for assessment or evaluation may have to be revisited by peeling several layers of formal regulatory frameworks against societal realities.

The current debate has shifted to "The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021"(Gazette Notification, 2021), which is mainly focused on social media. Observers point out that it will fundamentally change how the internet will be experienced in India. Part II deals with the regulation of intermediaries, including social media intermediaries. Social media intermediaries include messaging-related intermediaries, such as WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram, and media-related intermediaries, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This part is administered by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology or MeitY, which shifts the media focus from the MIB domain. The focus is also on OTT platforms and digital media. At the same time, the nodal ministry will be the IT administration by the MIB (Internet Freedom Foundation, 2021). Digital media publishers and other bodies have challenged these rules in various courts. The Madras High Court has acknowledged the impact of the rules on individual citizens – observing that "there is a genuine apprehension that a wink or a nod from appropriate

quarters may result in the platform being inaccessible to a citizen". (Smitha Krishnan & Madhavi Singh, 2021).It is also argued that despite many courts' ruling one way or the other, the matter may finally go upto the Supreme Court, where the final view is likely to emerge.

There is also a more significant issue of the right to privacy. Law experts suggest that India currently does not have an independent statute protecting privacy as a deemed right under the Constitution. They are understood in the context of two fundamental rights: the right to freedom under Article 19 and the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. Various court judgements have interpreted such rights under the right to life. In media, the experts observe that it is subsumed under section 5 of the Cable TV Regulation Act as amended. Although this is an important aspect, this is considered outside the purview of this article.

While the matters might rally in courts of law, the nature of information and other content flows among the people in our society otherwise vulnerable to social and economic inequities should concern us, especially the media educators' fraternity.

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Localised Media, Fragmented Audiences and Broken Reality: Post-pandemic Indian Media

Prof. Mira K Desai

The Indian media of early 20th century was "mass media" with Doordarshan and All India Radio ruling the electronic realities, films dictating the out of house and weekend television viewership, newspapers were respected and magazines did well for themselves. Late 20th and early 21st century witnessed liberalization, privatization and globalization. The television became largely private and radio became FM radio alongside community radio stations, newspapers continued to rule but begun their digital editions, magazines started schemes to sell subscriptions, and films became products to be sold globally.

And comes 2020 and the world changed and also India. People were scared, newspapers were ironed, theatres closed down, radio got revived as Spotify and digital media became inevitable day-to-day reality. Convergent media became actually convergent making everything else redundant and life became digital where people played antakshari, marriage parties, family get-to-gathers, group cooking, socialization and what not! The pandemic changed number of things- most prominent being; making digital media inevitable for nursery child to senior citizen in the family for all reasons. Education to entertainment, debates to medical dosages, care to cash transactions everything without mobile became primitive. And this has been the new world order

after NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) of seventies.

It was easier to name a film or television programme or news report in social gathering and everyone in the room would have "common" idea, mayneitherhave understanding nor agreement about it. People could talk about one serial and its characters and could spend hours discussing, arguing and or justifying their opinions about their favourites characters. While digital media made people social virtually, it made people aloof physically. The social media is not very social; it is pseudo or para social. If you examine how many times you did not call a person on birthdays and merely wished on social media, will tell you how social you have become with social media. At the same time because of social media, relationships that does not exist in physical realm become real in virtual environments; be it distant cousins, batch-mates, relatives and old colleagues, now everyone is connected at least virtually.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Though there is no need to elaborate and explain, anymore, what it was like to be under lockdown and how Covid-19 changed the way we ate, slept, studied, entertained or socialized ourselves. Reams of papers have been written about diverse aspects of pandemic and human life. Numerous researches were undertaken globally and locally. One study undertaken by the author through online distribution of forms in April 2020 revealed that most frequent activity they are doing in a day is 'spending time with phone', 'cooking', 'house work' or 'talking to people in the house'. The least done thing is 'watching OTT', 'arguing with people in the house' or 'video calling people'. Three out of four people said they never wanted to get themselves tested for Corona virus yet few of them accepted that they are 'worried and scared' about Corona virus 'all the time'. All most all of them accepted that they are getting the 'same information from multiple sources' and 'government is doing its best'. Half of them have doubt about quality of information they

receive and they felt that 'most information I receive is wrong'. Interestingly enough, eight in ten people 'trust' 'government announcements' followed by television little more than online editions of newspapers. Three out of four people reported they verify post before forwarding any information.

This study covering March 29 to March 30, 2020 evening fetched 412 responses from all over India and even few Indians abroad covering about 50 cities and the survey was closed on April 5, 2020 with total data of 563 people. The preliminary findings from 563 respondents in the age range of 15 to 81 years with proportion of male to female. Nine out of ten said this is their first experience of 'being locked out' in their house and half of the total people are 'happy being locked out'! Half of them stated that their life has changed 'to some extent' but one third felt that 'their life has changed completely' because of the lock down. Interestingly four in ten 'want to get newspaper home' whereas little more are 'not waiting for newspapers'!

Another study by the author during May 2020 revealed insights from 362 respondents in the age range of 16 to 61 years with proportion of male to female being 3:7 suggest educational background included school pass-outs to PhDs. The average age of the respondent was 37 years. Half of the people filling up the survey were service people with rest homemakers and business people besides students and retired people. Three fourth of the people were 'earning money' whereas ten percent reported that due to lock down they were not earning whereas 15 percent were not earning on their own mostly being students.

This study revealed that digital media has arrived in Indian household as seven in ten reported that 'everyone in the house has their own device'. It is only ten percent who were the 'only people using digital device in their house'. 16 percent of the people have been using 'shared' devices whereas eleven people reported to have 'borrowed' laptop. One percent people stated that they made "timetable in the family for the device usage". While

almost everyone owns mobile phone, the proportion of those owning mobile to laptop was 3:2. Ten percent each uses Kindle reader and Fire Stick. Five percent have been OTT users and five percent reported using other devices. Six of the ten use home Wi-Fi whereas close to half of them use prepaid and twenty percent use postpaid mobile data packs to go online. 13 percent of the people use shared hotspot to connect internet. About one in ten people reported that they had to reduce being online to save money. Two in ten said they used their family members' hotspot to remain connected. Cumulatively three in ten people faced challenge of being online during lock down.

Lockdown created "time" for people who were otherwise busy with their physical life. As evident there was enormous increase in the amount of time spent on digital media due to lock down. While before lock down only eight percent people used to spend 90 percent of their time online but during lock down the proportion became 37 percent people. Prior to the lock down the proportion of large majority (60%) who were not limitedly online, became mere 17 percent of the people.

Percentage distribution of users' amount of time spent on digital media due to lock down

Percentage of daily time spent on digital media >	90	50	30	10
Before lockdown	7.9	30	45.8	16.3
During lockdown	36.8	46	15.3	1.9

The most accessed platforms during the lockdown were WhatsApp followed by YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Almost everyone was on WhatsApp. Total 18 platforms were reported by the people and the most frequently undertaken activity is either 'looking for information' or 'watching videos' by seven in ten people. Half of the people chatted with other people and looked for Covid updates. And one fourth of the total respondents said 'they called people they had not spoken to for a long time'. Seven in ten

people reporting to be using their own money to remain connected and said that their data usage increased during lock down.

Majority (65%) people stated their life changed 'partially' because of lock down wherein one third (28%) reported that it has changed completely. For seven percent people,lockdown changed nothing. In response to another question majority (63%) said that during lock down they realized that the digital life was everything, one forth were not sure about it whereas remaining 10 percent did not agree that digital life was everything. In order to understand if people experienced any digital traumas in terms of frauds or threats they were asked set of questions.

Most often the respondents "missed meeting other physically", followed by "feeling fatigued after being online". Most people refused to the statements that they "picked up online fights with unknown people" and "they preferred being online than being Face to Face". Large majority (72%) of the people still "sometimes" have no trust in the online world. Half of the people (57%) after being online expressed that they "sometimes" feels that they wasted time whereas two in ten most often feel that way. Except for 17 people all the people reported that they missed meeting people physically due to lock down and digital in no way compensates for face to face interaction and similarly in another statement except for 47 people who 'most often' preferred being online than into face to face interaction.

Both the studies undertaken by the author, during the lockdown in April-May 2020, very clearly suggested that Indians had gone online and had become used to digital life but it is still not a generalization since few households still found it difficult to be online. Also for obvious reasons those who responded to online surveys were online so the studies did not cover those who were offline or not have electricity, access or motivation to use and respond to online surveys during lockdown. It is also evident from the borrowing devices, making timetable for device usage and using hotspots of other

family members indicating partial connected reality for Indian households. Mobile is the most frequently used device to connect Internet followed by laptop.

Lockdown led to huge increase in the digital media usage as evident from the data and most activities which were done in the physical world; like reading newspapers, conducting meetings, classes, social interactions, even prayers were taken up in the digital environments. Most frequently undertaken activities on digital media were looking for information or watching videos. For large majority life changed at least partially due to lock down and dependence on digital media also was immense.

LOCALISED MEDIA

Post 2017 regional media became more sought after amongst Indians. Numerous studies and industry reports stated that Indian audiences were watching television in regional languages and OTT shows in Indian languages did better than English language programming. Number of studies prior to pandemic had clearly indicated the preference for local languages amongst television as well as new media audiences (Ambwani Verma M 2020, Mehta 2019, KPMG 2019, Mohan and Punathambekar 2018, KPMG 2017). Pandemic expanded that preference and even the study by the author revealed that About half (45.2%) of the people use "only English" content whereas few (3.5%) use "Only Indian languages". Half of the people (48.2%) accessed online digital media in "English and Indian languages". Proportion of "Indian as well as foreign languages" was similar to those using only English content online.

Kohli-Khandekar (2021: 38/101) elaborates the data that Hindi is still the language of media consumption in India, looking at print readership as per 2019 data is 66 per cent in Hindi and 44.8 per cent of television viewership in 2020 was in Hindi. With digital language barrier has disappeared largely since the content creator can put up content in any language. The receiver has option of using translation software or subtitles which allowed multilingual

content consumption reality. This also leads to diverse audiences beyond geographies.

Digital media, community radio, FM radio made local content creation easier and relatable. Digital media made formats of short videos popular and reels by anyone anywhere in the world reaches anyone anywhere in the world. Though that makes content global, it also made it increasingly local at the same time. It is from DDLJ (Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (1995) that local stories were played on global canvass, films like Dangal (2016) did exceptionally well in China expanding local to global. The creators rooted in local have started finding global fan following and similarly the global has also become local with popularity of K-Pops, international icons being mobbed locally and so on. The YouTube reaches out to 200 countries and OTT platforms have multiple stakes. Kohli-Khandekar (2021: xxii) points out that companies like Flipkart and Zomato got into video in 2019 to increase the amount of time people spend on their online retail and food aggregation businesses. She comments that media companies are becoming retailers and technology specialists, while the latter are getting into media to keep audiences with them.

FRAGMENTED AUDIENCES

On February 1, 2019, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) implemented the New Tariff Order (NTO) with a requirement thatmigration needed to be completedby March 31, 2019. The NTO hasresulted in a situation wherehouseholds may customize thechannels or bouquets of channelsthey receive. Families also canselect the 75 non-DD free to air (FTA) channels they receive as partof the payment of the NetworkCapacity Fee (NCF). This changeresulted in a new environmentwhere the specific channelsreceived could dramatically differfrom household to household. NTO2 came out in August 2019 and NTO3 was announced in November 2022. As the average number of channelsreceived by a household decreases,the variability between

householdsin the channels received necessarilyincreases. Since channel receptionis a necessary condition for channelviewership, this ultimately canresult in increased heterogeneity inviewership within the country.

The role of television distribution on television consumption is going to be immense in the years to come. However, during pandemic television re-run the older television shows in absence of new content production.BARC in its yearbook titled "The year after two thousand & nineteen" pointed out that TV played a significant role in keeping people connected with the outside world during the lockdown. Consequently, TV viewership witnessed a growth of 23% during mid-March to June (week 11-26) as compared to the January to early March period (week 1-10)."

BROKEN REALITIES

Misinformation, disinformation, fake news, AI generated information are realities of post pandemic times.Press Information Bureau started its Fact Check unit (https://pib.gov.in/factcheck. aspx)in November 2019 and so do many media outlets. While on one hand Indian media is preparing for new job roles of fact checkers and making their fact check domains, Indian audiences are facing challenge of navigating through infodemia. Though the one-television sethouseholds are still much higher in India compared to multiple television set ownerships, social media has made media consumption individualistic. The gap of people having media exposure versus people without media access due to personal reasons is going to widen in the years to come.

Is it possible to name one television show, one Over The Top (OTT) show, one radio jockey that everyone knows about? Probably it works so far for a film or newspaper but the world while has become 'one' with pandemic realities, it also led to multiple realities for multiple audiences. The media, especially news media (be it newspapers or television) increasingly lost its credibility. Paid news, private treaties, troll army, journalists murders, ownership controls on media content are 'normative' realities.

Bhat (2023) points out that the Indian government on April 6, 2023 announced that a state-run fact-checking unit "will have sweeping powers to label any piece of information related to the government as "fake, false or misleading" and have it removed from social media." As per the new IT Rules Internet service providers are also expected to block URLs to such content. Bhat (2023) cited India's minister of information technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, stating that "the failure to comply could result in the platforms losing safe harbor protection that safeguards them from legal action against any content posted by their users." The PIB press release points out that "The amended rules now also make it obligatory on the part of intermediaries not to publish, share or host fake, false or misleading information in respect of any business of the Central Government. [This] fake, false or misleading information will [be] identified by the notified Fact Check Unit of the Central Government." On the face of it the provisions appear in the interests of the media audiences yet they also indicate immense powers the State unit gets in terms of removing contents from so-called 'free' online spaces. This may lead to partial realities rather than complete reality from the ground.

Deep (2023) reports a story in The Hindu that 14-member Misinformation Combat Alliance (MCA), except for Alt News, approached the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) to form a self-regulatory body to provide fact checking services to social media platforms, reportedly with assistance from firms like Meta and Google in line with the Information Technology Rules 2021.

CONCLUSION

Vinita Kohli-Khandekar (2021) in her book The Indian Media Business- Pandemic and Afteris writing a prologue with a section "what is a media company?". She points that in 2013, the Indian Media & Entertainment Industry (IM&EI) was INR 918 billion in revenue. In 2019, it became INR 1822 billion and in 2020, when first wave stuck, it went back to where it was in 2016. She is of

the opinion that Indian media in post-pandemic times is "bloody-nosed, battered" fighting both the pandemic and regulators, in the light of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021.

Media are a social construction and they get impacted by political, sociological, technological, and economic factors. Indian media post pandemic era is searching for "the audiences across geographies, technologies, languages, tastes, formats and devices is redrawing the Media & Entertainment map globally (Kohli-Khandekar, 2021: xxi). While the volumes will improve in the years to come, the realities of fragmented audiences and glocalised media are going to stay in the years to come.

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Media, Society and Power – A Symbiosis ?

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For any system of governance to survive, particularly a democratic polity, the media has to remain at the centre become the vanguard and truly discharge its role as the fourth pillar, other than the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. It has to discover facts, voice grievances and be vigilant with an added responsibility of forewarning analyzing and sensitizing the citizens of the manifold problems and events that have an impact on their lives. There is no doubt that the power of a pen is mightier than power of a sword as it is the mind that can do or undo things than the ephemeral matters. Nothing less than this role is acceptable if media has to position itself as a major booster or change agent. It cannot, therefore, remain inert, domesticated or regimented in any way to remain superficial or frivolous but always remain shining as a pivotal link to all who matter for true human stories.

If this is the narrative of media as an organ of the polity anything falling short of this is counter-productive and detrimental to the functioning of democracy.

Some critics had compared media to a kennel club where puppies are reared for supply chain to homes for performing functions of barking, guarding or giving company to owners as pastime. Media cannot be in any sense a pastime affair but a potent source of information and knowledge for citizens. Those engaged in effective reporting and writing are in a real sense watchdogs but not from kennel clubs but institutions connected with information

and knowledge fields which teach them techniques of mass communication, tools of analysis and of late using the digital angle to make it fast and accessible to each and every one through their cell phones and television sets when they have relaxing moments to know and take a stock of the facts concerning economy people and the problems facing them.

Media connects to society like a lightning conductor in a building to lightning in sky by reflecting analyzing and portraying the manifold problems and activities at various levels and sections both homogenous or heterogeneous that have a bearing on society or human development. It has therefore to capture the points of strength weakness threats and opportunities, discord and stress that are causing or are caused by actions of community, state or authority. To that extent it verily has to have a continuous connect with seats of power and authority who really matter to the citizens. The media like a connector in a switch board, a reflector and sheet anchor of a society takes up issues which the chosen representatives may fail to understand or analyse. Media house as an innate strength of archives to validate facts and has more access to pages in history and events and it can connect it better provided they are not biased one way or the other. But if the same media acts as a stooge of the power house or as a mouth piece the same media loses its essence and charm, breaks its sting power and gets reduced to rubble by carrying out errands of the power brokers who dominate the state for their short term self- centred goals.

Media is thus a true barometer and a reliable indicator of events by tracking their origin and understanding the complexity of issues that enable the power centre to evolve those policies and execute needful activities that are received well and benefit the people at large in every way. The objectivity of reporting and alerting all events and the rational understanding of each and every factor has to be undertaken by the media to find out proper solutions and advising the authorities to test check the factors before they do their intervention.

Media is undoubtedly connected with society and power centres on one side and on other side, as a visible institution and to an extent it also voices or represents the society and comes back to same society through its programmes, stories and reports. All of these are necessary on the part of media to restore and boost confidence and it is also seen working as a confidence boosting mechanism among the population or its sections in a symmetrical manner or shooting in the dark or remaining asymmetrical to facts .

Innumerable instances of media reporting and analysing in the past have helped freedom movements in many countries in the African continent and colonies and the bridging of population with leaders has happened through magazines and newsletters produced by the media.

The freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had the full backing of media which understood conveyed and mobilized the population through its columns. Similarly the cases of atrocities and exploitation in remote areas were timely reported more by the media than the official machinery and it is no wonder that the authorities have a tradition of meeting the press to know from them, ask them and then inform them about the steps taken in a particular situation whether a cyclone or a strike or a crisis of food or water scarcity or any public related welfare schemes. All positive steps to address various problems are invariably transmitted by the media down to the people till the last mile or to persons standing at cutting edge by its conventional and modern tools. Newspapers, television shows, video links, newspaper apps and YouTube or other social media platforms are commonly used to communicate transmit and inform the population. The rising consciousness about weather conditions, global warming or environmental conservation is the fall out of various writings both through articles and news stories. The evolution of any awareness or consensus on matters affecting society like price rise, inflation, unemployment, falling wages, crimes against women and violence in various nooks and corners

is again a byproduct of media reporting that helps society and government which runs the show.

I sometimes feel the media as an entity is like an umbilical cord that has its origin in people and connected with their representatives in a democracy or the power centre which runs the state in a non- democratic polity.

There are endless instances of the media playing the role of a bridge between people and government by giving proper guidance on facts and information on the details in a clear-cut manner, also exposing facts that never were unearthed particularly in cases of criminality or lawlessness afflicting people or proposing a state of preparedness to meet the emergencies likely to arise on account of any study or prediction ranging from weather related disasters to biological virus or epidemic related to major health disorders prevailing in a community or a region. It also acts as a mirror for people to decipher its government functioning or know about efficacy of institutions working for critical fields like health or educational sectors or even about prevalence of morbidity causing problems like anemia or common flu or any other kind of problem that is afflicting human or animal health.

To end it, the multi-dimensional media is a house of potent power, a source of hope and growth if it works on right gear. Conversely it is again a source of calamity if it works in a biased manner and disseminates out fake or unfiltered information which has the potential to misguide the people or allow rotten things to appear. Regulating media and to keep it in order is a complex issue but more important is to realize its self-worth before it is discarded by public for its wrongful contribution to the society at large. In recent past, a trend has been seen everywhere of controlling media and using the media houses by their take over through crony capitalists who are in the forefront of power politics and this helps to provide a positive view of the government in power without fingers raised. But over the years the credibility gaps do emerge. Media freedom of reporting questioning or criticising is central to

a democratic system where people seek solutions from reported facts and events. But if the same is suppressed, the end result will be disastrous except to benefit ruling class. There is of course a need to watch the functioning of the media by the judiciary as the phenomenal growth of digital media.

It is the citizens who ultimately have to keep the media stable, smart and objective by their responses and ratings which media owners can't afford to ignore if they want to survive in a competitive world.

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Media and Religion:
A Meta-analysis of Studies on Influence of Digital Media

Prof. N. Usha Rani

INTRODUCTION:

Regarded as a 'social engine,' digital technology is a new propeller of media reach. The significant feature of digital communication is participation of users in the technological process. The rapid development of digital media has posed challenges of handling fast spreading religious intolerance, hate speech and prejudice influencing religious and social divisiveness in the society.

The goal of every religion is to serve the humanity. Religion professes practice of peace for the survival and well being of the humanity. Media play an important role in the portrayal of image of any community, political leaders or people. "It is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind" (Navasky cited in Zelizer & Allen, 2002). The images of race, caste, community and religion as perceived by the media have long been of interest to researchers as they signify the attitude of majority communities towards smaller groups.

No religious community has generated so much heat and debate than the Muslims in the world. The negative image portrayed by the media in the past has reinforced the public's stereotypical and prejudiced perception of the Muslims. Studies have increased in the aftermath of act of terrorism on September 11,

2001 by Al-Qaeda attack against United States of America, which incident nearly 20 years later continues to generate voluminous body of research.

Globally there is rise of religious movements and are crossing political boundaries transforming ideologies. Digital media has paved way for the creation of alternative discourse challenging the dominant narrative. Social media have empowered alternative narratives and people are participating in the discussion.

MEDIA AND TERRORISM

There have been several studies published on different dynamics of religion in general and terrorism and the media in particular since the Sept 11 attack of terror on the US. Studies have analysed how the media tackled terrorism in different parts of the world. Terrorism has been defined as "the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims" (Ganor, 2002).

One of the significant studies by Hess and Kalb, as cited by Champlin and Knoedler, argues that "the merging of the war on Iraq into the larger war on terror by the Bush administration was crucial to public support of the war. When the press adopted the official language and rhetoric, it accepted, and ultimately promoted, the administration's worldview. In so doing, the press accepted a new role for itself as a recruit in this war" (2003). Study after study has vouched for the US media's failure in post-9/11 events leading to the war on Iraq. Champlin and Knoedler describe how the media changed the very perception of "public interest."

Many studies support the contention that terrorists have manipulated the media to gain publicity. "Perpetrators and target groups of terrorist assaults lead a propaganda war through the media, which enables them to publicly legitimize their own actions. The media's critical distance in reflecting upon pictures and comments disappears with the proximity of time and space. Reporting now appears to be marked by the conveying of emotions rather than objective analysis. An inherent lack of

quality of information opens the way to abusing the media for the manipulation of public opinion" (Giessmann, 2002).

Studies have corroborated to journalism gone wrong in dealing with violence and the most appalling act of distorted journalism is to manipulate news. "The temptation every reporter faces in the field is to paint the world in his or her own image, or the image we would like it to assume. But by failing to turn with equal ferocity on all sides, we distort these conflicts and discredit the values of tolerance and forbearance by ascribing them to people who do not, in fact, share them. It is not for us to decide what people should or should not know. This kind of manipulation is the work of advertisers" (Krishnan, 2002). So, besides market forces, emotions blur the objective reporting of terror attacks and journalists fail to defend public interest. In most of the studies, serious concerns have been expressed about the media falling in line with the government during such crises.

MEDIA, ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

Muslims and media have generated lot of interest among researchers across different countries. Post 9/11 has seen a spate of studies on media treatment of Muslim community contributing to the literature. Peter Manning says that the words "Arab" or "Muslim" were associated with terrorism in 89 percent of articles that appeared in Sydney's two major newspapers in the post 9/11. He further states that, by and large, the Australian media's coverage of Muslims and Arabs is tainted with a racism that portrays the community negatively (Cited by Ian Munro, 2006). The common thesis of all those who have reflected on this issue is that the Western media writers fail to see the perspective of ordinary Muslims as their vision is blurred by the rhetoric of the fundamentalists. Akeel Bilgrami laments: "If we see this very important dialectical point with clarity, our own efforts need not fall into the confusions that the rhetoric encourages, some writers—Christopher Hitchens, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ignatieff, Niall Fergusson, Thomas Friedman to name just a few—clearly have

when they write articles in leading magazines and newspapers with titles such as 'Of Course It's About Islam' or 'Who Said It is Not About Religion!'. These sleek writers with their fine phrases are buying into the very confusion of those whom they are opposing, and in doing so, they are letting down the millions of ordinary Muslims all over the world who, in the end, are the only weapons the US and Europe have against its terrorist enemies" (Bilgrami, 2006).

Minorities in every culture are a disadvantaged group and media treats them differently and not favourably compared to the language, culture and social system of the majority that gets reflected in the media. In non-Islamic countries, Muslims, as a minority community, have attracted national attention owing to global concerns with the subjects of Muslims and Islam in the post 9/11 era. "It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the whole debate on terrorism, Islam and Muslims are now being defined by American perceptions, articulations, and expectations", says Arun Mahizhnan expressing concern over the immortalising of the Islam and Muslim issues in the global media (Mahizhnan, 2002). The research studies blame American media like CNN for lacking accuracy, objectivity, balance and facts in their coverage of Muslims. One such work is 'Islamic peril: media and global violence' by Karim M. Karim in which the author builds his thesis on media mistreatments of Islamic issues (Karim, 2000).

Majority of theses on this subject criticize media inadequacies and unpreparedness in dealing with Muslims leading to bias and prejudice in their reporting. The very lack of cultural depth among both conveyers and consumers of information through the mainstream media has meant the spread of the sense of having understood Islam without any inkling that their information may not have any objective basis (Mahizhnan, 2002).

Islamophobia was coined to draw attention to unfounded hostility towards Islam. A new discourse was born to defend Muslims and Islam to check anti-Muslim prejudice (Runnymede

Trust 1997). A new narrative argued that there is distinction between Islamophobia and anti-Muslimism (Halliday, 1999).

Majority of the studies hold media responsible for creating negative images of Muslims worldwide (Aswad, 2013). Studies have also pointed out inadequacy of conceptual framework used in studies on Western media representations of Islam and Muslims. The researchers argue that Western media studies have analysed media coverage based on theories of Orientalism, cultural racism and Islamophobia and hence are defective. Instead, the study recommends adopting an alternative dialogical model of analysis (Faimau Gabriel, 2015) as it is more appropriate in understanding social relationship.

ANALYSIS

Meta-analysis is a conventional consistent empirical examination employed by researchers to evaluate the outcome of previous research on emerging new areas of study. Digital media have posed many challenges for researchers to evolve appropriate method of study unlike studies involving traditional media. Meta-analysis is adopted in this study to locate all related studies on the impact of digital media on people's perception of issues related to religion as a dominant narrative in global politics.

Meta-analysis provides a framework to study only authentic studies conducted scientifically and systematically. Meta analysis provide insight into the different perspectives, methods of study and diverse issues to enable us to draw inferences on sensitive issues that affect the peace and social relationship in multicultural, multi religious and pluralistic societies.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON DIGITAL MEDIA AND RELIGION

In a study on harnessing digital media in the fight against prejudice (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2019), researchers have found that digital media has the potential to reduce subtle prejudice among Jewish majority people towards Arab minority in Israel. The study examines the relationships between Jewish and Arab

citizens comparing the influence of both traditional and digital media in mitigating conflict and hostility. It is a comparative study of real and virtual media environments between religious majority and minority populations in Israel. The findings state that, 'virtual contact and exposure to negative content about a minority group in the digital media decreased subtle prejudice. Consequently, it can be concluded that, background variables and political attitudes being equal, virtual contact and digital media can affect prejudice reduction more than traditional forms of intercultural exposure such as mass media' (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2019).

Media stereotyping of religious minorities in general and Muslims in particular has been widely cited and researched. Stereotyping of Muslims is cultivated through media coverage affecting perception by different social groups (Bodenhausen et al., 2003; Dovidio et al., 2010. Saleem et al. (2016)). These previous studies have studied traditional media like newspaper, radio, TV and film to endorse the premise that media stereotyping of ethnic minorities has influenced negative perceptions.

In a paper on digital hatred and majoritarian radicalization and social media in India, Maya Mirchandani has analysed the 'intersections between free speech and hate speech and impact of majoritarain hate speech' (Mirchandani, 2018). The study propounds the premise that 'social media have the singular power to amplify the speed and force of messages that advocate or condone abuse against minorities and allow incendiary speech to spread like wildfire' in the Indian context. As a descriptive study, the paper delves on a new narrative of hate speech on social media and its impact on minorities.

In a significant investigation on religious politics of social media in India, Sahana Udupa from the department of religious diversity in Germany, 'explores the case of right-wing Hindu nationalist volunteers in India, to turn a critical eye on a digital practice that has become prominent on new media in India in recent times—the assembling of facts, figures, and treatises as

an ideological exercise by the net-savvy "non-experts" (Udupa, S. (2015). In a qualitative study, she propounds the concept of "online archiving" where "internet Hindus" and pro-Islamic activists in India are assembling information and are indulging in marking boundaries for religious communities. It observes that the religious politics of social media studies show that despite the belief that new media has potential to transcend social divides, it also reflects a contradiction as it capable of creating difference and animosity between communities in matters of religious terms and ideologies (Ibid, 2015).

In a study of Tweets, measuring the polarization of social media data (Ranjan et.al.2020), majorly focuses on the issue of controversies surrounding the Hindu place of worship, the Sabarimala temple in Indian state of Kerala. Adopting the method of scraping tweets from Twitter (which is rebranded as X) it uses the tools developed by Jefferson Henrique (2018) whose project has enabled researchers to retrieve old tweets. The findings reveal that tweets reflect sentiments and emotions of people recognizing polarization in digital space. Tweets on religious issues are proved to drive greater degree of polarization.

It is interesting to note that academicians have evinced keen interest in the study of interface between social media and religion in India after the establishment of right wing government in 2014. One finds many studies on the role of social media in perceiving religious ideologies. Many of such studies on social media have adopted conventional methods. A study on the impact of social media on religious tolerance in India (Tinumeren Ozukum, 2019) has adopted the case study method to study digital discourse in religious conflicts. This study has found that social media are the tools to propagate hate content by different religious groups for political gains. The results point out that with the expansion of social media across urban India, a range of new voices emerged on social networking sites, especially Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter (currently rebranded as X), leading to a distinctly middle-

class debate culture precipitating along the divide between self-fashioned 'liberals' and religious majorities like online volunteers of Hindutva' (Tinumeren Ozukum, 2019). This study is based on the theoretical concept of Foucault who argued that 'knowledge and power are intimately bound up' (Pollard,2019). Faucault, a twentieth century French postmodernist is known for his seminal works on the ramifications of power. This study works on the premise that 'power is seen everywhere' (Pollard, 2019) and that social media considers every individual as an active agent of power rather than a passive victim (Tinumeren Ozukum, 2019).

The practice of religion in China has drawn the attention of global scholars. A study has examined the utilization of social media by Chinese Christians using the concept of inter-contextuality (Lim & Sng, 2020). Researchers used sample from Chinese Christian groups on various social media platforms selected through snowball sampling. The study reveals that, 'intercontextuality of online communication enables Chinese Christian users to communicate regularly about their daily routines and Christian values which allows them to align their Christian concerns with wider societal issues' (Lim & Sng, 2020). However, this finding is relevant only to religion and not politics says the study as most of the Chinese refrain from social media activism and are conscious of the boundary that separates religion from politics in social media conversations owing to strong state surveillance.

Despite increase in research on religion and social media, scholars have recognized gaps in understanding the attitude of Muslims and Jews in the US, a hugely democratic society, and about their perception of social media. One of the studies examines patterns across religious practices of minority Muslims and Jews in United States to study how they perceive social media in relation to their religion. The study enables us to understand what it is to be a religious minority in general and a Muslim or a Jew in a liberal society in particular. The findings reveal that "Jews and Muslims view social media as a 'double-edged sword'—providing

opportunities to expand intracommunal ties and access to religious resources, while also diluting the quality of ties and increasing exposure to religious distractions (Ferguson et.al. 2021)."

Impact of new technologies on religious commitment among American youth is the focus of another study which uses data from National Survey of Moral Formation. It is one of the rare studies on researching the impact of screen time and social media with regard to youth religiosity. It examines the interface between measures of religious commitment and digital media. The findings reveal that the 'screen time is related to diminished religious commitment, and, for private religious outcomes, the negative relationship is stronger among adolescents whose parents are more religious. There is no unique negative effect of social media use on religious commitment except on the scripture reading of adolescents with religious parents' (Uecker & McClure, (2022).

Many studies have evaluated the role of social media in presidential elections in many countries. One of the studies interestingly used Facebook to establish the blending populist elements and religious discourse in political campaigns. The study endorses the relationship between populism, religion and social media. 'While populism gave political validity to religious discourse, a religious imaginary provided populism with charismatic and messianic authority. This populist/religious reason found an ideal expression in Facebook and, simultaneously, was resignified by this platform's affordances' (Siles et.al.) reveals the study.

SUMMARY

This Meta study reviewed various studies on the tension between digital media and religion. The studies offer insights into the digital platforms validating religious conversations. Most of the scholars especially in global south have refrained from conducting serious academic body of work. Media cannot afford to ignore the realm of religion as ironically even secular democracies are witnessing contentious discourses on religion and politics in digital

sphere. Media stereotyping of religious minorities has been widely researched providing enough evidence in support of distortion of news, misinformation and hostility sustained through digital platforms. It is noteworthy that couple of studies has reflected on the contradictions of social media as a divisive force leading to religious polarization. However, there are still gaps in knowledge in this sphere. It endorses Hoover's (2016) premise that religion has been a blind spot of media studies. It is widely believed that new media have opened up new conversations on key domains like religion but the alternative discourse that has emerged is neither inclusive nor it recognizes the principles of public sphere (Habermas) or civil sphere (Alexander). Democratic societies ought to have space for both dominant discourse and counter discourse to facilitate marginal voices. We need to research more into the emergence of multiple subaltern spheres on digital ecosystem as it has the responsibility of protecting religious minorities.

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Stardom, Loneliness and Showbiz Insecurity:
Postmodern Inclinations in Satyajit Ray's *Nayak* (1966)

Dr. Sunayan Bhattacharjee

INTRODUCTION:

Popular Bengali cinema has always been obsessed with stars. In the 1950s and the 1960s, this trend was particularly true. Cinegoers were more concerned about who featured in a specific movie rather than what the movie espoused. Thus, celebrity culture ruled the roost and often content was the scapegoat. The biggest representative of this culture was none other than Uttam Kumar, who enjoyed the status of a demigod in the collective Bengali consciousness. Popularly referred to as the Mahanayak (the great actor), Kumar, whose original name was Arun Kumar Chatterjee, was instrumental in producing some of the biggest box office hits in the history of Bengali cinema. As opposed to the star-driven movies that Kumar often featured in, the suave and sophisticated Satyajit Ray relied on actors and stories to make movies that defied the dominant trend of the time. However, the eternal storyteller in Ray was always curious about the celebrity reel culture. His curiosity got the better of him and the result was *Nayak* (Dwyer, 2021). The irony does not stop here though. The eponymous role in *Nayak* is enacted by none other than Kumar himself, who almost plays his own life. During one of the critical moments in the movie, protagonist Arindam Mukherjee states that a celebrity necessarily needs to hide his/ her original self to

retain his/ her charm and intrigue. This statement sums up the intrinsic philosophy of *Nayak*.

Nayak narrates a single day in the life of Arindam when he travels by train from Kolkata (then Calcutta) to Delhi to receive a prestigious government award. During the journey, he meets Aditi Sengupta, a principled young journalist, who runs a women's magazine, strategically named Adhunika (meaning a modern woman). While Ray intentionally avoids a romantic turn, the rest of the movie encapsulates the emotionally charged interactions between Arindam and Aditi. However, what is infinitesimally more interesting are the ancillary plotlines that are weaved to complement the fundamental thesis that the movie so unambiguously projects. While trying to make sense out of Ray's unique attempt, it is equally important to know the fundamental objectives of the expert filmmaker. While talking to his biographer W. Andrew Robinson, Ray said that his intention was three-fold: (1) investigate the psychology of a movie star; (2) investigate the psychology of fans; and (3) make a film about a train journey (Robinson, 1989). While the movie remains true to the three delineated objectives, it successfully goes beyond and in ways that are both novel and experimental. Anybody who has watched Ray's movies knows that Ray refused to incorporate his own takes on different subjects. He initiated the discourses, gave different perspectives, and stopped at that. As a filmmaker, Ray never believed in mollycoddling his audiences. He always let viewers form their own opinions on contentious subjects. While his contemporary filmmakers including the likes of Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak criticized him often for failing to take sides, this is where Ray was able to maintain his originality. That is the reason as to why Ray is a humanist more than a filmmaker.

For Nayak as well, Ray follows the same objective strategy. While doing so, he hobnobs with certain cinematic and literary devices. If one were to list some of these devices, these would be:

1. Self-reflections.
2. Redrawing the contours of what is real and what is not.
3. An intelligent mix of contemporaneity and traditions.
4. A re-evaluation of the past.
5. Surrealist metaphors.
6. A contempt for rationality and logic.
7. An engagement with the visual narrative.
8. A dedication towards simulacra.
9. An active interest in the sublime.
10. Comments about the post-industrial society.

All these devices point towards postmodernist tendencies (Wright, 2009). In the current paper, the author analyzes the usage of all these devices to decipher the filmmaker's commentaries about stardom, loneliness, and showbiz insecurity. This analysis has been done using the Auteur Theory as the theoretical framework. The key concepts used here are:

STARDOM

According to the Oxford Dictionary, stardom is the state of being famous. In the given context, we are talking about cine fame. As for the study, the paper tries to understand the construction of stardom by Satyajit Ray. While Arindam is undoubtedly a star, his existence and his persona represent and complement his stardom. While the meaning of the term remains constant, the context changes from person to person. During this study, we shall look at the representation of stardom through Arindam, as projected by Ray.

LONELINESS

According to the Oxford Dictionary, loneliness is the feeling of being unhappy because one does not have friends or people to talk to. In the context of Nayak, it is more than apparent that Arindam is lonely despite having many admirers. Satyajit Ray has a definite take on loneliness as a phenomenon associated with stardom.

SHOWBIZ INSECURITY

Showbiz is a general term that is used for the entertainment

industry. However, the entertainment industry is very uncertain. Even a consistent string of successes is not enough to ensure someone's presence at the top. This results in insecurity amongst professionals. Satyajit Ray consciously portrays this insecurity in *Nayak* through Arindam's demeanours and misdemeanours.

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a late 20th-century literary and philosophical movement that is marked by the surge of relativism and skepticism. It rejected reason and scientific objectivity and emphasized the importance of ideology in the sustenance of political, social, and economic powers (Aylesworth, 2005). Postmodernism was a reaction to modernism that assumed that there is a universal reality, which is objective. Postmodernism is a Western construct as it resulted from a post-industrial society. Therefore, multiple scholars have said that postmodernism can be limited by geography as all the parts of the world have not been equally touched by post-industrialism and modernism. However, the concept is not limited to its historical scope. Instead, the concept has an aesthetic and philosophical dimension that can be extended to popular cultural forms such as cinema.

SURREALISM

Surrealism is a major avant-garde cultural movement that began in the 1920s and subsequently became quite popular in the following few decades. Surrealism juxtaposed the contradictory conditions of dreams and reality (Bhattacharjee, 2019). During the initial days of the uprising, artists expressed themselves through irrational and shocking images that constituted morphed versions of everyday objects. The idea was to let the unconscious express itself. The movement went on to impact cinema eventually and led to the birth of a new genre called surrealist cinema.

AUTEUR THEORY

The Auteur Theory maintains that the director is the 'auteur' (French for author) of a movie and every movie reflects the creative vision of the director. According to this theory, any movie would

bear the signature style of its director and hence is different from the creation of another director (Uytdewilligen, 2019). For example, an Alfred Hitchcock movie or a Quentin Tarantino movie would have the typical styles of the concerned directors. The Auteur Film Theory does not take into its contention the collective effort that is put into the making of a movie.

ANALYZING POSTMODERNISM IN *NAYAK* USING THE AUTEUR THEORY

The movie's title sequence overlooks a man's blurred head within a grid. Eventually, the head turns out to be that of Arindam, who is shown brushing his hair before he readies himself for a day-long trip to Delhi. The viewers are immediately made aware of the charming, good looks of Arindam and his effort to maintain the same in terms of how he dresses. In a way, this is representative of the stifling nature of celebrity culture and resultant stardom.

Towards the beginning of the movie, Arindam tells his manager and friend Jyoti that he is least bothered about the government award that he is about to receive in Delhi. This depicts his absolute contempt for both order and logic. Also, this statement is indicative of a deep feeling of professional insecurity – something that we inherently see in Arindam at multiple points in the movie. Ray brings out this aspect with élan.

During the same conversation with Jyoti, Arindam mentions that he would consume a sleeping pill and sleep the entire day on the train. There can be two separate ways of looking at it. The first is on the importance of sleep and resultant dreams that constitute a significant part of the story. The second interpretation is very straight forward. Through the usage of the sleeping pill, Arindam would be able to escape from his insecurity for a significant amount of time.

While the conversation with Jyoti continues, Arindam asks if his screen presence is not enough for a movie to be a box office success to which Jyoti retorts that times are changing and hence the charisma of Arindam alone cannot guarantee the success of a movie. Arindam's obsession with his celebrity nature is another

stark representation of his deep insecurity. In ways more than one, he is concerned that he might not be able to sustain at the top. The fact that Arindam is not confident about the future is reflected by his wry assertion that he would go back to his daily dose of meals at the fictional Kundu Cabin just in case his upcoming movie flops. This discussion about a probable redonning of his pre-stardom lifestyle is also a desirable and nostalgic reconstruction of his own past.

In Arindam's next interaction with a potential producer, there is an element of self-mockery in terms of coverages by two newspapers concerning a drunken brawl that Arindam had with another person while being at a party. He nonchalantly talks about the brawl and refuses to sign the contract brought by the producer. Here again, there seems to be a disdain for normal logic.

What follows the interaction with the producer is a telephonic conversation between Arindam and a non-visible woman at the other end of the telephone. Although the context is not noticeably clear, it becomes apparent that Arindam does not want to continue the hitherto unmentioned relationship that he has with the woman for reasons that are best known to both. What we see here is a general lack of trust that Arindam harbours even for his apparent love interest. This is undoubtedly representative of Arindam's general sense of insecurity.

Nayak is also self-reflective and self-referential by its very nature. The character of Aghore Chatterjee, played by Jogesh Chatterjee, and his visible hatred for all things cinematic is Ray's way of self-depreciation. During two different points in the movie, Aghore admonishes Arindam for his lack of a moral compass and the general vices that mark film professionals. During his first conversation with Arindam, Aghore mentions John Ford's cinematic classic How Green Was My Valley (1941) thereby establishing Ray's admiration for American cinema. In another scene, a successful businessman Haren Bose, played by Ranjit Sen, pays his homage to the sheer quality of American cinema thereby vindicating Ray's passion for Hollywood.

The first conversation between Arindam and Aditi Sengupta is a postmodernist's delight. Highly loaded and figurative, there are multiple aspects of the conversation that need to be taken into consideration. First is the sheer aggression and confidence with which Arindam takes the autograph book from Aditi. It would seem from his behaviour that he is doing a favour to Aditi. However, when Aditi mentions that the autograph is meant for her cousin sister, Arindam looks amused and a little befuddled. The fact that this statement by Aditi unsettles him is evident from how he makes an all-out effort to make his pen work, which does not seem to be working. The exchange of words between Arindam and Aditi also seems uncomfortable as Aditi makes a sardonic commentary about how unrealistic popular Bengali movies are thereby hurting the brittle ego of Arindam. Somehow, the interaction upsets the popular notions of cultural realities.

Now, let us take our focus away from Arindam for a little while and analyze some of the ancillary plotlines in the movie. The first conversation between Haren Bose and Pritish Sarkar, played by Kamu Mukherjee, is representative of a change in popular thought process that was evident across the globe at that point in time in history. While Haren mentions the role of God in scripting his success story, Pritish emphatically shifts the credit to Haren. There is also a mention about the contradictory leftist radical and rightist conservative approaches to life. Here as well, there seems to be a combination of contemporaneity and tradition thereby establishing the postmodern inclinations here. During the conversation, Haren complements the West for its forward march in the realm of science, technology and commerce, another tertiary indication of the post-industrial civilization.

The second conversation between Arindam and Aditi is even more interesting. When Aditi reveals that she edits a women's magazine, Arindam dismisses journalists in his usual style. When Aditi expresses her intent to interview Arindam from an unfamiliar perspective, Arindam says that it is better for cine idols to reside in

the world of dreams and shadows only as otherwise the audiences would not care much about them. This is representative of the blurring lines between what is real and what is not as the cine status of the megastar is given more importance than what he is. During another point in the conversation, Arindam mocks Adhunika. This mocking is also indicative of a severe distaste for modernism and established norms of logic.

However, a critical moment in the movie comes when Ray shows one of the most iconic dream sequences in the history of international cinema. A scene that reminds us of the meticulous designs of dream sequences by Salvador Dalí, Arindam gets locked in a strange world where he sees himself in the middle of a heap of Indian currency notes. Initially, he is euphoric and moves around the place like a king in his palace. The background music complements this euphoria. But soon, Arindam hears a telephone ringing and comes across a skeletal hand holding the telephone. In desperation, Arindam tries to run away and finds himself in the middle of innumerable skeletal hands, each holding a telephone. He then starts drowning in the heap of currencies while seeking help from Shankar, played by Soumen Bose, Arindam's initial mentor in theatrical acting. However, Shankar, after making initial advances refuses to help Arindam and Arindam eventually drowns. Surreal, contemplative and extremely rich in meaning, this sequence could be interpreted in a number of ways. What is clear beyond doubt though is the clear expression of insecurity and discontent that has crept into Arindam for unapologetically following his passion. He harbours a sense of guilt for not having listened to Shankar, who advised him not to get into the world of cinema. The sequence also points towards the apparent loneliness of Arindam subject to his stardom. Most importantly, Arindam's fear of being lost in the vortex of his own wealth becomes more than apparent. In a subtle way though, this sequence could also be interpreted as the projection of a very awkward relationship between Ray and the world of commercial cinema.

Figure 1: Arindam's First Dream Sequence

There is a scene where Arindam disembarks at a station named Khanyan, takes a cup of tea from a local vendor and immerses himself in the country landscape. This scene stands in stark contrast with the modern train that has all the facilities that a traveler can vie for. Arindam's gesture to buy the local tea also tells us that he is steeped in the past notwithstanding his status. Aditi empathetically looks on as Arindam sips the tea. This contrast between past and present is also representative of the movie's postmodern inclinations.

During one of the interactions with Aditi, Arindam mentions that he harbours a very neutral feeling about death and is not perturbed by it. He says so while introducing Shankar as his mentor. While Shankar's death moved him initially, it also opened his avenue in the reel world. This way, Arindam reevaluates the past. This trait of the protagonist to ruthlessly move on is the reason as to why is lonely. While Arindam does not enjoy loneliness, he tends to have no other option to realize his vision to go to the top, as he reveals during one of his flashback interactions with Jyoti.

In another flashback conversation with Arindam after the death of Shankar, Jyoti specifically mentions that the era belongs to Marx and Freud and there is no space for providence and reincarnations. In fact, this conversation motivates Arindam to reconsider options to join the world of cinema. To be precise, this conversation marks the subtle changes that were happening in the post-industrial society and its impact on developing countries like India.

A critical moment in the movie is when Arindam reminisces about his introduction to Mukunda Lahiri, a fictional Bengali acting stalwart, during the shooting of his first movie. Mukunda suppressed the acting skills of Arindam to ensure that his clichéd mannerisms were not exposed. Arindam has a grudge against Mukunda for not letting him perform up to his potential. However, Arindam also reveals to Aditi that he got an opportunity to settle the scores when Mukunda had come down to his swanky new apartment to canvas for a role. Arindam turned down the request. While Arindam does not specify it in as many words, Aditi sums it up by saying that Arindam refused to give a role to Mukunda just to avenge his earlier experience. This is also a self-reflection that Arindam engages in and is indicative of celluloid loneliness and desperation.

In his effort to establish the volatility of the times and the transitioning nature of geopolitics, Ray also incorporates a political side story. This involves the relationship between Arindam and his close friend and confidante Biresh, played by Premangshu Bose. In a flashback scene, Arindam deliberates on the political nature of this association. Arindam recounts how Biresh, a leftist trade union leader, sought to establish an egalitarian society along the lines of the dominant anti-establishment narrative of the time while Arindam intended to make a name for himself in the world of theatrical acting. It should be noted that the Cold War, fought between the two dominant political ideologies of the world, was raging at the time

when *Nayak* was released. Ray could not have stayed insulated from the global developments. However, through the movie, Ray masterfully juxtaposes the global political instability with individual emotional turmoil thereby establishing the movie's obvious postmodern inclinations. The conflict, though, is visible more through a fight for maintaining images than anything else. When Biresh requests Arindam to give a lecture to workers, Arindam refuses. However, this also sparks a guilt trip in Arindam. Arindam's self-reflection with guilt is active on three separate occasions – with Shankar, Mukunda and Biresh. In a way, Arindam's obsession with simulacra is responsible for his loneliness, which is also one of the reasons for his insecurity. Through Arindam, Ray illustrates the universality of how stardom and fame can often deprive a person of humane considerations.

Ray's tryst with surrealism in *Nayak* is also visible through his emphasis on sleeping pills. While Arindam mentions sleeping pills towards the beginning, he does consume a sleeping pill in the train thereby emphasizing on the importance of sleep in bringing out realities and counter realities.

While dissecting the postmodern inclinations of *Nayak*, it is a pre-requisite that we revisit the second dream sequence. A little more nuanced than the first one, the second dream sequence combines reality and Arindam's subconscious being. It features the voice of Mukunda Lahiri, a cinema set, a cinema poster and a restaurant. Through this sequence, a relationship is drawn between the reported case of brawl involving Arindam and his romantic relationship with a heroine, who introduced herself as unmarried in another flashback scene. This dream sequence primarily hints at multiple betrayals – the ones that Arindam inflicted on others and the one that he had to endure herself. The fact that Arindam is extremely lonely is reflected in the visuals that were incorporated in the sequence. However, in both the dream sequences, the ringing of the bells suggest that Arindam fears his troubled times to come his way after a string of successes.

Figure 2: Arindam's Second Dream Sequence

Let us again look at some of the other ancillary plot points. All the interactions between Haren and Pritish are commentaries on the state of contemporary civilization and the perspective is two-fold – at times appreciative and at other times dismissive and cynical. Also, the filmmaker makes us look at two opposing views of life – one in which Pritish almost coerces his wife Molly to extend sexual favours to Haren for the benefit of Pritish's publicity business and the other one in which Pritish refuses to let Molly enter the world of acting. Ray subtly makes a scathing commentary on the futility of the publicity business and its ingrained philosophy. Again, this is reflective of a contempt for industrial and capitalist developments.

There is another sequence though that perfectly sums up the inner philosophy of the movie. After getting drunk and facing a severe existential and identity crisis, the guilt-stricken Arindam opens the exterior door of the train compartment that he is in and looks outside as the tracks shine. For a moment he contemplates suicide and then he summons Aditi through the conductor. After Aditi arrives, Arindam confesses to his lonely and insecure existence and almost reveals as to why the reported brawl happened at the first place. Aditi politely declines to listen to what happened

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and empathetically guides Arindam to his room. Ray takes an active interest in the sublime in this scenario.

The materiality of the spiritual domain also smacks of a typical cynicism that is so reflective of postmodernism. The same is visible through the depiction of Swami of Worldwide Will Workers (WWWW), played by Satya Banerjee. The naming of the organization seems like a prophecy when we consider the invention of the triple Ws or the WWW or the internet much later. The Swami is considering the expansion and exploration of the organization through publicity. This is also reflective of the blurring boundaries between commerce and religion or spirituality.

Eventually, when the train chugs into Delhi, both Arindam and Aditi part ways but not before Aditi tears up the notes that she took during her interactions with Arindam so that Arindam continues to remain a star. Again, Ray takes the liberty to somehow intermingle the reel world with the real world.

CONCLUSION

It needs to be noted that Ray took several cinematic liberties while making *Nayak*. Consequently, the movie became a yardstick. While postmodernism was at its nascent stage when *Nayak* was released, the movie does manage to conform to many of the philosophical and aesthetic considerations that postmodernism forwarded. In the process, it reveals significantly about the stardom of a successful movie star, his professional insecurities, and the resultant loneliness that fame and stardom create. Ray also does not shy away from posing social, cultural, and political questions and in the process establishes his essential humanist nature. While some of Ray's contemporaries considered cinema to be a medium to forward their respective ideologies, Ray took it as a beautiful medium through which effective and seamless storytelling can be done.

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Media, Society, and Power:
An Unfathomable Interplay

**Prof. Harish Kumar* &
Jagroop Singh Balhra****

EVOLVING DIGITAL AGE

In today's modern world, due to rapid technological advancements and easily available digital communication tools, we are constantly immersed in information of different forms. In this landscape, media plays a central role, both as a mirror reflecting societal values and shaper of these values. It touches every aspect of our life, from accessing the information to forming the opinions (Aljukhadar et al., 2020). Media acts as an important tool through which we perceive and understand the society, culture and power. Media captures and reflects the collective experiences of users, through attractive storytelling and information dissemination techniques (Lund et al., 2018). Understanding of the interplay in media, society and power is critical in today's digital age (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022).

MEDIA AND SOCIETAL VALUES

In the contemporary digital age, media holds a key position in our society (Gane & Beer, 2008). It serves as a mirror as well as shaper of the societal values. Media reflects our likes, dislikes, norms, beliefs and aspirations. It captures the key elements of various cultures, different ideologies and recent trends. Through news, advertising or entertainment, media provides us the essence

of what matters to us. Also, media shapes our values through information dissemination, storytelling and representation (Lund et al., 2018). It challenges or reinforces stereotypes, shapes our attitudes and behaviours and influences the public opinion. Media prompts us critically to assess the content we consume and realise the influence it puts on our beliefs and values.

The important aspect of complex interplay between media, society and power is media's power to influence the public opinion (Ausat, 2023).Through traditional news outlets or digital platforms, the media presents stories which capture the public's attention and act as an agenda setter. Media emotionally engages the audiences by framing the discussions and shapes how people perceive and interpret the daily events (Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). In the digital environment, media influence is amplified by social media platforms. The dissemination of information is very rapid and like-minded viewpoints are often reinforced fast on social media platforms (Enke &Borchers, 2021). We must also acknowledge the media's responsibility in shaping the public discourse.

INTERACTIONS WITH POWER STRUCTURES

The media's role is not only limited to dissemination of information and entertainment it also intersects with the power structures which govern our societies (Curran, 2012). The intersection of media and power structures is important in understanding the complex relation between media, society and power. Usually, media plays crucial role of vigilant watchdog and holds the people accountable who are in power (Balod & Hameleers, 2021). Through investigative journalism and exposes, media unearths the public corruption, abuse of power and breach of the public trust. However, media can also be used as a tool of power by the government's different corporations and various influential entities (Sen et al., 2019). The concentration of media ownership under powerful and influential people can raise the concern about potential bias and editorial independence. The State controlled media can be used as an instrument of propaganda, can

suppress the descent and also be used to make narratives to further the political agendas (Benkler et al., 2018).

The significance of understanding the complex interplay between media, society, and power is essentially important, mainly in the context of democracy. The topic holds a central and foundational role in safeguarding the health and functionality of democratic societies across the world (Curran, 2023).

In democratic systems, the media mainly assumes the role of the "Fourth Estate" (Berglez & Gearing, 2018). The term which states its importance as a check and balance for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This clearly shows that a robust and independent media is critical for holding people in power accountable. It serves as the eyes and ears of the public, probing the actions and decisions of those in authority. Without a free and vigilant media, the basic foundation of democracy - government of the people, by the people, for the people – is always undermined.

A vibrant democracy is based on a well-informed citizenry. This is where the media plays a crucial role. It acts as a primary source of information, context, and analysis on a wider range of topics, from local politics to global affairs (Grabe & Myrick, 2016). Informed citizens are better equipped to engage actively in the democratic process. They can make informed choices in elections and policy debates. They hold their elected representatives accountable by staying informed about their actions and decisions. Primarily, an informed citizenry is the basis of a vibrant democracy.

Media acts as a bridge among citizens for dialogue and debate with diverse viewpoints. In democratic societies, diversity of thought is always encouraged. The media provides a platform where different views and perspectives are discussed and debated. It serves as a meeting point where citizens can engage in public discourse, exchange views, and debate on important issues (Firmstone & Coleman, 2014). This broad-based approach to pluralistic dialogue is a key to the survival of democratic societies.

The complex interplay of media, society and power poses challenges to democratic values. Concentrated media ownership, where a few entities control the major portion of media outlets, leads to concerns about editorial independence and potential bias. Political manipulation of news outlets, whether through political pressure or direct ownership, always undermines the credibility and objectivity of the media (Bennett& Livingston, 2018). The spread of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation threatens the integrity of democratic processes, as citizens may form their decisions based on false or misleading information. Figuring out and addressing these challenges is important for the continued success of any democratic system.

MEDIA LITERACY AND ENGAGED CITIZENS

Understanding the interplay between media, society, and power is not just practised in theory; it demands for media literacy and engaged citizens. Citizens must be having critical thinking skills necessary to explore the media landscape full of misinformation and biased narratives. They must actively engage with media, question its sources, seek diverse perspectives, and separates reliable information from falsehoods. Media literacy empowers the citizens to be experienced consumers of information, which enables them to make informed choices and participate meaningfully in the democratic processes (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).The main exploration of one of the key dimensions is an in-depth examination of how media leaves its influence on society. It showcases the role of media as a mirror, which reflects and shapes beliefs, aspirations and societal values. We look into the mechanisms through which media showcases individual experiences, cultural norms and societal trends.

This article also explores the influence of societal norms on creation and production of media content. We look into how the existing cultural values, ethics, and taboos of a given society shape media storytelling, representation and the selection of topics for coverage. In addition, we find out how media covers controversial

subjects, sensitive issues and evolving societal norms, which serves as both a reflection of and a catalyst for societal change.

FUTURE LANDSCAPE OF MEDIA

The present article foresees and contemplates the potential trajectories of the dynamic and complex relationship among media, society, and power. We consider the transformative impact of emerging technologies, evolving regulatory bodies and policies, major shifts in media ownership, and the influence of civil society activism. By considering these multiple factors, we try to provide the insights into the ever-evolving landscape of this relationship and foresee the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Media's impact on society is profound, which is marked by its dual role of reflection and shaping. Firstly, media serves as a mirror, showing societal values, cultural norms, and different trends. In this capacity, media offers an outlook of a society's identity. This reflection of this is evident in different content forms, from news reports to entertainment content showcasing existing cultural narratives. However, media is not merely a passive mirror; it actively shapes societal values and beliefs. This transformative power of media emerges through storytelling, representation of society, and the dissemination of information (Lund et al., 2018). Media narration, characters, and messages have the potential to challenge or create the stereotypes, promote empathy, or reinforce bias. For instance, movies, television series and other contents have the ability to influence how people view and relate them to various social and cultural groups.

MEDIA AND THE POWER OF AGENDA-SETTING

Media has the power of agenda-setting, which greatly influences the public opinion and collective understanding of the public. Media outlets only select, frame, and present those stories and issues to the public, which effectively gains prominence in the public consciousness. This shows how the stories are framed, the language used, and the context provided, ultimately how individuals emotionally engage with and interpret the events. The

impact of agenda-setting is large, as it shapes the public discourse, formulates societal concerns and drives policy debates (Semetko, 2023).

Media is a strong force which drives social change and activism (Ausat, 2023). Historically, media has acted as a catalyst for social transformation, exposed injustices, inequalities, and highlighted the systemic issues. Through investigative journalism, documentaries, and citizen journalism, media has highlighted critical issues which demands both attention and action. Moreover, media platforms also offer opportunity for marginalized groups and activists to voice their concerns and calls for change. Social media, in particular, has democratized the ability to share the stories, mobilize different communities, and draw attention to urgent issues like civil rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. Media's role in shaping the public opinion becomes evident in activism, where the coverage of any issue influences the public sentiment and gets support for social movements.

Society has a great impact on the content produced by media, where cultural influences play a central role. Cultural norms and values decide what is considered acceptable or taboo within a society, and media content often furthers these norms. This cultural influence on media stretches to how stories are made, the portrayal of characters and situations, and the overall direction of the content creation. Like, societies which values individualism showcase media content that emphasizes on personal achievement, while the collective cultures give importance to community and interdependence. In addition, to create inclusiveness and cultural understanding the representation of various cultures in media content is essential. At the same time media must handle culturally sensitive issues carefully in order to avoid the misinterpretation and misrepresentation as it can lead to backlash.

Media's role in covering news and current events is greatly shaped by societal norms, values, aspirations and expectations (Ausat, 2023). This hugely influences crucial aspects of journalism.

Media organisations often face the challenge of the balancing sensationalism and objectivity in their reporting. Societal norms, sometimes, encourage sensational coverage to capture the viewers or readers' attention, but ethical journalism necessities prioritizing objectivity and fairness. Managing this thin line is essential for responsible news reporting.

Sensitive topics, like violence, crime, or tragedy, receive different coverage in the media due to societal norms with regard to decency and respect. Editors must make choices about the content selection and coverage, taking into account the potential harm to vulnerable sections of the society and audiences. The influence of societal norms and political ideologies can show in media bias and framing. News stories may be framed to align with prevailing political or social narratives, potentially leading to biased coverage.

Media ownership and corporate interests have significant influence over media content, priorities and narratives. Ownership, whether by individuals or corporations, always plays an important role in the editorial decisions in any media organisation. This includes the selection of stories, framing the narratives, and determining the editorial stance on various issues. However, corporate interests may give priority to profit over journalistic integrity, which potentially gives rise to conflicts of interest.

The concentration of media ownership limits the diversity of voices and perspectives within the media landscape. When a few powerful entities control numerous outlets, the range of viewpoints narrows down, and critical reporting is curbed. Corporate interests, including advertising revenue, impacts the content produced by media organisations. In an attempt to please advertisers or sponsors, media organizations compromise their editorial independence and the diversity of content offered.

POLITICS OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP

The way media is owned is connected to politics, and this affects how free and unbiased the media is and what role it plays in society. Political connections of media owners can affect the

media which they control. When media owners have ties to politics, it raises questions about whether the media reports news without being influenced by those political connections. This makes it difficult for media organizations to balance their role in serving political interests while also staying truthful and fair in their reporting.

This balance is crucial because it directly impacts how free the media is to share different viewpoints and to hold powerful people accountable. In the real world, we see examples of how political control over media ownership can lead to problems like biased news coverage, stories which prioritize certain viewpoints, and the silencing of opposing voices. All of these things harm the variety and plurality of opinions in the media and makes it harder for democracy to thrive.

The presence of propaganda, censorship and state-controlled media in the media landscape significantly affects the information dissemination and narratives within the society. Censorship practices, employed by governments or authorities, have the potential to curtail the free flow of information and limit the critical voices. This directly impacts the media's ability to fulfil its critical and important role as a watchdog and to keep the public informed. Additionally, state-sponsored propaganda manipulates public opinion and perception. Through controlled media organisations, governments disseminate narratives which serve their interests, whether on domestic matters or international affairs. The blurring of the lines between factual reporting and propaganda challenges media's role as a credible source of information, leaving the public to face questions of trust and accuracy.

Economic interests, mainly those related to advertising revenue, have major influence over media content and business models. Media organizations mainly rely on advertising revenue as a primary source of income, creating a complex web between their editorial independence and economic sustainability. In the pursuit of profitability, media organisations may tailor their content

to align with advertisers' preferences and interests, potentially compromising their editorial integrity and the diversity of content offered to the public. This economic influence has direct effect on the content produced by media organisations, influencing which stories receive attention and potentially impacting the extent of coverage. Striking a balance between editorial independence and economic viability remains a crucial challenge for the media industry till this day.

The proliferation of surveillance technologies in the modern era presents major challenges to individual privacy and fundamental freedoms. Surveillance technologies, whether held by governments, corporations, or other organisations, have the potential to intrude into individual privacy through the collection and analysis of personal data, online surveillance, and mass data gathering. These practices also raise concerns about fundamental right to privacy and civil liberties. Furthermore, the omnipresent nature of surveillance technologies can have drastic effect on freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas. Fears of being monitored may lead the individuals to self-censor, potentially curtailing democratic discourse and active participation in the public debates. In an increasingly interconnected and technologically driven world, taking into account this kind of challenges is critical for protection of democratic values and safeguarding the principles of transparency and accountability.

Case studies serve as tool through which we analyse the complex interplay between media, society, and power. Real-world examples showcase the complexities and their consequences. Such case studies include a wide range of topics, from historical events to contemporary issues. For instance, examining the Arab Spring reveals how social media platforms empowered activists and played an important role in driving social change across the Middle East. In the context of elections, case studies explore instances of misinformation and its impact on public opinion, like the spread of fake news during elections in various countries. Additionally,

exploring media ownership in specific regions, like China, can shed light on how concentrated media ownership can influence political narratives and democratic discourse. Moreover, the Black Lives Matter movement serves as a relevant example of how media coverage influences the social movements and public perception (Mundt et al., 2018). These case studies provide valuable insights into the feedback loop between media, society, and power, showing the multifaceted nature of these interactions.

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

In the modern era, technology and digital platforms play a transformative role in shaping the dynamics between media, society, and power (Stephen, 2022). Technology has democratized the production and dissemination of media content, allowed individuals and grassroots movements to have a wider global reach. Social media platforms have become crucial and influential tools for political engagement, citizen journalism and activism (Nielsen& Ganter, 2022). Yet, these platforms also raise ethical and moral concerns. The algorithms governing content recommendations create filter bubbles and echo chambers, reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives. Moreover, the challenges of regulating digital platforms and addressing issues like hate speech, misinformation, and privacy breaches always remain (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2022). This poses critical questions about the role and responsibility of technology companies. In the evolving landscape of technology and digital platforms, understanding and taking remedial measures is essential for grasping the future of media, society, and power.

Misinformation, driven through digital media, is a common challenge in the contemporary media landscape. Countering misinformation and promoting media literacy have become essentially important. Strategies to fight the misinformation involve fact-checking, media literacy education, and promotion of critical thinking skills among the public. Media literacy initiatives empower the individuals to separate credible sources

from unreliable ones, navigate digital platforms responsibly, and engage critically with information (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). These efforts are critical in creating an informed and engaged citizenry capable of differentiating between accurate reporting and disinformation (Maria et al., 2016).

The future of media, society, and power stands at a critical juncture shaped by a dynamic and complex interplay of technological advancements, regulatory stranglehold, media ownership structures, and civil society activism. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and augmented reality, are ready to redefine how media content is created, distributed, and consumed. As governments and international bodies cope with issues like data privacy, content moderation, and antitrust concerns related to tech giants, the way regulatory policies are framed will crucially influence the digital landscape. The diversity or concentration of media ownership will continue to play a critical role in determining the plurality of voices and narratives within the media ecosystem. The role of civil society, activists, and grassroots movements in holding media and power structures accountable is equally important. Their advocacy for transparency, accountability, and responsible media practices is bound to grow in importance. Anticipating the challenges and opportunities in this ever-evolving media landscape is essentially important. This will ensure that media continues to serve as a strong pillar of democracy, which will facilitate a free exchange of information and the promotion of democratic values in today's increasingly complex digital age (Bennett& Livingston, 2018).

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AI in the Digital Space:
Telescopic Conundrums

Dr. Sunder Rajdeep

AI technology in advertising and marketing has revolutionized the way businesses reach and engage with their target audience. It enables businesses to create highly personalized and relevant content that resonates with their audience. It analyzes vast amounts of data to generate insights that help businesses better understand their audience's behaviour and preferences, allowing for highly targeted marketing campaigns. It also automates and streamlines marketing processes, saving time and resources.

However, the use of AI in advertising and marketing raises ethical concerns, such as potential bias in AI-generated content and invasion of customer privacy. Responsible and ethical practices are crucial when implementing AI in marketing strategies. The use of AI in copywriting is an area of ongoing research, and further studies can be conducted to examine the audience's ability to distinguish between AI-generated content and content created by human copywriters and writers.

Human beings have the tendency to relate things to them. We seek approval and try our best to share our experiences with others. In short, we crave connection. Before the rise of the digital age, humans gathered together and conversed and interacted in various social settings.

The rise of the internet has completely changed the way we interact with one another, and the way we connect with each other. Though the convenience of communication has increased, the gap in human connection has increased as well. The internet has created a phenomenon where human intimacy is faked.

Since communication has become increasingly effortless-from letters to telegrams, from calling to texting, from texting to emoji usage, from emoji usage to responding to individual messages on WhatsApp without replying but just reacting via the new emoji reaction feature; communication is short and effective.

The nature of social media makes it extremely addicting. This means that users are constantly looking at their phones and getting hit with dopamine, thus, reinforcing that behaviour. As social media usage is highly addictive, advertisers can take advantage of this.

Because it is incredibly easy to fake intimacy and build on social media, especially with automated systems, brands can reach a wide audience in seconds; making them believe that they are cared for and they are appreciated. It is commonly seen that people build para-social relationships because of this very reason itself. Whether a person is watching a TV show, a movie or a YouTuber, they are always looking out to make a connection with someone.

Brands are aware that people do this. It is often seen in branding too. Companies create mascots that are not human, yet behave as humans do. Social media campaigns also tend to showcase communication as though it was from a person and not from a brand with a whole team of people behind the messaging. Since advertisers know that their consumers have the tendency to create connections, brand campaigns focus on this aspect.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly impacted various industries, including advertising and marketing. AI has revolutionised the way businesses reach and engage with their target audience, by enabling more efficient and effective data-driven decision-making. AI technology is transforming traditional advertising and marketing methods, as it enables businesses to

create highly personalised and relevant content that resonates with their audience.

In the past, creating effective marketing campaigns and content was a time-consuming process that required significant investment of resources, including hiring copywriters, graphic designers, and marketers. However, with the advent of AI technology, marketers can now leverage machine learning algorithms and natural language processing to generate high-quality content that appeals to their audience.

One of the most significant benefits of using AI in advertising and marketing is its ability to analyse vast amounts of data and generate insights that help businesses understand their audience better. AI technology can identify patterns and trends in customer behaviour, preferences, and interests, allowing businesses to create highly targeted marketing campaigns that are more likely to resonate with their audience. AI also enables businesses to automate and streamline many of their marketing processes, saving time and resources. For instance, chatbots powered by AI can provide instant and personalised responses to customer queries, improving customer engagement and satisfaction.

Moreover, AI technology can help businesses track the performance of their marketing campaigns in real time, allowing them to make adjustments and optimizations on the fly. This helps businesses maximise their return on investment (ROI) and ensure that their marketing efforts are always aligned with their business objectives.

However, the use of AI in advertising and marketing also presents ethical concerns, such as the potential for bias in AI-generated content or the invasion of customer privacy. Therefore, businesses must adopt responsible and ethical practices when implementing AI in their marketing strategies.

AI is now being used as a tool in advertising campaigns. From sales, and marketing, to customer relationships and HR; AI can be seen everywhere. Copywriting is one such area where there have

been discussions on the use of AI. The audience's ability to spot the differences in the copy created by real copywriters and content writers has not been covered in this topic. Perhaps, it would be a good field of research to study for further information on the topic.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines to perform tasks that require human intelligence such as reasoning, learning, perception, and decision-making. AI is a rapidly growing field that has gained popularity in recent years due to its potential to transform various industries.

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Media, Society, and Power:
A Complex Interplay

Sanjay Ranade, PhD

Iwould like to begin with a story from the epic Ramayana. Rama has returned to Ayodhya along with Sita and Lakshman. He has ascended the throne and what we call the RamaRajya has started. A local government officer, while passing the house of a washerman, situated in some remote part of the State,overhears a public squabble between the washerman and his wife. During the squabble the husband and wife cast aspersions on the purity of character of the queen Sita.One of the couple argues that Sitawas kidnapped and held prisoner by Ravana for such a long time and asks how then couldone guarantee the purity of her character. The officer reports the incident and what he heard to his senior and thereon to the highest officer in the hierarchy. The report reaches the ears of Rama who orders Lakshmana to abandon Sita, who is pregnant at the time, outside the territory of the state of Ayodhya.

Rama's reasoning is that the character of the head of the state as well as that of his kith and kin has to be impeccable and if there is doubt in the minds of the people then it has to be acted upon and resolved. This teaching is central to Indian thought. Whatever actions great persons perform, the people at large follow, says Krishna in the Bhagvad Gita's twenty first verse of chapter three. Therefore, while Rama looks into the matter, his immediate step to reassure the people is to abandon Sita. The story continues taking

interesting twists and turns. However, for our purposes we will only look at the part I have narrated.

Between people and the centres of power there is a need for communication and therefore a medium of communication. In an oral-aural communication and media universe, as it was in ancient India, a key factor for communication to work was trust. The official could have ignored the squabble. He could have intervened and shut them out. He could have reprimanded them, appealed to their good sense and judgement. When he reported the incident up the ladder, his superiors and they in turn to their superiors, at any stage, could have taken any of the options available to the official. Rama himself could have scoffed at the whole thing and none would have been the wiser. That did not happen. What we see instead is trust in the order, the system. None of the characters questioned the narrative or the creators of the narrative. None held the narrative or its creators in low esteem. The narrative is accorded a positive, meaningful status over which the entire order reflects and takes action to mitigate the central problem that was narrated even if it meant that the Queen had to be abandoned.

The relationship between media, society, and power is a complex and multifaceted one. Media, in its various forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception, influencing societal norms, and even determining the distribution of power within a given society.

Let us look at another story from the Ramayana. Hanuman was sent to Lanka to track the whereabouts of Sita but also as an emissary of Rama. After meeting Sita, he provoked Ravana by devastating the grove of Ashoka trees where Sita is kept. Captured by Ravana's son Meghanada, he was brought to the court in chains. There, he introduced himself and asked Ravana to release Sita. As an emissary, he was the voice of Rama. He was Rama's medium. Ravana could have ignored him, asked him to be thrown out or even killed. Instead, he sets fire to Hanuman's tail and gleefully, Hanuman frees himself from his bonds and sets fire to Lanka.

Tearing up newspapers, smashing the television sets, banning books, trolling content makers, shutting down the Internet, incarcerating, beating, killing content makers does not change the context and conditions within which the narrative emerges.

The media is everywhere today and everybody can create narrative. In those ancient times, a public squabble would become part of a larger public narrative through word of mouth, it would move slowly, it would acquire biases and prejudices of those who mouthed the narrative to others and after a while, constrained by space and time, it would die away, limited to a certain number of people in a specific region. In the media universe of today, the squabble would be imprinted aurally and visually making it come alive, it would be amplified in real time and over time and space, it would be cut, spliced, and put together again to make for a completely different narrative with a totally different context,it would be stored and retrieved, enacted upon, performedand re-performed, over time and space and most importantly, all this would be done in exchange for money or a minute or two of fame.

Narratives today acquire the biases and prejudices of innumerable people whose worldviews and purposes are obscured from those who encounter the narratives. The media has increased the individual ability to narrativize manifold, but the ability to engage with the narrative remains as of old. What was spread by word of mouth is now spread through forwards and retweets.

The tricks are the same – manipulating, dramatizing, sensationalizing – so much so that the individual is immersed in creating another self that is validated not from within the self but from the behaviour, the responses of others who are equally busy in creating another self of their own using the media. More and more, the individual is afraid to venture out, lest they be called out for the stark difference between who they are and what they have manufactured and projected to others. Less and less, the individual reflects on the narrative that they create or engage with,

choosing instead instant action, a pseudo-performance of creating and engaging, all the time only regurgitating.

Underwriting all of these activities is a system of banking, finance and commerce and commercial, political, social, economic power that comes from that trade off. Thus, the washerman and his wife make a spectacle of their squabble, the people around, according to their own biases and prejudices, amplify the spectacle in a pseudo-participation and pseudo-performative mode, the officials of the Statedo the same thing and Rama, responding in the same mode, dramatically orders Lakshman to abandon the Queen making hashtags of ideals in the process. Lakshman and the Queen for their part dramatize their end of the story, each individual character harvesting followers till the projection and publication of the narrative moves to a bigger commercial end like a film, a book, a play or worse a web series to be played out and consumed on a mobile phone by the same individuals who participated in the corruption of the narrative as they commute, enslaved and enchained, to earn their daily bread. In the process, trust among individuals is sacrificed for bread.

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Communication Discipline and Surveillance Capitalism: Consequences and Conundrums

Prof. Sisir Basu

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus pandemic named as COVID – 19 began in Wuhan City in Huwei district of China in the month of November, 2019. The first indication of its would-be devastating impact globally came to light towards the end of December, 2019[1] *(Economic Times, April, 15, 2020)*.

This virus had its predecessors like SARS and MERS. In the first and second decades of this century, human society has been hit by pandemics. EBOLA was another pandemic that hit some of the African nations very strongly. But in all these pandemic attacks, the human society was able to contain and limit the devastation to small geographical areas quite successfully. But COVID – 19 proved to be otherwise, even though the human society was in a stronger position technologically and medically, COVID – 19 swept every continent of the globe infecting millions and killing hundreds and thousands of people. Those who survived have been affected with long term health issues[2] *(Peeri, Shrestha, Haque, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)*.

The countries of the world, both developed and poor, were underprepared for the pandemic and therefore, responses were not well organized and could not manage a successful fight against it as it was in earlier pandemics. Time was a major factor. In this age

of new digital technology many developed and underdeveloped countries were exploring the ways to solve various socio-economic problems through new technologies. Like many countries, India also developed an App named Aarogya Setu as a response to COVID – 19 pandemic. It has raised many questions and opened many other issues with regard to the working of new media giants like Google and Facebook. While trying to solve a problem through technology, the agencies created new socio-economic problems like Cambridge Analytica, micro targeting voters; violating the sanctity of democratic process; and devaluing the voting rights. Some other issues such as the content and form of the discipline of communication as fakeness has descended on the social communication networks and the culture of the human society.[3] *(https://www.newindianexpress.com)*.

Therefore, some of the inter-connected factors discussed here are:

• Two cases of using new technologies for some well thought out objectives resulting newer problems in the process;

• The new form of capitalism, much more powerful than its previous avatars, known as Surveillance Capitalism;

• The countries with almost all its institutions have moved to an unchartered territory- where the status of democracy has come under serious scrutiny;

• The established communication channels, their meaningful role for and the powerful few; and new media establishments like Google and Facebook controlling audience's behavior;

• The all-pervasive fakeness in formal channel of communication; the promotion of predictable behavior of humans; and meaning of human creativity.

• In such eventuality, the course that the subject/ discipline of Communication needs to take to survive and contribute to society-building; and

AAROGYA SETU

Aarogya Setu, is a mobile phone App developed by National

Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. Its operation was being looked after by a private agency named: Amazon Web Service (AWS). This App was released by the government on April 2, 2020. The main purposes of this App were to:

• Help spread awareness about COVID – 19 among the citizens;
• Connect essential health services to the people of India; and
• Help trace, track, and treat the ones who may show the symptoms or are doubtful cases of having Corona virus.

This was a voluntary App. But on April 29, 2020, even before completion of a month of launching the App, the Government of India made the App mandatory for all the government and private sector employees. The Aarogya Setu App is run in both Android and iOS – both are mobile operating systems[4] *(www.aarogyasetu. gov.in)*.

Aarogya Setu was basically a tracking and tracing system. The tracing and tracking was done by the GPS (Global positioning System) which was connected with about 30 satellites placed 20, 000 km above the earth's orbit and the devise called Bluetooth was attached with a smart phone. Once the App is downloaded and installed in one's smart phone, one had already allowed the App to collect and store some basic information about the user of the smart phone. One then had to get an OTP (one-time password) to get the App further operationalised. An user while registering for Aarogya Setu would have to give out some basic information like name, address, gender, sex, age, date of birth, profession, foreign visits history, etc. Some of these data would be transferred to the central server; the rest would be kept in the phone itself for a number of stipulated days[5] *(www.aarogyasetu.gov.in)*.

Some questions with regard to transfer of data to a server, decision for collections, processing, storing, and marketing personal data without the explicit permission of the users were raised.

The smart phones were to be kept 'on' all the time 24x7. Therefore, every movement, every conversation, every meeting,

discussion, and call would be traced, tracked, and recorded. The fear expressed by the experts that identity number provided to the users by Aarogya Setu could be misused by various agencies involved. The data could then be collected and used for other purposes other than the stated purpose. Moreover, the identity of the infected persons could be ascertained easily by other registered users[6] *(Vaidyanathan, Huffpost, https://m.huffingtonpost.in/)*.

If one looked at the layout of the App, the user after signing, registering, and clicking the consent button would give out more information which were bits and pieces of personal information. On the surface, this information might not seem to be important. Moreover, the App was also built on platforms that could provide Application Programming Interface (API) so that other computer programs, mobile applications, and web services could make use of the features and data available for Aarogya Setu.

Thus, doubts about the storage of data and usage of the same were raised. Transparency was the key. Though in the beginning downloading of the App for travelers by train and aero plane was made compulsory, later the authority changed its position[7] *(https://internetfreedom.in/45-organizations-and-105-prominent-individuals-push-back-against-the-coercion-of-aarogya-setu/)*.

Pawan Duggal, a cyber-law expert stated: This (mandatory) order is in contravention of Information Technology Act.2000 and Rules and Regulations... [8] *(hindustantimes.com on2/5/2020)*. He further added that making it compulsory for various sections of the citizenry could mount legal challenges.

The government communicated that, "…the encrypted data of all the users, stored in their devices, get deleted automatically in 30days. Data of the users who undergo tests are kept for 45 days and for those who have tested positive, it is stored in the server till 60 days from the day they are cured [9] *(thehindu.com –May11, 2020)*.However, the issue of which data were to be stored and the reasons as to why only those data were to be picked up was not stated.

Transparency was the key issue. Aarogya Setu while stating the terms and conditions and the issue of privacy stated: 'Government won't be responsible for the unauthorized leakage of data.' This was later removed. The whole process of data collection was opaque. The deletion of data after certain period, the policy regarding the deletion of data, authority regarding the deletion of data, the leakage of data, and action after the leakage were the challenging issues.

Therefore, one can imagine that in an emergency /urgent situation, application of technology could create other problems while finding solution for a crisis.

Thus, there were questions and doubts regarding the Aarogya Setu App got intensified because of the opacity of its procedure and operation. But the government's request to download the App was met with a very positive response. Within a few days almost 10 crore users had downloaded the App by turning a deaf ear to the concerns expressed by various groups. This phenomenon can only be explained by 'PSYOPs" *(Psychological Operations)*[10]*. (www.thefreedictionary.com)*

SAGA OF CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

As India does not have data protection laws, the digital platforms are able to collect data at will, sometimes with or without the knowledge and consent of the users. The button for 'Consent and Agree' is placed among or interspersed in a large statement which is always in small font size and written in a complex language. Overall the text is uninviting. The users without reading the full text, most of the time, click the button of 'Consent and Agree' and move on. The users do not realize that this hurried consent would allow the platforms and the Apps to collect and use their private data. Moreover, many times, without the users realizing that their data are being siphoned off. Once a user enters an App, his/her own network of friends also comes in the ambit of the App's network. Therefore, the users need to be careful while they use digital platforms. The cookies attached

to the search engines are collecting seemingly unimportant data and process them in such a way that these data become valuable and are monetized. This process makes the user and his or her contacts vulnerable.

This brings us to Cambridge Analytica as an example to fully understand the surreptitious nature of the digital platforms particularly the big agents. The case of Cambridge Analytica exposed how Google, Facebook, and others clandestinely harvested personal data of the users, which were used for micro-targeting them for political purposes resulting in financial gains.

Cambridge Analytica was a subsidiary of Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL) established in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1993. The main activities of SCL were to train the military personnel to collect data related to psychology of people, create data base on psychographics and develop communication messages for targeting audiences. The work mainly focused on disinformation about terrorism. Therefore, the main focus of the SCL group was data mining and analysis of the same[11] *(Sam Knight, Life Inside S.C.L., Cambridge Analytica's Parent Company, https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-uk, Accessed on 20 February, 2021).*

Cambridge Analytica was established in 2013 specifically to collect data on psychographics of the voters and advice political parties to micro-target them with specific messages and lure them to vote as per the desire of the political clients. The avatar of this is found in Internet advertising - very accurately targeting the users and push products to them to buy. Therefore, one can argue that if micro-targeting advertising in Internet is accepted, then how micro-targeting the voters to vote in a certain way is not acceptable. The difference is that, in the former's case, the users know it, have consented for the use of the cookies and search engines to track them and accumulate data related to their points of navigation. In the latter's case, the data are collected, that too personal data without their consent

and knowledge of the users. Hence it is considered a criminal offence[12] *(Zuboff, 2019, p.278).*

Cambridge Analytica was headed by Alexander Nix who was an old hat from SCL and had substantial experience in micro targeting users for specific communication. The idea of establishing a company to micro-target the voters and serve political parties to win elections came from an academic paper in 2014 of Cambridge University's Psychometric Centre. The title of the paper was: Computer Based Personality Judgments are More Accurate than those Made by Humans[13] *(https://pubmed. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25583507).* Professor David Stillwell was the main author of this article. Professor Stillwell developed MyPersonality App in 2007 and motivated the Facebook users to take personality test. Professor Stillwell and his colleagues while working on these papers and analyzing the findings developed five major traits in personality known as OCEAN (openness, conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). These traits have formed the basis of Cambridge Analytica to analyse the personality of each user and categorise each of them under different types of personality for micro targeting. During this time in 2014-15, a researcher named Alexandr Kogan, from the Psychology Department; Cambridge University, UK developed an App 'thisisyourdigitallife'[14] *(https://www.straitstimes.com/ world/europe/aleksandr-kogan-the-psychologist-at-the-centre- of-facebooks-data-scandal).* Dr. Kogan was collaborating with Cambridge Analytica as the in- charge of his own private commercial research enterprise named 'Global Science Research'. Through this App, Kogan helped Cambridge Analytica to harvest 87 million voters' personal data from Facebook[15] *(https://www.abc. net.au/news/2018-04-18/cambridge-analytica-employee-testifies- before-uk-committee/9670192).*

The big data were then cleaned by taking the inefficient data out. Dr. Kogan and Cambridge Analytica through the use of algorithm and computational mechanism organized data as per

the psychographics of each user. It is stated that in the USA, the Cambridge Analytica had cleaned specific psychographics data of 50 million voters with 5000 contact points. Cambridge Analytica first worked for Ted Cruz, one of the Republican Candidates for nomination for 2016presidential elections, later CA was working for Donald Trump who was the official candidate of the Republican Party for 2016 presidential election. The identified voters who had specific expectations were bombarded with messages that would either won them over or suppress them. It was possible for Cambridge Analytica to identify 'pursuable' voters to vote for the candidate for whom CA was working. The personal data were harvested without the consent of the users and through the computational method, and psychographic profiling. CA knew more about these users than the users themselves. The results of 2016 presidential election are now known to everybody. The absence of data protection law in the USA has made it possible for CA to collect information from the users or voters without their knowledge or consent and harvest data for political gain for a price. This was exposed in March 2018 by a whistleblower Christopher Wylie. Christopher Wylie was an employee of Cambridge Analytica. The expose was carried out by the Guardian and The New York Times on March 17, 2018. Carole Cadwalladr, a journalist from Britain had started writing in The Guardian and The Observer about this. Later on Channel 4 of the BBC also joined them to report on the l'affair De Cambridge Analytica. The onslaught of hate speech, lies, dark posts such as 'defeat crooked Hillary'were posted in individual devices. These would stay for a while the devices of the users and simply disappear later making it difficult to investigate on them further[16] *(Zuboff, 2019, p.280).*

Cambridge Analytica stated, on record, that its operational network is global. It has worked in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and other continents. Everywhere it has adopted the same method of harvesting surreptitiously big data of the users, analyzing

them as per psychographics parameters and micro-targeting the pursuable voters to swing their casts in favour of the candidates and or political parties it was working for *(washingtontimes.co)*.

What Cambridge Analytica episode shows us is that the digital platforms are being run by big and powerful communication companies like Google, Facebook, and others. These companies have mechanism of collecting, cleaning, and processing data through algorithm and artificial intelligence (AI). The data thus harvested without the knowledge of the users are then used to target them and make them behave like puppets. The behavioural change is without the understanding and knowledge of the users themselves. Therefore, all the users are micromanaged so accurately that their behavior would be predictable. This, therefore, devalues and nullifies the human intelligence and individual autonomy. The human beings are subjected to manipulations to yield desired results. Thus democratic system becomes hollow and meaningless[17] *(Zuboff, 2019)*.

As of now there is no legal course of action that an individual can undertake to protect his/her data. There is no data protection law in almost all the countries. India has taken a lead in this matter and has enacted a data protection law. There are issues with various provisions of this law. Only European Union (EU) has recently enacted and implemented a law to protect data: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. It was enacted and implemented on May 25, 2018, well after Google, Facebook, Cambridge Analytica and such other companies had an easy run in collecting data[18] *(https://digitalguardian.com)*.

SPURT IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES

With the end of the Second World War, began the cold war between two major camps of the nations led by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Social republic (USSR). These two camps wanted to outdo each other through military empowered with new sophisticated technologies. The focus of both these camps was to invent new technologies and threaten each other.

Huge economic resources were channeled to the research centres of the military establishments of both these camps. The power of new technologies was assessed by the quantum of destructive power such as killing millions of people and obliterating cities and other assets. The competition went on and new sophisticated technologies were invented regularly and in quick succession.

The old technologies with required modifications were being used for civil societies. That is how satellite technology first used by the US military and later being used for communication, weather prediction, and other non-military and declared purposes[19] *(https://www.pocket-lint.com/gadgets/news/143526-how-military-tech-changed-our-lives)*. Hence, the growth of technology in the last fifty odd years has been stupendous

The advent of digital technology gave hope to democratic process to gain more strength and bring transparency to the affairs of the ruling dispensation, particularly the government.

SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

The two major sections that were placed above discussed 'Aarogya Setu' a vehicle for collection of data for a declared purpose, i.e., to fight against a pandemic COVID – 19 and save people's life. The other, Cambridge Analytica, exposed the hidden purpose and undeclared intention of using data, clean them up and sell them for economic value without the knowledge of the users that their personal data have been siphoned off and monetized. They had no share in it.

According to Shoshanna Zuboff, the author of: The Age of Surveillance Capitalism – The Fight for Human Future, states that in the year 2000 Google annual revenue were 86 million dollars. It increased by 3590 % in just four years' time, i.e., in 2004[20] *(Zuboff, 2019)*.

As stated earlier that digital technology has the power to serve the needs of the ordinary people in the area of health, education, job, agriculture, among others and also strengthen the democratic system to give more authority to the ordinary citizen. However, it

was guided to other direction which has made the ordinary people, the users, and mere puppets in the hands of giants by stealing their personal data and commodifying them and selling them to the highest bidder.

The case of Cambridge Analytica has established that our personal data are siphoned off without our consent. Even if there are 'terms and condition' and 'consent' buttons and the users click them without reading the long, complicated, and small font sized text, it is never stated that those data after cleaning and sanitizing would be used for commercial purposes, and those would be used for micro-targeting them only to realize the commercial and political purposes. The giants of digital platforms deal with big data as stated earlier, but each user is targeted according to one's 'psychographics'. The voters who are undecided or fence sitters are bombarded with lies, fake news, likable slogans to influence them to change their mind and behavior. The 'predictability' and 'certainty' is sold to the agencies of both politics and economic endeavours. That the voters' behavior could be changed through communication campaigns was known and was strived for in the past. But the voters' behavior could be predicted with certainty and accuracy is something very new. This makes the human beings devoid of control on themselves. One's emotions, decision making processes, and behavior are predicted and monetized. The individuals are then reduced to commodities. The economic system which harvests these commodities of human beings through predatory mechanism and tags them with economic values is called Surveillance Capitalism.[21] *(Zuboff, 2019, p. 307)*

HUMAN FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

Hence, the argument went against the activities of Cambridge Analytica and doubts are being raised about activities of many digital Apps and devices to trace, track and treat patients and consumers. There are many indications that our digital footfalls are being recorded and harvested. Surveillance Capitalism is based

in secrecy. The users' ignorance about the working of digital platforms makes them doubly lethal. Our sovereignty over our life is being taken away, our authorship on our creativity, our emotion and experience are being taken away. The so called 'users' are being dispossessed of their assets which are unique and dear to them.

The 'Big Brothers', the giants of digital platforms, have enveloped the users with their architecture. Casting of votes is predictable with full accuracy and the behavior is totally predictable. So, all the activities, both social and economic, are guided. The users are now a commodity and rather helpless.

The giants of digital platforms are doing all these with impunity. They operate in an environment not guarded by law. The moral and legal binding is not there, or exist in a weak form. As stated earlier, that only European Union has data protection law known as GDPR, enacted and implemented in 2018. The other countries are now waking up to this challenge. One can read and analyse dispassionately the action of the various governments and their agencies with regard to new Apps for various stated purposes and the other hidden ones. The notifications of the government and the laws are being modified and changed quickly to suit the needs and intentions which are kept away from the 'users'.

In this century of digital era, we feel vulnerable and dispossessed of our personal treasures. The promise which the digital platforms brought to us for a new era of human civilization is being hijacked by the digital giants. The users feel helpless as no legal action can be taken against these platforms; there is no power to protect personal data; and no institution to protect the democratic system of governance. The users are being dehumanized. This is an unchartered territory facing the humans in all continents. We must not allow these giants to operate illegally with fearlessly in the absence of robust legal framework to protect the users. The people must educate themselves and put pressure on the lawmakers to enact laws to protect personal data and the system of governance.

There have been sporadic protests and criticism against many such activities by civil societies around the world. There have been commissions constituted both in the United States of America and the United Kingdom swinging in action to investigate and document the working of Facebook, Google, and others.

These are instances of encouragement that human beings need to fight back for their rights, data, and system of governance. They need to fight back to restore our communication sovereignty, autonomy and creativity. They should not submit themselves to the mechanism of predictability and certainty.

IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION DISCIPLINE

Therefore, the culture of communication which developed over the years and which in turn sustains our culture will have to be looked into. Hence, the issues of Communication as a subject matter to study in institutions of higher learning will have to be reassessed. The issues like the areas of Communication which the students are to be exposed to, the skills which they are to master; the areas which are to be investigated and researched upon; the areas which are to be re-assessed and re-evaluated and relocated in the scheme of things in academia. From the year 2000, social media in its current form was introduced: It was in the formed 'Sic Degrees' founded by Andrew Weinreich that social media took birth. Then Google created its e-mail service in 2004; face book followed suit in the same year; YouTube was launched in 2005 and many more sites were launched for the users to have interaction among themselves. Social media and Internet sites have fundamentally changed our approach to Communication, the issues we deal with in these sites; and the structure and content which one looks for in social media. These have created a rupture with what is being dealt with in formal classes and courses in universities and institutions[22] *(https://dewzilla.com/a-brief-history-of-social-media/)*.

And now in the light of Surveillance Capitalism and the cases of Cambridge Analytica and others, the Communication education cannot be done in a linear fashion. Like the digital technology, the

courses need be arranged/ organized in a non-linear manner. The issues in the society vis-à-vis Communication are: i) the technology – more precisely digital technology; ii) the issues of governance, and communication networks; and, iii) the economic system based on data production by the communication architecture. Based on these three broad areas, courses are to be designed, operationalised, and implemented. For teaching the syllabi on Communication, there needs to be coordination among various experts drawn from different disciplines and specialized areas. Team-teaching is to become the order of the day, and one need not shun away from this. In addition, components from various media platforms are to be included in the teaching materials. These steps will be in line with the demand of the time for bridging the gap between what is happening in the society and what is being offered in the classrooms as learning material. Currently, there is a disconnection between what is taught and what social context requires. The students so prepared should be multi-tasker and must have a grip on technology, artistic tilt and aesthetic sense; and inquisitive mind to question the media and social ecology.

For research, a new approach is needed to study issues in Communication. Communication components cannot be isolated and studied like the transmission models which the students and scholars are trained in and familiar with. Communication is not a standalone subject – it is an interdisciplinary area. For instance, surveillance capitalism is a complex area with problems pertaining to technology, economics, psychology, Sociology, Culture, and Communication. Therefore, an approach having these dimensions will have to be adopted to go into the heart of the matter. The scholars in Communication need to pick up such multi-dimensional approach to study various phenomena and problems which abound our academic and social ecology. Research endeavours will have to be elevated at a higher level so that the scholars from Communication can contribute to the creation of new knowledge which would give us the insights to understand the predicament

of the human beings infested and governed by new technologies. Not to do it is to push the discipline and the scholars to the edge of impoverishment where peril is the only certainty.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the author dealt mainly with the new media and the unprecedented economic power and influence with which the Big Brothers of new media operate in the society.

From the discussion and the studies, one can conclude that the new media has devalued the social norms, corrugated the painstakingly built social institutions and created a new economic system. This new economic system in which human beings supply the raw material in the form of personal data without being conscious about the process which targets them for monetization for others. The giants which are overseeing this process of new economic system are Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon and others. The human beings are micro-targeted to act in a certain predictable manner which could then be monetized. Uncertainty of human behavior is replaced with certainty. The human being has now become a puppet. The creativity has been replaced with copying, and predictability has replaced the unpredictability of human moves and action.

The human society is therefore, changing in an unprecedented and irreversible manner and hence the culture --- the way of life, values, what to think and what to think about – is to change forever.

Capitalism has been changing at certain intervals to cast itself in a new manner and survive. At every watershed period, it found new raw materials, and discovered new products to satisfy the needs and demands of the people. This time, it found new material in human beings themselves and human being are targeted for the material produced by capitalism. It is very new and unprecedented.

These will have an impact on Communication education as a discipline: what is taught? How it is taught? And why it is taught

in educational institutions? The content and the form of teaching issues and matter are to change.

The Apps are crowding the space. One needs to have a good grip on these in order to navigate and survive profitably. In addition, it is relevant to mention that with a strong entry of Artificial Intelligence (AI), fundamental changes are to occur. The challenge is how prepared we are for such scenario.

Any person in any society today will have to have various essential gadgets, continuous supply of electricity, strong and uninterrupted signal for these gadgets so that the new way of life could be cultivated with gains. The more the users surf, more they use social media, more they use internet, more they produce personal data for harvesting by the big agencies. Thus, the users become vulnerable as they use more media or social media or new media.

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Media and Democracy as a Way of Life

Dr. V.L. Dharurkar

INTRODUCTION:

Democracy is the only government in which people's hopes and aspirations are rightly reflected. According to United Nations, "democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms and in which the freely expressed wills of the people is exercised."[1] Indian democracy is not exception to this. The sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln described democracy as Government of the people, by the people, and for the people.[2] In a vibrant democracy the true reflection of people's' feelings, their hopes and aspirations can be rightly described as regular dialogue between people and the government because it has been rightly observed that "World public opinion strongly favors democratic systems of Government."[3] In South Asia also, India is the most successful democratic nation. It has been observed by V-Dam that as per "democracy indices and the Economist Democracy Index, less than half of the world's population lives in a democracy as of 2022."[4]

However, in order to expand the sphere of influence of democracy we have to transform democracy into a way of life. In the present paper the role of media in building democracy as way of life has been sharply focused. The image of government can be developed by maintaining good and healthy relations with people through mass media. Stephan Hess has written a book entitled "Government Press Connection". In the book, he has observed that

the true image of government depends on information provided by mass media, which portrays the image of government. Every democratic government tries to maintain free and balanced flow of information, which generates cordial atmosphere for the fine tuning of mass media. The two-way communication between government and people is a sign of healthy democracy.[5]

In this process mass media plays the role of a mediator. Further media is just like a mirror which reflects image of the government and it can help government to correct its picture and government can continuously improve its performance. The constructive criticism of media not only accelerates development, but it can also transform democracy as a way of life. The role of free and fearless media is an essential part of vibrant democracy. Media plays the role of search light to guide and assist government to reach the destination of maximum public welfare, because, according to Edmund Burk, greatest happiness of greatest number is the sole objective of a welfare state.

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:

Mass media has been described by Dennis McQuail as an engine of social change. If media is used in a deliberate plan and systematic manner, it can take fruits of development to the lowest corner and common man can be benefitted in this process. In order to transform democracy as a way of life, three aspects are very basic:

- Firstly, to promote socio-economic changes.
- Secondly, to illustrate rights and responsibilities of citizens and to demonstrate strong points and limitations of bureaucratic system.
- Thirdly, the success of democracy depends on peoples' participation, which can be generated and improved constantly on the basis of media's role as a catalyst to generate democratic values, norms and traditions for better functioning of governmental mechanism.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Mass media and public relations should go hand in hand in a

democratic system. Today the government PR is lagging behind. The success of democracy depends on proper harnessing of mass media and effective PR support in governmental mechanism. Kofi Annan states that, "there are as many different forms of democracy as there are democratic nations in the world."[6] In both parliamentary and presidential form of democracies, seeking people support and monitoring public relations is highly needed.

About participatory democracy, one theory holds that "democracy requires three fundamental principles: upward control (sovereignty residing at the lowest level of authority), political equality and social norms by which individuals and institutions only consider acceptable acts that reflect the first two principles of upward control and political equality."[7] Media plays a key role in decentralization of power and it also supervises about the sharing of fruits of development towards the last common man.

The nature and scope of public relations in government PR in the new age has focused on disseminating development through the dynamic role of mass media. The image of government is perceived by the people through mass media. However, sharing fruits of development can be possible through civil society and vibrant media. Roger Scruton argued that "democracy alone cannot provide personal and political freedom unless the institutions of civil society are also present."[8] In India along with media civil societies are emerging in the recent years.

- Regular flow of information is maintained from government to media and media to government. This kind of effective interaction helps to develop image of the Government. It has been rightly observed that "In some countries like India, freedom of political expression, freedom of speech and internet democracy are considered important to ensure that voters are well informed enabling them to vote according to their own interests and beliefs."[9] Due to ample freedom of expression media has grown in India for developing peoples' choices and beliefs.

- Regular clipping services are provided by PRO for the right understanding of the people's problems for solving their key issues by the government. It has been rightly pointed that "a basic feature of democracy is the capacity of all votes to participate freely and fully in the life of their society by sharing development and solving problems the sphere of democracy as its way of life can be enlarged further in developing democratic country."[10]

- The image of government in developing countries can be rebuilt by using PR tools. The effective use of PR tools can be responsible for image building and good will generation. The status of Government PR is undergoing through many difficulties. There are fewer budgetary allocations and there is lack of advanced technology for generating image of the government organizations. It is thus true that in multi-party system, efforts on health and education conditions are better developed than non-electoral autocracy.[11]

Rebuilding Democracy as a Way of Life:

In the last 75 years, India is established as a strong and successful democracy in Asia and Africa. When fortunes of many democracies were fluctuating, Indian democracy has survived through many tempests and storms. In spite of walking through the troubled waters of emergency, India emerged as safest and secured democracy by following norms and conditions laid down by Indian constitution. The following of constitutional morality is a key point in the success of Indian democracy. Mass media plays a key role in rebuilding democracy as a way of life in developing countries. Kevin Moloney and Conor McGrath have presented new dimensions while "Rethinking public relations in the persuasion democracy and development." In the expanded coverage of PR's impact on democratic society through mass media has been discussed by these scholars.

The authors have pointed that PR plays a strategic role in building relationship with stakeholders and is role in democratic

debates and public policy.[12] In India, mass media and PR agencies are playing key role in the pre-election period in 2014, Prashant Kishore, a PR expert, was the main advisor to the BJP campaign, which provided larger mass base for gaining support.

Rajani Kothari observed that "The 20th century witnessed a remarkable shift in many countries from authoritarian to democratic rule and move to many older democracies towards more plural forms of political competition, yet the upsurge of formal democracy has often occurred in the absence of significant change in the distribution of political opportunities on the ground."[13] In Indian democracy, the emergence of mass-based political aspirations has been based on effective use of media and PR agencies for changing the tides of public opinions.

- The government PR is undergoing through many experiments. New information technology through internet is providing a new forum for development communication

- There are many problems like communication gaps, ignorance and lack of information can be sorted out by providing effective means of social media platforms to overcome many complicated problems.

- There is lack of participation, persuasion and performance and lack of new models based on qualitative changes in favor of government welfare and development schemes for generating effective public support.

- People at large do not know as to how media functions and they do not have proper information networking for creating image of government. The present status of government PR is based on a two-way mechanism. There are central agencies developed on the basis of Indian information services. Each Central Government Ministry has the public relations wing to communicate mass media and to set healthy relations with print and electronic media. There are agencies like Press Information Bureau, Field Publicity which collect data from relevant ministries and

they develop features and articles both in English, Hindi as well as in Indian languages.

- In India, magazines like Kurukshetra, Yojana, Gram Vikas and Gaonka Jeevan help a great deal to promote developmental programs of the government towards grassroots level. Common man is the epi-center of these social development messages. People's participation in development can be possible on the basis of information flow maintained by these agencies. In order to improve GDP constantly, proper development communication support is highly needed.

MAJOR DIFFICULTIES AND REMEDIES:

Democracy can survive, sustain and flourish where the minds are free from fear. Vibrant media is the vanguard of all democratic institutions. In transforming democracy as a way of life, there are many difficulties in the pathway of fostering democratic values in Indian society. In this phase, major difficulties can be noted below as under:

- Lack of pride: India had rich democratic traditions. In Vedic period, Sabha and Samitiees were bodies to advice King.[14] There were sixteen Mahajanpadas in ancient India. Further the Buddhist Sanghas were working effectively by following democratic traditions. Asoka's inscriptions also speak about welfare mechanism to understand public grievances. During the Chola period, villages were free and they were ruled by local bodies like Gram Sabha. However, democratic traditions in Buddhist Sanghas have not been pursued properly. Lack of pride in democratic traditions is a major problem in developing democracy as a way of life. Shivaji had eight prime ministers to advice his welfare states.

- Lack of education: On regional and rural level, 100% literacy has not been achieved. Due to lack of education, people cannot involve in the developmental process. They cannot handle print media like newspapers and magazines. Credible books

are not available for references and if they are available the opinion makers cannot read it.

- Lack of media logic: People are influenced by TV on a large scale. People discuss major events and breaking news items appearing on TV. However, for their authentication and questioning about facts they have no agency to examine this information.

- Lack of developmental awareness: In Indian system, there is a lack of developmental awareness. People's participation in development is low and slow. There are no serious efforts for informing, persuading and transforming people.

- Weak government agencies: In the rural development programs, there is an agency known as IRDP i.e. integrated rural development program in spite of five decade-background, such agencies are still very poor and they do not have healthy neat working of media and development communication support.

- Weak local self-government: Gram Sabha and Panchayat Raj agencies are functioning at grassroots level, but they do not have sufficient linkage and coordination among each other. Due to lack of training, developmental programs are not properly disseminated.

- Urban-oriented media: Indian mass media is urban-oriented and content related to villages is very less and it is not appealing to village audiences.

- Limited reach and availability: Mass media in India is also middle class oriented. The reach and availability of newspapers are limited in rural areas. Latest books are also not available in small town libraries.

- Neglect towards women and children: In a traditional society, women and children are neglected. They have to suffer from malnutrition and cannot contribute for productivity acceleration.

- The government agencies related to development are bureaucratic and they never examine their success and failure

in a rational manner. Due to these problems, government agencies do not focus on promoting development schemes at rural level. The government agencies and NGOs require media training and monitoring of facts.

• The local self-government should develop a democratic agenda for conducting Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings as well as conducting Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad meetings. All such institutions should have media backup.

• The properly reconstruction of media is highly needed. Media should go to villages and serve the cause of people.

• Promotion to establish rural newspapers, rural TV and rural education is highly needed. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar rightly pointed that democracy is not a form of government but more a form of society and mental disposition.[15] In order to develop democracy as way of life Indian society should undergo certain changes.

ON THE BASIS OF ABOVE DIFFICULTIES FOLLOWING REMEDIES ARE SUGGESTED:

• Indian democratic traditions rooted in history and culture of India should be promoted carefully.

• Unification of primary education must be on the top of the agenda so that educated people can be vanguards of democracy. In Kerala, Goa and Tripura the voting percentage is higher due to high literacy level.

• At regional and rural level, the percentage in media education institutes is very less. Without media education, it is difficult to develop media logic for examining its democratic role. People should know that all printed information is not truth and all broadcast content cannot be fully truthful. Examination of these contents can be based on media logic.

• There are many rural development schemes sponsored by central and state governments. Along with government, NGOs are also partners in this development process but

unfortunately people are not aware of developmental programs. Hence priority must be given for taking these schemes to the people through mass media. Rural newspapers should take interest in promoting all these development schemes.

• From Gram Sabha, Municipal Council, Panchayat Samiti to ZP, all local self-agencies should be properly trained to raise issues and solve development problems.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The future of democracy depends on glorious and inspiring past that can develop new pathway for future changes. The future can be bright if the obstacles can be crossed by vision and caution to take a great leap forward. Mahatma Gandhi in Hind Swaraj rightly pointed that, "My democracy is that in which weakest of the weak must have the same chance as of the strongest of the strong." Democratization of institutes is the need of the time because the colonial mindset has not yet thoroughly changed. It has been observed that, "Democratization is the process of democratic transition to a more democratic political regime, including substantive political changes moving in a democratic direction.[16] In India, democratization has remained a continuous process. The legacy of democracy has been developed through many changes those have occurred in the last century. It has been observed that, "Twentieth century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive waves of democracy, variously resulting from wars, revolutions, decolonization and religious and economic circumstances." We are on the crossroads of change. The observations are:

• Democratization of mass media is highly needed for fostering constitutional values such as liberty, equality and fraternity and social justice.

• Huge flow of information can help to overcome difficulties in decision making. Media's agenda-setting role can be effective if all useful data is made available to people at large.

- In a welfare state, greatest happiness in greatest number can be achieved only by the support of mass media. People oriented development can be possible by media support.

Thus, these challenges in the twenty-first century are alarming to open new peoples' voice through media support. People-oriented development can be possible only by adopting new strategies of people's participation on the basis of digital transformation. Indian society is slowly adopting these changes to promote suitable sustainable developmental goals. What is important is preparing agenda and supporting government and NGO agencies for propagation of development.

CRITICAL STUDY

According to Nani Palkhiwala, "Indian democracy has survived on the basis of awareness of rural population, which enjoys adult franchise sincerely and fearlessly better than urban elites."[18]

A critical study of role of Indian media brings us on the milestone changes leading to cross roads of democracy.

- Media is not upholding democratic values. It is not supporting developmental programs. It prefers only negative criticism.
- The negative approach of media is killing the developmental initiative and it leads to frustration and neutral behaviour of people.
- Everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility and people are in confusion while walking on the path of democracy.

SUMMARY

Thus, all these aspects clearly show that government PR is in transition and democracy is not getting strength from mass media. The media should play a positive role in building a democratic way of life. The PR agencies are many times prefer negativity that may lead to chaos and frustration. We have to assure a bright future for a vibrant democracy through live and alert media.

There is a need to re-build democracy as a way of life. Social environment and cultural ethos should be developed in tune with democratic social norms. Though there are some difficulties regarding universal education, media logic and gender sensitization, we have to develop a democratic way of life along with civic society. The adoption of internet and new information technology is keeping India on the top of the developing countries. The process of digitalization is going to benefit both media and governmental agencies. These changes are effective in bridging urban rural gap as well as digital divide. If the twenty-first century belongs to Asia, then in the democratic world, this century is going to be dominated by Indian democracy.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was Guru to Mahatma Gandhi, believed that free media was the essence of Swaraj. If we hamper the freedom of expression, the very existence of Swaraj will come down. In order to develop free media, free society and active government, all the three can work together for attaining peoples' welfare. Proper dialogue and communication among democratic institutions can lead to attain popular welfare through media and good governance. In this way, we have to build democracy as a way of life by cultivating and harnessing democratic values from rural life to the apex metro life by connecting the executive, the judiciary and the legislature and synchronizing these three pillars to the fourth estate the mass media. The newly emerging social media is also playing its own role to strengthen the main line media. India has to develop new dimensions of digital journalism, citizen journalism and advocacy journalism along with all specialized areas to disseminate development to the people so that democracy can become a way of life of common people in 2047 at the end of "AmrutKal" of Indian independence.

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People's Reception of Signs and Symbols in Narendra Modi's Speeches

Pradeep Mallik, PhD

There are very few political leaders who can match India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's genius in establishing communication links with the masses. His monthly talk to the people in India and abroad through the official broadcaster All India Radio (now called by its Hindi name, Aakashwani) is one of the most talked about examples worldwide of successful political communication. "Man ki Baat," as it is called, has been analysed by scholars and politicians of all hues: some of his detractors accusing him of misusing official medium while his fandom terming it as a brilliant piece of public communication. The proliferation of modern means of communication has made a political leaders' job easy as they have several communication tools and vehicles at their command these days, but Modi seems to have taken the use of media vehicles to a different level. His use of media does not begin with his ascension to the prime minister's post of India. It dates back to his days in his parent organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), when along with fellow pracharaks (canvassers on foot) he trudged far-flung areas to spread the message of his organisation largely using small group and interpersonal means of communication with printed material and occasional public meetings to complement the enterprise. Upon entering electoral politics after assuming the office of the chief minister of the western

Indian state of Gujarat in October 2001, he used the other means of modern media to the hilt. Apparently, Modi's most troubled days in public office were the period of communal violence that broke out in Gujarat in the wake of the burning of a passenger train at Godhra, a town in central Gujarat in February 2002. This author distinctly remembers how Modi made use of the electronic media (in an interview with this author) to reach out to the people telling them the steps he had initiated to restore normalcy in the state. And when the digital media began taking roots, Modi was among the first leaders to put in place a team of workers and professionals to help him reach out to his audience.

However, this article is based on the outcomes of a research project sanctioned to this author by the Indian Council of Social Research. The principal objectives of the study, conducted under the framework of the semiotic approach to communication, were;

(i) To identify the oft-repeated words, idioms and phrases in Narendra Modi's election campaign speeches after being declared the prime ministerial candidate by his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014,

(ii) To trace the context in which he used these words, idioms and phrases,

(iii) To see how these words, idioms and phrases stood for something other than themselves, thus getting converted into signs or symbols.

(iv) To see to what extent the electorate understood and interpreted these signs and symbols.

COMMUNICATION

Society is an intricate network of partial or complete understandings between the members of organizational units of every degree of size and complexity. It is being reanimated or creatively reaffirmed from day to day by the ensemble of acts of communication in it. Every cultural pattern and every single act of social behaviour involves communication in either explicit or implicit sense.

Since time immemorial, demagogues and politicians have been using speeches to connect to their constituencies. The importance of communication, specially mediated communication can never be overemphasized more than in democratic societies. Political parties and their leaders, workers and sympathisers use varied types of communication – interpersonal, group and mass – to connect to their audience. The objectives could be many: retaining their constituencies' votes, ideologically convert the opponents, attract the fence-sitters and undecided voters, or to counter their political opponents.

POLITICS

Politics is an essential part of democracy. It can unite society just as it can play a divisive role. Its practitioners can inspire unarmed masses to stand up to the mightiest of the empires or the dictators, as Mohandas Gandhi did in South Africa and India in the first half of the last century or Ion Iliescu did in Romania late in 1989. Politicians can also pump into the masses craziest of the ideas, as Hitler did in Germany and Idi Amin in Uganda in the last century. In authoritarian societies, politics can take unpredictable shape but in a democratic set-up, it throws up the possibility of impossible. People may disagree, but politics gives them an opportunity to come to a negotiated settlement, binding upon the contesting sections.

Indeed, politics is "a process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interests are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy" (Miller, 1987: 390).Those who treat politics as a branch of knowledge-seeking and praxis, view it as the science of deciding who gets what, when and why (Lasswell, 1936).

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences defines Political communications as "an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public. The process operates down-wards from governing

institutions towards citizens, horizontally in linkages among political actors, and also upwards from public opinion towards authorities" (Norris, 2004:01)."

Scholars have given several understandings of political communication. Building upon McNair (2011), Denton and Kuypers (2008) and Smith (1990), Perloff (2014: 30) defines political communication as a "process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, or citizens, exert intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes, or behaviors of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state, or community."

Denton and Woodword define political communication as:

"(...) pure discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes) (1990: 14).

They hold that the factor that makes communication political is not the source of the message but the purpose of sender for sending the message. The stress is on the intention of the sender who wants to influence the political environment.

Earlier, Graber (1981) put accent on not just the rhetoric, but paralinguistic signs like body language and political acts like protests and boycotts. Graber terms it "political language".

Building upon Denton and Woodword's definition, McNair (2011), too, stresses the intentionality of political communication which they define as "purposeful communication about politics". McNair's definition includes:

"(i) All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, (ii) Communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists, and (iii) Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics" (2011: 04).

Ball (2011: 42) sees political communication as "the practice of using language to move people to think and act in ways that they might not otherwise think and act." In order to "move" people, political leaders use the power of language to sway the public and their opinion. Mohandas Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Indira Gandhi, M Karunanidhi, MG Ramachandran, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi, to name a few, have used language to galvanize people in India and abroad. Bose's "Tum mujhe khoon do, mein tumhe aazadi doonga" (literally translated: you give me blood, I shall give you independence, or great sacrifice is needed to win independence) or Lal Bahadur Shastri's "Jai jawan, jai kisan" (Long live soldiers, long live farmers)still strike a chord with Indians though they were spoken decades ago. The language of political leaders is indeed laden with signs symbols.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned earlier, the author adopted the semiotic approach to analyse Narendra Modi's speeches. As against this approach, the transmission approach explains the process of communication though models consisting of arrows here and there elude a range of social issues such as the space the media occupy in the wider social context, the role media producers play in the generation of meanings in society and the reproduction of culture (Mallik, 2016).

The semiotic or the ritual approach addresses itself to these concerns. It sees communication as the production and exchange of meanings. The author adopted Saussure's model of semiotics.

Saussure's model: According to Saussure, a Swiss linguist, a sign is a combination of concept and a sound image that cannot be separated. He used the word sign (signe) to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified (signifie) and signifier (significant); the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts.[i]

The relationship between the signifier and signified, and this is crucial, is arbitrary, unmotivated, unnatural. There is no logical connection between a word and a concept or a signifier and signified, a point that makes finding meaning interesting and problematic.

The difference between a sign and a symbol, Saussure suggests, is that a symbol has a signifier that is never wholly arbitrary: it is not empty, for there is a rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and signified. The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just another symbol, such as a cart. If the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, the meaning these signifiers hold must be learned somehow, which implies that there are certain structured associations, or codes, we pick up that help us interpret signs.

Fiske visualises Saussure's model as follows:
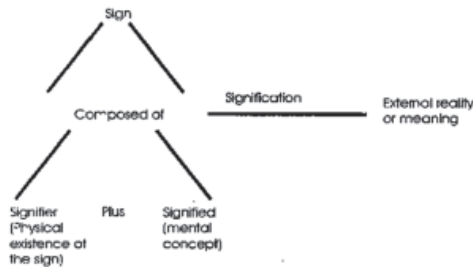
(Source: Fiske, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives of the study, the author carried out the study in three stages. The first stage involved identifying the oft-repeated words, idioms and phrases in Narendra Modi's election campaign speeches. While the second stage involved tracing the context in which Modi used these words, idioms and phrases, and how these words, idioms and phrases got converted into signs and symbols. The first stage of the research involved content analysis of the speeches as reported in the newspapers of those months, website archives, and any other source from where these speeches

could be accessed. The second stage involved semiotic analysis of those signs and symbols. The third stage involved survey method of the electorate to find out the meaning they generated from those signs and symbols. A questionnaire based on the signs and symbols emerging from the first stage research was developed for this stage. The languages used in the questionnaire were Gujarati and Hindi. While Hindi version of the questionnaire was used at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, the Gujarati version was used at Vadodara in Gujarat. Second and the third stages of research were conducted almost simultaneously.

The study was limited to the speeches made by Narendra Modi, though while explaining the signs and symbols, references have been made to speeches or any other communication issued by his rivals or his own party leader and allies.

There are several sampling techniques in both qualitative and quantitative research (Kumar, 2013). The researcher has to take the call on the technique(s) to be adopted to fulfill the objectives of the study.

Sampling Speeches: Soon after he was declared the prime ministerial candidate by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on September 13, 2013, the then prime minister hopeful Narendra Modi addressed a series of pre-election public gatherings across India over a period of about two weeks. He made ten famous speeches, all of which were given grand tags. Brief descriptions of these speeches have been picked to semiotic analysis.

Sampling respondents from the electorates: For this study, snowball sampling technique was used. It is a non-random/non-probability sampling design. Since the idea was to find out how the electorate generated meaning with Modi's speeches, it was necessary that only such people were selected as samples who had attended at least one of Modi's speeches or had listened to his speech, even if partly, at least once on TV or radio or any other platform such as the internet.

This process is continued until saturation point is reached. As the purpose here is to primarily study the signs and symbols

used, the main approach was semiotic analysis. Quantitative data through survey method was used only to check the meaning the electorate, whom Modi was trying to wean, attached to the signs and symbols he was using in his speeches. In a way, this objective was secondary to the primary objective. Though there are ways to determining the ideal size of sample from a population, the researcher decided to limit the sample size to 500 for this study, 250 each from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Vadodara in Gujarat from where Modi contested election.

As people attempt to share meaning by means of communication, symbols become their tools of communication. Because symbols have a degree of ambiguity in their representation of sensory experiences, people may "bargain" over the symbols and begin to reach commonalities or shared views, of a particular topic under discussion.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS IN MODI'S SPEECHES

A content analysis of these ten speeches (these are available on www.narendramodi.in) threw up several signs and symbols. Some of them were similar, so they were clubbed and the ones which had most common terms were selected for analysis. Though there is no specific reason, the number of signs and symbols selected and analysed was limited to twenty-five to make analysis feasible in the short duration of this research (a few months).

Modi used these signs and symbols to evoke in the minds of the electorate certain images of (i) himself, his party, party members and allies, and (ii) his detractors, critics and political opponents. It goes without saying that he tried to create a positive image for the first group and a negative image for the latter.

Semiotic analysis of the signs and symbols that were identified in Modi's speeches are presented below in alphabetic order. Since he spoke in Hindi, the terms and phrases are in Hindi. Their English translation has been given alongside in italics.

Keechad-kamal (Aap jitna keechad phekenge utna hi kamal khilega) *(The more mud you throw, the more will lotus bloom)*

Baap-bete ki sarkar *(The government of the father-son duo)*
Badle ki rajniti *(Politics of revenge)*
Bete ki sarkar *(The government of the son)*
Bhrastachar mein doobi sarkar *(A government neck deep in corruption)*
Chaukidaar *(Watchman)*
Congress ke neta *(Leaders of the Congress)*
Dal-Desh (Dal se bada desh) *(Country bigger than the party)*
Damaad ki sarkar *(The government of the son-in-law)*
Dilli ke takht par baithe log*(People sitting on the throne of Delhi)*
Dilli ki saltanat *(Delhi sultanate)*
Dilli ki sarkar*(The government in Delhi)*
Dilli mein baithe log*(People sitting in Delhi)*
Shanshah*(Emperor)*
Dilli may baithi sarkar *(The government sitting in Delhi)*,
Dilli ke log *(The people of Delhi)*
Dilli sarkar may baithe log *(The people in Delhi government)*
Dirty king
Ek pariwar, pura pariwar, raj pariwar, bada pariwar*(One family, entire family, royal family, big family)*
Ek toli desh ko loot rahi hai*(A gang that is looting the country)*
Garib maa ka chai bechnewala beta*(Tea-selling son of a poor mother)*
Gatbandhan ki sarkar*(Alliance government)*
Hamare Mitra*(Our Friend)*
Jangal raj se mukti*(Freedom from lawlessness)*
Jativaad*(Casteism)*
Jhoot failate log*(People spread lies)*
Kendra ki sarkar*(Central government)*
Laxmi kamal par baithati hai*(Goddess Lakshmi sits on lotus flower)*
Maa ki sarkar*(The government of the mother)*
Maa-bete ki sarkar*(The government of the mother-son)*

Madam
Pariwarshahi*(Family rule)*
Pariwarvaad*(Family first)*
Pink revolution
Remote control se chalne wali sarkar*(A government that is run by remote control)*
Rupayya ICU may hai*(Rupee is in ICU)*
Rupayya neeche ja raha hai*(Rupee is falling)*
Shaath saal se gumrah kar rahi hai*(Misleadingpeople for 60 years)*
Sampradayvaad*(Communalism)*
Samsaya Dilli mein hai*(The problem lies in Delhi)*
Sarkar parde ke peechhe se chal rahi hai*(The government is being run from behind the curtain)*
Shasakone 60 saal loota*(Rulers looted people for 60 years)*
Secularism
Sevak ko mauka de*(Give the servant a chance)*
Shahzaada*(Prince)*
Us party ke neta*(Leaders of the other party)*
Vanshvaad*(Lineage first)*
Vikas ki rajniti*(Politics of development)*
Vikas ki rally*(Rally of development)*
Vikas ki yatra*(March of development)*
Vishwashghat*(Betrayal)*
Vote bank ki sarkar*(The government that follows the policy of vote bank)*
Votebank ki rajniti*(Politics of vote bank)*

ELECTORATE'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

To partially fulfil the objectives of the study (to ascertain the extent to which the electorate understood and interpreted these signs and symbols), a questionnaire was administered to 500 samples in Varanasi and Vadodara (250 samples in each city).

Table 1

Frequecy of Signs/Symbols in Modi's speeches
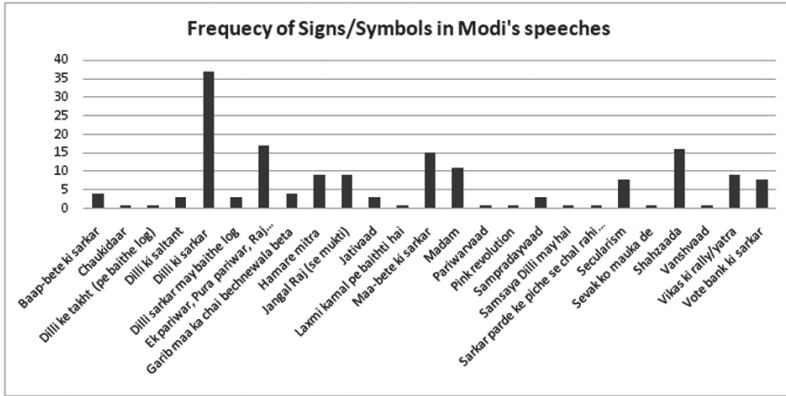
The way and the extent to which people interpreted some of these signs and symbols are presented below with the help of charts.

Chart 1

It is interesting to see that people see "Dilli ki sarkar (the government sitting in New Delhi)" as the one that is far removed from them and it is inaccessible to the common people. A significant portion of the people see the government as arrogant, too. Modi certainly

Dilli ki sarkar (The govt sitting in New Delhi)

- Govt of India 5%
- Inaccessible 34%
- Arrogant 18%
- Distant 43%

wanted to make people feel so about the then UPA government headed by Manmohan Singh.
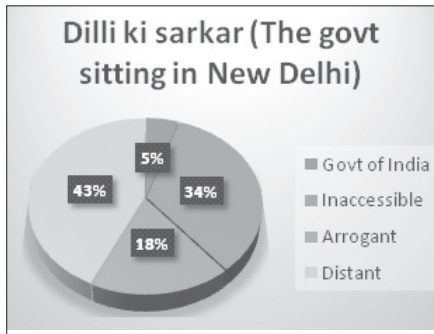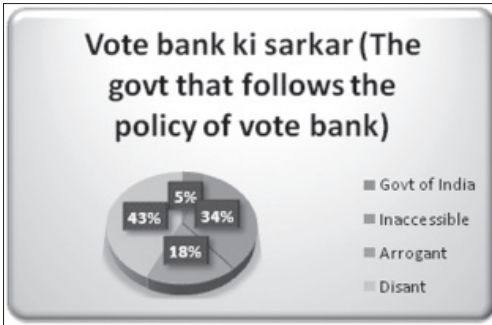
Chart 2

When someone says "Vote bank ki sarkar (the government that follows the policy of vote bank)", nearly half the electorate equates it with the Congress/UPA government and more than a third with a government that is biased. The phrase also evoked the image of economic policy of the government of the day or

Vote bank ki sarkar (The govt that follows the policy of vote bank)

5% | 43% | 34% | 18%

■ Govt of India
■ Inaccessible
■ Arrogant
  Disant

easy bank loan among a few people. The phrase has a negative connotation, and by using it Modi was able to make people relate the UPA government with bias towards a certain community or communities.

Chart 3

An overwhelming proportion (77 per cent) of the electorate identify "Maa-bete ki sarkar (the government of mother-son duo)" with the Nehru-Gandhi family: the then Indian National Congress (INC) president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi. The latter

Maa-Bete ki sarkar (The govt of mother-son)

2% | 3% | 18% | 77%

■ Nehru-Gandhi family
■ Jayalalitha family
■ Nepotism
  Sharad Pawar fmily
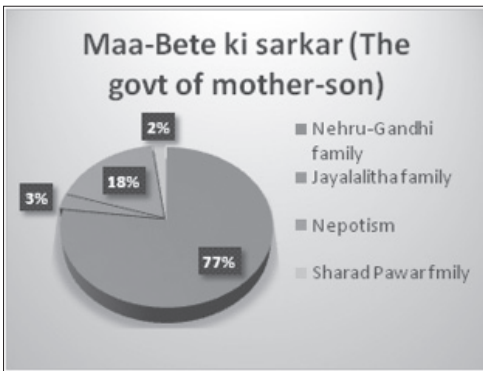
was the vice-president of the INC at that time. INC, incidentally has had five generations of Nehru-Gandhi family as its president(Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi), and three of them went on to become the prime minister. Motilal Nehru headed the INC for a brief while and passed away before Independence, and hence never became the prime minister. After leading the UPA to victory in 2005 parliamentary election, Sonia Gandhi could have become the prime minister, but she surprised his party members, allies and the rest of the Indians by proposing the name of Manmohan Singh as the prime minister. There are other influential political dynasties in Indian politics, but they came a

distant third and fourth. Incidentally, those who did not see the Nehru-Gandhi family as "Maa-bete ki sarkar" saw the phrase as a form of nepotism. And nepotism is a negative practice in democracy. Some other families in Indian politics do not really catch people's attention.

Chart 4

"Pink revolution" refers to export of beef from India, something the right wing political parties like the BJP and Shiv Sena have been demanding to be stopped. Though the term crept into Modi's speech only once, this
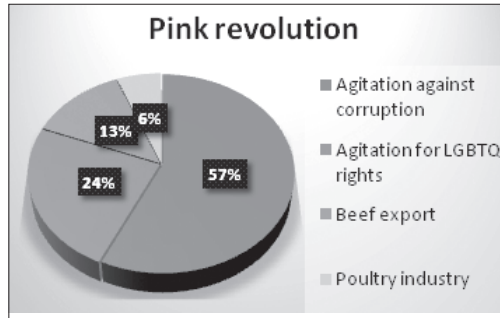
is the only symbol that his audience could not decipher. As the chart above shows,more than half the electorate thought Modi was referring to agitation against corruption. Some thought it has something to do with LGBT-Q community's rights. Very few people (only 13 per cent) took it for what it stood for: beef. Clearly, evoking this symbol to paint the Congress as the party that hurts the religious sentiments of the Hindu did not work for Modi.
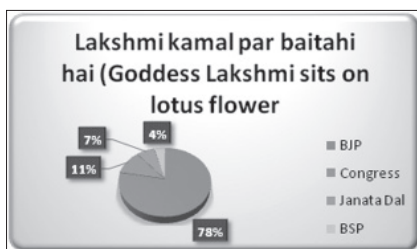
Chart 5

The attack on the family continues with different terms and phrases. More than half the electorate identify all the above terms with Nehru-Gandhi family and more than a quarter
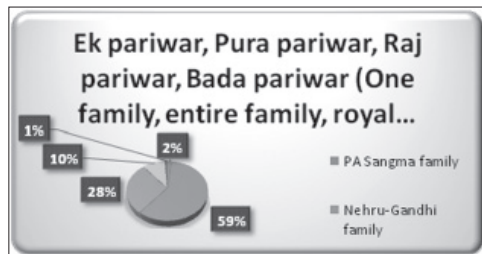
with nepotism. Thus a negative attribute (nepotism) comes very closely with this sign. Incidentally, the families of PA Sangma

(former Lok Sabha Speaker whose son and daughter both are in politics) and Laloo Prasad Yadav come to only 2 and 10 per cent respectively to people's mind. Only 1 per cent people thought of Mulayam Singh Yadav's family.

Chart 6

Lakshmi kamal par baitahi hai (Goddess Lakshmi sits on lotus flower

- 4% BJP
- 7%
- 11% Congress
- 78% Janata Dal
- BSP

In the Hindu pantheon, Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth. When Modi says "Lakshmi kamal par baithati hai" (Goddess Lakshmi sits on lotus flower), an overwhelming majority of people relate it to his party, the BJP. Modi successfully establishes BJP's association with wealth and prosperity. Lotus is the election symbol of the BJP. So this imagery becomes a good connect between the electorate and his party.

Chart 7

Vikas ki rally or Vikas ki yatra (March to development)

- 16%
- 0%
- 27%
- 57%
- BJP policies
- Cong policies
- JD policies
- Prosperity

Modi and other leaders of his party sort of carpet bombed the electorate with talk of development. So much so that when Modi says "Vikas ki rally or Vikas ki yatra," the policies of the political party that come to people's mind is BJP. Less than half of such people think of the Congress. A few people (16 per cent) saw this phrase independent of any political party. They saw it as prosperity.

Chart 8

Political leaders like to describe themselves as "Sevak (servant)" though once they are elected to an office, they become quite powerful. Indians generally look upon people with humility more favourably. When Modi uses this humble designation of

"sevak" an overwhelming chunk of the electorate (71 per cent) knows he is referring to himself. A share less than a quarter sees Manmohan Singh as the humble servant. Very few see Sonia Gandhi and Rahul as sevak.
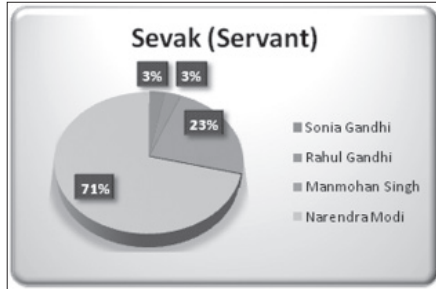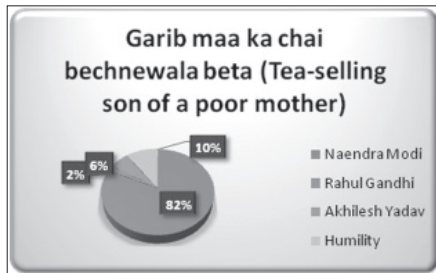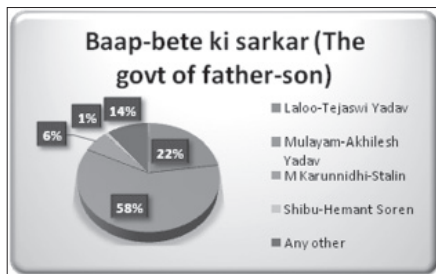
Chart 9

Modi very successfully turned the Congress' jibe in his favour. So whenhe says "Garib maa ka chai bechnewala beta (tea-selling son of a poor mother)", 82 per cent of the electorate knows who he is referring to: himself. It is interesting to see, the percentage of people who saw in this phrase humility. The percentage for humility is higher than the percentage for other prominent leaders like INC vice president Rahul Gandhi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav.

Chart 10

This was no brainer. "Baap-bete ki sarkar (The government of the father-son duo)" was identified more with Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav than any other father-son duo. One reason could be that half of the samples lived in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh where the father-son duo have been chief

ministers in succession and the other duoshave not had major influence on national politics.

Chart 11
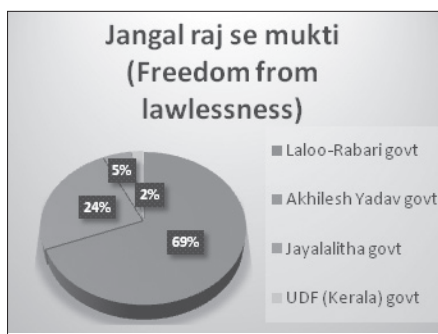
By promising people "jangal raj se mukti (freedom from lawlessness) Modi tried to position himself as the saviour of the people and the nation. The figures above and the subsequent election result shows Modi used this symbol (jangal raj) very effectively to drive home his point that he was the best option before the electorate. As high as 69 per cent people understood, he was referring to the tenure of Laloo Yadav-Rabari Devi government in Bihar. The next highest response, nearly a quarter, was for Akhilesh Yadav government (which this phrase was really meant for).

Chart 12
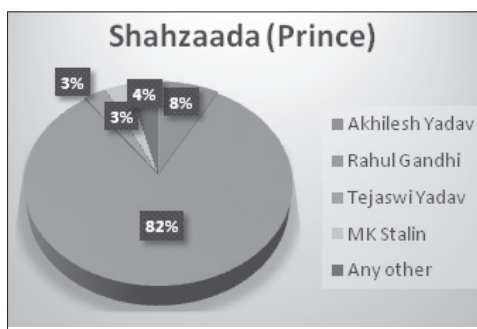
Modi was hugely successful as more than three fourth of the electorate identified "shahzaada" with Rahul Gandhi. Though sons of influential politicians and leaders of standing in their own rights, Akhilesh Yadav (son of former UP Chief Minister and Union Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav), Tejaswai Yadav (son of former Bihar Chief Minister and federal Railway Minister) and MK Stalin (son of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and M Karunanidhi) caught people's attention, by in a very modest way. About 4 per cent people named

other leaders: they were Omar Abdullah (former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and son of former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah and grandson of former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Sheikh Abdullah, and Jyotiraditya Scindia (son of former federal minister and scion of Gwalior royal family Madhavrao Scindia.

Chart 13

When Modi spoke "pariwarvaad", a little more than a third of the people thought he was referring to nepotism (38 per cent). Rest of the people associated the word with other negative attributes. Seen or heard together with
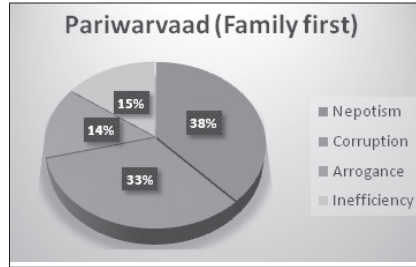
other terms like "Baap-bete ki sarkar", "Maa-bete ki Sarkar" that have been discussed above and "Vansvaad" that has been discussed in in the next paragraph, Modi was able to associate negative emotions with his rivals.

"Vanshvaad (clan first/succession)" evoked similar feelings among the electorate as "pariwarvaad".

Chart 14

Modi perhaps could not use this term as successfully as most of the symbols discussed above. While in his speech he attacked his rivals like the Congress (across India) and the Samajwadi Party (in UP) by using the term "sampradayavaad", more
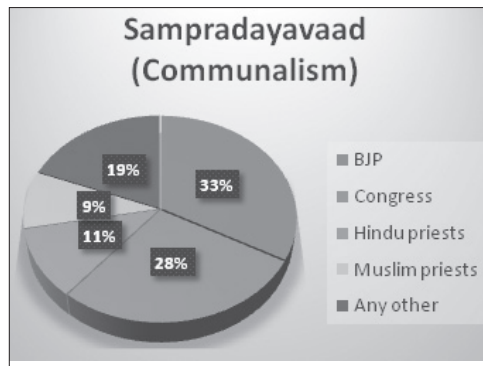
people (33 per cent) associated this word with his own party

than the Congress (28 per cent people). Nineteen per cent people associated other parties like the SP and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

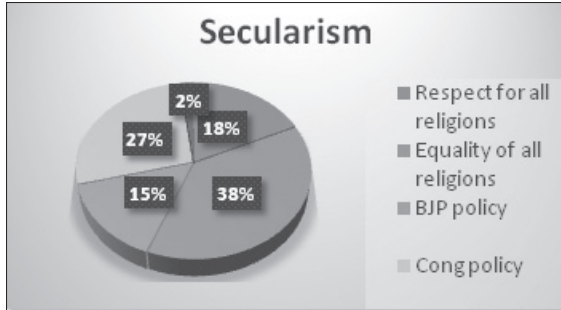Reference to "Jativaad" (caste) evoked similar sentiments as "sampradayvaad" did.

Chart 15

Modi tried to deride the political parties who profess secularism as their policy/ideology. For Modi and his party accuse their opponents of double speak on the idea of secularism. However, when Modi uses the term, more than a third of the people see it as "equality of all religion", and a shade more than a quarter as the Congress party's policy, a little less than a fifth as respect for all religion and 15 per cent as the BJP's policy. There a few who see as "ideal society" or "Ram rajya".
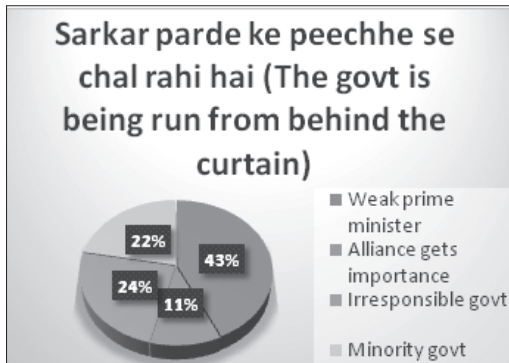

Chart 16

People have understood whom Modi was pointing his fingers at. He seems to have hit the bull's eye with his "Sarkar parde ke peechhe se chal rahi hai (the government is being run from behind the curtain)" as 43 per cent people know he was referring to a weak prime minister (Manmohan Singh).

Chart 17

An overwhelming majority (79 per cent) of the electorate saw him as the "chaukidaar" whereas only 18 per cent saw Sonia Gandhi and only 3 per cent saw Rahul Gandhi as the "chaukidaar".

Chaukidaar (Watchman)

0% 18% 3% 79%

Sonia Gandhi
Rahul Gandhi
Narendra Modi
Supriya Sule
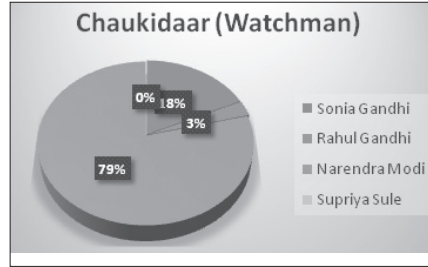
CONCLUSION

Semiotic analysis and quantitative analysis when read convey some meaning. When the two are read together, another layer to understanding the signs and symbols used by Modi emerges. The terms and phrases that emerged from Modi's speeches, make it clear that Modi used various signs and symbols to attack the Nehru-Gandhi family and the UPA government at the Centre. Modi liberally used terms and phrases with negative connotation to refer to the Nehru-Gandhi family and the UPA government. By association, the Nehru-Gandhi family and the government of the day were painted in a negative manner.

Analyses show that Modi is an astute communicator. His choice of words, idioms, phrases in speeches seems to have paid rich dividends in the Lok Sabha election in 2014. Not that other leaders did not use words, idioms, phrases in speeches, but the overwhelming majority that Modi's party and his political grouping, the National Democratic Alliance, won underlines his oratory.

Besides, quantitative analysis shows that people readily understood and connected to the words, idioms and phrases he used in his speeches to evoke the kind of imagery in their mind that he intended. There were a couple of exceptions, though, such as "Pink revolution" and "Secularism".

Semiotic analysis gives a good insight into his mind and sense of purpose as well. It shows how focused he was in his speeches: constantly attacking the Gandhi-Nehru and Mulayam

Yadav families and their parties. These parties were his main adversaries, at least in northern India which sends an overwhelming number of parliamentarians to Lok Sabha or the Lower House of Parliamentary. Winning these states is important to forming the government in New Delhi. Modi understood this well. A look at the number of times he made reference to Maa-bete ki sarkar, Baap-bete ki sarkar, Damad ki sarkar, Bete ki sarkar, Dilli ki sarkar, etc, shows how he went whole hog in attacking the two families and their parties. Indeed, his alliance, National Democratic Front went on to win 74 of the 80 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh. This is 13.5 per cent of the total seats from one state alone. In other words, his alliance could capture more than 27 per cent of the seats required to form government at the Centre!

The results of the study, in no manner, should be interpreted to conclude that there is an automatic connection between the ability of a political leader to identify and use sings and symbols in speeches and win election. However, it can safely be said that leaders can use signs and symbols to connect to the electorate better, and by extension leaders in other fields too can use signs and symbols to reach out to their target audience.

A resurgent young India is looking for new standards of public conduct and political debate. The Election Commission of India could use some of the findings to prescribe norms to raise the standard of electoral politics in India.

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Vicissitudes of Kannada Press in the New Millennium: A Mirror View

Dr. A.S. Balasubramanya

The mosaic of the Indian press is rich in diversity. As on March 31, 2020, the Indian press was a composite of 1,43,423 registered publications in English, 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, and 166 other languages and dialects (Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) 2020, p. 12). Such a spread of Indian press across languages reflects the vivacious cultural and linguistic variety of the country.

In terms of numerical benchmarks, as on 31 March 2020, the Hindi press was in the lead with 54,873 publications followed by English (19,766), Marathi (10,051), Urdu (6,909), Gujarati (6,625), Telugu (6093) and Tamil (6,024). With 5,828 publications, the Kannada press ranked eighth in the spectrum of the Indian print media (Ibid p.18). Of the 5,828 publications, 5692 publications were being published from Karnataka, and the remaining 136 were issued from other States (Ibid p. 28).

In respect of periodicity, the composition of 5,828 registered Kannada publications included 2468 monthlies, 1097 tri-bi and weeklies, 1028 fortnightlies, 1059 dailies, 111 quarterlies, 9 Bi/Tri-weeklies, eight annuals, and 66 belonging to 'other' category (Ibid p.22). In the hierarchy of daily newspapers, Hindi with 8,484 dailies topped the list followed by Urdu (2,055), Telugu (1,755), English (1,667),

and Marathi (1,384) dailies. Kannada newspapers ranked sixth with 1059 dailies (Ibid p.23).

Of the 5828 Kannada publications, only 1118 had filed the annual returns for the year 2019-20. The incidence of filing annual returns with RNI was the highest among the dailies (49.10 per cent) followed by monthlies (27.83 per cent), fortnightlies (10.82 per cent), weeklies including bi/tri weeklies (10.82 per cent), quarterlies, annuals and others (0.80per cent) each.

The circulation of 1,118 Kannada publications as claimed in their annual returns was 94, 12,902 lakh copies per publishing day (RNI, 2020, p.61). The dailies had the highest circulation of more than 75 lakh copies which accounted for 79 per cent of the circulation of Kannada publications. Compared to dailies, the share of all other publication was abysmally low. The share of the weeklies was a bare 6 per cent, followed by fortnightlies (5 per cent), and monthlies (8 per cent). Much lower was the circulation share of quarterlies, annuals, and other periodicities.

Though RNI has a process to verify the claimed circulation, advertisers rely on the circulation data issued by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). The ABC certified circulation reported in Table 1 reveals that the total circulation of Kannada publications was 26.15 lakh copies representing 53 editions/publications. The circulation trend of ABC member publications indicates a steady fall. It was about 28.38 lakh copies in July-Dec 2017 and it got reduced further to 27.06 lakh copies in January-June 2018.

Table 1: ABC certified circulation of Kannada publications for the year 2019 (July-Dec)

Periodicity	No of Editions/ Publications	Circulation
Dailies	44	24,13,021
Magazines	08	1,83,036
Annuals	01	19,532
Total	53	26,15,589

Such a trend indicates that the circulation of Kannada publications is declining every year by about a lakh copies. Based on the RNI data, the Federation of Industry and Commerce of India (FICCI) and Ernst and Young (EY), estimate the readership base of Indian publications to have increased from 395 million in 2017 to 403 million in 2019. The readership of Kannada publications had increased from 18 million in 2017 to 21 million in 2019 Q3 (FICCI &YE, 2020, p. 84). In the case of advertising volume, Kannada newspapers ranked sixth with 5 per cent share, and Kannada magazines had the seventh position with a 4 per cent share (FICCI & EY, 2020, p.90).

OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of the present study is to examine the significant changes in the Kannada press in the new millennium. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Trace the growth of Kannada press in terms of its strength and circulation;

2. Examine the role of the publications which spearheaded the growth momentum; and

3. Analyse the marketing strategies adopted to enhance the reach of Kannada publications;

METHODOLOGY

Changes in the Kannada press in the new millennium can best be deciphered through a longitudinal study design. Generally, longitudinal studies follow an observational approach and collect quantitative and/or qualitative data to describe the sequence of changes across time. The two decades of new millennium which constituted the study period were grouped into four phases with the year 2000 as the base year: first phase, 2000 – 2004; second phase, 2005- 2009; third Phase, 2010 – 2014; and the fourth phase from 2015-2019.

Both primary and secondary data were collected to realise the specific objectives of the study. The secondary data relating to the strength and circulation of the Kannada press was drawn

from the annual reports of Registrar of Newspapers for India, the Audit Bureau of Circulation of India, FICCI annual report on media and the Media Research Users Council. Further, leading Kannada newspaper publishers and editors were interviewed to gather additional data.

As this researcher is aware, not many comprehensive research studies have been undertaken to examine the developments in Kannada journalism during the new millennium in which a couple of dailies came into being, kick-started stiff competition and overtook the decades old publications. The present study attempts to fill in the gap.

July 1, 1843, marked the beginning of the Kannada press with the launch of the first Kannada newspaper Mangalura Samachara, a four-page fortnightly from Mangaluru by the Basel Mission under the leadership of German missionary Fredric Hermann Moegling. After about eight months, the publication was shifted to Ballari which had better printing facilities and was renamed as Kannada Samachara. Though it was closed after about ten months, the journey of Kannada press progressed (Havanur, pp.13-14)

The 177-year long history of Kannada press has five distinct periods: the early period from 1843-1890; freedom struggle period, 1891 – 1947; reorganisation period, 1948 – 1956; the consolidation period from 1957-1977; and the period of acceleration from 1978-1999.

In the changing economic environment, a new entrepreneur entered the market of Kannada press and achieved unprecedented success. Charting the success story was Vijay Sankeshwar, the owner of Vijayanand Roadlines Limited (VRL). He set up Vijayanand Printers Ltd (VPL) and launched the Kannada daily Vijaya Karnataka on October 4, 1999, from Bangalore. The entry of Vijaya Karnataka triggered fierce competition and resurgence of the Kannada press in the first two decades of the new millennium.

The development of Kannada press was lacklustre in the first five decades after independence. The reasons for the retarded

growth were low literacy rate, lack of purchasing power, and transportation and communication facilities. Even after the unification of Kannada speaking areas in 1956, the growth rate did not pick up momentum. As Bhandarkar (1999) recounts Prajavani daily, which had its launch in 1948 attained a circulation of one lakh copies 25 years later in 1973 and three lakh copies by 1997 (p.29).

The case of Samyukta Karnataka was not any different. According to a publication, SadhaneyaDashaka (A Decade of Achievement), brought out by the Lokashikshana Trust (1996),the Hubballi edition of Samyukta Karnataka was started in 1937 and Bangalore edition in 1959. If it took 25 years for Praja Vani to reach a circulation of one lakh copies, Samyukta KarnatakaHubballi edition took 62 years to attain a circulation of 1, 10,000 copies in 1996 (pp. 40-45).

FIRST PHASE, 2000– 2004

The Kannada press registered a remarkable expansion during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. In 2000, there were 1668 publications in Kannada out of which 332 were dailies. However, only 28 dailies and 42 periodicals had filed circulation details with the RNI. The claimed circulation of 28 dailies was 11,79,578 copies per publishing day, and that of 42 periodicals was 11,80,203 copies.

In the year 2000, the base year of the first phase, only 17 publications comprising six dailies, four weeklies, six monthlies, and one annual were ABC members. The average circulation of the dailies was 8, 17,669 copies, whereas the circulation of all periodicals put together was 7,02,330 copies. The lead positions of Praja Vani, Samyukta Karnataka, Udaya Vani and Kannada Prabha dailies were destined to change as Vijaya Karnataka which had entered the realm of Kannada press in 1999 and was being steered on the success path by its owner Vijay Sankeshwar, the game-changer. Sankeshwar, hailing from printer's family of Gadag, had entered the transport business by establishing Vijayanand Roadlines Limited (VRL)

in 1976 and developed it as one of the leading logistic firms of the country. His political leanings with BJP helped him to become a Member of Parliament three times - eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth Lok Sabha.

When Sankeshwar decided to start a daily, the Kannada newspaper industry was not very vibrant. In several parts of the state, morning dailies reached late, and their publishers were sluggish in expanding their printing and distribution network. Moreover, publishers were not coming forward to take risks and were playing safe. The feeling that newspaper business would not fetch profit had prevailed for an extended period. Another primary reason for their complacency was that the two prominent Kannada dailies, namely Prajavani and Kannada Prabha belonged to publication houses whose English dailies enjoyed preferences. Samyukta Karnataka owned and managed by the Lokashikshana Trust not only had the problem of capital but inherited legal disputes and hence could not make much headway. The failure of dailies such as Munjane (1983) Mungaru (1984), and Jana Vahini (1996) was a pointer to many entrepreneurs that Kannada publications have a limited market and cannot prosper. But that was not a deterrent to Vijay Sankeshwar.

Being a shrewd businessman, Sankeshwar visualised an excellent opportunity for a new Kannada daily. His vision was to have a state-level newspaper, and he had no financial or technical constraints. He was aware that rich and relevant content, attractive printing and timely delivery were crucial for the success of a new daily. All editions were planned with one special page devoted to a particular topic like health, religion, women, children, agriculture, art under the leadership of Iswara Daithota and D. Mahadevappa, two senior most Kannada journalists. Photographs and graphics were used more meaningfully so that readers get a better sense of the events. Few photos were enlarged to attract readers. Reports of mere

speeches were side-lined. Headlines were made attractive, meaningful and simple. Pun was used extensively in headlines. Civic issues were given prominence and were widely covered to catch the attention of urban readers.

Historically, Kannada dailies had remained confined to their headquarters for several years before moving into other cities of the state. "For historical reasons, there have been four distinct markets for Kannada newspapers; South Karnataka (the princely state of Mysore), North Karnataka (districts which were part of undivided Bombay), Coastal Karnataka (Mangalore and Udupi) and North-west Karnataka comprising of the districts from the old Hyderabad state. Prajavani remained the market leader among all Kannada newspapers for more than half-a-century though its sphere of influence was limited mainly to South Karnataka. Samyukta Karnataka and Udayavani had higher readership respectively in the North and Coastal Karnataka. The fourth region did not have any newspaper of repute and was served only by small newspapers published from Gulbarga" (Chandrasekhar,2004, Para 3).

Sankeshwar had a time-bound strategy to make the Vijaya Karnataka a pan-Karnataka publication. Vijaya Karnataka emerged as the leading Kannada daily within a short span of about five years. Vijaya Karnataka's ABC certified circulation in July -December 2001 was a little over 3.79 lakh copies which with a steady increase in 2002 and 2003 peaked to over 6.26 lakh in July-Dec 2004. Across these years, Parajavani and Udayavani ranked second and third in terms of circulation.

Table. No.2: Average circulation of top Kannada dailies (ABC members) during 2001- 2004

Kannada Dailies	Circulation in				% Increase in circulation from 2001 to 2004
	July-Dec 2001	July-Dec 2002	July-Dec 2003	July-Dec 2004	
Vijaya Karnataka	3,79,946	5,37,162	5,83,168	6,26,279	64.8
Prajavani	2,86,036	3,17,816	3,09,541	4,48,483	56.8
Udayavani	1,52,996	1,80,012	1,89,352	2,07,877	35.8
Samyukta Karnataka	1,21,126	1,48,004	1,43,696	1,61,530	33.3

Also, in respect of the percentage of increase in circulation in 2004 as compared to 2001, Vijaya Karnataka stood on top with 64.8 per cent increase followed by Prajavani with 56.8 per cent increase. Udayavani and Samyukta Karnataka had a far restricted rise of 35.8 per cent and 33.3 per cent respectively. Also, two more Kannada periodicals Nuthana, a weekly, and Bhavana, a monthly, launched by him failed to survive as support from readers and advertisers was not forthcoming.

Associated with the first four years of Vijay Karnatakawere two significant developments. The first was the price war among Kannada dailies and the second was a shift in the Vijay Sankeshwar's political affiliation. Price war was integral to the success of Vijaya Karnataka with its price-cutting tactics. Vijaya Karnataka was launched with a cover price of Rs 2.50. When Jana Vahini started offering the paper for Rs.1.50, Vijaya Karnataka reduced the cover price to Rs.1.50 in July 2001 resulting in the price war, a strategy often employed to undercut one another to capture a more significant market share. When other leading dailies reduced the cover price to Rs.1.50, Vijay Karnataka went a step ahead and reduced the price to Rs.1 in September 2004 compelling others to follow suit. With the production plus transport costs

and commission to agents remaining unchanged, the subscription revenue was reduced to almost zero, and the newspapers depended entirely on advertisement revenue.

The price war also changed the newspaper supply chain system, which involves the distribution of printed copies to readers through supply agents and delivery boys. Typically, a supply agent deposits a certain amount with the newspaper for a specific number of copies, and he had to sell all the copies. There was no buyback of unsold copies. But these dynamics changed on account of ruthless competition among the publishers to sell newspapers to readers at a much-reduced cost. However, agents insisted that their commission amount should be intact and new publishers like Vijaya Karnataka paid more to their agents to induce them to sell more copies. When the competition heated up, the publishers started offering cash prizes and gifts to agents. The subscribers were tempted with combo prices and gifts.

The price war had an adverse effect on the small and district-level newspapers as their readers started moving towards state-level publications for they were presenting colour pages rich in national and local news. The state-level publications were also attracting local advertisements which were being published in the respective district and city split editions.

Price-cutting tactics, an outcome of a change in the marketing practices, benefitted Vijaya Karnataka most as its circulation skyrocketed. By June 2002, its circulation crossed half a million, and by the end of 2003, it was nearing six lakh copies. The price-war which accelerated the growth of Vijaya Karnataka and forced the rest of the Kannada newspapers to cut their selling price did not continue for long. Due to the increase in input costs, the mainline Kannada dailies raised their selling price from Rs. 2 to Rs. 2.50 by the mid-2005. Thus, the price war, by and large, remained confined to the first phase.

The first phase saw the end of Jana Vahini daily, which made its appearance in 1996 in Mangalore. Though, short-lived for six years

(1996-2003) Jana Vahini created ripples in Kannada journalism. The daily was the brainchild of Samuel Sequeira, a progressive writer who had the backing of dynamic Catholic Christian group of Mangaluru. The Bangalore edition of the daily was started in 1998. The publication was very liberal in accommodating various communities on their staff. It was more pro-active compared to other dailies. The daily demonstrated its commitment by taking up public issues. Several cashew plantation owners sprayed insecticides to protect cashew trees in their land. The pesticide, Endosulphan, was sprayed by helicopters for several years which affected the health of villagers in the Dakshina Kannada district, many of whom died of cancer. Jana Vahini took up this issue and published series of stories. The public support and the campaign by the press resulted in stopping the spraying of the pesticide.

A new daily Vartha Bharathi made its debut on August 29, 2003 at Mangalore and three years later, its Bangalore edition was launched. The journalist behind this venture was Abdussalam Puthige. The main philosophy behind this venture was to represent the aspirations of Dalits, Muslim, Christian and Backward communities. The daily has most of its employees from these communities. A seasoned journalist, Abdussalam Puthige makes sure that the publication follows a straight forward approach without compromising on any individual, political party, organisation, business house or any pressure group.

SECOND PHASE, 2005 – 2009

The changes that had come about in the marketing dynamics of the Kannada press continued to reverberate in the beginning of the second phase. The marketing strategy of Sankeshwar, no matter how 'unfair' it paid rich dividends. The impressive growth trajectory of Vijaya Karnataka in the first phase was losing its force in the second phase draining the resources of Sankeshwar. But his new Usha Kirana failed to meet the expectations. It neither impressed the readers nor the advertisers. Its circulation never picked up as its content did not differ much from that of the other dailies.

In June 2006, India's largest publishing company, BCCL, known as the Times Group, acquired the Sankeshwar's Vijayanand Printers Ltd (VPL) and its publications – Vijaya Karnataka and Usha Kiran, and theEnglish daily, Vijay Times – for an undisclosed amount. According to the market reports, VPL was bought by BCCL for Rs.300 crores. The deal required Vijay Sankeswar not to be in competition with the Times Group for the next six years. BCCL's entry in Karnataka was not new. In 1985, it had entered Karnataka with the launch of Bangalore edition of The Times of Indiaand frommid-1990s onwards it had overtaken Karnataka's oldest English daily Deccan Herald. In the acquisition of VPL, the Times group had strengthened its market in Karnataka.

The Kannada version of The Times of India launched in 2007 was a replica of the English Times of India. The Kannada version even had the masthead of The Times of India and most of the news items, features, special reports, sports stories were translated and published keeping in mind the new generation Kannada readers sprinkled with more English words. This came to be known as Kanglish (Kannada-English). But that did not affect the circulation of any of leading Kannada dailies in the second phase, except that of Vijaya Karnataka.

There was a noticeable change in the strength and circulation of Kannada publications during 2005-2009. As per RNI reports, in 2005 there were 50 dailies with a claimed circulation of a little over 19.46 lakh. The strength of periodicals was 68, which together had a circulation of about 8.07 lakh (RNI 2004-05). The analysis of ABC circulation data relating to 2005 to 2009 denotes variations in respect of certain dailies as well as periodicals. In the first phase, Vijaya Karnataka had heralded a revolution and attained the highest average circulation of a little over 6.26 lakh copies per day in 2004. But in the second phase, it was on a declining path. Vijaya Karnataka's circulation had slipped to about 5.55 lakh copies in 2005, the first year of the second phase. BCCL's acquisition of VPL publications in 2006 could not arrest the decline in Vijaya

Karnataka's circulation. By 2009, its circulation had declined further to about 5.35 lakh copies.

In contrast to Vijaya Karnataka's declining trend in the second phase, other dailies had a different trend, a decline in circulation followed by an increase of varying proportions. For instance, the circulation of Prajavani, the second-ranking Kannada daily, declined from 4.48 lakh in 2004 to 4.25 lakh in 2005 and shot up again to about 4.92 lakh in 2009. The increase in its circulation from 2005 to 2009 was 15.5 per cent. The circulation of Udayavani and Samyukta Karnataka too had a similar trend but with a lower proportion of increase. From 2005 to 2009, Udayavani had 6.42 per cent increase in its circulation; while Samyukta Karnataka had 5.54 per cent increase.

The story of Kannada Prabha, the fifth ranking Kannada daily was different. Its circulation increased from 74,669 copies in 2004 to 84,118 copies in 2005 and to over 1.85 lakh copies in 2009. With 120.2 per cent increasein circulation in the second phase, it emerged as the fourth largest circulated Kannada daily. As a result, Samyukta Karnataka stood relegated to the fifth position in 2009.

Between 2010 and 2014, Kannada press was marked by notable developments: birth of Vijayavani, a new daily with an unparallel growth synergy; change in the ownership of Kannada Prabha; resurrection of two Kannada magazine by Delhi Press group, the publisher of popular English monthly Caravan; the diamond jubilee of Vinoda, a monthly, and golden jubilee of Sudha weekly; and impressive growth in the circulation of Udayavani.

THIRD PHASE, 2010-2014

ABC certified circulation of Kannada publications indicated that Vijaya Karnataka, which had become a part of Times group since 2006 ranked above all dailies in 2010 with an average circulation of 5.60 lakh copies per day. Compared to 2010, its circulation in 2014 had increased by 17.18 per cent as its circulation per publishing day had reached 6.56 lakh copies. The second-ranking daily Prajavani, had 5.46 per cent increase. The increase

in circulation in absolute terms was from 5.04 lakh copies to 5.31 lakh copies.

During the third phase, there was a change in the ownership of Kannada Prabha which had entered the realm of Kannada press in 1967 in Bengaluru as a part of the Indian Express Group publications owned by the family of its founder Ramnath Goenka. Following the bifurcation of the group by Goenka's family in 1991, Kannada Prabha along with South Indian edition of the English daily, The New Indian Express had become a part of the Express Publications (Madurai) Limited (EPL) owned by Manoj Kumar Sonthalia. In 2011, another change in the ownership of Kannada Prabhaun folded. Rajeev Chandrashekar, Rajya Sabha member, who had acquired a minority share in 2009, increased its share to 51 per cent.

FOURTH PHASE, 2015-2019

Like the previous three phases, the Kannada press had notable changes in the fourth phase. There was no let-up in the growth of Kannada publications in respect of their strength. The number of dailies and periodicals which had filled their annual statements with RNI, had increased in varying proportion from 2015 to 2019. In 2015, the strength of dailies was 126, and it went up to 540 in 2019. The number of periodicals increased from 158 in 2015 to 702 in 2019.

The claimed circulation of dailies had the highest increase of 26.94 per cent in 2017 and the lowest increase of 3.77 per cent in 2018, which got increased to 7.58 per cent in 2019. The claimed circulation of periodicals had a fluctuating pattern. Compared to 2015, their circulation decreased by 4.12 per in 2016, to increase again to 25.72 per cent in 2017 and 1.60 per cent in 2018 and jumped 40 per cent in 2019.

For a relatively precise picture of Kannada press growth, it is pertinent to analyse the circulation of the publications audited by the ABC as it is reckoned as authentic and reliable by the advertisers and marketers of products and services. A comparison

of the ABC audited circulation of Kannada dailies and periodicals presented in Table 12 is suggestive of a decline in their growth from 2015 to 2019. The decline was across all types of publications irrespective of their ranking. The decline in circulation of the dailies was far less as compared to the weeklies and monthlies.

Table No. 3 Average circulation of Kannada publications (ABC Members) in the fourth phase, 2015-2019

Publications	Average Circulation in		
	July - Dec 2015	July - Dec 2019	% Increase (+) / Decrease (-) from 2015 – 2019
Dailies Vijayavani	8,03,738	7,57, 119	-5.80
Vijaya Karnataka	6,86,112	6,73,639	-1.81
Prajavani	5,07,059	4,78,374	-5.65
Udayavani	3,03,985	2,78,236	-8.47
Kannada Prabha	**	1,25,412	**
Samyukta Karnataka	94,176	70,332	-25.31
Karnataka Malla	20,356	**	**
Udayakala	**	29,909	**
Weeklies Taranga	80,524	57,441	-28.66
Sudha	75,185	50,202	-33.22

Karmaveera	8,903	7,454	-16.27
Monthlies SpardaSpoorthi	92,358	21,883	-76.30
Mayura	21,620	13,406	-37.99
Roopatara	21,154	9,432	-55.41
Tushara	17,010	11,537	-32.17
Kasturi	16,287	9,284	-42.99
Annuals Praja Vani-Deepavali Spl.	40,028	**	**

** Not available/applicable

The heaviest loser in the fourth phase of the study was Samyukta Karnataka, the oldest surviving Kannada daily. It had a decrease of 25.1 per cent as its average circulation per publishing day had slipped from 94,176 copies in 2015 to 70,332 copies in 2019.

The dip in the circulation of weeklies from 2015 to 2019 was higher than the dailies. The circulation of the top ranking, weekly Taranga had 28.66 per cent decrease as its circulation had declined from 80,524 copies in 2015 to 57,441 copies in 2019. The most massive loss was that of the second-ranking weekly Sudha, a sister publication of Prajavani. In 2019, its circulation was down by 33.22 per cent. The meagre circulation of Karmaveera weekly had suffered a loss of 16.27 per cent in 2019.

All the monthlies had a much higher loss in their circulation in 2019 as compared to 2015. The per cent of decrease was a high of 76.3 per cent in respect of Sparda Spoorthi followed by Roopatara (55.41 per cent), Kasturi (42.99 per cent), Mayura (37.99 per cent), and Tushara (32.17 per cent).

Table No. 4 Growth of newspapers and periodicals of ABC member publications during 2000-2019

Year	Dailies	Periodicals	Total
	Percentage of increase / decrease	Percentage of increase / decrease	Percentage of increase/ decrease
2000	8,17,669	7,02,330	15,19,999
2005	15,48,964 (+89.43)	8,26,472 (+7.67)	23,75,436 (+56.27)
2010	16,44,945 (+6.19)	6,25,942 (-5.73)	22,70,887 (-5.59)
2015	25,35,690 (+54.15)	4,06,277 (-4.90)	29,41,967 (+29.55)
2019	24,07,613 (-4.94)	2,39,604 (-58.97)	26,47,217 (-9.98)

What could be the reasons for widespread downslide in the circulation of Kannada publications, especially the weeklies and monthlies in 2019? A major cause could be the spread of the internet and the explosion of net-based content because of which fewer people feel the need to read magazines. In addition to social media, abundant choice of programmes for all age groups in TV channels is another main reason.

The fourth phase had the shock episode of the murder of Gauri Lankesh, a well-known social activist and editor of Kannada weekly, Gauri Lankesh Patrike. She was shot dead by two suspects of a right-wing Hindu organization on September 5, 2017, in front of her residence in Bangalore. Gauri was the daughter of acclaimed Kannada writer and journalist P Lankesh, the editor of a path-breaking Kannada weekly Lankesh Patrike. After the death of her father in 2000, Gauri became the editor of Lankesh Patrike, and her brother Indrajit took over the management of the weekly. When

differences between them surfaced, Gauri launched her own weekly tabloid Gauri Lankesh Patrike in 2005 and continued to criticise the right-wing political organisations and Hindu extremism.

Samyukta Karnataka, the oldest existing Kannada daily launched its sixth edition from Bagalakote in November 2019. The daily which has completed 88 years of its noble service is more than a newspaper. It is an institution by itself.

The year 2018 was a milestone in Kannada journalism. Prajavani, one of the prominent Kannada dailies, completed 70 years of its fruitful service. The reading material prepared by the editorial team of Prajavani won the admiration of readers. T.S. Ramachandra Rao, who had joined the daily as sub-editor, became the joint-editor and then full-fledged editor in March 1951 to guide its destiny of the daily for the next 27 years. His daily column 'Chhoobana' remains as one of the best in the history of Kannada journalism. The Printers (Mysore) Pvt Ltd started two Kannada magazines, Sudha, a weekly in 1965 and Mayura, a monthly in 1968, which had a large circulation for a long time. Prajavani has the distinction of being the largest circulated Kannada daily for over 40 years.

The year 2020 marks the golden jubilee year of Udayavani, the fourth largest circulated daily known for its excellent design and printing. On Jan 1, 1970, the Manipal Media Networks Ltd (MMNL), launched its flagship daily, Udayavani from Manipal, an educational hub located in coastal Kanrakata. The daily uses lucid, flawless and cultured language of the coastal Karnataka. As Mumbai has a large number of Kannada speaking population, Udayavani launched Mumbai edition in 2000. Later, it expanded its operations to Hubballi, Gulbarga and Davanagere to establish its presence across entire state.

Udayavani was the first newspaper to adopt offset printing and won several national awards for best printing and design. In 1977, it garnered another distinction of being the first Kannada daily e-paper to be accessed on the Web. Besides Udaya Vanidaily,

MMNL brings out four periodicals: Thushara, a literary monthly since 1972; Roopathara, a film monthly since 1977; Taranga,a weekly launched in 1982; and Tunturu, a bi-monthly illustrated magazine for children since 2000.

CONCLUSION:

The study period marks a significant chapter in the 177-year history of Kannada journalism. Vijay Sankeswar took the lead and invested substantial amount triggering the growth of Kannada newspaper industry. The innovative marketing approaches, extensive network of agents for timely distribution and the quality editorial content helped Vijaya Karnataka to become a true Pan-Karnataka daily. Eleven printing plants strategically located across the state ensured that readers get the paper early in the morning including border areas surrounding the state. The other leading Kannada publishers were forced to initiate expansion across the state to vie with Vijaya Karnataka. However, this makeover had ruthlessly affected the prospects of small and medium publications, as they had to compete with state level dailies in their home market. The local editions of major dailies took away their ad revenue besides trouncing their circulation.

Enhanced commission to agents was another factor that helped Sankeswar. Publication of dailies, hither to confine to big cities steadily moved to several towns putting them on national map. Extensive coverage of local reports besides state and national events presented through district-level editions of major dailies resulted in a big chunk of small and medium publication readers to switch over to major dailies. Vijay Sankeswar who sold three of his publications including Vijaya Karnataka, in 2006 to The Times group, came back to newspaper publishing in 2012 and made the new daily Vijyavani number one setting a record.

Further, the new millennium recorded a steep fall in the circulation of periodicals. According to ABC figures, the circulation of Kannada periodicals was around seven lakh copies in 2000 and it came down to 2.39 lakh copies in 2019. The variety of contents

offered by TV channels and online media are the main reasons for the decline of magazine readership. During the same period, the circulation of dailies has increased from 8.17 lakh to 24 lakh copies. The RNI report for the year 2019 pointed out the dominance of dailies over periodicals. The circulation of dailies was 71.10 lakh copies whereas periodicals had a circulation of only 26.30 lakh copies. A significant majority of Kannada publications have adopted the latest technologies and are marching ahead hoping for survival in the ever competitive media market.

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Gandhiji was against Religious Conversions

Dr. Santosh Kumar Tewari

Religious conversions are a teething issue in our country and elsewhere as well. Time to time, Mahatma Gandhi used his journals to ring out his views on this matter. Gandhiji was a great writer, journalist as well as publisher. When he was in his teens, he was in Britain. There, he wrote a booklet, London Guide. This booklet was for Indian students in England. While his journey from England to South Africa in 1909 by ship Gandhiji wrote Hind Swaraj. The book is a severe criticism of modern civilisation. He had a great love for his mother tongue Gujarati. Hind Swaraj was originally written in Gujarati and later on it was translated into other languages including English. In South Africa, he took charge of Indian Opinion and published his views in this paper.

Gandhiji's writing style was simple and precise. He never used flowery language just to show off his knowledge or vocabulary.

PURPOSE OF JOURNALISM

Expressing his experience on Indian Opinion, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography (Part IV Chapter 13 entitled 'Indian Opinion'):

"In the very first month of Indian Opinion, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves

more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice."

On his return to India he took up the editorship of Young India and Navjivan (Gujarati) and Navjivan (Hindi). Under his editorship, first edition of Navjivan (Gujarati) was launched on 7 September 1919, first edition of Young India on 8 October 1919 and first one of Navjivan (Hindi) on 19 August 1921. Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography was also originally written in Gujarati and it was first serialised in 105 parts in Navjivan (Gujarati). After that it was translated into several languages including English, Hindi, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, and other Indian and foreign languages. The complete title of his autobiography in English was An Autobiography or My Experiments or The Story of My Experiments with Truth.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote in Young India on 2nd July 1925 his basic purpose of taking up journalism. He said: "I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and percept under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non-violence and truth. To be true to my faith, therefore I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion."

GANDHIJI'S OPPOSITION TO TAKING ADVERTISEMENTS

After the closure of Young India and Navjivan, he started writing for Harijan (English), Harijan Sevak (Hindi) and Harijan Bandhu (Gujarati). All these five journals did not carry any advertisement. Expressing his clear opinion against publishing advertisements in his journals, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography (Part V Chapter 34 entitled 'Navjivan and Young India'):

"From the very start I set my face against taking advertisements in these journals. I do not think that they have lost anything thereby. On the contrary, it is my belief that it has in no small measure helped them to maintain their independence."

HIS OPPOSITION TO RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

In all these journals, he strongly opposed religious conversions. When Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira Nehru was about to marry a Parsee named Firoz Gandhi, Gandhiji got a lot letters from different people who were against this inter-faith marriage. People wrote to Mahatma Gandhi because he was close to the Nehru family. Indira Nehru was engaged to Feroz Gandhi on February 26. It was not possible for Gandhiji to reply to each and every letter. Therefore, he wrote an article in Hindi on this matter. His original Hindi article was published in Harijan Sevak on March 8, 1942. Its English translation was carried by Harijan and also Gujarati one was published in Harijan Bandhu. Why it is considered that he wrote original article in Hindi? Because the flow of language of this article in Hindi is better than English one.

The article of Mahatma Gandhi carried in Harijan (English) on 8 March 1942:

INDIRA NEHRU'S ENGAGEMENT

I have received several angry and abusive letters and some professing to reason about Indira's engagement with Feroz Gandhi. Not a single correspondent has anything against Feroz Gandhi as a man. His only crime in their estimation is that he happens to be a Parsi. I have been, and I am still, as strong an opponent of either party changing religion for the sake of marriage. Religion is not a garment to be cast off at will. In the present case there is no question of change of religion. Feroz Gandhi has been for years an inmate of the Nehru family. He nursed Kamala Nehru in her sickness. He was like a son to her. During Indira's illness in Europe he was of great help to her. A natural intimacy grew up between them. The friendship has been perfectly honourable. It has ripened into mutual attraction. But neither party would think of marrying without the consent and blessing of

Jawaharlal Nehru. This was given only after he was satisfied that the attraction had a solid basis. The public know my connection with the Nehrus. I had also talks with both the parties. It would have been cruelty to refuse consent to this engagement. As time advances such unions are bound to multiply with benefit to society. At present we have not even reached the stage of mutual toleration, but as toleration grows into mutual respect for religions such unions will be welcomed. No religion which is narrow and which cannot satisfy the test of reason will survive the coming reconstruction of society in which the values will have changed and character, not possession of wealth, title or birth, will be the sole test of merit. The Hinduism of my conception is no narrow creed. It is a grand evolutionary process as ancient as time, and embraces the teachings of Zoroaster, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, Nanak and other prophets that I could name. It is thus defined:

विद्वद्भि:सेवित:सर्भिर्नित्यमद्वेषरागिभि:

हृदयेनाभ्यनुज्ञातोयोधर्मस्तंनिबोधत।।

Know that to be (true) religion which the wise and the good and those who are ever free from passion and hate follow and which appeals to the heart. If it is not that, it will perish. My correspondents will pardon me for not acknowledging their letters. I invite them to shed their wrath and bless the forthcoming marriage. Their letters betray ignorance, intolerance and prejudice—a species of untouchability, dangerous because not easily to be so classified.

Mahatma Gandhi's original article in Hindi published in Harijan Sevak on 8 March 1942 is presented here:

कुमारी इन्दिरा नेहरू की सगाई

श्री फिरोज गांधी के साथ कुमारी इन्दिरा नेहरू की सगाई के सवाल को लेकरइधर मेरे पास ढेरों पत्र आये हो ं कई पत्र क्रोध और गाली से भरे हैं और कुछमें दलीलें देने की कोशिश की गई हैं। एक भी पत्र ऐसा नहीं है, जिसमें श्री फीरोजगांधी की अपनी योग्यता के बारे में कोई शिकायत हो। पत्र-लेखकों की दृष्टि मेंउनका एकमात्र उपराध यही है कि वह पारसी हैं। मैं हमेशा से इस बात का घोरविरोधी रहा हूं कि स्त्री-पुरुष सिर्फ व्याह के लिए अपना धर्म बदलें। मेरा यहविरोध आज भी कायम है। धर्म कोई चादर या दुपट्टा नहीं, कि जब चाहा, औढलिया, जब चाहा उतार दिया। इस व्याह में श्रधर्म बदलने की कोई बात ही नहींहै। श्री फीरोज का नहरू-परिवार के साथ बरसों पुराना घरोपा है; स्वं श्रीमतीकमला नेहरू की बीमारी में श्री फीरोज ने उर्से तक उनकी तीमारदारी की थी। और इसीलिए कमलाजी के मन में फीरोज के लिए आत्मीय का-सा भाव

था। युरोप में कुमारी इन्दिरा की बीमारी के वक्त भी इनकी बड़ी मदद रही थी। यहां से दोनों में मित्रता पैदा हुई। यह मित्रता संयमवाली थी। इसमें से आपसी चाहहैदा हुई। मगर दोनों में से किसी ने यह नहीं चाहा कि वे पण्डित जवाहरलालकी सम्मति और आशीर्वाद के बिना व्याह कर लें। जब जवाहरलाल जी को विश्वास हो गया कि इस आकर्षण की तह में स्थिरता है, तो उन्हों ने अपनी स्वकृति दे दी। लोग जानते हैं कि नेहरू परिवार के साथ मेरा कितना घना सम्बन्ध है। मैंने दोनों से बातचीत की। अगर यह सगाई स्वीकार न की जाती, तो वह क्रूरता होती। जैसे-जैसे समय बीतता जायगा, इस तरह के विवाह बढ़ेंगे, और उनसे समाज को फायदा ही होगा। फिलहाल तो हममें आपसी सहिष्णुता का माद्दा भी पैदानहीं हुआ है। लेकिन जब सहिष्णुता बढ़कर सर्वधर्म-समभाव में बदल जायगी, तो ऐसे विवाह स्वागत-योग्य माने जायंगे। आनेवाले समाज की नवरचना में जो धर्म संकुचित रहेगा और बुद्धि की कसौटी पर खरा नहीं उतरेगा, वह टिक नसकेगा। क्योंकि उस नवनिर्माण है। उसमें जरथुष्ख, मूसा, ईसा, मुहम्मद, नानक और ऐसे दूसरेकई धर्म-संस्थापकों के उपदेशों का समावेश हो जाता है। उसकी व्याख्या इसप्रकार है-

विद्वद्भि: सेवित: सर्भिनित्यमद्वेषरागिभि:
हृदयेनाभ्यनुज्ञातो यो धर्मस्तं निबोधत।।

अर्थात् जिस धर्म को राम-द्वेषहीन, ज्ञानी सन्तों ने अपनाया है, और जिसे हमारा हृदय और बुद्धिभी स्वीकार करती है, वही सद्धर्म है।

अगर धर्म ऐसा न रहा, तो वह बच नहीं सकेगा। मैं अपने पत्र लेखकों को अलग-अलग जवाब नहीं दे सका हूं, इसके लिए वे मुझे क्षमा करें। मैं उनसे निवेदन करता हूं कि वे गुस्सा छोड़ें और इस व्याह को अपने आशीर्वाद दें। मुझे मिले हुए पत्रों से अज्ञान, असहिष्णुता और अरुचि के भाव टपकते हैं, उनमें एक प्रकार की ऐसी अस्पृश्यता है, जिसे कोई ठीक नाम देना मुश्किल है, लेकिन इसीलिए वह भयंकर भी है।

Mahatma Gandhi's above article was very clear about his opposition to religious conversions. But who cares for his views! Most people do only lip service to his ideas.

Most of the information given in the above write up is available free of cost to all across the world on;

- *https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/*
- *https://www.mkgandhi.org/*
- *http://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/ collected-works-of-mahatma-gandhi-volume-1-to-98.php.*

Those who are interested in doing further research on Mahatma Gandhi can use these websites.

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Fly High, O Mother, Our Mother; Always and Forever: Re-Discovering 'Bhārat'

Dr. Nishamani Kar

If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed, some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention of even those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact, more truly human, a life, not for this life only, again I should point to India.

(Max Muller, India: What Can it Teach Us, 6)

"India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of mature mind, understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all human beings."

(Will Durant, The Case for India)

This paper seeks to analyze the idea of 'Bharat', our motherland, and the socio-cultural discourses attuned to it. The sole intent is to participate (possibly to contribute) in the dialogue already given a kickstart in recent times. The changing global order, especially in the context of our international engagements, amidst the concomitant internal and external challenges, priorities,

and reorientations is also accessed passingly. Thus, our age-old knowledge system needs to be rediscovered and reviewed while identifying, exploring, and ensuring its relevance. A variety of theoretical perspectives, from the fields of aesthetics, literature, sciences, and societal practices are negotiated to ascertain the preeminence of Bharatiya thought prints, which essentially attest to the convergence of tradition and modernity. In this context, the reflections of Eastern thinkers like the Vedic Rishis, Gautama-the Buddha, Mahabira, Shankara, Ramanuja, Kautilya, Nanak, Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi, are indeed pertinent. Paradoxically enough, such timeless ideals crossed the boundaries and were comprehended by Thoreau, Tolstoy, Emerson, and Ruskin, as reflected in the formulation of their theories. Further, being reinforced by Gandhi, the ideas are presently rediscovered by Martin Luther King [Jr], Nelson Mandela, Aang Su Ki, Dalai Lama, and even Barrack Obama. As if the ebb and flow of ideas are a reality that is realized earnestly. Given the above premise, we must limit our analysis to our ancient and age-old value system (by reappraising the classics), underscoring the Indian contribution to the world.

Before proceeding further, a couple of observations on the recent controversy about whether 'India' is to be renamed 'Bharat' would not be out of place. Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare) says, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet". It means that names are a convention to distinguish things or people, but they do not have any worth or meaning. For Shakespeare, a name did not matter much when he wrote five centuries ago. But, in the present times, the answer to the question "What's in a name?" would be "It's everything" - an important part of one's identity, a deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical construction. It lends a sense of who we are, the communities we belong to, and our place in the world.

The name 'Ivõia' was initially given by the Greek invaders to the Indus Valley and its adjoining territory, taking the key from

the Persian nomenclature 'Hindū̃s' meant for the inhabitants of the said area, which became 'India' in Latin over time. During the fifteenth –sixteenth century, the said term entered into English vocabulary, and the Europeans started using the term replacing 'indie', 'inde', and 'indea', which were in circulation earlier. Contrastingly, as cited in Purāṇas and scriptures, there are several other names like Bharat, Hindustan, Aryabartta, Brahmabartta, Haimabata, Ajanavabarsa, Navikhanda, Narabhu, Narabhumi. In Viṣṇu Purāṇa (a dialogue, where sage Parāśara teaches his disciple Maitreya), 'Bharat' refers to the said land mass.

Uttaramyatsamudrasyahimādreschaibadakshinam
BarsamtadvāratamnāmaBhāratīyatrasantatih II
Nabajojanasāhasrobistārosyamahāmune!
KarmabhūmiriyamswargampabarganchagachatāmII

(Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 2/3/1-2)

[The country that lies north of the ocean, and south of the snowy mountains, is called Bhārata, for there dwelt the descendants of Bharata. It is nine thousand leagues in extent, and is the land of works, in consequence of which men go to heaven, or obtain emancipation.]

Further,

Gāyantidebāhkiḷagītakānidhānyāstu je bhāratbhūmibhāge
Swa rgāpabargāspadamārgabhūtebhabantibhūyahpurusāhsuratwāt II

(Visnu Purāṇa, 2/3/24)

[The gods exclaim: Happy are those who are born, even from the condition of gods, as men in Bhārata-Varṣa, as that is the way to the pleasures of Paradise or the greater blessing of final liberation.]

To elucidate more, the word Bhārata is derived from the Sanskrit *Bha+Rata* (*Bha* means knowledge and *Rata* means getting involved) and thus it stands for the land, the inhabitants of which are knowledge-seekers. Differently, *Bha* in Prakrit is *Prabha*, which means luster or exuberance, and the people here are bright and brilliant. With this background, let us dive deep into some Bharat-centric ideas and assess their significance.

It is a common place of criticism that ideas shape the course of history, foster the present, and provide a roadmap for a better future. We reimagine our future through the proper use of the mind to serve love, life, and letters (the standard foundations of *Bharatiya Chintan* – Indian Thought Prints), a new social contract for the survival of humanity. Indian culture and tradition, as we know, respect, dissent or debate and accommodate diversity while combining nuances of democracy and detente. Eventually, with its rich civilizational history, India, that is Bharat, has had a continuous trajectory of socio-political progress. The praxis of *Shāstra* and *Shastra*, the age-old approach to art, aesthetics, astronomy, and sciences, especially ecology, need to be preserved, practiced, and prolonged. The discourses of dharma and traditions, philosophical and belief systems, ethics, and values need to guide us to forge ahead (in accord with CHARAIVETI (चरैवेति), an aphorism from the *Aitareya Brahmana*). Once all these are integrated within the prevailing social structure and practices, the youth can have a sense of rootedness, and address local, national, and global issues.

The Indological perspective helps us understand Indian society through the concepts and canons closely associated with Indian civilization which has accorded immense importance to knowledge — its corroborating texts, thinkers, and schools in diverse domains notwithstanding. In *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, 4.33,37-38, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that knowledge is the great purifier and liberator of the self. Thus, knowledge has been at the center of all inquiry in India, from the *Vedas (Upanisads)* to Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. In the fitness of things, interventionist historiography is applied while examining the theoretical positions from different vantage points. Incidentally, each re-reading of a text dislodges it from the ambit of 'static categories' and leads us to the production of new knowledge. This is perhaps the only suitable way to ensure the continuum of the existing frameworks. Accepting that the Indian culture is unique in structure, function, and dynamics, it

denounces rigorous empirical investigation. Being an approach to study Indian society and its foundations like secularism, composite culture, pluralism, and historiography as the subject matter, it demands an interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and even cross-disciplinary approach.

The entire body of organized knowledge in India is divided into two sets in the *Mundakopanisad*— "Tasmaisahovāca/ Dvevidyeveditavyeiti ha sma/ Yyadbrahmavidovadantiparācaivāparā ca." (1.1. 4.)

[To him, he said: Two kinds of knowledge must be known-that is what the knowers of Brahman tell us. They are the Higher Knowledge and the Lower Knowledge]- the *Para Vidya* (knowledge of the ultimate principle, Paramatma or Brahman, the metaphysical domain), and *Apara Vidya* (knowledge that is secondary to how one grasps Akshara-Brahman, i.e., worldly knowledge).

Accordingly, a distinction is made between jnāna and vijnāna, the knowledge of facts of the perceptible world. Over time, knowledge of different domains has been institutionalized into disciplines, or vidyā and kaḷā (craft): 18 major vidyās, theoretical fields, 64 kaḷās, applied or vocational disciplines, and crafts.

The 18 vidyas constitute the four Vedas; the four subsidiary Vedas (Ayurveda – medicine, Dhanurveda – archery (weaponry), Gandharvaveda – music dance, and drama, and Sthāpatyasiḷpaveda – architecture); Purāṇa, Nyāya, Mimāmsā, Dharmasāstra, and Vedānga; the six auxiliary sciences - phonetics, grammar, poetic meter, astronomy, ritual, and philology. As far as the applied sciences are concerned, there are 64 competing enumerations. Few cultures can show such wide-ranging, structured systems of ideas in almost all spheres of human life. This has led to the generation of a vast mass of ideas, which has imprinted itself on the Indian mind making it naturally reflective and ideational. Nevertheless, it has had a tangible, worldly, and pragmatic aspect. A case in point is Kautilya, an iconic figure in the ancient and modern world and the sole strategist who could translate his tenets into practice,

leading to the creation of a vast empire. The Arthaśāstra covers every topic required for running a country, most of which remain relevant even today.

Incidentally, as a matter of added explanation, we are to admit that Indian disciplinary formations include fields as diverse as philosophy, architecture, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, metrics, sociology (dharmashāstra), economy and polity (arthashāstra), ethics (nitishāstra), geography, logic, military science, weaponry, agriculture, mining, trade and commerce, metallurgy, mining, shipbuilding, medicine, poetics, biology, and veterinary science. In each of these, a continuous and cumulative series of texts are available despite the widespread loss because of historically crafted designs leading to widespread destruction.

To our utter dismay, IKS (Indian Knowledge System) has not received the importance it deserves. China's contributions to the global knowledge pool are often acknowledged in intellectual circles. Arab scholars have ensured that the Islamic countries' essential role in transmitting ideas and inventions to Europe is widely recognized. However, in the latter case, many discoveries made in ancient India are often depicted as Arab origin, though most Arabs only bequeathed what they had learned from India. Even post-independence, such distortion of facts continues to prevail, negatively impacting the appreciation of ancient Indian wisdom. To a large extent, the global elite viewed pre-colonial India as feudalistic, superstitious, Dionesyan, irrational, and lacking scientific temper.

The colonial masters not only approximated and thought the same way but also forced upon us their approaches to life and letters in the name of a 'civilizing mission', leading to an entrenched prejudice against our indigenous knowledge systems. A significant reason for this prevalent notion is India's flawed and skillfully maneuvered education system, smartly enforced by the Macaulay Minute, which has resulted in subverting the projection of ancient Indian knowledge and scientific achievements in its curricula.

Thus, even when facts are presented, few in the West or even from the elitist circle are willing to believe them, as stereotypes about India are deeply entrenched in their psyche. Therefore, in the fitness of things, the general curricula/syllabi must be reoriented and restructured to accommodate the Indian Knowledge System as a matter of course correction. NEP 2020 takes the formidable step thus highlighting an education system rooted in Indian ethos, that will make India a global knowledge superpower.

In this context, it is equally relevant to come across a different reality: India holds the Presidency (from December 1, 2022, till November 30, 2023) of the G20, the premier forum in shaping and strengthening global architecture and governance on all major international economic issues. The theme and the logo for India's G20 Presidency mention "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth-One Family-One Future".

AyamNijah Paro VetiGananāLaghucetasām-I

UdāracaritānāmTuVasudhaivaKutumbakam-II

(Mahā Upanishad, VI.71-73)

[Only commoners discriminate saying: one is a relative, the other is a stranger. For those who are generous the entire world constitutes but a family.]

Considered the most important moral value in Indian society, the above-stated 'Lofty Vedantic Thought'advocates the cause of holistic development and respect for all forms of life; nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence as a creed and strategy; is but an extension of the ancient Indian concept. This idea of 'oneness of being' subscribes to 'Harmony', when many [things] are restored to some unity. Despite all superficial diversity, our life in illusion must experience and endure the feeling of oneness through love brought about amongst all the nations, castes, colors, and creeds, similar to the nuances of the Jagannath cult promoting faith and belief in brotherhood, mutual love, and reconciliation. The Rigvedic dictum "Bahujanasukhāya Bahujanahitāya cha" encourages humanity to follow the idea

of "welfare of the many, the happiness of many" and is doubly relevant to inspire and empower the masses to address the societal (mal)practices.

Further, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (commemorating 75 years of progressive Bharat and the glorious history of its people, culture, and achievements) is an effective initiative to celebrate the ideas and ideals our motherland stood for. In a fast-changing world where a new world order is unfolding, our civilizational thought prints are relevant worldwide. "Discover Bharat" is the key to fighting for a human future at this new frontier. This initiative endeavors to initiate intellectual discussion and deliberations on our rich historical, cultural, and philosophical heritage and communicate the relevance of this vast knowledge oeuvre to the emerging order. Eventually, what ensures the live continuum of epistemology-ancient and modern-is a robust and critical engagement with it. It prevents the intellectual tradition from becoming ossified and keeps it alive and contemporary. However, the most significant development, at present, suggests lasting solutions to problems at hand from a Bharat-centric perspective, with the eloquent underpinnings of truth, transparency, and tolerance; responsibility, righteousness, and respect (caring and civility) for others. It would incontrovertibly incentivize hope for humanity.

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Upholding Democratic Values:
Role of the Indian Press

Prof. Subir Ghosh

"Freedom of the press is the staff of life, for any vital democracy."

Wendell Willkie (1892-1944),
Republican nominee for U.S. President in 1940

On the eve of the Independence of India, Winston Churchill, the arch-imperialist and former prime minister of the United Kingdom, made a dreadful prediction. He described our national leaders as men of straw and expressed the fear that once the British left this country, India would be engulfed by utter chaos and confusion. He predicted civil war and Balkanization of India in no time.

Churchill was not alone. The New Delhi bureau chief of the Times Neville Maxwell forecast in 1962 the imminent collapse of Indian democracy. He said then that it could not last more than 5 to 10 years. During the 1970s and 1980s, whenever there was a minor crisis in our country, the conclusion that the Western press had reached was: "This is the end of Indian democracy."

Despite many gloomy prophesies, India has steadily flourished as a democratic republic. Transfer of power, after every general election, has taken place without any hitch. Despite minor hiccups, democratic milieu in India remains firm and secure. Political

observers consider India's adherence to democratic culture is one of the miracles of the modern world, especially, in the context of our next-door neighbours.

The Indian Army also reflects the nation's deep-rooted commitment to democratic values. During all these years, it has stayed safely in its barracks, in stark contrast to most other Third World countries.

EMERGENCY – A TRANSIENT ABERRATION

Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy.

Walter Cronkite (1916– 2009),
American broadcast journalist

True, our democratic rights were suspended during the Emergency. It was, however, a transient aberration. It lasted only nineteen months (1975-77). In fact, it served to further strengthen our democratic moorings. The party in power was swept away by the political backlash of the Indian electorates. A government, in power for thirty years without any break, was thrown out of power for its authoritarian attitude and fascist tendencies. No Government has dared to deviate from the democratic practice ever since.

Yet exultation over the fact that democracy in India has survived is like a doctor telling a patient after a medical examination that he is lucky to be alive. Should we be content to define our expectations so low, or should we go by some higher standards than just mere survival? When we look for exceptional qualities in Indian democracy, is it merely the size that makes it the biggest in the world, or is it our effort to lay a modern liberal constitution over a traditional society, still marked sporadically by feudal and colonial hierarchies and hangovers?

More importantly, what exactly has been the role of the media to support and sustain our democratic milieu? American president during the World War II F. D. Roosevelt knew freedom of the press is essential to the preservation of a democracy; but he also knew there is a difference between freedom and license. Journalists,

who twist the truth to promote their narrow and sectarian agenda, discredit the press. In a way, they foment totalitarian attitude among the rulers.

CITIZEN'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Freedom of the press, or, to be more precise, the benefit of freedom of the press, belongs to everyone – to the citizen as well as the publisher. The crux is not the publisher's 'freedom to print'; it is, rather, the citizen's 'right to know'.

Arthur Sulzberge (1891-1968),
publisher of The New York Times (1935 -61)

The answer partly comes from Ram Dass Pasi. His history, spanning three generations, is the core of the book "Words Like Freedom: Memoirs of an Impoverished Indian Family" by Siddharth Dube, development expert and writer. Ram Dass Pasi is about 70-year- old, illiterate, of a formerly "untouchable" caste. He began life as a destitute and landless in Uttar Pradesh. This is what Ram Dass has to say about democracy: Having the vote is better than having Rajahs! With democracy you can change governments, but with Rajahs there is just dynasty and dictatorship." Pasi goes on to add: "I have voted since the first election in 1952. I felt excited, but not as much as I was when zamindari – the landlord system – was abolished. That was the most important thing in my life, the abolition of zamindari.

Yet another response comes from an unlikely quarter -- an observation by a Circle Inspector of Police at Renigunta in Andhra Pradesh in 2000. As one who has passed through our experiments with democracy and experienced the change from close quarters, he confided about the way the media have contributed to the empowerment of the average citizens to the Australian journalism scholar Robin Jeffery in course of a railway travel. He said: Newspapers had made the police's job more difficult. Once, if one policeman went to a village, the people were afraid. Now, six policemen may go to a village and people are not afraid. Newspapers have made them know that the police are not supposed

to beat them up. He suggested the media have taken away the sense of fear from the villagers and made them stronger.

"OPEN TO ALL PARTIES …"

A free press can, of course, be good or bad, but, most certainly without freedom, the press will never be anything but bad

Albert Camus (1913-1960)
French philosopher, author and journalist

The first newspaper editor in India envisaged the role of the press as being: "Open to all parties but influenced by none." He flaunted the maxim proudly below the masthead of his newspaper. In a pluralistic democracy, the press serves public interest by permitting the expression of opinions and views of all persons, parties and interests and projecting a broad spectrum of views.

The Indian Constitution asserts that the final end of the State is to provide citizens with a political milieu for independent and rational thinking. Democracy thrives where the public is vigilant and conscious of its rights and responsibilities. Public opinion goes a long way in safeguarding democracy. It keeps the wheels of democracy turning. The press exercises this collective right of the citizens to ensure free flow of information between the governor and the governed. The press happens to be a vehicle through which public opinion is articulated. It has been a part of the intricate system of democratic checks and balances that keep power fragmented and accountable.

A democratic society respects transparency in all matters concerning public interest. It is a crucial test of democratic freedom. It enables citizens to make intelligent and informed decisions and thus, play their part in enforcing the accountability of public functionaries. The Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment in 1959, elaborated the points further. It said: "… the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public; … the purpose of such a guarantee is to prevent public authorities from

assuming the governance of public mind." Since the Independence, a free press in India has not only defended a nascent democracy but also ensured that the many controversies and disputes that are part and parcel of a lively society are settled in a civilised manner. In this, it is fair to say, the Indian press has made a crucial contribution to the consolidation of the democratic system of this huge, diverse and fascinating country.

CULTURE OF DISSENT

Freedom of expression – in particular, freedom of the press – guarantees popular participation in the decisions and actions of government, and popular participation is the essence of our democracy.

Corazon Aquino (1933-2009),
President of the Philippines (1986-92)

The culture of dissent that the press promotes provides the backbone of the Indian democracy. It contributes to the spirit of enquiry, the hallmark of a vibrant democratic system. Democracy is based on pluralism. A pluralistic press in India reflects this principle at its best. Freedom of conscience, of education, of speech, of assembly is among the very fundamentals of democracy and all of them would be nullified should freedom of the press ever be challenged. The Indian press grew up with the nation's freedom struggle. It contributed significantly to social reforms and concepts of human rights and democratic values. After the Independence, the press in India thrived under the liberal and democratic ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru. He believed freedom of the press is to the machinery of the state what the safety valve is to the steam engine.

Indeed, while addressing the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference (1954), Nehru remarked: "I have no doubt that even if the Government dislikes the liberties taken by the press and considers them dangerous, it is wrong to interfere with the freedom of the press." --- A lesson that his daughter never really learnt.
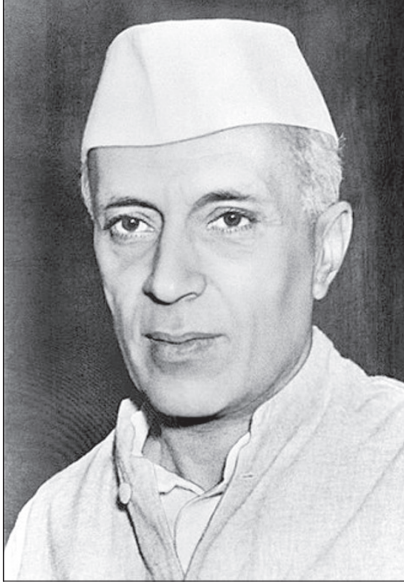
Jawaharlal Nehru

Freedom of the press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticise and oppose. Indeed, a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people. Barring a few rotten eggs, the Indian press has performed its role as a watchdog reasonably well. It has exposed deception and wrongdoing in government. Many scams involving the plunder of public money have been unearthed because of its courageous investigative journalism. Even during the dark days of pre-censorship, when most of the mainline publications meekly surrendered to a dictatorial regime -- they chose to crawl, when asked to bend -- many newspapers, though small and medium, stood out in support of democratic ways.

DICTATORS & PRESS FREEDOM

In a free press, you can state the conclusion you're led to by the evidence.

Bill Moyers (b. 1934),
U.S. journalist

Dictators all over the world couch their enmity to democratic rights by declaring that economic progress and social welfare are more important than so-called "abstract" rights. They argue that a free press is a luxury in poor countries. The best weapon of a dictatorship is secrecy, but the best weapon of a democracy should be the weapon of openness.

Prof. Amartya Sen has shown the fallacy of these arguments. He has brought to light how crucial the freedom of the press is for the fight against poverty and backwardness. Warning us about the dangers of a 'gagged' press and how it can retard the development of a nation, Prof. Sen writes: "In the terrible history of famines in the world, it is hard to find a case in which famine has occurred in a country with a free press and an active opposition within a democratic system."

Prof. Amartya Sen

Prof. Sen saw the Bengal famine (1943) at a young age. He witnessed how gagging of information under a wartime ordinance kept the rest of the country in the dark about mass starvation and death in Bengal. He studied the results of a silent press during the Chinese famine (1958-61). It had caused the death of nearly 30 million people over three years.

The Chinese story is not an isolated one. Prof. Sen cites similar examples during the famines of the 1930s in the Soviet Union, the Cambodian famines of the 1970s, famines in Ethiopia, Sudan and North Korea in the recent past. In such instances, warning signs of the famine went unheeded because of the absence of democratic institutions. From this point of view, the press has served India well since Independence. It has sustained and defended a vibrant democracy.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP

We are so cleverly manipulated and influenced by the media establishments on both the right and left, that the truth becomes hopelessly lost in semantics.

Jules Carlysle,
Political Humourist

The Indian Constitution gives to every citizen the fundamental right of the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a), subject to certain reasonable restrictions. The sentimentalist may, therefore, beam with satisfaction that no constitutional fetters bind the Indian press. Yet, the weather-beaten realist would merely ask at whose disposal they are. Where the State dominates the providers of information, as is the case with Doordarshan and All India Radio (Prasar Bharati notwithstanding), the checks and balances that are vital for a sound democracy get blunted. One must be equally sensitive to the dangers that are inherent in the ownership of the media by large private corporations. Private monopolies, experience tells us, could be as harmful as the State monopolies. Jawaharlal Nehru was alive to the potential danger inherent in a situation when editorial freedom and democratic norms might have to be undermined to sub-serve the political interest of the press barons. He observed: "The freedom of the press usually means non-interference by the Government, but there is such a thing as interference by private interests."

It may not be an exaggeration to say that Delhi's Bahadur Shah Zaffar Marg is strewn with the corpses of newspaper editors. From Khuswant Singh to B.G. Verghese and Chapalakanta Bhattacharya to Vivekananda Mukhopadhya and Pran Chopra to H.K. Dua, the history of the Indian press is full of distinguished editors who had been unceremoniously thrown out because they refused to fall in line with the undemocratic ways of the owners.

German philosopher Jurgen Habermas connects the rise of the press with the development of public political dialogue. In speaking of the role of the press in public life, he refers to the

concept of 'public sphere'. Intellectuals in the eighteenth century Europe discussed public issues in the coffee houses and salons. It paved the way for the making of an informed public opinion.

In today's society, the press offers only a notional space as a forum for public discussion. The big newspapers do not serve the need for public discourse; instead they serve to link audiences and advertisers. Democratic values necessarily take a back seat in these circumstances. Today, we witness in India the sorry spectacle of concentration of wealth in the hands of industrial houses. They flaunt garish and flashy consumption, while the vast majority ekes out a miserable existence. Genuine democracy cannot coexist with vast inequalities of wealth and income. If the press intends to live up to its reputation as a pillar of democracy, it would do
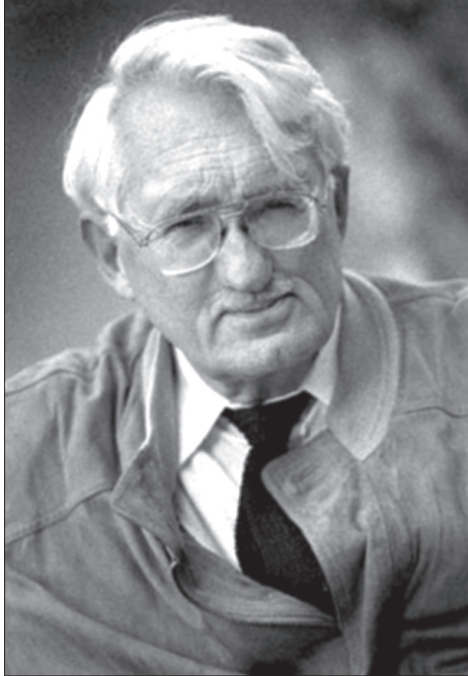
Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), German philosopher

well to recall the inspiring words of the Joseph Pulitzer, who saw democracy as part of the modernising process of a society. Recognising the role of a free press to uphold democratic values, he wrote more than a century ago that the press would: " … never tolerate injustice or corruption, never belong to any party, always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public

welfare, never be satisfied with merely printing news, always be drastically independent, never be afraid to attack wrong."

The question, however, remains: should the press always criticise the government in a democracy? Why should it not also play a constructive role, particularly when political stability is essential for the progress of a democratic country? Some would perceive in this a dilution of the watchdog role of the press. But is not information about the achievement of the government as important for citizens as the news about its failure and lapses? To bite everybody indiscriminately is not a sign of watchfulness but a symptom of rabidity.

SHOULD THE PRESS REMAIN FREE?

Freedom of the press is a precious privilege that no country can forego.

Mahatma Gandhi

It leads us to the question: Are the blessings of a free press worthwhile? What about circulation of falsehood and half-truths? James Madison (1751- 1836), a leading spirit in drafting of the First Amendment of the American Constitution and a former U.S President, answered the question thus: "… it is better to leave a few of the obnoxious branches to their luxuriant growth, than, by pruning them away, to injure the vigor of those yielding the proper fruits".

Yet another justification comes from Mario Matthew Cuomo (1932-), Governor of New York (1983-1995). While addressing the New York Press Club, soon after the New York Times had accused him in an editorial of showering undue favours to a law firm run by his son, Cuomo spoke about press freedom and the First Amendment: "The Founding Fathers knew precisely what they were dealing with. They had a press. And the press of their time was not only guilty of bad taste and inaccuracy. It was partisan, reckless, and sometimes vicious. Indeed, the Founding Fathers were themselves often at the point end of the press sword."

"In view of that experience, they might have written amendments that never mentioned freedom of the press. Or they might have tried to protect against an imperfect Press like the one dealt with, with conditions, qualifications, requirements, penalties. They knew the dangers. They knew that broad freedoms would be inevitably accompanied by some abuse and even harm to innocent people. Knowing all the odds, they chose to gamble on liberty. And the gamble has made us all rich and happy. Overall, the press has been a force for good -- educating our people, guarding our freedom, watching our government -- challenging it, goading it, revealing it, forcing it in the open." People who believe in democratic norms must on "gamble on liberty".

A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the even greater values of democratic freedom of expression and the right of the people to know, as Nani Palikhivala, the eminent jurist, reminded us once. There is no other way.

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Media Accountability: Elusive or Delusive ?

Prof. D. V. R. Murthy

Mass media channels and social media outlets disseminate news and opinions widely, reaching millions of people in every nook and corner of the country. With the emergence of the first newspaper in India, the print media completed more than two centuries while the government-owned television completed more than 60 years of its existence in the country. Nonetheless, social media platforms are aplenty by streaming varied content targeting different segments of the population. One significant point in this dissemination of news and opinions is that the mass media content is bound by rules and regulations as 'checks and balances' on the flow of news, and an aberration can be contained with specific laws of the land. But, the growth of social media platforms with their dissemination of homely gossip in studios is wooing the different age groups of audience and viewers when the content is streamed unchecked and unregulated. An observation by James Curran and Jean Seaton (2007: 236) in their book, 'Power without Responsibility' is that the 'explosion of information has fuelled a democratic revolution of knowledge and active citizenship. If information is power, power can be within the grasp of everyone'. Truly, if knowledge propels a citizen for action, it is a good sign that democracy survives with the matured discrimination of individuals. Moreover, presently, media channels churn out false information in the guise of news, it sets a dangerous precedent in the country.

When media channels wield power without responsibility, it affects democracy. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in Harijan on April 27, 1947 as

The press is called the fourth estate. It is definitely a power but to misuse that power is criminal. I am a journalist myself and would appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no idea other than that of upholding the truth.

Even the first known sensational journalist per se Joseph Pulitzer often exhorted his colleagues to be 'accurate, accurate, and accurate' by repeating it three times in respect of news items. He implied that the headline, the intro and the body of the news item must correlate with each other when news is disseminated. Now-a-days, the social media outlets sensationalize news headlines to obtain more hits. . Susman-Pena, Druckman and Odura (2020) as part of their digital literacy teaching offered a suggestion to the receiver to check the content before proceeding to read it. 'In order to attract the attention of the receiver, information is manipulated through deceptive headlines by sensationalizing the news. Once a receiver clicks on the link, it generated advertising revenue for the sender. Even credible platforms adopt this technique to instigate strong emotions'.

Further, media scholars seek accountability from the media outlets since the emergence of fake news is distorting, and in some instances affecting the harmony in society. One such instance was found in India, when fake news posts spread through WhatsApp about child kidnappers which led to the killing of eight people in various parts of the country, according to a report in Guardian, dated July 3, 2018. The second example was cited by Law Commission of India Report (2017) which quoted different reports/ studies about rumour-mongering of Northeast exodus in 2012. The Law Commission observed:

Up to 50,000 citizens belonging to the Northeast moved from their residences across India, back to the Northeastern states. This was triggered because of the circulation of false images of violent

incidents that took place in Myanmar several years ago. These were projected to be images from Assam riots of 2012. This resulted in creation of panic across the country as other groups started targeting people from Northeast living in other parts of India.

MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

In the media discourse, accountability is used to explain a media channel's functioning to the higher authority or a group of persons in the event that its behaviour be deemed as questionable. The media is often accused of violating professional norms, and hence, its actions call for certain explanations. However, while gathering and disseminating the news, the media though is cautious may be blamed of acting in unfair and biased manner by violating the professional code of ethics. In the age of market-driven journalism, the media indulge in sensationalism to maximise profits and commercialism is said to be the motive for such behaviour. Therefore, society expects the press to be accountable to its constituents and media accountability is central to its behaviour. Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) classified accountability into three: accountability to employers, accountability to subjects and accountability to sources.

Though the profession of journalism is considered to be a public service, journalists as employees are obliged to render an account to their employers. The employer considers his/her enterprise as a profit-making unit and the boundaries of professional code is fixed by him. The news that generates income to the enterprise is prioritized by him/her without concern for the professional obligations and the eulogised role of a journalist as social reformer is lost in the process. One aspect of this is the accountability of the journalist to the employer, instead of public welfare. With the polarisation of media outlets on political lines since 1990s in the country, the mass media channels and the social media platforms now project news in consonance with the employers' perspectives. Obviously, it is found that news is scanty and opinion is more in the news reports.

The second aspect of accountability is that the media is also expected to be accountable to the subjects involved in news stories. Journalists cover sensational stories when public personalities are the subjects involved in the issue. Sometimes, institutional heads, elected representatives, civic officials or film stars get involved in scandals or controversies. The public is entitled to know the news about these people through media channels. However, if these subjects are misrepresented in the media, can they take legal recourse against the media? In such a situation, the media can maintain accountability to these subjects. A misjudgement on the part of the media will tantamount to negligence and an error of this kind and its consequent harm cannot be excusable, in spite of an alibi to avoid accountability.

The third aspect is the source accountability. In the process of gathering news from different sources, journalists are liable to be accountable to their sources of information. The source reposes faith on the journalist to share confidential information on the belief that the   identity of the source is protected. The disclosure of the source's identity will have consequential impact on the privacy of the source. Although a journalist's main goal is to provide information to the public, the information given by the source can serve the interests of the public or the society. For example, the source may disclose some information related to a policy decision of the government and asks the reporter to maintain secrecy of the source. Sometimes, the source may say 'off the record', the journalist is bound to keep the information confidential from being disclosed. However, the journalist can use his discretion in disclosing the information when it is related to a crime, national security, and financial loss to the organization, and so on. On the other hand, in securing the information to reveal the truth, the journalist gathers information by deceiving the source of his identity, and it is unethical on the part of the journalist to disclose secrecy of the source. However, Christians, et al. (1991) argue that

public good is more important than the means adopted to secure information and disclose it. The prevailing environment in the media envisages little scope for analysing the accountability question more so in agreement to violate journalistic principles of fair play in the profession.

POWER WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY

The burgeoning growth of media in the country has an advantage and disadvantage in a country like India if it is seen in the light of power politics and manipulation of information. The obvious fallout of these influences, the information churning and manipulation is that the news is tilted in favour a political party, particularly the ruling party. At the Centre or the State, the media in order to gain a financial mileage indulges in campaigns against Opposition parties with planted stories in the media outlets. Mostly, opinions dominate the media content instead of fair news. The transportation of information is the key function of any media outlet, yet the media carry opinions of its' selected panellists. Earlier, the news media seek opinion of the witnesses of an event or programmes like vox-populi on the eve of elections are telecast basing on the ground situations, but the modern trend seems to be conducting panel discussions with a group of select media persons. These discussions focus on a single theme to drive the point of the media channel's agenda. The select panellists who are veteran journalists once sit in panel discussions to take their point of view further with support of the media outlet either pro or anti ruling party. More so, the media channels do not invite those experts/ journalists who present a counter-narrative, which is against the channel's agenda. Further, the media behaviour which is to be responsible is gradually sliding down while utilising its' power of information dissemination to its advantage. The social responsibility of media is given a go-by by these channels and they want to remain ignorant on the belief that the viewers do not question its' activities.

MEDIA TRIAL

The Supreme Court of India on September 12, 2023 ordered the Union Home Ministry and the State Governments to prepare guidelines to stop media trial of victims even before the court proceedings are completed in some criminal cases. In fact, the police conduct press conferences to share the information about a victim with the media, and media picks up information selectively to depict the victim either favourably or unfavourably. The Supreme Court pointed out that this biased reporting in the media does not give any opportunity to the victim to present his or her viewpoint. The media selection of news follows a media channel agenda to increase its' viewership. The Aarushi murder case trial is an example of how media irresponsibility is seen in presenting different narrative in the public. Different salacious stories were knit together to assassinate the character of the girl and the family even before the court trial of the case began. Many such instances are found in the country with particular references to the crime. The present case of the arrest of former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Nara Chandrababu Naidu is presented in the pro-media and anti-media differently. The State government sketches the case differently while the other anti-government media outlets depict the arrest diagonally opposite to the government view of the arrest. In the process, will the judges be influenced? Above all, the social media platforms have become encouraging sites for casting aspersions on the judges by attributing motives to them.

MECHANISMS TO MONITOR MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

In the absence of media accountability, two disastrous problems such as irresponsible dissemination of news and opinions and media trial are occurring in the society which poses a threat to the credibility of media. Eventually, can the people counter these problems? Generally, the reactions, according to Buttny (1993: 3), are: i) invoking legal sanctions and institutional authority, ii)

verbal rebuke, accusations or criticism, iii) questioning, prompting or calling for accounts, iv) waiting for the offender to initiate an explanation and v) letting it pass or overlooking the offence.

Normally, these accounts are distinguished into two main kinds: excuses and justifications. The media will seek an excuse for its' deviant behaviour or try to justify its actions. However, when an institution like the media deviates from the ethical code, what can be done? Is there any ethical code for the media? In spite of having an ethical code, it may vary from country to country and from individual to individual because the value system is not constant, and it keeps on changing from time to time. However, countries as well as media managements have evolved codes of ethics for journalists and newspapers. Former Chairman of the Press Council of India, P. B Sawant (2001) observed, "The ethics are essentially the self-restraints to be practised by the media persons voluntarily, to preserve and promote the trust and credibility of the people".

Collection and dissemination of information is the duty of the media. Because, the media as a mass communication channel that operates in a public sphere for the benefit of the viewers or readers, the actions of the media are expected to be above ground as a fourth pillar of democracy. One section of the public scrutinizes the actions of the media on all occasions and expects the media to reflect values and ethics of the profession. When the media does not impose self-restraints on its gathering and dissemination of news, a regulating mechanism is required. Sawant (2001) also noted that the code of ethics all over the world emphasises the following: i) honesty and fairness, ii) reply to critical opinions, iii) objectivity in reporting, iv) prohibition to receive gifts, v) respect for privacy, vi) distinction between fact and opinion, vii) not to inflame hatred, viii) not to use dishonest means to obtain information, and ix) general standards of decency and taste.

When the media intrudes into an individual's privacy or defames him or her, the media is liable for punishment. Hence, an individual can seek the redressal of the problem by going to

the Press Council though it is ineffective or a court of law. For example, if an individual is affected by the coverage of the news, he or she can go to the Press Council first for redressal of the problem, and if he or she is not satisfied by the Press Council's enquiry, he or she can approach a court of law for defamation. In India, the law of Torts and the Indian Penal Code deal with specific aspects of defamation to help the individual and gives the media an opportunity to defend its actions. 'The law of Torts' says that defamation is an injury to the reputation of a person. If a person injures the reputation of another person, he does so at his own risk as in the case of an interference with the property. A man's reputation is his property, and if possible, more valuable than other (materialistic) property. For example, in the case of D P Choudhary vs. Manjulatha (AIR 1997 Raj 170), a news story was published in a local Hindi daily, Dainik Navjyothi in Jodhpur on December 18, 1977 that 17-year-old Manjulatha went out of her house at 11 pm on the day earlier on the pretext of attending to night classes with a boy named Kamlesh. She was a graduate student and belonged to an educated family. The news story, which was untrue, was published with utter irresponsibility and without any justification. Such publication resulted in her being ridiculed and affected her marriage prospects. Since the news story was defamatory in nature, the court held the press liable for defamation (Bangia, 1999: 170).

Nonetheless, the press has to function in a democracy and the media is given an opportunity to justify its actions in the face of a plaintiff's claim of being defamed. The defences are i) justification of truth, ii) fair comment, or iii) privilege which may be either absolute or qualified. In justifying its actions, the media must prove that the statement or news item is made in public good. Making a fair comment on matters of public interest is a defence to an action for defamation. For this defence to be available, three essentials are required viz., i) it must be a comment i.e. an expression of opinion rather than assertion of fact, ii) the comment must be fair, and iii) the matter commented upon must be of public interest. The

other essential is privilege in which there are certain occasions when the law recognises that the right of free speech outweighed plaintiff's right to reputation. The law treats such occasions to be privileged and a defamatory statement made on such occasions is not actionable. Despite censures to the media, media behaviour particularly of the social media channels has not changed much in the country. In the case of film heroine Samantha Prabhu's divorce with film hero Nagachaitanya, the social media distorted the case causing mental agony to the lady. The District Court intervened and counselled the petitioner to seek apology from the channels.

Pressure groups can be formed to fight for media accountability. Normally, groups of people rely on media for information for their day-to-day information. In fact, media may sensationalise the news and may exaggerate the situation. Also, the institution of ombudsman can control and educate the media on ethical behaviour. Furthermore, internal monitoring of the media is necessitated in the modern times and all mainstream media channels can appoint an ombudsman to look after the proper functioning. Hence, the media organisations all over the world are increasingly recognising the importance of ombudsman in dealing with complaints because the governments are passing specific laws to protect the individuals' privacy. Moreover, in regulating media behaviour, institutions like media councils can be of vital importance. Normally, a media council is constituted by a government with the help of a statute like in India. A press council, according to Bertrand (1996), is a group of people whose concern for the quality of media leads them to use what moral influence they have on public opinion to improve it. Hence, any press council is entrusted with two tasks: improve the quality of media, and defend media freedom. In view of these roles, the press councils function to make the media more accountable to the public. Although the Press Council functions in India, it lacks effective laws to impose penalties on the wrongdoer. In practice, the Press Council can act as deterrent to curb excessive media misbehaviour.

Media scholars observe that the mainstream media all over the world have assumed an unhealthy role in public affairs. Since profit making is the goal of the media, newsroom agenda decides the issue even before the final copy arrives from the reporting desk. Stories are published without acknowledging the source or attributing to a non-existent or a false source to strengthen the news credibility. For example, newspapers use words like 'allegedly', 'reportedly', 'prima facie' and so on to justify their stories and sometimes cases that are sub-judice are reported by the newspapers or television channels. Mostly, the public may not be aware of media practices. In such a situation, what can be done? Instead of regular media accountability systems which may not be effective, alternative mechanisms can be considered.

CONCLUSION

In a democracy, society and mass media are interdependent as media reflect the society in the news contents, and therefore, mass media and society share a symbiotic relationship. Media maintain relationships with individuals, groups, organizations, and other social systems, and these relationships are apparently conflict-ridden or cooperative; they are dynamic and orderly. They also may range from being direct and powerful to being indirect or weak. Whatever be the specifics of the relationship, it is the relationship that carries the burden of explanation for the media. This relationship makes mass media being accountable to the public. In the dissemination of news, media establish credibility and respectability among readers or viewers and therefore they patronise the media. Because media require continuous support from the audience, they render an account to them. In being accountable to the readers or the public, media persons can report events. Though journalists do not witness the events, they construct the events in a language that is meant for communication. Rather, in the case of newspapers, the responsibility is much more than electronic media. In reporting an event, two dimensions play an important role. They are: a) presentation of social reality, and

b) objective journalism. In presenting the social reality of an event, journalists are expected to adhere to journalistic principles of accuracy, factuality and truthfulness and in the absence of good communication skills, journalists distort social reality and they are held responsible for the consequences. For example, in reporting communal riots or accidents, the journalist by using inflammatory language invokes passions and thereby disturbs the public tranquillity and peace. On many such occasions media behaviour is questionable.

In media studies, objective journalism is understood as value-neutral and impartial in reporting an event. Objective journalism, according to Boyer (1981), consists of six elements: i) balance and even-handedness in presenting different sides of an issue; ii) accuracy and realism of reporting; iii) presentation of all main relevant points; iv) separation of facts from opinion, but treating opinion as relevant; v) minimising the influence of the writer's own attitude, opinion or involvement; and vi) avoiding slant, rancour or devious purpose. Objective journalism is losing its sanctity in the age of multi-media reporting and journalists often violate it. Journalism of attachment to a political party or to an issue is the present norm in the media practices while a code of ethics for journalists is heard in the media circles. With the entry of new generation of journalists, the link between old timers and the new entrants is cut off, and mentorship in journalism is not seen in the twenty-first century journalism. Also, truth in journalism is interpreted differently by different media channels and therefore it is an elusive search for accountability in media practices. For any query about accountability from young journalists, the retort is, "Media accountability: Where is it?". May be the concept itself is delusive!

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Media, Power and Society:
A Relational Abstraction

Dr. Shripad Bhalchandra Joshi

Herman and Chomsky have asserted that the media "is not a solid monolith" but that it represents a debate between powerful interests while ignoring perspectives that challenge the "fundamental premises" of all these interests.

The media are 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). The United States is different among the industrial democracies in the rigidity of the system of ideological control - 'indoctrination,' we might say - exercised through the mass media" (Noam Chomsky). Remember the statement that people will believe what the media tells them to believe (George Orwell). It is also said that the uniformity and obedience of the media, which any dictator would admire (Noam Chomsky). Media manipulation in the U.S. today is more efficient than it was in Nazi Germany, because here we have the pretence that we are getting all the information we want. That misconception prevents people from looking for the truth (Mark Crispin Miller). All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perception and arbitrary values (Marshall McLuhan).

These few quotes explain the relationship of media, power and society. They emphasise the characteristics of this relationship such

as, debating between powerful interests, ignoring the perspectives challenging the fundamental premises of all these interests, the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, controlling the minds of the masses, indoctrination exercised through, uniformity and obedience, preventing people from looking for the truth, creating artificial perception and arbitrary values.

Media itself thus has become a power, power centre, and a generator of power and device to control the minds of the people. Its power is not only felt but it is a real power to shape and restructure various institutions and the world, the governments, the parliaments, the laws, the state machinery and its decision making process. It has become an all pervasive force, encompassing every sphere of life and impacting the animate and inanimate world. It creates more than life size images of the concerns of media and minuscule images of the opposing opinions, distributing benefits to those in ruling and the multinational global markets.

Vannevar Bush, who headed the U.S. office of Scientific Research and Development and early administration of Manhattan project, was of the view that for American supremacy, army, scientists, and rulers should be at one side, and it excludes the people's participation. All these are powers and media obviously being extension of power centers included in it, though he has not identified so. It was the decade of 1940s when media sowed the seeds of paradigm shift which changes the entire narrative.

Vannevar Bush in his famous essay,' Age we may think,' transformed pressure, (i.e. a form of power) and developed the cheapest technique, which afterwards established itself as the leader for social dominance and disparity, inequality (Jadishwar Chaturvedi). He felt the need for a National Defence Research Committee, a scheme to carry out his plan and he was made Chairman of it. He changed the roll of science and handed it over to capitalists and military structures (Chaturvedi). This has resulted in total centralisation of knowledge, advocacy of dominance and opposing the democracy (Ibid). Media, which was then was

transformed into the tool of gaining all pervasive power, started seizing its vocal relationship with democracy. The phenomenon of power can be seen today in the form of Global domination, the forms of which are Economic domination, Cultural domination. All these are deeply related to Economic empire of multinationals (Chaturvedi).

Herbert Schiller has said, for penetration of power it is essential that the media should be under control of the forces creating power. This starts from commercialization of media. He explained the deeper relationship of media with political and economic powers. He also said that, media cannot become forum for comprehensive democratic intervention; neither can keep watch on powerful forces; this is known as political economy of communication. The earlier colonial nations are dependent on those multinationals, which have tremendous amount of capital, technology and power to exploit (Chaturvedi). Schiller in 1993 stated that the expansionist media was grabbing the space and people. In his famous 'Definitional Control' concept, he explained its meaning as controlling the global reality, controlling the expression and communication, it makes the national system, schools, education, entertainment, media, among others, dependent.

This control is essential for ruling classes. It creates a framework within which only theatrical and unimportant information finds prime importance. Schiller also stated that where problem of the people remains at peak, the space is filled by commercial messages since it is in the interest of corporates that people view the commercials. Schiller described and analysed the nature of cultural domination and controls created by Multinationals through media, it sets the narrative. This is how the narrative of the power, by the power, for the power is set and maintained constantly through the media. Control of media thus creates cultural imperialism. It also enforces non- native language as a medium of instruction in education. Media effects studies have proved that the power of media is used to mold audience beliefs,

cognition and behaviours as per the will of communicators. It is through ownership, advertising, media elite, distraction, creation of a common enemy image, the media operates the controls for powerful classes and culture as stated by Chomsky, known as ' five filters'.

Denis Mc Quail pointed out that ' the way media select, process and shape conduct for their own purpose can have a strong influence on how it is received and interpreted and thus on longer term consequences '(Denis Mc Quail). The ' tailored persuasion ' through media is thus the powerful tool of disseminating old and creating new desired power structures and frames in the society; to be made acceptable through ' manufactured consent ' as described by Noam Chomsky. As identified by Valkenburg, Peter & Walther, people only go to a limited portion of messages they select.

Now the group media, popularly known as social media, has become a new tool in the hands of political powers to appeal directly to the people. Media at a time can be a tool for motivating and discouraging people. It is believed that in spite of the all-pervasive media power climate, some among the audience may also be able to resist the persuasion by media.

However, the role of media as a powerful actor, as a powerful political actor and its deeper role in the political process from whose net it is difficult to escape without getting influenced is also widely accepted. Even the so called democratic choices presented democratically are the choices made available, not by any other institution but by the media. These ' choices ' leading towards formation of democratic governments and parliaments are the ' images ' created, tailored by mediators of the ' choices' by the media industry, which may even produce the most dictatorial ideologies and its carriers having democratic value orientation and the flow of such influential images. Such kind of power orientation of the most undemocratic, aggressive and violent perception of reality through the media presentation and analysis of happenings on 24×7 basis may also lead to creation of most unpleasant, intolerant society.

According to Andrew Heywood, author of 'Politics in political culture and the media', the dominant-ideology model portrays the mass media as a politically conservative force that is aligned to the interests of economic and social elites and serves to promote compliance or political passivity amongst the masses. Gramsci has also suggested, as reminded by Heywood, that the media propagates bourgeois ideas and maintain capitalist hegemony, which acts in the interest of major corporations and media moguls. Heywood says that, "Ownership in other words, ultimately determines the political and other views that the mass media disseminate and ownership is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of global media conglomerates." Noam Chomsky and Herman Hess in their book 'Manufacturing Consent' emphasised that mass media can easily subvert democracy.

Media is supposed to protect democracy through public debates and creating political and democratic awareness in the capacity of its role as' watchdog' and operate as a check on power. Instead, media today is perceived by democratic society as aligned with the power and no more the powerful agent of political education. Another foremost question is as to whom the media is accountable? Is it accountable to people's democracy, people in democracy or has it gained its status and place in the society as possessing the power without any responsibility and accountability?

New technologies of communication have given rise to the new media, which is not mass media but is personalised and group media in nature and form. It is e- media, online media, digital media, which transformed the reality into virtual reality; and the societies into virtual societies, with less physical, face to face, human interaction. This network society has created netizens in place of citizens. It is brought to the notice by many studies that the democracies are becoming e-democracies, giving rise to non-state actors to ' control ' the opinion. These non-state actors, carry within themselves the element of state sponsorship or are state

sponsored. There can be the elements like formal organisations of the ruling powers, its members using the new media as a tool to control or shape the opinion in the interest of influential, powerful forces of undemocratic nature.

Also, the social and political movements are generated online, giving rise to a new kind of opinion leaders, found a new way to gain social power to protect democratic values, using Internet, group media as opinion building platforms, contributing towards discouraging anti-democratic, pro- globalisation forces. Large media has played a bigger role in cultural globalisation and thereby spreading cultural imperialism, linguistics imperialism, environmental imperialism, marginalising local cultures, local language as medium of instruction, handicrafts, cultural economies, local artisans, artifacts produced by them, substituting it by the huge factories generated art and artifacts, sold in online markets.

Contrary to the perception that media are tools of liberation, it has actually helped strengthen surveillance of forces empowered to do so. New media proved to be of immense help for those whose agenda is to spread hate, fundamentalism of all kinds, racist and discriminatory views. At the same time, it has enabled and empowered people to express themselves more conveniently and comfortably. Due to new media technologies people's access to information, possibilities of exchange of ideas, opinions, views, obtain specialist information, exposure to the diversity of views has also increased. These media have encouraged people's participation, making democracy a reality for them. Media also remained a useful tool for shift in power from few elites to public at large; boost to the process of more democratisation of the society. New media technologies proved to be a new tool to raise funds, mobilise people, organise movements, emergence of people's leadership, dismantling the formal organisation and traditional forms of leadership. It enhanced political communication amongst people's groups.

Media also, always is and was controlled directly or indirectly by governments and used as a form of propaganda machine in its hands. Not only governments but the religious institutions, organised religions and unorganised non- Institutional groups also use the media to spread their messages. They also own the TV channels to mobilise masses. Media has also been used by various power centers to promote their relationship between governments and the privately owned media, allowing each other to use for their own purposes. Truth and democratic spread of opinions hence are the first causality of this unholy union, concerened primarily with winning over and retaining power of each other in the interest of each other. This has resulted in ignoring people's interests and people's agenda and opinion making related to those.

Media is allowing the markets and the governments to shape the news and views agenda for dissiminatiom of information through 'news management' and 'political marketing' for the control in the interest of power. This has tremendously affected the culture, local languages, local societies and democracies in the world. Keeping the interests of power, only the ' official line' is often presented, counter views are prevented or side lined or distorted, people's priority issues are overshadowed by trivial and sensational news, information and arguments are edited and presented in a way to suit to the interests of powers that be.

Many a time, publishers, editors, and journalists conspire with ' spin- doctors' to manage news for mutual benefits. This phenomenon has been seen as 'a threat to the democratic process' since it widens the scope for manipulation and dishonesty and weakens the role of representative institutions. Moreover, it may promote apathy and undermine interest in conventional forms of political activity; in particular, voting and party membership (Heywood). Governments are also concerned with political marketing rather than improving their performance.

In an essay,' The Internet and Global Activism ' in ' Contesting Media Power ' edited by Nick Couldry and James Curradan,

Rewmah and Littlefield, W. lance Bennet has said that roles of information producers and consumers enable the rapid adaptation and transformation of political organizations and it creates new sorts of power relationships. He has concluded that the political impacts of emerging technologies reflect the changing social, psychological and economic conditions. It is also said that the rise of new media has complicated the political media system.

In a press release of January 28, 2019 of NORDICOM, it was stated that in a new study, published by Nordicom at the University of Gothenburg, researchers from Sweeden, Finland, Poland and Lithuania analysed the relationship between media and political power in their respective countries. The study has shown a complex relationship and a mutual interdependence between the actors. It was also said that the researchers pointed out the risk of professional journalism becoming less influential; making it easier for other powerful sources to influence and shape the public image of governmental politics. The question was raised that whether this is a problem for democracy? It was answered by Karl Magnus Johana on, Professor of political science at Souderton University, that if opinions and values of the citizens on policies, politicians and institutions can be easily manipulated by elites, that can hurt democracy.

Natasha Fioreffi, Italian web Editor of European journalism observatory, has written an article on ' The Ambiguous Relations between Media and Power,' wherein she has pointed out that when news is discovered to be false; power and the media mutually deny responsibility for the error so that both lose credibility. Today, the politicians are more concerned with 'image' rather than reality, so as their 'image' to be projected is larger than life size and they need media at their side to influence people's opinion. People have stopped thinking about themselves, on their own and this space has been filled by the media. It is 24×7 media which is setting the agenda as to what the people should watch, which issues are to be brought forward, which are presented in a way to tell the people what to think and what not. This is the most dangerous form of

dissemination since people watching TV do not realise at all as how are and in which way they are being influenced. Noam Chomsky has compared it with the fish in the sea which cannot view sea separately being part of it.

One important fact has been underlined by Nick Couldry that it is misleading to separate fictional and news contents, because it is divided from media's symbolic authority. Media's power in constructing the narrative itself is acknowledged and confirmed when it is constructed within people by themselves. This process gives legitimacy to media. Media has the culture of make believe and people are made to believe the 'constructed' reality by the media. These constructs primarily carry within themselves the interests of the influential in the society, besides the interests of the market and governments in power. This is how the democratic societies at large are made to believe the 'constructs of the media' i.e. the constructs of the power interests. To understand the reality of media production, people need to be made media literate. There always remains huge gap between an event or happening and viewing experience of the media coverage of the same. The media coverage is 'tilted' coverage that projects and protects the interests of the powerful in the society.

The media world is not a natural world as it is. It is media production of the world views through which ordinary, natural events and happenings are projected as glamorous, sensational, entertaining, fear-some, terrifying and vicious by virtue of it's being mediated by the media producers. Society, power and media have been at the centre of attention in contemporary 'mediated' world as explained by many media theorist and researchers. Of late, there is an increased awareness and also increased level of media literacy which have enabled the educated in building their competence and abilities to question the media might, to understand the difference between media 'construct' and the real world. People hence also recognised the necessity to have control over it in preserving democratic values.

The mass society theory viewed the media as corrupting influence, which undermines the real world, culture and social order. It explained media as a dangerous drug or killing force, viewed media as weapons of mass destruction; though it is said that it would collapse 'under its own weight', still the impact, its depiction is not proven unrealistic. Michael Crichton treats cyber space as the end of species, end of innovation, whole world wired together for mass death; views mass media as 'swamps diversity,' 'makes every place the same', regional differences vanish, disappearance of intellectual diversity, the most necessary resource. Everyone will think the same thing at the same time, which he calls global uniformity.

This perception of media is a reality which has actually been created and the society has become so. Such societies with losing all kinds of diversities would cease to be democratic societies with plurality, multilingualism, multiculturalism and would make people non-resisting, non-opposing, non-thinking creatures, born to be ruled. This is a huge danger for the democracy and the society as a whole.

Marshall McLuhan has also said that societies have always been shaped more by the nature of media by which men communicate than by the control of the communication.

The role of media was supposed to be setting agenda, not for marketers and power holders to protect their interests but to set the agenda for the nation, society and building, promoting a welfare state and democratic values and oppose the forces against it.

There are contrasting views of media world, one dominated by the media products of the transnational media businesses and the other is of media facilitating creative interaction of cultures.

Herbert Schiller, proponent of the first view has shown as to how the global capitalism attacks working people's living standards. Gidden says that globalisation introduces new forms of world interdependence and a sign of declining grip of the west. David Held in his book 'A Globalising World? Culture, Economics,

Politics' has said that the condition of the nation state is being side tracked by the global reach of capitalist commercial institutions. Media is very much such an institution.

As discussed by Grame Burton, media texts are cultural products and media is such a context where power is brokered on a global scale, the economies of nation states no longer standalone. Burton also quoted Wates stating that in the process of globalisation, people become increasingly aware that they are receding. Media being essentially the tools for globalisation, also become tools for recession of the people in society. Burton has also quoted Wates, as skeptical as others about the emergence of a genuine world society which threatens the nation state.

Globalised media being very much a carrier of globalisation is also one of the major beneficiaries of it which created media empires, media moguls and media imperialism. Media and globalisation hence are inseparable. Curran (2012), as quoted by Burton, comments that,' global regulation is heavily insulated from public influence'; as Burton said, it is pretty undemocratic. Global media ownership has raised the issues of power. This power is to manufacture and distribute representations on a global scale. There is the power to control certain views and understandings of the world through control of few news agencies and news producers (Burton). Burton has also quoted Held, saying that he clearly sees economics and the global market as a location of power and change, affecting society and governments. Burton has put the counter argument also quoting John Tomilnson against exaggeration of the cultural power of the west and refers to the 'myths of western identity', concluding that the global future is much more radically open than the discourses of homogenization and westernization suggest.

The cultural power of the media is also termed as Cultural Imperialism or Media imperialism. Burton quotes Rothkopf referring to cultural divisions which have fueled war and genocide. Media thus is no more inclined towards the people, society, people's

democracy or welfare state. It is inclined towards huge capital investors who essentially are multinationals and transnational corporate companies. Agenda of the media hence is no more the social development, exposing and figuring out exploitation, social justice or social movements. Media does not intervene as it is towards people's cause. Not that media completely ignores its social role, it still plays it. But compared to its commercial and power oriented character and agenda, its positive role towards social issues of larger public interest is getting altered. It is claimed that information revolution has democratised the media. At the same time, it is also a reality that the contrary is happening.

Media has acquired the character of playing safe, restraining from analysing, investigating, describing, commenting on various kinds of real, local, and peaceful democratic struggles at the ground level, minimising their coverage. These are either reported microscopically or even ignored, censored to the much more extent; thereby not allowing counter views to build public opinion, which is utmost essential for a democratic society. Instead, non-issues, anti-democratic views and symbols are projected and debated and given the space which harms the fabric of democracy and society. It has not only affected the democratic societies but the local cultures and languages have been made causality. The globalised media has been spread as local media and the global media is owned by huge commercial media conglomerates; which do not give importance to democratic dissent and tolerance. They focus on generating unnecessary wants and desire to design new products and shape up taste of the people accordingly. This kind of big commercial media is socially negative. This negativity towards social democratic issues has promoted media's own interest and the interest of the ruling power and power centres in the society.

In conclusion, it is necessary to spread media literacy in the form of a social awareness movement, by formally introducing it as an essential subject of study at all levels of education and informally through seminars, symposiums, conferences, debates,

speeches, which would necessarily be off media resources. Society has reached at such a point where media power and its imperialistic agenda have become a reality. The need is to search for alternative to the media imperialism and another alternate information and communication order in the interest of society and democratic values is a felt necessity.

The free flow of malcontent generated and circulated freely is harmful, which flows in the form 'media constructs' undermines the identity, dignity of the individual and keeps the people under pressure. It needs to be checked in the form of self-restraint by the media. Struggles related to real issues should be brought in at the centre stage of media for survival of the democratic societies.

UNESCO has long back advocated these measures, most of which were opposed by the western countries. Though the Right to Information has become a reality, its implementation needs to be strengthened. Global media wants to retain the status-quo. Media would not advocate for alternative development model except global development with the globe as one free market that allows transnationals to earn huge profits. To break the status-quo, the need is the resistance through people's movements for social change, towards social justice and alternative development model. There is a need to search for democratic communication model, which would not be pro- market, but pro-poor. The need is alternative popular agenda which would oppose cultural, military and economic hegemony, protect multiculturalism, multilingualism and adopt inclusive vision; condemning exclusionist views.

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Wall Murals in Chennai: Communicating Culture and Aesthetics

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INTRODUCTION

The art of graffiti is known to have existed since ancient times and took modern forms in the 1960s turning into what White (2018) calls "the visual language of social equity, personal expression, and integral art."As Young (2010) avers cities are sites where cultural meanings are produced and negotiated and where there is a perpetual process of creation and definition of 'self-image'.

The cityscape of Chennai has seen the proliferation of street art at different junctures, mostly in the form of wall paintings. The wall murals of Chennai, a city known for its rich cultural legacy, reveal a colourful tapestry of artistic expression. A mural is a work of art of generally huge proportions that cover an entire wall or a significant proportion of a building. The origin of mural art dates back to the Paleolithic age, when paintings were made on walls of caves, tombs and ceilings. In India, some of the earliest mural paintingswere found in Kerala, which are rich and vibrant in the hues they use. This article explores the cultural narratives that are woven into these murals that decorate the urban environment. It examines the complex interrelationship between art and culture in Chennai. The wall murals present a kaleidoscope of cultural

themes that range from religious symbolism to social challenges. The walls give tradition a new life by connecting ancient culture with modern consciousness, besides contributions to aesthetics. Further, these wall murals help bring out identities of marginalised groups, and in the process, negotiate power.

The development of wall murals in Chennai city is a reflection of a transformational path from unimportant political endorsements to potent channels of awareness and cultural representation. These urban canvases, which once featured politicians' faces prominently, have experienced an amazing transformation that reflects the shifting goals and sensitivities of the city's residents. Wall murals have undergone a change, going from docile demonstrations of political devotion to dynamic manifestations of social consciousness, reflecting a city that is not only politically active but also socially conscious and culturally active.Larger-than-life pictures of political figures were frequently painted on Chennai's walls in earlier times, a reflection of the intense political milieu in the area. These pictures represented authority and loyalty, giving the viewer a sense of their own political identity. But as socio-economic dynamics and artistic frontiers in the city changed, so did the function of these paintings. Political portraits, which had previously been static, began to give way to more complex and emotive artistic interpretations.

The shift from political endorsements to social awareness was a key turning point in the development of Chennai's wall paintings. Murals that support a variety of social causes, from environmental preservation to gender equality and education, are now hung on the walls where politicians' portraits once hung. These paintings have developed into potent advocacy tools, igniting debate and mobilizing a community. Beyond political divides, the city's walls have evolved into platforms for bringing critical societal issues to the public's attention.

The murals stop being merely creative endeavours and started acting as cultural communication channels, promoting

relationships between communities and weaving identities. The difficulties with authenticity and community involvement brought attention to the murals' importance as a live representation of culture. The murals showcase the transformational potential of art in representing culture as the hues on the walls of Chennai tell tales of the past, present, and visions of the future. They stand as testaments to the city's changing character since they go beyond the boundaries of walls to touch people's hearts, create connections, and celebrate diversity. The city has several murals that represent religious narratives, traditional art styles, and modern societal themes. This study spotlights the variety of topics that artists work on to portray cultural representations. The paintings' use of colours, symbolism, and motif show the blending of traditional and modern ideas, resulting in a visual dialogue that reflects the city's rich cultural heritage.

We use visual semiotics to examine the wall arts discussed here. Semiotics is an approach that looks at anything as a symbol that an entire community may relate to and derive meaning from. Visual semiotics, which is a subcategory of semiotics, is a viable methodology, which is used across disciplines such as art, cultural studies, media studies and film studies. According to Rose (2016), an important approach within visual semiotics is to focus on the images themselves before dwelling upon their contexts. Owing to its interpretative and critical approach, semiotics also proves to be an able companion to empirical forms of research such as content analysis and frame analysis (Aiello, 2020). Design, according to Curtin (2009), is a comparatively new area of academic interest and the focus on the meanings that designs produce and on signification that semiotics offers could prove to be a fertile area of study. Taking street art as examples Visconti et al (2010) argue that there is a need to understand them as public goods which are to be seen seriously in consumer research for their consumption value by the public. They posit that the common nature of such

spaces make them a place where dialogic exchanges happen and there is a public forum that is created. This, we opine, is not very different from the idea of a pluralistic 'public sphere' as conceptualized by Habermas et al. (1974). These become a space where ideas are put forth and contested in their own silent way. In using visuals such art forms provide a more inclusive space for cultural meanings to be negotiated.

Not only do artists from across India and abroad take interest in reforming the walls of Chennai, but the city's own college students along with art-inspired groups like 'Paintbox' find time to beautify the walls of their college with abstract as well as graphical depictions. This painting can be seen on the walls of Stella Maris College on Cathedral Road.

Paintbox and Anna University students painted the university walls with murals of trees along with the real trees in the foreground merging into the art, on Sardar Patel Road. The painting has elements of the habitat that is usually seen on that stretch of roads, inside Anna University premises and IIT Madras campuses.

Art at Government Primary School, Nandanam - this painting was done by school children, artists and volunteers of NalandaWay Foundation, an NGO, to make schools and classroom atmosphere welcoming for children who study there.

SOME CLASSIC EXAMPLES

Here are some classic instances of the wall murals found in Chennai public spaces:

Max Mueller Bhavan

#ConquerTheConcrete campaign was celebrated by Goethe-Institute Chennai and Max Mueller Bhavan in collaboration with Chennai City Connect in 2015. A Street Art by Look, hailing from Berlin as part of the #ConquerTheConcrete campaign. Location: Chennai Egmore railway station. The painting aims to depict a fusion of Indo-German thought processes into the art, primarily graffiti art, symbolising that public places see a mix of people and

celebrates diversity. 'Life' can be represented in multiple ways but mostly life is symbolised as birth. But in this unique street art painting on life, the artist AxelVoid from Germany depicts old age as life. He tries to symbolize wisdom, experience and reality of life for some people in Chennai. This is at the Greenways Road MRTS station.

Indira Nagar Railway Station

Figure 1: (Left) Close up of a portrait with half faces of a man and a woman, (Right) The panoramic view of the graffiti on the front side of Indira Nagar Railway Station

The panoramic art on the front face of the Indira Nagar Railway Station at Adyar in Chennai is the country's largest. It features a number of monochromatic portraits that have one half of a male face and one of a female face coming together in a harmonious blend. The mural sought to destigmatise HIV AIDS and send out a message of hope for survivors. The mural's dynamic and bright appearance is achieved by combining spray paint and brushwork. The artist, who goes by the name A-kill, expertly used hues like red, black, and white to suggest contrast and a sense of urgency. The artist's attention to details and capacity for evoking emotion are demonstrated by the precise rendering of the figures' features and their expressions.

The columns of a flyover leading up to the station feature vibrant paintings of a varied themes including Bharatnatyam dancers, sportsmen, children at play, popular cartoon characters, floral patterns and much more. These paintings have used flat but colourful and vibrant tones,that add to the aesthetic appeal of the structures.

METRO RAIL COLUMNS –GUINDY

Figure 3: (Left) A poor woman carrying twigs for kitchen fire. (Right) A tea plantation labourer collecting leaves.

Figure 4: (Left) A portrait of the archaeological site Mamalapuram, near Chennai. (Right) A poor boy playing happily in a muddy surrounding.

The columns holding up the Metro line near the Guindy railway station have an assortment of paintings on the four sides of each pillar, each depicting a slice out of life in Tamil Nadu. These depictions include glimpses of life cutting across class divides. We see the conditions of children belonging to lower socio-economic strata going to school or pumping out water. We also see women practising farming or carrying twigs, and pursuing various other means of earning a living. At the same time, the cultural traditions such as temples, celebrations, dance and music, unique to Tamil Nadu also find an expression in these paintings. What is worth noting here is that there is no attempt at eye washingthe penury and squalor to show only the pursuits of the affluent. A significant number of these depictions focus on the poor and the marginalised. The paintings in this stretch are photorealistic and follow a certain colour theme and gradual gradation of colours.

'MOTHER AND DAUGHTER' WALL MURAL AT KANNAGI NAGAR

The 'Mother and Daughter' wall mural in Kannagi Nagar is a heartwarming and emotionally resonant artwork that graces a prominent wall within the neighborhood. Its touching depiction and relatable subject matter make it a standout feature in the local environment. The mural's central theme is the bond between a mother and her daughter. The artwork portrays a tender moment between the two, capturing the essence of love, care, and companionship. The mural showcases the mother and daughter engaged in an everyday activity, such as walking hand in hand or sharing a conversation, creating a scene of relatable intimacy. The mural is created using a combination of soft brushstrokes and precision. To evoke a sense of comfort and softness, the artist uses delicate hues and shading. While the surrounding surroundings is depicted with a dash of realism and artistic interpretation, the mother and daughter's facial expressions convey compassion and emotion. The "Mother and Daughter" wall painting emphasises the value of emotional ties, nurturing relationships, and family love. It acts as a reminder of the important experiences that different generations have shared. The painting strikes a chord with visitors, bringing up memories and feelings they may have about close family ties. The mural's location in Kannagi Nagar is significant since the area emphasises strong ties to the local community and extended families. The "Mom and Daughter" mural, which honours the enduring relationship between parents and children, is in line with the values of the neighbourhood. It crosses cultural barriers and connects with viewers from all walks of life.

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE

The outer walls of Stella Maris College, one of the premiere educational institutions in the city, greet travellers with an aesthetic view of art works. Students of the Department of Fine Arts of the college usually take up the initiative to paint the length of the outer face of the campus wall with theme-based paintings from time to

time. The art works on the 25 panels on the wall reflect ideas such as the need to preserve the environment and increase tree cover in the city. The style of painting is largely Indian tribal art, which adds to the indigenous quality of the paintings.

CONCLUSION

Wall murals in Chennai have become popular as both aesthetically beautiful images and means of cross-cultural communication. They act as a link between the aspirations of the present and the foundations of the city's heritage. The wall arts in the city serve the dual purpose of communicating cultural nuances unique to a geographical location and increasing the aesthetic quotient of the cityscape. These art forms can also be seen as a means to negotiate power equations with the interests of the marginalised sections taking precedence over those of the privileged sections of the society. Moreover, efforts have been seen on the part of certain groups to interweave social causes into such forms of art. The present study exemplifies how art has the ability to transcend time and distance, to reshape narratives, and to build relationships. These murals reinvent public places as artistic canvases, serving as living testimony to the city's constantly changing identity. More studies should focus on bringing out the cultural and social connotations of such street art.

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Politics of Message and Meaning Making in Media: Process of Priming

Prof. G. Balasubramania Raja* &
Dr. Gnana D. Hans**

In the present day context, innovation and dexterity of communication media is overtly admired. Significant number of human beings tend to sink into an aggrandized hype about their involvement, engagement and interaction with the media appliances and applications. There is growing demand to sensitize the users of the media about the process and nuances of communication. In addition, at the governance level, it is becoming imperative to regulate the communication process. In so far, communication researchers and theorists have understood the process and periodical observations have been widely discussed.

The process of communication is myriad yet subtly cryptic due to the factors contributing to the process of communication. The concept of media in the present day context denotes a structural institution which disseminates messages to the audience. The messages are the packets of information that are known and unknown to the receiver intended to enlighten. In this multifarious process of communication, it is to be noted that an array of information embedded in the messages is taken as per the selection based on the audience, context and the intention of the message. This phenomenon of selecting information to

be added in the messages with regards to the receiver and the context can be termed as 'the politics of crafting' the message. While the meaning making processes by the receiver with regard to the sender and the context is characterised as a semiotic endeavour. This piece of thinking is an attempt to ruminate about the understanding of media and its apparent 'power' in promoting messages.

DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication process is inevitable, intricate and innate process for all living beings in this world. Even though the process of communication has different components like the sender, medium, channel and receiver, the contextualised insistence of parlance significantly promotes the term 'media' to connote the process of institutionalised communication in the society.

In most of the proposed communication model or theory commenting on the process of communication, the significance of crafting the message in relation to the audience is emphasized. In the Aristotle's model of communication, the diligence of the speaker in promoting messages in relation to the audience is highlighted (Triadafilopoulos, August 1999). The communication theorists and researchers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have broadly explicated on the intricacy involved in crafting the message and its reach with the audience. In fact, innumerable studies have focused on understanding the perception of the audiences. True, the preference of the audiences can be altered through the process of public opinion. In other words, the process of communication can diligently alter the perception of the audiences (Griffin, 2009). In the Representation Theory suggested by Stuart Hall, he observes the producers of the messages codify or encode taking into consideration the audience, their context which contributes to the meaning making process (Hall, 1997). In a media organisation, arrangement of information and subsequent presentation of the news is inevitable with regards to the content creators and the audience (Harcup, 2009).

The inverse of the User and Gratification Theory suggested by Blumler and Katz suggest that the messages are designed taking into consideration the choices of the audiences (Trowbridge, May 1976). Moving further down in understanding the dynamics of process of communication process, Deleuze and Guattari points to the concept of assemblage. Aligning with the concept of assemblage, the process of communication can be perceived as layout of varied processes and systems which are independent of each other yet continues to function as one (Nail, 2017).

DECISION, DISCRETION & DISSEMINATION

While understanding the dynamics of the communication process is seemingly myriad, the intricacies of the present day media and its institutions with respect to the messages and the meanings are not often deliberated in academia. In this regard, three hypothetical statements about the media institutions and its messages can be pondered upon.

a. Media institution inevitably decides on the mandate of the medium.

b. The mandate of the medium inspires the discretion about the design and details of the message.

c. The art of dissemination ingeniously contains packets of information that will lead the audience make meanings and opinions conjectured by the mandate of the media and discretion of the content producer.

a. Decision and Mandate

The media industry has become of the one of lucrative industry for potential investment. According to the government policy, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) are allowed up to 100 percent depending on the function of the media industry (Media and Entertainment: Make in India, 2023). Especially, in the recent past Indian media industry has witnessed a manifold growth in the infusion of fresh capital mostly from Foreign Investment agencies. It is estimated that there has been a surge in the investment in the media and associated industries (Farooqui,

2023). When media institution is perceived as potential engine to churn the investment into potential returns, the mandate of the media and its messages needs to be seriously contemplated in the academia. The mandate of any communication media from the humane point of view is to creatively build individuals and communities for a peaceful and harmonious existence. Reflecting on the growing trends in the media industry, the mandate of the media needs to be reviewed.

b. Mandate inspired discretion in message formation

It is quite logical to think that any institutional discretion depends upon the obligation of the organization which is ubiquitous in the case of the media institution also. Analysing this hypothesis from the standpoint of the concept of 'assemblage', it can be perceived although media discretion may not be organismal. Evaluating the present trend of the media, discretion in making messaging and in some cases masking messages leads to the veracity of the claim. The academia should seriously explore the possibilities to realise the concept of 'assemblage' in the functioning the media thereby actively promoting to experience different flavour from the message and the media.

c. Discrete decision on dissemination in meaning formation

As discussed in the introduction, in the process of dissemination, the right packaging of information is quintessential. The right proportion of information would help the audience decode the message in the expected sense. The packaging of information in the messages has been researched and observed in academia significantly through empirical studies. It is to be noted that the process of meaning making is dynamic since the audience's perception, attitude and expectation change in line with the verve of context. In the regard, efforts should be taken to understand the process of meaning making through the set of information embedded in the media messages. Moreover, the

aspect of dissemination is crucial not as mere transmission of information but more than the message itself as in the words of Marshall McLuhan, 'Medium is the Message'. The academia should engage in research to understand the nuance of the messages and its meaning making process. In the present times, the researchers should engage in more qualitative studies which will expose gradations in the communication process, message and media.

It is irrefutable that the process of communication is dynamic and insofar as the process of meaning making. In the process to make the communication equitable by mediation, enquiring the pending and looming problem through research and review is essential. The research in the present time should be engaging and should take on refinements of media, messages and its meaning. It is to be noted that qualitative approach can more appropriate to inquire problems relating to present day communication media and the messages. The learnings and observations inferred through these systematic enquiries and approach should not stay in the annals confined within the academia rather these observations should permeate to the wide world. Communicating the knowledge about the media, messages and their meanings to the human beings across the world would help in building a beautiful harmonious world.

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The book - **MEDIA, SOCIETY AND POWER** - offers a comprehensive and dynamic exploration of the present day society catering to a diverse readership including students, media professionals and researchers. It begins by defining media and democracy and its close proximity in our society and provides historical context, discussing key concepts and challenges ranging from various techniques and technologies. The book emphasises the role of media in developing our society and democracy as well as our society in a digital eco-system. Moreover, the book addresses the issues related to future of media and democracy, including emerging trends and ethical conundrums. Throughout, it presents practical insights, theoretical frameworks, and actionable strategies compelling readers to harness and leverage media knowledge for competitive advantages, elaborating with case studies and best practices adopted by our society to strengthen and embellish media and democracy.