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Media Contouring the Societal Functioning: A Study of Indian Democracy

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A participative and representative democracy like that of India cannot deny media's significant role in strengthening its democratic fabric. However, while media has offered a huge platform for creating awareness, educating and sensitising people, the quality of knowledge disseminated, the kind of awareness created, the way of connecting with the masses as also, the content flashed and the intention behind it are clouded with dubiousness. This paper proposed to conduct a qualitative study into analysing the role and performance of media towards nurturing democratic principles in Indian context through narrative analysis of certain instances picked deliberately for the purpose; and suggested certain measures for enhancing the effectiveness of media in this context. The paper reaffirmed media in the country, contrary to the expected role, to be biased, indulging in blatant fabrication of news, manipulating facts and spreading propaganda, hence fast losing its credibility, integrity and sanctity under the garb of reinforcing democracy.

Keywords: Media role, democracy, commercialization, India

The term 'Democracy' has always attracted much debate in socio-political context. The relativity of the concept of democracy arising out of its relation with the society it descends from, the socio-cultural settings of the territory, the kind of economic and political environment that the state patronages has given rise to vivid typology of democracy, including both classical and modern concepts. Democracy as one of the most talked of concepts in political theory has two connotations to itself, namely a form of government and a system of governance. As a form of government it is a government, putting famously in the words of Abraham Lincoln, of the people, by the people and for the people, wherein the power is exercised by the government to provide protection to civil rights. And as a system of governance it is ought to provide extensive representation to and ensure inclusiveness of as many people and views as possible to enable just and fair societal processes. Democracy has a long and chequered trajectory of evolution and, despite being a contested concept, is the most sought after form of government and governance in different modalities adopted by the states worldwide.

Conceptual Framework

Indian parliamentary democracy is distinctive from its equivalents in the sense that it is based on close cooperative working of its various organs towards the achievement of the goals of a welfare-state, and not on separation of power, simply to ensure checks and

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balances. There has always been a pertinent debate on the performance of the three pillars of the edifice of Indian government, namely executive, legislature and judiciary in context of the roles assigned to them. Of late, these three pillars have been complemented by the presence of yet another pillar serving as the centre of checks and balance for these three pillars, no less important and suitably termed as the Fourth Pillar or Fourth Estate of democracy, the media. Although not much has been talked about its effectiveness, but that does not in any way undermine its significance and responsibility in democratic development process. Media has a very crucial and multi-dimensional role in fostering smooth and sound governance in a democratic state like India. It not only serves as a platform for availability of multitudinal information, facilitating popular participation by ensuring common and different voices being heard, also acts as a 'watchdog', 'beacon' or 'flashlight' digging and highlighting the wrongdoings in all circles of public delivery system.

'Media' is a comprehensive term referring to different means of mass communication, including both traditional and contemporary means like television, radio, print and new media (internet and social media). Since all these means make use of some technology to propagate the message, they are also referred to as media technology. The media and democracy association is two-pronged, instrumental and institutional. Instrumentally, media serve as facilitator and provide sustenance to democratic polity. Institutionally, the focus lies on the democratic character of the media itself. Interestingly though, both these aspects are inter-related and democratic media is only more likely to nurture the democratic fabric of the nation. In India, media contributes towards reinforcement of democracy by disseminating information, providing representation to people's voice, and ensuring people's participation.

Different kinds of democracies around the world emphasize upon different roles of media theoretically – elitist, traditional and liberal democracies perceive the informational role of media as important; for the deliberative and pluralist democracies it is the participative role of media; and emphasis is laid upon representational aspect of media by the ideological constructs of democracy. It is, however, imperative to note that these approaches are not exclusive of each other as only the degree of emphasis varies and all these aspects of media contribute together towards strengthening democracy.

Irrespective of the various normative roles that media play in terms of facilitator, collaborator, monitor and revolutionary, within a democracy, it is expected to be truthful, unbiased, uncompromised and perceivably working beyond the state's pressure. Media is viewed as the citizens' window to the world and as the fourth pillar of democracy its role becomes even more critical as it is not only expected to present a free and fair picture through its news coverage, but also helps in building public opinion. Media is a potential tool of bringing social change irrespective of the area it deals with at a point of time. Internet and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter in combination with the traditional media have proved themselves powerful weapons of furthering social causes, curbing corruption, bringing enhanced transparency in the entire system, facilitating sound policy-making and hence accelerating economic growth. The quintessence of democracy is the people's right to know government activities, especially those directly affecting them. Media is capable of providing this access to people by enabling their voice not only to be heard but also paid heed to. At the same time, media is also capable of providing the people full scope for thought and discussion on public matters by making different and opposing viewpoints available to them. Thus, people are able to make informed and rational choices, participate in state, market and civil society activities, get socially mobilized, sensitized and educated towards social, political and economic causes of the nation;

thereby fostering the principles of a fine democracy.

Media, by and large, is a non-state actor as being different from state and all other societal actors. Ideally, media acts freely on behalf of the citizens both against state and other interests, but in reality the practicality of media the worldwide is complex, diverse and rapidly changing. The mass media are rightly referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy due to the power they wield and the overarching function they exercise. However, if they choose to sow the seeds of violence, fear and division they instead play anti-democratic role causing democratic decay. Democracy necessitates active participation of citizens. Ideally, the media should serve as a conduit between the government and the masses keeping the citizens importantly engaged in the entire process of governance by adequately informing, educating, sensitizing, socializing and mobilizing them. The reality, however, speaks otherwise as in times of commercial competition in media circles serious reporting is finding difficult to sustain itself courtesy shallow and sensational news content being immensely incentivized. The traits that largely characterize the present times media in the country are prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths.

Changing Scenario of Media in India

The forces of liberalization, privatization and globalization almost eternally changed the face of Indian media resulting into the country's official media platforms All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (Indian television) losing pace to the new steers. Although the commercialization of media had already begun in 1980s, but the 1990s economic reforms provided greater momentum to the process. Nevertheless, the deluge of players, platforms, portals and programmes, both qualitatively and quantitatively, have provided gateways and opportunities to variety of opinions hitherto unheard, lest these opinions are not governed by some harmful, biased vested interests. The deregulation of Indian media where imparted a greater sense of freedom of thought and expression to the multiple players partaking in the arena also gave rise to compound issues and problems.

Commercialization of Media

Institutionally, it refers to big corporate houses owning newspapers and television channels deliberately set up by them with the sole focus of developing a favourable clout with the governments and political parties so as to expand their business establishment, and not for direct profit-making. Individually, it is a sheer reflection of advancement of one's monetary interests with journalist(s) demanding certain pecuniary benefits in exchange of the coverage provided by them to a report or an event. Nonetheless, commercialization in media is thriving unabatedly at both the levels putting the integrity, fairness, objectivity and authenticity of media as the fourth pillar of democracy at stake (Hanson, 2005). Journalism, in India, has ceased to be the voice of the unheard and has instead come to glorify crime and criminals, churning false stories, selling non-issues in the garb of breaking stories, drifting away from its social obligations. The real societal interests have unfortunately lost the race to the market principles of demand and supply gauging interests on the basis of their influence and affordability. The only brighter side of this commercialization is the newer enhanced status attached to it, both as an industry and a profession, in terms of financial gains and scope available for increased research and development. The issue of commercialization in context of media seeks a recourse to socio-political and economic reforms, invoking the psyche with camaraderie-missionary zeal to recuperate the genesis behind the evolution of media.

Literature Review

Media's Role in Democracy

Dreze and Sen (2013) strongly criticize media as a responsible instrument of democracy analysing it as being indifferent towards the lives of the Indian poor in their work. They also contend that media institutions owned by the rich and media professionals coming predominantly from privileged sections, the entire process is all about advertising and selling. As put further, the content displayed and the techniques and methods engaged to do so by the media always target specific consumers from which maximum benefits can be reaped and all this is done at the cost of integrity and credibility. Thus, the authors depict a rather grim picture of Indian democracy faring poorly on almost all social indicators including health, education, employment, etc. and hence not having been able to regenerate and expand human capabilities and capacities in conformation to the achieved economic growth so far.

Ram (2011) perceives a shift in audience preferences towards the new including websites, mobile and digital networking platforms due to which even traditional media like newspapers, television and radio are replete with websites and web links offering rich, variegated, multi-media content, including all sorts of features, articles and analytical content. Besides, he notices that Indian media enjoys much more freedom than its contemporaries elsewhere and hence its role towards deepening democratic principles and processes becomes more critical.

Gupta (2008) suggests that government officials, legislatures, bureaucracy, NGOs and media all need to be sensitized towards human development initiatives as he observes people to have occupied the centre-stage due to paradigm shift in the concept and measures of development from economic development to human development in India since independence.

Barnett (2004) highlights the need to adequately weigh the publicly agreed norms over the decisions and actions of political institutions and economic organizations, especially in context of matters having direct bearing on public welfare. Herein, the author asserts about the significance of media as the fourth estate of democracy while serving as the necessary platform and space for alternative ideas, viewpoints to debate and arrive at conclusions and providing representation to the unheard sections for the betterment of society.

Media Ethics

Couldry et al (2013) debate upon the existing beliefs and practices of media vis-à-vis increasing technological advancement in the sector as also, efforts to initiate new ways of defining and perceiving ethics of media across variegated society. The work is an array of essays wherein answers have been sought to questions pertaining to the very concept of ethics of media quite distinctively from the increasingly outdated legalism of media ethics. In light of the enhanced debate on the need for ethical relationship between media and society, the work highlights and analyses the status of ethics in media.

Matthew (1997) portrays a poised image of media when on one hand it discusses deceit and lies, privacy, violence, sex and media censorship, and on the other good news, responsibility and information. Major aspects of ethics in all types of media have been brought to fore through the deployment of philosophical approach.

Besley and Chadwick (1992) underscore the idea that the role of press is to provide information in the backdrop of its ethical purpose towards maintaining the quality of the

content. The work also communicates that both journalism and media are built on certain fundamental values as democracy, freedom, truth, honesty, objectivity and privacy, and hence ethics form major dimension of both.

Status of Indian Democracy

Ganguly et al (2007) convincingly argue that despite a chequered path Indian democracy has prospered against all odds and continue to do so. The work which is a compilation of essays echo several important themes including evolution of democracy in India, factors influencing the country's democratic arrangement and the challenges posed before the Indian democracy in present times. The attraction of the book for the purpose of the present study is the essay by Praveen Swami which discusses the constructive bearing of media on the quality of Indian democracy. Tracing the complete trajectory of Indian press, the author has highlighted the institutionalization of the norms pertaining to media independence in the backdrop of Emergency of Indira Gandhi's times.

Jayal (2007) while offering a discourse on various dimensions of Indian democracy identifies three basic dogmas– democracy is mainly about the representation of the marginalised sections, political mobilization of backward castes is enough proof of strengthening democracy, democracy is a panacea– about the present status of democracy in the country. The work further analyses the feats and failures of democracy in India as also the anxiety of the experts towards the present status.

Vora and Palshikar (2004) in their edited work bring forth the intensity, richness and vibrancy of Indian democracy while tracing its journey and exploring its viability and status in an environment characterized and nurtured by corporate economy in the backdrop of a society facing serious challenges and a politics coloured in the hues of communalism and hypocrisy. The work further re-asserts the need to strengthen the formal structural framework of procedural democracy to deepen the democratic principles and practices. Kohli (2001) puts forward a tightly conceived volume wherein various themes including politics, ethnicity, federalism, caste, poverty, and Hindu nationalism have been addressed to depict quite a clear picture of Indian democracy in context of the multiple challenges standing tall before it. The contributors have endeavoured to explore the genesis of democracy in India despite it being an ethnically diverse nation and a low-income economy infested with poverty and illiteracy.

Issues in Media

Gordon et al (1998) delivers a comprehensive perspective and balanced analysis on a myriad topics ranging from influence and manipulation by the media, political correctness and inclusiveness, advertising privacy and censorship to infotainment and pornography. The authors also concentrate on real life issues and the responsibilities of different professionals working in various forms of mass media.

Patterson and Lee (1998) besides concentrating on major problem areas including cyberspace, photojournalism, persuasion and entertainment, also provide specific academic modules for news-writing, advertising, public relations, communication technology and photojournalism. Weaving the discussion through case studies and progressing from particular subject to the general and later to the abstract, the volume presents a nice amalgamation of theory and practice in context of media.

Crozier et al (1975) in their report on governability of democracies submitted to the Trilateral Commission deal with the pessimism, crisis and challenges shadowing the

functionality of democracies of the globe, especially of Western societies, and re-visit, reexamine and re-assert the necessity of smooth functioning of the component systems on the basis of democratic premises. Although the report centres round Western Europe, Japan and United States, but has indicated issues and made recommendations relevant to governability across regions.

As per the review of the available literature, it can be well interpreted that media possess huge potential to cast an impact on politics and governability as it is an important source of disintegration of old forms of socio-economic controls and ushering in the new changes in the socio-economic life of the masses. Democracy implies participative governance, and it is the media that ensures informed participation of the masses and hold those at the helm of affairs accountable. Media is powerful enough to shape power and participation in the society in both positive and negative ways. Negatively, when it chooses to obscure the vested interests and motives behind political decisions; and positively, by promoting people's involvement in the decision making process. Therefore, the mediagovernance equation keeps significance in this context.

The present study puts forward that though there is no denying the fact that possesses immense potential to encourage democratic development, but Indian mass media is failing to fulfill its functions as the reputed fourth pillar of democracy. It is rather being viewed as nourishing anti-Indian democratic force supporting the status quo. Infotainment, advertorials have come to form the mainstay on the mass media supplying more scandalous, sleaze, sensational and superficial information. Although there have been various challenges posed before Indian media and the lines between news and entertainment have blurred. The face of media in the country has transformed rapidly with the rise of internet, the phenomenal growth of satellite and cable networks alongside the upgradation of the traditional media. This, however, is a crisis period in the media sector due to commercialization and commodification.

Objectives

The present study, therefore, aims towards the following through the analysis that it draws at the end: (i) to explore how media influences and articulates public opinion, (ii) to study the impact of news material aired on democracy, (iii) to analyse the utility of media as an instrument of social change, and (iv) to find out the prevalent trend in news content in the country. Hence, the hypothesis formulated for the purpose of the study is that media being instrumental in articulation of public opinion definitely impacts a democratic society like India thereby effecting a social change.

Methodology

This study offers a qualitative treatment of the subject matter and deploys narrative inquiry as the methodology to fulfil the requirements of the process. Narrative inquiry canopies several personal and human dimensions of experience gathered over time, and takes into account the relationship between individual experience and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). A comparative study across a few instances having occurred over the past two years 2015 and 2016 has been made to arrive at conclusion. Print media and online news, both have been referred to lift the relevant instances. In order to draw analysis of the role of media critically as well as in terms of influencing and articulating public opinion, various news contents and instances relating to government policies, information

dissemination and media trials on sub-judice cases have been studied comparatively. Also, the relevant literature reviewed has been taken into account while drawing conclusion and suggesting measures to increase media's effectiveness as the fourth pillar of the Indian democracy.

Narrations and Analysis

Case-I: This instance relates to the famous Gajapati Case of Palakhemundi town in southern Odisha in India. The case of August-September 2016 revolves round the scandalous stories pertaining to the house arrest of the ailing head of the local royal family. Gopinath Gajapati, his property of worth over 500 crore rupees and the suicidal deaths of Ananya Manjri Patra, the palace manager and her three siblings. After the rumours of tremendously ill Gopinath Gajapati having been kept under house-arrest to devour his mammoth property and denied adequate medical help by his closest aide Ananya Manjri Patra started doing rounds, and the local political outfits and pro-palace wings went ahead with sit-ons in the town the Odisha government had to intervene so as to provide immediate medical attention and treatment to him. There was much uproar against Ananya and her family's alleged role and it got further accentuated by a local news channel's coverage of the story wherein it went on to extrajudiciously convict her while the case was still sub-judice, to the extent that it caused insurmountable trauma to Ananya and her family leading her to find succor in nothing less than death. A governmental inquiry into the entire issue has been ordered, but four lives were lost due to the unethical media intervention for the sake of leveraging the coverage to enhance its viewership.

Case-II: This is a story of poor tribal farmer Dana Majhi of Kalahandi district of Odisha carrying the body of his wife on his shoulders, with his sobbing daughter walking alongside. As the incident caught light of the day through media coverage it was brought to fore that poor Dana was denied any help by the hospital administration to drop the body of his wife who was afflicted by tuberculosis and breathed her last in the hospital to his home 60 km away in Melghar village and he did not have enough money to arrange otherwise. It was only after he had already walked 12 km that a known person spotted him, called up a TV reporter and an ambulance was dispatched by an NGO to carry the body home. An immediate inquiry was made by the district administration to prevent further damage to the incumbent state government and all but Majhi were absolved stating that he never informed the hospital staff before leaving the premises. Whatever went into the entire build-up of the story was nobody's bargain but the heart-wrenching image of Dana Majhi carrying his wife's stiffened body wrapped in a mere rag cast by the media and the persistent coverage of the incident by the national media attracted attention from various corners. Bahrain Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa was so moved that he donated 8.9 lakh rupees to Dana. Besides, not only did financial help poured in from several individuals and organizations including district administration, Sulabh International and anonymous donors, but also have his all three daughters been admitted in government-run school and they have been further promised free higher education. If this was not enough, 'Majhi effect' led Kalahandi district administration to earmark a 40 acre site for a proposed medical college in the area. All these developments immensely reflect upon the power that media wields in a society.

This narration refers to the reflection of the media's role in ambitious Clean India or *Swachh Bharat* campaign. The media role in popularizing the campaign and educating the masses about it has not only made it a household name but has inspired people to actively

participate in cleanliness exercise. All the audios, videos, advertisements and slogans being flashed on media as regards this campaign while being critical of the present prevalent scenario call upon the people to support the very cause of clean, healthy and progressing India. Here media has well exhibited that power wielded constructively is bound to make a positive and long-lasting change in the society.

Case-III: This narration gyrates round cold shoulder attitude of media towards Maharashtra drought this past year that attracted nationwide attention in March 2016 when around 30000 farmers carried out agitation against the state government in Nashik city in Maharashtra demanding a loan waiver, better drought relief measures, and compensation against failed crops. Initially, this massive protest by farmers and their plight was only partially covered by some of the regional media houses, while the mainstream media preferred to ignore it and rather air coverage on absolute non-issues like celebrity lives. The same media houses, however, exhibited a role reversal by not only giving wide coverage to droughts and resulting farmers' deaths in Maharashtra, but also holding panel discussion on the issue only after a public interest litigation (PIL) calling for shifting of IPL matches out of Mumbai was filed in wake of abundant water needed to maintain the stadium and pitch amidst the drought hit districts of the state. This media coverage helped in alerting, sensitizing and mobilizing support and resources from all corners of the society—governmental, nongovernmental, individuals and organizations.

The above instances are testimony enough to reflect upon the importance of in a democratic set-up and its potential to effect change in the society. The advent of information technology opened new channels and avenues of knowledge to all. People in present times are fortunate not only to have an access to all sorts of information but also store it comfortably for future reference. Unrestricted and unchecked flow of information, however, is proving hazardous. Media, undoubtedly a formidable strength of democracy has rather fallen prey to excessive doze of commercialization, consumerism and liberalism. More often than not political news does not intend to disseminate information instead create sensation. Similarly, media's economic aspect is dominating all requirements and commitments. Instead of enriching the culture of the nation it has taken the path of cultural invasion causing uproot of our own traditional, ethical and moral values. The obvious concern emanating from all this is that a rootless society is short-lived and cannot stand tall upholding its respect and pride. In today's times, media has come to transform the entire thought process of the common man, the source and sink of democracy, portraying market and success as the actual criteria of judging things and people as right or wrong.

Media is plagued with biased approach and is largely directed towards its own profits, direct and indirect, camouflaged under the garb of freedom of press. Its activities are directed towards surviving the competition due to the presence of innumerable players in the arena, obliging the chosen privileged sections including corporates, politicians and selfacclaimed social leaders—all but the common masses and their pertinent issues and problems. Rest all that sees the light of the day is pure sensationalism rather than nonfabricated and trustworthy dissemination of information. Levels of media coverage have fallen down abysmally as it is more concerned with the wardrobe malfunctions and makeovers of celebrities rather than giving a due weightage to poor Indians problems. Very few instances can be found which intend to voice popular concern; provide a two-way communication channel towards influencing policy decisions fruitfully, articulation of ideas, mobilization of resources while ensuring people's participation, dissemination of necessary information and hence strengthening the various aspects of a democratic set-up of the nation.

In developing countries like India, post liberalization and globalization new media environment has set in due to explosive growth in media as well as its frontiers caused by widespread liberalization thereby resulting in a fundamental shift in communication patterns from subtle to vigorous and vociferous, having both positive and negative implications on democratic fabric. The media itself in this modern liberalized environment has unfortunately come to be captured by narrow commercial, ethnic, religious and/or political interests. The causes of marginalized and poor populations stand defeated by the increasingly attended advertisers-attracting urban consumer audiences. In wake of the excessive competition for the market most media frontiers have succumbed to the global pressures and have end up drawing out and dumping down the most important news.

Findings

Media is indisputably an indispensable organ of the democratic institutional framework of the country as it plays significantly variegated role—creates awareness amongst masses about their duties, rights and entitlements as also towards their socio-economic and political environment; enables people to have access to government programmes and schemes while educating them about public policies and plans; draws public attention towards institutional failures and maladministration to ensure public accountability in the system; provides an important platform and interface for debate, discussion and deliberation between masses and other actors of governance; educates, sensitizes, socializes and mobilizes citizens towards various issues and practices; and builds trust and social consensus. The role of media in the country has undergone a sea-change from a mission to profession, hence to a business, and so has its role in the democratic set-up. India being the largest democracy of the world, the situation is quite alarming in the country.

Media in the country, contrary to its expected role, is being biased, indulging in blatant fabrication of news, manipulating facts and spreading propaganda, hence fast losing its sanctity. The menace of paid news plagues the system ranging from individual media professionals to media institutions. Media ownership largely being controlled by vested political and business interests the owners use their outlets (newspapers, news channels broadcast stations) to extract their personal benefits including advancing their political or business agenda cutting down rivals, manipulating views and dumping down the challenging voices. The findings from the present study are as follows:

- (i) Media technology due to its potential to reach out to masses almost effortlessly has an unquestionably significant role in bringing social change. Now, this social change may be both progressive and regressive.
- (ii) Media casts tremendous influence over masses and articulates their opinions while trying to bring a social change.
- (iii) Media extensively indulges in orchestrating a parallel investigation and thereby forming and/or influencing public opinion. Media's intervention in under trial cases is one of the widely noticed vices. Quite often they end up influencing the final verdict of the trial courts, both positively and negatively, especially in high profile cases.
- (iv) In present times, due to capital intensive media technology and excessive commercialization media is more involved in fabrication of news instead of covering real incidents.
- (v) Besides, a lot many old news is sold under the new garb to beat the professional rivals or at times, simply for sustenance sake.

A democratic society warrants an active and vigilant participation of mass media as it is widely assumed that media serves as the voice of the masses, represents society's interests and provides a check on the government by holding it accountable and transparent. In changed scenario, however, the sanctity of media has come under flak and has been widely questioned. Thus, it was found to hold true that media undoubtedly has a farreaching impact on the democratic fabric of a society like India as it is instrumental in public opinion articulation and also, it effects a social change accordingly.

In democratic societies, greater responsibility lies on media to ensure the accuracy of the coverage as also to initiate reporting that is robust and capable enough to withstand scrutiny. Media should realize that without any integrity it will cease to exist and needs to distance itself from economic and political pressures and controls. In order to overcome all the negative sentiments against media's role in modern times, as popularly suggested by Dreze and Sen (2013), it calls for a brave and resilient media house to stick to the principles and yet report substantive issues with absolute integrity and resolution.

Conclusion

It has been widely observed that corruption in Indian media has become more rampant and institutionalized. Free and fair media is a prerequisite of sound democracy. News need to be objective, fair, unbiased and away from advertisements. Media occupies a vital position in a democracy as it helps in generating and nurturing a democratic culture that extends beyond the political set-up and subsequently makes an indelible mark on public-consciousness. The new media enjoys even larger scope and wields greater control in brining social change sincethe younger generation uses new media for almost all purposes in terms of inform. Since media exercises significant and rather comprehensive control and influence over public life, therefore, it becomes increasingly important that media acts more cautiously, responsibly and accountably.

The way media relates to the two posts of democracy—government and masses—needs a paradigm shift to be brought in sustainably, and this is possible only through comprehensive media development interventions addressing the four levels, namely population, practitioners, organizations and systems, in an integrated manner to achieve the optimal and lasting change. A few measures need to be adopted to increase the effectiveness of media in the given context so that media can optimally utilize its potential towards the consolidation of Indian democracy—legally guaranteeing and protecting the rights of journalists; capacity building through adequate training and skill development; enhancing media accountability by inculcating culture of acknowledging their mistakes and upholding professional and ethical standards; democratising the access to media by making them accessible to wider section of population instead of a few privileged sections of the society. At the same time, educating the masses about the role of media so better public demand can be created in terms of the quality and content of the aired features; sensitizing and educating media professionals, irrespective of the platform they relate to, in social development issues seem to be immensely significant in the light of the prevalent scenario. These measures would help in creating an environment for media wherein it is enabled to contribute progressively in enriching, buttressing and deepening the democratic principles in the country.

In keeping with the indispensability of media as one of the pillars of Indian democracy, it is imperative that the functions of media are duly recognized and respected by state and civil society alike, and an enabling social, political and economic environment is created so that an independent, sustainable, pluralistic and professional media flourishes.

However, it is equally important that through state's regulation fairness and professionalism in the media sector, both instrumentally and institutionally, are ensured clearly defining and delineating public service broadcasting; and any extravaganza in terms of hyped and fabricated content, extra-judicial media trials, biased approach, flexing of money and muscle power, sensationalism and vested interests on the part of media is effectively through introduction of some sort of compliance regime for media to uphold its status as the Fourth Pillar of Indian democracy.

Media in itself is of highly diversified and compound nature, therefore, the present study has limited itself to the broad treatment of all media in general over a shorter timespan. There is an immense scope for further research in the same context pursuing a comparative study across specific media, for instance, social media, print media, electronic media and so on, over a greater temporal dimension.

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