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How Media Works on Psyche: The Challenges and Dilemmas of Media and Changing Society

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Abstract

Media is a double-edged sword. While the law dictates that an individual is not guilty until proven to be so. There is also the age-old adage that even a hundred convicts may pass through the fingers of the law but no innocent should ever be convicted, let alone be penalized or punished. It is the media that has currently and increasingly taken on the role of lawyer, advocate and judge in several issues pertaining to social atrocities and human rights.

Every day the media is apparent in the print and electronic channels and is the harbinger of positive and negative responses apparent among the population reactions and responses. It is the representation of the central thought processes of a society.

Objective

Many of the issues that are being blown out of proportion are the result of irresponsible media provocation. The main concern of this paper is to determine to what extent is the media responsible for the reactions of people. The focal question here is to ascertain to what extent media takes ownership of the resultant blow up of its exposures. The issue of media's responsibility for spawning wrong or exaggerated reactions to events and circumstances is a very significant one.

Improvements

Whether it is the question of factual infighting between socio-political groups, religious balkanization of petty non-issues or the matter of economic undulations on the domestic and international markets, all these matters should be discussed and displayed without hype and one-sidedness. A responsible media, of which there are several local, national and international examples, is a vital tool for the development and progress of the country. If it is used judiciously, it can prove to be a vital support and in all ways the fourth pillar of democracy. The prime objective of this paper is to highlight this role of the media.

Key Words

Double edged sword, law, guilty, convicts, innocent, punished, lawyer, advocate, judge, responsible, socio-political groups, fourth pillar.

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“Law is not law if it violates the principles of eternal justice”

Lydia Maria Child

“The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent and that’s power. Because they control the minds of the masses.”

Malcolm

Introduction

Law is widely known to be blind but media can give it eyes. While law believes in proof it is media that can responsibly dig out the proof. These are the tasks of a responsible media. On the other hand an irresponsible power hungry media can turn life into virtual death. The law affirms that even if a million criminals go scot-free not even one innocent should be unjustly penalized.

Taking a look at the genesis of the world’s progress into the present day it can be explained that today is the era of liberalization, that led to privatization and finally globalization that has joined the world into one local village. The visual media is a potentially potent tool. It is instrumental in bringing information and news directly to society. The World Wide Web or the shortened version ofwww.comthat has come to be acknowledged as the world of the web 2.0 technologies has promoted the vital impetus to the electronic media. Today the common man is empowered to give vent to his views through the medium of individual blogs, website posts and social media like facebook and twitter. The social media is a part of a richly diversified media industry all over the world. A zillion US dollar industry.

Media today plays a tremendous role in the motivation and implementation of public opinion. It is a vital strengthening pillar of society. Responsible media works against injustice, oppression, misdeeds, partiality and nepotism rampant in society. Currently media has become an integral part of virtually the entire human civilization. Media plays a pivotal role in the shaping of society.

The Judiciary, the Executive and the Legislative are pillars of democracy. It is media as the fourth pillar that stabilizes it. There are several instances where media's supportive role helped the nation arrive at several beneficial conclusions pertaining to cases of the greatest relevance to society. One recent decisive case was the announcement of the death penalty for rape. The

'Nirbhaya Case' of Delhi bus rape and subsequent media action and follow-up shook up the world.

Influencing the Psyche

The far reaching crusade triggered across world borders by the Indian media in the case of the Nirbhaya rape horror. Indian media brought world attention to some of the heinous crime that should. Such atrocity was never witnessed by such a magnitude. So insidious was the topic that world media burnt up communication channels in the attempt to denounce such a horrible act as the Delhi rape as it came to be infamously called. Most foreign media tended to blacklist India as a whole. Many tourists even cancelled their visas to India in the wake of the horrible tragedy. This was a singular example of how irresponsible media could influence the psyche of not just individuals but nations as a whole. Media is the government's vehicle to bring its schemes and programs to the target audience.

The role and impact of media on society is huge. Therefore it is mandatory that media representatives should own and accept the full responsibility of all that they present before the public. However, while talking about media and its role in promoting peace is virtually impossible if the mutual and interpersonal influence of media and society is not taken into consideration.

Media provides the people with the truth that is bound closely to the social realities of everyday life. The socio-cultural and spiritual development of society depends on the way media operates. Media reveals the factual interactions of politics, economics and culture at various levels of society. The impact of media has been two-fold. Its impact results in tangible and intangible reactions. The intangible reactions are rooted in the psyche. These reactions have several short term and long term ramifications.

Across the annals of history, media has been producing and agitating against some of the worst possible cases of crimes witnessed in community. These crimes are almost always against humanity. Media has been responsible for changing mindsets. Media has helped rectify mistakes that had been made in history but at times it has also been related to spreading hate and deep

rooted animosities. Media represents the all pervasive and persuasive message service for developing general empathy in society. Irresponsible media handling has resulted in the spreading of hatred and violence among ethnic groups and minority communities.

Public education is an important task especially when discussing the role and collective impact of the media. Seeing its impact it is observed that media shapes and influences new generations of thought. In earlier days, almost upto the early 90s, propaganda, hate speeches and violence were the arsenal of journalists all over the world. This necessitated the control of the media. Several obstacles were presented. It was a clear reflection that nothing had been imbibed from history.

The largely powerful media doyens have tended to be usually biased ethnically. They provide news and information favorable to their own ethnic group. They eagerly satisfy the demands of political attitudes inherent to their own ethnicity.

Media sometimes tend to encourage and even spawn all kinds of religious or ethnic hate because of incorrect and fundamentally inappropriate reporting. Any form of irresponsible media results negatively on coexistence and threatens the tolerance of people because of different religious as well as ethnic backgrounds. The media could have a negative impact on the process to promote sustainability. The riots that have been representations of enraged mob violence in several states have been another terrible facet of the manner in which media has the power to mobilize human psyche into action. The Bombay bombings, the Gujarat riots, the 1984 carnage of Sikhs, all are instances of misguided and misplaced irresponsibility of media reporting.

The journalists and their media houses most often are guided by political elements that influence freedom of speech directly or indirectly. Responsible news and informing is usually followed by problems of very poor professional standards. The views of the printed and electronic media locally impact upon the society concerned. Irresponsible media action borders on unprofessional tendencies but this is most often than not ascertained only in hindsight.

When any form of incorrect information gets aired then typically various political lobbies get to be in the background. Media houses must own the responsibility for the worst situations that society has been subjected to. Various social diversities are outlined strongly and become apparent. The fear, the hate and mistrust all begin when the media lets down its guard. Media professionalism is the most essential component of true reporting. Responsibility and independence work within the social center of power. They interact with the myriad political and religious groups. This interaction gets reflected in the inherent editing policies of various media houses.

The world required journalism which rose above various facts and dealing with statistics. Most importantly it deals with the moral and ethical issues present the responsible form of journalism. Professional journalists should always be held responsible for their writings. Their writing should not challenge the people's coexistence and tolerance. Most people always tend to be humans above all else. They are steeped in insecurities and complexes. There is the example of people who loved their neighbors they disregarded politically pumped media propaganda and changed the opinion of their neighbor or influenced them to commit a crime. This is irrespective of the fact that they are good people. But who shall guard the guards? The power of media is such that it provokes journalists to make news or even turn new about on its head.

The Media Concern

Society should be owned by the media responsibility. Journalists must identify themselves and recognized their role on society. The journalists and media persons, who are aware of their commitment to responsibility, know what is courage and who cannot be influenced by politics to succumb to the sensational in journalism are the true journalists. It is definitely proven that society finally learns and acknowledges that while people may be good or bad but a responsible journalist owns that responsibility. The challenges faced by the smaller and regional media houses can be overcome only if the tremendous burden of psyche and direction of society is not adversely impacted upon. Newspapers are and shall continue to have far-reaching as well as authenticated information sources and shall remain major sources of sustained public information. There is a perpetual and an intricate relationship that exists between the media,

knowledge and public opinion as well as policy. It is however, the Media coverage that ultimately matters.

Perceptions, attitudes and knowledge tend to influence people's understanding of various social phenomena. To cite a case "Attitudes inform the perpetration of this violence, shape victims' responses to victimization and influence community responses to violence against women" (Vic Health 2010-15). It is apparent that media plays a major role in the areas of communication and information generation on matters of public significance. It can have both a positive or negative impact on social issues. A literature review looked at reporting patterns on crimes against women internationally (Politoff& Morgan 2010).

The secondary data research for this paper showed that news coverage of various issues of public concern influences the framing of policies (Yanovitzky 2002) alongwith public opinion (Palazzolo& Anthony, 2011; Sotirovic,2013). Thus, the foregoing acknowledges some of the most significant impact of news coverage is its influence on the psyche of individuals.

Democracy and the Media Contribution

In the days of the freedom struggle there were popular namely newspapers like Tilak's 'Maratha', Mahatma Gandhiji's, 'Young India' etc. All these provided the much required platform for placing the demands of common Indians. They also expressed solidarity of the nation with freedom fighters, Indian media in post Independence era grew phenomenally. Today the Indian media expanse comprises more than 50,000 newspapers as well as newsfeeds from hundreds of television and radio channels.

Media played a huge role in India's democratic framework. A government, "of the people for the people and by the people", has been eulogized in our Constitution but the truth is not all that easy to follow or maintain. To have the avowed benefits of a strong democracy the government alongwith the people must be hand-in-glove. This form of freedom of expression also definitely requires a bridge to the chasm of the uninformed and the channels of passing information i.e. the media. The initial responsibility of all media is to successfully bridge the gap between the government and the people. The democracy maintenance mechanism dictates that the

government be run by representatives of the public, who have been elected by the public from the public and for the public. These elected representatives' decisions can be proven to be either right or wrong.

Responsibility of media in an efficient democracy is to adhere to certain do's and don'ts which need to be followed mandatorily. The responsibility always has duties to control and check for various degradations. Its mechanisms or procedures are checked from spreading the consequent ill-effects.

What is the strength of Media?

It is among the most powerful tools in the field of communications. Among developing nations it is all the more necessary while in the developed countries it is a tremendous resource of power. It can prove to be helpful in promoting the right thing at the right time, or it can also use any situation to create sequential disturbances in the immediate environment. Media helps convey a strong message on what is right or wrong to the entire world.

The world is steadily progressing towards a better future every day. However, a vast majority of the people are tied up with several social problems directly or even indirectly. This is largely because all events and occurrences are “affected by the people of the people and for the people”.

Media Information detached from Geo-Location

Media has proven to be a boon and a blessing in several spheres of today's world. Mass media has helped tremendously in keeping the people to remain informed. It has constantly updated the public about many aspects of the news, various events, most social activities, lifestyle, information about various aspects, entertainment of all forms, as well as advertisements that are irrespective of geographical barriers. It is not less than a miracle that even while being in India, anybody can access the current news and events of powerful nations like UK or USA while sitting miles away. The technology of satellites is such that one obtained the breaking news of Barack Obama winning the President elections simultaneously all over the world. It was all the more sensational because Obama became the first African American to become the President of the United States of America.,

Media: The Good and Bad Aspects

Mass media has always made a profound impact on societies as well as culture. It tends to dissolve boundaries of societies among individuals and promote perpetuation of ‘Globalization’. The process of equalization promotes the process where all people are enabled to understand what has been happening all over the world. Media reflects the life of the people and informs them about lives of the rest of the world.

Thus, as widely acknowledged fact all over the world media has been the power house of information. The daily events, occasions are covered to present new revelations. The media has been used very successfully by various governments promoting their own propaganda. It has been the vehicle of information and knowledge for the common man helping the making of informed choices rather than ignorance.

Media helps create the speediest awareness over a large coverage of people. Mass media has sustainably had massive impact on the lifestyles of people. It also visibly impact upon the religion, culture and ritual perpetuation of the people. Individuals from a conservative culture tend to adopt new practices when they are exposed through media to other cultures.

The electronic and visual media is very powerful. This point stress the negative impact of TV while it has made several positive inroads for society. It has been an agent of change towards modernization which many people did not accept. It was through television that media has created social awareness on socio-economic issues like AIDS, child abuse, female foeticide, etc. on the positive side television channels have organized TV shows like “SatamevJayate” that had focused on the harsh realities of people’s lives. It discusses problems and then provides possible solutions. It covered several social issues of India. The objective was to empower people with information. It is through such shows that civil society addressed social causes. Media became a vehicle for holding campaigns, demonstrations and protests to demand and seek justice.

Platforms of Mass

Social Media has mobilizing power for launching and maintaining social movements. Countries like Tunisia and Egypt utilized social media platforms extensively for the several social media networking sites like the Facebook and Twitter etc to help citizens organize, communicate and even initiate many a street action and campaigns. An example of the deep influence of Western media channels that was sustained through social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube. It was the prolific social media campaign that gave Moldova's 2009 revolution the moniker of its being a “Twitter Revolution.”

In India, illiteracy has been the greatest barrier to development initiatives in the country. It is only in India that there are such a surfeit of media methods. The commonest is the radio which can help reach the largest number of masses. It is affordable because it uses less electricity lends and the community a voice because the programs are in local languages and also because they are made respecting the local culture and tradition. Although small, it is an intervention that markedly increased the processes of globalization as well as commercialization of the media.

The successful results of a media program are when information is efficiently disseminated at the grassroots level. It is the main platform to reach rural masses and create awareness about various policies of the government.

There are several generations of National TV Channels that focus on educational programs. They are instrumental in educating the children. Even the younger generation has been in the grip of platforms of Social networking like the Facebook as they have brought net users much more closer. People can connect themselves easily with the relatives and acquaintances residing all over the globe.

Technological advancements like the internet have practically telescoped our workplaces and homes as they can interchange at a flick of a switch. Thus, the impact of mass media is such that it can build or destroy the belief systems of a people.

Media, however, proves to be a prominent innovation that boosts individual aspirations which can impact upon the psyche for the formation of ideas and opinions. For this media has to responsibly adhere to certain Do's and Dont's.

Do's for the Media

1. Maintain transparency in government

It is an important feature. The political world can not be visualized in a factual manner by the common man. The media retains the power to be the channel between the government, its ministers and the common man. Responsible media exposes the realistic picture to the world.

2. Revealing the truth in an acceptable form

Just revealing truth may be easy but expressing it in a socially acceptable manner is very difficult. In India, exposing the truth of government activities to the people is a challenging task in a democracy. People of different religions, regions, languages, traditions and diversities react differently to the facts. Media must ensure that their exposures are incapable of propagation of agitations in the country. This is probably the toughest role played by the media.

3. Facilitate people for exercising their Rights

It is the duty of media to help citizens enable themselves to nourish their rights. At the same time it is essential to examine if citizens excised their rights sustainably.

4. Challenges of Media Exposure

The toughest job of the media is to check the government and the citizens both. The role of the media is a two-edged sword which is why it has to be most careful and handle all issues with the greatest caution.

5. Encourage debate and criticism

Media has the potential to open any debate. It welcomes appreciation as well as criticism for opening up various controversial questions making government absorb the significance of the media's role in forming opinions.

6. Build up patriotism nationwide

This is for the betterment of the nation so that people can openly appraise situations without the fear of politicians. Media can circulate a markedly positive aura among the masses so that they can contract any negativity against the nation.

7. Promoting Free press

Free press helps maintaining democracy. Media has the ability to fly and attain beyond various limits. They promote the efficient and smooth functioning of democracy.

8. Media Don'ts

These are some of the area where the media should be careful and not intervene:

(i) Twisting of Facts

All information must be presented as actual fact. Facts must not be twisted deliberately to promote sensationalism.

Media must at all costs avoid getting involvement in the creation of sensational news. The responsibility of the media is to report the news but always attempt to avoid creating sensationalism and created impact.

(ii) Real Issue Sidelined

The news should be focused and well treated when presented. However, journalists must refrain from covering side-lined issues and ignoring the real ones.

The main concentration issue should not be ignored. It needs to be reported under all circumstances.

(iii) Irresponsible News

Whenever terror activities occur they are covered almost immediately by certain news channels by broadcasting emails that claim the responsibility by some or the other terror group. Emails can be sent from fake ids with the objective to disturb the peace and harmony existent among Hindu and Muslim settlements. This form of provocative information must be checked minutely and be broadcasted only after the facts have been confirmed.

(iv) Foreign Interferes avoided by the Press

Foreign interference in the press or media leads to adulteration of facts. This provokes a trend of twisting the news in a manner that it definitely harms the economy of the country directly or indirectly. The foreign agencies tend to set this trap to bring about the down fall of the country.

(v) Exploitation and Misuse of Press Prevented Totally

Though the presence and promotion of the Free press has been a most welcome factor. However, the undue dominance of this very press is most acceptable. This reshapes the actual facts according to several pre-determined and variously categorized criteria.

Conclusions

It is an undeniable fact that an Independent Media remains an essential component of democracy. It serves to exhibit to the people that all is being done by the ruling party and opposition. Both the good and bad facets are made apparent. It is essential to ensure that individuals should form their own opinion on how the government is functioning. They are enabled to make informed choices wisely so that they can cast their vote in subsequent elections on the basis of their satisfaction levels. An efficient media is essential in a strong and powerful democratic set up no matter what its size be in the U.S. or India. The objective is to proceed into a brilliant future with the guiding light of media action and power supporting the democracy. Thus, it can be concluded decisively that the mass media powerfully influences in shaping the future of the nation while even impacting upon individual lives. Mass media has both positive

and negative impact on the psyche of the nation of the nation. It impacts deeply the mindset of people. Media influences the side people may choose to take. To a large extent the deep rooted impact of the media is apparent in their choices.

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