

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the foreground, there is a silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

MAY'19 (23 to 29 May)

Media, the fourth pillar of democracy

Communication is what makes society tick (and evolve and progress) and media is the vehicle that will facilitate this. Media is as diverse as it is essential. From old school to new, from print and broadcast to online, digital and social, these continue to be a relevant aspect of today's technology-driven world, especially so in the corporate and social arenas. Because of the rapid frequency with which communication occurs in the modern day, the media technology industry consistently updates itself with the practicality of the ever-changing times in order to deliver increasingly precise means of communication. Media has always played a huge role in our society. For a long time media was one of the methods of controlling people and leisure. In ancient times when there was no newspapers and television, people used literature as source of information, some books like "the Iliad", and different stories about great kings, shows those people the information about them. Nowadays media is one of the main part of our lives and our society, because we use word media, to combine all sources of information. The role of media has become one way of trading and marketing of products and

prejudices. The media claimed to be governed by righteousness and equity, but greed and self-aggrandizement has poisoned its virtues.

Media is in charge of:

1. information
2. education
3. entertainment
4. advertising
5. correlation of parts of society

Today our life is full of mass media. Some of us even log on to our favorite sites for news and information. After getting ready the moment we hit the road we are bombarded by hoardings, banners, stickers, and bill boards cajoling and coaxing us to do this and not to do that. In this era of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) the world has reached our drawing room thanks to media. Media helps in fighting against corruption, nepotism, cronyism of institutional machinery and carrying out relentless campaign against them. Way back in independent India from the Mundra case to the jeep scandal to the hawala case to the kickbacks received in different defense deals- Indian media performs commendably in exposing the corrupted highly placed statesman. No doubt, media has played

significant role in making world a global village and to reduce the communication gaps amongst the people living in the far areas but unfortunately, media these days has become a commercialized sector, eying the news which are hot and good at selling. The goal is to gain the television rating points.

In India, media has always been considered as the fourth pillar of democracy. In the eighties public service broadcaster “Doordarshan” was the only television channel. The number of national newspapers in circulation was exiguous. The 21st century scenario is different. While the print media has seen a tremendous upsurge with the number of national newspapers increasing in circulation, television news channels have multiplied in numbers. There are more than 25 national news channels and more than 70 national newspapers and magazines now delivering news and happenings across India and the entire globe every minute. Be it Arnab Goswami interviewing Rahul Gandhi in “Times Now” or spin doctors from various political parties taking part in a debate in the “Prime Time”, news channels television has always been a front runner in providing information related to almost every happening.

The media affects people's perspective. Too much intervention of media in everything is a matter of concern. Media can be considered as "watch dog" of political democracy. Through the ages, the emphasis of media on news has camouflaged. Media these days, tries to eye the news, which could help them to sell the information that is gathered worldwide, so that they could pave a way of success and fame of their respective channels. Fm radios, newspapers, information found on net and television are the mass medias that serve to reduce the communication gap between the audience, viewers and the media world. For the sake of publicity and selling, important figures, their lifestyles are usually targeted. Unimportant and irrelevant news, that usually have no importance are given priority and due to a reason or the other, they get onto the minds of the viewers and in this ways many a times, important political, economical and sociological news get neglected and gradually, lose their importance!

The credibility of Indian media is fast eroding, as the country's media has been criticized time and again by the world audience for its sensationalism. The way Indian media manipulates the news and portrays the information in a twisted manner has seen the country

drop three places in the recent World Press Freedom Index.

The need for an independent and control-free press is really essential in a vibrant democracy like India. The Indian government's stance on the role media has been hotly debated, ever since our constitution makers started framing the Indian Constitution. In a diverse country like India, it is difficult to have detailed legislation on the role of media in the democracy, as was pointed out by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. News Broadcasters Association (NBA) is a government body that has laid down the guidelines to be followed by media houses, to disseminate the information across the audience. The guidelines focus on ensuring credible news reaches out to the public with impartiality and objectivity.

With the intrusion of corporate, politics and industrialists into the media industry, the art of portraying unbiased facts and honest opinions has changed a lot. Nowadays, news channel have become more concerned with TRPs than providing relevant news. Consequently, there are many important and relevant news items that are not shown by media, while the irrelevant bits are repeatedly telecasted by many news channels. For instance, there were news channels that were repeatedly telecasting the

death of Sridevi and her 'incarnation' in the form of a young and beautiful girl. During the time of Guru Ram Rahim's conviction, news channels continuously discussed his relationship with Honeypreet. Likewise, there is a list of irrelevant news that diverts our attention from the highly important issues.

Eventually, this is leading to the loss of credibility of the Indian media. We can see this in the press freedom rankings, where India ranks 136 out of 180 countries, when it comes to press freedom. The public is also losing its trust of the mainstream media – and the news shown by them often create lot of chaos and confusion among viewers, when they try to distinguish between authentic and fake news. However, there are some news anchors who still show the relevant news in an unbiased manner -but their numbers are either very less or they are using YouTube and social media to still keep the spirit of journalism alive.

Using media and journalism for TRPs, favoritism and to create a false mirror of the world (through irrelevant and fake news) and by restricting press freedom is very disturbing indeed.

For reference:-

- <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/government/medias-role-in-indian-democracy>
- <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2018/05/embedded-media-dangerous-for-democracy/>
- <http://www.shareyouressays.com/essays/essay-on-the-role-of-media-in-the-modern-world/7704>
- <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/media/the-important-roles-of-media-and-the-society-media-essay.php>
- <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/the-new-media-s-role-in-politics/>

Suggestion for extra reading:-

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/11/opinion/sunday/extinction-endangered-species-biodiversity.html>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/12/the-guardian-view-on-abortion-protecting-a-human-right>
- <https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/opinion/editorials/editorial-this-report-is-for-the-birds-311787/>
- <https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/opinion/editorials/editorial-community-leaders-find-solutions-not-excuses-313239/>