

MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN POLITICS

DR. Jahangeer Ahmad Bhat*

Guest Faculty in the Department of Political Science
Govt. PG College Rajouri (J&K)

Abstract:

Indian politics has witnessed a spin of change over a period of time and to interact with the people makes it completely dependent on media the one way or the other experiencing the fellow democracies and its effect. The history of mass media emanated from man struggle for liberty and freedom, which include freedom of expression, freedom to write and express oneself. To borrow a leaf from Jakande Lateef, a veteran journalist has argued that, “the Press is more important than the other functions of government for none of them has so ramifying an influence and great a power on the daily lives of millions of people”. Citizens learn about politics and government primarily from television and newspapers. These media outlets can influence voters not only through the slant of a particular report, but also merely by choosing which stories to cover. The primary aim of this paper is to critically examine the impact of media on Indian politics.

Key Points:

Media, Politics, Democracy, Freedom, Government.

Objectives of the Study:

- To study how Media is an imperative forum for Politicians to grab attention of the voters;
- To study how Indian citizens genuinely uses their right to opinion;
- To know how far Indian Media is impartial.

Research Methodology:

Most of the existing published material pertaining to the topic has been studied in order to extract pieces of information that were found relevant for the Research work. Along with that, historical method has been used to have in-depth insight for the background and nature of the work.

Introduction:

Indian politics has observed a whirl of change over the period of time and its dependency over social media to connect with people experiencing the fellow democracies and its effect. Over its diversified nature, 40% of its total population constitutes of Indian youth and concerning to the popular culture, Indian political parties are holding to internet and social media to connect with youth for their agenda and political events. Observing the famous 2014 general elections of India, social media was the battle field of various political campaigns and tremendous flow of varied political opinions.

It is no hide truth, that youth of this generation is highly invested in politics and the round of ideas around it. Social media has become a platform of voiced opinions and charges and even though politicians for their campaigns still use posters, cut-outs, fliers and graffiti for their valley, but becoming digital and being attentive over digital platform has changes the picture or urban India and politics. As per various surveys

and reports, after 2014 elections, 2-5% of budget is set for every elections political campaign on social media (which is roughly around 400-500 crores for major leading national parties (Paul, Kegan, (2015).

We're living in the age where media affects our lives more than anything else. Also, there is this constant need of being in touch with everything that is happening around the world and at this point, the media plays a very integral part. It tells us everything about the entire world and that is what we usually base our opinion on. Whether it is a rape that happened in Delhi or the Syrian crisis, we end up thinking exactly what the media tells us to think about.

Affecting opinions:

The media, as told earlier, has this capability of affecting a person's opinion about the happenings in the world. Most of the times, it is more about the way a story is told that makes it worse than the actual mishap, and this where the Indian media has gone wrong the most. They tend to blow things totally out of proportion to get their share of profits, oblivious to the fact that this very act is making the country poorer in their ability of decision making.

Sensationalism:

Since the era of sensationalism has started, the entire country has been engulfed by it and this has made people's appetite for masala news grow. The youth and the nation want to see or hear things that are controversial, which will result in a heated discussion and something that quenches the thirst of the news channels for more drama and hence, more TRPs. This sort of news telling leaves very little space for ethical journalism which is now almost extinct.

Viewer's Discretion:

The only good thing, however, that has come out of this sort of media functioning is that a few sensible viewers have started exercising their discretion while watching the news and hence, not agreeing with whatever is being shown. They know that not everything told by the media is the absolute truth and that if one wants to lead a normal, unbiased life, they will have to choose from the ocean of news which is out there only to make the situation a lot worse. This has made the youth more sensible as to what should be accepted and what should be ignored.

The youth or the entire country, for that matter, depends largely on the media to show them the true picture of whatever has been happening around the world. Lately, the media shows everything but that and this is why it has influenced the people's lives in a more negative way than positive. It is because of this that the media is losing its credibility and is now being detested by most of the people. The competition for higher TRP is leading to bad quality news and has made journalism seem like a bad profession. People have started looking down upon the media due to a few people and this can very easily be changed if the youth is willing to do so. Let's see how far the youth goes to change what they don't like about the Indian media.

Freedom of Media and Indian Constitution:

Constitution is said to be the basic or the fundamental document of a country and it is living document. The Indian Constitution considered being the lengthiest Constitution of the world confers certain rights of its individual and on its individual. Freedom of speech and expression is one such right which the citizens are

entitled to. In a broader analysis, the freedom of speech and expression also included freedom media. Before going to details of freedom of media as guaranteed under the Constitution of India it is necessary to understand right to freedom of speech and expression (Sridhar, Madhabhusi, 2007). The citizen enjoys certain rights as mentioned above in democratic system. Freedom of speech and expression is considered as sacred right and is to be the prized privilege of the citizens. Art. 19(1)(a) of the Constitution protect and guarantees right of freedom of speech and expression to all citizens (The Constitution of India, Article 19(1)(a)). However this right is not an absolute right and certain restrictions are also imposed. Indian Constitution by guarantees freedom of speech and expression has given the people of India the liberty to express their opinion because it is cherished goal of every individual in a civilized society (Ghosh, Subir, 1991)

In the words of Justice A.N. Sen these rights are instinctive and natural right of every human being. According to him, “this freedom of speech and expression, which is indeed a natural right as expressed in different ways under different circumstances, various in its nature. The freedom of expression is the birth right of every living creature and is indeed a gift of nature.” Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression includes freedom of media (Masani M.R, 1979).

Media users and politics:

Over its diversified nature, 40% of Indian population constitutes youth and concerning to the popular culture, Indian political parties are holding to internet and social media to connect with youth for their agenda and political event.

One such survey conducted by TCS with the name of “TCS GenY Survey 2012-13” targeted the ‘Post-Millennial’ generation. It included responses of more than 17,000 students of age group 12-18 years from urban high schools spread across 14 cities all over India. The main findings included:

- Used by above 65% of the respondents, Mobile phones emerged as the favorite gadget of the youths.
- 18% of the youth’s access internet through mobile phones, which is only next to their internet, uses at home (72%).
- One in every four youngster’s access internet for more than 60 minutes on daily basis while above 50% do so for 30+ minutes every day.
- 73.65% youngsters use internet for academic research work, more than 62% use it for social media activities such as chat/connect/blog.

Nowadays, to gain voters, politicians can’t just focus on opinion, government projects and tax reduction plans because it doesn’t attract the attention of a user scrolling down on Facebook or Twitter.

Conclusion:

For media owners, the youthful segment of the world population is an irresistible target. Its sheer size and homogeneity in terms of basic tendencies makes young people the primal focus of television, print and Internet strategies. Along the way, the media promotes idealistic paradigms of politico-socio-economic behavior. To grab attention, political candidates have resorted to dynamic and fresh material, such as videos, to communicate their government plans and encourage the target audience to vote. This also gives them the chance to have a modern image that appeals to younger audiences.

As it has been rightly pointed out by A.D. Gorwala, “The press educates in two ways mainly, by giving the latest news along with its background and an analysis. Its duty is to give whole news without bias, selectivity or distortion. But the real glory of any press is to be found in its most educative part that is to provide sound comments upon public life in all its aspects. This should be „task of the press, source of its power”

References:

1. Ghosh,Subir, 1991, “Mass Media” Today, Calcutta, p, 42
2. <https://www.armcommunications.com/blog/Social%20Media%20and%20its%20Impact%20on%20Indian%20Politics>
3. <https://www.google.com/amp/www.indianyouth.net/influence-of-media-on-youth/amp>
4. Kegan, Paul, 2015, "Journal of Politics". Cambridge Library,p.17
5. Masani M.R, 1979, Edited by, A.G. Noorani “The Importance of Free Press in a Democracy.” Freedom of the press in India, , Bombay, Nachiketha Publications, P.69
6. Sridhar,Madhabhusi, 2007, The Law of Expression, An Analytical Commentary on Law for Media 3, 22, Asia Law House, Hyderabad,p.28
7. The Constitution of India, Article 19(1)(a)