

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IS VITAL IN ENSURING DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT: *Media is the most important vital element for dissemination of information. The role of media has become extremely critical for smooth functioning of democracy as it helps in forming public opinion on vital topics. This is the reason why Media is termed as the fourth estate as it is not a non state element aimed at protecting citizens. All forms of media have a specific set of followers and therefore, they together ensure better governance. The active and vigilant participation of mass media is essential in a democratic society. It is an important assumption that the Media speaks for the people, represents the interests of the society, and serves as a check on the government. Independent, free and pluralistic media have a crucial role to play in the good governance of democratic societies, by ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting participation and the rule of law, and contributing to the fight against poverty. Good governance may be impeded by the blight of corruption, which disrupts the free flow of information, undermines accountability for decisions and discourages greater participation in the decision-making process. Accurate and professional reporting is often the only recourse that society has to combat corruption. Journalists need the support of the larger society to eliminate hindrances to accurate reporting. Government measures to control the media, either directly or indirectly, have many motivations but ultimately they have a common outcome, namely, democracy as a practice or an aspiration is undermined. This paper aims to make an attempt to highlight that the role of media is vital in ensuring democracy and good governance and also explain the key aspects and its challenges .*

Keywords: *Good governance, democracy, media, accountability and corruption.*

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is the government which rest on the active consent of the governed . In the day-to-day life of a busy journalist, publisher, broadcaster or media owner, it is easy to overlook the fundamental principles that are at stake when going about one's work. Newsroom or broadcasting studio constraints include deadlines, squeezed budgets, limited electronic and library resources, demanding managers, distribution difficulties and draconian media laws, to say nothing of news subjects who are often wary of journalists, if not overtly hostile. This makes for a challenging work environment, and it is easy for journalists to lose sight of the big picture. The big picture is that the work of journalists reflects how we as humans interact with each other, and is a measure of how well our society is functioning. The principles of interaction that apply to us as individuals are carried through and apply to how broader social institutions, such as the media and government, interact with each other. You can tell a lot about the state of a country's governance, as well as its commitment to democracy and economic and social development, by looking at whether it respects its citizens and its media. This handbook unpacks the internationally developed standards and best practice models of democratic media regulation. It examines universally agreed norms for democratic media and democratic broadcasting regulations, as well as the standards for imposing restrictions upon, or otherwise regulating, media content.

The terms "governance" and "good governance" are not new concepts. In fact the idea of good governance has been practicing since the Aristotle period. Now the concept of good governance has become a donor driven idea. Indeed, more and more importance is attached to the notion of good governance. At present context media can play an important role in ensuring good governance, especially, in developing countries where alternative sources of information are scarce. The media constitute the fourth pillar of democracy. The role of media in generating a democratic culture that extends beyond the political system and becomes ingrained in the public consciousness over time. Media is supplying the political information that voters base their decision on. They identify problems in our society and serve as a deliberation. They also serve as watchdogs that we rely on for overcoming errors and wrongdoings by those who have power. The watchdog function of media is essential in a democratic society where people must know what their governments are doing. The primary democratic function of the media is to act as a check on the state. The media should observe the activities of the state, and fearlessly expose exploitations of official authority. It is an important assumption is that the Media speaks for the people, represents the interests of the society, and serves as a check on the government. This process holds government accountable; makes visible what it is doing, so that people can judge. Through this function the media helps to ensure good governance in a democratic system. Good governance entails the principles of transparency, accountability and participation.

MEDIA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The role of the media in promoting good governance is clear. All aspects of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent medias cape within a society. Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration's policies and actions can good governance take hold. Independent media are like a beacon that should be welcomed when there is nothing to hide and much to improve. Indeed, this is the concrete link between the functioning of the media and good governance--the media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the population of the activities of government and assist in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion. Instead, all too often governments devise laws and informal means of keeping their activities hidden from public view or only available to media favorable to their viewpoint. In recent years, many governments have tried to co-opt journalists by paying part of their salaries or by giving them certain kinds of access on condition that they will not report from other perspectives. If the media are to function in the public interest, governments have to protect the independent functioning of the media and allow various viewpoints to flourish in society.

WHY IS MEDIA RELEVANT FOR GOVERNANCE ?

Sustainable and successful democracies require more than elections, the existence of an independent judiciary and other democratic institutions and even a free press. They require the existence of an established, legitimate relationship between state and citizen. Such relationships are dynamic, complex and take many forms, but they depend in large part on how state and citizens communicate with each other. For governments to be accountable, responsive and effective, citizens need opportunities to communicate their perspectives and needs not only through the ballot box but also between elections. Political processes are – essentially - communication processes, ongoing dialogues between people, parties, pressure groups and governments. For men and women to be engaged citizens, they need information that allows them to exercise democratic choices. Healthy political processes therefore need open communication environments. The modern communications revolution – including the Internet and mobile phones – offers immense opportunities for people to access more information and knowledge and engage with those who govern them. But to make best use of these opportunities requires that different kinds of information, communication systems and technologies become more accessible, transparent and inclusive .

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE MEDIA

To effectively contribute to good governance, the media themselves must be a credible example of good governance concept. First the media should uphold professional ethical rules set up through self-regulation, and constantly enhance professionalism, be accountable to the public in the way way it informs, educate and entertains. In sum the media should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to the public, their profession and themselves.

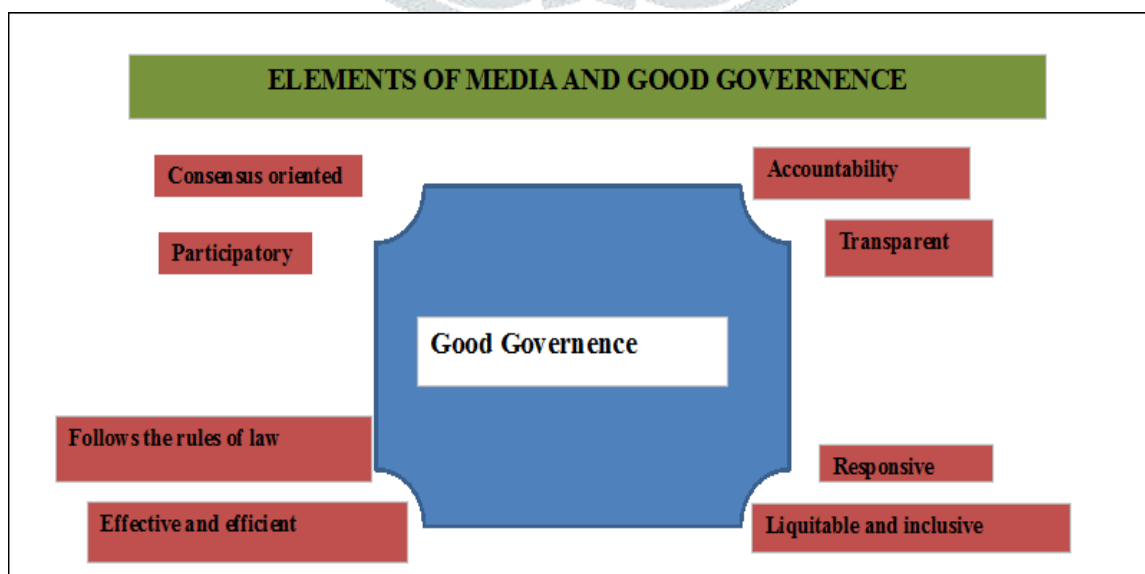
WHY MEDIA IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR INDIA ?

Since good governance comprises of accountability, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive as well as effective and efficient media has a huge role in ensuring that all of these criteria are met from time to time. Good governance has some characteristics and these characteristics are adopting new factors with the changing world. For a developing country like India which still reels with superstition, communalism and casteism, the involvement of media becomes even more important. The backward and ignorance of poor should make the media emboldened regarding their responsibility to bring them modern ideas for eliminating poverty and other social evils. Another reason why media is of paramount importance for the country is because of the immense disparity that is prevalent. Despite being one of the fastest growing economies of the world, it is ranked pathetically lower than even its neighbors in the Human Development Index. While a large number of journalists cover the more glamorous and glitzy events and news, less report on the number of deaths or the unemployment scenario.

The rationality of media lies in helping the government fight diseases such as AIDS, Polio, Cancer along with promoting latest technologies for the development of its citizens. Media should be vigilant about the laws of the country and that they are not violated by institutions of the government or any other rogue elements. In this aspect, it has demonstrated its excellence in bringing to book some of the law breakers in recent times. In fact, it has gone an extra mile by putting pressure to ensure that justice is given to victims. However, often we find that it surpasses its role of a watchdog and instead attempts to give the verdict, which is the Judiciary responsibility. A lot of governments across the world have faced charges of corruption highlighted by media and that has often led to either overthrowing of corrupt administration or bringing in more transparency into the system.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Media plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy and ensuring good governs. As an important source of information media has been functioning the role of the heart of democratic society and Good governance. According to Norris, the media has three key roles in contributing to democratization and good governance. The very vital function of media is to act as a watchdog over the powerful, promoting accountability, transparency and public scrutiny. The second important role of media is to function as a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed electoral choices and actions; and the third function is to act as an agenda-setter for policy makers, policy makers, strengthening government responsiveness for instance to social problems and to exclusion .



In their 'watchdog' role, the media can play an important role to promote transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny of decision-makers, by highlighting policy failures, maladministration by public officials, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector . Investigative journalism can open the government's secret records to external scrutiny and critical evaluation, and hold authorities

answerable for their actions. The Media also exposes maneuvering s and abuses of fundamental human rights. It is also castigate elections rigging and offer objective assessments of the process and results of elections and offer recommendations for improvement. The media also has a critical role to mediate between the state and citizens through the debates and discussions about the major issues of the day and informing people about the stand of their leaders on such issues. If the channels of communication reflect the cultural and social pluralism and diversity of the society, in a fair and balanced manner, then only various open ion and different voices can be heard public debates. Democracy requires that people should have the right to know all the activities of the government, particularly the decisions of the government that affects their life, liberty and property. Information is very vital for people to make decisions regarding their involvement in the State and the civil society. Adequate information helps the citizens to decide sensibly and take the right course of action favorable to them. Media thus helps people to know what is happening around the world and socialize them with the values of pluralism. By publicizing information the media also make public services more responsive to the people. Media has been playing a crucial role in protection of rights by making people aware of their rights. Media also making people to vigilant on political developments in the world and helping to stimulate debate drawing attention to all social evils including the institutional failures, corruption, inefficiency and illegal activities.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

A system can be termed as a genuine and comprehensive democracy only when it fulfills both political and socio-economic aspects of people's participation and satisfaction. Let us identify those. There may be two major categories: (a) political conditions, and (b) social and economic conditions – the fulfillment of the first leads to political democracy and the second as social democracy. Obviously, the first and the foremost, are political conditions of democracy. It is essential that for a system to be democratic, we must adopt a Constitution and laws that vest supreme power in the people. The human rights and fundamental rights, such as equality, liberty of thought and expression, belief, movement, communication and association must be protected by the Constitution. The democratic system has to have universal adult franchise as the basis of electing representatives at various levels of the government. Moreover, opportunities for political participation of all the citizens not only in elections at regular interval, but also in other aspects of the political process have to be made available. A democratic system has to ensure that the social development is in tune with democratic values and norms reflecting equality of social status and opportunities for development, social security and social welfare. Citizens must avail opportunities of universal and compulsory education. They must also be enabled to utilize means of economic development. The fruits of economic development must reach all and especially to the poor and the deprived sections of the society. Socio-economic development of the people strengthens social democracy. Think over the situation in India and identify at least two political and socio- economic conditions that are present and two that are not present in Indian democracy. List the same in the table shared below. One example has already been done for you.

Condition	Category	Present/Absent
Equal pay for equal work	Socio-economic	Absent

Since independence India has been functioning as a responsible democracy. The same has been appreciated by international community. It has successfully adapted to the challenging situations. There have been free and fair periodic elections for all political of faces from the panchayats to the President. There has been smooth transfer of political power from one political party or set of political parties to others, both at national and state levels on many occasions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS CRITICAL TO DEMOCRACY

This rational is based on the notion that democracy which recognizes that people have the right to elect a government of their choosing cannot exist in any meaningful way without the right to freedom of expression. There are many expects to this rationale, but the fundamental concept is that in order for democracy to be effective, the citizenry that votes in elections and engages in public process with government must be informed and must have the right to participate freely in public discourse. If there is no freedom of expression- if people are not free to share information and express the range of ideas, opinions and political views they will not be sufficiently well informed to make appropriate and meaningful political choices, whether at the ballot box or their interactions with government more generally. The media can play a positive role on democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows

MEDIA AND SOCIETY

The media can play a positive role on democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows them to do so. They need the requisite skills for the kind of in depth reporting that a new democracy requires. There should also be mechanisms to ensure they are held accountable to the public and that ethical and professional standards are upheld. The media should also be accessible to as wide a segment of society as possible. Efforts to help the media should be directed towards: the protection of press rights, enhancing media accountability, building media capacity and democratizing media access. Building independent media in developing countries requires more than freedom of speech, skilled, skilled journalists, or strong business management skills. Enabling independent media to perform the crucial roles of being a watchdog over government and educating people about the issues that effect their lives also required supporting organizations such as trade unions and professional associations for journalists, and a public educated about these roles and responsibilities of media and their function in a democratic and open society. If a democracy is to run smoothly in any country, it is a must that the media in all fairness should be given full autonomy and a free hand it deserves in airing its view among the people and no unnecessary restrictions should be imposed on it.

On the other side, media also on its part should play a very responsible, active and neutral role in discharging its duties without being influenced by any particular political party or few individuals and should treat everyone on an equal footing. If media does not discharge its responsibility independently in any democratic country, the politicians are bound to behave like dictations. Media carries with it a huge responsibility in a democratic setup which it has to fulfill very carefully without any bias toward anyone by bringing out the real facts before the public.

DIFFERENT REACHES AND COMMON IMPACT

The evaluation of media is a fascinating journey. The print media was responsible for conveying information regarding freedom struggle of great leaders. It continues to remain popular despite fierce competition and is still the preferred medium for reaching out to

masses as well as classes. Other hand, the radio is a simple media that is portable as well. Radio wields its influence greatly in rural areas where majority may not know how to read or write. Since a large chunk of the population is still illiterate, this medium is critical for government as well who would like to communicate any urgent information such as whether related warnings. Television is a phenomenon that continues to grab the maximum eyeballs. It's a well established fact that visual medium does have the greatest impact. The presentation and catchy visuals do ensure that a large part of the country is that combines the audio and visual effects to reach out to millions of users worldwide. Unlike television or radio, one can just look at the Internet at a convenient time. The power of social media and Internet is now rife, which is the reason that the government is now increasingly focusing on the internet to reach out to a large section of the youth.

KEY ASPECTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance depends on an ability to exercise power, and to make good decisions over time, across a spectrum of economic, social, environmental and other areas. This is linked with the government's capacity for knowledge, mediation, resource allocation, implementation and maintenance of key relationships. There are many ways to define governance and good governance. However, there seems to be a general consensus that key factor include :

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and Managerial Competence • Organizational Capacity • Reliability, Predictability and the Rule of Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Transparency and Open Information Systems • Participation
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Technical and Managerial Competence

Technical and managerial competence of civil servants is an obvious factor of good governance. This may be less of a constraint than it used to be, as access to education has improved, but rapid changes require ongoing development of skills.

Organizational Capacity

Good governance has to be built on the quality of organizations so that development is based on this rather than simply relying only on political will, personal will of a strong leader and state power, which may not be sustainable over the longer term. Having skilled staff is not sufficient if the government organizations do not have the capacity to make good use of these skills. Capacity of government organizations is a key factor in the provision of many important services to businesses and the public, and in creating conditions for economic progress and social cohesion.

In other countries the problem may be a lack of regularity and discipline in the administration, often with associated corruption.

Reliability, Predictability and the Rule of Law

The rule of law refers to the institutional process of setting, interpreting and implementing laws and other regulations. It means that decisions taken by government must be founded in law and that private firms and individuals are protected from arbitrary decisions. Reliability requires governance that is free from disproportional incentives - through corruption, nepotism, patronage or capture by narrow private interest groups; guarantees property and personal rights; and achieves some sort of social stability. This provides a degree of reliability and predictability that is essential for firms and individuals to take good decisions. Reliability and predictability do not mean that the more specific the regulations are the better. Excessive specification can lead to rigidities and risk of selective application of regulations. Interpretation and effective implementation of individual regulations requires a degree of discretion. This discretion can be counterbalanced by administrative procedure legislation and external reviews of decisions (appeal mechanisms, judicial review, ombudsmen etc.). Reliability and predictability require certain degree of political stability. Governments need to be able to make credible commitments and persuade the private sector that decisions will not ultimately be reversed due to political uncertainty. While this is not necessarily related to a particular political system in the short term, over the longer term democracy enhances stability by giving a voice to citizens to express their preferences through an open competition.

Accountability

Accountability can be both an end in itself -- representing democratic values -- and a means towards the development of more efficient and effective organizations. Politicians and public servants are given enormous power through the laws and regulations they implement, resources they control and the organizations they manage. Accountability is a key way to ensure that this power is used appropriately and in accordance with the public interest. Accountability requires clarity about who is accountable to whom for what and that civil servants, organizations and politicians are held accountable for their decisions and performance. Accountability can be strengthened through formal reporting requirements and external scrutiny (such as an independent Audit Office, Ombudsmen, etc.). Democratic accountability, as represented by accountability of ministers to parliament and the parliament to voters, can be seen as objective in itself, but it also strengthens accountability in general. Many OECD countries are strengthening accountability through more focus on accountability for performance as opposed to limiting accountability to regularity of decisions.

Transparency and Open Information Systems

Transparency is an important aspect of good governance, and transparent decision making is critical for the private sector to make sound decisions and investments. Accountability and the rule of law require openness and good information so higher levels of administration, external reviewers and the general public can verify performance and compliance to law. Governments have access to a vast amount of important information. Dissemination of this information through transparency and open information systems can provide specific information that firms and individuals need to have to be able to make good decisions. Capital markets depend for example on information openness.

Participation

Participation can involve consultation in the development of policies and decision-making, elections and other democratic processes. Participation gives governments access to important information about the needs and priorities of individuals, communities and private businesses. Governments that involve the public, will be in a better position to make good decisions, and decisions will enjoy more support

once taken. While there may not be direct links between democracy and every aspect of good governance, clearly accountability, transparency and participation are reinforced by democracy, and themselves are factors in support of democratic quality.

MAJOR CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Indian democracy faces serious challenges also from casteism, communalism and religious fundamentalism. They weaken the functioning and stability of democratic system. The major challenges of democracy are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of realization about values of democracy. • princely states vanished but political dynasties started. • absence of any social or political or cultural ideology. • excessive sensitivity for the fundamental rights [without understanding of limitations thereto]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absence of sense of social responsibility. • unethical use of law for unlawful and unethical purposes. • absence of sense of social good or common good. • absence of sense of social parity. • predominance of customs and traditions over legal provisions. • religion getting priority over law.
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While evaluating India's stand amongst other countries of the world, it is revealed that India is compared favorably with many developing countries though it has long way to go to attain the level of developed countries. The criminalization of politics and corruption are two major challenges of good governance in India which need to be addressed on urgent basis. The corruption has virtually spread in almost all aspects of public life. The person lying on the street is left to struggle incessantly with corruption throughout his life. Corruption is relatively inherent in terms of client public puzzle, harassed by opaque rules and procedures, excessive delay in disposal of public matters. It not only averts the benefits of globalization to reach the common men but also denies transparency, accessibility and accountability, confuses rules and procedures, proliferate mindless control and poor commitments at all levels. Hence, there is foremost need to check corruption at all levels through raising public consciousness and strong commitments not to make dishonest compromises which would put down the moral values and ethics of life. India being the largest democratic country in the world is struggling hard to emerge as world class leader in the fields of social and economic development. However, the nexus of crime and politics is so strong that the common citizens of the country have no stand to say or exert their rights. The major challenges of Good governance are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Governance • Securing Justice • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Criminalization of politics • Corruption
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The central challenge before good governance relates to social development. In his famous 'tryst with destiny' speech on 14 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru articulated this challenge as 'the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunities'. Good governance must aim at expansion in social opportunities and removal of poverty. In short, good governance, as I perceive it, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services.

CONCLUSION

The role of media in India, the largest democracy of the world is different from merely disseminating information and entertainment. Educating the masses for their social upliftment needs to be in its ambit as well. In a country where there is large scale poverty, and unemployment. It has a role to play behind formation of public opinion which can force the political parties to address the core issues haunting the country's. It is thus referred as fourth pillar of democracy. The effective functioning of governance is the prime concern of every citizens are ready to pay the price for good services offered by the state, but what is required is transparent, accountable and intelligible governance system absolutely free from bias and prejudices. Media is essential for democracy and good governance. The role of media plays in India is not significant for the purpose like ensuring good governance. The role of media has risen over the time and it would gain more importance in the times to come as many across the world still yearn for better governance or at best governance itself and not autocratic rule. While media does highlight some of the concerns from time to time, it does not delve deeper into the real issues. The checks and balances which media ensures by reporting issues in an objective manner can go a long way in ensuring that governance by government would be fair and fruitful. The participation and understanding of every member of the society is inevitable to the function of parliamentary democracy. It is also very vital to ensure good governance. The free and fair media is the single most prerequisites of the good governance. But a large number of existing media, cannot take up this responsibility because of the market influence on media industry. In this context, the media should have to introspect whether such practices will do any advantage to the society and the media industry itself. The advertisements should be clearly apparent from editorial matters. Credibility is life air of Media. Media should realize that if it does not have integrity it will cease to exist. They should be free from any kind of influence from various pressure groups. They should be keep a distance from any kinds of political and commercial control. Above all the media should be equipped with the essential investigative power to bring out the truths to the public and discharge their functions in promoting good governance. Achieving the good governance requires the understanding and participation of every member of the society. The media, their significant roles, channels and contents, are considered to be the most powerful weapon to make this achievement a reality.

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