

## Media in Democratic Governance and Social Development

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Twenty first century is the century of knowledge. In the present world order, modern democratic nations are undergoing a state of knowledge revolution where media play a vital role. Edmund Burke, the best British Parliamentarian, rightly highlighted media as the 'fourth estate of a democracy'. In a democratic state, elimination of social evils is the principal objective of a free and independent media. It contains public grievances and reflects public opinion.

Education is the key which unlocks the door of development and modernization. Media play an instrumental role in promoting education in society. It creates social consciousness in establishing a healthy social order. A democratic set up calls for informed citizenry in which media play a significant role in ensuring good governance through transparency and accountability in the system of governance.

Where media remain silent, a totalitarian state of order emerges and continues to exist as long as people in that state of order live with a state of uncertainty, mal-administration, and mis-governance and autocratic administration where citizens are denied to enjoy their freedom and liberty. To arrest the menace of this state of order, democracy is the ultimate solution. Democracy, is the form of government, in which sovereign

power rests in the hand of the people and is exercised by them either directly or indirectly through their representatives. Democracy is the surest guaranty against arbitrary rule, despotism, unbridled and autocratic power; it is most dependable assurance of justice and individual freedom.

Development is the legitimate expectation of the citizens in a democratic set up. It is also the responsibility of the state to promote development for the well-being of the people. Most particularly, it is the responsibility of the welfare state to ensure basic survival amenities to the people such as food, clothing, shelter, health care and primary education for ensuring a good civic life to the citizen.

The media can be considered a combination of content-music, films, T.V., radio, publishing advertisements and electronic games along with the associated technological devices. Media, in common parlance, have been divided into two types such as print and electronic.

Both play a vital role in a democratic set up which resulted in establishing a technologically and intellectually advanced civilization. Socio-structural transformation in any society indicates the predominance of media and its contribution to development.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the development of mass media and the foundation of global media. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the transformation of the media is accelerating as a consequence of digitalization of the content and its global distribution over digital platform to digital devices. Traditional Radio and T.V. will continue to be the most effective ways of delivering high quality information on issues such as health care and education and of debating issues of general interest and promoting a culture of peace. (World Electronic Media of Forum 2005).

The creation and dissemination of knowledge are the key factors in the development process where the media have been instrumental as the means of storing and sharing knowledge. For instance, U.K Department for International Development (DFID) cites the effectiveness of radio in promoting development in a wide range of disparate countries including Afganisthan, Moldava and Kiribati (DFID, 2006). The well recognized functions of media are to educate, inform and entertain where the social and economic contributions of media to development depend on the nature of the content delivered. Direct benefits of development flow from educating and informing with entertainment possibly acting as a book, 'Edutainment' is a common component of development projects. The media act as a significant driver of growth in many economies. Increased access to knowledge spurs higher levels of literacy, which strengthens human capital for higher productivity. The media serve as an important contributors to social and cultural life and key components of democratic structures. These contributions to development are often deliberately embodied in the media system. For example, Article 2 of South Africa's 1999 Broadcasting Act lists 18 goals for the Act, the first 2 of which involve:

- Strengthening democracy, social development, gender equality, nation building, education provision, and the spiritual and moral fiber of society.
- Safeguarding, enriching and strengthening the country's cultural, political, social and economic fabric.

In the contest of current orientation on media revolution, IEC (Information, Education and Communication) has been accorded the highest priority. Communication can be effective through media both electronic and print for 'edutainment' (Education through Entertainment) and 'infotainment' (Information through Entertainment). Both 'edutainment' and 'infotainment' are vital for behavioral change of the society.

It creates the conditions for good governance in which transparency and accountability are two important pillars of administration which can ensure transformational development of the society. Good governance is also vital for economic development and the development dividend that it generates is considerable (World Bank 2008). Plurality and transparency influence should be both top down and bottom up and media should reach the poorest and disadvantaged sections of the society and should play a catalyst role to accord the basic survival amenities to the poorest section of the society and to minister the most immediate needs of the people who are by-passed from developmental intervention. Media as the promoter of public opinion help create conducive atmosphere for healthy democratic order.

In India, newspapers have undeniably a vital role to play and an important duty to perform both as 'vox pupili'. (Voice of the people) and a builder of the public opinion. The media can be used for disseminating information and imparting

education to illiterate masses. The Press can perform its true role as a guardian of the public interest, a watchdog and a source of all kinds of information.

With the dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, human society has witnessed the emergence of an era of high-tech multi revolution and globalization of economic activities. We have tremendous progress in the fields of science, technology, education, commerce, industries and related fields. In this context, we can observe that the contribution of media to development has not yet achieved the degree of recognition that it deserves. However, this intellectual offspring in highlighting its role will assist in rising awareness, understanding and visible contribution of media to governance and development. Media show the way how to protect the society from all types of evils, discrimination and malpractices. A corruption free transparent social order will pave the way to development. Both print and electronic media in modern society ensures good governance where citizen's rights are well protected and documented.

Media as a vigilant checks inordinate delays in redressing people's grievances and find out the source of delay, unrest and corruption. It is the linking point between the government and

the public in eliciting public opinion regarding functional efficiency of the organs such as the executive, legislature and judiciary of the state. It should be involved in constructive criticisms to bring reformation by checking irregularities and discrepancies of any type. Its role in performance auditing of the governing institutions and also in shaping the public opinion is highly remarkable. However, it has the moral responsibility of being unbiased. The Press Council in India was set up under Act 37 of 1978 to safeguard the freedom of press to maintain and improve the standard of newspapers and news agencies.

The significance of media in democratic governance can be judged for its impartial and unbiased character which accords foremost priority on individual freedom and liberty. At the same time, it is also the high time for the media to undergo an assessment of its specialized function in democracy of H J Laski's famous dictum that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty'.

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