

---

## Mediated Politics – The Amity of Politics and Media Houses

*<sup>1</sup>Gopagani Sreenija*

### Abstract

News media is one among the most powerful tools of communication which plays a key role in building a nation's strong, rational and healthy society by informing and empowering the citizens. It has the ability to shape the opinions and thoughts of the citizens and it is believed that the media has the power to make or break the Government. On the other hand, Politics has become a 'power' play where they use the tactics of *Sam-Dhan-Bedh-Dhand* to induce and persuade people in this democratic country to grab the administrative power. But when media shakes hand with politics for power instead of doing its duty, it becomes dangerously powerful making people pawns and democracy a joke in their power-play.

*Key words: Media, politics, mediated politics, media ownership, corporate media, political ownership of mediahouses.*

---

*Corresponding Author:-*

*<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Research Scholar (UGC JRF), Department of Journalism & Mass Communication  
Osmania University, Hyderabad. Email- sreenijagopagani@gmail.com*

### Introduction

Modern day politics in India is intertwined with media; to simply put it can be termed as 'Mediated Politics'. Every one of us experiences it on a daily basis through one or the other form of media is it print or electronic. The content that is broadcasted and in turn consumed by the viewers has a direct impact on the public opinion. This broadcasted content is very critical for a vibrant democracy. This is the information that can keep the democracy alive helping the dissent to thrive. To understand or analyse any democracy in modern day perspective, a study about the media reporting and interpreting political issues and events is very important. This is the way how media creates a political discourse and in turn shapes the public opinion. So, we can simply say that media and politics are so closely knit that it has become the

key pillar to politics and public life in the new age democracy.

Media, with this mammoth influence to make or break a democracy has a prime responsibility to fulfill its function of bringing information to the forefront and not to cater any specific interests. Media can shape the nation in both positive and negative ways. If the motives and interests behind political decisions are obscured, it is going to have negative impact, where as if welfare of the people is involved in that decision making process, it would make that democracy more people participatory and people centric there by impacting in a positive way.

### **Objective of the study**

However, new media has more powerful tool for communication and ability to strengthening democracy but in the recent times a new worrying trend of media coming under the radar for drifting away from its prime responsibility is being observed. To understand this worrying trend, the equation of media and political governance has to be studied in detail. The study analyzing this trend, and provide new insight for the equation of media and political governance.

### **Discussion and analysis**

Indian media market is highly concentrated and contested. With the evolution of new technologies and changing dynamics media organizations face a myriad of problems from commercial pressures to cultural and political constraints and ever-changing professional practices. These changing boundaries can lead to different patterns of agenda setting by various organizations. This in turn also determines the openness or rigidity in terms of media access which is one of the key measures of power and equality. This also affects the patterns of ownership and the opinions expressed.

Power and media association is not new. Over the years media way not only used as a potent tool to manufacture public consent but also to control dissent. By directly imposing strict laws, the scope of media reporting can be limited. Sometimes influence through state funding for advertisements is also seen.

Now-a-days an emerging trend of covertly owning the media is seen which is a very subtle way of limiting the media to discharge its duties of critical

reporting and informing the public thereby controlling the political discourse. This is nothing but forcing the media to go through self-censorship with the pressure strategy. The complexities in this type of ownership are many and the outcomes are crucial for the functioning of a democracy. This trend has reached to an alarming level that before consuming a news some of us question ourselves 'who is presenting'. This is obviously a bad news with respect to the media ethics but now and in future will be a boon for democracy where misinformation being passed as information. Over the last decade, there has been a significant change with respect to the Indian media structure. With new age technologies making inroads, the industry is abuzz in terms of number of outlets in print, TV. Though this trend is so impressive, but the outcomes attached with this have thrown up new challenges not only to the media industry but also to a healthy democracy. People with access to the power corridors have either wholly setup their businesses or have turned as inventory and owning the outlets partially. In any of the case a clear influence in the way news is presented is being seen. The pressure tactics associated with it is wide known and the bias in reporting, coverage, analysis in that atmosphere is becomes inevitable.

A research project Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) carried out by reporters without borders provides a clear picture of Indian media landscape and their owners. This helps us understand who is the real boss controlling the news flow. In this survey it clearly states that "India is one of the biggest media markets in the world. However, the concentration of ownership of media shows that a handful of people own and control Indian media. Our research captures ownership structures and reflects on media pluralism. This is an important initiative to strengthen media ownership transparency which is fundamental to media's credibility and its relationship with audiences. This project serves as a useful data and resource base for future media research in the country", said Syed Nazakat, founder and CEO of Data LEADS. This report also finds that though the media outlets are huge in number it does not represent a pluralistic landscape. This simply boils down to a point that vastness doesn't cater to the variety in supply but a significant concentration.

In this study it clearly spells out the delicate handshake of media and politics. To understand this let us see a few examples from print and electronic.

- Zee news which is among the top four news channels in Hindi is owned by Zee Media Corporation Ltd. Its co-owner Dr. Subash Chandra is an independent member of Rajyasabha, elected with the help of BJP.
- Rajeev Chandrashekar, a BJP Rajyasabha MP is an investor in Asianet News Group, which has presence in seven languages, through his Jupiter Capital Pvt Ltd. Previously he pioneered the Republic TV.
- Kalanithi Maran, chairman of Sun Network, is son of Senior DMK leader Murasoli Maran and grandnephew of former Tamilnadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.
- News Live is owned by Pride East Entertainments Pvt. Ltd. whose majority stake is owned by Rinky Bhuyan Sarma, wife of Himant Biswa Sarma, the Chief Minister of Assam.
- Odisha TV operates under the leadership of Baijayant Panda, a former Loksabha MP and National Vice President of BJP.
- HT Media Limited chairperson Shobhana Bhartia, a former MP from Indian National Congress.
- Mahendra Mohan Gupta, owner of Dainik jagran group of newspapers, is a former MP from Samajwadi Party.
- Supriya Sule, Director of Sakal Media Group is a former MP from National Congress Party.
- Vijay Darda, the CEO and Rajesh Darda, the Editor-in-Chief of Lokmat are former Members of Parliament and associated with Indian National Congress.
- Namaste Telangana, published by Telangana Publications Pvt. Ltd. owned by K. Chandrashekhar Rao, Chief Minister of Telangana.
- Sakshi Media group is owned by Y.S. Bharati, wife of AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

This clearly shows both National and regional media are controlled by the 'powerful people'. These media organizations being mammoth and having huge viewership and circulations, their implications in shaping a public opinion are more. This controlling of media by the power corridors or political parties has come as a handy tool to manufacture public opinion and stifling the political discourse. This political capture of media, which is not directly visible puts the people at margins of society at a greater risk and they will become the tools of politicization in the garb of social, political, economic and even religious justice.

This scenario has led to a scuffle between media and governance sometimes

even fed into each other. Civil liberties suspension, communal polarization and assertions etc. spells a very claim for democracy have far reaching consequences.

Media has opened up the space for marginalized. They have become participants and raised their voices against injustice and fought for their rights. This enabled their participation in governance which otherwise is not possible. Media which has been a liberating force since independence has started to now behave a tool to stifle to discourse and limit the freedom of opinion. Vested interests are taking the center stage limiting the real interests of the people. Though this political ownership of media is the least appreciated factors that appear to be a threat to free press and the ethics of journalism, its consequences have a direct bearing on the democracy where news room agendas are set by a politician whose political interests are the top priority. As the saying goes, everything is fair in love, war and politics, the agenda set by such politician can never be fair to the downtrodden and marginalized who look up to the media as a ray of hope. According to Free Press Unlimited the ownership of media by people having vested political interests by enabled the government “to develop a centralized information strategy that amounts to a modern form of propaganda whereby all-important media are speaking a similar vocabulary, demonizing the same enemies, and presenting the same arguments in support of the leadership’s actions”.

Indian laws neither restrict nor ban political ownership in print or television. There is no mandatory requirement for owners to disclose their political affiliations either. This arises the need for regulating the political capture of media.

### **Conclusion**

Though power and media association is not new, but the present trends are a bit worrying. Media which was once a powerful medium to present the voice of downtrodden or the voices that are unheard to is now being turned against those voices so as to scuffle the dissent against the government. With the political bosses taking over the ownership the news room agendas which were once public centric now has turned into person, party centric. The ethics or values that are the backbone of journalism are now rendering the media spineless. Call it politicized media or mediated politics it has reduced the present day media to a mere tool at voicing the vested interest of the political

boss.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors are thankful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their handy suggestions to improve the quality of the article.

### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **References**

1. Democracy on the Road: A 25 Year Journey Through India by Ruchir Sharma, Penguin Books, 2019.
2. Dynamics of Political Communication Media and Politics in a Digital Age by Richard M.Perloff, Taylor and Francis, 2018.
3. I am a Troll by Swathi Chaturvedi, Juggernaut Books, 2016.
4. Media and Politics: An Introduction by Wayne Errington and Narelle Miragliotta, Oxford University Press, 2007.
5. Politics of Media by Ranjith Thankappan, Kalpaz Publications, 2015.
6. Politics of the Media by Ian Ward, Paul & Co Pub Consortium, 1994.
7. Power, Press and Politics: Half a Century of Journalism and Politics by Alok Mehta, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
8. Press in Chains by Zamir Niazi, Ajanta Publications, 1987.
9. The Media and Political Process by Louw Eric, SAGE Publications, 2005.