

ROLE OF MEDIA IN ENSURING GOOD GOVERNANCE: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Today, media is acknowledged as a watchdog, a protector of public interests, and a fourth pillar of democracy. Media organizations are typically viewed as crucial to democracies, yet the effectiveness of their performance in this role is a subject of investigation. Media's influence can serve to strengthen democracy. It can serve as a tool to connect rulers and the ruled. In India, the world's largest democracy, the media's role extends beyond just providing information and entertainment. In a nation facing widespread poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, the media has an obligation to practice developmental journalism. It plays a role in shaping public opinion that can compel political parties to tackle the fundamental issues hindering the country's advancement.

INTRODUCTION

Media serves as the fourth pillar of democracy. Yet, vested interests can influence public opinion to benefit their own objectives.

Governance applies to various contexts, including corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance. Governance refers to the process of making decisions as well as the means by which those decisions are executed. Therefore, an examination of governance centers on both the formal and informal participants engaged in decision-making and the execution of those decisions, including the established formal and informal systems designed to reach and carry out the decisions. The government is one of the participants in governance. Different entities engaged in governance change according to the level of government being discussed. In rural regions, for instance, other participants might comprise significant landowners, groups of farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research organizations, faith leaders, financial institutions, political parties, the military, and so forth. Conversely, the context in urban settings is considerably more intricate. At the national level, besides the mentioned actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multinational companies, etc., can impact decision-making or influence the decision-making process. All participants except for the government and the military are categorized collectively as "civil society." In certain nations, besides civil society, organized crime groups also impact decision-making, especially in cities and at the national scale.

Management

The word "governance" pertains to the process of making decisions and the methods by which those decisions are executed (or not). In any system, the government is the primary player, yet others can affect the process. Non-state entities, including religious and tribal leaders, civil organizations, large property holders, labor unions, banking institutions, the armed forces, and community organizations can have significant impacts.

The following characterize a good system of governance:

- Participatory—encouraging wide citizen participation in decision-making;

- Consensus-orientated—attempting to reach decisions based on widespread agreement;
- Transparent—being open to scrutiny in decision-making processes;
- Responsive—listening and responding to the needs of its citizens;

Democracy:

Democracy in general terms is understood to be a form of government which is subject to popular sovereignty. It ensures that citizens make responsible, informed, choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. And information serves a “checking function” by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them. A democratic system can run to its paramount potential when there is extensive participation on the part of mass which is not possible without people getting informed about various issues. This is where media steps in.

A list of the core characteristics of democracy includes

- People’s sovereignty.
- Rule of law.
- Social and political equality.
- Elected government by means of universal adult franchise.
- Free and open competition for political positions and institutions.
- Periodic elections for legitimizing government.
- Fundamental rights and civil liberties.
- Multi-party system, independent judiciary and free media.

Media:

As a tool, media signifies communication - be it written, broadcast, or oral. Typically, the term ‘communication’ refers to the sharing of information and messages. Mass Media refers to a segment of the media specifically created to target a broad audience. Free media is a crucial component of a successful democracy. The media possesses a remarkable capacity to serve as a catalyst in societal endeavors to enhance democratic governance. Various forms of mass media have impacted human life in numerous ways. Having maintained its status for a significant duration, print media continues to be viewed as the genuine form of mass communication.

In addition to delivering news and opinions, Radio and Television have also cultivated a talent for entertainment. The latest type of media, referred to as new media, utilizing the internet, has certainly enabled the global distribution of information and ideas in real time. Through broadcasting differing perspectives and participating in cross-examination on important national and social matters, the media mirrors and educates public opinion, essentially collaborating with the responsibilities of parliament.

Media and Governance

Mass media and democracy are consistently interconnected. Media reflects society, and the level of democracy within a society can be illustrated through media. Opinion leaders shape public perception of political leaders and the political system in any nation. Therefore, media plays a key part in bolstering democracy.

Media and democracy are closely linked. Nations with robust democracies consistently possess independent and resilient media. As a 'watchdog', the media can enhance government transparency and accountability, encouraging public examination of those in power. By bringing attention to policy failures, public officials' misconduct, judicial corruption, and corporate scandals, the media serves as a reflection.

Governance in India

India adopted its constitution on 26th November 1949 and became a Democratic Republic on 26th January 1950. Since that time, our country has developed into the largest democracy. Our nation adheres to the federal parliamentary form of governance. In line with the trias politica framework, the government has separated its authority into three autonomous entities.

Legislative authority lies with Parliament, executive authority is granted to the President, and judicial authority is the duty of the Supreme Court. Though these three operate within their own boundaries, they possess unique powers to oversee one another in order to maintain a balance of authority. The primary emphasis of the political landscape in India consistently revolves around the legislative institutions.

Ultimately, it is the politicians selected by the citizens as their representatives, and all the plans, policies, laws, and actions are assessed and approved under their guidance. The growth of our country as an economy heavily relies on their choices.

Since India became an independent nation, its political history has been filled with scandals, corrupt practices, and controversies. Our progress has been impeded to such a degree that modern countries such as Israel and China, established in 1948 and 1949 respectively, are significantly more advanced than India in development. Israel has also achieved the status of a developed nation.

Characteristics of Good Governance

(i). Participation

All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.

(ii). Rule of law

Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

(iii). Transparency

Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

(iv). Responsiveness

Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.

(v). Consensus orientation

Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.

(vi). Equity

All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

(vii). Effectiveness and efficiency

Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.

(viii). Strategic vision

Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

Principles of Good Governance:

- Participation
- Rule of law
- Transparency
- Responsiveness
- Equity and Inclusiveness
- Consensus oriented
- Accountability
- Effectiveness and Efficiency

It also makes sure that both the present and future needs of society are met and fulfilled. Good Governance is very important in the public sector because especially when one is dealing with the money of the public as well as the trust in which they elected a government that will fulfill their needs and stays for their best.

The press or Media as a public watchdog

This watchdog role can take many forms depending on the nature of the medium concerned, as well as on the state of democracy and development in a particular country. Essentially, this role is to provide information – to be the ‘eyes and ears’ of the public in monitoring what is happening in public life by reporting on daily events as they unfold.

(a). Reporting on government

When one thinks of the press as watchdog, one thinks of the press as reporting on the happenings of government. In and of itself ‘reporting on government’ is a huge task. It involves reporting on the programmes and activities of the three branches of government:

- ❖ **The legislature:** Its activities include not only deliberating upon and passing legislation, but also important committee work, overseeing the executive’s operations and being the body to which public authorities are generally accountable.
- ❖ **The executive:** Its activities include the day-to-day management of government. The activities of all ministries and government departments fall under the auspices of the executive, which is essentially the ‘engine room’ of governance in a country.
- ❖ **The judiciary:** These are the courts – that is, the administration of justice within a country. The media needs to be able to communicate judgments and court proceedings.

(b). Reporting on economic development

Economic issues can be as important as political ones; hence, a watchdog press also needs to report on economic developments and news. While these will often overlap with government-related reporting (for example, when covering issues such as interest rates, unemployment figures, gross domestic product figures, the budget, development projects or the use of international donor aid), this is not necessarily the case. Often economic issues involve the private sector, and a watchdog press will need to be able to report on the activities of major corporations and concerns in all spheres of the economy, including mining and/or oil operations, agriculture, manufacturing and services. In doing so, it is important for the press to keep the public informed about the side-effects of economic activity, such as the actions of polluting companies.

(c). Reporting on social issues

The press also needs to be able to report accurately on the social life of the nation. This means covering artistic and cultural happenings and sporting events, as well as social trends and developments that impact on the daily life of all, including children, the youth, the elderly and the disabled.

(d). The press as detective

This ‘press as detective’ role is evidenced when the press is able to engage in fairly long-term, detailed, in-depth investigative journalism – the kind that is able to report to the public on large-scale systematic wrongdoing by public (or indeed private) officials, which may include nepotism, corruption, fraud or other kinds of criminality. These exposés often rely on more than one journalist and require the backup of the media publication or outlet (be it broadcasting or print) as a whole to provide the necessary resources for the investigative exercise.

Independent civil society and Media

“Civil society” refers to the non-governmental and, usually, non-profit sectors.

- Civil society includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as community associations, trade unions, professional leagues, religious and advocacy groups. It also describes the activity that occurs between the government and individual citizens.
- Civil society is critical to the development of a democracy because it can represent the views of citizens, hold elected officials accountable to the population and monitor democratic institutions (see chapter on civil society).

From a governance standpoint, the laws and legal procedures developed for the registration of NGOs is also of critical importance. In many cases, the legal framework acts as an obstacle to the establishment of independent NGOs and becomes a vehicle for the government’s control of civil society.

Role of media in democracy and Good Governance

Good governance is an indeterminate term used to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)”. Good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. Its not about making ‘correct’ decisions but about the best possible process for making those decision. The concept of “good governance” centres around the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society.

- a. Media usually refers to mass media, which is any medium that provides citizens with information regarding all the current affairs of any area at a large scale. It is unbiased reporting of facts through print, television, radio or Internet.
- b. Traditionally and constitutionally, the media has no defined role in governance. It doesn't have the power to change any decisions made by the various arms of a state—the legislature, executive and the judiciary. Yet, the media plays one of the most important roles in the functioning of any society. It amplifies the voice of citizens and communicates their opinions to the lawmakers.
- c. Access to information is essential for a democratic society because it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation and information also serves a checking function. It is well known that media overlaps other functional areas of democracy and governance.
- d. The rule of law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.
- e. If media is to have any meaningful role in democracy and governance it must be free and independent from the control of government. The ultimate goal of media is to serve the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through a greater number of outlets and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one outlet.
- f. Television and radio have made a significant achievement in educating rural illiterate masses in making them aware of all the events in their language. Coverage of exploitative malpractices of village heads and moneylenders has helped in taking stringent actions against them by attracting government attention.
- g. The media also exposes loopholes in the democratic system, which ultimately helps government in filling the vacuums of loopholes and making a system more accountable, responsive and citizen-friendly. A democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru called media '*the watch dog of our democracy*'. This handed the media a huge responsibility in the functioning of our society. Thus media plays the role of communicator in democracy. They make people aware and conscious of their state of affairs by providing them with in depth insight on important issues concerning people. Though freedom of press is essential and indispensable for the successful functioning of the Indian democracy, it is very often silenced by the executive, gagged by the legislature, suppressed by judiciary, repressed and muzzled by the pressure groups.

CONCLUSION

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. The phenomenon of "paid news" endangers the functioning of independent media in the country and the working of strong democracy and good governance. It is a serious threat to Indian polity.

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.

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