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CREATING THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN POLITICAL AWARENESS

AMBARAYA S. HAGARAGI

Department in Political Science, Government P.G. Course, Gulbarga

Abstract:

Media's role in promoting good governance in India has become most pivotal as the issues like equity and equality, inclusiveness and environmental protection have come to occupy the centre stage. More so when the country is passing through an era of unprecedented changes at all levels. People's expectations are also high especially in the areas of social infrastructure, education, health and social security.

KEYWORDS:

Media, Political, People, Governance,.

INTRODUCTION

There is crying demand for immediate attention to overcome challenges of poverty, hunger, housing and unemployment etc. The need for building of institutions laying out the basic infrastructure, creation of human resource development and knowledge based society, optimal realization of creative potential, artistic talent, scientific temper and entrepreneurial spirit of the people etc., all have assumed urgency in this context.

With this end, governance has to be centered on propelling economic growth, that is inclusive, delivery of social welfare schemes, on implementation of radical reforms aimed at gearing up the administrative machinery reaffirming eroded credibility, placing a regular system of monitoring and evaluation of programmes and schemes, decentralization and participatory form of governance that empowers women and disadvantaged sections of society.

GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE:

Governance connotes the capacity of the state to move “towards avowed goals, reduce the inherent cleavages among social, cultural, ecological and political systems and communities, concert sound policies, mobilize resources and maintain the sufficient level of legitimacy, transparency, credibility and accountability before the public”. Good governance is the modern mantra of development, which is currently in vogue among international funding agencies like World Bank and other UN agencies. It is an inevitable phrase to be included in the funding proposals.

However, good governance has come to mean different things to different people. For some it is synonymous with justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services. Others define it as the relation between market, state and civil society. In the eyes of a few experts, good governance is seen as a mechanism of achieving desired results in the right way and with a sense of justice and fairness, of ensuring growth and development with equity and distributive justice.

Further, it also implies a commitment to uplifting the masses, providing them with the basic needs, such as the same and equal education, healthcare and welfare for all which continue to be fundamental challenges before our policy makers. Besides, they argue, good governance should entail the

rule of law, accountability, probity in administration, a commitment to ensure peace and harmony among the diverse communities which make up our country.

MEDIA: MEANING AND DEFINITION:

Media as a generic term includes everything from national newspapers to student magazines. TV and radio, from global to local broadcasters, websites and blogs to social networks and virtual communities, citizen journalists to government mouthpieces.

Media are (mostly) non-state actors who define themselves apart from the state and from all other societal actors (what Edmund Burke calls a “fourth estate”, as distinct from government, church and electorate). While this notion of free and independent media acting on behalf of the citizen against both state and other interests is a widespread ideal, the reality of most media worldwide is complex, rapidly changing and extraordinarily diverse.

MEDIA AS TOOL OF GOOD GOVERNANCE:

Media undoubtedly are indispensable part of modern democracies and called the fourth pillar. The media as the 'fourth pillar' is intended to exercise a check on the aberrations of the society and polity and to counterbalance the three organs of government in order to ensure that there are no hindrances in effective functioning of media, it is imperative that media have to be free.

The media draw the sanction from Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian constitution, which in principle has been upheld by several apex court judgements. The reason as to why the media have been granted such freedom by the apex court is primarily because the citizen's 'right to know' is an important element of the fundamental freedom of speech and expression. Thus, in order to ensure that there is free dissemination of information, it is necessary that we have free and fearless media in our country.

Independent, free and pluralist media have a crucial role to play in fostering good governance in a democratic society ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting participation and the rule of law and supporting the fight against social inequalities and evils.

Independent media act as a guardian of human rights and watchdog against abuses by authority and also provide citizens with the required information to exercise their democratic rights. In a democracy like ours, media provide the voters civic and political education and strengthen the culture of democracy state accountability is ensured by independence and capacity of the media to investigate and interrogate government policy in the public interests.

Proactive and progressive media help in raising the quality of entertainment and information and make the news as the vehicle of great human interest and culture, bringing enlightened opinion and useful information to the consumers and the common man, who are the basic denominator of democratic good governance.

In the 240 years of media history in India, media have played an important role especially in freedom movement and thereafter in independent India to put in focus the goal of nation building. In today's world, with unprecedented advances in the field of science and technology, media have grown in a big way largely in two essential forms ... the print media, and the electronic media.

With phenomenal expansion of mass media structures media form a vital part of communication systems. Regulatory cable television and cyber media act today have become disseminator and provider of information and analysis. Tremendous expansion of the print media has made India the second largest market for newspapers. Most of the corporate national daily newspapers have a circulation of more than two million. The electronic media too is expanding fast. Media today are the 5th or 6th biggest industry in India.

The media and governance equation is very important as access to information is one of the key measures of power and equality. Media can help to shape and influence power sharing and participation of people in society in positive ways by promoting the involvement of people in these decisions or in negative ways, by obscuring the motives and interests behind political decisions.

Media plays an important role in the exertion of power and distribution of values. The media channelise information between the citizen and government and in turn communicate the governmental decisions with a view to helping the citizen to shape their reactions besides serving as the primary source of information for the government on the public reactions to contemporary issues.

Lack of understanding of public policy is an obstacle to its acceptance. Poverty reduction and other development strategies, have been undermined through lack of wider societal acceptance. Weak ownership is often rooted in lack of public understanding and debate of the issues of policies. As a remedy, media can provide access to information that enhances public understanding space for public debate which

ultimately opens up the potential for decision making and participation. Due to exposure to powerful media access and accessibility of information has increased. Thus, marginalised sections of the society dalits and women are also making the effective use of the media to make their voices heard, thus adding depth to democracy.

The media have emerged as true watchdog of the democratic system and have unearthed various shortcomings in the functioning of government. Investigative reporting in print and television media have helped in exposing large scale and cases of corruption which have robbed the nation. The Commonwealth Games Scam, The Adarsh Housing Society Scam. Cash for vote scam and the bofors scam are some of the highpoints of the Indian media.

With a crusader's zeal all across newspapers and television channels voices have been raised whenever the bureaucracy, judiciary of other public functionaries have crossed the Laxman Rekha and thus provided much needed critical check on state abuse of power or rampant corruption in various echelons of government as also other segments of society, including the corporate houses and even media.

From the role of a mere mirror, watchdog, whistleblower to activist campaigner and crusader media have come a long way. But for media's role as an activist and crusader Anna's fast would not have spread to the length and breadth of the country nor it would have assumed almost the character of a veritable tsunami blowing across the country, nor built such compelling massive public pressure on the government to force it to initiate Lok Pal Bill and the deadline in which it is to be passed. In recent times, media have unearthed several multi-crore scams and cases of black money sending the accused, ministers, bureaucrats and corporate, to various jails, thus ascertaining its role in ensuring a corruption free systems of governance.

EMERGING CHALLENGES:

Mass media of various types have pervasively influenced human life in India not only through the provision of information and entertainment to the people, but also as the creators of informed public opinion. However, there has emerged a serious concern on certain aspects of its role. This has raised some pertinent questions: are media really fulfilling their social responsibilities? Are media posing a threat to the democratic way of thinking in India where they have assumed a larger than life size image of the movers and shakers instead of playing the conventional role of providers of mere information and entertainment? Viewed in the aforesaid light, the media have come to occupy today an autonomous space in our vibrant society which is constantly undergoing organizational and technological restructuring notwithstanding its economic cultural and political constraints commercial pressures as well as changing professional practices. The changing contours of this space may therefore, could lead to various patterns of domination and agenda setting as well as to different degrees of openness and closure in terms of access patterns of ownership available genres and types of disclosure and range of opinions represented.

India's modern media have as a matter of fact taken on the character of a mass media, in the sense of being able to reach the vast masses of people. The daily circulation of Indian newspapers has increased by 500 percent in 20 years. The press as a whole presently reaches about 60 percent of urban Indians and 25 percent of rural Indians who regularly read print media. Radio's reach is even more comprehensive and it covers about 96 percent of the country. Notwithstanding this growth of the media in terms of reach, their impact on development and governance remains at best tenuous.

Therefore the need for the role of media in bridging the development gap is being felt more keenly today than ever. Though globalizations impact on the poverty reduction leaves much to be desired the transnational media organizations have spread their wings in the Indian market for serving their own global interests. This has happened at the cost of the Indian media which were initially thought to be the harbingers of social change through the propagation of developmental programs which were directed at the non privileged and marginalized sections of the society. But despite this majority of the poor and the marginalized had by and large remained untouched by the media.

The commercial media appear to have completely ignored and have tended to increasingly focus primarily on the urban audience who mostly attract the advertisers as the targeted consumers. As a result marginalized and poor populations have been left poorly served.

Although the role of media has become all the more crucial for enlisting mostly the masses for their active participation in the decision making processes but media are seemingly preoccupied more with political issues than the developmental goals of the nation. It has therefore become imperative that media should keep their focus on promoting an enlightened society to ensure critically vigilant citizenry. They should ensure that all reporting by them be analyzed evaluated and researched upon prior to presentation.

CONCLUSION:

Be that as it may the Indian media have evolved as an important democratic resource. They have been playing a pivotal role in developing the understanding of the common man and thereby have been contributing to nation building and well being of the people as a whole in a big way yet the fact that the present scenario is not quite encouraging in respect of certain critical areas cannot be denied.

Hence, it needs to be urgently addressed. Media organizations whether in print, audio visual, radio or web have to be therefore made more accountable to the general public. They should be monitored in such a way that professional integrity and ethical standards are not sacrificed for sensational practices. Media need to be professional and objective if they have to succeed in playing their role in nation building.

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