Chapter 5

Iraq War and the Indian Media: An overview

Indian mass media system has been transformed by the technological revolution for the last two decades and it has a massive impact on processing, dissemination, and consumption of news. Thus the “media world is on a fast-paced transformative journey and its destination is still unknown” (Shrivastava 2008:37). Now newspapers are not only facing stiff intra-media competition but have to compete with the electronic media as well as the social media. The information revolution of the second half of the twentieth century and the knowledge revolution of this century would inevitably transform all institutions. To handle and manage these forces of change in a meaningful way is a measure of the success of all institutions. Indian media have succeeded in adopting new information technologies for their infrastructure development. This chapter provides a brief history of the Indian press and its present status. It then discusses the way wars have been covered by Indian media in the past and takes an overview of their reporting of Iraq war.

Origins and Development of Indian Press

The history of journalism is closely linked to the development of printing and the growth of communication (Natarajan 1962:3 Aggrawal 1998: 12, Natarajan 1997:1-5). A well-informed and participatory public is the backbone of a healthy democracy (Sharma 2005:2). The printing technology is the ‘beginning of capitalism’ (Lnglis 1991:14) and it ushers in ‘the era of the modern newspaper’. The press was launched by Europeans for exercising the imperial rule over the Indian people (Finkelstein 2000:1). “The rise of the press and literacy, and the accompanying emergences of journalism, was integral parts of the democratic revolutions and the modern notions of informed self-governance” (Herman and McChenseney 1998:11). In the mass communication field, much of the news are ‘manufactured’, composed, and it is entitled in the so-called ‘news factory’.
Therefore, the idea of ‘news value’ is also “complex in nature and it depends on the cultural factors and on proximity to the audience” (McQuail 2006: viii-ix). The narrations above reveal the role of media in democracy and in moulding public opinion. Thomas Carlyle describes the press as “the fourth estate” and ranks it with the other three estates, State, the Church and the Parliament. Today, it is acknowledged as the fourth organ of the State wielding the same power as the other three traditional organs, such as the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

The Bengal Gazette newspaper was started in India on 29 January 1780; It was the first regular newspaper in India published in the English language. James Augustus Hickey announced the policy of the newspaper stating that it was “a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties, but infused by none” (Kumar 1994: 63). He constituted a significant history in Indian press. He stands out as a fearless critic of the administration. He was sentenced for imprisonment and fine by the government. In the history of press in India, this was the first public attack against the media.. In the Government records in 1786, there were seven weeklies in India (Natarajan 1997: 24).

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) has been described by Jawaharlal Nehru as a founder of the modern Indian press. He was the earliest champion of press freedom. He was a fighter for social reform and he wielded his pen in many journals he sponsored to achieve a social and cultural renaissance in the Hindu society (Parthasarathy 2001: 31).

The Indian press has a long tradition of providing information and education to the public. In an article, N. Ram suggests that “its strength has largely been shaped by its historical experience and, in particular by its association with the freedom struggle as well as movement for social emancipation, reform, and amelioration” (Ram 2007: 3). The Indian press in its long history remained highly political. It stands for a secular and vibrant democracy. In fact, the British’s used information to divide the people. It was part of the official policy to withhold facts and censor or deny access of news. But the Indian newspapers played an active
role in the freedom struggle and to fight for the rights of the Indian citizens. The life and witness of the Indian press has been shaped by its historical experience, the freedom struggle as well as movements for social reforms. Indian press mostly maintained the best traditions of ethics of journalism during the freedom struggle. Nadig Krishna Murthy in his book *Indian Journalism* argues that “Indian newspapers have been organs of opinion and criticism, representatives of the people, defenders of public interest and champion of liberty” (1966:460).

Even before Independence, Indian press clearly had defined objectives. I.P. Tiwari says that “it was to act as the mobiliser and consolidator of public opinion against forging rule. On 15 August, 1947, this objective ceased to exist and a vacuum was created. Now this vacuum has not been filled” (Tewari 1980) N. Ram narrates the journey of the Indian press:

Even in the pre-Independence context, the press learned to act like a player in the major league political and socio-economic arena, despite its well-known limitations in terms of reach in society, financial viability, professional training, entrepreneurial and management capabilities. This rich history accounts for the seriousness, relevance, and public-spirited orientation of the press at its best (Ram 2012).

Mahatma Gandhi believed that “The sole aim of journalism should be service” (Bandyopadhya 2002:15). Thus Indian journalism has a rich moral and ethical tradition. Journalism is primarily and essentially a value based profession for building up and maintaining a healthy, responsive and just society, and only after that it is a means of livelihood. Media played an important role in ushering in many reforms in Indian democracy. In 1947, the major English newspapers were *Times of India* (Bombay), *Statesman* (Calcutta), *Hindu* (Madras), *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi) and *Indian Express* (Bombay). In 1952, there were 330 daily newspapers in India and their total circulation was 25 lakh copies (Chaturvedi 1992:3).
Mahatma Gandhi himself was a journalist and he published many journals. His first journal was *Indian Opinion*, the weekly aimed to air the grievances of South African Indians to the rulers and to unite the diverse elements among the diaspora. The journal said, "we are not, and ought not to be, Tamils or Calcutta men, Mohamedans or Hindus, Brahmans or Banyas, but simply and solely British Indians, and as such we must sink or swim together" (Guha 2003)). To this end, *Indian Opinion* was published in as many as four languages: English, Hindi, Tamil, and Gujarati. Mahatma Gandhi mentioned three functions of the press: to understand popular feelings, to arouse desirable sentiments and to fearlessly expose popular defects. In heterogeneous and plural societies, all these are susceptible to subjective and differing perceptions. In the freedom struggle, all the newspapers were united for the national interest and freedom struggle. According to Parthasarathy, “Mahatma Gandhi’s ascendancy in Indian politics and his assumption of leadership of national movements for freedom acted as an elixir to Indian journalism” (1989: 119).

During the period of emergency, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took control of the press and prohibited reports and withdrew accreditations. Fundamental rights of the Indian people were suspended and strict controls were imposed on freedom of speech and the press. The Indian Constitution treats freedom of the press as an integral part of the larger “freedom of expression”. But Indira Gandhi meaningfully controlled the mass media in India for about 21 months (1975-1977). Indian media faced potential government retribution only in the period of emergency. But media in India had been free and independent throughout most of its history.

Robin Jeffrey brought out the story of Indian language press in his book *India's Newspaper Revolution*. He identified the following five factors in the growth of successful newspapers in a dozen Indian languages over the past quarter century: improved technology which enables the production and distribution of larger numbers of more attractive newspapers, steadily expanding literacy, better purchasing power, aggressive that is profit- power- and survival-driven publishing,
and political excitement (Jeffrey 2000:42). The newspaper provides news, analysis, comment, and entertainment as well as the hybrid creature, ‘infotainment’. Indian audience is voracious consumers of political news. Daily newspapers and news channels are their primary source. Thus Jeffrey speaks of the ‘Crimean war effect’ and makes the connection strongly: while literacy, basic communications, and adequate technology are a necessary condition for the development of a daily newspaper culture, it is ‘momentous events’ that provide “the link between these developments and politics – the link that seems to send circulations shooting upwards”. Journalism in India used to be regarded as a ‘calling’. Fired by the spirit of patriotic and social reforming idealism, it was able to draw in outstanding talent as the freedom struggle and movements for social change intensified and as new educational and career opportunities arose in a modernising society. “As is often the case with such pursuits, the calling was conspicuously underpaid” (Ram 2003: 1).

Indian newspapers have performed invaluable democratic functions: the credible-informational, the critical, ‘adversarial’, investigative, the educational, and the agenda-building. The purpose of journalism is to safeguard the interest of the nation and the people. But this social commitment has been eroding from the media, because it as an industry. Now the media gives the hidden message that the audience or readers are mere ‘consumers’ of ‘media products’.

According to N. Ram, the newspaper needs two guiding principles - "fairness and justice". These are crucial for its survival and development over the long term. He writes:

The other side of the coin to the buoyant growth of Indian newspapers in recent times is a new combination of pressures on the core values of journalism, pressures generated by intensifying competition, by business success, and sometimes by political ambition. In the name of the omnipotent market, a new kind of demand is made for manipulating news, analysis, and opinion to suit the owners’ financial and political interests - and for tailoring the editorial product to subserve marketing goals. Murdoch-style price
wars and other aggressive practices tremendously strengthen these pressures. There is also evidence of creeping corruption in Indian journalism (2003:1).

Noted journalist Sainath narrates the changes that Indian press and media has undergone: The media are not the generators of development. It depends on what the media presume as their social role. Today for instance, the media see as their role as a representation of the corporate world as it believes in its ideology. In a different time, in a different period, Indian journalism was a child of the freedom struggle” (Sainath 2010).

“Vibrant journalism in a democracy is watchdog journalism that monitors the exercise of power in the state, stands for the rights and freedoms of citizens, informs and empowers citizens rather than entertains. Vibrant journalism always springs from the bedrock of professional ethics” (Ansari 2011). However, Sevanti Ninan says that “the lack of experience and quality at the copy desk are the big problem of Indian press. Media is targeting the audience as consumers rather than citizens. It is the result of the liberalisation policies of the media” (2003). “The functions that a serious newspaper can perform with benefit to society are the credible-informational, the critical-investigative-`watchdog', the educational, and the agenda-building functions. Unfortunately, a propaganda or `manufacture of consent' role is also played from time to time, a negative function that harms society and the people's interests” (Ram 2003: 1).

Markandey Katju highlights “three major defects in the Indian media” such as frequently diverting attention from serious socio-economic issues to non-issues and trivialising news, dividing the people by putting out communal or other divisive messages, and promoting superstition and obscurantism instead of rational and scientific ideas (Katju 2011). Keval J. Kumar formulated a question about journalism and its code of ethics. He writes: “Journalism is a calling, a public service, an entertainment, a cultural industry motivated by profit, or a tool for propaganda, public relations and advertising. He has concludes that journalism can

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1 Interview with P Sainath, at Kottayam, 24 November, 2010.
be a combination of all these, or each of these separately” (Kumar 1994:57). Since 1990, the Indian media are passing through dramatic shift in favour of consumerism and the market. The past decades of economic liberalisation has been a time of accelerated growth for Indian newspapers, with a sea change taking place in their production, distribution, marketing, profitability, and overall operations. Rangaswami Parthasarathy notes that “Journalism is both an art and a profession…The trend in modern journalism, at any rate in India, is to emphasise the professional aspect more than the artistic side” (2000: 1). In fact, journalism moves from art to profession, business and industry. At present, the market value system of neocolonialism is having a grip on it.

According to N. Ram,

There are market tendencies of manipulating news, analysis, and public affairs information to suit special in terest; a down grading and devaluing of editorial functions to sub serve advertising and marketing goals; and an increasing willingness to sensationalise, trivialise, and dumb down. There are tendencies of hyper-commercialisation, which tackles the newspaper and its journalism more or less like any other commodity or ‘product’ and sees any higher ground vision as old-fashioned, sanctimonious humbug (Ram 2007:3).

Sainath has shown how paid news has become a disturbing trend in Indian media. He says “Governments, too, buy “news’ sometimes” (Sainath 2011). In short, consumerism and market are the most serious threats to journalism not only in this country but in the entire developing world.

**Indian News Media industry**

India’s dominant newspapers are thriving while newspapers in the West are shrinking. “India is one of the few places on earth where newspapers still thrive” (Auletta 2012) and plenty of professional opportunities are available for media people. Jacob Mathew says that “newspapers are not a sunset industry in India” He writes: “in India, China, Brazil and South Africa, the print is growing both in terms
of circulation as well as advertising revenue” (Mathew 2011). Furthermore, *Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011* states that with rising literacy levels and with no immediate threat of new media platforms, the trend is expected to sustain over the next five years. Harold Evans sees television and radio are sequential media; with them, the audience has to wait until the program ends. But the press is simultaneous media; one can scan and select the page or stories. However, in online newspaper the editor can change the content any time (Evans 2010). The preference in India for newspapers remain high.

*Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2011* says that Indian language daily newspapers own large circulations and huge readership. Today half the total readership of about 352 million is in small towns and rural areas and women account for a third of the readership. N. Ram suggests that “Pluralism in the Indian media can be said to reflect the vast regional, linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural heterogeneity of the subcontinent. A positive factor for both the print media and news television is that over the past quarter-century, their social representativeness has broadened”. The circulation of English-language newspapers is expanding by about one and a half per cent annually. Many non-English newspapers are growing three times as fast, as about twenty million more Indians become literate each year. The English newspapers in India are growing both in influence and popularity.

The growth of the English newspapers in India started as a result of the British rule and it has interwoven with the political history of the country. The English newspaper in India has played a positive role in the freedom struggle. Today, technology and market allow them to sell news as a product and diversify their content. English-language papers attract middle class and richer readers. *Press in India 2004-2005: 49th Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India* (2005) states that “all big newspaper groups have specialised teams focusing in multimedia activities”. People are reading newspapers digitally and they are live as global audience. Regional language newspapers also publish their English editions in the e-editions. Most newspapers are introducing websites which have
interactivity through blogging, citizen journalism and infotainment. This not only helps maintain the relevance of newspapers but actually enriches the print media content. N. Ram argues that for “the English language press, still the most resource-endowed sector within the Indian press, the challenge is one of consolidating gains and holding its place against rising Indian language challengers, competition from television, and potential competition from new media operations in a changing socio-economic, business, and political arena” (2000: 242-243).

Studies show that the rise in the reading habit of the people who turn to English language newspapers has not diminished despite the great encouragement given to the development of Indian language newspapers. The IRS Report of 2012 shows the growth of English dailies in India. Among the English dailies, The Times of India tops the list followed by *The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Telegraph* and *The Deccan Chronicle*. The readership of the top three English dailies increased. *The Times of India’s* Average Issue Readership (AIR) grew from 7,643,000 to 7,653,000, while Hindustan Times’s AIR grew from 3,767,000 to 3,786,000.

**Figure 5:1**

**Top 10 Dailies in India, 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Times of India</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>21,95,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dainik Bhaskar</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>15,49,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dainik Jagran</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>15,13,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Malayala Manorama</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>12,12,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>12,10,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gujarat Samachar</td>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>10,47,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>9,25,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eenadu</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>9,11,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ananda Bazar Patrika</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>8,82,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aj</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>8,62,837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABC July-December 2002
The circulation of India's dailies consistently increased from 5,78,44,236 in 2001 to 7,29,38,646 in 2003; and to 7,86,89,266 in 2005. The total circulation of newspapers stood at 32,92,04,841 as against 30,88,16,563 copies in 2009-10. The number of India's dailies increased from 1,493 in 2001 to 1,907 in 2003. The figure, rose to 1,834 in 2004.

**Figure 5:2**

**Top 10 English Dailies in India, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>2012 Q3</th>
<th>2012 Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Times of India</td>
<td>7653</td>
<td>7615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>3786</td>
<td>3820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>2258</td>
<td>2164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Telegraph</td>
<td>1254</td>
<td>1265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Deccan Chronicle</td>
<td>1051</td>
<td>1020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mumbai Mirror</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Economic Times</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Tribune</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The New Indian Express</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (AIR number; ASI figures in ‘1000’) IRS 2012 Q4  
(www.mruc.net/irs2012q4_topline_findings.pdt)

In fact as per the 55th Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) covering the period from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012, newspaper circulation in India maintained its upward trend clocking a growth of over eight per cent in 2010-11 with regional language dailies. In terms of circulation, according to the report, in 2011-12, Hindi newspapers continued to lead with 15,54,94,770 copies followed by English with 5,53,70,184 copies. Urdu press had a figure of 2, 16,39,230 copies. Circulation of newspapers in the country grew by 8.23 percent in 2010-11. As per data from the 2010-11 annual statements, the highest number of newspapers
were published in Hindi (7,910), followed by English (1,406), Urdu (938), Gujarati (761), Telugu (603), Marathi (521), Bengali (472), Tamil (272), Oriya (245), Kannada (200) and Malayalam (192).

In fact, the 56th Annual Report of the RNI, 2011-12, state that total number of registered publications in India stands at 86754. It includes the newspapers category numbering11304. Top three Indian languages having largest publications are Hindi (34651), English (11938), and Marathi (5798). Total number of the press in 2011-2012 is 37, 38, 39,764 copies per publishing day.

**Figure 5:3**

**Top 10 Dailies in India: 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Periodicals</th>
<th>2012 Q3</th>
<th>2012 Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dainik Jagran</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>16474</td>
<td>16370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dainik Bhaskar</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>14491</td>
<td>14416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hindustan</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>12242</td>
<td>12246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Malayala Manorama</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>9752</td>
<td>9760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Amar Ujala</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>8536</td>
<td>8534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Times of India</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>7653</td>
<td>7615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Daily Thanthi</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>7417</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lokmat</td>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>7409</td>
<td>7313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rajasthan Patrika</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>6818</td>
<td>6837</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mathrubhumi</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>6415</td>
<td>6334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (AIR number; ASI figures in ‘1000’), IRS 2012 Q4, (www.mruc.net/irs2012q4_topline_findings.pdt)

The RNI Report in 2012 shows that the top three publications, *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Hindustan* grew by 0.3 per cent each. They were followed by *Malayala Manorama* (Malayalam), *Amar Ujala* (Hindi), *The Times of India* (English), *Daily Thanthi* (Tamil), *Lokmat* (Marathi), *Rajasthan Patrika* (Hindi) and *Mathrubhumi* (Malayalam), which made up the top 10.
According to a report of FICCI-KPMG (2013) India's media and entertainment industry will be double in size by 2017. It says that television continues to be the dominant segment of the sector although new media like animation, visual effects, gaming and digital advertising are expected to post strong double-digit growth during the next five years. The above document claims that the current size of media revenue is estimated at Rs 91,700 crores, and it is expected to touch 1,66,000 crores by 2017. There are 348 per cent growth of television channels in India since 1991; wireless internet connection will register at least 350 per cent growth by 2017. These are the bright side of the Indian media, but it moves along with the marketization and globalalisation tendencies, the ill effects of which are also evident in the Indian media.

**Media and Paid News**

Since 2009, the phenomenon of paid news has acquired a new dimension entering the sphere of political news reporting on candidates contesting elections. Numerous favourable news features on representatives of political parties, including candidates who have been contesting elections, have appeared in the Indian newspapers. In this context, the Press Council of India published a report on paid news which indicates that “paid news is undermining democracy”. The report is titled “Paid News: How Corruption in the Indian Media Undermines Indian Democracy?”. The first paragraph of the report reveals the clear picture of Indian media. It says:

Corruption in the mass media in India and elsewhere is as old as the media itself. If there is corruption in society, it would be unrealistic to expect the media to be free of corruption. India is the world’s largest democracy. A vibrant and diverse mass media is an important pillar of democracy in the country. The independence of the media facilitates adherence to democratic norms. Article 19 of the Constitution of India confers the right to freedom of speech and expression to all citizens of the country and to the media as well. In recent years, corruption in the Indian media has gone way beyond
the corruption of individual journalists and specific media organisations from planting information and views in lieu of favours received in cash or kind, to more institutionalised and organised forms of corruption wherein newspapers and television channels receive funds for publishing or broadcasting information in favour of particular individuals, corporate entities, representatives of political parties and candidates contesting elections, that is sought to be disguised as news [paid news] (2010:4).

This report provides large amount of analyses, interviews, statements and reports from various parts of India. Many of the prominent ministers and media people contributed their views on paid news and about Indian journalism. In this report, P. Sainath’s views about paid news is revealed:

Throughout my journalistic career, I have witnessed how money power and corrupt journalism have always been major factors influencing the outcome of any election – this is not a phenomenon that has appeared overnight. Yet, the last two general elections – of 2004 and 2009 – were exceptional even by past standards in the manner in which huge amounts of money were spent by candidates in their election campaigns…The general elections of 2009 were the seventh covered by me and never before in my career had I witnessed such large sums of money being spent on election campaigns. Though I was aware that candidates were spending large amounts, I did not have evidence that would help me expose the fact that candidates were incurring expenditures that were far higher than what is officially permitted by the Election Commission of India. It was visible to the naked eye. Proving it with documentary evidence was another matter (2010:37).

The Report speaks of the “deception or fraud” that paid news entails as having three levels. First: “the reader of the publication or the viewer of the television programme is deceived into believing that what is essentially an
advertisement is in fact, independently produced news content.” Second: “By not officially declaring the expenditure incurred on planting “paid news” items, the candidate standing for election violates the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, which are meant to be enforced by the Election Commission of India under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.” And third: “by not accounting for the money received from candidates, the concerned media company or its representatives are violating the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 as well as the Income Tax Act, 1961, among other laws.” The report notes that “the pernicious practice of paid news has become widespread across media (both print and electronic, English and non-English languages) in different parts of the country. Interestingly, this phenomenon appears to be less pervasive in states (such as Kerala or Tamil Nadu) where the media is clearly divided along political lines.” The Report also calls for giving regulatory bodies like the Press Council more teeth. It further appeals to media organisations to adopt a number of principles that would curb “paid news”. However, it recognises that self-regulation and civil society oversight, while welcome and useful, can tackle the problem “only to an extent”. There would have to be effective use of existing laws to “apprehend those indulging in practices that are tantamount to committing a fraud on the public”. The Report says that “the phenomenon of ‘paid news’ goes beyond the corruption of individual journalists and media companies. It has become pervasive, structured and highly organised and in the process, is undermining democracy in India.” (2010:41).

In an interview P. Sainath said "Paid News will wipe out journalism". He commented\(^2\):

Paid news destroys the concept of a free and fair and balanced press. That the same time the paid news undermines the very basis of electoral democracy because it prejudices and interferes with the free and fair election. It allows huge use of money power without accountability. So in elections paid news becomes even more

\(^2\) Interview with P. Sainath at Kottayam on 24 November 2011.
damaging but it is not only in elections that there is the phenomenon of paid news. There is paid news every day in the newspaper and channels. If journalism does not wipe out paid news; paid news will wipe out journalism (2010).

Though the Indian media plays a decisive role in shaping opinions and views in a society, it is facing new challenges like paid news. “Now the market plays as God and the market is the solution to all the problems of the human race. It has its own Gospel: The Gospel of St. Growth, of St. Choice...Welcome to the world of Market Fundamentalism. To the final solution” (Sainath 2011). The market and paid news reality has been constructed by the agenda setting strategies of media and the political parties. Money and power are the interlinking factors in this alliance.

**Indian Media and Social Media**

The multiplication of mass media, the emergence of the social media and the world of ‘virtual reality’ are new opportunities and challenges to Indian press. Globalisation and neo-liberal polices are strengthening and converging the communication systems. The digital age provides the growth of new media and it has had a tremendous influence in India. The introduction of new technologies provided better access to more consumers of the social media, especially the youth. This age has been characterised as the “information age.” More information has been created since 2000 than that has existed in the history of the world. Since 2009, social media transformed the media trends in India and they have a significant impact on newspapers and the practice of journalism in India.

Facebook and Twitter are the major social media that covers the developments in politics, sports, culture etc. It is mostly personal and spread across chunks of friend networks. Professional, business bloggers are alive in the social media. Religious groups and political parties have realised the power and influence of social media. In blogs one can share personal thoughts and

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3 Interview with P. Sainath at Kottayam on 24 November 2011.
experiences to the public. The smart mobile phones and their new ‘app’s are providing more access to news and information.

The 3G and 4G connections provide more exciting and innovative opportunities to engage the cyber space which will further improve the growth and access of social media. The online forums are transforming the traditional journalism patterns. Today’s print and electronic media have to be conscious that digital media is not only here to stay but could well dominate the space in the days to come. Now the price of smart-phones is steadily dropping and it will surely will have an impact on the newspaper business in the near future. Social media networks are starting to emerge as game-changers in a manner in which information is disseminated and administrations reach out to the people. It provides meaningful interventions in shaping public policy and public opinion. This can be particularly important in speedily communicating disasters and epidemics, including early warning signals. A sociologist, William H. Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institution calls the social media as the ‘Fifth Estate’ (2010: 10).

Indian papers are cheap, so many middle class households buy more than one daily, and the actual price of each Indian newspaper is even below five rupees. Rising literacy levels offers significant room for growth. Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011 states that “the growing regional markets are a testimony to the increase in newspaper consumption and hence the potential for advertising revenues”.

Alan Rusbridger, Editor of The Guardian, says that “journalism is changing at the speed of light” and “virtually every week we are learning new techniques and fresh truths about the way digital technologies are transforming the media”. Prabhat Patnaik (2002) says that ‘markets, morals and the media’ are fascinated with the neoliberal ideology and thus “the power of the media as an institution” has gone down. He writes:

Where the media are on the same side as international finance capital, they appear powerful; but in fields where they strike out on
their own, upholding humane values and expressing concern for the poor and the suffering, they appear powerless. Such powerlessness…is the outcome of …the process of ascendancy of international financial capital over the economy, which the media, paradoxically, with a few honourable exceptions, have avidly supported.

The Indian media have substantial involvement in and coverage of Indian politics. Its contents are with less focus on international news, less coverage of the arts, less reporting on dire threats that India faces like rural distress, farmers’ suicides, and mass migrations. Poverty and mass deprivation, basic livelihood issues, human rights issues and the state of agriculture etc. are under covered in both Indian newspapers and the broadcast media. Markandey Katju (2011) sees that the Indian media should help our country get over the transition period and become a modern industrial state.

The Indian media moves more closely to hyper-commercialisation, a move which takes a heavy toll of journalism. The works of Robin (2000), Thussu (1995, 2007) and Ninan (2007) indicated the existence of the characteristics of market driven journalism in the Indian print and TV media, they are based more on observations than any systematic study. According to Satish Jacob, “Journalism is falling into the hands of corporates.” However, Ken Auletta says that

Indian newspapers thrive in absence of digital competition. Less than ten per cent of the Indian population has access to the Internet, and, with two-thirds of the population surviving on less than two dollars per day, expensive smartphones and tablets aren’t about to replace print media as the news-reading platform of choice… The big world of small “e” (i.e. electronics) has changed the lives of the mankind with its two siblings called ‘connectivity’ and ‘networking’ (2012:52).
In India, only below ten percent of the people have internet access, but in urban areas the situation is different. In an interview, P. Sainath evaluated the current Indian press in the following words:

The Indian media is a free media, they are free, they are politically free, but they are imprisoned by profit and commerce. No one is shooting you for saying something in India in journalism. But you’re a prisoner of profit. So even if they are politically free, they don’t make use of the political freedom because their first priority is profit. If profit entails loss of freedom they will accept it because anything but profit matters. Now every time they do some crime like “paid news” or anything else and if there is criticism of them, they respond it to by saying you are attacking press freedom (2010).

**Indian Media and War Coverage**

The world has witnessed around 15,000 wars and attacks. Most of them were in Europe from the seventh Century onwards. World War I World War II resulted in millions of human casualty. In World War I, thirty three nations participated, and in World War II, sixty two nations did the same. The Vietnam War killed 20 lakhs of people. The first two World Wars corresponded to the classical image of war. The first ended the supremacy of Europe and the Colonial era. The second put an end to Nazism. The third in the form of Cold War and deterrence put an end to communist regimes. The second Cold War was a ‘war on terror’. After World War II, more than 200 wars occurred in the different parts of the world. Each war ended with the opening of new wars. After World War II, most countries were liberated from the control of the European nations and became independent. But war and conflict occur everywhere and they terribly affect the people in multiple ways.

Since Independence, Indian media has had many experiences of war coverage. Internal conflicts also have been reported in many ways. The following are the major wars and conflicts that the Indian media had to report. Some of them

**Indian Media and the Iraq War**

The mass media have given a wide coverage of Iraq war in both television and newspapers. Both English and regional language newspapers also provided an extensive coverage of the Iraq war. The presence of Indian labour force in the Gulf elicits media interest in major developments in that region. During the so-called ‘Operation Desert Storm’ (1990), Indian media in general adopted war reports from the global news agencies and reported it from their own perspectives. This is true with the Iraq war of 2003, but this time the influence of external news agencies was more prominent. Regional newspapers provided a large coverage of Iraq war especially in south India. In Iraq war reports in Indian media, there was an over-dependence on global news agencies such as Reuters, AP, AFP, etc.

Kapil Aarya (2011) studied the over-dependence of Indian English newspapers on global news agencies for international news. After comparing the stories of *Times of India* with the associated reports of global news agencies, Kapil Arya found that 46 per cent news reports were exact duplications of the Reuters, 30 per cent were nearly complete rewrites of A.P wire and the remaining didn’t detect any perfect matches of the agencies between them and the corresponding Reuters and AP feed within the parameters defined. In *Times of India*, a total of 76 per cent of the foreign news stories selected came either from Reuters or A.P. In the case of *The Hindu*, which was also dependent on the reports of global news agencies, the above study reveals that 60 per cent news reports were exact duplications of the A.P, 33 per cent were nearly complete rewrites of Reuters and the remaining didn’t detect any perfect matches of the agencies between them. The Indian English
newspapers thus have an over dependence on international news agencies for stories from around the world (Arya 2011). Apart from the sheer volume of new stories imported from the transnational news services by the top newspapers, the study also found that these agency dispatches are most of the times published without hardly any rework or editing by the publications. The percentage of agency content detected in the news stories was in the range of 80-90 per cent. This indicates that the ‘global news agencies’ stories had been published almost unchanged (Arya 2011).

In short, the media as the major democratic institution rest on the values of the credible informational, critical-investigative, analytical, educational, and agenda building functions for the transformation of the society. However, the result of the globalization and market pressure contribute to the decline of the core values of the press. For most coverage of global events, Indian media are still dependent on global news agencies and their political ideologies. This reflects that with the globalisation of the media field contributed to hegemonic influence of global media on Indian media either in English or in regional languages.