Chapter-V

Media in Globalizing India

(1991 Onwards)
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MEDIA IN GLOBALIZING INDIA (1991 ONWARDS)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century entered an era of economic liberalization in India under the co-authorship of the Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narsimha Rao and his economist Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh which has a lasting impact on the working of democratic institutions and functional freedom of mass media in India. Long demand to end the state control of electronic media and its de-monopolization started becoming a reality with the structural changes in economy. This has, as a result, opened the doors for private players to start their operation in electronic media and to compete with the government controlled electronic media. This has also provided to the people an alternative to the state controlled Doordarshan, and simultaneously increased the choices before the citizens: first, to choose the source of news and information of their choice; second, to cross check the authenticity of the facts in the news; third and final, to avail the diversity in opinions, interpretations, and analysis. Consequently, the All India Radio and Doordarshan which had so far functioned as department under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Union government and for which there were persistent demands that the electronic media should be free from government control and they should have autonomy in their functioning, were given some space for free breathing. The parliament, finally, passed an act to give autonomy to the broadcast media in 1990: The Prasar Bharti (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990, however, the act was not notified at that point of time. Even the governments did not desire to notify it for next seven years. At last, in 1997 the United Front (UF) government decided to notify this act; The Prasar Bharti (15 September 1997, vide S. O. 509 (E), dated 22 July 1997), the autonomous broadcasting corporation of India, after which it came into existence. The introduction of Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV channels
and live telecast of parliamentary proceedings are big steps in the process of involving the people in the political process as if parliament is in your living room. Till now people know briefings about parliament’s debates and its proceedings through newspaper or broadcast media.

This chapter attempts to examine the role of the mass media in expanding the scope of public sphere for free, diverse and vibrant debates concerning public issues and its implications in enlarging the participations of the people leading to consolidating democratic processes as well as strengthening of democratic institutions. The chapter also attempts to analyze the impact of the increasing corporatization of media in the working of democratic institutions and its policy making.

5.2 UNSTABLE GOVERNMENTS, CRITICAL ECONOMY

In the closing years of 80s and in the beginning of 90s of the last century when the world was witnessing revolutionary political transformations in single party socialist systems of Eastern Europe and former USSR, the largest democracy of the world was facing twin challenges of politico-economic nature: serious governmental instability and severe economic crisis. Though the world admires India’s track record as a stable procedural parliamentary democracy since independence in the whole developing world despite the 19th months of derailed democratic process during emergency between 1975-1977, and acknowledges with a sense of appreciation the post-Emergency political transformation leading to deepening roots of democratic processes in society, India started experiencing short-lived governments at the national level consequently entering a multi-party coalitional government phase. With an unprecedented majority in Lok Sabha in 1984-1985 Rajiv Gandhi started his Prime Ministership as Mr. Clean, but under the fire of political friends turned political foes and the aggressive press owing to Bofors Scandal he lost majority in 1989 elections and ironically ended his Prime Minister’s inning as defamed Rajiv Gandhi. Political scientist, C. P. Bhambhri,
acknowledging the then political developments in national politics, writes: “The Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress lost the Lok Sabha elections of 1989 and for the first time in the history of Indian democracy, a patch-work government was formed at centre and from 1989 to 1991, India had two Prime Ministers in succession for brief periods. The V. P. Singh government from 1989 to 1990 remained shaky from the beginning because the Prime Minister was a leader of a miniscule number of MPs of the Lok Sabha and even his supporters were split and Chandrashekhar succeeded as Prime Minister from 1990 to 1991” (Bhambhri, 2010: 69-70).

In that highly instability-ridden national politics in 1991 when mid-term elections for the 10th Lok Sabha were being held, and shockingly during the election campaigning former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in Tamil Nadu by the alleged LTTE supporters of Tamil separate state in Sri Lanka, the results of the elections favoured the Congress Party as the largest party, but well short of the required magic figure of absolute majority in the Lower House of the Union Parliament. Prof Chakrabarty analyzes the elections’ results of 1991 mid-term poll and sums up: “Of the all the national election held so far, the 1991 Lok Sabha poll is a watershed for a variety of reasons. First, it was perhaps the most protracted election, having been punctuated by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Although this dastardly killing of a Congress leader most unfortunate, it gave the Congress party an extra political mileage especially in the light of its decline in the Hindi heartland. Second, despite the absence of an electoral pact among the opposition parties, two major issues of Mandal and Mandir placed them at an advantage over Congress. Third, the 1991 election was also unique in the sense that was held when Indian Policy makers more or less reconciled to the structural adjustment programme of the neo-liberal variety” (Charabarty, 2008:57). This was also the beginning of Congress rule without the Prime Minister of Nehru-Indira family in post-Indira period. The Congress won 232 seats and attained the status of the largest party in Lok Sabha and was invited by the President to form
the government and later proved its majority on the floor of the house as per the established constitutional convention. Therefore, the Congress formed a minority government led by P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991 and began a set of structural economic reforms that were to change the character of the economy and society (Jayal and Mehta, 2010: 7). It had been maintained by the public policy makers that India had faced serious Balance-of-Payments crisis and the P.V. Narasinha Rao government at the centre from 1991 to 1996 was compelled to take steps for the restoration of financial health of the economy. Looking this as a break with the past in the 1990s, C.P. Bhambhri observes: “The grave economic situation that India was in at the beginning of 1990-1991 compelled her to abandon the time tested path of economic planning. A New Economic Policy was formulated by the Rao government and unlike Nehru- Indira Gandhi model in which public sector had occupied a commanding position in the economy, the economic policies of Privatization, Deregulation Liberalization and Globalization and fiscal adjustment were to be followed for accelerating the growth of the economy. The decade of 1990s and the first decade of Twenty First Century are associated with these New Economic Policies” (Bhambhri, 2010: 84-85).

These changes also transformed the state of the passive revolution. The crucial difference consisted in the dismantling of the licence regime; greater entry of foreign capital and foreign consumer goods; and the opening up of sectors such as telecommunications, transport, infrastructure, mining, banking insurance, and the like, to private capital. The most dramatic event was the Indian information technology industry (Jayal & Mehta, 2010: 7).

One of the important political developments since 1999 is the formation of coalition governments with relative stability unlike the coalition governments of the past severally infected with instability. However, different governments since the formation of the minority government of P. V. Narasimha Rao in 1991 have one common characteristics of numerical minoritism. C. P. Bhambhri writes:
“The salient feature of this phase of democratic politics is that all the central
governments either led by Narasimha Rao, or HD Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar
Gujral, or BJP- led government from 1998to 2004 or the Congress-led United
Progressive Alliance government of post-2004elections were either led by Prime
Ministers who were supported by a minority of the elected members of the Lok
sabha or coalition governments had to be formed because no party could secure a
majority of Lok Sabha Seats on its own” (Bhambhri, 2010: 70).

5.3 THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY: PATH BREAKING INITIATIVE

The new economic policy under the garb of Liberalization, Privatization and
globalization (LPG) was a path breaking bold, but risky political initiative taken
by a government having no majority of its own in the upper house, however,
economic compulsions had left no viable option before the newly formed minority
government to rescue the fast deteriorating economic health of the country before
it slipped into coma. The previously short-lived government of Chandrashekhar
had faced a very serious crisis of balance of payment, and was even forced to
mortgaged reserve gold in international market to resolve an immediate shortage
of foreign exchange. In this background the Nehruvian economic policy was
given farewell by none other than the Prime Minister of his own party. Therefore,
it is remarkable that a Congress Party-led coalition government of Prime Minister,

The new economic policy had been introduced with great fanfare in India. There
was a hope bordering on euphoria in certain circles that it would enable India to
overcome the hurdles which it has been facing for quite some time. The ‘New
Economic Policy’was dominantly focused on policy of liberalization under the
economic agenda as part of neo-liberal reforms supported by international
financial institutions and Western developed capitalist economies. The policy of
liberalization in general is withdrawal of state from economic affairs, end of
licence-permit Raj, greater role to private sectors in economy and a free market.
Though the policy of liberalization was launched in a way by Rajiv Gandhi during his regime in the late 1980s. However, When the Rajiv Gandhi government fell in 1989, the man who was behind the partial economic reforms, Sam Pitroda, whose influence with the department of Telecommunication (DOT) bureaucrats waned, and the pace of telecommunications reforms slowed down until the Narasimha Rao government came to power in 1991. Rahul Mukherji observes that the trajectory of India’s economic transition was different from the economic reforms under authoritarian regimes. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s reform efforts, initiated in the 1980s enjoyed limited success in relation to the big bang reforms of 1991. The balance of payments crisis of 1991 was necessary for, but not sufficient to explain, the changes that occurred thereafter. India had faced a balance of payment crisis in 1966 but had sustained Import Substitution Industry (ISI) with renewed vigour from 1969 (Mukherji, 2010: 375).

Led by a former governor of Reserve Bank of India and an economist Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, the Rao government, responding to a national economic crisis, announced a series of path-breaking policy changes. These came to be referred to as the New Economy Policy (NEP). At the time, NEP looked like bitter medicine for India (Singhal & Rogers, 2001: 198-199). The five main components of NEP include (a) devaluation of the Indian rupee in order to increase exports; (b) deregulation or dismantling of government controls over domestic industry; (c) privatization, including formation of jointly owned public-private enterprises and the sale of public sector enterprises; (d) liberalization or opening up of monopoly markets to increase foreign and domestic competition; and (e) globalization by opening the Indian economy to foreign investment (Sinha, 1996). Essentially, the NEP was a massive and radical change in India’s political economy toward free-market forces, an about face that occurred across the continuum of political economy from left to right. As a matter of fact, now it’s not any visible hand of government, but Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” of
business competition would determine prices, the volumes of sales, and other economic factors in the Indian economy.

Under the NEP infrastructural sectors such as power, telecommunications, roads, ports, harbors, and civil aviation were especially targeted for liberalization, de-monopolization, direct foreign investment, and privatization. The winds of macroeconomic change spurred by the NEP were blowing hard enough to force the monolithic DOT to respond, albeit slowly and with great reluctance. The pace of telecommunications reform picked up in 1993 when N. Vittal, previously Secretary in the Department of Electronics and a visionary technocrat was appointed head DOT. Championing the cause of private industry and of telephone users, Vittal was instrumental in the formulation of the National Telecommunication Policy of 1994 (NTP-94) which (a) aimed to provide telephone connection; (b) promoted rapid expansion of the telecommunication network; (c) sought to achieve international standards of service quality; and (d) invited direct foreign and private investments for telecommunications expansion.

5.4 ECONOMIC REFORMS AND CHANGING POLITICS

If politics decides market, economy gets affected, so is the case, when market decides state’s economic policy, politics gets affected. When finance minister Dr Manmohan launched neo-liberal economic reforms in July 1991 in response to the twin economic crises (of balance of payments and inflation) that was building up for over a decade. The central objective of economic reforms was to incrementally transform the Indian economy from its inward looking and globally relatively marginalized geo-economic positioning prevailing in 1990 to a more dynamic market oriented economy driven largely by private initiative and increasingly integrated with the global economy. In the next few years, the economy stabilized. Nevertheless, the government faced political problems as the BJP embarked on a campaign to whip up religious fervor. The campaign ended on 6th December 1992 with the destruction of a mosque at Ayodhya. Hindu
fundamentalists charged that India’s Mughal (Muslim) rulers destroyed a temple to effect the mosque nearly 500 years ago. They further claimed the temple marked the birth place of Lord Rama, a mythological figure from the Ramayana, a Hindu epic that is widely revered in India as a treatise on ethics and morality of rulers. The BJP’s overtly communal campaign saw religious riots flare across the country. Equally important, the then government faced the wrath of liberal critics who charged that it failed to prevent destruction of the mosque and the riots that followed, damaging the secular image of the Indian state and composite fabric of the Indian society. They held P. V. Narasimha Rao to be personally responsible and said he did nothing to protect the lives and property of Muslims. It was no surprise then that in the 1996 eleventh Lok Sabha election the Indian National Congress lost the vital support of India’s 120 million Muslims, who had hitherto been a bedrock of support. Thus, the Congress failed once again to secure a majority in Lower House of Parliament. Since then a series of coalition government has ruled India (Desai, 1998: 85).

5.5 REVIVAL OF INSTABILITY: NATIONAL POLITICS IN 1996

The 1996 election manifestos of the major parties reflected the difference in their ideologies, but except for the Communist party of India (Marxist), the three national parties- the Congress, the BJP and the Janata Dal (the main party of the National Front-Left Front Alliance) – accepted, with slight carination the need for continuation of Narasimha Rao’s economic reform programs and foreign investment. All manifestos also reflected the need to woo the lower castes that emerged as a new factor in Indian politics during the preceding five years (Vohra, 2000: 67).

The eleventh Lok Sabha elections concluded in May 1996. None of the major national party won a ruling majority in Lok Sabha. Following the short-lived government of the BJP, a United Front (UF) government-a coalition of thirteen regional and leftist parties with divergent ideological orientations - came to power.
in June 1996. Political uncertainty did exist due to the coalition forms of government in power since 1996. The United Front government introduced several measures to open further the foreign investment regime, the tax system, continue the liberalization of trade and modestly liberalize some segments of the financial sector (Desai, 1998: 113).

Among observers of Indian politics this is being considered a watershed election because of the decline of the national parties and the consolidation of the agendas of regional and local political parties.

5.6 ECONOMIC REFORMS AS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Economic reforms that started with Narasimha Rao’s government did not end with the defeat of the Rao’s regime in 1996 general elections to the Lok Sabha. Those political groups who were the vocal critics of the policy include the BJP. Although in 1996 and 1997 the BJP kept up its nationalist campaign, urging restrictions on foreign trade and investment. Finally, in the election (twelfth Lok Sabha) which concluded in February 1998, the BJP emerged as the largest party in Parliament and with support of other regional parties, formed the government. Hence, once the party came to power as the largest partner of the coalition in 1996 for 13 days only, and once again second time in 1998 for 13 months, and the third and last time so far after the mid-term elections in 1999 did not leave the path of economic reforms and continuously moved ahead with the agenda of more economic reforms. Therefore, Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s administration surprised many by continuing reforms, when it was at the helm of affairs of India in 1999 for five years. The Vajpayee administration continued with privatization, reduction of taxes, a sound fiscal policy aimed at reducing deficits and debts and increased initiatives for public works. Even the United Front (UF) government attempted a progressive budget that encouraged reforms, but the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and political instability created economic stagnation. In 2004 when Dr Manmohan Singh, once the co-authors of economic liberalization along
with the then Prime Minister of P.V. Narsimha Rao in 1991, himself became the Prime Minister of the UPA government, the uninterrupted economic reforms again took the center stage though during the period his government was supported by Left Front from outside which used to oppose economic reforms and sometimes even forced to slow down the pace of the neo-liberal reforms. The conflict between the UPA and its supportive Left Front finally led to the withdrawal of support by the Left Front on the Issue of Indo-US Civilian Nuclear Deal in 2008. Therefore, the process of neo-liberal economic reforms never disappeared from the agenda of the UF, NDA led by BJP or UPA supported by anti-economic reforms political front named Left Front.

5.7 GLOBALIZATION AND MASS MEDIA

Globalization is one of the most talked-about phenomenon of the last 20 years. But the term is so often used it is in danger of becoming a cliché. However, it is a favourite catchphrase of journalist and politicians. It has also become a key idea for business theory and practice, and enteracademic debates. But what people mean by ‘globalization’ is often confused with and confusing. Nevertheless, scholars have tried to define, explain and analyze the term as well as its implications. Ronald Robertson, Professor of Sociology, was the first person to define globalization as “the compression of the world and intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992: 59). M. Albrow and E. King defined globalization as “…all those processes by which peoples of the world are incorporated into a world society” (Albrow, “Introduction” 1990: 8). Hence, Globalization could be understood as the process through which economic and cultural phenomena that had previously been mainly national in scope become increasingly internationalized. This process has accelerated in recent decades under the aegis of multinational corporations based in the United States and imperialist centers. At an ideological level, corporate globalization is bolstered by neo-liberal arguments about the merits of ‘free trade’.
Globalization is about the growing worldwide interconnections between societies. Culture is in many senses the most direct, obvious and visible way in which we experience these interconnections in our daily lives. It is crucial component of globalization because it’s through culture that common understandings are developed, so culture is central to connections between places and nations (Mackay, (ed.). 2000: 48). Therefore, the credit to visualize the whole world as a Global Village (McLuhan, 1964:6) often goes to the notion of globalization in which the real facilitators are the information and communication technologies whose visual face is the mass media. However, critiques of globalization never forget in talking about the emergence of tendencies of cultural homogenization as a new form of hegemony-cultural imperialism.

5.8 POTENTIAL OF INDIAN MEDIA IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

India is one of the few nations with capabilities in satellite technology having influenced developments on the television front. Post-1990 satellite television in India has become transnational in nature. It coincided with the entry of multinational companies in the Indian markets under the Government’s economic policy of liberalization and privatization. The implications were private ownership in disguised forms, absence of censorship or any such controls, autonomy and commercialization of the medium and economic, political and cultural implications of transnational messages. The concept of television as an intimate and family medium is being utilized to its fullest to influence the rapidly expanding middle class in India (estimated to be 222-250 million of the 535 million people with access to television). Today, 535.4 million people have access to television in a country of 1.2 billion people. Nowadays Indian television means regional television networks, language channels, country/language approach by commercial broadcasters and preference for public service broadcaster due to economic and other considerations by Indian audiences. Indian television also means confusion for national identity, lack of language
representation, division of urban-rural areas, co-existence of private and public systems, dilemmas of prioritization of education upon entertainment, development over market and so on. India is in this context a very interesting case in point for cultural diversity debate as the diversity inherently brings complexities.

And India is also one of the few countries from the global south to emerge as a significant actor in the international media market. This is because of the particular historical context of the evolution of the media industries in India from the time of British colonialism, through more than six decades of independence. It explores the opportunities that globalization has presented for cultural industries in India as a consequence of gradual deregulation and privatization of broadcasting in the 1990s, and looks at how the Indian cultural industries, often in partnership with transnational corporations, have expanded beyond the borders of the country to reach a regional and, increasingly, a global audience.

News programmes have suddenly become hot property and are vying for attention with other popular programmes telecast in different channels. All major television broadcasters are including at least one news channel to their bouquet. The biggest headache for launching a satellite channel is programme software for round the clock. In this juncture, newsgathering is a major task for the 24-hour news channels. To cater this task, the emerging electronic channels have always made an attempt to cover all the incidents irrespective of position, location and time. These channels not only revolutionized the concept of news on Indian television but also changed the news formats. Before 1990s, Doordarshan had monopolized newscast on Indian television and also turned the news programs into a dowdy exercise. Now the private channels made the news an essential commodity like food, cloth and shelter. The strong point of all today’s news bulletins is their topicality, objectivity, glossy editing and high-quality visuals. News has traveled a long way from the DD era. From Local events to International events, breaking news to news analysis, television soap to page 3 news, every happening comes
under purview of news. We have covered some significant changes in news broadcasting in India before and after the Gulf War.

5.9 LIVE COVERAGE OF GULF-WAR: A CATALYST IN GLOBALIZING MEDIA

Post-1990 satellite television in India has become transnational in nature. It coincided with the entry of multinational companies in the Indian markets under the Government’s policy of economic reforms leading to liberalization and privatization in different sectors including information and communication technologies. International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991. In August 1991, Richard Li launched Star Plus, the first satellite channel beamed the signal to Indian subcontinent. Subhash Chandra’s Zee TV appeared in October 1992. It is India’s first privately owned Hindi channel to cater the interest of Indian viewers. This ignition followed by Sony and a little later by domestic channels such as Eenadu, Asianet and Sun TV. Entertainment programs had begun to occupy center stage in the organization’s programming strategies and advertising had come to be as the main source of funding. Doordarshan’s earlier mandate to aid in the process of social and economic development had clearly been diluted. Doordarshan had faced a stiff competition in news and public affairs programming with international channels like BBC and CNN. Doordarshan planned to sell some slots for news programme under sponsored category. In February 1995, NDTV becomes the country’s first private producer of the national news ‘News Tonight’, which aired on the country’s government-owned Doordarshan set a new landmark for Indian television because of its on-the-spot reporting with pertinent visuals. In the same year, TV Today Network occupied a 20 minutes slot in DD Metro channel and aired a Hindi and current affairs programme ‘Aaj Tak’. This programme became popular for its comprehensive coverage and unique style presentation by Late S. P. Singh. Still we remembered the sign-up message “Ye
Thi Khabar Aaj Tak, Intizar. Kijiye Kal Tak”. Large number of viewers across India had been watching Aaj Tak as a daily habit because of its innovative style of news presentation. Besides that Nalini Singh’s five-minute fast paced, condensed daily news capsule Ankhon Dekhi, TV Today Network’s Business Aaj Tak and Newstrack was aired on the Metro channel of Doordarshan. This is the period when satellite channels concentrated on entertainment programmes for their respective channels. Doordarshan was still ruled the most wanted area ‘news’.

5.10 ELECTRONIC MEDIA: EVOLUTION TO REVOLUTION

Television has been with the world for only about five decades and in this comparatively short period, it has firmly and clearly established itself as the most powerful and the most popular medium of communication for information, ideas, values and skills. Its potency and influence as carrier of news are phenomenal. In the affluent and technologically advanced countries of the world, it is well on its way to becoming the prime medium of news dissemination leaving way behind in popular acclaim the older and more traditional media like radio and the press. The secret of this extraordinary power of television as a news medium is that it is for its public of the closest and the most approximate thing to actually witnessing a news-event rather than receiving a verbal or written account of it, as through radio or the press. It is, so to say, the least mediated of the all the media. Newspapers are for the eyes only. Radio is for the ears. Television addresses the eyes and the ears both at the same time. It has this marvelous ability to bring to its viewers actual texture, colour and motion of an event as it unfolds. A newscast on television enables literally millions of persons sitting comfortable in their homes to watch vividly all the important occurrences near and far- wars, earthquakes, fires, floods; destruction of life and property, construction of dams, hospitals; acts of great courage and valour, acts of great violence and meanness; agitations, negotiations, conferences, revolutions; elections and enthronements; the entire grit and guts of complex processes of change, of the forward and backward movement
of societies. That is why it is clear that the powerful influence of television on the processes of political decision-making, on shaping public opinions, habits and morals and in the motivation and direction of social change. Therefore, electronic media in India in pre-liberalization era had more served a social tool to address socio-economic problems and in the nation-building project under the state controlled structure.

Up to 1991 the television broadcasting in India meant that the Indian State controlled the nation-wide network, Doordarshan. By 1991 satellite television took the form of ‘transnational television’ with telecast of Gulf war by CNN. Notes that more channels, cable television distribution regulation, together with some programming changes highlight the Government of India’s response and policy choices in 1990s. According to India Today dated 31st March 1992, an internal report of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had predicated as early as February 1991 that ‘Programmes specifically targeted at Indian audiences are likely to be beamed from foreign satellites in the near future’. The reactions of the Government of India in the print media during that time were that ‘there is no threat’ (Dasai, 1998). As Reddy notes, ‘inaction is the best condition for private enterprises to flourish, and they are now unstoppable’. Doordarshan underwent major changes in the period from 1993 to 1998. Traceynotes, “…the shift of emphasis on Doordarshan…within the overall context of growing commercialization of media in India (and even many other developing countries across globe)”. The historic judgment of the Indian Supreme Court on airwaves in 1995 stated: "air waves or frequencies are public property. Their use had to be controlled and regulated by a public authority in the interest of the public and to prevent invasion of their rights". Laws, rules and regulations do exist in India, but on the whole they facilitate the reception of foreign satellite programmes; the Indian state actually ‘actively mediated the process’ (Pendakur and Kapur, 1997: 201).
Prasar Bharati Act of 1990 provided ‘for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation of India, to be known as Prasar Bharati, to define its composition, functions and powers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto’. The Government came up with distribution regulation in form of Cable Television Network Regulation Bill (1994) and the Act was passed in 1995. The Government started taxing cable operators in a bid to generate revenues. The rates rose by 35 percent in 26 states of India. The Act made is mandatory for the Cable operators, who must register their companies in the Post Office and pay entertainment taxes. More significantly, the Act made transmission of at least two Doordarshan channels obligatory, and drew up a programming and advertising code, the adherence to which would be the responsibility of the operator.

The commercialization of the electronic media was given a boost as globalization hit India, bringing about the transformation of Indian television in the early 1990s, accelerated by the combined impact of new communication technologies and the opening up of global markets. Economic liberalization, deregulation and privatization contributed to the expansion of Indian media corporations, facilitated by joint ventures with international media conglomerates. Such developments revolutionized broadcasting in what used to be a heavily protected media market, certainly the most regulated among the world's democracies. Gradual deregulation and privatization of television has transformed the media landscape, evident in the exponential growth in the number of television channels – from Doordarshan the sole state-controlled channel in 1991 to more than 70 in 2000. Out of these, 19 are in Hindi or English and therefore national in reach, while others cater to regional audiences in their own languages.

The privatization of broadcasting made many western transnational media players enter the 'emerging market' of India – potentially one of the world's biggest English-language television markets. With a huge middle class – estimated between 200-300 million – with aspirations to a western lifestyle and a well-
developed national satellite network linking the vast country, their task does not appear to be too demanding. Sectors of the Indian economy, such as information technology, have demonstrated exceptional growth in the past decade. This has stimulated changes in the broadcasting industry, benefiting also from a fast-growing advertising sector, making the Indian television market attractive for transnational broadcasters.

The entry of global media conglomerates into India opened up a new visual world for Indian audiences, first through the live coverage of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis by the Cable News Network (CNN) and later through Hong Kong based Star (Satellite Television Asian Region) TV, part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Star's five-channel satellite service in English (Plus, Prime Sports, Channel V, the BBC World and Movie), originated in 1991, became a major hit with the English-fluent urban elite and the advertisers, who saw in these channels a way to reach India's affluent middle class. Buoyed by advertising revenues, cable and satellite television increased substantially from 1992, when only 1.2 million homes received it. By 1999, India had 24 million cable TV homes, receiving programmes from major transnational players – notably, CNN, Disney, CNBC, MTV, Star, Sony Entertainment Television and BBC – and from scores of Indian channels. After an initial infatuation with western English-language programming, noted for its liberal attitudes to sexual subjects, hitherto a taboo on Indian airwaves, it became apparent that the Indian audience preferred television in their own languages, prompting global media companies to adapt their programming strategies to suit the local marketplace. Star started the process of hybridisation when it realised that its mainly US-originated programming was being viewed by only a very small urban elite. It therefore started adding Hindi sub-titles to Hollywood films and dubbing popular US soaps into Hindi. In 1996, Star's India specific channel, Star Plus, began telecasting locally made programmes in English and Hindi. The sheer logic of market Pressure – localising the products to reach a wider consumer base and increase advertising revenues, was at the heart of this
localisation strategy. Instead of positioning itself as covert imposition of Western culture, characteristic of the 19th- and 20th- century imperialism, globalization appears to undercut Western authority through the cosmopolitan culture it promises for the Indian upper middle class and a stress on the local (Mathew, 1998: 56).

5.11 REVOLUTIONIZING VERNACULAR PRESS

India, the second most populous country in the world with the population more than one billion is the largest functioning democracy with more than 600 million voters even greater than the total population of many of the western developed democracies including the US. However, the total circulation of the newspapers is even less than the total circulation of newspapers in the US. In the post-liberalization period interestingly the circulation of newspapers in India has increased while the circulation of newspapers in the US and in other western developed democracies have gone down. “When newspaper circulation in other parts of the world is continuously declining with the coming of television and new media, it has seen exponential growth in India. The average daily circulation of the newspapers in the United States has been declining at the rate of 6% a year (Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds, 2010). Total newspaper circulation in India has grown from 126.96 million in 2000 to 207.10 million in 2008 (Registrar of Newspapers for India for various years). Though the opening of the private TV channels in India has substantially increased the number of viewers in every parts of the country. The substantial increase in the readers of newspapers is the result of the increase in the number of vernacular newspapers. Tabrez Ahmed Neyazi writes: “This growth in circulation has been spearheaded by Hindi and regional languages, though the English language newspapers have also grown” (Neyazi. 2011: 75). Robin Jaffery has credited it to the growth of capitalism in India. Today there are more than hundred private channels running 24 hours daily and many FM radio stations privately controlled are in operation. This is generally
referred as the revolution of the electronic media in India. However, this has brought the debate in the public space that whether private control of electronic media is contributing to the democratic process or weakening it.

5.12 DE-MONOPOLIZATION OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Electronic Media have different historical trajectory since its operation in India with a modest beginning in the late 1950s. It was used as an important tool in the process of nation-building by the Indian state, however, it was always used by the ruling class as the mass apparatus to serve their political interests. During the Emergency the Indira regime used it as a propaganda instrument in justifying as well as popularizing emergency among the masses, however, during the regime its lost whatever credibility it had before the proclamation of emergency. Therefore, there were two pronged demands have always been moving around: de-monopolization of electronic media and state de-control of Doordarshan. The New Economic Policy and economic structural changes opened the floodgates for private controlled electronic Media. Therefore, it was in 1991 when governmental monopoly of the airwaves was ended by the advent of satellite and cable technologies, Doordarshan was predicated on modernization and development communications paradigms that rendered television a powerful tool for state-led efforts in nation-building. The Government of India’s laws and policies regarding electronic media provide insight into the concrete realities, rather than professed goals, of these attempts in the context of phenomenal class disparities, cultural pluralism, and multilingualism. The unintended consequences of this governmental-media monopoly included the politicization of news programming; the impacts of motivated news of Doordarshan in flaring up of communal riots; increasing consumerism; and exacerbation of regional anti-Centre sentiments. Based on archival data, memoirs, government documents, and numerous interviews with politicians, television officials, producers, advertisers and legal experts, the development communications paradigm rationalized a governmental
television monopoly that was politicized, centralized, and hierarchical, creating a widening gap between government rhetoric and programming realities. The result has been a series of lost opportunities, in which Doordarshan undermines its greatest strengths: its wide reach, greater than that of any transnational broadcaster; its public rather than commercial, rationale; and its extensive infrastructure that unlike any satellite channel, could contextualize programming for local and regional informational, educational, and language needs. The electronic media, telegraph, radio and television, because this is where the thorniest issues regarding democratic practice have arisen in India. This is because the evolution of policies regarding the Press followed a very different trajectory than did that of television policy.

A relatively free and dynamic Press has a long rich history in India dating from the importance of newspapers in the freedom struggle. From independence the role of the Press in creating a new nation was debated publicly, and though examples of restrictions on the Press are abundant. The existence of a free Press is a dominant refrain throughout India’s political culture, and attempts at restriction are widely greeted with suspicion and resistance. Television policies did not evolve within this broad political discourse regarding cultural hegemony, independence, and democracy, but instead arose more as the result of technological faits accomplis over the course of more than three decades. Television did not originate in the context of struggle against centralized political control, but instead evolved within the institutional structures of an independent Central government whose legitimacy rested in part on promises that it would direct technology for development. Television originally arose more as a partner with centralized authority than as part of the struggle against it. Public debate over the role of television, reaching beyond the relatively small group of people directly involved in the industry, did not occur until after the Emergency and again more forcefully with the campaign for the 1989 Lok Sabha election.
5.13 OWNERSHIP: THEORETICAL DEBATES

The media is an important player in democratic political process, however, its working can’t be judged without the understanding of its structure and nature of ownership and its defined and inherent goals. A simple observation concludes that who controls ownership, controls media, and media as an institution would serve the interests of the owners. If state controls and monopolies media, media becomes an instruments in the hands of rulers for sustaining its political powers and interests of the ruled becomes secondary. On the contrary, if media is owned by private individuals, it becomes a business or enterprise to serve the economic interests of the owners. Therefore, question of ownership of media is vital in any democracy.

In “Rethinking Media and Democracy” James Curran discards the accepted view of the media’s role in democracy and shows that corporate control may be worse for the people than government control. Historically, the media is seen as a check on government that must be independent – meaning it must reside in the free market. Curran says that this arrangement has failed the people in several ways.

Curran gives three standard arguments for media independent of government: first, to act as a watchdog; second, as a way to facilitate idea exchange and debate; and third, so that they may act as the voice of the people more. He says all three arguments are flawed by real-world conditions and corporate ownership. First, the media rarely even schedule watchdog-type news anymore-most mass media effort today is entertainment. And the government is no longer the only large, faceless entity that the people need a watchdog for. Giant corporations, the same ones that own the bulk of the mass media, today have more power than some governments, yet the classical argument doesn’t mention them. Furthermore, there are many examples of the mass media working with or for the government even if they are independently owned, simply because it is in their best economic interest.
Curran does allow that loss of credibility and professional ethics counter these arguments to some degree, but not enough to overpower his concern.

Curran rejects the marketplace of ideas theory largely because the free market has led to multi-billion dollar media mergers, large percentages of market share for a small number of companies, and a high cost to enter the marketplace in any meaningful manner. Second, the mass media market demands more entertaining, less informative content; third, the market lead to information-rich for elite and info-poor media for the mass market; and fourth, it leads to simplified news rather than process-type news.

The mass media also do not really act as a voice of the people. Curran thinks the free market is fundamentally flawed in this regard- public participation in the media is passive, in terms of buying what they like, rather than an active voice in most cases. Even new communication technologies, he says, which may seem to give people more of a voice, have been reigned in by deregulation-inspired mergers (Curran, 2005).

In the light of the arguments it seems that the media’s standard role in a democratic society as defined by traditional liberal thinkers have problems. It is especially important that the people have a watchdog for large corporations now when so many of them are beyond any real government or market control. Corporations are free to do anything they wish that may affect individuals adversely with little accountability. The government, on the other hand, has seek people’s approval in periodic elections, therefore, it is relatively easy to know about the working of the government. However, corporations are controlling what we eat, breathe or read every day but they don’t require people’approval. Mass media’s are increasingly becoming more entertainment oriented than information centered and profit making motive is working behind though the purpose of the news media is to share more and more information.
5.14 OWNERSHIP OF MEDIA IN INDIA: NATURE AND IMPLICATION

In the present era of mass media communication, the old questions are still the key to understanding the contribution of communication to the performance of the political system and its political culture. Mass media has a potential of including practically everybody into the political public sphere and the process of political deliberation do formation and decision making. The influence of mass media in political structure is significant. It becomes even more crucial to know who owns media. Media ownership has serious implications for democratic governance. As one observer of Indian media, contended, "if we permit the foreign media to operate as owners in our country, we will end up our democracy controlled by outsiders". This rationale is based on following perceptions. Newspapers influence the thinking of the entire nation. Thus the implications of the entry of foreign ownership are ominous. Similar is the case with corporate houses (Raghavan, 1994: 126-132). India is one of the few nations with capabilities in satellite technology having influenced developments on the television front. Post-1990 satellite television in India has become transnational in nature. It coincided with the entry of multinational companies in the Indian markets under the Government policy of privatization. The implications were private ownership in disguised forms, absence of censorship or any such controls, autonomy and commercialization of the medium and economic, political and cultural implications of transnational messages (Kamath, 1980).

The concept of television as an intimate and family medium is being utilized to its fullest to influence the rapidly expanding middle class in India (estimated to be 222-250 million of the 535 million people with access to television). Today 535.4 million people have access to television in a country of more than 1000 million people. Now a days Indian television means regional television networks, language channels, country/language approach by commercial broadcasters and preference for public service broadcaster due to economic and other
considerations by Indian audiences. Indian television also means confusion for national identity, lack of language representation, division of urban-rural areas, co-existence of private and public systems, dilemmas of prioritization of education upon entertainment, development over market and so on. India is in this context a very interesting case in point for cultural diversity debate as the diversity inherently brings complexities. Therefore, the question of ownership becomes very crucial. There are roughly four models of decision-making power connected with the two principal forms of ownership.

A. Public ownership combined with public control over the relevant decisions concerning the performance of the respective media unit. (Not the government, but civil society organization exercise effective control over media units).

B. Public ownership combined with government control.

C. Private ownership with decision making at the owners’ discretion.

D. Private ownership with decision making in a legal framework or a strong cultural tradition concerning professional rights for journalists, quality standards and the like.

Obviously, some combination of models A and D is required to meet the second hard condition for a public discourse of democratic quality. Many countries today represent one or another type of blend between the different models. In India e. g. there is free Press and up till now a government controlled TV. In Germany, you find both public-ally and privately controlled TV and Radio plus private print-media under certain public restrictions for private control. I do not want to discuss the various models in theory and practice here. My own preference however is clear: public control for the bulk of TV and Radio units plus a strong legal and cultural framework to protect the professional freedom of journalists in private print media and broadcast unit (Singh, 1980).

The forms of ownership and control are some of the crucial issues such as:
Mass media are intrinsically asymmetrical. The access to their functions is very unequal. Some social and political actors do have direct access, others have at least indirect, sometimes even powerful, access and some social actors have no access whatever.

Mass media do have the power to set, to build and to shape the political agenda of a polity. Whether political issues at stake in the real political arena and the daily life of society are represented or not in the picture of political life as construed by the media are highly dependent on the media actors who in this respect function as very effective gatekeepers.

The agenda structuring function also lies with the media actors as it is up to their discretion whether certain issues rank high or low, are dealt with extensively or in a volatile manner only.

But what in the long run may be even more relevant in its effects for building political culture is the way in which the media shape the portrait of the processes and the logic of politics in the political area which is enshrined in the reports they give and in the news they construe.

5.15 GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA TUSSES

The second spark came in the early nineties with the broadcast of satellite TV by foreign programmers like CNN followed by Star TV and a little later by domestic channels such as Zee TV and Sun TV into Indian homes. Prior to this, Indian viewers had to make do with DD's chosen fare which was dull, non-commercial in nature, directed towards only education and socio-economic development. Entertainment programmes were few and far between. And when the solitary few soaps like Hum Log (1984), and mythological dramas: Ramayan (1987-88) and Mahabharat (1988-89) were televised, millions of viewers stayed glued to their sets. The initial success of the channels had a snowball effect: more foreign programmers and Indian entrepreneurs flagged off their own versions. From two
channels prior to 1991, Indian viewers were exposed to more than 50 channels by 1996. Software producers emerged to cater to the programming boom almost overnight. Some talent came from the film industry, some from advertising and some from journalism. More and more people set up networks until there was a time in 1995-96 when an estimated 60,000 cable operators were existing in the country. Some of them had subscriber bases as low as 50 to as high as in the thousands. Most of the networks could relay just 6 to 14 channels as higher channel relaying capacity required heavy investments, which cable operators were loathe to make. American and European cable networks evinced interest, as well as large Indian business groups, who set up sophisticated head ends capable of delivering more than 30 channels. These multi-system operators (MSOs) started buying up local networks or franchising cable TV feeds to the smaller operators for a fee. This phenomenon led to resistance from smaller cable operators who joined forces and started functioning as MSOs. The net outcome was that the number of cable operators in the country has fallen to 30,000. The rash of players who rushed to set up satellite channels discovered that advertising revenue was not large enough to support them. This led to a shakeout. At least half a dozen either folded up or aborted the high-flying plans they had drawn up, and started operating in a restricted manner. Some of them converted their channels into basic subscription services charging cable operators a carriage fee. Foreign cable TV MSOs discovered that the cable TV market was too disorganized for them to operate in and at least three of them decided to postpone their plans and got out of the market.

The government started taxing cable operators in a bid to generate revenue. The rates varied in the 26 states and ranged from 35 per cent upwards. The authorities moved in to regulate the business and a Cable TV Act was passed in 1995. The apex court in the country, the Supreme Court, passed a judgment that the air waves are not the property of the Indian government and any Indian citizen wanting to use them should be allowed to do so. The government reacted by
making efforts to get some regulation in place by setting up committees to suggest what the broadcasting law of India should be, as the sector was still being governed by laws which were passed in 19th century. A broadcasting bill was drawn up in 1997 and introduced in the parliament. But it was not passed into an Act. State-owned telecaster Doordarshan and radio caster All India Radio were brought under a holding company called the Prasar Bharati under an act that had been gathering dust for seven years, the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990. The Act served to give autonomy to the broadcaster (Iyenger, 2001: 13).

In an important judgment in 1995, the Supreme Court declared the airwaves or electromagnetic spectrum to be public property and not a government monopoly as therefore. It reiterated that the citizen’s right to freedom of speech and expression guarantees the citizen’s right to inform and be informed across national frontiers. The Court accordingly directed the government to set up an independent broadcasting authority to license the airwaves. At the same time, it warned against ‘private oligarchies’ gaining control over the airwaves, as they could equally defeat the purpose of plurality in expression and the kind of free debate that is the hallmark of a truly democratic society. This landmark judgment spurred long pending legislation to de-governments the state-controlled radio and television channels and transfer these to an autonomous public service broadcasting corporation, Prasar Bharati, managed by an independent board funded by and accountable to Parliament (Iyenger, 2001: 35). This has been done and, teething troubles notwithstanding, a new chapter has opened in Indian broadcasting.

A new legal framework aimed at conferring ‘autonomy’ on both AIR and Doordarshan, the Prasar Bharati framework, was eventually notified in July 1999. The conversion of the two previously state-owned radio and television organizations into public broadcasting services (PBS) constitute a landmark, a transfer of power, a shift from government to governance, from state to civic
society. Today, AIR and Doordarshan are parts of an autonomous body, the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India). The idea behind Prasar Bharati is the creation of a critical public service broadcaster in the country even while it is expected to be immune to any interference by the state or the party in power. But because of conditions of political instability, technical lacunae in the law, and a marked unwillingness on the part of succession of governments to give up control of the historically manipulated and misused media, autonomy is widely recognized to be a fiction.

Since the 1990s, there has been a problematic confrontation of Indian national identity with Hindu identity, largely orchestrated by the rhetorical and political tactics of the BJP. The BJP manifesto released for the 1998 national election had a chapter titled “Cultural Nationalism” that typifies the BJP position with the following declaration.

The construction of a monolithic and rather ethnocentric Indian national identity (as outlined by the BJP) is one of the conservative reaction to the threat of Westernization posed by the private television networks (Collier (ed), 2002: 56). The twelfth Lok Sabha elections, February and March 1998 were characterised by intense media activity, particularly on television. Pointed out ‘gauged from the self-reflexive interest in this activity, there appeared a culmination in the public awareness of how audio-visual media, its presentation and reception, had changed from that of previous years’. A study conducted my Media Advocacy Group (1998) pertaining to Lok Sabha elections 1998 argues that the weight given by the television medium to the role of personalities in politics is particularly evident at election time. According to this study the projection of personalities on television ‘has perhaps become the single most important and influential factor in public perception of candidates and their parties’. Print journalists have also played a major role in the television coverage, commenting on elections and on issues of national political importance. Though television new reporting has produced its
share of trivialization and sensationalism, to a surprising extent, all television channels identified important national issues (Brosius and Butcher, 1999: 21). The election of the BJP-led government in 1998 means that broadcasting issues were put on hold. But the expectation that the BJP would try to shape the media in the BJP mould were not fulfilled. The criticisms of Prasar Bharati that the BJP had expressed in opposition were concentrated, once they were in government, on the personalities and political backgrounds of individual members of the Prasar Bharati board. The BJP argued that members of the board were all close associates of the former Prime Minister, I. K. Gujral, and for that reason could be assumed to be politically biased. In the end, the appointment of a serving government official, R. R. Shah, as acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Prasar Bharati in mid-1999 was taken as confirmation of the closer control that the government had been exercising over the autonomous corporation since the dismissal of S. S. Gill (Brosius and Butcher, 1999: 22).

In March 1996, an expert committee set up by the government to recommend ‘the adoption of suitable marketing oriented approach by the state broadcaster. The Sengupta Committee in August 1996 recommended the restoration of license fee, or a one-off tax on the sale of new radio and television sets. Many media critics were of the opinion that absence of license fees makes it extremely difficult for Doordarshan and AIR to take their role as a public service broadcaster seriously. There are limitations to public funding. It is not easy to find advertisement support for a lot of programmes. The only alternative is higher budgetary support. The idea was implicitly accepted that the established public broadcaster seriously had something to learn from its commercial rivals. Revenue could be earned from exploiting archival material as well as non-broadcasting activities such as radio paging on the FM (Frequency Modulation) network. In 1999, with the appointment of a further three-man expert committee, the newly elected the BJP-led administration seemed to be thinking along much the same lines. In 1998-99, under the BJP-led regime, political manipulation of Doordarshan and, to a lesser
extent, AIR approached the levels of misuse of these mass media by the administrations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s (Brosius and Butcher, 1999: 42).

Over the last 10 to 15 years, the television landscape has changed radically in India. Global and local forces have combined to create an environment conducive to private television channels. Both cable and satellite channels emerged in the mid-1980s, and these have become an essential part of the landscape. The satellite revolution began in India in 1991; within first five years of the 1990s, television in India changed from a single, state-run “educational” network to include more than 40 private commercial channels broadcasting around the clock. The new television atmosphere was made possible by satellite and cable technology. Many of these new networks and channels were Western owned (e.g., STAR TV, CNN, ESPN, Discovery). These television channels inspired the initiation of a number of private, indigenous Indian satellite television networks during the early 1990s. In other words, these private commercial channels have entered the nation on their own or with the help of local partners. National and international media companies also collaborate to produce program in India. Therefore, with the transformation of media organizations into large-scale commercial entities, freedom of expression is threatened not from state power but from the commercial concerns that govern media organizations. The assumption of a media that national is also difficult to sustain with the development of transnational networks leading to globalization of communication as well as emergence of a global or transnational capitalist class (Robinson and Harris, 2000).

5.16 GROWTH OF MASS MEDIA IN INDIA

During the 1950s 214 daily newspapers were published in the country. Out of these, 44 were English language dailies while the rest were published in various regional languages. This number rose to 2,856 dailies in 1990 with 209 English dailies. The total number of newspapers published in the country reached 35,595
newspapers by 1993 (3, 805 dailies). The main regional newspapers of India include the Malayalam language Malayala Manoram (published from: Kerala, daily circulation: 673, 000), the Hindi-language Dainik Jagran (published from: Uttar Pradesh, daily circulation in 2006: 580, 000), and the Anandabazar Patrika (published from: Kolkata, daily circulation in 2006: 435, 000). The Times of India Group, the Indian ExPress Group, the Hindustan Times Group, and the Anandabazar Patrika Group are the main print media houses of the country. Newspaper sale in the country increased by 11. 22% in 2007. By 2007, 62 of the world's best selling newspaper dailies were published in China, Japan, and India. India consumed 99 million newspaper copies as of 2007—making it the second largest market in the world for newspapers. The country consumed 99 million newspaper copies as of 2007—making it the second largest market in the world for newspapers. By 2009, India had a total of 81, 000, 000 Internet users—comprising 7. 0% of the country's population, and 7, 570, 000 people in India also had access to broadband Internet as of 2009—making it the 12th largest country in the world in terms of broadband Internet users. India also ranks 8th in the list of countries by number of television broadcast stations by 1997 statistics.

5.17 PRINT MEDIA IN GLOBALIZING INDIA: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Noting the tremendous sociological changes the globalization and privatization brought into the Indian Society, Sunanda K. Dutta Ray points out to the paradox that this market phenomenon generated by 1997 in Indian media. "If the English press keeps alive the hallowed principles of John Stuart Mill and Walter Bagehot holding them up as models to inspire and admonish politicians in Delhi, it is the humbler Indian language regional press that ensured that by 1997, 60 per cent of the urban dwellers and a quarter of the rural population read news papers regularly. With circulation going up steadily, there publications have made democracy meaningful at the grass roots. They often work with social and political forces, enabling growing numbers of people to voice grievances,
organize collective action redress” writes Sunanda K. Dutta Ray (Ray, 2000: 50). However, at the same time, she brought out the irony in the media role to saying that ‘The media too, bristles with ironies and inconsistencies. It does not boast uniform characteristics. So many press functionaries, from owners to reporters, and more anxious to be power brokers than opinion makers that it might be opposite to adapt Oscar Wilde and say that good newspaperman join the government before they die’. Her comment on the failing media’s adversarial role in the post globalization is even acerbic and urgent as she went on to add that “If media publicists who used to parrot the fashionable theory of ‘natural adversaries’ and now acquiescent, it is because they have to the rewards of flags of convenience” (Ray, 2000, p. 50).

Many other wonderful events began to unfold on the front media in the post globalization. One such important but silent event was that almost all the professional editors were shunted out of their positions by 1995, The owners silently took over the editorships themselves. Though The Hindu and The Indian Express and The Malyala Manorarma and Eenadu had always their owners as their editors, the other papers, such as The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, Anand Bazar Patrika, The Telegraph, and The Statesman which hitherto allowed professionals to man their editorial offices gradually bid adieu to them and owners themselves took over the editorship. Interestingly, The Times of India has gone a step further consciously to blur editorial and managerial designation, writes Sunanda K’Datta Ray (Ray, 2000: 61). Without a full time conventional editor, The Economic Times of The Times of India Group, had done a very good business in the post globalization marking an end to the era of Editor’s Sovereignty. As a result, writes Sunanda k Datta Ray, that ‘not many arresting and independent by-lines are to found now a days in Indian Papers’ (Ray, 2000: 62).

Electronic media in globalizing India Sevanti Ninan claimed in ‘Through the Magic Window: Television and Change In India, ‘that consumerism in somehow
sinful’. Gandhian and Nehruvian socialism demanded uplifting editorial content to atone for the ‘sin’ of making profits. Virtue lie in a heavy diet of stories on development, religious harmony and distributive (justice, 1995: 18). Mass media today is about culture - but a culture selected for representation by the media. This process of the ‘refeudalisation of the public sphere’ will leave the public exempt from political discussions. It could be argued that a new kind of absolutism emerges as a result of an abuse of democracy. The issue of whether a free Press is the best communications solution in a democracy is much too important at the close of this century and needs to be examined dispassionately.

Before addressing the subject, it helps to define the terminology. In the broadest sense, the media embraces the television and film entertainment industries, a vast array of regularly published printed material, and even public relations and advertising. The "Press" is supposed to be a serious member of that family, focusing on real life instead of fantasy and serving the widest possible audience. A good generic term for the Press in the electronic age is "news media". The emphasis in this definition is on content, not technology or delivery system, because the Press-at least in developed countries-can be found these days on the Internet, the fax lines, or the airwaves.

A self-governing society, by definition, needs to make its own decisions. It can’t do that without hard information, leavened with an open exchange of views. Abraham Lincoln articulated this concept most succinctly when he said: "Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe".

The influence of the media has evolved along with technology, from early newspapers to modern cable television and the Internet. The nineteenth century saw the use of yellow journalism (or stories driven by scandal, sex, and violence) to sell newspapers. These stories also had a profound impact on public opinion. The advent of radio was significant in that it soon replaced newspapers as the primary source for news and political information. Once politicians could directly
speak to large numbers of people, their influence over public opinion could be immediate as well as dramatic. Television combined sound with pictures and made the news appealing, quickly replacing radio as the dominant source for political information.

In the present era of mass media communication, the old questions are still the key to understanding the contribution of communication to the performance of the political system and its political culture. Mass media, such as newspapers, radio and television do have the potential of including practically everybody into the political public sphere and the process of political deliberation, will formation and decision making. But, whether they succeed in materializing this historically new potential or not depends on a variety of conditions which by no means are fulfilled automatically once modern mass media come into existence. Print media, Radio and television can cause depoliticisation of the rank and file or contribute to its enlightenment and appropriate information; they can serve the sheer interests of political power or that of the population and the public good. Information alone can be quite a mixed blessing. Therefore, a large and crucial portion of the responsibility for both the construction and nutrition of a democratic political culture and even for the long-term performance of governance rests with the media system and its actors. And this is all the more so in the modern media-society as it is here that the media is mainly and sometimes almost the only constituent that can give meaning and structure to the society's public sphere. Whatever the fruitful contribution of other factors for a of public deliberation, such as civil society, may be in the overall public sphere of modern societies, the responsibility of addressing the supreme decision making bodies and the entire society invariably rests within the reach of the mass media. In this sense, they beat the ultimate responsibility for a quality of public discourse that is democratically adequate.
In present day media democracies, the mass media are a crucial part of their respective political culture contributing substantially to shape the rest of it. For the media to be capable of rising to this challenge, two hard and a whole bunch of soil conditions have to materialize. The most obvious of the hard conditions which normally goes undisputed is of course the legal guarantee for a free media and free flow of information to exist. An effective legal framework, which gives sufficient protection to the media system and its actors, is one of the compulsory conditions for a democratic public sphere. Such a legal protection is, as we all know, still far from being even in the post-totalitarian world of today. And, in some countries where the lake appearance of an independent media is staged-managed it is often dangerous to be a responsible journalist.

5.18 CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC LIFE AND MASS MEDIA

Corruption in public life is a very serious problem that the world’s largest functioning democracy is facing today. Every walk of public life is badly infected with this deadly anti-poor, anti-people virus. From elected representatives to the ministers, from prime minister to chief ministers, from top bureaucrats to a simple peon, from top defense officials to top police officers, from High Court judges to lower judiciary, almost every second person associated with governance is under the allegation of corruption. However, it does not mean that people other than those who are associated with governance, are free from corruption. Corporate world, film industry and even media person are deeply involved in some forms of corrupt practices. Neera Radia’s CD episode has exposed many of the so called high profiled people associated with corporate world and media. Therefore, it’s not untrue to say that we all, in general, have accepted corruption as the way either to do things or to get things be done in public life. Corruption that can be defined in simple term as a form of human behavior which in general departs from ethics, morality, and tradition of a society, and clearly violates the law of the state, is not as if a new thing in India, however, the matter of serious societal concern is the quantum and the extent of
corruption in public life found in the last thirty years and so which were definitely unknown previously. Bofors scandal during the late Rajiv Gandhi regime, and Fodder scam in Bihar during the chief ministership of Lalu Prasad Yadav, Jain brothers Hawala scam exposed by ‘Kalchakra’in which, except left parties, leaders of every major parties were involved, Bangaru Laxman’s involvement in bribery case as the president of BJP during the NDA regime, PF scam in UP, Commonwealth game scam, Aadarsh apartment scam, and the biggest one, the 2-G spectrum scam…. are some of the few that completely shaken the faith of the common people in the political class and the bureaucracy of the country. As a matter of fact, the corruption is not just robbing the pocket of the common people and it ultimately deprives them of their right to development, but it also starts eroding the legitimacy of the democratic political system of the country which has far more serious ramification for the parliamentary democracy.

There are already laws against corruption and governmental agencies; CVC, CBI, Anti-Corruption Bureau, ECI, Lokayukta in many states, to take action against corrupts, but unfortunately these have been proved futile so far, and the amount of corruption has increased many folds in public life. As a result, a strong anti-corruption law and investigating as well as executing agency have become the common demand of the people and the civil society groups. Country wide demand for JAN LOKPAL and unprecedented public support for civil society movement ‘India Against Corruption’ under the leadership of social activist, Anna Hazare are merely the reflection of the feeling and anger of the people.

Though existing laws, investigating agencies and judicial system despite their honest or dishonest efforts could not generate enough positive results and corruption spread unchecked anything like from top to bottom in public life. However, the mass media, on the contrary, have succeeded to a great extent in highlighting the scale and gravity of corruption and in exposing corrupts through its investigative journalism and organized sting operations. The role of the mass media as the watchdog of
democracy, therefore, is very important and crucial in the battle against corruption. It was the print media, The Hindu that exposed Bofors scandal which ultimately had proved politically fatal for the then government in the next national election. The role of Tehelka magazine is well known in exposing bribery episode of then president of BJP, Bangaru Laxman, who is finally convicted recently by the court, the sting operations against some of the MPs asking money for raising questions in the parliament by the media people is another example of media’s sustained crushed against corruption at high places. Later, as a result of these sting operations 11 MPs belonging to Congress, BJP and other parties were dismissed from the membership of the parliament by the respective presiding officers. Rob Jenkins, referring corruption as a very common practice among these days politicians, observes: “…the bribe-taking politicians has become the preeminent symbol of India’s democratic malaise. The persistence of corruption is a constant reminder that democracy is deepening in some respects but not others—that inclusiveness and accountability do not necessarily accompany one another” (Jenkins, 2007: 162).

The mass media is the fourth estate of democracy and it is supposed to play a vital role in a democracy. Therefore, a free, fair and fearless media is a functional necessity of a democratic polity because it informs people, it provides public space for open debate on any of the issues that matter for public, and it helps to build public opinion on any matter of public concern including corruption in public life. The media fights against corruption through different means and wages that include investigative journalism, sting operation, holding public debates against corruption and conducting opinion polls against corruption in public life. Hence media can be a very crucial instrument in highlighting the issue of corruption and subsequently exposing the corrupts that may finally help the legal investigating agencies to bring the corrupt to book.

Corruption was not invented in the 1990s, when the first of two succeeding wave of anti-corruption activism was unleashed. Allegations of scandal plagued the 17-year
tenure of India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Two of Nehru’s ministers resigned under an ethical cloud. During the reign of Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi, corruption began to become more extortionate, a development largely attributable to the wholesale induction of organized crime figure into Indian Politics by Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi’s son and presumed political heir until his death in a 1980 plane crash (Jenkins, 2007: 164).

Little has changed in the three decades since the Bofors affairs. Corruption remains a staple of political discussion. Print and broadcast and telecast media are filled with charges of corruption and heated discussion about how best to combat it. Throughout the 1990s, the country witnessed a seemingly endless procession of ‘scams, ‘as the media labeled them – the stock- market scam, the telecom scam, sugar scam, the fodder scam and others too numerous to mention. Jenkins interestingly mentions about Jain Brother’s Hawala scams in which politicians from many parties including ministers and chief minister’s name were found in the diary. Jenkins writes: “There was also the 1996 discovery of an industrialist’s diary that was alleged to show payments to politicians, whose names were indicated by the use of initials. The Jain Diaries were captivating both because they appeared to be convincing primary-source documents and because they revealed how readily an entrepreneur could come to see corruption as just another business expense to be recoded” (Jenkins, 2007:164-165).

5.19 INDIAN MEDIA IN NEW MILLENNIUM

The news media are in crisis across the developed world. Journalism as we know it is being described, obviously with some exaggeration, as ‘collapsing’, ‘disintegrated’, in ‘meltdown’. In this digital age, there is gloom in most developed countries, or mature media markets over the future of newspapers and also broadcast television. The arrival of the digital revolution- the evolution of the internet, the emergence of new forms of media, and rise of online social networks- has reshaped the media landscape. (Ram, 2010:1). There is stong sense that ‘the news industry is no longer
in control of its own future and that is technology companies like Google and the social media that lead the way and look set to hegemonies the public space that once belonged to the news media. (Ram, 2010:1). Therefore in a clear sense it seems that a historical era for the news media is closing to an end and it has entered, even if differently across the world, are indeterminate period of uncertainty. The situation and prospect of broadcast television, which still commands a big audience across the world and remains the world’s premier advertising medium, do not seem much brighter. While daily newspapers circulation has been in decline globally, by 17 per cent between 2006 and 2010 in the United States, 11.8 per cent in western Europe, 10 per cent in eastern and central Europe, it has risen 16 per cent in Asia-pacific region and 4.5 per cent in Latin America over the same period. With nearly three-fourths of the world’s 100 top selling daily newspapers now published in Asia, India and China are regarded as ‘the world’s absolute leaders in the newspaper industry’ (WPT 2009), with current daily circulation in the vicinity of 110 million copies in each case. In India, the growth trends circulation and readership are especially strong in the Indian language sectors of the press, led by Hindi. However, N. Ram says that the buoyance and implications of this development need not to exaggerated, as it comes on the back of extreme underpricing of cover prices and dumping of hundred of thousands copies that go to straight to Radhi markets (Ram, 2010:4). Side by side, satellite television has been in buoyant growth mode in south Asia, in China and other parts of the developing world. In 2011, television households in India are estimated 141 million, with 116 million of them served by cable and 26 million by direct-to home television. Since the total number of households in India estimated to be 231 million, there is considerable space for growth. However as India enters the 21st century, the ball game for India’s news media – the press, television and radio- is dramatically different from what it was half a century ago. It can also be seen that two established media traditions, associated with the press and the broadcast media respectively, are no longer quite what they were widely recognized to be for most of the 20th century (N. Ram: 252).
As for the print media tradition, the news is mixed. The Indian press is still widely regarded as the most pluralistic, the least inhibited, and the most assertive and independent in all the less developed world. In terms of the number of newspapers circulation, India is among the top four countries in the world (the others being Japan, USA, and China). “When newspaper circulation in other parts of the world is continuously declining with the coming of television and new media, it has seen exponential growth in India. The average daily circulation of the newspapers in the United States has been declining at the rate of 6% a year (Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds, 2010). Total newspaper circulation in India has grown from 126.96 million in 2000 to 207.10 million in 2008 (Registrar of Newspapers for India for various years). Jeffery Robin has described five reasons for the phenomenal growth of Indian language press over the last two decades. They are: improved technology, steadily expanding literacy, better purchasing power, aggressive publishing and political excitement. The logic of capitalism’ Jeffery explains, has driven newspaper expansion as strongly as a thirsty potential readership. (Jeffrey, 1993:207). NRS’99 brought news that was music to the ears of the Indian language press. From the standpoint of readership, all the top ten dailies in urban and rural India were Indian language newspapers, with their readership ranging from 9.45 million to 4.88 million (N. Ram:255). This shows the increasing importance of the Indian language newspapers in globalizing India and this has a direct relationship with the increasing involvement and participation of the greater number of people in the democratic process of India.

5.20 CONCLUSION

Economic reforms and policy of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization have a direct bearing on the structure, nature and working freedom of the mass media in India. Today in the 21st century Indian mass media is very vibrant, diverse and relatively enjoying qualitative freedom in its functioning as the fourth
estate, fourth pillar of parliamentary democracy, an effective public sphere, an alert watchdog, and an important instrument in galvanizing the masses, especially the middle class living in urban or rural India. Apart from the English language national dailies and TV channels, the vernacular press and TV channels are catering greater numbers of readers and viewers in India. The interesting phenomenon that the research came across is the revolution in the vernacular newspapers how far the number of its readers is concerned. Unlike Western developed democracy where the number of readers and circulations of newspapers have gone down drastically in the age of electronic media, the readers and circulation of newspapers including English dailies and the vernacular dailies have been recording phenomenal increase. At the same time, the viewers of electronic media and the users of new media are also increasing by leaps and bounds making the people fully involved in the public affairs. Media’s role in raising the issue of corruption in political and public life is very effective and crucial in making the issue a core issue of concern in public life along with the civil society movements. Equally important of the media’s debates on the issue of increasing criminalization of Indian politics. However, allegation of corruption in media world and the issue of paid news are the serious matter of concern which, sometimes, question the credibility of media as a free, fair and fearless institution. The increasing economic interests of the owners of the private media is also effecting the media’s credible contribution as a fair opinion makers. However, despite number of pit falls and charges against the media, it still command respect among the people and are seen as one of the few institutions in independent India whose contribution in public life as well in democratizing the political process is not only admirable but also acceptable.
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