CONCLUSION

The history of the print media in particular and the mass media in general is older than the history of representative democracy in modern India. However, both of these institutions are the product of colonial India and have complemented each other in its growth and consolidation, and today both of these institutions have recognition, repute, and acceptability all over the world.

The origin of the print media began with the defiance of the then ruler, British East India Company which remained more or less the same in one form or the other throughout the colonial period despite severe legal restraints, financial constraints and physical suppressions though some of the newspapers especially English print media tacitly or explicitly allied with the alien rulers. The ‘Bengal Renaissance’or ‘the ‘Nineteenth Century Indian Renaissance’under the influence of liberal philosophy of the West originated as the social and religious movements that emphasized and demanded civil rights and liberties for the colonial subjects which facilitated indigenization of the print media and freedom of the press. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other co-reformers played very important role in establishing the press as the strong institution having the capacity to carry forward the reforms and generate political consciousness in the colonial India. The importance of the print media has been enhanced by the role of the Press during India’s struggle for independence. The Press was the vehicle used by more important leaders of the national movement form Lokmanya Tilak to Mahatma Gandhi, to communicate their ideas to the then rulers as well as to fellow citizens. Repressive Press laws during the British Raj gave the indigenous Press what, veteran journalist, term its ‘reforming and crusading zeal.

Mahatma Gandhi’s arrival in India heralded the start of a new school of missionary news papering in India. While the mainstream Press continued in its commercial tradition, a new segment evolved and with it the notion of the Press as
a crusader. Small in comparison to the mainstream commercial Press, this new breed of newspaper wielded disproportionate influence. Undaunted by commercial consideration, they survived because of political objective and nationalist perception. The advent of missionary journalism changed the face of the Indian Press. Virtually overnight, commercial success became secondary. The mainstream Press lost much of its influence. This streak of missionary journalism in the Indian Press made it susceptible to the manipulative methods of politicians and bureaucrats who dominated the public affair scenario after independence. It had left an indelible mark on the profession as a whole and on the format of the Press. The role of the Press and the journalistic efforts of those who led the struggle for freedom ordained an adversarial role for the ‘fourth estate’ vis-à-vis the imperial government.

The vernacular press went with the political agenda of spreading national consciousness and supported whole heartedly the struggle for India’s independence. However, the colonial state left no stone unturned to suppress vernacular press and deny freedom to the print media. The British ruler used all sorts of physical force to suppress right to free speech and expression as well as freedom of the press. There was an extraordinarily close association between the struggle for social and political emancipation and the origin and development of the Indian Press. Therefore, the missionary print media of the colonial India left a glorious legacy to the print media of the free India.

Modern representative democracy is a Western system of rule which evolved in a particular historical context. However, the origin of the parliamentary democracy in India could be traced in the Council of India Act, 1861 which came into being after the transfer of the Indian empire from the British East India Company to the British Crown. The Council of India Act, 1892 brought the non-elected native component in the legislative process which over the period of time introduced the limited elected native components in the process of legislation. The concept of
self-rule as a fundamental necessity of democratic governance and a long cherished demand of the freedom struggle was introduced in a limited sense in the provinces of the British India under the Government of India Act, 1919. However, the constitutional developments though with all limitations were the result of the British Colonial ruler’s unwilling response in reaction to the mounting pressures of the mass freedom struggle. Therefore, the introduction of the parliamentary democracy and its institutions during the colonial India was the historical product of the India’s political struggle for national freedom.

The study has examined the process of historical evolutions of the mass media and parliamentary democracy in colonial India and concludes that both of these institutions have passed through many phases and have established as the complimenting institutions which successfully laid down the foundation of independent republican democratic India.

The relationship of the mass media and democracy is always a complex relationship though it always seems as if a simple straightforward relationship. Democracy in general terms is understood to be the form of government which is subject to popular sovereignty. It is essentially a rule by the people which is in contrast to monarchies or aristocracies. One of the crowning glories of the democratic system is the freedom of expression and the space that it provided to views from different section of the society. A democratic system can run to its utmost potential where there is wide participation on the part of the general mass which is not possible without people getting informed about various issues. Reliable information resources are an important constituent of any democratic society.

Therefore, a chronological understanding of evolution of the mass media in India shows that it have passed through different phases of evolution spreading from colonial to post colonial India. The history of the mass media, particularly the print media in colonial period was different and the very objective of it, in
general, was to support the national movement. The post-colonial India provided a more favourable political milieu where it have  the freedom to play more pro-active role in the process of modernization of the Indian society and of course, in the process of nation building . However, the conflict between the ruling elites and the mass media began coming to the fore since the adoption of the republican constitution in 1950. The very first amendment of the constitution of India, unlike the US constitutional first amendment which incorporated the unlimited freedom of speech and expression of citizens and also separately mentioned the freedom of the press, reflected the confrontationist approach of the ruling elites towards the freedom of speech and expression of the citizens which implicitly covers the freedom of media, and as a result, it imposed many constitutional restrictions on the citizen’s right to freedom of speech and expression and with that addition of reasonable clauses, the mass media felt the heat of the ruling party. However until the declaration of internal emergency in the month of June in 1975, the mass media remained more or less free. Emergency was the first major blow to the freedom of speech and expression of the citizens as well as the freedom of the mass media. Ironically the press as an institution failed to put up any kind of courageous resistance to the authoritarian Emergency regime of 1975-77, which brought press censorship and other repressive measures, and actions against independent and adversarial print media. The legitimacy of governance, which we sometimes refer to as the rule of law, derives in its entirety from the consent of the governed; and that consent is rightly extended only when those governing rule on behalf of the common people. That is why democracy, when it really is democracy, is morally legitimate, and all other forms of governance are not. History has shown us repeatedly that certain types of rule have a strong propensity to degenerate into governance on behalf of a privileged few. That's why democracy is not governance by the man who has the maximum goons to beat up his opposition. Therefore it is not government by a hereditary aristocracy.
The experience of the Emergency also provided enough evidence to show how weak-kneed a very large part of the Indian Press was when it felt really threatened. One would not have believed that, during the independence movement, a much larger proportion of newspapers had faced difficulties and shown courage. The poor morale of many editors and others concerned was aptly characterized by the Janata Government's Minister for Information and Broadcasting who told the Press that, when they were only asked to bend, they crawled. Nevertheless, there were brave exceptions; and it is important to note who they were. Two of the so-called monopoly papers resisted encroachment on their freedom and faced considerable risks. These were The Statesman and The Indian Express. Of course, even a more valiant attitude was shown by independent, small journals like Sadhana (Marathi), Bhoomiputra (Gujrati), Seminar (a monthly journal) and Opinion (a weekly Mrs. Gandhi); but these were run by individuals or groups who had commitment to certain values and where the overall financial stake, the number of employees etc., was not very large. A very large proportion of the regular Press offered little resistance and gradually accepted a kind of self-censorship. That the ruling group was thinking of controls over the Press as a permanent measure was indicated by the putting on the statute book of the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act in 1976. It was also known that the spokesmen of government were threatening newspapers about "consequences", after the censorship was lifted and general elections announced. These threats indicated what might have been in store for the Press if the Congress Party had won the elections in March 1977.

However, post-Emergency has a different story about the print media. After the relaxation in emergency, the mass media, especially the print media played a very crucial role in exposing the abuses and misuses of state power by the government machinery, party leaders, and even individuals loyal to prime minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her younger politically over ambitious son, Mr. Sanjay Gandhi. The proactive role of the mass media had a critical value which informed the people about
the truth of emergency regime and allowed them to critically evaluate the relevance of emergency and formed their opinion about it. With the declaration of emergency, the myth that was created by the regime was that it had improved the functioning of the government machinery, brought punctuality in offices, public institutions, railways services, and government hospitals. The slogans seen everywhere like Work more, talk less, Discipline makes a nation great, We are marching towards a golden tomorrow…. so on and so forth were the inspiring and motivational forces in moral justification of the emergency. However, even Congressmen in private accepted that after a brief effectiveness of all these governments’ direction, these remained nothing more than lip services. Therefore, myths that were surrounded around the emergency got exploded very soon in practical life of the people and it was the press which got the credit for this eye opener. India in many senses is a mature functioning democracy than the most nations passing through the excruciating process of development. In India, a highly centralized control over broadcasting has been accepted as a prerequisite for political power. In the process, political propaganda potential becomes the deciding factor in programming news presentation and commentary. In India’s case, it was fairly obvious in the elections during 1984, and the elections of 1989 when Doordarshan was nicknamed as ‘Rajiv Darshan’ (Rajiv Vision) it assumed serious proportions. More development programmes were increasingly shown because they somehow projected a party or its leaders. Features on the 20- point programmes or DD coverage of mass loan melas during 1984, the DD coverage of Rajiv Gandhi’s tour of the country, emphasizing the party’s stand on the aborted attempt to get the 64th & 65th constitutional Amendment Bill passed, the so-called power to people or V. P. Singh’s speeches on the Mandal Commission and Ram Bilas Paswan’s outbursts exhorting the down-trodden to revolt against the so-called privileged community as a new resurgence during the late 1990 are examples of the cases of centralized control over broadcasting. The laying of foundation stones of a vast number of economic, educational, social and community institutions by the party leaders have become a brazenly political affair with the party leaders not only
cutting the tapes but also making political speeches. Radio and TV in such circumstances become as good as exclusive channels for the purpose of the political propaganda by party in power.

Along with the extension of broadcasting and telecasting facilities for political purposes at regular intervals before, during and after election, there is a definite need for the constitution of an apex high-powered monitoring independent body consisting of eminent political/administrative/legal and academic personalities with proven integrity to act as a watchdog on the continuing pronouncements of political parties and groups and their leaders on the electronic media. There is some substance in the argument that during the election, this institution should have the quasi-judicial powers not only to control and regulate political broadcasting but also to prevent its misuse and manipulation by the ruling party group or the leader.

The press seems to have learnt its lessons well from this incredible response during the national emergency. In the late 1980’s when corruption allegations facing Rajiv Gandhi’s government wanted to somehow silent the press under the fear of Defamation Bill, the inspiring protest movement by the print media that sprang up round the country virtually overnight gave the bill short shrift. The episode sent out a strong signal that the press as an institution was determined to guard its historical estate.

Hence, the mass media in India which have a glorious past related to its untiring struggle against the high handedness of the British colonial regime and its draconian laws to suppress the freedom of the media, especially the vernacular print media, echoing the spirit of national freedom movement, are an essential and integral part of liberal democratic political process and have been playing very crucial and critical role in independent India, enabling a procedural parliamentary democracy to be a vibrant parliamentary democracy. Its diversified roles include: an instrument of nation building, an active agent of political socialization, an open platform for rational public debate and discourse, an important public opinion
maker, a communicator between the government and the governed, a watchdog of democracy, and on occasions, an active political actor playing the role of political opposition to the party or parties in power.

However, despite its positive contributions and multiple crucial roles in the life of the largest functioning democracy and its citizenry, the mass media are not free from severe criticisms of playing partisan role, propagating particular opinion and ideas and making undue efforts in influencing the political process for serving its own economic, professional and even personal interests. Apart from the above mentioned criticisms, media’s ever growing unaccountable power and its consistent denial of any self regulatory mechanism also have attracted more criticism.

The study historically peeped into the past and present media practices from the point of view whether the constructive approach of media has been totally adhered to be the print media in its long history spanning both pre-independent and post independent era. The study examined whether ‘Spin-doctoring’ and hype existed even during pre-independent era. It has further analyzed since when the decline of constructivist approach has begun in the history of Indian Media and how the post liberalization and market driven media had hastened the transformation and metamorphis of the constructivist role of media into a totally ‘market driven’ and ‘spin-doctored’ media.

The study applying personal discussion with some media person found that the initial commitment of media professionals, majority of who were freedom fighters for constructivist approach gradually faded out in the immediate post independent era. Further, some media even during the pre-independent era allowed the spin doctors to transform the news in favour of British as pro-Raj press. This phenomenon, to the post independent era and truly according to some media experts, Nehru enjoyed the media manipulation to mobilize public opinion in his favour or Congress favour to rule the country for the largest period of 17 years.
It was only after Indira became the Prime Minister the media manipulations of news content became intense and the pre-emergency and emergency era had seen the scenario of spin-doctoring. Though some media like The Indian Express has the privilege of boasting to resist the spin-doctoring and media control by Indira, all said and done, it was not always the case given Ramnath Goenka’s leanings to compromise with Indira where it came business. 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 is 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.

However, the Indian media as main stream journalism continued its journey to main accountability to public sphere though it started making deeper shifts from its earlier formats to magazine journalism, localization of news, change in the formats, use of colour prints and mast heads, combining news forms of content into the front page content, topping up political content with crime, sex, sleaze and sports, and entertainment had increased the circulation and advertizing revenues of media. Both vernacular press such as Hindi and Telgu had achieved regional booming business in the circulation.

However, the intense spin-doctoring and market driven journalism alienating the readers from the main stream press has begun in the phase of liberalization and privatization. Frustrated by the main stream, people looked for an alternative media. The present study both from the sources and responses of the academics and media professionals found that the sooner or later the alternative media is going to be a curse for the main stream media.

For the Indian media, emergency rule proved to be a transformative experience. In the decades after, a new generation of media person worked to erase the shame of that period by mobilizing in defense of media freedoms. An increasingly feisty and sometimes irreverent journalism was born, characterized by an adversarial relationship with authority. This new journalism coincided with a revolution in media reach and influence.

The expansion of Hindi newspapers and the vernacularization of the public sphere have significantly influenced politics and society at the local level. Growing newspapers circulation in north India has been accompanied by increasing
mobilization of marginalized groups, a phenomenon witnessed in south India in the 1960s.

Effective political participation requires informed citizens. The survival of electoral democracy in India is a well established fact. Yet, election held in every five years is an essential aspect of democracy. The day to day monitoring of the political process by the media is crucial to ensuring checks and balances in the political systems and deepening of the process of democratization. The media revolution spearheaded by the vernacular media has brought marginalized groups into the public arena, and posed serious challenges to the dominance of national political elites, who now cannot afford to ignore issues emanating from the regional public arena.

The expansion of Hindi newspapers into the hinterland, though directly motivated by profit generation, also helped in creating a space for marginalized groups to raise their grievances in the public arena. As English newspapers have largely been concentrated in urban areas, and television is mostly national and regional, the local space, which remained unrepresented, was appropriated by Hindi newspapers. Such an appropriation of local space by Hindi newspapers not only supported their survival in a competitive media environment, but also earned them the reputation of being closer to the people. Hindi newspapers, thus, have become important channels to reach the masses. In short, it is worth in saying that the Indian media and democracy have complemented each other in the growth and consolidation. Today media’s reach and its close relationship with the people helped the masses to become more involved in the political process which in general testifies the hypotheses.