MASS MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN INDIA:
A POLITICAL STUDY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN
POST EMERGENCY PERIOD

ABSTRACT
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ABSTRACT

In today’s world the mass media, for all practical purposes, are nearly omnipresent whatever be the nature of the political system: a democracy, a semi-democracy or no-democracy. The relationship of the mass media with democracy is widely debated and a contentious issue. India has been a democratic political system since independence and today the largest functioning democracy in the world where mass media has powerful presence and influence. Therefore, if a well-informed citizenry is the foundation of democracy, the mass media undoubtedly are lifeline of that democracy. As a matter of fact, a democratic polity lives and grows by free and open public discussion. In order to enable the citizen to form their opinion on various issues, they must have access to all shades of opinion. It is, for that matter, essential that there should be a variety of ownership and opinion, and different newspapers, magazines, broadcast and telecast channels should put before the people the varied and different points of view held by different political parties or groups. However, it should be left to the people to choose their course of action.

The media in India that started its journey in late eighteenth century just as a small private venture by a British during British Raj, is today one of the most free and vibrant institutions in the world, and it played very crucial role in nationalist project, in nation building, in highlighting people’s problems, exposing misuses and abuses of power by the political executive and bureaucracy, exposing corrupt politicians and government officials and their relationship with dishonest industrialists, businessmen, and other vested interests, in criticizing criminalization of politics, caste politics,
communalism and regionalism, and in making people aware of their rights and civil liberties.

However, the role of the mass media during the national emergency 1975-77 declared on the ground of internal disturbance was not up to the mark as the defender of its own freedom and defender of the democratic rights and civil liberties of the citizens. The break from the past history of freedom struggle and Nehruvianera questions its credibility, however, in post-emergency period the media established its lost credibility and consistently defended its freedom and responded to any attack on its freedom from the state. It also raised the issue of civil liberties of the citizens and played critical role in exposing corruption in public life and criminalization of politics. However, the Indian media have its own serious criticism, elitists; urban oriented; politically biased; under the grip of big industrial and business houses; using hate politics and sensationalizing the news for economic interest; using communal and caste politics especially by the vernacular media. The post liberalization of enhanced the accessibility, capacity, diversity and autonomy of the mass media. Vernacularization of press and electronic media had a deep impact on democratization of politics.