CHAPTER – V
IMPACT AND ANALYSIS

India has entered a space age in communication technology. This has increased manifold the social impact for good or ill of the media of mass communication. It is the need to promote critical awareness among policy makers and managers as well as the audience of the media.

The broadcasting system was owned and run by the government prior to India's independence. It provided entertainment to the middle and upper classes who could afford to buy a radio receiver in the pre-transistor age, and purveyed such information as was not adverse to the interests of the British authorities. Soon after the transfer of power, Jawaharlal Nehru said on 15th March 1948, while replying to a debate on external publicity in the Constituent Assembly which functioned as the provisional parliament of India: 'My own view of the set-up for broadcasting is that we should approximate, as far as possible, to the British model, the British Broadcasting Corporation : that is, to say, it would be better if we had a semi-autonomous corporation under the government, of course, with the policy controlled by the government, otherwise being not conducted as a government department but as a semi-autonomous corporation'. Nehru's impulses were liberal but he did not always act on them. The continuance of All India Radio as a government department during all the 17 years of Nehru's prime ministership was one of many instances in which a shadow fell between his perception and his practice.

A great difference would have been made to radio's role in free India had he remembered and acted on the recommendations of a sub-committee on communication of the National Planning Committee formed by the Congress in 1937 with Nehru as chairman. The sub-committee's report laid great emphasis on the potentiality of radio as the only literacy-free medium of mass communication.
then available. Sharing the socialist inclination of Nehru, and convinced that development had to be powered and guided by the state, the sub-committee used the expression 'State propaganda' for what is now connoted by the term 'development communication'. "The principal functions of broadcasting," the report said, (a) dissemination of news an useful information; (b) adult education and fighting rural ignorance; rural ignorance; propaganda by the State; (d) entertainment.

The sub-committee's report called for an innovative approach to broadcasting hardware, stating that, "many problems of communication engineering are peculiar to the country and their solution can only be obtained by carrying out investigations in the country itself." Broadcasting was envisaged as the most effective link between "the vast majority of the population who are still illiterate and a large section of the women who do not go out into the public, on the one hand, and the progressive part of India on the other." Radio, the report said, should provide "an easy channel for bringing to the masses useful information on agriculture, animal husbandry, current political thought, etc." The planning for broadcasting had to serve the objective of providing populous regions of the country with first-grade service, and installing community receivers on a wide scale in the rural areas."

The approach was thus oriented to rural development, and there was lively awareness of the need not only to put out broadcasts of relevance to the village population but to provide access to radio to the rural poor through the facility of community listening.

The role of communication in development as envisaged in the document on the First Five Year Plan was in line with the approach of the National Planning Committee's subcommittee. The Plan document, published in December 1952, had in Chapter VIII, a section on 'Reaching the people' which said: "A widespread understanding of the Plan is an essential stage in its fulfillment. An understanding of the priorities which govern the Plan will enable each person to relate his or her
role to the larger purposes of the nation as a whole. The Plan has, therefore, to be
carried into every home in the language and symbols of the people, and expressed
in terms of their common needs and problems ... with the assistance of creative
writers and artists, which has to be specially enlisted. All available methods of
communication have to be developed and the people approached through the
written and the spoken word no less than through radio, film, song and drama.
Above all, steps have to be taken to provide literature and information for the
people in simple language on a scale equal to the needs of the country."

Post-independence reality turned out to be very different from this vision
of decentralized communication which would be bottom-upward as well as
top-down, and supportive of progress towards an egalitarian social and economic
order. Radio continued to serve with entertainment and information the middle
and upper classes. The transistor revolution did not alter the role of radio. Instead
of serving the new mass audience with information relevant to improvement of
their living conditions, All India Radio regaled them with tinsel film music and
brought them commercial messages such as this one from Modern Bread, a unit
which was meant to control of the Central public sector the 'commanding heights'
of the economy: mummy, mummy, modern bread'. Children in the majority of
Indian families neither eat packaged and branded bread, nor do they mummy their
mothers. The failure to utilise the advent of the transistor to turn radio into an
Instrument for democratising communication and conveying to the rural and
urban poor locally relevant and useful information reflected the elitist orientation
of free India's economic growth.

The course of planned development began to take an elitist turn even in
Jawaharlal Nehru's days. This was perhaps because of the time and energy that, as
Prime Minister, he devoted to International affairs as his own Foreign Minister
(and it is tragic that he failed in this field of his own choosing in the handling of
Kashmir and of India's relations with China). He tried to replicate in India both
the Soviet model of heavy Industrial development and the Chinese Communist
model of cooperative joint farming, without the instrumentality of a totalitarian
system in which a single party stifles the expression of dissent and liquidates dissenters. The regime of government controls, permits and licences introduced by the bureaucracy in the name of socialism was taken advantage of by unscrupulous politicians, businessmen and civil servants for self-aggrandisement.

Nehru’s own vision, even if dimmed over the years, remained basically egalitarian. In the course of a letter to Chief Ministers on 7th June 1961, Nehru said: "We should think in terms of concentrating on production of goods that a person or family with an income of Rs. 500 per month or so might require. From this point of view, a bicycle is far more important in India today than a motor car, even if a small one." Considering the then value of the rupee, Nehru obviously had in mind the middle class rather than the poor. Subsequently, towards the close of his life, he noted with anguish that the Five Year Plans had made little difference to the living conditions of the masses. While replying to a debate on planning in the Lok Sabha in December 1963, Nehru said: "One thing that distresses me very greatly is that there are a good number of people in India who have not profited by planning, and whose poverty is abysmal and most painful ... I begin to think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi’s approach."

It too that long for Nehru, though he had been a close lieutenant of the Mahatma, to realise that only the Gandhian approach of decentralised, labour-intensive production, and of compassion and sharing, would enable India with her vast under-employed manpower to achieve self-reliant economic growth. Not surprisingly, Nehru’s successors were unable to act in accordance with Gandhi’s talisman: "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."

There has been a sea-Change in the attitude of the commercial advertising. Mahatma Gandhi excluded advertisements altogether from his journals. He was against the multiplication of wants (as distinct from needs), and expressed the wish in the course of an article in ‘Young India’ in October 1919 that there were,
for each province, only one advertising, medium—not a newspaper—containing innocent, unvarnished notices of things useful for the public. Annie Besant, after she acquired the 'Madras Standard' and ran it as the daily 'New India', from 1914, wrote to a friend that the first thing she did was to “clear off all the coarse advertisements.”

In *The Discovery of India*, written in 1944, Jawaharlal Nehru said: “The advertiser is one of the symbols of our age with his continuous and raucous attempts to delude us and dull our powers of perception and induce us to buy unnecessary and even harmful products.” In an address to the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference at Allahabad on 16th February 1946, he said: “The quality of advertisements appearing in some newspapers sometimes pains me. I appeal to the editors that they should exercise a strict censorship over advertisements so that undesirable advertisements are not accepted.” Referring to commercial advertisements carried by Radio Ceylon and other foreign broadcasting systems, Nehru said in 1963: “Personally I react strongly if an advertisement comes through radio. My reaction is never to encourage that advertiser. What does he mean by interfering with my peace of mind? It angers me when it suddenly comes in; it upsets me.”

In order to counter the pull of Radio Ceylon which was broadcasting Indian film songs, the Vividh Bharati channel was introduced in Nehru's time, on 3rd October 1957. But it did not adversely affect popular taste because film music at that time was not the organized noise that much of it is today but had a lyrical quality and aesthetic appeal. Though radio listenership went up with the introduction of the Vividh Bharati service by more and more stations, creating an audience of tempting size for the commercial advertiser, it was out of the question for A. I. R. to go commercial as long as Nehru was Prime Minister.

After commercials were introduced on 1st November 1967, during Indira Gandhi's prime ministership, the standard of Vividh Bharati began to decline, along with the quality of film music which began to be dominated by
love songs ranging from the inane to the lewd. Vivid Bharati also began to carry commercial advertisements promoting the sale of consumption goods of interest to the growing urban middle class and to the affluent, but of no relevance to the urban poor and the majority of India's rural population. To the extent that these latter have exposure at all to television, advertisements on TV have a disorienting effect and serve to provoke envy, frustration and crime.

On the destabilising effects of the consumerist culture associated with industrialism, Jawaharlal Nehru said in the course of the Maulana Azad Memorial Lecture delivered by him in November 1959: “We see the effects of rapid technological changes more especially in young men and women today. There is a tendency to criminality, alcoholism, destructiveness, eroticism, in addition to a cynical and negative attitude towards life and work. In a world of constant change, and without any assurance of certainty, the hedonistic principles of life have a strong appeal. These tendencies are present more in the developed societies than in India or other under-developed countries. But it is important to note them because similar forces are likely to affect our life too.” The words have proved prophetic.

Indira Gandhi, who succeeded her father as Prime minister after Lal Bahadur Shastri’s brief tenure, was also aware of the pursuit of more and more wants to the detriment of moral integrity. Unmindful of the contradiction between precept and action, she went on to say in an address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 28th September 1983 : "In this age of instant globe-encircling information technology, the media dazzle eyes and fill ears with images and reports of affluence. Even the modest expectations of our people are far beyond our present means."

Why did the government-owned electronic media go in for commercial advertising, despite the warnings of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru? The reason lies in the need felt by those who have led the country after Nehru for the building of their image at the personal level as well as for propaganda in favour of
the policies and performance of the governments headed by them at the Centre. This could be done day after day through the news and current affairs programmes of All India Radio and Doordarshan, since both are run as government departments.

The four metropolitan cities -- Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi - are the centres of publication of many of India's oldest and largest circulated daily newspapers. Several of them were critical of some of the Central Government's policies even in Jawaharlal Nehru's time, and more so of the populist policies of Indira Gandhi during and after the Congress split of 1969. The electronic media operated by the Central Government came to be regarded by the ruling party as weapons with which to counter the Press which was privately owned. Soon there grew a division of labour under which the citizen received from radio and television only good news, favourable to the Government and it was left to the Press to report what was going wrong.

There was an additional reason for the Central Government concentrating its energies on addressing the urban audience. The middle classes and the affluent who form the bulk of the population in cities and towns could afford to buy their own receiving sets. There was no need to organise community access to the electronic media. All that the Government had to do was to make the audio and visual fare popular enough to attract a large clientele. This it proceeded to do with total disregard for the aesthetic standards and moral health of society. Cheap film music became the main pulling power of radio. Feature films, far too many of them laden with sex and violence, and song and dance sequences compiled therefrom became the chief attraction of Doordarshan. The new mass audience, mainly urban and with Increasing purchasing power in its hands, attracted the commercial advertiser in a big way. This brought in, specially in the case of Doordarshan, commercial revenue to supplement budgetary provisions for expanding the reach of the electronic media through additional stations and relay transmitters.
Oldest of the modern media of mass communication, the Press has by and large served India better than the others, both before and after independence. Press played a socially purposeful role in the pre-independence period and the early years of freedom. In contrast to the scope afforded to the socially conscious communicator by newspapers, both of which are in the private sector, monopoly control of radio by the Government since before independence, and of television since its advent in the 1960s, has proved stultifying.

It is the middle class that contributes most of the personnel of all the mass media. But since the Press, besides being free of government control, is relatively less market driven than films with their large budgets and generally short life, (many newspapers have from time to time exemplified the idealism that marks the more attractive of the two faces of the middle class) Jawaharlal Nehru said of the Janus-like middle class in the course of his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Congress on 12th April, 1936: “Being too much tied up with property and the goods of the world, it is fearful of losing them, and it is easy to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina. And yet, paradoxically, it is only from the middle class intellectuals that revolutionary leadership comes, and we in India know that our bravest leaders and our stoutest comrades have come from the ranks of the middle class.”

The beginnings of the Press in India revealed both the faces: newspapers as commerce and as social mission. The first printed periodical, the Bengal Gazette, which appeared in Calcutta on 29th January, 1780 was a commercial venture and it illustrated the nexus that often exists between newspapers and politicians. Though published on Indian soil, the weekly was meant for English-speaking foreigners residing in India, not for Indians. James Augustus Hicky, the publisher and editor, openly sided with the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, in the in-fighting between two factions in the Governor-General’s Council. The opposition to Warren Hastings was led by Philip Francis, whose ambition was to become Governor-General himself. The journal would lampoon Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a friend of Warren
Hastings, as 'Foolbundy' (pul in Hindustani means bridge) in an obvious reference to a contract for maintaining bridges which the Chief Justice had secured for a relative. Warren Hastings and his wife were also boldly satirised. The types of Hicky's press were seized and his journal was suppressed in 1782 after Philip Francis decided to leave India. Warren Hastings for his part patronised a rival weekly, the India Gazette, which was given postal facilities not available to Hicky.

We have witnessed two centuries later, to a similar struggle between some journals affiliated with rival barons of industry who, in turn, enjoy the support of rival princes of the State. A conspicuous example is the campaign carried on in recent years against each other by the Ambanis of Reliance Industries who own the Observer group of publications and Nuslia Wadia, of Bombay Dyeing, who is a director of the Indian Express.

A half-way house in the emergence of a truly Indian Press was marked by the journals brought out, early in the 19th century, by Christian missionaries in Bengal. Though published by foreigners, these journals were addressed to Indians, and some of them were in Indian languages. They promoted the dual objectives of promoting - the Christian, religion and the British Empire. It was in order to counter the attacks on Indian religions which these missionary journals carried, and to assert national self-respect, that the first Indian newspapers, property so called, were established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), the initiator of India's renaissance in the modern period. Born in a well-to-do family he represented the finer of the two faces of the middle class.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy advocated, through the journals launched by him in the 1820s - the weeklies Sambad Kaumudi in Bengali and Mirat ul Akhbar in Persian and irregular in publication, the Brahmunical Magazine, a brief-lived magazine in English - many social reforms that were to become part of the plank of the nationalist movement. These included abolition of Sati or the custom, already on the wane in most parts of the country, of Sati or the burning of the...
widow on the funeral pyre of her husband, equality before the law, and modern education through the English medium. He did not press for representative government, it being too soon for that - with an entrenched imperial power and a people steeped in illiteracy and superstition and with little sense of a national identity; the affiliation of caste was, at that time, all that mattered for self-identity. But Raja Ram Mohan Roy's readiness to assert national self-respect is evident from his courageous criticism of the brash methods of the foreign missionaries who reviled the religious beliefs and practices of Indians, both Hindus and Muslims.

The role of the Press acquired a new dimension with the advent of daily newspapers in the 19th century. Several of them were moderate or conservative, both with regard to political and social issues: some were moderate in their politics but radical in their attitude to social reform or vice versa, and some others were radical both in politics and on social issues without necessarily subscribing to the tactics of law-breaking in the name of Satyagraha.

The complexity of the scenario is illustrated by the instance of Annie Besant (1847-1933) and her daily newspaper New India. Having fought and suffered in England for many causes - as a free-thinker, trade unionist and proponent of planned parenthood - she became a theosophist, found in India her spiritual home, and settled at Adyar, in Madras, in 1907. Through New India which she ran from 1914, Annie Besant advocated a political line that was bold in comparison with the petitionary politics of the then Congress leadership. In 1916 the British authorities demanded a security from Annie Besant for "the better conduct of her publications". It was to protest against this action that young Jawaharlal Nehru, then practising law at Allahabad, made his first public speech in June 1916.

Annie Besant was chosen, while under internment as punishment for her advocacy of self-government for India, as president of the 1917 Congress session at Calcutta, becoming the first woman to be so honoured. But her popularity
declined when she refused to endorse Gandhi's movement in 1919 against the Rowlatt Bills, his advocacy of Non-Cooperation, and support to Khilafat. She held that there was nothing in the two Bills to which an honest citizen could take exception, and that, instead of non-cooperation, the best men and women should enter the legislative councils and press for the transfer of greater power to the people's representatives. Civil disobedience, she warned, was "rearing huge obstacles in the way of the first Home Rule government."

The over-simplification and consequent misrepresentation in branding a person as a 'moderate' or a 'radical' is illustrated also by the case of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He was a conservative in his attitude to social reform, while being a radical in politics; he coined the pledge 'Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it.' Though Tilak suffered imprisonment and deportation, he was for a constructive response to any move that the British were prepared to make in the direction of self-government, such as the Montagu Reforms Act of 1919.

Gandhiji was an exemplar of educative journalism. His first journalistic venture was 'Indian Opinion', a weekly brought out in 1904 in South Africa. It was published in four languages - English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil in order to reach all the major elements of the Indian population in Natal and the Transvaal. It is characteristic of Gandhiji that while, on the one hand, he utilised the journal to ventilate the grievances of Indians who were grossly discriminated against by the regime of the white colonists, he also exhorted his countrymen to give up unsanitary habits, to overcome feelings of difference based on caste or religion, and to observe truthfulness in their business dealings.

After returning finally to India in 1915, Gandhiji conducted three weekly journals: 'Navajivan' (1919-31) in Gujarati; 'Young- India' in English (1919-32); and 'Harijan' in English from 1933 till his martyrdom in 1948. So widespread was the interest in Mahatma Gandhi's views that what he wrote in these journals was news.
"I have taken up journalism", he wrote in 1919, "not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example the matchless weapon of Satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non-violence. To be true to my faith, I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is training for me." And in his autobiography: "One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects."

A major consequence of Gandhiji for Indian journalism was the emergence of new dailies as radical alternatives to the nationalist but somewhat staid Indian-owned newspapers of long standing. These emerged as a third alternative to the loyalist newspapers, many of them British-owned, and to the newspapers which were once described by Nehru as 'immoderately moderate'.

In the 1920s, as modern journalism was just taking form, writer Walter Lippmann and American philosopher John Dewey debated over the role of journalism in a democracy. Their differing philosophies still characterize a debate about the role of journalism in society and the nation-state. Lippmann understood that journalism's role at the time was to act as a mediator or translator between the public and policymaking elites. The journalist became the middleman. When elites spoke, journalists listened and recorded the information, distilled it, and passed it on to the public for their consumption. His reasoning behind this was that the public was not in a position to deconstruct the growing and complex flurry of information present in modern society, and so an intermediary was needed to filter news for the masses. Lippmann put it this way: The public is not smart enough to understand complicated, political issues. Furthermore, the public was too consumed with their daily lives to care about complex public policy. Therefore the public needed someone to interpret the decisions or concerns of the elite to make the information plain and simple. That was the role of journalists. Lippmann believed that the public would affect the decision-making of the elite.
with their vote. In the meantime, the elite (i.e. politicians, policy makers, bureaucrats, scientists, etc.) would keep the business of power running. In Lippman's world, the journalist's role was to inform the public of what the elites were doing. It was also to act as a watchdog over the elites, as the public had the final say with their votes. Effectively that kept the public at the bottom of the power chain, catching the flow of information that is handed down from experts/elites.

Dewey, on the other hand, believed the public was not only capable of understanding the issues created or responded to by the elite, it was in the public forum that decisions should be made after discussion and debate. When issues were thoroughly vetted, then the best ideas would bubble to the surface. Dewey believed journalists should do more than simply pass on information. He believed they should weigh the consequences of the policies being enacted. Over time, his idea has been implemented in various degrees, and is more commonly known as "community journalism."

This concept of community journalism is at the centre of new developments in journalism. In this new paradigm, journalists are able to engage citizens and the experts/elites in the proposition and generation of content. It's important to note that while there is an assumption of equality, Dewey still celebrates expertise. Dewey believes the shared knowledge of many is far superior to a single individual's knowledge. Experts and scholars are welcome in Dewey's framework, but there is not the hierarchical structure present in Lippman's understanding of journalism and society. According to Dewey, conversation, debate, and dialogue lie at the heart of a democracy. While Lippman's journalistic philosophy might be more acceptable to government leaders, Dewey's approach is a better description of how many journalists see their role in society, and, in turn, how much of society expects journalists to function. Americans, for example, may criticize some of the excesses committed by journalists, but they tend to expect journalists to serve as watchdogs on
government, businesses and other actors, enabling people to make informed decisions on the issues of the time.

Journalists around the world often write about the governments in their nations, and those governments have widely varying policies and practices towards journalists, which control what they can research and write, and what press organizations can publish. Many Western governments guarantee the freedom of the press, and do relatively little to restrict press rights and freedoms, while other nations severely restrict what journalists can research and/or publish. Journalists in many nations have enjoyed some privileges not enjoyed by members of the general public, including better access to public events, crime scenes and press conferences, and to extended interviews with public officials, celebrities and others in the public eye. These privileges are available because of the perceived power of the press to turn public opinion for or against governments, their officials and policies, as well as the perception that the press often represents their consumers. These privileges extend from the legal rights of journalists but are not guaranteed by those rights. Sometimes government officials may attempt to punish individual journalists who irk them by denying them some of these privileges extended to other journalists. Nations or jurisdictions that formally license journalists may confer special privileges and responsibilities along with those licenses, but in the United States the tradition of an independent press has avoided any imposition of government-controlled examinations or licensing. Some of the states have explicit shield laws that protect journalists from some forms of government inquiry, but those statutes' definitions of "journalist" were often based on access to printing presses and broadcast towers. A national shield law has been proposed. In some nations, journalists are directly employed, controlled or censored by their governments. In other nations, governments who may claim to guarantee press rights actually intimidate journalists with threats of arrest, destruction or seizure of property (especially the means of production and dissemination of news content), torture or murder. Journalists who elect to cover conflicts, whether wars between nations
or insurgencies within nations, often give up any expectation of protection by government, if not giving up their rights to protection by government. Journalists who are captured or detained during a conflict are expected to be treated as civilians and to be released to their national government.

Journalists' interaction with sources sometimes involves confidentiality, an extension of freedom of the press giving journalists a legal protection to keep the identity of a source private even when demanded by police or prosecutors; withholding sources can land journalists in contempt of court, or in jail. The scope of rights granted to journalists varies from nation to nation; in the United Kingdom, for example, the government has had more legal rights to protect what it considers sensitive information, and to force journalists to reveal the sources of leaked information, than the United States. Other nations, particularly Zimbabwe and the People's Republic of China, have a reputation of persecuting journalists, both domestic and foreign. In the United States, there has never been a right to protect sources in a federal court. Some states provide varying degrees of such protection. However, federal courts will refuse to force journalists to reveal sources, unless the information the court seeks is highly relevant to the case, and there's no other way to get it. Journalists, like all citizens, who refuse to testify even when ordered to can be found in contempt of court and fined or jailed.

Social media has changed journalism. The Web is now the sole distribution channel for newspapers that can no longer afford to publish hardcopy, and those that don’t follow the best practices of social media may see their brands marginalized in cyberspace as well. Social journalism, an extension of those practices, is now an essential component of any news organization’s strategy. Citizen journalists post photos of fast-breaking events, and cover stories from a different angle than legacy news organizations, but it’s the premeditated watchdog or advocacy role that defines a social journalist. Another factor is the network effect: people using social media to communicate and collaboratively produce content. Editors are still important, but the pieces are shaped by crowd
dynamics and the velocity of information. Here’s a look at the past, present, and future of social journalism.

**The Past** - As Mark Glaser of the PBS site media shift points out in his summary of Dan Gillmor’s “We the Media,” a book about grassroots media, the people who recorded the Los Angeles police beating of Rodney King nearly thirty years later did so out of a sense of social duty: they could have turned off their cameras, but kept them rolling, and contacted mainstream media with the results. This was a crowd of social journalists who broke the story before any editor could slow it down. The Independent Media Center, formed in 1999 to cover the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, was an early aggregator of social journalism. Run by a collective of alternative journalists and activists who provided minimal editing, the IMC allowed individuals to upload their own coverage of political events. Today, Indymedia hosts a network of IMCs serving cities around the world. In 2005, social journalists responded to Hurricane Katrina by filing coverage from the field that was more detailed, and often more accurate, than that seen on mainstream media. Sites like the Interdictor, self-described as “A small pocket of New Orleans web guys blogging, running off a generator, with a web cam,” provided a firsthand account of the disaster. One person even declared a Katrina Blog Relief Day in an attempt to start a groundswell movement.

**The Present** - The Huffington Post might not be the first organization that comes to mind when talking about today’s social journalism, but it’s actually a leader in this area. Last year, it co-sponsored Off the Bus, described by director Amanda Michel as a “citizen-powered campaign news site.” The idea was to offer alternative coverage of the presidential election by ordinary people, but the process uncovered a market that Michel describes: “Our market was defined by our access to on-the-ground information that other news outlets lacked, and collaborative, crowd-powered methods of newsgathering that made some traditional journalists uncomfortable. Private fundraisers, official campaign conference calls, volunteer meetings, and rallies—where mainstream reporters
found themselves stuck in pens—were our specialty. We wanted to tell stories inaccessible to the national press. This required replacing objectivity with an ethic of transparency..."

**The Future** - Rosen’s Flying Seminar in the Future of News cites Dan Conover’s piece “2020 vision: What’s next for news” as a definitive source for predictions. Conover, a reporter turned blogger, offers a number of observations about the next decade of journalism. He talks about the continued demise of newspapers: the metro dailies in major cities, not the “web/print nationals” (New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal), or local papers serving communities of up to 30,000 readers. His assertion that the Semantic Web and open-source technologies will drive revenue from sources other than advertising and paid subscriptions anticipates data-mining and machine-readable news feeds, and he even mentions the trend of newspapers opening up their APIs, correctly pointing out this won’t mean much unless developers and end-users are given more freedom. Conover offers a cautionary statement about crowd funding, citing Spot.us, a Bay area site where writers and individual donors can collaborate to fund stories. He says that “volunteers” who are paid neither directly nor substantially will produce much of the next decade’s writing, editing and producing. The future of social journalism will be driven by disintermediation, the replacement or removal of middlemen in the supply chain. This has already happened on the revenue side, with Craig list (http://www.blipper.com) and other online resources taking classified ads from newspapers. As the newspaper industry consolidates, and social media matures, journalists will increasingly work as independents, forming transient relationships with multiple publishers. A handful of national brands will survive, and hundreds, perhaps thousands of new microbrands will flourish. The public good will be preserved, and society will be more transparent.

The Indian media, especially, the electronic news channel, exceeds its limits in reporting an issue. Rather than playing the role of a responsible Press,
certain news channels go berserk reporting cynically just to increase their channel’s (Television Rating Point) TRP.

Breaking News: Three children born to a woman; the statues of Gods are drinking milk; a boy reborn, recalls his past life and the list accrues with such breaking news.... A time will come when these kinds of news will be flashed on various channels to increase the television rating point (TRP) of the news channels. Out of 1.12 billion populations, our country suffers with the low literacy rate (though the literacy rate rose to 65.38 per cent, people are still unable to read and write efficiently). The people who belong to the group of illiterates are unable to understand their right to information. The electronic media targets them and show programmes, according to their needs. Moreover, news channels play a major role in misleading these people. A large section of our countrymen, are still superstitious in practice and are easily misled by elites. Thus, news channels overcome the expectations of these people. Many among us watch such news out of anxiety and gradually this anxiety merges with our faith. Breaking news (as the essential part of the news channels) should throw light on the subject that is important for the masses and the nation and owes to its interest. A few years back, it was flashed that a boy fell in a deep ditch. This could be a news because it is well known to us that a single boy or a girl takes his or her stand in making a prosperous nation, but the way it was telecast ie a full 24-hours live telecast was somewhat an exaggerated form of the issue. The misuse of breaking news could be avoided by showing, the news, relevant to the nation’s interest. The channels should cover those issues, which matters rank and file, but do not mislead them. It is true that some people want to see the ‘masala’ news. Therefore, the sole responsibility lies on the shoulders of electronic media to act as an eye-opener and take initiatives to guide people to the right path.

Media plays a vital role in the upliftment of the rural masses. It widens mental horizons for better perception of information that help the people to be update on the information super-highway, transporting people to a modern society. Media plays a very vital role in the development of social life. It
enhances or widens the horizons of people. Mass media add to the knowledge levels of the masses. It helps elevate intellectual level to new heights.

It is synonymous with a liberating force because they can break the bonds of distance and isolation. It transports people from a traditional society to the advanced or modern society i.e. also known as great society because it has the availability of all those means and instruments, which are required for receiving information first hand.

This feature help the masses of a nation develop the quality of empathy. High empathetic capacity is the personal style of West. In India most people are apathetic towards the need of others. A non-traditional society is urban, highly literate, industrial and participant.

A traditional society is predominantly rural, partially illiterate, agriculture based and non-participant. It develops people by kinship into communities that are isolated from one other and from a centre. It also means that there is no urban-rural division of labor in this society and that is lacks the bonds of interdependence. The horizons of people are limited because their decisions involve other known people in known situations. On the contrary, in a modern society, the operations are done through consensus individuals, who make personal decisions on public issue. These must occur quite frequently with others to arrive at rational society-friendly decision.

Mass media creates curiosity by disseminating information among the masses. In an era of information and communication networking, everyone wants to travel on the information highway because information is synonymous to power. In a modern society, the mass media presents images of distant places and events most of the times. When a traditional society moves towards modernity, it also starts depending upon mass media. Hence, the ideas generated in the minds of masses have their cues or origins in the media. Mass media promotes people, products, concepts and even nations. Ad campaigns can create history in the field of business and trade.
If the media of a developing nation is responsible, they can shift focus not only on commercial aspects of life but also on the broader socio-political canvas that can help the nation become a modern advanced society. The media can bring new customs, procedures and activities to the notice of the masses. They can also focus on the ill-effects of dowry, ostentatious marriages, drinking etc by censuring these issues and events. As such, it can change the mindset of the society from the traditional to become an advanced one. The mass media can also raise aspirations. They can motivate people to buy new or improved products, services, concepts and ideologies. They raise the aspiration levels of the masses of both advanced and developing nations. During the late seventies, the media added fuel to the fire and motivated people to say even those things that they did not want. Commercialism and materialism overcomes the ‘fear to change’ if the media raises aspirations of the masses through carefully planned media campaigns. The campaigns are planned so that change has to look ‘natural, positive and in tune with the existing value sets of the audience’. There are many limitations for the masses though. Socially unacceptable products, imported goods, free sex, pornography, high-tech gadgets, sport cars, fashion apparel etc are some of the many things that our rural masses do not need. Hence, we can conclude that the media raises the aspirations of the urban masses largely and to some extent it raises the aspirations of the rural masses too.

In the 'excitement' of covering Mumbai terror live, the media, especially TV channels, forgot their role, namely, to be sensitive and non-melodramatic. In its anxiety they asked silly and irrelevant questions, but forgot to raise more serious issues. Television Channels drew much flak for going overboard covering the Mumbai terror live for more than 60 hours. The likes of Barkha Dutt, Rajdeep Sardesai, and Arnab Goswami etc. etc. overworked to bring 'exclusive' reportage to the anxious audience. Doesn’t matter, if they asked some silly questions to the relatives of those who were taken hostages inside Taj (like, 'Are you worried?'). They made sure that their TRP ratings shot up by over 30 points in those 60 hours.
In the bargain, as critiqued widely, two important events were almost forgotten: elections in three states and the death of V. P. Singh (Unfortunately, he died at the wrong time). But one thing was clear: the attacks did not deter the voter from coming out to vote. In fact, the average across the states was 66 per cent, much higher than what it used to be earlier. And as the results show us, the voter came out defying all odds just to make sure that only the performer got elected. The BJP’s cashing in strategy on terror boomeranged, as the voter did not perceive terror as something that concerned only the ruling party. All this shows that that the voter has become more intelligent and choosy. No party, thus, is a frontrunner in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Coming back to the live media coverage of Mumbai terror, it was sheer loss of professionalism on the part of Indian TV channels. They threw all caution to the wind and reported as if they were the only heralds of hope for those trapped inside and waiting anxiously outside, not to mention millions of hungry viewers all over. All norms of broadcast journalism were forgotten, at least for sometime. Their main concern seemed to be only TRP ratings and nothing else.

Compare this with the reportage of BBC network. They too went live to a certain extent; but they never gave a feeling of a loss of balance anywhere. Granted, that they were a foreign channel and that they did not have as much at stake in the Mumbai terror as Indian channels did. But such stakes need not overburden you to be melodramatic and, in some cases, even to the extent of loss of voice. It is true that reporters too are human and, perhaps, most of them were covering such terror live for the first time. But, whatever happened to those long years spent in training, learning news values, social responsibility, sense of proportion and so on? It is indeed unfortunate how journalists conveniently forget fundamental theories of journalism when it comes to competition. Media sets agenda and manufactures consent. This was proved decades ago by Walt Lippman, Noam Chomsky and others. The coverage of the Mumbai attacks was a fascinating example corroborating these theories. The audience was made to believe that Taj and Trident were more important (national icons!) and CST was...
just another railway station. We were also told that it was an attack on Indian economy. But does our economy depend only on a miniscule filthy rich people who frequent such avoidable hotels?

A quick final comment: over the last five years or so, more than 10,000 farmers have committed suicide, owing to debt and other reasons, in Maharashtra alone. But that tragedy does not seem to be a worthwhile issue for the TV channels. However, lives lost in Taj and Trident are deeply mourned. Does it mean that some lives are more valuable than others? It is true that all terror attacks should be condemned and that we cannot condone the violence that takes its toll on hundreds of innocent civilians. But all lives are equally precious and hence must be given equal weightage, if not intensity. A farmer’s life is as important as the life of a wealthy man dying in the Taj or a police official dying while fighting terrorists at CST. We can only hope media will learn from their mistakes.

It's not often that Indian sports persons except cricketers get featured on the front page of newspapers. It is time for the media to create an equal space for all sports to encourage the masses towards other games beyond cricket. Sushil Kumar, Vijender Kumar and Abhinav Bindra are names, which have done India proud at Beijing Olympics. Hardly anyone knew them a few days back, may be the sports journalists had known them but now these three have become a part of history forever. Media is all over them for a small interview, a picture, for a minute of their life. Their families are being interviewed on television channels, media has reached their homes. And all the credit goes to the three stars who proved their mettle at Beijing. Else, when do the media in India get time to cover any other sports except cricket, which is their first love? Even if Dhoni buys a new car, or gets a new dog it is 'breaking news'! Or Yuvraj attends a party with a girl, it’s news! Before the world cup, anything you do, make a cake in shape of bat, sing a song to wish the Indian team, it was news and the media covered it. But the same passion is never there for any other sport. These do get some coverage but that prime time attention is missing, especially in electronic media.
In fact, when Abhinav was competing in the shooting event, half the Indian media at Beijing was missing, they only rushed to get his shots when he won.

Media attention also brings in money, sponsors and no doubt, Indian Cricket Board is the richest cricket board in the world. Sports other than cricket also have a story. It is not that Sushil, Abhinav and Vijender have never played for India earlier. In 2006 Doha Asian Games, Sushil got a bronze. Vijender is the Asian Games bronze medallist and the King’s Cup silver medallist. Similarly, Abhinav had got a gold in 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games and is the first Indian shooter to win a world championship gold. It was covered by media, may be as one news item or limited to sports page. Unlike this time when Bindra made to Page One as India’s golden boy. Possibly, these victories in wrestling, boxing and shooting may do some good to these sports and divert attention to them. And a country like India with over a billion people should be aiming high in the next Olympics. We celebrated India’s 1984 World Cup victory in cricket, but we never celebrated or even remembered Khashaba Dadasaheb Jadhav’s victory, he was India’s first individual (Olympic Games) wrestler to win us a bronze medal at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Today when Sushil Kumar repeated history they talked about him.

In today’s fast life, people tend to rely on electronic media more. They get the glimpses of the news in a minute rather than going through pages of the newspapers or magazines. But, new channels today are more devoted in order to increase their TRPS.

From time immemorial, journalists are considered to be ‘the watch dog of the society’, ever since the concept of journalism came into existence. Journalism basically started with print media, but got into our nerves through the electronic media only. The impact of the latter is considered to be much more because its the electronic media that brings the news first to our homes. In that respect print media lags behind. But the vivid analytical interpretation is only and solely provided by the newspapers. But no matter what, in today’s fast life, people tend
to rely on electronic media more. They get the glimpses of the news in a minute rather than going through pages of the newspapers or magazines. So, with passing of each day, the impact and effect and power of the electronic media is increasing. With power, comes responsibility. So inevitably the responsibility gets doubled. The electronic media industry should be more and more cautious on the accuracy of the information. Rather than devoting their effort to increase their channel’s television rating points (TRP) and moulding the news value for entertaining the audiences, they should actually be conscious on providing the accurate information to the society. Not all news can be given an entertainment value...that’s what they should learn. Political, social and human interests stories, business stories all are given as much entertainment element to it, to gather audience. This violates the norms of journalism. Who will remind the big stars of the media industry...the so-called ‘well known news organisations of the country’? Unnecessary lengthening of the stories, dramatisation of crucial issues—all these are responsible for the degradation of the credibility. The common mass who depends on this medium for their information source, are being basically fooled. Being ignorant of ‘behind the scene’ scenario, they are unable to raise their voices. But we, who are socially responsible citizens and somewhat related to the media industry and are aware of such confusion, we can lead the revolt against such a violation of journalism.

These days, news channels telecast entertainment bytes besides news, just to improve ratings. They believe news relating to peoples problems does not sell. But if the channels really want people to like those, they have to focus on peoples problems. Now-a-days one can often get confused while watching news channels on television. One must have had those experiences, in which while watching a comedy show or a reality show or some dance programme, the show suddenly stops and a news anchor starts sharing her views about the programme as news. Then you focus at the channel name and find it is a news channel. This has become the present scenario. Almost all news channels are telecasting very long clips of several programmes of different entertainment channels. The worse thing
is that the news readers present it like very important news concerning the nation. They try to create a thrill about the programme to add viewership. Do the news channels really exist for this kind of presentation? Probably such comedy shows or reality shows and other programmes have such a great impact on the general public that it can improve the ratings of that particular channel. But will the news channels do anything to enhance the ratings of their channel?

Don’t they have any moral duties? Why do they forget that it is a news channel that they have some duties towards the nation and that they have some responsibilities for the general public? Probably they have so much spare time that they don’t have anything important to present within that time. Probably they don’t want to prepare anything logical. Probably they don’t want to listen to the problems of the general public or they don’t try to anything like this. Probably they are sure that all those efforts of them will go in vain.

If they really want to be liked by the general public, they have to feel the pulse of them. The people of India may like to watch recreational programmes on their news channels but more than that they would like to watch programmes about their problems and their solutions. If you can’t provide solutions to any problem, at least you can highlight the problem and make the government aware of that particular problem. News channels can reveal thousands of problems (corruption, populations, transportation, medical facilities and many more) which people are facing in their daily life. Every problem has a solution and the media are the strongest fighters in the fight against problems, whether they are related to the government or the public.

If the electronic media accept their duties and responsibilities, the general people will definitely support them. News channels will no more be avenues for refreshment for viewers but a path they can take to reach the solutions to their problems. Moreover, people can be more active and more supportive of that particular news channel.
The question is not that of TRP only; electronic media is politically affected, biased and motivated by different influences. The public will have to strengthen their independent source of information and will need to counter the misleading media.

The Value of freedom rests in valuing the freedom and security of others as one value it for oneself. After securing ones own stake at home, if one ventures and dare to safeguard the security and freedom of others, he is also extending the cover of his own security. Television channels adopt most insipid and frivolous methods to promote their channels and business and often compromise the quality of their programmes. For promoting Sri Lankan tourism, these channels built up hype in a completely derogatory manner, unacceptable to a prudent and rational mind. Instead of making the programme informative and scientifically acceptable, these channels made a mockery of the entire Ramayana by shouting in high-pitched voices: “Mil gaye Ram, Mil gayi Sita, ab aap dekhenge Ravan ka sharir jo is admi ne dekha hai, yeh Pushpak viman jo admi ki charbi se chalta tha.” Why such nonsense should be allowed to hurt the religious feelings of thousands of people and make a mockery of great epic, Ramayana.

Why should ordinary incidents of crime be dramatised in such illustrious manner, which does not add anything in substance to any information of the viewer except perverting the brains and most of the times influencing people in a negative way and inspiring more crimes in the society. Why can’t they make crime reports interesting with information that can help the viewer in some way identifying some grey areas and take precaution? Why should you present teenage sex in schools in such bad light that parent get scared of sending their children to schools?

Perhaps, people at the helm of affairs do not trust the common sense of general viewers; they do not believe that their visuals and words are effective enough and they resort to crude forms of expressions with very vulgar and
primitive taste. They indulge in buffoonery and mudslinging rhetoric in serious matters of discussions supposedly being aired in public interest.

During elections and even some time before that, these channels take sides with one or the other political party. In a brazen manner the channels show their twisted slant and when charged with accusation, they claim that if ‘netas’ (leaders) can mislead people in the name of vote why cannot TV channels do it for TRP.

In the election analysis, one expected that there will be some meaningful debate on the serious issues of the people and the politicians will find it tough time to answer probing queries. But what one got to witness was dramatised version with background music and special thrust on the presentation of Varun Gandhi as a communal demon, a big threat emerging from a place called Pilibhit to swallow all secular forces, therefore warning the entire nation. In the entire debate, the anchors tried in utter desperation to revolve the debate for almost an hour around Varun Gandhi with a view to hype communal sentiments as was done at the time of Amarnath land row in J&K by the same channel. The channel had taken a lead in highlighting the venom spilled by PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti and had polarised the Jammu and Kashmir voter. It shows a clear nexuses of public and private owned media to divert public attention from the real issues. The media is completely hand-in-glove with the politicians who believe that progress in the balance sheet of just a few people is the progress of the entire country. The entire media is subservient to such forces for its existence. The public will have to strengthen their independent source of information and will need to counter the misleading media of doctored debates, opinions and politically motivated promos.

We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our everyday activities. But today, is the information given really genuine? Can we rely on that information? Is it not sensationalised? The media plays an important role in a democratic country. It
acts as a fourth institute outside the government. In the last 50 years media influence has grown exponentially with the advancement in technology. We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our daily activities. But, today, is the information given really genuine? Can we rely on that information? Is it not sensationalised? Media today is no less than a Bollywood masala movie. News channels are no less than dance drama and action. They serve us everything except the news which we require. They take no time in stretching a small issue, like a bubble gum, into an hour long show. Shows like SANSANI with a tag line “Chain Se Sona Hai To Jaag Jao” are one of its kind. It takes no time in converting a five minute issue such as a rape case or a dowry case into a one hour long horror cum suspense show. Just another way of sensationalizing news. The news channels are more interested in showing what people think about SRK’s six-pack abs than the plight of the flood victims in Bihar. All the news channels are working in order to gain TRP’s today and not to educate and inform the people. Every minute there is a “Breaking News”. Whether a boy falling into a 20 feet deep hole or a Kareena Shahid breaking up, it’s all Breaking News. Channels even sometimes cross the boundaries of ethics. The Arushi murder case for instance is a great example for crossing ethical boundaries. They actually tainted the character of a teenager who was dead. May it be blue line buses case or an UFO seen or may be some mishap in some reality show, there is not less than an hour’s show program’s script ready at hand.

The mass media has lost its essence today in the race for TRP’s. The news channels should be run under some code of conduct, so that, they don’t forget their ethics and limitations. They should provide the public with genuine and reliable news and information and not some masala Bollywood flick.

The term alleged, according to Oxford Concise Dictionary means asserted but not proved. Princeton Dictionary defined it as “supposed but doubtful”. It also has synonym like claimed, asserted or charged. Is it fair to use this word in news stories?
The term allegedly is thrown around very often these days. It is used profusely in the print and electronic media. Why would a news article or story report that someone was allegedly murdered, maimed or kidnapped? Why would a report state that someone allegedly made the following statement? Why would any news report be based as well as build around the alleged action or statements or links or implication or even alleged events? The term alleged, according to the Oxford concise dictionary means asserted but not proved. Princeton dictionary defined it as “supposed but doubtful”. Alleged also has synonym like claimed, asserted or charged. It also means a declaration made, but not yet substantiated. So is all the news where any statement, allegation or event is ‘alleged’ is unsubstantiated? The word has recently become an integral part of many stories for “legal reasons” as often “allegations are made when the story is made and later another angle appears”. So is it a bid to cover the legal aspects when a story makes unsubstantiated allegations or implications? Or is a bid to simply make stories appear more that what they are? But doesn’t the use of such works make the story appear less unsubstantiated and rather fishy / flimsy? Or, to a less jaded and cynical mind, is it a genuine attempt to report truthfully and objectively? Sulbha Rai, a freelance news analyst in Bangalore, feels that every news report has more than just viewpoint. She feels in a recent case of the rave raid in Bangalore there is the police’s side of the story, the party goers have another story to see, so do the society’s watchdogs and so the various segments of the society. “So whose story or whose versions of the truth do news agencies take as the absolute and complete truth” is the question. She subscribes to the “safety net of words that help states one party’s version, yet remaining objective as well as open to another side of the story”. Yet, by itself, the word in question ‘allegedly’ is rather harmless. It’s used in legal jargon as not really an allegation but “declaring or asserting of something (believed) to be true.

In the literal sense, it means simply stated yet not proved, but in terms of news it comes across as simply attributing a statement (negative – like an accusation, or positive – like a political party claiming to have made progress or
development or government as well as the opposition’s statistics and 99 per cent of their statements). Amusingly what makes the media’s usage of the word seem flimsy is that subjectively it uses the word. So do we assume stories where ‘allegedly’ is not used is substantiated and the absolute truth? So shouldn’t all political, social as well as most news be littered with the word alleged, unless the editors and newshounds can cent percent prove its validity? On a final note, till the word allegedly, that is an attempt to show impartial objectivity, is not used objectively is all news for accountability? What does the reader believe, in news that is alleged or is sans the allegation of being alleged? Is the former the truth or the latter a lie? Allegedly, both are news!

More than 18 journalists have been killed by militants and unidentified miscreants in the last few years in Assam. And the shocking part is, none of the killers of these journalists have been arrested by police, so far. Media is mirror of the society but the freedom of the Press guaranteed by the Constitution is by no means absolute. More than 18 journalists have been killed by militants and unidentified miscreants in the last few years in Assam. And the shocking part is, none of the killers of these journalists have been arrested by police so far. On August 9, 1991, unidentified miscreants gunned down Ajir Asom’s local correspondent in Sivasagar, Kamal Saikia. Police has so far failed to nab his killers and the family members are making the rounds of courts seeking justice. In the same year, Assam Tribune’s local correspondent, Kunarmal Agarwala was killed by suspected ULFA cadres in Kampur, Nagaon. On Aug 19, 1995, suspected timber smugglers killed Northeast Times correspondent, Pabitra Narayan in Sonari, Sivasagar. In the same year, on Sept 24, unidentified miscreants killed Goreshwar journalist, Dipak Swargiary. On April 26, 1996, suspected BLT members gunned down journalist, Manik Deuri in Diphu. In the same year in May 16, Asomiya Pratidin’s editor, Parag Kr Das was gunned down in broad daylight in the heart of Guwahati city. In 1997 local journalist, Panja Ali was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in Kasugaon, Kokrajhar.
In 1998, suspected mafia killed local journalist, Nurul Haq in Hojai. In 1999, photographer Alfarid Shazad and journalist Jiten Chutiya were killed in a grenade explosion inside Sivasagar SP’s office. On Dec 31, 1999, suspected ULFA gunned down senior journalist, Ratneswar Sarma Shastri in Barpeta district. On March 24, 2003, journalist Dinesh Brahma fell to assassin’s bullets in Dhubri district. In 2003, Amar Asom’s local correspondent, Indramohan Hakasama was killed in Aagiya in Goalpara district. On Jan 6, 2005 Asomiya Khobor correspondent, Prahlad Gowala was killed in a preplanned conspiracy in Golaghat. On Oct 29, 2006, Suwaltuchi journalist, Kanak Raj Medhi died under mysterious circumstances. Last year, Hojai journalist, Mohd Musalmuddin, Kokrajhar cable TV director Bodosa Narzary and very recently Kokrajhar journalist, Jagajit Saikia were killed in cold blood. What is shocking is that the police has so far not been able to nab the assailants of these journalists. Will these journalists and their family members ever get justice? “Freedom of Press” is gaining momentum from the people, engineered by politicians, students’ organisations and anti-social elements in the state. If the authorities do not take any steps, this may well send a wrong message across the world on how democracy is being threatened and how freedom of the Press is sabotaged in an egalitarian society like ours. Let media be work freely.

These challenges and opportunities are on the same line in the Darwin's theory of the 'survival of the fittest'. The closure of the 'National Herald' is a clear example of what can go wrong if a newspaper cannot keep pace with the times. How much information is needed in this over-informed society? Today, the information market is flooded with newspapers, magazines, broadcasting corporations etc. The answer lies in only that much, which is important enough for the audience, with which they can relate themselves and fall back to pay attention. But media portrays itself as a medium, which not only provides information to masses but also supports individual interests and rights. The drift from being a representative of the mass, to catering to specialised audience aimed at small, special-interest, regional or even local markets results in segmentation of
the audience. From mass to niche audiences: In the demassified media, audiences have wider choices from which to choose from whether its cable TV, Internet FM broadcasts or the numerous FM stations. They have a situation whereby different media organisations are no longer targeting a mass audience but dealing with niche audiences. For instance, audiences are now being categorised by age group or social class by different media houses. The challenge is to get hold of the viewer. For example, in case of broadcast news, the prospective viewer has a remote control in his/her hand and may switch to other channels. So one has to be a whole entity and present it in each frame to tell viewers who they are, why they are important.

**Citizen journalism:** If we need to know what is happening, and the Media won’t tell us; if we need to know why it matters, and Media won’t tell us; if we need to know what to do about it and Media won’t tell us … we have to tell the story ourselves. This trend has gained momentum nowadays with easy availability of camera phones, camcorders and user-friendly editing software, everyone who wished to make a difference can be a journalist. On the line medium: On-line medium is considered a major factor behind the demassification of the mass media. This medium brings both the media and the masses closer than any other medium. The challenge lies in providing information, which is credible and unassailable and much faster than before.

**Opportunities for journalists:** Today, almost every publication and broadcast media has their own website (online editions) providing what they are already providing through their existing medium. The media has realised the potential of new technology, especially the Internet, which they see as a platform to go global and tap global market. The money factor: Setting up a newspaper and a news channel is a costly affair whereas having your own website is a much cheaper option for journalists. Media freedom: Due to demassification, the information age has witnessed huge diverts in presenting news though blogging, private websites. These trends give more freedom to journalists to express and the concept of Press Freedom remains intact.
Support to regional languages: Demassification revitalises the regional media in India, which somewhat enhances reporting, giving it wings to explore new ventures.

Print media also gets into new avenues with the publishing of supplements and the concept of free newspaper has come into existence. In Kolkata, a free newspaper circulates its edition to its employees travelling in company’s bus service. Recently in Nepal, an 8-page weekly was launched on gay community to disseminate information about the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS through unprotected same gender sex and provides a voice to a community that alleges persecution by family members, employers and even police. These challenges and opportunities are also on the same line of the Darwin theory of the 'survival of the fittest'. The closure of the National Herald, which was instituted by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru is a clear example of what can go wrong if you are not part of the demassified reality.

Mere knowledge of a crime is not enough to be awarded death penalty under IPC Section 120B. In a democratic country like India, no innocent person should be sentenced to death. The media could play a constructive role in this regard. Some sections of the media often give their judgment without waiting for the decision of the court. We have seen it before, especially in the Aarushi murder case. The Nithari killings case is not an exception either.

Without thinking through the pros and cons of the repercussions of their behaviour, sections of the media declared Moninder Singh Pandher as the main culprit in Nithari killings even though there are many loopholes in the case. After the failure of the state police in investigating the case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took up the probe. The CBI has filed chargesheets in 16 cases, out of a total of 19 cases of abduction, rape and murder of four women and 15 children, mostly girls. The cases are being heard separately and while Koli has been charged with rape, abduction and murder in all the cases, Pandher is the co-accused in six.
But according to RS Sodhi, the retired judge of the Delhi High Court who agreed to defend Moninder Singh Pandher in the Allahabad High Court, there is no evidence which directly links Pandher to the conspiracy and this lack of evidence may come to his aid in the high court. In his opinion, Pandher’s mere knowledge of the horrific crimes is not enough to invite a conviction like a death penalty. Interestingly, Sodhi has presided over many sensational cases, including the Jessica Lall murder case, the gruesome Tandoor murder case and the Shashinath Jha murder case. He has sent many criminals, including Priyadarshini Mattoo’s killer Santosh Kumar Singh, to the gallows. Sodhi practised in constitutional, civil, criminal, land revenue and excise matters in the Supreme Court of India for 25 years. Appointed a high court judge in 1999, he retired in 2007. According to Sodhi, the judge got emotionally involved and the judgement, therefore, is not a judgment in law and may be called a judicial murder. He also said that there are no factual things on record that nail Pandher in the present case, that the trial court judge totally bypassed the facts on record and that mere knowledge of the happening was not enough to convict anyone of murder. No doubt, the house in Noida where the murders occurred belongs to Moninder Singh Pandher. It means that he must have known about the crime being committed. But you can’t hold a person guilty for murder under 120 B (criminal conspiracy) for ‘must have known’ because it does not mean he was, in fact, in the know.

Then, what made the judge deliver such a judgement? The immense media hype that surrounded the case may have played a role. Media should understand its limitations and do its job accordingly. Media’s role should be constructive in this regard.

In a democratic country like India, no innocent person should be sentenced to death. So, everybody must think about the case at least once from a different angle.
Now it is time for the media to show some maturity. It should concentrate much more on the actual political atmosphere. Rather than commenting on assumptions it must analyse the current political scenario. The Election Commission has banned exit polls. Apparently it seems to curb the freedom of the media but a close look will reveal another story.

It seems that this time the Election Commission has begun moral policing over the media by banning dissemination of results of opinion polls and exit polls during the 48 hours before the end of the poll in case of single phase election. This has raised a question whether it is trying to curb media freedom? After the 26/11 Mumbai attack the government similarly wanted to restrict media freedom. The repeated attempt means that the media is under the scanner. But in this case it should be taken as a positive move. In the past few years we had seen that experts gave their views and analysis on the opinion polls and exit polls which later proved either misleading or wrong. The question is how a whole election process can be estimated on opinion polls and exit polls which abdicate in its purpose. Now it is almost a trend, before an election, to analyse an election by experts depending on opinion polls. Many news channels and news papers spend lots of money not only to carry out the surveys but also on experts. But as it was proved in the past elections that these are often wrong. The comments and analysis that are based on them are also misleading. Whether opinion polls and exit polls affect voters is a matter of controversy but the experts’ opinion and these polls surely mislead common people.

Another aspect is that these opinion polls create a frenzy that makes the situation more complex in times of an election. On the eve of election different media gave various opinion polls. As if these are penultimate results. Different political parties react with such belligerence on these results that it takes on a war like hysteria. Moreover, our susceptible sensex reacts accordingly with these opinion polls and become more volatile.
Now it is time for the media to show some maturity. It should concentrate much more on the actual political atmosphere. Rather than commenting on assumptions it must analyse the current political scenario. People can only have a clear idea about the political spectrum when news, views and analysis are based on actual facts and figures. Proper guidance of masses is the soul of true journalism.

No less than the Advertisement Guru, indeed a demi-god of the Ad-circuit, Alyque Padamsee, has called for a ban on rape scenes in films and TV shows. Notorious for his ultra liberal views, even Padamsee is outraged. "Like Doctors and lawyers journalists should have statutory registration. There is no shame in it. If doctors and lawyers have a licence why not journalists?" This stunning suggestion came 62 years ago from an eminent editor-journalist, the late Mr. K. Rama Rao, in an address to an Andhra journalist conclave. It is instructive to note a couple of paragraphs from his address that is of considerable relevance today, as reproduced here (1944). He said: "An eminent journalist recently pointed out that journalism in India has ceased to be a calling and become trade. So far as proprietors are concerned, it is a well-organised industry, but it is not a well-organised profession, even so far as the men who produce newspapers are concerned. If the ideal that the best newspaper should be owned by its own readers cannot be realised? We must at least attempt, those who own and those who work, to adjust our angles and approaches, in common interest? The profit motive (has become) rather deep rooted in the mind of the proprietors..?..Skilled labour is the basis of trade unionism. You can regulate (entry) only on the test of skill". These observations were made a couple of years before Independence when almost the entire nationalist press was part of the national struggle for freedom. It shows that the situation, none-too-happy then, has worsened since, particularly with advent of the electronic media. Left to itself, the electronic media will reduce Kalidas to Khushwant Singh and Meerabai to Shobhaa De. This profound observation, made by a well known journalist-editor, Mr. Prabhash Joshi, at a media university meeting sometime back, underlines the seamy side of
the media. It may sound a trifle exaggerated but it is the quintessential truth of the state of the media today. Both of the electronic and its forerunner, the print media, which has become an apology for tabloids -- with few honourable exceptions. The term 'media' itself is the plural of 'medium' but, rightly or otherwise, has come to mean a collective noun for the entire press, the printed word as well as its electronic variety, the ubiquitous idiot box.

The proliferation of 24-hour news and entertainment channels, started by all and sundry from Rupert Murdoch to babulal panwala, is a pain in the neck. With their tireless reiteration of the trite, these channels revel in highly dramatised presentation of sex and crime stories, sensationalising senseless minor incidents, often strewn with unrelated, salacious visuals culled from old clips. Of late the use of "hidden cameras" is a new craze in stage managed shows and making tall claims of investigative journalism. Most of the news channels relegate major national events of importance to secondary or even tertiary position. Doordarshan seems to be the only exception, but it is also gradually falling in line. It is strange that terms like dress code, regulation, control, (much less 'remote control', 'censorship' etc.) have become dirty words in the lexicon of even eminent editors like Vinod Mehta as much as of the show business stalwarts like Mahesh Bhatt. Both profess to be unrelenting champions of freedom of expression, freedom of art, freedom of the press -- indeed in defense of absolute unbridled freedom in everything.

Cry in wilderness A code for self-regulation of print and electronic media has long been a cry in the wilderness. In the fiercely competitive world of liberalisation and globalisation it is foolish to expect voluntary restraint from the media. The media barons, addicted to making pots of money through crass commercial ventures at the expense of social harmony and welfare, and public decency and morality, will never respond positively to the calls of self-regulation. The only remedy lies in a powerful popular movement to re-instill a modicum of sanity and obviate obscene displays. Not through violent methods adopted by Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena, VHP or Yaqoob Khan, but by millions writing a constant
barrage of protests to the bigwigs in the various channels and show business, as also by non-political public organisations. Most urgently needed is for an all powerful Media Council to replace the toothless Press Council and an empowered autonomous regulatory mechanism. It is deplorable how the incipient Broadcast Bill, still in the womb, has provoked sharp criticism mostly from professionals backed by entrenched commercial interests. "Bare bosom culture" The state of the self-styled entertainment channels, blighted by films dominating the television, is even worse. Vulgarity seems to be the new passport to wealth and fame. It is a cruel joke that the likes of scarcely clad Rekha Sawant or Mallika Sherawat protest ... and protest too much. No less than the Advertisement Guru, indeed a demi-god of the Ad-circuit, Alyque Padamsee, has called for a ban on rape scenes in films and TV shows. Notorious for his ultra liberal views, even Padamsee is outraged obviously because of their inevitable baneful impact on young formative minds as much as on adults and adolescents who constitute a large chunk of viewers. The danger of teen-age pregnancy looms large and stares some of them in the face. Most of the TV shows revel in spreading the semi-nude "bare bosom" culture. Add to it the fashion parades and ramp shows exhibiting models wearing little or no clothes? Paradoxically to advertise designers who seem to be averse to all kinds of clothing. It is only Doordarshan which presents its female anchors in decent dress.

Unlike most other private channels which seem to promote what may be called the "banyan coat" dress code to their anchors and newsreaders of the fair sex which in any case proliferates all over the television these days. Conclusion with recent examples: The media is playing havoc with the cultural and moral fabric of the Indian society, as we have witnessed in recent times in the case of the Mangalore Pub incident, the Arushi case, Mumbai terror attacks, the acid attack on girls where the media sensationalised and delivered its own justice, thereby, circumventing the judicial process. In the Mangalore case, the media blew up an issuel and distorted the facts by showing women alone as being assaulted. The Arushi case was the worst of all! Given this situation, it is myth
that self-regulation will work in the media. It has not worked in the west. Its better that India learns its lessons before it is too late.

Information dissemination through media helps in raising the aspirations of the masses and highlighting the need for education. Media has contributed in changing nations and societies. Thus, revolutionary changes have taken place at all levels.

Communication is power and so is information. Communication is needed for development; communication elicited is long-lasting, more meaningful and readily acceptable. Media, in the modern world, is a force to reckon with. The active role played by the media in the development of human beings in regional, national or international spheres has to be fully acknowledged. The most important endeavour in development has to be accorded to human development. In fact human development is the key to development in all other areas. Without adequately-planned, skilfully-executed and spontaneous media support, human development will prove to be a difficult proposition and remain an unachievable goal. It is therefore imperative that before we plan any development activity, we ensure that the human effort involved in the task is adequately communication-oriented. Media encompasses upbringing, human nature and personality in a number of ways. It has contributed tremendously in changing nations and societies. In spite of inequalities in our society, revolutionary changes have taken place at all levels. The role of media in highlighting women’s issues and helping ameliorate their plight has been amply recognised. A large number of television serials on women such as ‘Stree; kab kyo aur kaise; shakti’ and several others have focused on issues like child marriages, pregnancy tests, dowry deaths, broken marriages, widow remarriage, discrimination against women at the workplace and numerous other issues. It must however be recognised that media is a tremendous force in today’s world. National and global issues are affected, influenced and shaped by media outputs. Any nation or organisation, which ignores media power does so at its own peril.
Involvement of media in development is in two ways: to help remove illiteracy and improve prosperity. All the other allied tasks are by-products of media inputs and media consumption by masses and they contribute to the welfare of the nation and the happiness of its people.

The media played a crucial role in focusing the attention of the entire country on the recent pub incident in Mangalore. However, stories about local broadcast channels being party to the attack point to a depressing trend in the Indian media. “What would you choose as a press photographer if you were to decide between clicking a photograph and saving the life of a victim?” The photographer said, “I would rather click a photograph.” There is a case of a South African photographer who won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography. The photograph shows a starving and emaciated Sudanese girl struggling her way to a UN food distribution centre and a vulture waiting behind her at a distance, supposedly for the girl to die so that it could feast on her.

The photograph received rave reviews. However, the photographer was criticised for failing to carry out a basic humanitarian duty. Subsequently, the photographer committed suicide out of depression but that’s another story. The recent pub attack in Mangalore and the media role in it, brings ashore several such issues. It was alleged that the miscreants who attacked the hapless women in the pub took TV journalists along to cover the ‘moral policing’. The whole thing, it is alleged, was orchestrated with precision with cameramen waiting for the ‘action’ to begin.

Subsequently, the police accused the media of not informing them about this planned attack. According to the police, the media should have alerted them so that the whole incident could have been avoided. Yes, the media could have informed the police and the police could have averted the incident. But the question is would such action by the media serve any purpose? Next time the Sri Rama Sene goes out to bring about ‘order’ in another pub, they may go about it quietly and inflict a greater blow. With no any media coverage, it is likely that the
world will not see their hooliganism. It is widely argued, at least in media circles that but for the wide and constant reportage by media channels, the Mangalore pub attack would have gone unnoticed. In a way, it is true as it was only after the national news channels broadcast the story that the police and the government woke up to take some measures.

Even now, the whole incident refuses to die down with the Sri Rama Sene being vindicated by the apparent failure of the Karnataka state government to take stringent action. However, in the whole development, there emerged another disturbing trend. It is reported, quite convincingly that certain local broadcast channels were party to or at least part of the entire assault.

In fact, it is alleged that the Sene members made sure that TV cameras were there with them when they went on the rampage (perhaps, they were eager to show to the whole world their “chivalry” by attacking helpless women.) If it is true that these TV cameras went along with the hooligans, then it could point to a depressing trend in the Indian media. Yes, journalists have to tell, show to the whole world, the reality as it is (well, as far as possible). For this they may have to be candid. They may, at times, even have to cross boundaries. However, there is a danger of temptation to indulge in such endeavors purely for personal gains – to increase circulation, gain a few more TRPs etc. When that happens, the media will cease to be messengers.