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ROLE OF MEDIA IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract: Power of speech is a blessing to human beings. It is an amazing pleasure to listen to people's speech. Freedom of Expression has always been given utmost importance as a special right for the democratic, economic functioning of a society thereby enabling for good governance. Media plays a vital role in part of each and every human life and this paper aims at discussing about the role of media in Good governance. Media plays a significant role by providing information to the citizens about the evils related to social and economic conditions of life. It is a known fact that citizens cannot personally gather and collect all information's to form his/her opinion. Access to internet and mobile phones is rising rapidly, not least in fragile states, but radio and TV remain the key sources of information for most people. Over the last couple of decades powerful changes in media markets have had a substantial impact on patterns of information, communication and governance: the number of media stations has rapidly increased. Political, religious, ethnic or other factional actors have stepped in, supporting media outlets to promote their agendas. Media serves as a medium of exercise of freedom of speech; hence it is rightly regarded as a 'fourth estate'. Owing to the fact that Media plays a vital role in today's society, this paper shall focus on the role of media in our democratic system of governance.

Key words: Media, Good Governance, Participation, Rule of Law, Accountability.

Introduction:

"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; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects"- *Mahatma Gandhi*.

The statement by Mahatma Gandhi explains the importance of media in upholding freedom, and in expanding education and social reforms and change. Media can inform people giving them the voice to be heard and heeded to with greater significance.

Media plays three key roles in promoting good governance: watchdog, civic forum and agenda-setter. Despite decades of scholarship, there is little systematic effort to examine the empirical relationship between the media and governance. Moreover, scholars conceptualized governance with their interests and scope of

work. Regardless of political system, this paper puts aims at identifying the role of media in good governance of a society.

Democracy requires that people should have the right to know the activities of the government, especially the decision of the government that affects their life, liberty and property. Information is important for people to make choices regarding their participation in the State, the market and the civil society. Sufficient information helps people to decide rationally and take the right course of action beneficial to them. Media—both print and electronic—thus helps people to know what is happening around the world, socialize them with the values of pluralism and equip them with the elements of modernity. By publicizing information the media also make public services more responsive to the people. A responsible media equally helps in socialization of people into citizenship, democratization of the State and political society, institutionalization of civic culture through unfettered flow of information, and rationalized use of power in social relations.

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Reducing poverty through achieving sustainable development is the key objective of a welfare state and Governmental programmes and good governance is central to these efforts. Governance implies the ways through which citizens and groups in a society voice their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Good governance includes notions of greater participation by civil society in decision making, instituting the rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, poverty reduction and human rights.

Good governance links government to the notion of responsibility for and to the citizenry as opposed to the traditional idea of authority over a nation—legitimacy emanating from popular assent to and participation in government, which is concerned with the welfare of its citizens.

The role of the media in promoting good governance is clear. All aspects of good governance are facilitated by a strong and independent mediascape within a society. Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration's policies and actions can good governance take hold.

Independent media are like a beacon that should be welcomed when there is nothing to hide and much to improve. Indeed, this is the concrete link between the functioning of the media and good governance—the media allow for ongoing checks and assessments by the population of the activities of government and assist in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion. Instead, all too

often governments devise laws and informal means of keeping their activities hidden from public view or only available to media favorable to their viewpoint. In recent years, many governments have tried to co-opt journalists by paying part of their salaries or by giving them certain kinds of access on condition that they will not report from other perspectives. If the media are to function in the public interest, governments have to protect the independent functioning of the media and allow various viewpoints to flourish in society.

Active public participation:

Greater participation is crucial for good governance in two ways: greater participation by citizens in the decision-making process allows greater transparency and can help ensure that political decisions are adapted to the needs of the people affected by them. Second, greater participation is important for democratic legitimacy, which depends on the investment people have as citizens in their own governing.

The role of independent and pluralistic media in fostering participation is critical as the media report on aspects of the decision-making process and give stakeholders a voice in that process. Freedom of the media allows for the formation of a public sphere in which a wide range of debates can take place and a variety of viewpoints be represented. Government has a responsibility to allow the media to contribute to the participation process, especially in arenas where face-to-face participation is not possible.

Civic forum for Political Debate:

Yet an important role of media is to function as a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed citizens' political knowledge and political efficacy. Viewed in this manner, the media play a critical role in connecting the state and citizens via debates and discussions about major political issues as well as informing the public about the stand of their leaders on such issues. If channels of communication reflect the cultural and social pluralism and diversity of society, then various opinions and different voices could be represented and heard in public sphere the media have the power to set a nation's agenda and divert public attention to certain key political issues. Not only do citizens acquire information about public affairs from the media, but also they learn how much importance to attach to an issue, according to the emphasis the news media have placed emphasis on specific issues or events. The media playing the agenda-setting role in democracies are ideally expected to inform elected officials about public concerns by raising their awareness on such issues. In terms of developing countries, the press is considered to play a more important role in highlighting crucial issues, which require urgent action taken by the national government or the international community.

Significance of Human Rights :

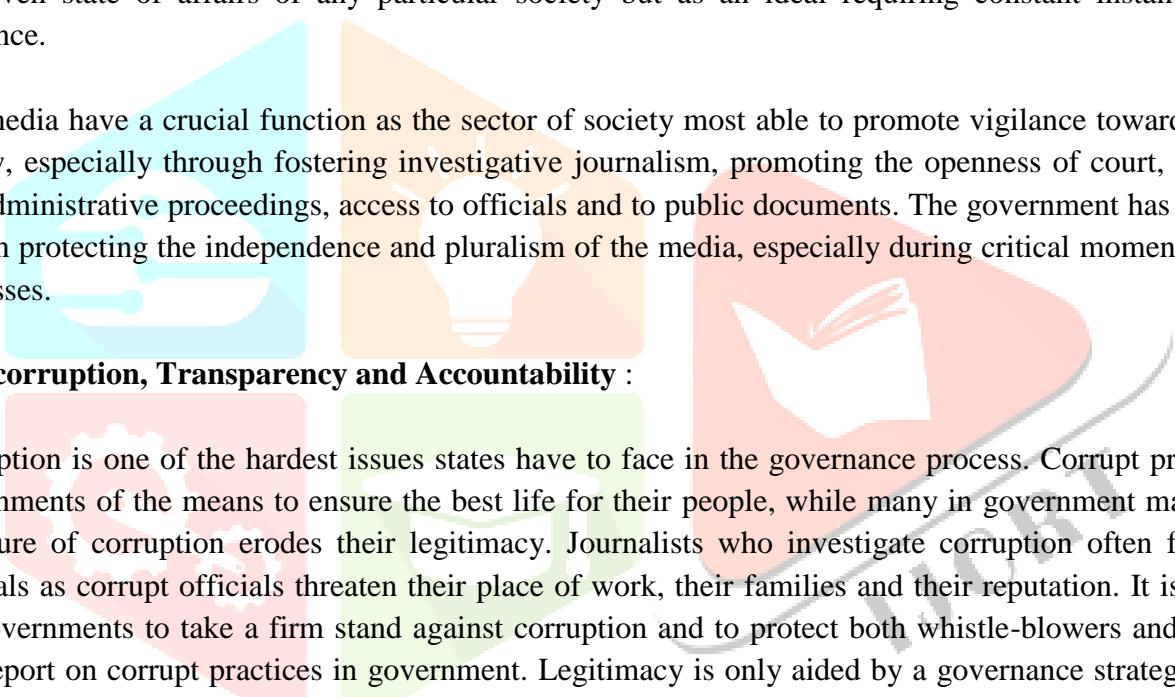
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings have certain basic inherent, inalienable and unassailable rights to which they are entitled by birth. Guaranteeing these rights to citizens is a precondition for a functioning democracy.

By reporting and denouncing cases of human rights violations, a free and open media can increase awareness among citizens about their rights and act as a reliable source of information on the basis of which civil society organizations and public authorities can work to bring down the incidences of arbitrary abuse. However, many obstacles often face journalists investigating cases of human rights violations: restrictive censorship, lack of fair access to official information, heavy fines or even prison terms. Ensuring freedom

of expression and press freedom should therefore be regarded as a priority as they are rights that make it possible to advance and protect other human rights.

Importance of The rule of law :

The rule of law is implied in the existence of law and other judicial systems within societies and is enshrined in the texts of the law itself. The rule of law can be understood both as a set of practices which allow the law to perform a mediating role between various stakeholders in society and as a normative standard invoked by members of society that demonstrate their assent to this principle. The rule of law is fundamental to the stability and smooth functioning of society. Only when the rule of law is respected can citizens have confidence in democratic process over the long term and invest in the sustainable development of their society. When the rule of law is not respected, arbitrariness and impunity dominate the political scene. The rule of law depends heavily on the development of an independent and honest judiciary and the will of any particular government to restrain itself and show respect before the law. The rule of law is best seen not as the given state of affairs of any particular society but as an ideal requiring constant instantiation and vigilance.



The media have a crucial function as the sector of society most able to promote vigilance towards the rule of law, especially through fostering investigative journalism, promoting the openness of court, legislative and administrative proceedings, access to officials and to public documents. The government has a key role here in protecting the independence and pluralism of the media, especially during critical moments of these processes.

Anti-corruption, Transparency and Accountability :

Corruption is one of the hardest issues states have to face in the governance process. Corrupt practices rob governments of the means to ensure the best life for their people, while many in government may feel that exposure of corruption erodes their legitimacy. Journalists who investigate corruption often face severe reprisals as corrupt officials threaten their place of work, their families and their reputation. It is important for governments to take a firm stand against corruption and to protect both whistle-blowers and the media that report on corrupt practices in government. Legitimacy is only aided by a governance strategy that sees independent investigative media as an ally and not as a threat.

A current issue in many governmental reform processes is transparency. As state bureaucracies have grown into large, often opaque entities, practices of secrecy often cover the hidden struggles and interests of particular sectors and civil servants beyond their stated missions. In some cases, the social networks that link civil servants and the broader society lead to conflicts of interest in the practice of governance that are hidden by the secrecy of administration. Greater transparency in public administration allows for checks on these possible conflicts of interest and ensures greater legitimacy for the government.

An independent media that is guaranteed access to public documents and to decision-making processes is able to bring possible conflicts of interest to light and assist the government in maintaining clarity in the execution of its directives. Positive expressions of an open relationship between the media and democratic governments include judicial protections for the media, inculcated respect for freedom of expression and access to information, support for national independent broadcasters and news agencies in the public service and the lessening of punitive restrictions on journalistic activities.

Closely linked to the issue of transparency is accountability. Where transparency focuses on the practices of public administration, accountability points to the responsibility for judging those practices and their effectiveness by various entities, including the public. Accountability includes a sense of moral accountability to the public with various kinds of sanctions guaranteed by the rule of law. While most forms of state government include internal regimes of accountability, accountability to the public is critical to the legitimating of a democratic society. In an atmosphere in which the public is free to examine the transactions of the government and to hold its representatives accountable for their actions, the public simultaneously takes responsibility for the functioning of their government through this form of participation.

Clear Access to Information :

Ensuring wider access to information, through the enactment of freedom of information legislation, ensures greater citizen participation in governance. This allows for maximum verifiability of information and allows all stakeholders to come to the table equally on important issues.

Governments should also explore ways to strengthen “e-governance” which provides media and citizens with direct access to administrative information and decision-making processes.

Openness and transparency in the electoral process is also critical. Media coverage is a crucial component of elections and it is of vital importance that journalists be trained to cover the election campaigns and the elections themselves in a fair and impartial manner, giving equal coverage to the viewpoints concerned.

Reduction of Poverty – Ultimate goal of Good governance:

The eradication of poverty is indeed today a vital condition for global stability, democracy and peace. As long as the poor are excluded from participation in global growth, sustainable peace and development will remain out of reach.

An open and free media can play an important role in the fight against poverty. Firstly, by on the one hand increasing the accountability of both businesses and governments, and on the other allowing citizens to make better informed decisions, it promotes and encourages good governance, without which the battle against poverty cannot be won.

Secondly, by acting - as mentioned above - as a watchdog against corruption, it can help ensure that greater importance be attached to development issues in the allocation of resources, while at the same time strengthening the institutions responsible for promoting the overall development of society.

Finally, it can contribute to combating the exclusion and marginalization of the poor. This is important, for poverty is more than just a lack of resources; it is a lack of empowerment. Poor people are generally unable to participate fully in society and earn a living. Simply providing them with additional resources is therefore not enough to lift them from their deprivation. What they need are increased capabilities. Only then can they gain control over their lives and learn how to productively use whatever resources are available. Reducing poverty through achieving sustainable development is thus the key objective of UNESCO programmes.

Providing the poor with access to the media is an important step in achieving this objective: by supplying them with reliable information, it allows them to take well-informed decisions and make better choices about their lives; it also gives them the opportunity to express their views and have a say in the election of decision-makers, thus increasing the chances of a more efficient allocation of resources. Finally, a free media can contribute to the empowerment of citizens through educational programmes and public health

programmes such as HIV/AIDS education campaigns.

Governance of the media:

If we affirm that independence and pluralism in the media are in fact preconditions for democracy to flourish, it is possible for key elements in government to be committed to media that do not simply repeat what they would like to hear. A positive relationship between the state and media goes beyond pure laissez-faire to nourishing an independent and pluralistic mediascape. A current issue in many countries is the monopolization of media by powerful interests, whether private or public, which lessens the plurality of voices in the public sphere.

Perhaps the most important expression of an open relationship between media and the government is the airing of unpopular viewpoints that may reflect tensions in the society. If the mediascape is not open and pluralistic, these viewpoints may leave the democratic sphere and may result in violence.

Governance of the media also includes the dimension of governance among the different sectors and interests present in the media themselves. The implementation of a legal and regulatory environment that encourages freedom and pluralism in public information is often facilitated when governments and professional associations have access to comparative examples of media legislation, codes, and cooperation strategies for media development.

For much of modern democratic history, media has been considered one of the most powerful agents of democratic accountability. Extensive empirical research has demonstrated the connection between a free press and good governance, including the association between access to balanced, independent programming and improved knowledge and political participation.

Associations dedicated to media accountability such as ombudsmen and press councils also have a key role to play in the governance of media. One important role they play is in encouraging discussion within the media sector about ethical practices and their professional responsibilities. They can thereby strengthen the media's internal professional standards and increase public confidence in the reliability of the information provided.

In countries with emerging independent mediascape, professional media industry associations can take the lead in assisting various media outlets to understand their role as independent media and encourage them to find ways to be economically self-sustaining. This should include both media as well as information services such as news agencies, community-based radio, web-based distribution and media production networks. Considering the smaller number of women in the media in most societies and the special situations they may face, professional associations should actively encourage training for women and greater gender equity within the profession.

These associations should also promote training among media professionals and broad education for those who wish to enter the profession. Such training should emphasize the values of independence, professional ethics, gender equity and the role of media in democratic societies.

Such associations can sponsor debates that touch at the heart of the particular circumstances and challenges confronting the media in particular societies, while opening up wider discussions about the relationship between governance and media in the region and in the global context.

In fast-changing media and communication environments more people are connected than ever before. While most acknowledge that the influence and impact of changing media and communication on governance outcomes is growing, the degree to which new media landscapes are contributing to more informed, peaceful and accountable societies remains in question. For some, increasingly networked young, educated and information-empowered global citizens have the potential to be democratically, socially and economically transformative. For others, increasingly fragmented and co-opted media and communication environments are driving political polarization, extremism and violence.

Stability and conflict reduction:

To improve debate, dialogue and tolerance in fragile or conflict-affected societies, often in order to: increase the availability of balanced, reliable and trustworthy information; reduce the likelihood of hate speech or inflammatory media likely to exacerbate conflict; and enhance social cohesion or build state legitimacy

Communication for development:

To create demand for services and use the media as an instrument to shift behaviour or change the social norms that prevent such behaviour.

Development actors have often struggled to have collective conversations on how best to support media, in part because they have these differing objectives. As the evidence base for media interventions builds, now is the time for the development industry to develop a more strategic approach to media support.

Conclusion:

Media has impacted on governance in the following ways namely- Through Public Political participation-Governments have provided formal online mode of communication channels for citizens to report crime, comment on policy etc. Citizens are often seen using social media to organise activism and protest thus making democracy a success. Apart from this Citizens are using media to communicate, report issues in society thus making government accountable and responsible. Moreover Media have been used to monitor violence thereby acting as a supporter of peace building an essential condition for a good governance. Media in its quest of promoting good governance in any modern democracy must act in such a manner that it promotes those values which create ripples in the form of positive values in the minds of the nationals of a modern democracy. In this way, the role of media is to promote those values in a modern democratic society which promotes elements of positivism in the minds of the democratic citizens of a modern democracy. In this endeavor, media must deter itself from those elements which act as a divisive force for the democratic process. Time to realize that Media and Good governance go hand in hand.

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