International Journal of Academic Research
P-ISSN: 2348-7666: Impact Factor: 7.215
Homepage: https://www.ijar.org.in/
Volume-13, Issue-3(2), Jul-Sep-2026
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License [CC BY 4.0]

ROLE ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA OF STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Dr. Jatti Rajendar
Department of Political Science, University, Warangal, Telangana.

Abstract
Since 17th century, press is being recognized as Fourth Estate of democracy and a forum for public discussion and debate. Today, Media is respected as watchdog, as a guardian of the public interest. Media organizations are generally assumed to play an important role in democracies, but how effective are they in performing this function is a matter of study. The power of Media can be used to reinforce democracy. It can be used as an instrument to bridge between governors and the governed. The media acts as a strong agency to formulate and organized public opinion. The relevance and importance has been adequately dealt in this research. The role of the media as public forum is vital, media functions as an agenda-setter, providing information about urgent social problems the free press can strengthen the public sphere, by mediating between citizens and the state, facilitating debate about the major issues of the day, and informing the public about their leaders. A good democracy is thus first and foremost a broadly legitimated regime that completely satisfies its citizens (quality in terms of result). Hence to strengthen Democracy, India requires to safeguard its citizen first. Media is a tool for social change also. Through promoting programs like the beti bachao, beti padhao, building and maintenance of clean toilets, swach Bharat, saving of water and saving of fuel etc., that the media is quite successful in promoting the social values and protecting the environment to some extent. The extent to which they perform a 'watchdog' role by providing information, and the degree to which they act as a representative forum for the views of citizens..
Keywords: Democracy, Media, Representative Strengthen, Society.

Introduction

Civil society refers to the network of organizations, institutions, and individuals that exist independently of the state and are not driven by profit-making motives. It includes a wide array of non-governmental entities, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, social movements, labor unions, advocacy organizations, and media outlets. These groups play a pivotal role in shaping public life and influencing political, social, and economic processes. In democratic societies, civil society fosters active citizenship by enabling individuals to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making, and hold governments accountable. Civil society is essential for the healthy functioning of democracy. It provides a platform for public debate, protects human rights, advocates for marginalized groups, and works to ensure transparency and accountability in government actions. By engaging citizens in collective action, civil society strengthens social cohesion, builds trust within communities, and promotes political participation. Furthermore, civil society organizations often play a watchdog role, monitoring state actions and exposing corruption or abuses of power. In authoritarian regimes or fragile democracies, civil society can also serve as a counterbalance to state control, mobilizing resistance and pushing for democratic reforms.

Media organizations, whether in print, audio visual, radio or web have to be more accountable to the general public. It should be monitored that professional integrity and ethical standards are not sacrificed for sensational practices. The freedom of press in the country is a blessing for the people. However, this blessing can go terribly wrong when manipulations set in. No one is perfect in this world. Still there is a lot of scope for improvement by which media can raise up to the expectations of the public for which it is meant. We cannot think of a democracy without active and neutral media. Media employs the tools of discussion, opinion polls, debates, and write ups to stimulate authorities for taking appropriate action. Media offers an indicative and investigative platform for discussing the different causes of and solutions to, to the problem of improper implementation of law. The Indian democracy has survived and is

functioning relatively well, and the media no doubt have great contribution in it. However, the Indian media have its own serious criticism, elitists; urban oriented; politically biased; under the grip of big industrial and business houses; using hate politics and sensationalizing the news for economic interest; using communal and caste politics especially by the vernacular media.

A democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels. The media has undoubtedly evolved and become more active over the years. It is the media only who reminds politicians about their unfulfilled promises at the time of elections. Through excessive coverage during elections helps people, especially illiterates, in electing the right person to the power. This reminder compels politicians to be up to their promises in order to remain in power. Media plays a central role in shaping a healthy democracy. It is the backbone of a democracy. Media makes us aware of several social, political and economic activities happening around the world. It is like a glass, which reflects us or attempts to show us the bare truth and harsh realities of life.

Media: As an instrument

Media means communication - whether written, broadcast, or spoken. Generally, the word 'communication' is defined as an exchange of information and message. However, Mass Media denote a section of the media especially designed to reach a large audience. Liberated media is an essential part of a functioning democracy. The media has an extraordinary ability to act as a catalyst in society efforts to strengthen democratic polity. Mass media in its different forms have influenced human life in many ways. Being the leader over a considerable period of time Print media is still regarded as the authentic medium of mass communication. Apart from providing news and views Radio and Television, has also developed a flair for entertainment. And now the latest form of media named the new media with internet has indeed made it possible to disseminate information and ideas in real time across the globe. By airing divergent views and engaging in cross-questioning on significant national and social issues the media reflects and informs public opinion and practically shares the task of the parliament.

Importance and role of media

Today, the word media is used by the general public in all the spectrums of life. It is not a surprise because no industry has grown, extended and succeeded as media in the present times. Under the garb of speech and expression, media is now omnipresent, it has invaded upon all the facets of life of an individual. This fact is not only applicable to the Indian soils, but is global. Not only this, the media has become so powerful that it can make or break the government by influencing the people. The public also heavily depends on the media to secure information. In this scenario the question of the accountability of powerful media arises. Here we need to understand that We "Public" are the active participant, we are require to shape the role of media because this commanding instrument can use as a boon or as bane too. Media has a fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression which can be used as per its whim or wish. The modern age is generally considered to be the age of representative democracy, and the mass media are an informal but an essential component of that representative democratic polity. Equally important is the fact that a democratic polity is an institutional guarantee of a free, fair and fearless media.

Role of Civil Society in Democratization Processes

The role of civil society in democratization processes is both essential and multifaceted. Civil society refers to the array of organizations, institutions, and individuals that operate independently of the state but influence and shape political life. It encompasses a range of non-governmental actors, such as NGOs, labor unions, media, religious groups, and grassroots movements. These groups are central to fostering democratic principles, accountability, and participation. In contexts where authoritarian regimes have held power, or where democratic institutions are weak, civil society can become the bedrock upon which democratic transitions are built. Democratization refers to the process by which a political system moves from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic form of government. This process typically involves the establishment of free and fair elections, the development of rule of law, respect for human rights, and the creation of inclusive political institutions.

The role of civil society in this transformation can be seen at every stage of democratization: in challenging authoritarian rule, in fostering political participation and civic engagement, and in holding new democratic

governments accountable. One of the most important ways in which civil society contributes to democratization is by challenging authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian governments often suppress dissent and undermine civil liberties, but civil society groups provide an avenue for citizens to voice opposition and advocate for change. These groups can range from opposition parties and political activists to grassroots movements and professional associations. Through organizing protests, raising awareness, or engaging in non-violent resistance, civil society groups push back against repressive regimes and demand political change. Historically, civil society has played a pivotal role in breaking the monopoly of power held by autocrats and dictators. In many cases, the success of democratization has been driven by organized movements that mobilized large sections of the population against the state.

The fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, for example, was in part due to the efforts of civil society groups that fostered political awareness and organized protests against the regime. In Eastern Europe, the rise of independent trade unions and human rights organizations played a major role in pressuring Communist governments to open up political space, paving the way for democratic transitions. Civil society's involvement in democratization is not limited to opposition to autocratic rule. Once authoritarian regimes collapse or give way to new political systems, civil society continues to be an important force in the development of democratic institutions. In transitional democracies, civil society can help lay the groundwork for effective governance by promoting political participation.

Media and Democracy

In India however media has developed and emerged as a very powerful and influential tool in all matters. Importance and power of Media can never be denied in democracies; media policies, media content etc. and media persons have a direct or indirect influence on the audience. Mass Media and Democracy are always related to each other. Media is a mirror of the society and how democratic a society is, can be represented through media. Opinion leaders influence the public opinion regarding political leaders and political system of any country. Hence, media has an influential role in strengthening democracy. Media and democracy have strong association. Countries which are strong democracies always have resilient and free media. In the role of 'watchdog' the media can promote government transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny of decision-makers in power, and by highlighting policy failures, maladministration by public officials, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector, Media acts as a mirror.

Media freedom and people participation

Media freedom shapes the social, legal, political, economic and the cultural factor. People know very less about the political issues and activity in countries where the government interfere with the media. Corruption has a very adverse impact on the development of the country. Media extracts the fact and information's from the institutes and makes it available to the people. And this role off media makes the life of corrupt government officials tough. The media even at times releases the secret files which may include the actual instance of corruption. So in countries where the government does not interfere with media, people participation in the functioning of the governance is more and the people can easily punish the corrupt politicians. So free media repeatedly report the action of the government to the people and it put everything in front of the people to decide whether if it is right or not. When people are not conversant of the political activity, they become ignorant of the political affairs of the country.

Role of media in public policy

The foundation of the democratic institutions dates back to the French revolution in 1789. There were three centers of power namely the monarchy, the church and the feudal lords during those days. So the fourth estate 'media' was added by the French revolution first. It was because of the major role played by the media in the democratic institutions. So even during the inception era of democracy the media had a very important role to play. Therefore we can't imagine democracy in present day without media. It a two aspects or faces of one coin. Media structures the policy of a country by making public opinion. The policy output is actually authoritative action i.e. the decisions of the government on various problems of the people. Media directly can't shape the policy but definitely it can criticize the policy and force the government to change the policy in case if it is not in the interest off the people. Media mediates between the state and the society and hence criticize by the media has very adverse impact on the popularity of

ruling party. In a way media exercises the decisive influence over the public policy. Media is the regulating flow of communication between the policymakers, policy and others in any political system. This role of media influences the policy making and hence makes a country and its political system more democratic.

Conclusion

Civil society plays a fundamental and multifaceted role in the democratization process. From challenging authoritarian regimes to fostering political participation, social justice, and human rights, civil society organizations serve as crucial actors in the development and consolidation of democratic systems. They provide a space for citizens to voice their concerns, engage in political debate, and hold governments accountable, contributing to the creation of inclusive, transparent, and accountable political structures. Civil society also plays a key role in bridging divisions within society, promoting unity, and advocating for marginalized groups who may otherwise be excluded from the political process. However, the role of civil society in democratization is not without challenges. In many contexts, civil society faces repression, limited resources, and political resistance, particularly in fragile democracies or authoritarian regimes. Despite these obstacles, the resilience of civil society remains critical in safeguarding democracy, as it continues to push for reforms, monitor government actions, and ensure that the principles of democracy and human rights are upheld. The strength of civil society is often a measure of a democracy's health and sustainability. A vibrant, active civil society is essential not only for achieving democratization but also for maintaining democratic values over time.

In the current scenario the Indian media has been subject to a lot of criticism for disregarding its obligation to social responsibility. Perilous commercial practices in media have affected the fabric of Indian democracy. In the race of sustainability and commercial interest transnational media organizations have spread their wings in the Indian market with their own global interests at the cost of truth and accuracy which was initially thought to be an agent of escorting in social change through developmental programs aimed to uplift the weaker section of the society and showcase the truth only. But Extreme coverage or propaganda of sensitive news has led to communal riots at times. Constant repetition of the news, especially sensational news, breeds apathy and insensitivity. Though media has at times successfully played the role of a watchdog of the government activities and has also aided in participatory communication, a lot still needs to be done. Media should take utmost care in airing or publishing such sensational news. It is a mirror of society and a powerful tool in implementing laws. Although the Indian constitution does not have an exclusive act defining the liberty of the press but it is evidently included in the freedom of speech and expression under the Article 19 (1) (a).

References:

1. Putnam, R. D. (1993). Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy. Princeton University Press.
2. Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (Eds.). (2005). Assessing the quality of democracy. Johns Hopkins University Press.
3. Wuthnow, R. (2002). Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragmented communities. Harvard University Press.
4. http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19 issue9/Version7/H019975051
5. http://racolblegal.com/role-of-media-in-strengthening-democracy-in-india/
6. http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/22%20Mian%20Ahmad%20Hanan_v31_no1_jan-jun2016.pdf.
7. http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/articles/undp_rti_2006/annex3_background_paper.pdf
8. http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19 issue9/Version7/H0199