

Power of Media in Modern World

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Outline:

Introduction:

- . Power of media in 21st century
- . Most powerful weapon of the contemporary world
- . Media...backbone of tremendous social, political and cultural changes
- . Freedom of expression...a basic human right
- . Interrelationship between media and democracy
- . Thesis statement leading to conclusion.

Constitutional provisions and guarantees:

- . Article 19 of the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973.

Constituents of freedom of press:

- . Freedom of thinking, speech, expression
- . Freedom from all government pressures.

Functions of media:

- . Education for the masses
- . Awareness about world scenario and fundamental rights and duties
- . Opinion formation related to social, political, economic & religious issues
- . Ensures public participation in government's policies.

Freedom of press in Pakistan:

- . Semi-independent press owing to punctuated democracy
- . Role of military regimes from Ayub Khan to Zia Ul Haq

Current scenario in Pakistan over the last decade:

- . PEMRA 2001...martial law regime 2001
- . Mushroom growth of private TV channels
- . Role of media in promulgation of emergency...3rd November 2007
PRO, under emergency

Challenges / hurdles before Pakistan's media

- . Illiterate population...Lack of interest/ awareness
- . Political instability
- . Indifferent attitude of the masses towards the policies of the government
- . Shortage of funds/ resources
- . Political interference

Obligations of media/ the way forward.

- . Ethics of journalism/ press to be followed.
- . Strive for national integration
- . Impartial / unbiased analysis

- . Avoid exaggeration
- . Avoid obscenity / vulgarity
- . Depiction of Pakistan's true culture and history
- . Promotion of social, ethical and moral values
- . Projection of softer image of government's policies
- . Maintenance of public confidence
- . Promotion of Quaid's vision and ideology of Pakistan

Conclusion

“Freedom of conscience, of education, of speech, of assembly, is among the very fundamentals of democracy and all of them will be nullified if the freedom of press be successfully challenged.”

(US president, Roosevelt)

Media is regarded as the most powerful weapon of 21st century. It is as lethal a weapon as a nuke. It has the capability to convert day into night and night into day, a hero into a villain and a villain into hero. Media has brought revolutions in the world and has transformed the globe into a global village. It has virtually erased the geographical boundaries, removed the barriers of social, political and cultural differences and as a result this diversified world has been reduced to remote control. Media's role in education, awareness, opinion formation and entertainment is so diversified in its horizon and domain that one thing is clear and decided that the tides of media cannot be reversed, however, they may be altered in nature and composition.

The status of freedom of press in Pakistan, ever since independence, has remained semi-independent, despite adequate safeguards and provisions promised by the constitution.

“There shall be freedom of press. It shall, however, be subjected to any reasonable restrictions imposed by the law, in the interest of glory of Islam, of the integrity, security and defense of Pakistan or any part of it, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency and morality or in relation to contempt of court or commission or incitement to an offence.”

(Article 19 of the constitution, 1973)

Freedom of press literally means the freedom of expression i.e. speech, writing and thinking. It also ensures the liberty to think and act without any restrictions and pressures.

A free press and electronic media is an essential attribute of democratic polity as both work hand in glove with each other. If democracy is the government of the people, media is the voice of the people. But it is a matter of grave misfortune for Pakistan that due to one factor or the other, ever since independence, media could not breathe independently and one of the factor that could be held responsible for this sorry state of affairs is the obstructed and failed democratic form of government.

The fundamental ingredient making democracy possible is the flow of information. Media is the only force that can ensure the flow of information. If restricted, hindered or obstructed in any way, masses remain ignorant, ignorant of their rights, their duties to the state, their needs and the role that they can play for the betterment of the society and the country they live in.

Media's role in imparting education to the masses cannot be stressed enough. Online

lectures and speeches of the professors, scholars and intellectuals are playing a significant role in imparting formal and technical education to the masses.

Media's role in creating awareness among the masses regarding the political, social and economic scenario cannot be overemphasized. Owing to the mushroom growth of TV channels and newspapers, people today are more aware and educated about the surroundings and the steps taken by the government. This is promoting public participation in the decision-making of the state machinery. The skilled and bold personalities of the anchor persons raise people's voice, analyse government's actions and get the expert opinion.

Media has also played a significant role in bringing the world at our doorstep. It produces and introduces different lifestyles in the world, changes moods and behavior, braves the bold topics through dramas and talk shows. It also suggests the new household styles, guides the youth to new opportunities and creates civic sense.

Media also helps in providing religious knowledge by the competent scholars, answering the queries of public to solve their problems. It highlights religious events and promotes sectarian harmony.

In the historical perspective, one can safely say that unfortunately democracy could not flourish here in the true sense of the word. Consequently, Pakistan has not been able to evolve a full-fledged free news media. The media in Pakistan has not received the nourishment needed for its full flowering.

However, the electronic media took new form after promulgation of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) 2001, by the autocratic regime of president Musharraf. The authority has been made responsible for facilitating and regulating the establishment and operations of the broadcast media and distribution services in Pakistan. The mandate of the PEMRA is to ensure accountability and transparency by optimizing the free flow of information. This law is on the face to the article 19 of the constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech, expression and press.

Despite frequent martial laws, other factors that stand responsible for the poor growth of independent media could be indifferent attitude illiteracy, poverty, unawareness, attitude of indifference towards the political decisions, lack of interest in state affairs, political instability and political pressures and problems.

Illiteracy has proved to be one of the major obstacles in the improper growth of press and electronic media. Owing to lack of education, people have been rendered unaware of their rights, duties and of course responsibilities to the state. This dilemma of illiteracy gave birth to poverty and consequently, the poor masses that could not afford two meals in a day, could never realize the importance of newspapers and freedom of press. This sorry state of affairs has created an indifferent attitude on the part of the common masses. Consequently, the apathy shown by the government and the people gave birth to an orthodox and stereotyped thinking and nationalist approach.

There are certain ethics and do's and don'ts of media channels and press to shape the discipline of journalism so that they may seek truth, convey information, ideas and opinions with transparency and accuracy. These ethics advise the media personals to report and interpret honestly, striking for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts and urge the necessary correction of errors.

21st century has turned out to be a century of media war, as it has turned out to be the most lethal weapon of the contemporary age. Drastic, cultural, political and social changes can now be seen as a result of revolutions brought about by media. Media is bursting forth like a meteor, breaking new frontiers. In this age of cosmic revolution and technology and means of communication, those archaic barriers blocking any people's access to independent source of information are being dismantled rapidly to the utter discomfort of the obscurantist still intent on keeping them intact. This is an era of satellite television, internet connectivity and mobile telephones. US constitution categorically forbids that: ,
“Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of press.”