

Media in Pakistan:-

"When complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained, that wise men look for."-- Milton

No power on this earth can block the truth as it is God who, being the truth Himself, guards it. Nowhere in history could the truth ever be suppressed, it always revealed itself in some other form and with dangerous consequences.

British philosopher John Stuart Mill underlined the need for free speech mainly for three reasons. He believed that freedom to read or write is an important element to expose and reveal the truth, to ensure self-development and self-fulfillment of citizens and to help ensure participation of the citizens in a democracy.

The Pakistani media is an enthusiastic member of the new warrior clan of the 21st century and despite belonging to war-torn country, is playing active role in keeping with the demands of the modern times. 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. Investigative reporting and live discussions can undermine the spell of many a magicians.

This has facilitated public access to the hitherto unseen workings of the political and bureaucratic set-up while simultaneously highlighting the injustices suffered by the common man as a result of the shady practices of the elite.

After a significant role of media in restoring the judicial crisis, media has an unprecedented ability to act as a catalyst in civil society efforts to strengthen democratic polity.

The fundamental ingredient making democracy possible is the flow of information. The media (plural of medium)electronic, print, cyber and internet ensures this flow of information. If restricted, censored or hindered in any way the people will remain ignorant, ignorant of events, ignorant of their rights, their duty to the State, their needs and the role that they can play for the betterment of the society they live in and the country as a whole.

Macaulay called the Press as Fourth Estate of the government, but the advent of

technology the media has gained new dimension, great strength and very sharp transforming the present age into information explosion.

The media plays an extremely important role in transmitting the claims of social, economic and political movements to the decision-makers and the public. A free press and electronic media is an essential attribute today of a democratic polity because only these sources of information can keep not only information flowing freely but also help maintain a constant dialogue between the policy makers and the masses.

How did TV Channels Emerged in Pakistan:

Surprisingly, the free electronic media in Pakistan was initiated by a dictator General Musharraf, though he had his own interests to present himself as a democrat President before the West.

Growth of Satellite system facilitated its technical side. President Musharraf to project Enlightened Moderation and democratic image.

Multinationals' advertisements provided huge income to make the business viable.

The peoples' interest in watching their issues instead of traditional dramas and movies.

The world after 9/11 and talk shows got the attention of the Pakistanis and the Muslim world. Talented anchor persons became the voice of the people.

Less readership and more viewership due to busy life spread the culture of watching.

Availability of TV sets due to China imports and cheap manufacturing in Pakistan.

New local government system in 2001 and 2002 the urgency to provide electronic media at the grass-roots level.

Allowing media freedom was not a choice for Pakistan's establishments. It was their compulsion. During the Kargil conflict the Pakistani establishment had learnt the bitter lesson that PTV commanded only a limited audience. People watched Zee News and other Indian channels to get the other side of the story.

In this backdrop it was decided the Pakistan needed its own independent electronic

media channels.

Western Media and need for local Media:

The Western Media Cover Iraq, or Afghanistan, WMD. A.Q. Khan, London bombings, Pope's remarks about Islam or Islamabad agreement with tribal elders in South Waziristan, but with its own comments and showing one as Hero and other as Villain. The world is in the grip of War of Media.

Johann Galtung, a distinguished journalist, maintains that media projects violence without analyzing its causes for unresolved issues portrays one side as 'Evil' and the other as 'Liberator.' Kevin Doyle quotes the theory of 'Propaganda Model' and explains that the modern Media promotes the division within the global village which is enhancing insecurity.

The US controlled western media, is blaming Islam and Muslims as terrorists. If some Muslims are terrorists, it does not prove over a billion Muslims are terrorists. Former President CBS News, Richard Salient reveals,

“Our job is to give people not what they want, but we decide they ought to have.”

Miracles of Electronic Media:

Modern-day electronic media, on the other hand, has employed advanced technology to wage a bloodless war in the form of investigative reporting and live debates.

The combined usage of auditory and visual sensory perceptions by the electronic media can succeed in stimulating deep emotions and sensations.

Televised news is the most powerful medium today, especially in Pakistan where the literacy rate is extremely low. Due to impact of TV channels, the people are more informed. The electronic media, along with the print media, often criticize the government for going against the spirit of the constitution, violating democratic traditions and being unaccountable to the public at large for inflation, unemployment, poverty, deterioration of the law and ordersituation and highhandedness against opposition.

It can be used as a motivational force to bring consensus on vital issues like education and health. The truth is that the significance of the media as a medium of interconnectedness

of human affairs cannot be undermined in an age of rapid globalization.

It seems to have overtaken the press in forms of impact on the target population in as much as it reproduces events and characters on the screen directly and promptly. The advent of independent TV channels in the country substantially transformed our culture and political discourse. Television is far more effective pervasive, intensive and graphic than print media. Its impact on the public mind is substantially higher than that of the print media. Live coverage on television not only provides us with the most up-to-date information about events but also engages the viewer in a way that print media cannot do the in the same way.

It is usually claimed that the job of the media is the dispassionate presentation of facts. The fact is that the job of the media person is not to serve as a post office but more importantly to educate the public through informed reporting so as to facilitate as objective an opinion formation as possible. A free media that works conscientiously can serve as the collective conscience at the national and international level. This, however, is often easier said than done.

The reporter or journalist is after all human and endowed with biases and in some cases prejudices and as with all power bases the media too is vulnerable to the corruption of the absolute power. There will always be those in their ranks who can be bought with cash or perks or promises of paradise. But then there will always be those who are not purchasable because they know that their reporting can make or break individuals, communities and nations -- a heavy burden indeed.

Positive Effects:

Political Analysis:

The skilled and bold personality of anchor person raises people's voice and clearly asks the real point of the crisis.

They analyze government actions, either in favor or against the masses and develop the opinions of the experts.

Media is serving as true democratic notion of people's participation. The general peoples' criticism, analysis, and comments are added. which also act as a catharsis.

The ruling feel shame while speaking bluff in live shows before the millions of the citizens.

Media successfully informs the whole world against any injustice and shows world' criticism which compel the government to change its autocratic orders.

Economic Debate

Shows government's projects internationally to get foreign investment by projecting the benefits of the enterprise.

Advertising to maintain competition among various companies which facilitates the public. Like, mobile phones and their lowering prices.

It represents new business trends going in the world and offering the new opportunities for the investors.

Performance of stock exchange keeps update the investors.

Spreads technical education to learn the working of the machinery.

Social Awareness:

Bring the world at doorstep with its various trends, colors and life styles.

Changes moods and behavior of people from conservative to liberal.

Bold topics through dramas and talk shows to purify the society from superstitions, evils and fake stories.

New household styles to upgrade the living standards.

Guides the youth for new opportunities and to compete with the world in all fields of life.

Creates civic sense.

Religion Clarifications:

Authentic information by the competent scholars instead of narrow minded and ignorant clerics who have changed the world into hell.

Solutions of answers of publics' questions which remain unheard and unexplained.

Highlights religious events like Mohram, Eid, Mairaj and the holy ramazan.

Sectarian harmony is minimized by putting forward the views of competent and enlightened Ulamas.

Negative Effects:

Political gimmick:

Blackmailing by the media persons to get personal gains as now practically, media is not answerable before any institution.

Sensationalism of news to get cheap popularity.

To show one as Evil and other as Liberator by continuously repeating the comments or visuals.

Social Evils:

Vulgarity due to inflow of foreign culture. The English and Indian channels are affecting the moral of the youth.

Time wastage due to constant watching the dramas.

More materialism by diminishing simplicity.

Generation gap is increasing on account of fast approach towards life.

Religious impressions:

Weakening religious impressions due to foreign culture and time wastage.

Challenges to Media:

.

The violence stricken areas like FATA, Balochistan, the journalists are terribly vulnerable. In 2008, almost 12 journalists were killed and 6 in 2009. It has curbed the free flow of information.

Pakistan is facing conflict of ideologies between conservative and secular approaches. Therefore media is cautious in debating on such sensitive issues

The government indirectly restricts media by withholding advertisements.

Media monopoly by big groups is also obstructing the expansion of smaller channels

PAMERA have frequently threatened to cancel the license. Also other government agencies pressurize.

The political issues are so debated that other social, religious and psychological aspects are not properly addressed.

Though the media as an institution enjoys enormous power and influence, media organizations are not charity houses: they operate as businesses and have commercial interests. There is a natural tendency to indulge in corruption and malpractice when an institution enjoys absolute power, particularly in the absence of a strong system of accountability.

The Government verses Media

Our country is rapidly drifting towards destruction due to the ever-increasing corruption and poor governance.

Since independence, corruption and mismanagement have become common norms. Now media has to work hard to sweep the dirt. As a result, the government considers it as humiliation and defeat. The anchors like Kamran Khan, Dr Shahid Masood, Hamid Mir, Luqman Mubasher, Talat Hussain etc. have successfully criticized missing people, steel mills case, Kerry Lugar bill, NRO, rental projectors, victimization by members of the assemblies and the inside stories of DEALS with each other.

This government has no ability or a morally upright resource to take cognisance of it; our

attorney-general has resigned due to corruption charges, the minister for parliamentary affairs has been named in a corruption case involving tens of million rupees and it is needless to mention the conduct of our ex-chief justice Abdul Hameed Dogar.

The banning of Meray Mutabiq is unacceptable to 170 million Pakistanis who believe in the freedom of speech. This is an attack on free speech and the media by the current regime which must be resisted. Dr Shahid Masood has been bringing the facts before the nation. He is a professional journalist and must be allowed to continue his show.

PEMRA and Freedom of Media

The Authority is responsible for facilitating and regulating the establishment and operation of all broadcast media and distribution services in Pakistan. The mandate of PEMRA is ensure accountability, transparency and good governance by optimization the free flow of information. But the ex-President Mushraf issued orders' "To seize broadcast equipment or seal the premises." When journalist refused to be overawed by indirect threats, a draconian law in the form of the Pemra (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, was promulgated. This law is on its face contrary to Article 19 to the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, which guarantees freedom of speech, expression and the press.... To raise the fine of violations tenfold and if required to suspend the lincense."

Sensationalism in the Media:

What is sensationalism? Dog bites Man. This is old news. We already know the outcome. Man bites Dog. This is sensationalism: it immediately stirs the listener's mind and is the cause for great hype.

The dramatic background music, images of clashes between security officials and civilians, and riots all form a part of sensationalism, enticing the viewer to turn on the television set. Whatever the truth, does not matter, television is selling, making money and that is the true motive.

On the other hand the growing trend in broadcast media for attracting anchors on heavy remunerations, anchors who possess skills of creating sensationalism and who spice news with hypothesis, is an example of how media channels are departing from objectivity and balanced reporting.

Furthermore, the frequent switching of anchors from one channel to another mainly for economic gains in utter disregard of the basic ethos of the journalistic profession also supports the argument that broadcast media in Pakistan is headed for over-

commercialization.

These channels sometimes most of the time have been guilty of over-doing things with their moment-by-moment commentary. Give them some time (a decade at least!), they'll mature over time.

Also they would just cut anybody, a politician would be there talking and they will cut him in the middle saying buhat buhat shukriya app ka

During the Lal masjid episode she even once said to DG ISPR app qaum ko koi pegham dena chahin ge. he said, BB main yahan apni duty de raha hoon, qaum ko pegham dene nahin aya.

The claim of Sub se pehley has started a mad race.

The media has realized its power and ability to penetrate an innocent mind and they are exercising it so savagely.

The private channels are owned by big investors with a purpose to enhance business. They have to afford massive expenses, so, competition to excel others makes them irresponsible. In order to attract more view ship and resultantly more commercials-they even sometimes forget the damage caused to national interest.

A bold and blunt anchor person undermines the set standards. The petty events are heightened. Tiny is made mighty and vice versa-on the grounds of personal grudges or at the behest of the owners.

Moreover still, the mood of the public is not as mature as in the strong democracies due to lack of education and weak sociopolitical and cultural norms.

Causes of Controlled Media:

The imperial heritage has been hallmark about politics. In Pakistan, not only the dictators but also the civilians rulers took unconstitutional steps, covered their own corruption along with their associates. Internal corruption of judiciary all were only possible with a curbed media.

Narrow minded religious parties once the blue eyed boys of the military restricted media

freedom.

Media has been the fear of every general after taking over the government.

The illiterate masses have been exerting zero pressure on the policy makers.

The reason for different views are the investors. If a party or institution invests in the media, they want to see their own views reflected. The views reflected are not necessarily of the public, nor of the employees, rather, the views of those who pay wages to these employees, in turn shaping not only their view, but also the public.

Corporate barons who own a large chunk of the Pakistani Media obeyed the official orders to get monetary benefits.

Pakistan has failed to spawn a free and fair political culture attuned to the expectations of its people. Journalists have been intimidated and humiliated by the denizens of power and their agents. The vigilantes of the political parties, too-especially the religion-oriented ones-also contribute generously to making the lives of journalists miserable. Everyone wants the journalists to obey their orders.

Suggestions:

The media as an institution and fourth estate is accountable to the public and responsible for its actions. Media practitioners should stop thinking they are above the law. Let the media introduce an internal scheme of checks and balances. Undoubtedly, this is an uphill task.

Accountability of the media is not possible under the disputed regulatory regime. Media organizations and civil society should jointly constitute a commission for this task. The recent coming together of several leading TV channels to frame rules for terrorism coverage is a step in the right direction. This move may help purge the elements abusing the power of the media in violation of the public mandate.

The aim of media activism should be to strengthen the weak and vulnerable segments of society. It is they who need our support, activism is not merely reporting but it involves deep passion and research.

While covering a big story, especially in the war zones, the human sides of a conflict are

often ignored by the general media. Here media activism can play its true role in reminding the world of the miseries and sufferings of the ignored segments of society.

In the same context the NRO has made even the highest office of the country questionable. In such an environment it is the honest and straight-forward media which can make some difference by acting as a pressure group and the recent action of the government amounts to treason.

First and foremost, media must help in stabilizing the national institutions and national socio-economic, political and administrative structure by pointing out the flow and appreciating any good work done by the Government or State institutions and organizations in private sector. Serving the country honestly and sincerely must be projected.

The need to strengthen our socio-cultural and ideological foundations was never so great as it is today. There is cultural invasion from the West and Indian TV channels and Cable TV networks. Our values are being attacked and are in danger. Media must build our confidence and faith in our values.

We as viewer should mend ourselves, so that we may not be carried away with the media hype. We should know when to stop viewing the repeated hysterics.

Media going through a turbulent transition, with a new found liberties. It is hoped they will settle to a saner posture in due course.

It must create a pride in our glorious past, our culture and our way of living. Pakistan is the seventh atomic power in the world and the only Muslim country, which has achieved this status. This is a matter of great pride and prestige. We have a beautiful normative and social value structure, which needs to be preserved, promoted and strengthened.

Media must help sustain confidence in our national institutions such as parliament, armed forces and our social structure. Erosion of such confidence in our institutional set-up can be dangerous. All problems and issues such as relating to functioning of our institutional framework have to be explained effectively to the people so that they develop a positive opinion and attitude.

At present, we are living in a world, which is moving too fast. And in the ensuing din and noise masses must be helped by the mass media to see things clearly so that they are not misled.

The prime objective of media must be national stability in all its dimensions. A social and political climate needs to be created in which people could engage-themselves in positive and healthy activities and could contribute to the overall national development.

The feelings of despondency, frustration and deviant tendencies need to be neutralized. Only an effective media, can do this.

This also places far greater responsibility on the shoulders of those running its affairs. The nature of their functions is such that all those involved in the process including reporters, analysts, anchors, editorial staff and the management are required to make difficult choice every day. It is essential for their credibility that they remain visibly impartial, evenhanded and demand from the passions of the moment.

A system of journalistic accountability, both internal and external, is in place on the news side, which leads to more responsible reporting and editing.

The sudden boom in the media has led to severe shortages of trained manpower, so that people can be appointed to positions that require more journalistic experience than they really have.

The print and broadcast media must make every effort to ensure that their coverage is factual, balanced and informed. Live pictures must be responsibly broadcast.

Conclusion:

To summarize, media can help stabilize and strengthen the country by playing educational and informative role and by imparting knowledge to the masses as knowledge is power and only a well-informed society can develop a positive approach towards life.

The objective of media freedom can be realized only when public trust and confidence reposed in the media is respected and protected by the media itself by acting as a true watchdog, keeping an eye on the government on behalf of the public.

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

This is an era of satellite televisions, internet connectivity, and mobile telephony. US constitution categorically forbids: “Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of press.”