



IMS UNISON
UNIVERSITY

Nurture Knowledge. Empowering Minds.

ISSN: 0974-5591

Pragyaan

Volume 16, Issue 1,
June 2018

Journal of Mass Communication
a bi-annual refereed Journal



Listed in
**Ulrich's International Periodicals
Directory, USA**

Research Papers/Articles

**Contradictory Perspectives on Freedom and
Restriction of Expression in the context of
Pakistan: A Case Study**
By Anis-Ul-Haq, Dr. Rashid Khatun

**Significance of Media in Strengthening
Democracy: An Analytical Study**
Dr. Nazim Dohral, Nuzhat Ghani Durrani

**"A Study of Reach, Form and Limitations of
Alternative Media Initiatives Practiced
Through Web Portals"**
By Geetika Prakashani

**Employer Branding: A Talent Retention
Strategy Using Social Media**
Dr. Manika Gupta, Dr. Lakshmi

**Online Information Privacy Issues and
Implications: A Critical Analysis**
By Vansha Saxena, Prof. (Dr.) N. Saha Aggarwal,
Dr. Sushil Raj

**Online Journalism: A New Paradigm and
Challenges**
Dr. Sushil Raj

Significance of Media in Strengthening Democracy: An Analytical Study

* Dr. Harsh Dabhal

** Mukesh Chandra Devrani

ABSTRACT

Known as the fourth estate following the Executive, Judiciary and the Legislative, media play a very crucial role in nurturing, preserving and deepening democracy and its various institutions and processes. The media also play a tremendous role in negotiating and democratizing the public sphere and expanding it to a wider segment of society. It is in the complex set of dynamics a democracy offers that the role of media assumes utmost significance and media and democracy enter a symbiotic relationship. Without a free media that is accessible to and representative of all, there can be no democracy and without democracy, media can never get adequate space for proper functioning. This paper deals with four interrelated themes. Building on the assumption that a free media and democracy are inseparable, the first part discusses the linkages between and the role of media in deepening democracy. The second part deals with the freedom of the press, increasing attempts by the State to curb this freedom and the need to further democratize media. The third segment deals with the concept of public sphere and media as a critical constituent in the process of creating and furthering the public sphere for ensuring representation and voices to citizens towards shaping political power in a democracy. An attempt is made to construct an argument in favor of an expansion of freedom and the role of media in a democracy. Rather than perceiving the expansion and freedom of media with a sense of skepticism, this paper argues that the media should be treated as a powerful tool towards furthering a vibrant participatory democratic process.

(Keywords: media and democracy, communication rights, public sphere, digital media)

1. Introduction

The power of the media in a democracy comes from it being the 'watchdog' of society, the 'fourth estate', supplementing the other three pillars of democracy - the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary - by providing the necessary checks and balances on issues that concern the masses. (Saeed, 2009, p. 67)

This is how the idea of democracy and the free press as an integral part of this process has been conceptualized and articulated by political scientists and the founding fathers of modern democracies. According to Thomas Jefferson, "If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without a free press or a free press without a government, I would prefer the latter" (Choi & James, 2007, p. 23). Freedom of expression in India is guaranteed by the constitution and it is reasonably reflected in the functioning of national and international media. One of the founders of modern India and the first Prime Minister of the country who shaped a number of democratic institutions in the country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also said that he would prefer to face chaos and other related problems arising out of functioning of free and independent press than having a peace and discipline of the coat of enslaved press. In India, the movement for

freedom from British rule injected certain values for democratic institutions and political leadership of the time were cautious enough not to leave any scope for authoritarian tendencies to spring up. However, things are slowly changing in India.

The noble idea of the independent free press is withering away. Mainstream media outlets are becoming town criers, cheerleaders, abettors, apologists and an advance guard of new hounds clearing the way, preparing the ground for totalizing ideology and agenda of the ruling forces. (Kumar, 2017, p. 76)

Ideally, democracy is a structure where individual's dignity is fully respected and maintained; at the same time, collective interests of the community are also protected. The greatest part of modern democracy is the creation of acceptable structure where though the ruling elite has the legitimacy to govern the masses, it provides a platform, although in a limited sense, to every citizen to argue for and attempt to realize her/his interests. It allows individuals to shape the nation-state in unique ways.

India as a nation state may have the most modern model of political governance, but the idea of a full-blown democratic society can't be realized without respect for concepts like equality, liberty and social justice. These

*Visiting Professor, School of Communication and Media Studies, Doon University, Dehradun and Uttarakhand - harshdabhal@gmail.com

**Assistant Professor, School of Communication and Media Studies at Doon University, Dehradun, and Uttarakhand - dema2011@gmail.com