

Expert Studies in Communication and their Implications in India after Independence

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Abstract

It's just been 68 years of independence since then; the media had undergone radical changes following the socio-political need of the country. Also fronting the challenges thrown by the media imperialism (biased in information distribution) has been an important essence of Indian media.

In India, media laws and committees came into existence post-independence marked the end of the glorious struggle of the Indian Press for freedom. Experts' recommendations and commissions appointed promised the beginning of the new era, where the Press can breathe freely. Here, the paper overviews the expert studies in the field of communications in India after independence and the action taken by the government following the recommendations of the committees.

The major challenge that Indian Media has faced is to harmonize among the western influence over information flow, the third world countries info need and its own culture and values. These obligations paved the way for the policy makers to update the existing media laws and frame new one, so that it can comply with the international standards. The process is the outcome of hard core study and analysis of the need by the expert committees.

The paper emphasize on such studies and the implications.

Key Words:

PTI; Press Commissions; Press Council of India; RNI; Prasar Bharti; Working Journalist Act; Chanda Committee; Varghese Committee.

INTRODUCTION

On March 5, 1962 the then Prime Minister of India Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, in a speech delivered on "Freedom of information" said, The mass media which are very useful have an element of danger in them in that they may be distorted for private aim. The rich group (inside) or the rich nation (outside) can flood the country and the world through the mass media with its own view of things which may or may not be correct view. After five decades these words had turned out to be ominously true.

In 1990s, the communication policies and process underwent a drastic change as by this time India had adopted neo-liberal economic policies. The government media bodies like, All India Radio and Doordarshan have been given instruction to generate their own revenue. Till then these agencies were dedicated more towards public welfare.

For achieving a national policy on proper functioning of media organization in a country like India studies are carried out since independence on different media that would help in understanding intricacies involved. Many committees played an important role in providing recommendation with fresh perspectives on programmatic issues. These properly composed and structured committees to carry out a specific initiatives.

From 1947, India's independence, to 1990s India had witnessed a slow but solid growth in the field of media. With establishment of Press Trust of India (PTI) in 1947 India advanced its journey of media distribution. It is also notable that All India Radio had been operating well before Independence. In

1950s, the press Act (1951), Cinematography Act (1952), Registrar of Newspaper Act (1956), United News of India (UNI) came into existence, but the biggest move was introduction of Television in the country. It was September 15, 1959. During 1960s Film and Television Institute of India, Indian Institute of Mass Communication and press council of India were set up. The establishment of press council (1966) was followed by the recommendation of first press commission (1954).

The first Press Commission had some admirable achievements to its credit. It was so because its report led to certain substantial measures towards regulating the newspaper industry. It was following the recommendations of the first Press Commission that the Working Journalists Act was passed and wage boards for the industry were set up. Then the office of the Registrar of Newspapers was created, and also the annual reports on the Press in India published. The Press Council too followed the recommendations of the first Press Commission.

Since the report of first press commission submitted, there have been several studies on various aspects of the Press. One of them was a committee headed by R. R. Diwakar in 1966, which prepared its report on small newspapers. Then there was Administrative reform commission 1967, the enquiry committee of film censorship 1969. The report of Fact Finding Committee on Newspaper Economics came in 1974. In late 70s the second press commission was set up which submitted its recommendations in 1982.

Expert studies on media with recommendations

❖ **Press Laws Enquiry Committee 1948:** This is the first ever committee which came into action soon after independence. The importance of press in India can be understood as India has the rich press history. It came into existence when India was in grip of many challenges. It was set by Indian government under the

chairmanship of Ganga Nath Jha. The committee was set to gather all the information regarding the existing press laws and make recommendation on the laws which needed to be modified.

The committee had following recommendation;

- Repeal of the Foreign Relation Act 1932
 - Before taking action against the press under emergency legislation, provincial government should invariably consult the press advisory committee or similar body.
 - Repeal of Indian states (protection) Act of 1934.
 - Necessary provision should be made in the law to empower courts to order the closing down of press for special periods in case of repeated violation of the laws. So these were the important recommendations of the first press committee in India.
- ❖ **Film enquiry committee:** This was the period when the film industry set itself up as a national industry in the sense of assembling a national market. It was also a major medium that has its impact on society. The committee was headed by S. K. Patil and was set up in 1951 made a comprehensive recommendation on film industry and other related matters was nevertheless an extraordinary achievement, perhaps unparalleled in the history of world cinema

The major recommendations were;

- Censorship had been advocated by the committee.
- It recommended the organization of film council and film production Administration.

- ❖ **First Press Commission** -In September 1952, the first Press Commission was appointed. The chairman of the commission was Justice G.S. Rajadhyaksha. The Commission submitted its report in 1954. It made several important recommendations which helped in constituting a number of institutions and organizing the profession of journalism in a systematic manner. It was the first enquiry of its kind which delved into the working of the press and its report has been a kind of Bible for the Press hitherto.

Major implementations of recommendation of First Press Commission

1. Registrar of Newspaper of India (RNI)

The First press commission recommended the appointment of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI). As a result of this recommendation Registrar of Newspapers for India was established on 1 July 1956 by amending the Press and Registration of Books Act 1867. It is a statutory body of Government of India for newspapers in India.

The office of RNI verifies and regulates the availability of newspapers, registers them, containing detailed information on newspaper. The office also issues entitlement certificates to the newspapers/periodicals for the import of news print and printing machinery and allied materials required by newspapers. It regulates and monitors printing and publication of newspapers based on the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 and

the Registration of Newspapers (Central) Rules, 1956.

The Registrar of Newspapers for India, commonly known as the Press Registrar, is required, inter alia to submit an Annual report to the government by 31st december every year on the status of newspapers. The period for which the annual statements were to be furnished, was changed from the calendar to financial year in 2002. Earlier the Annual Report was compiled on financial year basis.

2. Press Council of India

Press Council is a statutory quasi-judicial authority mandated by the Parliament to preserve the freedom of the press and maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and the news agencies in India. It is an autonomous body with equal quasi-judicial authority over the authorities and the press persons.

The First Press Commission (1954) came across in some section of the Press, instances of **yellow journalism** of one type or another, sensationalism, scurrilous writing-often directed against communities or groups, bias in presentation of news and lack of responsibility in comment, crudeness and vulgarity and personal attacks on individuals. The Commission remarked that "whatever the law relating to the Press may be, there would still be a large quantum of objectionable journalism which, though not falling within the purview of the law, would still require to be checked." It was of the view that the best way of maintaining professional standards of journalism would be to bring into existence a body of people basically connected with the industry whose responsibility it would be to adjudicate on doubtful points and to censure any one guilty of infraction of the code of journalistic ethics.

Once Mahatma Gandhi said, " The sole aim of journalist should be

service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as unchained torrent of water submerges the whole country side and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within." The basic concept of self-regulation of the press was founded in this statement.

While defending Press freedom, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru warning of the danger its irresponsible exercise entails stressed, "If there is no responsibility and no obligation attached to it, freedom gradually withers away. This is true of a nation's freedom and it applies as much to the Press as to any other group, organization or individual."

The Commission recommended the setting up of a Press Council. Among the objectives visualized for the Council were: to safeguard the freedom of the press, to ensure on the part of the Press the maintenance of High standards of public taste and to foster due sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to encourage the growth of sense of responsibility and public service among all those engaged in the profession of journalism."

The Press Council of India was first constituted on 4th July, 1966 as an autonomous, statutory, quasi-judicial body, with **Shri Justice J R Mudholkar**, then a Judge of the Supreme Court, as Chairman. The Press Council Act, 1965, listed the following functions of the Council in furtherance of its objects.

The Act of 1965 provided that the Council shall consist of a Chairman and 25 other members. Of the 25 members, 3 were to represent the two houses of Parliament, 13 were to be from amongst the working journalists, of which not less than 6 were to be editors who did not own or carry on the

business of management of newspapers and the rest were to be the persons having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of education and science, law, literature and culture. By an amendment of the Act in 1970, the membership of the Council was raised by one to provide a seat for persons managing the news agencies.

The Chairman under the Act on 1965 was to be nominated by the Chief Justice of India. Of the three Members of Parliament, two representing Lok Sabha was to be nominated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and one representing Rajya Sabha,. The remaining 22 members were to be selected by a three-man Selection Committee comprising the Chief Justice of India, Chairman of the Press Council and a nominee of the President of India. The Chairman and the members were to hold office for a period of three years provided that no member could hold office for a period exceeding six years in the aggregate.

PRESS COUNCIL OF 1979

A fresh legislation providing for the establishment of the Council was enacted in 1978 and the institution came to be reviewed in the year 1979 with the very same object of preserving the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of Press in India.

The present Council is a body corporate having perpetual succession. It consists of a Chairman and 28 other members. Of the 28 members, 13 represent the working journalists. Of who 6 are to be editors of newspapers and remaining 7 are to be working journalists other than editors. 6 are to be from among persons who own or carry on the business of management of newspapers. One is to be from among the persons who manage news agencies. Three are to be persons having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of education and science, law and literature and culture. The remaining five are to Members

of Parliament: three from Lok Sabha, and two from Rajya Sabha.

The new Act provides for selection of the Chairman by a Committee consisting of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the Speaker of Lok Sabha and a person elected by the members of the Council. The twenty representatives of the Press are nominated by the associations of aforesaid categories of the newspapers and news agencies notified for the purpose by the Council in the each category. One member each is nominated by the University Grants Commission, the Bar Council of India and the Sahitya Academy. Of the five Members of Parliament, three are nominated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and two by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The term of the Chairman and the members of the Council are three years. A retiring member is eligible for re-nomination for not more than one term.

Major recommendations which were implemented

- Price-page schedule should be introduced and was accepted in 1956.
- For maintaining a cordial relationship between the government and the Press, a Press Consultative committee should be constituted. It was accepted and a Press Consultative Committee was constituted on 22nd September 1962.
- Working Journalists Act should be implemented and the government implemented this and in 1955 the working journalist and other newspaper employees (conditions of services).
- It recommended establishment of a fact-finding Committee to evaluate the financial position of the newspapers and news agencies. A Fact Finding Committee was set up on 14th April 1972. It submitted its report on 14th January 1975.
- For protecting the main principle of the freedom of the press and to help

the newspapers against monopolistic tendencies, a Newspaper Financial Corporation should be constituted was accepted in principle and on 4th December 1970, a Bill was also presented in the Lok Sabha, but it lapsed.

❖ **Ford foundation:** This committee was setup in 1963 and was sponsored by Mass communication study team..The terms of reference of the Committee was--

- to ascertain all the elements of the cost of production (including distribution to the reader) of the daily newspapers; and the relative magnitude of these elements in the different categories of newspapers;
- to ascertain all the different elements of the total revenue earned by the newspapers; and the relative magnitude of these elements in the different categories of newspapers;
- to study, under both the above items, the trends during the past few years and forecast, to the extent possible, the normal changes likely to occur in the next year or two;
- to evolve norms for different elements of expenditure from the point of view of reasonableness combined with efficiency and examine the prevailing levels of expenditure with reference to such norms; and
- on the basis of the above studies to record its findings in regard to the effect of the restriction of news-print supplies to different categories on newspapers and the fair prices to be charged by newspapers of different categories.

❖ **Five year plan publicity:** It was set up in the year 1964 under the chairmanship of **Amarnath Vidyalkar**. Also known as the **Vidyalkar committee** studied the effect of planned publicity in the country. The major recommendation were

- The committee advised numbers of measures to improve and effectively utilise publicity and audio-visuals material.
- Another major recommendation was the need of coordination between different media organization, Information and Broadcasting, Central and the states.

❖ **The small newspaper Committee:** The committee was set up in 1965 under the chairmanship of **R.R. Diwakar** as Chairman to make an investigation into the difficulties and problems facing small newspapers. The terms of reference of the Committee are to enquire into the present conditions of small newspapers and periodicals in the country and to make recommendations. The major recommendation was as follow:

- The Committee had recommended that the limit should be raised to 20,000 in the case of dailies and 15,000 in the case of periodicals. This recommendation was been implemented by the government to protect the right and freedom of small newspaper organisation.

❖ **CHANDA Committee:** It was a committee on Information and Broadcasting as headed by Ashok Chandra in the year 1966. It evaluated the work of various media

organization working under I&B ministry and has made 219 recommendation on radio and television. The then government accepted some 198 recommendation out of the total. It examined the role of media and the policies they made and the program produced by them. Major recommendation are as follow:

- Recommended the separation of television from radio and requested the formation of an independent television corporation
- The committee recommended a corporate financial accounting system for AIR its recruitment and financial activity
- Separate recommendation for Press information Bureau and publicity.
- Chanda Committee endorsed this view and expressed its dissatisfaction with the place given to the development of mass communication in India.

❖ **Administrative reform commission 1967:** It is known for the study on the relationship between administration and Press. It is carried out under leadership of K. Sanathanam, on behalf of the administrative Reform commission.

❖ **The enquiry committee of film censorship 1969:** Popularly known as Khosala Committee studied the depth and the effect of the film on the people in the context of changing need of the society.

- It examined the work of existing laws regarding censorship
- Machinery and procedures for fee certification on Indian and foreign

cinematograph being displayed for public exhibition.

- ❖ **Fact finding committee 1975: Established under the chairmanship of Babatosh Datta.** It examined the economics, capital, investment, profitability, revenue and the cost of daily newspaper and other allied materials related.
- ❖ **Varghese committee 1978:** The Janta Government had appointed a Working Group on the autonomy of AIR and Doordarshan in August 1977. The chairman of this committee was B.G. Varghese. The committee submitted its report on February 24, 1978. This committee's main recommendation was "formation of AkashBharti or the National Broadcasting Trust, both for the AIR and Doordarshan. The committee noted that the people want an independent corporation because, the executive, abetted by a captive parliament, shamelessly misused the Broadcasting during emergency and this must be prevented for all times. The bill proposed the "Autonomous Corporation known as PrasarBharti for both AIR and Doordarshan.

❖ **Second press commission**

The period since the first Press Commission gave its report in 1954, has seen radical changes affecting the press. With the intensification of political conflict in India, the press came under attack from authority whose ideological premises were anything but libertarian. The Emergency and press censorship left the press in a battered shape. Second Press Commission saw the role of the press in a developing country as being 'neither that of an adversary nor an ally of the government'. It recommended newspapers should refrain from sensational presentation of news on outbreak of communal disturbance. Press Council should continue should be given powers to deny accreditation. Inclusion of 'respect for

privacy' in the Press Council Act of 1978. Editor take the responsibility of all matter published in newspaper, including the advertisements. Establishment of Newspaper Development Corporation, a body to promote the development of the press.

Major recommendations:

- Specific legal provisions to prevent foreign ownership in any form either loan.
- Advertisements rates must be published each year and on every revision.
- A newspaper should publish its profit and loss account with separate information about foreign and Indian sources.
- Program implemented are as follow:
- Statutory press council to look after editorial independence and development of press protecting it from external pressure.

❖ **Media advisory committee 1980:** This was the committee constituted by government in the to make recommendation from time to time regarding the restructuring of the various media organization under the ministry of Information and the Broadcasting.

❖ **Major recommendation are as follow:**

- Grant of pension to staffs artist of AIR and Doordarshan
- News policy of Broadcast media and introduction of color television.
- Structural change in the different media organization under the ministry.
- Media to be more participatory and intercommunicative. So that it could enrich the cultural identity.
- Co-operations between central and state media to maximize the

impact of communication support for developments and efforts.

- Major recommendation excepted are as follow:
 - Grant of pension to staffs artist of AIR and Doordarshan
 - News policy of Broadcast media and introduction of color television.
 - Proposal of introduction of color TV took in the account on the advice of the committee.
- ❖ **Joshi committee 1985:** PC Joshi Committee in 1982, whose main term of reference was to prepare a software plan for Doordarshan. But this group also emphasized on the absence of “Functional Freedom” in PrasarBharti. This committee said that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should be reorganized and a separate board, in which only people with professional experience should get entry.
- So, slowly a consensus developed for a Television Authority of India -as a public trust and under the control of the parliament and officed with only experienced professionals
- ❖ **Sengupta committee 1990:** It recommended publication of Dordarshan in the four major metros of the country.
- ❖ **Prasarbharti act 1990:** It can be termed as major breakthrough and enlarged the meaning of Broadcasting.

- Program published should safeguard the citizen’s right and presenting a fair and the balanced flow of information.
- Paying special attention to the field of education and spread of literacy, program related to agriculture, health and education.
- Promoting program related to upliftmen of women’s status,

appropriate programs keeping in view the special needs of youth.

- Promoting research and development activities in order to ensure that radio and TV technology are constantly updated.

Conclusion

This is media who plays a vital role in providing stability to the society for a strong base as it can focus attention. Media influence has grown exponentially and has witnessed many fruitful changes in its policies and regulations since independence. Various studies enable policymakers to frame the laws which can empower media and its consumers. The committees analyzed the need and accordingly proposed the recommendations. Many of the recommendation were accepted by the government and are turned into acts. From the establishment of press trust of India (1947) to Standards of Quality of Service (Digital Addressable Cable TV Systems) (Amendment) Regulations, 2014, Indian media has achieved several milestones in serving the nation and humanity. Thanks to the different expert committees appointed for framing recommendations for betterment of the press.

But this is just one side of the story and other still awaits answer of question; **media is for whom and for what!** And there is a need to have an honest answer to the question. A suitable structure can be formed to achieve the objective and to refrain confusion that half-truths creates in mind. It is so because media institutions have been blamed of being biased now and then. It is important to understand that audience as was traditionally believed is no more weak and passive, and is rather empowered and more active. Also technology is acting as a backbone and is enhancing the social participation. We need many more studies regarding media that would help the audience to understand the fruitful use of it. Hope, we would see few more studies for betterment of media

messages and management in near future. The message of media must be unbiased, and then only it (media) justifies its allegory of being forth estate of the society.

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