1

ELECTIONS AND IMPACT
OF MASS MEDIA

Unit Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

1. Learners will be able analyse the significance of information and mass media in the shaping of public opinion and behaviour.

2. Learners will be able to understand electoral processes and its significance in a healthy democracy.

3. Learners will be able to establish a correlation between mass media functions and electoral outcomes.

1.1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS MASS MEDIA?

Mass communication refers to the process of sending (one-way) or exchanging (two-way) information within a large group of people. Mediums that facilitate the dissemination of information to the masses are called mass media. For example, public service announcements about COVID-19 vaccination are a form of mass communication done through the mass mediums of television, radio, etc. Mass media is used for news, education, entertainment, business, and promotion. Mass media is broadly classified into two categories:

1. **Traditional Media**: Traditional media includes all mediums that existed before the internet such as print, outdoor, and broadcast media.

   - **Print Media** is one of the oldest forms of mass media. It includes mass communication done through printed publications such as newspapers, magazines, books, and journals. The circulation of print media can be roughly estimated through subscriptions or sales. Newspapers, magazines, and books are often passed along and hence, a media house cannot accurately measure the readership of the publication.

   - **Outdoor Media** is communication done outside of the home. It includes billboards, wall paintings, danglers, and posters seen while 'on the go'. Outdoor media is generally used to create mass awareness due to its high visibility in public spaces. However, it is difficult to measure the audience of outdoor media.

   - **Broadcast Media** refers to mediums that send information through electronic transmission of signals. Television and radio are examples of broadcast media.

2. **New Media**: New media refers to computational media that relies on digital means to share information. From a website or email to mobile phones and streaming apps, any internet-related form of communication can be considered new media. Unlike traditional media, the audience can be measured accurately.

1.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF MASS MEDIA

1. **Wide Reach**: Mass media's most important characteristic is its audiences are relatively large. For example, according to the Press Information Bureau, listenership of All India Radio streams witnessed a rise from 17 million in February 2022 to 19 million in March 2022. The cumulative listenership for the first quarter of 2022 stood at 56 million.

2. **Heterogeneous Audience**: The audiences of mass media are not only large in number but also heterogeneous and anonymous in nature. Its audiences may belong to different ages, religions, sections, and linguistic groups. For example, IPL 2023 broadcasted on the Star India Network, provides coverage in eight languages: Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, and Kannada.

3. **Scattered and Unknown Audience**: Mass media audiences are scattered in a vast geographical area, even in the whole world. Usually, the audiences are personally unknown to the communicator. Hence, its audiences are far away from the source of information. For example, Netflix is available for streaming in more than 190 countries around the globe.

4. **Rapid and Continuous Dissemination**: Mass media facilitates speedy and continuous dissemination of the message. Various media of mass communication like radio and television transmit messages instantly. Numerous copies of films, newspapers, books, and magazines can be distributed across vast geographical areas within a few days. Moreover, modern mass communication occurs continuously where messages are sent on a schedule.

5. **Direct and Indirect Feedback**: In earlier times, there was no direct feedback from the audience to the media houses. The media companies gauged the feedback through the number of people reading, watching, or listening to the media content. Today, it is possible to get direct feedback from the audience through audience votes for Reality TV shows, social media engagement and trends, letters to editors, website traffic, number of clicks on advertisements, etc.

6. **Social Connectivity**: Forms of social media have facilitated social connectivity beyond geographical borders. On a personal level, social media such as Facebook and Instagram allow you to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, develop your interests, and be entertained. Mediums like LinkedIn help people to professionally network with prospective employers and employees.

7. **Technology and Innovation**: Media is evolving with every technological advancement. Today, it is possible to get live news broadcasts, order products online, share live location updates, study/work from home, etc. Hence, the nature of mass media is ever-changing due to technological innovation.

8. **Automation**: Today it is possible to automate the process of mass communication through the application of artificial intelligence. For example, brands often use chatbots to automate the process of online customer service to reduce to cost earmarked for human resources.

9. **Media Convergence**: To reach a large audience with different media preferences, communicators often use a combination of mass mediums, often called a media mix. This helps in disseminating information to all subgroups of the target audience. For example, a media mix of TV, radio, social media and outdoor media is used for political campaigns to ensure maximum reach in the target audience.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

1. **What is mass media? Explain the characteristics of mass media.**

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1.3 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

The word democracy comes from the Greek words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power. Thus, democracy means the rule of the people. World War was followed by decolonisation, and most of the newly independent states including India adopted democratic constitutions. India emerged as the world's largest democracy and continues to be so. The central objective of democracy is to enable every person to have a say in deciding about the greater collective social worth. The characteristics of democracy include:

1. **Sovereignty with People**: In a democracy, the supreme power is in the hands of the people and people use their power through their representatives who are elected by them.

2. **Faith in the Rationality of Man**: Democracy believes in the rationality of man and believes that man can solve his problem with the help of his intellect.

3. **Liberty**: Liberty is very necessary for the overall growth of man. In a democracy, everybody is free within society from control or oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behaviour, or political views.

4. **Equality**: Equality and liberty are complementary to each other. There is no discrimination on basis of caste, colour, religion, sex, etc. Everyone is given equal opportunities according to one's capabilities to raise his status.

5. **Fraternity**: The principle of fraternity is one of the touchstones of democracy. In the Indian context, fraternity emerged during the process of anti-colonial struggle as an associated process of nation-building. While drafting India's Constitution, Ambedkar laid great stress on fraternity. According to Ambedkar, "Fraternity is a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians that gives unity and solidarity to social life."

6. **Provision of Fundamental Rights**: Fundamental rights have a special place in a democracy. Included in the Indian constitution, fundamental rights are essential for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of citizens of India. The six fundamental rights include the Right to Equality, the Right to Freedom, the Right against Exploitation, the Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights and the Right to Constitutional Remedies.

7. **Rule of Majority**: Democracy means the rule of the majority. After a fixed time, elections are held, and any party which achieves a majority, rules for a fixed time. But the majority also keeps in mind the interests of the minority.

8. **Rule of Law**: In a liberal democracy, there is a rule of law. The administration is run not according to the wishes of the rulers, but

rather according to the law and the man is punished only for the violation of the law. Law is also the guardian of the freedom of people.

9. **Respect for Public Opinion**: Democracy is based on public opinion. The People express public opinion by different means. Therefore, public opinion is respected in a democracy. People are given proper opportunities to express their public opinion.

10. **Independent and Impartial Judiciary**: This is an important element of democracy. Judiciary protects the civil rights and liberties. An independent judiciary protects the rule of law and gives correct judgment to the people.

1.4 PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

Mentioning the four pillars of democracy - the Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and the Media, Former Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu said that each pillar must act within its domain but not lose sight of the larger picture. "The strength of a democracy depends upon the strength of each pillar and the way pillars complement each other. Any shaky pillar weakens the democratic structure", he said. The Legislature is responsible for making and adopting laws in the country. Parliament is a legislative body. The Executive is responsible for the implementation of the laws in the country. Prime Minister's Cabinet and Government Ministries are executive bodies. The Judiciary is responsible for the interpretation and application of the laws. By that, the Judiciary keeps the other three pillars in check and prevents misuse of power. Courts are judiciary bodies. Media is responsible for keeping the public informed about the activities of the other three pillars. It represents the eyes and ears of the general public.

The term Media: Fourth Pillar of Democracy is coined by Thomas Carlyle. On one hand, the merit of the democratic system is that it gives freedom of expression and space is given to each individual. Whereas media is used to create awareness amongst the people about various social, political and economic activities of the nation. Media is considered as a watch dog of democracy as freedom of news media particularly plays a key role in maintaining transparency in the functioning of the government.

1.5 FUNCTIONS OF MASS MEDIA

1. **Education**: Today, media plays an effective and essential role in any formal or informal teaching-learning process. Books are one of the oldest methods of mass communication. Learners can access information through journals, and online research forums, digital books with a single click. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the education sector survived the crisis by switching to the study-from-home option engendered by media technology. Present day functioning of schools has been very much influenced by the media, especially by electronic media after the globalisation of economy and culture. Distance learning is also an outcome of media technology

being used to facilitate access to educational resources for learners who are geographically dispersed.

2. **Socialization**: The need to socialize has seen people invent various channels of communication. Technological advancements have transformed the world into an interconnected global village bypassing geographical boundaries. Media aids the process of socialization media which shapes our behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. Media provides a platform to express our views and consolidate public opinion.

3. **Mobilisation**: Mass media has changed traditional mobilization structures, including how members of movements are recruited, how communication takes place, how members interact, and what type of protest activities members engage in. Media has increased the speed and interactivity of communication and has transformed the landscape of social movements. Virtual protest can influence institutional politics by creating symbolic change, highlighting economic disparities, identifying targets of blame, and keeping the issues in the news and in the broader political conversation. Social media serves as a tactical tool (a means to disseminate information, coordinate action, and publicize the cause) as well as an emotional conduit (a place to develop identity, share emotions, and symbolically construct a sense of togetherness among activists).

4. **Entertainment**: The other important function of mass media is entertainment. Mass media fulfil this function by providing amusement and assisting in reducing tension to a large degree. Newspaper and magazines, radio, television and online medium offer stories, films, serials, and comics to entertain their audience. Sports, news, film review, and columns on art and fashion are other instances. It makes the audience's recreational and leisure time more enjoyable. But these days, media have comprised information and education in entertainment programs. The fusion of entertainment and information is called infotainment. Similarly, the inclusion of education in entertainment programs is regarded as edutainment.

5. **Business Promotion**: Mass media has been used by brands to promote their products and influence the purchasing behaviour of people. Brands often develop media strategies to create the need for a new product in the market. Advertising campaigns run on mass media for a specific duration with a predetermined frequency to aid brand awareness and recall. With the advent of digital media, these companies can now run their businesses 24x7 by using e-commerce websites. Media has played a key role in promoting consumer culture. Television and radio commercials, billboards on highways, social media marketing, etc are forms of business promotion done using mass media.

6. **Diversion**: In addition to the task-specific uses of media, people resort to mass mediums to escape the mundanity or negativity of their day-to-day lives. People read lighter-themed magazines, watch fantasy films, and listen to music not just to be entertained but also to unwind.

7. **Surveillance**: Surveillance denotes observation. The function of mass media is to observe society closely and continuously and warn about threatening actions to the public that is likely to happen in future in order to decrease the possible loss. Likewise, mass media also informs the public of prevalent social perils and discourage malpractices in society. Surveillance occurs when the media inform us about threats from hurricanes, erupting volcanoes, depressed economic conditions, increasing inflation or military attack. These warnings can be about immediate threats or chronic threats. Similarly, news of increasing deforestation, drug abuse, human trafficking, etc. are also disseminated to caution the people.

8. **Political Awareness**: As media acts as a gatekeeper of information, the majority of its content is centred on politics in our society. For example, political leaders and social activists advocate for better living conditions during panel discussions on television. Similarly, journalists expose corruption, show up developments, and condemn or praise political activities considering their merits. Thus, mass media assume a key role in setting the agenda for the entire political system and policymaking by forming public opinion on various issues. This process is called the agenda-setting function. It results from mass media highlighting some issues and avoiding others. There are instances in which business tycoons and political leaders misuse this agenda-setting ability of the media to keep their vested interests.

9. **Global Archive and Cultural Transmission**: Mass media acts as a bridge between our past and present. It reports day-to-day affairs which will become the history of tomorrow. The best records of modern history are newspapers, films and documentaries of yesteryears. We get our cultural traditions from history and we follow the best of them. Media plays a vital role in the transmission of culture and the construction of social identity. It focuses on the different aspects of our culture. Media through factual discourse and fictional narratives can create and/or promote languages, fashion trends, music, food, sports, etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

1. **Why is the media called the watchdog of society in a democracy? What is the function of media as the fourth estate?**

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1.6 ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

Elections are the nuts and bolts of democracy. Democracy and elections are two faces of the same coin. India is a democratic country with a parliamentary form of government, and in its heart lies the commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections. India being the largest democracy has a very well-established electoral system. The principle of free and fair elections is an essential postulate of democracy, which in turn is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India. The fundamental function of democracy consists of a government of the majority, which is formed by contesting free and fair elections, giving people their right to vote and respecting their basic rights as citizens and establishing equality before the law.

The Election Commission of India is a self-ruling established institution liable for regulating political activities in India at the national, state and local levels. Article 324 of the Constitution provides the body the power of superintendence, direction, and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of the president of India, and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission. The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, State Legislative Councils and the offices of the President and Vice President of the country. The Election Commission operates under the authority of the Constitution per Article 324 and subsequently enacted the Representation of the People Act. The commission has the powers under the Constitution, to act in an appropriate manner when the enacted laws make insufficient provisions to deal with a given situation in the conduct of an election. It is a permanent constitutional body. Election Commission is among a couple of establishments which work alongside the nation's higher legal executive, the Union Public Service Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

1.7 TYPES OF ELECTION

1. **Presidential Elections**: All elected Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), elect the President of India. The nomination of a candidate for election to the office of the President must be subscribed by at least 50 electors as proposers and 50 electors as seconders. The election is held by means of a secret ballot under the single transferable vote system. The winner of the Presidential election is not the person who gets the most votes, but the person who gets more votes than a certain quota. The quota is decided by adding up the votes polled for each candidate, dividing the sum by 2 and adding '1' to the quotient.

2. **General elections (Lok Sabha)**: Members of the Lok Sabha or Lower House of the parliament are elected directly by voting, by the citizens of India. The elections are held every 5 years, where every adult eligible voter, irrespective of his/her social status, religion, caste, race etc, from India, can vote from their concerned

constituency. Candidates who win the Lok Sabha elections are Members of Parliament and hold their seats for a period of 5 years. The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552. This includes 530 members from the states, up to 20 members from the Union Territories and two Anglo-Indian community members nominated by the President. Any party needs at least 272 MPs to hold a claim to form the central government. The leader of that party/alliance then takes oath as the Prime Minister.

3. **Rajya Sabha Elections**: Candidates of the Rajya Sabha, or the Upper House of the parliament are not elected directly by the citizens of India. The members are rather elected by the candidates who have already won the Lok Sabha Elections or who were nominated by the President of India. Rajya Sabha cannot have more than 250 members according to the Constitution of India. Twelve members, who have earned distinction in the fields of literature, art, science and social service, are nominated by the President. Each Member of the Parliament in Rajya Sabha gets a tenure of six years but one-third of its members retire after every two years. Rajya Sabha is the second-level review body when a bill has to be converted into an act, in the country. The Indian constitution, however, places some restrictions on the Rajya Sabha, making it less powerful than the Lok Sabha, in some areas.

4. **State Assembly Elections (Vidhan Sabha)**: Members of State Legislative Assemblies are also elected directly by voting. Every adult citizen of India can exercise their right to vote, from their concerned constituency. Candidates who win the State Legislative Assembly Elections are termed as 'Member of Legislative Assembly'. The maximum strength is fixed at 500 and minimum strength at 60. The governor can nominate one member from Anglo-Indian community if, in his opinion, the community is not adequately represented in the House. The elected candidates hold their seats for five years. The leader of the party or the alliance, which secures more than 50% of seats, takes oath as the Chief Minister of the state.

5. **Legislative Council Elections (Vidhan Parishad):** The composition of the legislative council is partly through an indirect election, partly through special constituencies and partly by nomination. The Councils are meant to play the role of the Rajya Sabha in the states and hence the composition, and process of the election are quite different from that of the state assembly. The councils consist of members elected through five different constituencies through a process of a single transferable vote (STV) system. The size of the State Legislative Council cannot be more than one-third of the membership of the State Legislative Assembly. However, its size cannot be less than 40 members. The actual strength of a council is fixed by the parliament.: One-third are elected by the members of local bodies such as municipalities, Gram panchayats, Panchayat samiti and district councils. One-third are elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State from among the persons who are not members of the State Legislative Assembly. One-sixth are

nominated by the governor from persons having knowledge or practical experience in fields such as literature, science, arts, the cooperative movement and social service. One-twelfth are elected by persons who are graduates of three years' standing residing in that state. One-twelfth are elected by persons engaged for at least three years in teaching in educational institutions within the state not lower than secondary schools, including colleges and universities.

6. **Gram Panchayat Elections**: A gram panchayat or village panchayat is the only grassroot level of panchayat raj institutions (PRIs). It is the formalised local self-governance system in India at the village or small-town level and has a sarpanch as its elected head. India has about 250,000-gram panchayats. The gram panchayat is divided into wards, where a Ward Member or Commissioner also referred to as a Panch or Panchayat Member, represents each ward. He is directly elected by the villagers. The panchayat is chaired by the president of the village, known as a Sarpanch. The term of the elected representatives is five years. The gram panchayat also has a Secretary, who is a non-elected representative, appointed by the state government, to oversee Panchayat activities.

7. **Panchayat Samiti Elections**: Panchayat Samiti, also called Block Development Councils and Taluka panchayat, are rural local governments (Panchayats) at the intermediate level in Panchayat Raj institutions (PRI). Operating at the Tehsil level, the Panchayat Samiti is a link between the gram panchayat (village council) and the zila parishad (district board). A Panchayat Samiti is comprised of elected members, like the block development officer, members of the state's legislative assembly, members of parliament belonging to that area, otherwise unrepresented groups (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women), associate members (such as a farmer, a representative of the cooperative societies and one from the agricultural marketing services sector) and the elected members of that Panchayat block (tehsil) on the Zila Parishad (district board). The Samiti is elected for five years and is headed by a chairman and deputy chairman elected by the members of the Panchayat Samiti.

8. **Zila Panchayat Elections**: The Zila Panchayat or District Council or Zila Parishad or District Panchayat, is the third tier of the Panchayati Raj system. The members of the State Legislature and the members of the Parliament of India are members of the Zila Parishad. Members of the Zila Parishad, which has minimum of 50 and maximum of 75 members, are elected from the district when Indian adults exercise their right to vote. The elected members have a term of five years. These councillors are chosen by direct election from electoral divisions in the district. The Parishad is headed by a president and a vice president. The chief executive officer, who is an IAS officer or senior state service officer, heads the administrative setup of the Zila Parishad. His main job is to supervise the divisions of the parishad and is assisted by deputy CEOs and other officials at district- and block-level officers.

1.8 INFORMATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Information is one of the key constituents of media. The flow of information, in addition to filtering and manipulation, shapes public opinion and social behaviour. Information is a potent force which can change the course of any activity. Public opinion is one of the most frequently evoked terms in politics. At the most basic level, public opinion represents people's collective preferences on matters related to government and politics. However, public opinion is a complex phenomenon, and scholars have developed a variety of interpretations of what public opinion means. One perspective holds that individual opinions matter; therefore, the opinions of the majority should be weighed more heavily than the opinions of the minority when leaders make decisions. A contrasting view maintains that public opinion is controlled by organized groups, government leaders, and media elites. The opinions of those in positions of power or who have access to those in power carry the most weight.

Public opinion is often made concrete through questions asked at polls. Politicians routinely cite public opinion polls to justify their support of or opposition to public policies. Candidates use public opinion strategically to establish themselves as front-runners or underdogs in campaigns. Interest groups and political parties use public opinion polls to promote their causes. The mass media incorporate reports of public opinion into a news story about government and politics.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN DEMOCRACY

Public opinion is, in fact, recognized as an important force in statecraft. In countries ruled by dictatorships, every effort is made to keep the public in line by allowing only one point of view to be heard. No free flow of information is permitted. In a democracy, it is an accepted idea that the public which is called upon to make important decisions at the ballot box must be kept informed of popular issues. It is also an important principle of a democratic governmental system that public policies are decided upon by the people. The people are the source of power. Hence, their opinions should mould the actions of the government. Mass media works as a medium between the government and the public. Its function is to provide the people with information for them to form an opinion based on the piece of information.

The successful life of a democratic government operating under these principles justifies our faith in the people's good judgment. Once the public's views on public issues are known and acted upon, the government can be improved rather than damaged. It is often said that only those who distrust the public and the soundness of its judgment need fear an expression of its views.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

1.   How is the public opinion reflected in democracy through elections?

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1.10 CIVIL SOCIETY AND REGULATORY BODIES

The term 'civil society' can be traced back to the works of classical Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero. As a matter of fact, Aristotle is credited with the very first usage of the term. The term, which at that period of time was taken, as synonymous to political institutions, has developed a completely opposite meaning in today's discourse and is referred to, as an autonomous body, distinct from the state. The modern idea of civil society is a domain, where the association of citizens takes place in accordance with their interests, desires, and wishes. Reflections of this changed school of thought is based on the third sector of society, distinct from government and business.

The World Bank has adopted a definition of civil society that was developed by a number of leading research centers, "the term civil society refers to a wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations. Civil society organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations."

A civil society ecosystem usually includes within its ambit:

1.   NGOs, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations that have an organized structure or activity and are typically registered entities and groups.

2.   Online groups like social media communities with activities that can be organized, but may not necessarily have physical, legal, or financial structures.

3.   Social movements of collective action, which can be online or physical.

4.   Religious leaders, faith communities, and faith-based organizations.

5.   Labour unions and labour organizations representing workers.

6.   Social entrepreneurs employ innovative approaches for positive social and environmental outcomes.

7.   Grassroots associations and activities at the local level.

8.   Cooperatives owned and democratically controlled by the members.

India has a long tradition of civil society activities and movements going on for centuries. The roots of civil society in India can be traced to the Vedic times. Various religions in India stress behaviour that is ultimately beneficial to society and mankind. In the 19th century, the popular mobilization vis-à-vis CSOs took place, which saw the emergence of various social groups like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, and Ramakrishna Mission, which were behind different reform movements in India. Active participation of various NGOs and voluntary organizations was witnessed during India's struggle for freedom. The voluntary sector gained momentum under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He mobilized the masses and created a space for civil society, which successfully carried out the movements like Satyagraha (truth and non-violence), non-cooperation, and civil disobedience. His school of thought continued to inspire people even after independence, reminiscences that can be seen in movements like Chipko movements led by Sunder Lal Bahuguna or more recently anti-corruption protests by Anna Hazare, social audit movement by the rural workers and others.

After independence, the union government set up Central Social Welfare Board, and began the Community Development Programme, and National Extension Service. These efforts were basically to involve and increase people's participation in social welfare developmental programmes. After the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India in 1958, various farmers and their cooperative societies came up in good numbers and gave a fillip to networking in civil society organizations. The incidences of droughts, famines, and engagement in wars in the sixties gave a further boost to voluntary action in the country. In the 1970s and 1980s, the number of CSOs, especially, NGO's grew in the areas of poverty alleviation, development and growth, access to education, empowerment of the poor, protection of civil liberties etc. and were recognized, as crucial partners in the development of the state.

With LPG in the nineties, the role of NGOs increased. As international organizations like World Bank and IMF giving aid to developing nations showed their inclination to work with non-state actors, the number and significance of NGOs increased. The dawn of the 21st century saw civil society in India undertaking a major initiative to the enactment of the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005.

1.11 ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

1.   **Policy Advocacy**: CSOs are engaged in policy dialogues with the government in areas of poverty alleviation and empowerment of the disadvantaged sections. These organizations help the government not only frame the policies in these areas but also help policy execution

and policy monitoring and review. Save the Children India is an NGO that works towards the restoration of the rights of children.

2. **Safeguard People's Well-being**: The Association for Protection of Democratic Rights helps provide legal aid to those who have no access to courts of law. Usually, such types of CSOs enable legal services and protect the citizens against repressive attitudes.

3. **Mobilization of the Citizens and Resources**: These organizations involve communities in development works by engaging them in planning and designing the same. This even helps the government to backtrack some of its policies that are not people-friendly. They have used community resources to undertake initiatives like building community infrastructure, houses, and toilets, and in providing basic services like water, electricity etc.

4. **Active Partners in Development**: NGOs like Asha, and Pratham are actively involved in providing education to the children in rural areas and slums in the country. NGOs like Rural Health Care Foundation is providing health care services to people in rural and remote areas.

1.12 CIVIL SOCIETY AND REGULATORY BODIES

The Federal Income Tax authorities govern all three forms of Non-Profit Organisations (trust, society, and Section 8 Company) for the purpose of tax exemption and deductions. In order to enjoy certain tax benefits, NPOs must register with the Income Tax Department. At the primary level of registration, responsible state agencies are the Charity Commissioner (for trusts), the Registrar of Societies (for societies), and the Registrar of Companies (for both for-profit and non-profit companies). Additionally, the Ministry of Home Affairs regulates all three NPO forms if they receive foreign contributions. An NPO seeking to receive funds from any foreign source must apply to the Ministry under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) 2010. The organization may either apply for one-time prior permission to receive funds from a single foreign source or register for a five-year permit to receive unlimited foreign contributions from several foreign sources. Registration is generally only granted to organizations that have been active for at least three years.

The government regulates the internal affairs of a civil society organization (CSO). the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) states that the assets of an association whose Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration has been cancelled shall be managed by the Additional Chief Secretary or Principal Secretary (Home) of the concerned State Government or Union Territory. Furthermore, MHA has launched an Online Analytical Tool to keep a close eye on foreign-funded NGOs. MHA has also put some organisations on a watch list, suspended or de-registered organizations, authorized Enforcement Department-led raids on CSO offices and frozen the bank accounts of some organisations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

1.   **What is the role of civil society in public welfare?**

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1.13 SUMMARY

The key tenet of liberal democracy is the separation of powers into the various independent branches of government, usually in the form of the legislature that makes the laws, a judiciary that interprets and applies the law and an executive that carries out the administration and operations of governing. Societies in the past were relatively small and citizens were able to engage face-to-face or via handwritten messages in their deliberation and decision-making process. As populations grew, larger participation in a democracy required mediation, i.e. communication is now mediated. The earliest mass media was the newspaper, followed by the radio and television, and today, the internet. Because of its emerging function as a watchdog that monitors the running of the nation by holding those in power accountable, the media is regarded as the fourth estate, supplementing the three branches of government by providing checks and balances. The media also plays a more basic role as a provider of information necessary for rational debate. A healthy functioning democracy is predicated on the electorate making informed choices and this in turn rests on the quality of information that they receive. The media, as an institution, has for a long time enjoyed the position as a trusted primary source of news and information. Due to the enlarging population, citizens participate directly in the democratic process or support it through civil society organisations. This led to the representational form of democracy where representatives speak and act on behalf of individuals. The media, in this environment, has the role of being a voice of the people to those in government.

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2

ELECTION CAMPAIGNING AND POLITICAL MARKETING

Unit Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Propaganda and Election Manifesto

2.2 Public Relations Campaign

2.3 Advertising Campaigns (After 1984)

2.4 Conclusion

2.5 References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

1. Learners will be able to analyse the use of mass media in political campaigning.

2. Learners will be able to understand strategic political communication and the steps of an effective political campaign.

3. Learners will be able to establish a correlation between political marketing and election outcome.

2.1 PROPAGANDA AND ELECTION MANIFESTO

A manifesto is generally defined as a published declaration of the intentions, motives or views of an individual, group, political party or government whosoever issues it. A manifesto usually comprises a previously published opinion or public consensus and/or promotes a new idea with prescriptive notions for carrying out changes for the future. Thus, an election manifesto is a published document containing the declaration of the ideology, intentions, views, policies and programmes of a political party. The Election Manifestos are generally drafted by the Political Parties keeping an eye on forthcoming elections and are generally published and well publicized. A manifesto serves as a reference document or benchmark for the public at large for what a political party stands for. By comparing the ideologies, policies and programmes of the political parties, the electors can decide which party they should vote for to meet their expectations and aspirations.

After independence, elections in our country have been held from the year 1952 onwards. But all the political parties were not used to publishing their ideologies, policies and programmes through the publication of manifestos. Major political parties used to make public their ideologies, policies and programmes not necessarily through manifestos. However, in recent years, many National and State parties are publishing their manifestos for each general election and these manifestos generally contain, in addition to the

basic ideology of the parties, major policies, viz economic policy, foreign policy, plans, programmes and issues for governance, if they come to power. These include but are not restricted to measures such as ensuring comprehensive social security to those at special risk, making quality education affordable to everyone, waiving agricultural loans, a pension scheme for aged and helpless farmers, provision of safe drinking water facilities and primary healthcare, medical cover for specified categories of people such as widows, old age pensioners, farmers, abolishing of child labour etc.

The Election Commission of India, as directed by Hon'ble Supreme Court in its judgment/order dated 5th July 2013, framed the following guidelines on the election manifesto to be included as part of the Model Code of Conduct.

1. The election manifesto shall not contain anything repugnant to the ideals and principles enshrined in the Constitution and further that it shall be consistent with the letter and spirit of other provisions of the Model Code of Conduct.

2. The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution enjoin the State to frame various welfare measures for the citizens and therefore there can be no objection to the promise of such welfare measures in election manifestos. However, political parties should avoid making those promises which are likely to vitiate the purity of the election process or exert undue influence on the voters in exercising their franchise.

3. In the interest of transparency, level playing field and credibility of promises, it is expected that manifestos also reflect the rationale for the promises and broadly indicate the ways and means to meet the financial requirements for it. The trust of voters should be sought only on those promises which are possible to be fulfilled.

4. In case of a single-phase election, the manifesto shall not be released during the prohibitory period, as prescribed under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

5. In case of multi-phase elections, the manifesto shall not be released during the prohibitory periods, as prescribed under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, of all the phases of those elections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

1. Write a note on Propaganda and Election Manifesto?

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2.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

Political communication is a plan to communicate with the public through several media forms. It creates an image of a political candidate, party, or issue to influence people's opinions. Organizations, politicians, and individuals must understand their audience before persuading them. This can be achieved through a political communication strategy that identifies the target audience based on demographics, lifestyle choices, social class, income levels, etc. A political communication strategy consists of a campaign's plan for how a candidate will communicate with voters and potential voters. Strategic political communication is the systematic use of communication to achieve specific objectives within the context of a political campaign. It involves the planning and execution of a communications strategy that takes into account the audience, the message, the media, and the timing. Political communication is a strategic process that involves the deliberate planning and execution of messages to influence the thoughts, emotions, and behaviour of individuals or groups. In election campaigns, political communication strategies are used to sway and win votes. A well-executed political communication strategy can distinguish between winning and losing an election.

Steps of Political Campaign

1.   **Target Audience**: Political campaigns are expensive and hence, it is very important to define the target audience of the candidate and the political party. Demographic segmentation refers to factors like age, race, gender, family size, income, or education. Psychographic segmentation refers to factors of personality traits, attitudes, interests, values, and lifestyle. Geographic profile refers to the physical location of your audience. The ethnographic profile corresponds to the cultural profile which includes the religion practised and language spoken by your audience. Mediagraphic profile refers to the media preference of the intended audience. The demographic, psychographic, geographic, ethnographic and mediagraphic profiles help the marketing team of the campaign to focalise the reach of their messages and also its execution.

2.   **Campaign Objectives**: It refers to what the political party intends to achieve with the campaign. In addition to the primary goal of winning by securing maximum votes, engineering a positive public opinion on and off media, encouraging the citizens to participate in voting, swaying voters of opposition, suppressing the share of voice of negative stories about the candidate and political party are the objectives of a political campaign.

3.   **Communication Strategy**: Theme songs, campaign slogans, stump speeches, and even negative campaigning are used, and each advancement in technology since then has offered new opportunities for candidates to persuade voters.

4. **Allocation of Budget**: The budget plays a key role in deciding the length and breadth of the campaign. Funds are required to hire a PR agency, ideate the campaign strategy, purchase media time and space, print production of campaign advertisements, etc.

5. **Media Mix**: Political campaign intends to reach a large dispersed audience with different media preferences. Hence, the PR team often use a combination of mass mediums, often called a media mix. This helps in disseminating information to all subgroups of the target audience. For example, a media mix of TV, radio, social media and outdoor media is used for political campaigns to ensure maximum reach in the target audience. A campaign targeting the subgroup of older voters might rely more heavily on television advertising. On the other hand, targeting young voters will likely use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Hence, opting for a media mix is necessary.

6. **Promotion Mix**: Promotion mix refers to a combination of communication strategies used for a campaign to ensure maximum penetration of the key message amongst the audience. The promotion mix often comprises advertising, public relation, social media marketing, press meets, new debates of broadcast media, rallies, public services announcements, etc.

7. **Scheduling Strategy**: Media scheduling is one of the important decisions in a political campaign. The scheduling strategy outlines the timeline of the campaign including the time and frequency of message delivery. Media scheduling calls for consideration of various factors such as budget, audience behaviour, and opposition's strategy to arrive at appropriate media timing and frequency

8. **Execution of Campaign Plan**: The PR team strives to stick to the predetermined plan for a political campaign. However, the plans are highly susceptible to change with the opposition's campaign strategy, the audience's reception of campaign messages, etc.

9. **Evaluation Parameters**: It refers to the factors that help the PR team to examine the effectiveness of the political campaign. The team evaluates whether the campaign objectives have been met. The candidate winning the election is the ultimate parameter which reiterates the success of the campaign.

The primary function of public relations (PR) is to enhance the reputation of a brand (a person or an organisation) and build a positive image of that brand among the public, potential customers, partners, investors, employees, and other stakeholders. This gives the brand an appearance of honesty, transparency, and responsibility.

In many ways, public relation is a natural extension of politics. The way the general public perceives political candidates goes a long way toward how they will vote. But controlling public perception is a very difficult task. Hence, political campaigns have extensive personnel dedicated to ensuring

a candidate appears in the best light possible, whether in the media or at public events. In politics, public relations is a strategic communication process used by politicians to build a mutually beneficial relationship with the public. Since politicians are constantly in the spotlight, they and their political parties are more prone to slip-ups and unexpected crises. In addition to this elevated risk, they are in a constant battle with the opposing party, who are watching their movements closely.

The earliest form of public relations in politics consisted of ancient leaders creating monuments promoting their reign or spreading rumours and lies about an enemy. But when mass communication arrived, politicians running for office truly had an opportunity to influence others for the first time.

PR as Propaganda

While it took time for politicians to utilize public relations effectively in campaigns, it didn't take long for them to create propaganda; defined as political communication that is biased and misleading in nature. As political machines began to break up and the modern primary election system was established, candidates used propaganda to dissuade citizens from supporting their opponents. The use of propaganda on a larger scale really emerged with radio and TV. The most well-known of early propaganda, attack ads were released in support of President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, insinuating that a vote against him could result in a nuclear war. Often called the Daisy ad, it is considered the grandfather of modern political propaganda. The attack ad featured a 3-year-old girl in a simple dress counted as she plucked daisy petals in a sun-dappled field. Her words were supplanted by a mission-control countdown followed by a massive nuclear blast in a classic mushroom shape. The message was clear: Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater posed a threat to the world's future. Two months later, President Lyndon Johnson won with an emotional political attack on the opposition.

PR Practices in Political Campaigns

1. **Spinning**: Spin can involve the presentation of particular facts that support a candidate's position and discredit an opponent's opinion. It can involve downplaying a mistake or making an apology or denial. Spinning often includes misdirection or diversion in an attempt to keep the reputation of a candidate intact. Campaign officials often appear on news outlets and conduct interviews intent on spinning.

2. **Platform Messaging**: All candidates have a platform or a set of beliefs and goals they have for the office they're pursuing. The platform serves as the base for all messaging. Candidates often put out policy papers or give speeches related to their platform. A strong platform of core tenets and beliefs helps PR professionals spread the word. A universally used form of platform messaging is stump speech. This standard speech is developed for candidates to hit on their basic beliefs and reasons why they are running. This speech is repeated often at campaign events with slight variation, allowing

more and more voters to hear the same message based on the same platform.

3. **Media Relations and Engagement**: For any political candidate, media exposure is critical in a lot of ways. It allows a politician to reach a large audience, especially one that can be targeted to improve standing. Public relations professionals are often charged with organizing media engagements and ensuring that their candidate's public profile stays strong. It can be especially helpful when a campaign is trying to target a particular subset of voters. If a candidate is struggling among younger voters, an interview with an outlet particularly popular among youth might be an idea. If a candidate is attempting to court a particular geographic area, appearing on a regional television or radio show can be beneficial.

4. **Use of Digital Space**: Social media and the internet have added a new layer to public relations and political campaigns. Candidates need a social media strategy to keep them in the minds of voters. For example, Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign was conceptualised with easy-to-share social media posts to describe her student loan policies. Candidates are paying more attention to bloggers as a part of their media engagement strategy. Social media and the digital space will continue to be of critical importance to the PR strategies for campaigns.

5. **Campaign Funding**: Political action committees can raise and spend huge amounts of money to campaign independently for candidates running for the office. The money can come from corporations and labour unions. In India, political parties benefit from an exemption on income tax, their accounts are subjected to scrutiny. All political parties are directed to submit an annual statement of accounts to the Election Commission. In 2017, the Narendra Modi government announced a reform in election finance to enhance the transparency of political funding. In the 2018 budget presentation, Union Finance formally introduced out this reform – a new system of electoral bonds. Electoral bonds are a vehicle through which associations, corporations, and individuals can transparently donate funds to a political party of their choosing via the formal banking system. A cap on corporate donations to political parties, which banned donations worth more than 7.5 % of average net profit over three years, was removed. Companies with partial foreign ownership were allowed to donate and firms were no longer obliged to disclose which parties they were financially backing. Donors can purchase as many bonds as they please and their identity is not revealed. Political parties must declare the amount of money they have received through the bonds, but not the funders' identity. Political parties are free to spend at will while parliamentary candidates are only allowed to spend up to 70 lakhs (about $100,000) in elections.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

2.   **Why is public relations considered a key communication strategy in a political campaign?**

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2.3 ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

Electoral campaigns are the competitive efforts by candidates and political parties to win voter support in the period preceding an election. Candidates use a variety of communication strategies to reach the voters, from public appearances, public opinion polls and rallies to the use of mass media. Public opinion polling is used by political parties, candidates and media to measure voter support for particular candidates, parties and positions. Polling is used to target campaigns and to develop voter messages. Campaigning for public office is usually done for a longer period of time than the official campaign period specified in the electoral calendar. Campaigns in today's media age can cost enormous sums of money, raising integrity issues over the raising and spending of money and whether elections are won by the candidates who spend the most money. In the campaign, candidates work extensively to get their messages maximum share of voice in public space and to encourage voters to turn out and vote for them or their party. There are several campaign issues that can affect the freeness and fairness of the election. These include the timing of the campaign, the ability to campaign freely, the neutrality of electoral officials during the campaign, security for participants, and Access to Media.

Case Study: Barack Obama's Presidential Campaign

In early 2007, Barack Obama was a little-known senator running for president against Democratic nominee and household name, Hilary Clinton. But on November 4, 2008, Obama made history as the first African American to win the election against Republican candidate, John McCain, thus becoming the 44th president of the United States. Obama won by a margin of nearly 200 electoral votes and 8.5 million popular votes. Barack Obama's campaign was also based on giving people hope. After 11 years, Obama's successful presidential campaign remains an important case study for political marketing. It was the first time that a grassroots-level campaign was built at such a huge scale in such a short period of time. The belief was a dedicated group of volunteers with a clear understanding of the candidate's vision, interacting directly with people, work better than any digital army. David Plouffe, Obama's Campaign Manager (for 2008), wrote in his book, The Audacity to Win, "As a former community organizer

Obama felt in his gut that if properly motivated, a committed grassroots army could be a powerful force". Apart from Obama being an incredible storyteller, the campaign team ensured uniformity in message delivery. When Obama talked about climate change in a rally or in a TV interview, all the ads were on climate change and volunteers were talking about climate change with the voters. The various communication channels were in sync with each other to deliver the message. The PR team working for Obama's campaign was small yet diverse; focused on avoiding leaks of electoral strategy and tactics. Furthermore, Obama's Campaign team relied more on data than believing what political pundits have to say on news channels and newspapers.

The campaign office, headquartered in Chicago conducted training programmes for volunteers and used database marketing extensively for social media networking to communicate with the public. There was also a performance management system for volunteers and staff. At last count, the Obama campaign had a database of more than 3 million opted-in supporters and it had raised over $600m. In terms of the numbers, externally, Obama's campaign was able to garner 5 million supporters on 15 different social networks ranging from Facebook to MySpace. By November 2008, Obama had approximately 2.5 million Facebook

supporters, outperforming Republican opponent John McCain by nearly four times. In terms of Twitter, Obama had over 115,000 followers, more than 23 times those of John McCain. In terms of YouTube followers and clips, people spent 14 million hours watching campaign-related Obama videos on YouTube with 50 million viewers total. It was four times McCain's YouTube viewers. Beyond such new media, the Obama campaign fully leveraged other technologies such as e-mail and texts. The campaign sent out a total of 1 billion e-mails in-house. They sent 8,000 to 10,000 unique e-mail messages targeted to specific segments of their 13-million-member strong e-mail list, with subjects ranging from state and residence to issues to donation history. The staff created content for the e-mails and tested that content by segmenting e-mail lists and trying different experiments. The campaign garnered 3 million mobile and SMS subscribers too. On Election Day alone, supporters received three texts. The campaign's internally created online social network, www.my.barackobama.com (MyBO), allowed individuals to use technology and web tools to connect to one another and to activate themselves on behalf of the Obama campaign. Two million profiles were created on that site. Registered users and volunteers planned over 200,000 offline events, wrote 400,000 blog posts, and created 35,000 volunteer groups through the site. From a financial perspective, Obama raised $639 million from 3 million donors. Although Obama did raise some money from well-connected fundraisers, the majority of the $639 million was raised through the Internet. Volunteers on MyBO itself generated $30 million on 70,000 personal fundraising pages. Obama's

donors made 6.5 million donations online, totalling more than $500 million. Of those 6.5 million online donations, 6 million were in increments of $100 or less. In fact, the average online donation was $80 and the average Obama donor gave more than once. All the other candidates had the same access to these tools, but the Obama campaign not only used them more effectively to organize, communicate, and fundraise but also leveraged the tools to support its bottoms-up grassroots campaign strategy that tapped into the hearts of the voters. What resulted was not only a victory for the Democrats and Obama but also the legacy of what was widely regarded as one of the most effective internet marketing plans in history—where social media and technology enabled the people to actively participate in a movement.

Social Media and Political Marketing

As on January 2023, India has 467.0 million social media users, equating to 32.8 % of the total population. A total of 1.10 billion cellular mobile connections were active in India in early 2023, with this figure equivalent to 77.0 % of the total population. With this, social media's role in political communication will only grow in the upcoming years. The empowering development of the internet has provided a way for politicians to use the technique of social media. Social media has changed the method of political communication, and social media is being chosen by politicians and political parties to communicate with voters in a different way. In the past, the vehicles for political ads were newspapers, direct mail, radio, and television. In 2008, Barack Obama became one of the first candidates to use social media advertising in his campaign. That year, 2008, candidates spent a total of $22.25 million on online political ads. social media has changed the game, allowing incumbents and newcomers alike to speak directly to constituents. Beyond communicating their policy views, new candidates can humanize themselves through their social media accounts, and that helps voters feel more connected to them. For example, former Democratic presidential contender Pete Buttigieg introduced his shelter dogs to his 2 million Twitter followers, while U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren used her Instagram account to chat live with supporters who made small contributions to her presidential campaign. Those small contributions, often between $5 to $100, seem unlikely to move the needle in a multimillion-dollar political campaign. But the research state that it can play an important part in the voting process because it represents hope.

The 2014 general elections, regarded as the first Social Media Election in India's political history, kickstarted a social media revolution in Indian politics. Before the 2009 general elections, Shashi Tharoor, a Congress MP who had previously served as UN Under-Secretary-General, was the only Indian politician with a Twitter account. All major political parties significantly expanded their social media footprints ahead of the 2014

elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s success in mobilizing India's digital generation using social media platforms has forced contending parties to revamp their social media engagement. As a result, millions of politically motivated messages now flood India's digital space, making elections susceptible to social media manipulation, spread of disinformation, and polarizing. Political content voters absorb through WhatsApp and other platforms influences political perceptions in a two-step manner. First, political accounts generate an influx of positive narratives concerning a party, drowning out criticism. The BJP's social media campaign has evolved significantly since 2014: then it largely focused on highlighting its leader. The core focus of BJP's social media campaign in 2014, aided by professional agencies, was building the brand of then Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, promoting its development agenda and criticizing the ruling opposition. Indicating the effectiveness of BJP's social media strategy, Modi surpassed Tharoor as the most followed Indian politician on Twitter in 2013. The BJP's savvy social media presence and electoral success has created incentive for other parties to expand their presence in the digital space.

The political parties have their own websites which were not seen some years back and some of them also use other social media to interact with people. With every party having its own website and leaders being active on different media it makes the citizens feel that they are within their reach. The leaders now seem accessible at the click of a button. The advent of social media has enabled unprecedented empowerment and engagement of the common man in expressing political opinions. The positive development of social media emergence has been that the youth is talking about political issues. Earlier political discussions were restricted only to those who read newspapers, watched news channels or participated in discussions in corners of a village or clubs. Today, social networking has made the youth of India sit up and discuss political issues. They spend time analysing and discussing politics. They now have views on the happenings of political events and they also influence administrative decision-making. Although, getting the youth together to vote in elections and using social media as the only platform to help political parties is still a pipeline dream. It may take years in India to replicate the USA in the use of social media campaigning and to influence the voters. The social media revolution in the Indian political space is real, tangible and accelerating. Though it may not bring in huge changes immediately, still it will play an important role in creating political awareness, which in itself is a huge step forward for a developing country like India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: I) Use the space given below for your answer.

3.   How has social media become an important platform for the promotion of political parties and their candidates?

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2.4 SUMMARY

A multi-layered communication environment exists for election campaigns. The media system is transitioning from a broadcast model associated with traditional media where general-interest news items are disseminated to the mass public through a narrowcasting model where carefully crafted messages target discrete audience segments. On the one hand, the mainstream press maintains an identifiable presence. Mainstream media still validate information disseminated via new media platforms, such as blogs and Twitter feeds. At the same time, the proliferation of new media has increased the diversification and fragmentation of the communication environment. Media are more politically polarized, as niche sources associated with extreme ideological positions appeal to growing sections of the audience.

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3

PSEPHOLOGY

Unit Structure

3.1 Opinion Polls

3.2 Exit Polls

3.3 Electoral Surveys and Analysis

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

Psephology is the field within the broader field of political science which uses statistical methods to study and comprehend elections. Psephology is also called as election science.

As per the Oxford Reference, *The study of elections, voting patterns, and electoral behaviour, and the forecasting of election results. This became a specialist field of political sociology with the spread of regular opinion polls on voting intentions, major post-election interview surveys, access to population census statistics for small areas, and sophisticated data analysis and modelling packages.*

The term Psephology gained momentum in the 1950s.

Psephology enables the political observers, policy makers and most importantly politicians to understand the changes or continuation in public opinion, especially before, during and after the electoral process. Psephological analysts or as they are referred to as psephologists work at the intersection of fields like electoral politics, statistics, journalism and communication.

Since world war two, the political environment has seen many shifts both at the granular level and global level. The changes in the political environment were and are the extension of social and economic changes. One of the key factors in influencing the political environment was the expansion of mass media. Mass media narratives have affected the public psyche and have been instrumental in shaping electoral politics for a long time. As the time progressed, political observers and especially the observers of electoral politics felt the need of methodical study to understand the behaviours and patterns of voting by different socio-economic segments and constituencies. Psephology considers demographics as units of observation and analyses, and draws inferences based on outcomes of previous elections, campaign strategies of political parties, political alliances and agendas, public opinion in the form of opinion polls and exit polls etc. Since the 1980s, the methods to gauge the public opinion, electoral perceptions and their effects on election outcomes became more refined. Rapidly changing demographic profiles of nations, new challenges and opportunities for political outfits, increase in

computational powers and the widespread process of democratic participation globally, encouraged the use of psephological analyses to determine not only the election outcomes but also it created a semi-industry within the broader media industry. It created a new crop of experts, who were engaged in electioneering, campaign management, political communication and demographic data analysis.

Just like many fields and subfields associated with elections and electoral politics, psephology is also heavily affected by social impulses rather than only identifiable numerical inputs and outputs. Although statistics plays an important role in psephology, the significance of social psychology and mass media cannot be ignored. Hence, it is said that psephology is both science and art.

As stated earlier, psephology functions at the intersection of political science and statistics primarily, hence, the debate surrounding whether it should be identified as an art (as in terms of humanities) or it should be identified as science, has always been undertaken.

Selection of survey design and methodology determines the quality and accuracy of the survey and ability to gauge election outcomes as near to perfect as possible. Demographic markers like gender, education, caste, religion, age are aggregated for quota sampling which helps to estimate vote share. Quota sampling helps media firms to conduct opinion polls.

Steps involved in carrying out opinion polls are as follows -

1. Questionnaires are created.

2. Population sample size is selected.

3. Respondents from the sample size are interviewed.

4. Responses are analysed and statistical information sets formed.

5. Interpretation of results and then conclusions are drawn.

Despite following above mentioned procedures methodically, there still can be drawbacks in the ways in which interviews are conducted for respondents. Like, lack of clarity in questions, opinions concealed as questions, definitions and examples getting interchanged. Scientifically speaking, in psephological exercises, the focus in more on "how" rather than "why", because the objective is to identify the changing patterns of public opinion and its impact on election outcomes. The data generated by observers, enumerators and then processed by pollsters is highly dispersed many times, plus the bias of media houses based on ideologies and political affiliations of the corporations which own and operate the media houses also is very crucial to understand. Most importantly, this isn't just crucial for pollsters or analysts only, but also for voters in general to understand different variables which affect the public opinion and based on that the polling activities and election outcomes. Understanding these differences is crucial from two points, one being identifying electoral fate of parties and alliances and two, its medium to long term impact on public policy.

The entire procedure being data driven and the data processing being technology driven, puts the use or abuse of technology in driving seat nowadays. It has been observed since more than a decade especially, that the new innovations in technology have become very disruptive in nature, and mass media couldn't remain unaffected from these disruptions. Plus, this also brings into discussion the disparate nature of technology being deployed by certain segments either for facilitation and expansion of civic utilities and addressing governance issues, and certain segments either being completely deprived of these technological innovations or having no information about how their opinions are being processed by the technology driven enterprises to make sense of their voting patterns. This has the potential to create information disparity and asymmetry. Problems in data gathering and polling estimations due to technological disparity and information asymmetry are not unique only to India and third world countries, even the advanced economies and democracies like USA, UK, Germany and France have seen the effects of these, both during polling exercises and during periodic policy decisions. Use of analytics for gathering the data points, identifying data clusters from various population segments through the conventional media and new media has made the scientific assessment and feasibility of psephological exercises relatively easy, with the caveat that it also poses lot of challenges like anonymity of right to privacy.

Check your progress exercise 1:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Give a brief introduction about Psephology.

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3.2 OPINION POLLS

The popularity of election surveys stems from the political socialisation and crystal ball gazing curiosity of Indians to foresee the outcomes of hustings before the pronouncement of formal results. The opinion polls capture the panoramic snapshots and divulge the socio-demographic characteristics of Indian voters and their nuanced voting preferences, as well as reasonably accurate vote estimates of political parties for predicting elections. The fixation for survey based election prediction turned a host of political scientists, journalists, news presenters and market research mavens in India into psephologists.

The success of mediatised election prophecy was short lived, however, as the erroneous prediction of the national election results in 2004 led to

widespread public criticism and calls for a blanket ban on pre-poll, exit poll and post-poll election surveys during elections in India.

Table 1: General Elections 1998: Almost Accurate Prediction

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
DRS-*Times of India**	249	155	139
Outlook-C Nielsen	238	149	156
India Today-CSDS	214	164	165
Frontline-CMS**	225–235	145–155	152–182
Actual result	252	166	119

Seat predictions based on opinion poll conducted before the elections.

Table 2: General Elections 1999: NDA Tally Slightly Overestimated

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
Times poll-DRS	332	138	–
Outlook-CMS	319–329	135–145	34–39
India Today-Insight	332–336	132–146	70–80
HT-AC Nielsen	300	146	95
Pioneer-RDI	313–318	140–150	84–86
Actual result	296	134	113

Seat predictions based on opinion poll conducted before the elections.

Table 3: General Elections 2004—UPA Seats Grossly Underestimated

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
NDTV—*Indian Express*	230–250	190–205	100–120
Aaj Tak—ORG Marg	248	190	105
Zee-Taleem	249	176	117
Star—C-Voter	263–275	174–186	86–98
Sahara—DRS	263–278	171–181	92–102
Outlook—MDRA	280–29	159–169	89–99
Actual result	189	222	132

Seat predictions based on opinion poll/exit poll conducted during the elections.

Table 4: General Elections 2009: Failed to Forecast Congress Upsurge

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
STAR News—AC Nielson	197	199	136
CNN-IBN	165–185	185–205	165–195
NDTV	177	216	150
Headlines Today	180	191	172
News X	199	191	152
Times Now	183	198	162
Actual result	159	262	79

Seat predictions based on opinion poll/exit poll conducted during the elections.

Table 5: General Elections 2014: Failed in Predicting a Majority for BJP

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
ABP–AC Nielson	281	97	165
CNN-IBN–CSDS	276–282	92–102	150–159
Headlines Today-CICERO	261–283	101–120	152–162
India TV–C-Voter	289	101	153
News 24–Today's Chanakya	340	70	133
Times Now–ORG	249	148	146
Actual result	326	60	157

Seat predictions based on opinion poll/exit poll conducted during the elections.

Table 6: General Elections 2019: Correct Estimation of NDA 3.0 Seats

Seat Forecast	BJP Allies	Congress Allies	Others
India Today-AXIS My India	339–365	77–108	69–95
Today's Chanakya	350	95	97
News18-Ipsos	336	82	124
Times Now-VMR	306	132	104
India News	298	118	127
Republic-CVoter	287	128	127
ABP Nielsen	277	130	135
Actual result	353	91	98

Seat predictions based on opinion poll/exit poll conducted during the elections.

Check your progress exercise 2:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

What are opinion polls. Highlight their significance

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3.3 EXIT POLLS

After casting their ballots in an election, voters are surveyed (face-to-face or online) to find out which political party they are supporting, this is known as exit polls. Such a survey was carried out by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion in 1957 during the 2nd Lok Sabha elections. Opinion polls are conducted in advance of elections, as opposed to exit polls, which are surveys conducted after voting. The exit poll, which is composed of an opinion poll produced by interviewing voters as they are 'exiting' the voting place, has evolved primarily as a media tool. Given that they are not a true record of how people voted, they are obviously inherently unreliable. The media would be well advised to use the same care when reporting on polling results since they are a type of opinion survey. It would seem obvious that

any limitations that applied to opinion poll reporting while voting was still going on would apply with even greater force to exit polls because the additional issue with exit polls is that they appear to give an indication of how people have actually voted, as opposed to how they intend to vote. Exit polls are typically used in results broadcasts as an early tester before actual results are released. They will also be used by morning publications, whose deadlines are frequently set before any meaningful results are available. In nations with many time zones, the situation can get more complicated because early exit poll results may influence later voting patterns. The majority of American media outlets freely choose not to report on exit polls or preliminary East Coast findings. Of course, one issue with exit polls is whether or not respondents will be truthful about their voting behaviour. This is probably going to be a problem in transitional democracies or places where there has been a lot of intimidation. Voter education need to have emphasised that each voter's ballot was private. In order to account for the possibility that individuals would not honestly report how they voted, a South African organisation, the Helen Suzman Foundation, created a far more complicated exit poll methodology for the 2000 elections in Zimbabwe. But one effect of this complexity was that it took longer to be released. In the end, its major objective was to offer some proof of how intimidation might have influenced the outcome. Sadly, the exit poll results did not receive the media attention they deserved because they were not made public until after the final verdict was known. Speed in the media is crucial.

Voters' reactions to their electoral choices are used by the media to project final outcomes for a public thirsty for news immediately after voting. After the votes are counted, media commentators from all political perspectives almost exclusively turn to exit polls to explain election results. The results of the exit polls reveal which issues the voters thought were most crucial. They describe the voting patterns of various voter groups. They reveal which personal qualities benefited or hindered some candidates. Even the people' future aspirations for the government are revealed by them. Exit polls are frequently used to interpret the results of elections in the weeks and months that follow. They are relied upon by newly elected authorities to support the policy directives they believe the voters have mandated. They are closely examined by partisan pundits for effective and unsuccessful campaign tactics. Even political strategists utilise them to identify important constituencies and issues that must be resolved in order to win future elections. Unfortunately, those interested in analysing these exact exit poll results cannot easily access them. They swiftly vanish from view after appearing in the following day's newspapers or on a political website as the election loses its attention. The exit polls are eventually preserved at universities, where only subscribers can access the data. But nowhere can

interested parties find a full set of biennial exit poll results in a simple to use format.

In order to explain election outcomes to their audiences, journalists created exit polling in the 1960s. It evolved over time from a small-scale attempt at CBS News to predict the results of the 1967 Kentucky governor's race into a multimillion-dollar operation supported by a group of television networks and created to predict race winners and explain the preferences of various voting groups. It overcame technical difficulties, internal conflicts, and incorrect calls along the road to become the focus of media coverage of the elections. Exit poll findings were first merely used to analyse election results, giving context for actual vote counts. However, the networks soon realised that they could use exit polls to predict election results ahead of the returns and give them an advantage over the opposition on election day. Reagan was predicted by NBC to win the 1980 presidential election at 8:15 p.m. Because this early call was made before many western states' polls had closed and with fewer than 5% of the actual ballots counted, it sparked a wave of criticism.

However, there are roadblocks that pose a risk of undermining the effort and distorting the outcomes. Like most surveys, exit polls progress through four distinct but frequently interconnected stages. Researchers typically start by creating methods for selecting a probabilistic sample of voters whose opinions may be confidently inferred to the active electorate. They create a survey that can both characterise the different voter types taking part in an election and provide details on the thinking behind those selections. To distribute the questionnaires to and collect them from sampled voters on election day, interviewers are trained and finally hired. Voter replies are combined with a data set for analysis to complete the process.

Exit polls have their own advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the exit polls are:

First and foremost, the exit polls stand out because they speak with actual voters as soon as they leave polling places around the country. Standard public opinion polls, like the American National Election Study or Gallup Poll, do not record respondents as they leave the voting booth, hence they frequently make mistakes in classifying voters from non-voters.

Exit polls also have the benefit of allowing respondents to self-administer the questionnaire and record their own responses, as opposed to telephone surveys that require interviewers to read the questions to participants and record their responses. This anonymous self-reporting relieves the pressure that respondents may experience to falsely claim that they cast a ballot or supported a particular candidate in an effort to impress an interviewer. The

risk of social desirability bias, which can afflict telephone surveys, is significantly reduced by the exit polls by allowing voters to complete the questionnaires on their own, especially on sensitive topics like voters' election choices.

The disadvantages of the exit polls are:

First, sampling error can affect exit polls just like it can any sample survey. Sampling error is the term used to describe potential bias in sample estimates that results from randomly choosing a portion of the whole population. The amount that sample estimates are expected to deviate from the population can be determined, in contrast to the other types of error. The method of sampling, sample size, and level of desired computation confidence all play a role in calculations. The sample estimates have greater variability than they would if they were genuinely random since the exit surveys use stratified sampling.

Second, coverage error may affect the results of the exit surveys. When every member of the population has an equal chance of getting chosen, coverage error develops. The poll's findings may be skewed if those who are not covered consistently differ from those who are. Exit polls have historically been prone to coverage error caused by interviewers applying interviewing rates erroneously by counting votes inaccurately or substituting incorrect substitutes.

Third, nonresponse error can affect the results of exit polls. Nonresponse error happens when sampled respondents don't finish the survey. This absence might skew the results if certain groups answer more quickly than others. Possibly the most problematic of the four survey error types, this one has been problematic for the national exit polls in recent years.69 Some sampled voters are not counted because of restrictions on interviewers' proximity to the polls, bad weather, or evasive respondents, while others decline to take part because of time restraints or misgivings about the method.

However, exit polls are crucial especially in a democratic set up as it points out to the aspirations of the voters and have proven to be reliable source of understanding the election outcomes. Media be it the print or the electronic media has played a crucial role in comprehending the election outcomes of a nation. It is essential that media continues to play a decisive role in the election process as it is the source by which the citizens get to know the various dimensions of elections and electoral process. As the proliferation of media increases due to the spread of internet and mass communication means, media forms a crucial pillar of political reporting. Opinion or exit polls along with election analysis in the 21st century is a significant aspect of media and its responsibility.

Check your progress exercise 3:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Write a note on exit polls and explain their merits and demerits.

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3.4 ELECTORAL SURVEYS AND ANALYSIS

Psephology or election science is primarily a branch of political science. Political science as an academic discipline functions both as a stand alone and an interdisciplinary subject. Like political science, psephology also derives many of its ideas from multiple disciplines like sociology, geography, economics and statistics. Hence, apart from being a tool for electioneering, psephology can also assist in identifying and managing political trajectories and public opinions.

While understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of constituencies, psephology can help the observers and analysts to draw comparisons for electoral outcomes across different regions. This could be true at the regional, national and international level. Psephological exercises conducted by print and electronic media, can help political parties and alliances assess their findings based on internal surveys.

Psephology helps campaign managers to understand the shortcomings in the campaign strategies as the election cycles approach closer. Campaign managers can make necessary changes based on what requires immediate attention, which particular electoral promise or promises need emphasis, how to gain optimum traction in print and electronic media based on internal surveys and the findings of mass media.

Apart from election cycles and identifying political outcomes, psephological assessments can also help strategic communications departments of market research firms to curate the marketing mix for products and services targeting specific demographics.

Psephology being part of political science, exhibits inherent limitations of the field. Psephology is highly data driven and any mistake or shortcoming in data gathering can have negative multiplier effect on estimations, resulting in inadequate or extra efforts taken by political parties and campaign managers to address the risks associated with underestimations or overestimations. Identification of socio-cultural norms is equally important like understanding political upheavals. It becomes more important in an extremely diverse demography like India, especially while

dealing with political alliances, whether based on convenience or conviction.

Factionalism within the political outfits, alliances and social groups makes it difficult to ascertain en bloc voting behaviours getting transformed into electoral numbers. Sub genres within the political manifestos when the national parties select and field the candidates across different regions of the country or that of the alliance partners, further enable the disproportional manner of estimations because the data sets and the reports which come from the ground varies from one region to another and how the respondents understand the questions.

The scope or the limitations can also be defined by the time tested methods of forecasting based on the number of observers and enumerators deployed by polling agencies and the data collected from various communities. The upward socioeconomic and socio-political mobility provides the necessary momentum for the polling exercises not just for the prediction of the electoral outcomes, but also the aspirational message to get amplified, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly.

In India, the task of forecasting the elections gets more complicated because of multiple layers of caste, community groups and their convergent and divergent social realities. Plus the representation of the social cultural realities of these myriad groups by many political outfits. The political representation may not even be uniform across regions for people adhering to a particular political ideology.

For eg. A legislator who is from Bharatiya Janata Party, a party which functions on the principles of cultural nationalism i.e. right wing ideology, if the legislator is representing a constituency from Mumbai Metropolitan or Bengaluru Metropolitan region, then he/she will be taking more inclusive and progressive stance compared to the legislator who is from Indian National Congress or Samajwadi Party representing a rural constituency in Haryana or Uttar Pradesh, despite the fact that these parties primarily function on the relatively progressive ideologies of inclusivity, constitutionalism, secularism, socialism i.e. centrist or left wing.

Technology is also one important factor which determines the scope or the limitations of psephology. Whether a particular demographic segment gets represented adequately in the sample size is also dependent on technological prowess and the adjoining prejudices of enumerators and poll observers. If the respondents are well versed and pollsters are well equipped with latest communication technologies, it can broaden the scope of inferences drawn from the expectations and grievances from the incumbent political system of that particular population segment. At the same time, the pervasive nature of communication technologies also can lead to the phenomenon of echo chambers and hence the miniscule voice of macro behaviours of respondents not getting captured. It can lead to misleading inferences being drawn and being projected as representative of large masses who may not be aware of the statistical modelling and the enabling technology which helps draw inferences.

The electoral analysis is always dependent on the large sets of data generated by the voters, parties, interest groups, and governments also. These data sets help the analysis of patterns of voting, policy making, policy communication, policy implementation and the feedback from stakeholders, primarily the citizens.

The modern history of academic voting research started at Columbia University in the 1940s under the guidance of Paul Lazarsfeld, they postulated applying the survey research for the study of electoral behaviour. The study conducted by Lazarsfeld and his team at Columbia University led to the publication of work titled *The People's Choice: How The Voter Makes Up His Mind In A Presidential Campaign.* In the year 1948, one more study was published, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign.* These two volumes helped create the set of questions and research methods which had an impact on the field of election science in the future.

Sir David Butler, a British political scientist, is considered as the father of modern election science, also known as Psephology. He used the Edwardian equation to predict the number of seats which can be won based on the polling percentage. Use of opinion polls was a key factor in the use of the Edwardian equation for David Butler. He served as an in -house analyst on BBC for election results programmes. Butler was known for developing the concept of swing – the percentage shift of votes from one party to another between elections.

In 1955, he introduced the Swingometer to the BBC's election night broadcast. It took a more prominent position in the BBC's 1959 election broadcast and has become a staple of election coverage all over the world. In the biography Sultan of Swing, Michael Crick writes that Butler "didn't confine himself to an audience of academic colleagues … but was determined to make elections understandable for a mass audience".

From the 1960s onwards, the American political scientists, political observers and media theorists started focussing on macro and micro trends of large public perceptions and community clusters. The new millennium saw the expansion of democratic processes, economic aspirations and most importantly an explosion of communication technology which became available to everyone.

In India, the field of psephology got popularised in the media realm through two young economists - Prannoy Roy and Ashok Lahiri. In 1980, Roy and Lahiri predicted that the Indian National Congress would get a resounding mandate in the seventh Lok Sabha elections. Till that time, psephology or to be precise mediated psephology was at the rudimentary stage in India. The sheer diversity of demographics was a huge task for pollsters to be able to make sense of. Roy and Lahiri started working on the essential elements of Indian electioneering. They started looking at the fragmentation of public opinion from state level and how the assembly polls have a cascading effect on the general elections.

Iqbal Narain et al in their book, *Election Studies in India* categorised the psephological studies in India under the following heads - A) Macro/Micro level generic studies based on secondary sources like newspapers, interviews etc., B) Macro level aggregate data analysis done by foreign observers and scholars in the field, C) Voting behaviour studies, D) Focal points in electoral outcome determination viz., nomination process, campaign strategies, community clusters of votes. According to B D Graham, Indian election studies have two kinds of theories A) Enlightenment Theory, which underlines the departure from existing barriers of community induced voting behaviour, and B) Transactional Theory, which emphasises that the electorates are controlled more on the transactions, negotiations entered into by various political leaders at regional and subregional level, rather than political parties or ideologies.

Check your progress exercise 4:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Explain the importance of Election analysis with examples.

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CONCLUSION

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CRITIQUE OF MEDIA IN ELECTIONS

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objective Coverage and Paid News

4.3 Accountability of Media

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

Mass media as we all know is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy. For the sustainable functioning of democracy, mass media plays a crucial role in making and breaking the public opinion. Historically, mass media has served as one of the most important tools for bringing people together for the issues which concerned the well-being of societies and nations. Mass media helped shape the dialogues and ideas which created the foundations for nation building. In democracies, both the advanced and the new ones, the mass media played the role of not just the information dissemination but also the role of public education. It helped create awareness about the challenges the new democracies were facing as well as enabled the understanding of prospects for new democracies to forge better ties with comity of nations globally and to maintain meaningful dialogue with the citizens of the country.

As the time progressed, the changes in the political and socio economic landscape were also visible in the mass media. Media cannot remain indifferent from the changes taking place in the activities involving the masses, media cannot operate in separate silos vis-a-vis the institutional framework of the governments, democratic or otherwise. Within broader mass media, journalism especially, cannot remain neutral when it comes to voicing the concerns of the people on various issues. This is more significant for democracies who have witnessed the disasters of the subjugation at the hands of colonial powers. Mass media in general and journalism in particular, helps democracies to calibrate their approach to the world and how various democratic and non democratic systems of government deal with each other. Mass media is the window to the world for relatively less informed societies.

The socio-economic and political changes which have occurred since the last thirty years, have had enormous impact on the functioning of mass media, both at the level of engagement with the public and at the level of impact on the economies and the impact of economic and financial transformations on mass media. In the last thirty years, mass media has seen high levels of consolidation of media enterprises, which have created monopolies in the media industry and by extension the virtual monopolies of perspectives and public opinions. Media enterprises have increasingly

become very dynamic in terms of volume of their operations across different regions.

The independence of the press is under constant threat nowadays, that too, from no less than elected representatives of people. This has serious implications on the functioning of democracies across the world. Due to this, large sections of populations are not getting access to bipartisan news and information. Many methods are deployed by governments to suppress the voice of independent media. It includes methods like regulatory overhaul to facilitate and promote pro establishment, pro government media outlets, financial and legal troubles orchestrated by the government against the media agencies which refuse to tow the government line of narrative and denigration and name calling of journalists. On the other hand, governments also reward the media outlets which help in creating the public opinion in favour of the government or in favour of the political dispensation or thought which is a key partner of the alliance which runs the government. Favours extended by governments to such organisations can be regulatory relaxation or excessive, illegal regulatory oversight on competing media organisations, giving access to the information repository of the state at the cost of privacy of citizens, providing with long term media contracts etc. This forces the gullible media houses to become subservient to the government. Loss of press freedom has occurred in concert with democratic institutions becoming ineffective to carry out their duties. Oppression of the press is one of the red flags to understand the noticeable lack of safeguards for civil liberties. Media independence is mainly threatened when authoritarian regimes are established or the testing of the political environment for the same is happening, or the smooth democratic transition of power isn't guaranteed and instead a despotic leader tries coup d'etat against the democratically elected leader. Free and independent media, just like independent judiciary, can be a desired barrier for such authoritarian tendencies, hence their freedom is muzzled to ensure the complete breakdown of democratic checks and balances.

Generally this form of repression of media happens in two ways, one, in democratic and hybrid regimes (hybrid regimes are ones where the democratic institutions have become ineffective and democratic processes like elections are merely optics created by authoritarian elements within democracy) where the mass media is controlled either by strategic buyouts of stakes in them or by using regulatory mechanisms for coercion of media institutions and the advocates of free press. Second, in thoroughly authoritarian regimes, where the mass media is almost always subservient to the ruling establishment, is further controlled through coercion, to ensure that no glimmer of press freedom is generated or thought of by non vocal and docile advocates of free press. There is a direct correlation between media freedom and regime change in democratic systems. If the democratic systems experience or are seen gravitating towards authoritarian tendencies, it directly impacts the freedom of press. If there is a transition from authoritarian rule to democratic one, mass media becomes an active agent in that. The transitory phase sees free and independent media being both the prerequisite as well as the product of pro democracy transition.

In authoritarian and hybrid regimes, during the election cycles, the criticism of mass media from respective countries happens most of the time from Euroatlantic nations, which rank highly when it comes to press freedom and associated media ecosystem and its positive influence on the working of government. Criticisms which are levelled against the media from these countries range from being an agent of the ruling class to facilitate its authoritarian rule further to being the enemy of the people and their legitimate voices in favour of democratic transition. During the elections specifically, the mass media in authoritarian and hybrid regimes is criticised for not showing objectivity in their conduct at all and incriminating people who wish to speak in favour of free and fair elections. Direct and indirect activities of mass media in these regimes are seen to be attuned to completely delegitimise the dissenting elements which are critical of the regime. For that, the media apparatus engages in propaganda, strawman arguments, smear campaigns etc. to rule out the possibilities of pro democratic transitions gaining any momentum. They are termed as agent provocateurs or are occluded from the media space. Consolidated ownership and state control of mass media enables such tactics to suppress the freedom of media itself.

Contrary to the authoritarian and hybrid regimes, in democratic systems, the criticisms levelled against the mass media are not about the suppression of legitimate voices of people speaking in favour of civil liberties. Instead, the criticism is largely about the disconnect between the corporate media and the concerns of the majority and that of the working class. Here, the corporate media considers itself as the sole arbiter and the bastion of free speech and protector of civil liberties, and in doing so, gradually it starts assuming moral high ground on issues related to the customs, traditions, social norms etc. This antagonises the majority, which perceives this not as efforts to create a safe and cohesive space for protection of civil liberties, rather, as an effort to debase the dominant culture, which many times is identified through ethno-religious or ethno-linguistic markers. This form of criticism further gains traction because of consolidation of media in few hands and by enormous multinational corporations. Hence the dissidents within the democratic systems which are upping the ante against "establishment", see this as an opportunity to generate public opinion against the mass media by equating the institutions and people involved in the mass media with foreign agents and enemies of the people and culture.

In both the democratic and the authoritarian or hybrid regimes, the conviction of the masses about the media being against them gets further entrenched through the targeted use of social media. The nature of social media makes it less prone to criticism compared with the traditional media of broadcast and print. Social media platforms function not just as purveyors of information unidirectionally but allow the participants of the platform to engage in discussions in real time. Moreover, monitoring of social media platforms either for content authenticity or for regulatory compliance is certainly not as straightforward as the print or broadcast media. Important reason being, the geographical areas these respective forms of media serve. Print or broadcast are mostly limited by regions, even if they are circulated or aired across different regions, their impact factor diminishes as they

move away from their core constituency of readers and viewers. The regulations for broadcast media are guided by the principle of information dissemination and unidirectional communication. For social media, these regulations do not come into action as the regions they cater to are spread across the world and their impact factor may keep varying depending upon the volume of engagement gathered by a certain information cluster. Secondly, legal status of traditional media and social media also varies, depending upon the legal frameworks of taxation, data privacy, telecommunication rules etc. Although, these factors are considered when it comes to comparison of two different sets of media systems in the legal sense. When it comes to the impact, definitely both the traditional media and new media (social media, blogs, video logs, podcasts etc.) have their strong points and coexist. Criticisms faced by new media are considered in the realm of technological development and its ubiquitous, all pervasive nature. Whereas criticism against the traditional media is through the lens of creating mediated realities. Where the news presenters, commentators, journalists, editors have overwhelming power to influence the public opinion in certain directions. Social media firms owned and operated by large technology companies syndicate the data from the traditional media at the same time allow the consumers of that data to create, contest and collaborate with the data. That gives the new media a sense of self regulation and the power to the consumers to maintain the checks and balances in real time. Having said that, new media and especially social media is far from a democratic space of discussion. This can be understood through the examples that the world has witnessed in the last decade and half. Be it presidential campaigns of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, or the allegations of influence and agitprop machinery used by pro Russia elements in during the 2016 presidential campaigns, Brexit campaign and during referendum of Crimea.

One more criticism that the media has to endure especially during the elections is the methodologies used by pollsters and media houses to identify the clusters of sample size to gauge the mood of voters through opinion polls and exit polls.
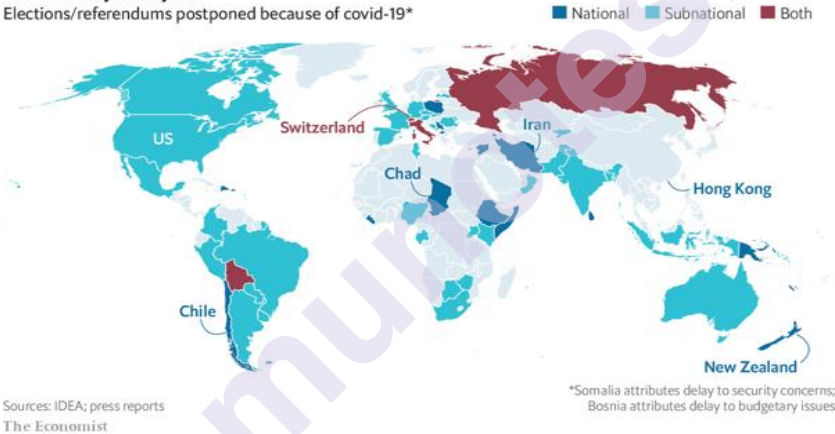
As discussed already in the previous chapter, the veracity of opinion polls and exit polls depends on the enumerators of polling numbers, the ability of journalists and reporters to frame questionnaires and most importantly, the statistical modelling used by psephologists to identify the patterns and predict the outcomes. Opinion polls and exit polls, apart from gauging the mood swings of voters, also work as the determining factor for voting in less news reporting penetrated areas. The problem of under penetration of media across different regions leads to creation of what are called "news deserts". During election season, these news deserts become susceptible to misconceptions about voter behaviours in those regions. Which can cause underestimation of the required sample size for opinion polling, if at all the exercise is conducted by the news agencies. Even if the exercise of opinion polls is conducted, pollsters cannot assure that the respondents were completely honest with their answers. Reasons being, inability to comprehend what was asked and more worrying sign of giving wrong answers due to fear of retribution by the politicians in a closeted community.

This can create a domino effect of wrong estimations, leading to statistical data fed into the system being useless at best and fragile and misleading at worst. Again, here the media needs to own up to the limitations and the overzealous nature of pollsters of "cutting through the noise" and "staying ahead of the curve".
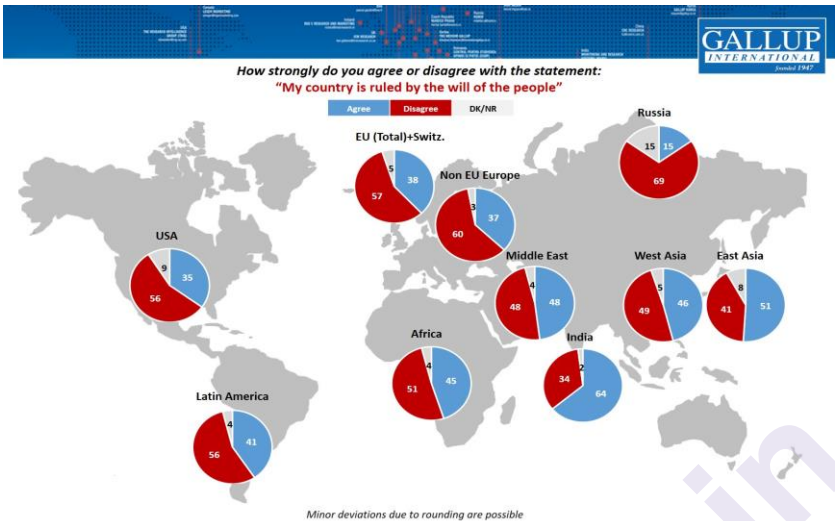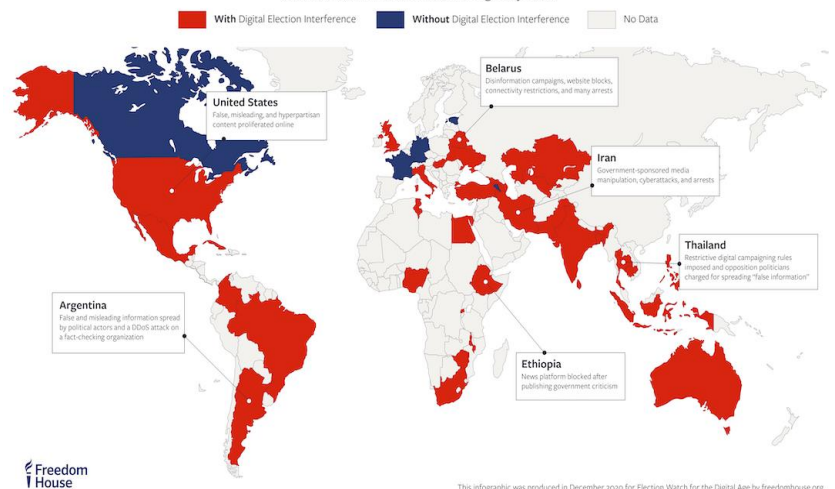
Check your progress exercise 1:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Write in brief about Criticism of Media from governance perspective.

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4.2 OBJECTIVE COVERAGE AND PAID NEWS:

One of the chief components for functioning of the media in democratic systems is objectivity. The objectivity of news gets more pronounced when the media houses are covering the elections. Objective functioning of media, elections or otherwise, is decided by the credibility of the media houses and the commitment shown by the owners of mass media. The factors which help examine the objective functioning of mass media are viz., bipartisan reporting by media personnel, commitment to and exercise of reporting ethics like maintaining and furthering secularism, respecting democratic values and multiculturalism and something which has become more important since the last three decades i.e. ownership patterns of mass media. Mass media is expected to operate without fear and favour. It is expected to function without the fear of powers that be and without taking or giving favours to direct or indirect monetary stakeholders. First and foremost, the responsibility and commitment of mass media is to the most important stakeholders being the audience and viewers. Audience and viewers are the most important elements of mass media from the standpoint of business as well as collaboration to make the democracies successful. Hence the objective coverage of news is both an ethical necessity as well as the professional requirement.

As stated, one of the most important stakeholders in the functioning of mass media being the audiences and viewers, they play a very important role to ensure the mass media remains objective in the coverage of the news and reporting standards prescribed by various regulatory mechanisms are adhered to. Regulatory mechanisms are created by the experts from the field who work in close coordination with government agencies. Whether it is the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the apex body to have oversight on the mass media in India or the self regulations exercised by the mass media.

This begs the question, why is objective coverage important and what would be the effect/s on society in the absence of objective coverage?

The necessity of objective coverage, apart from being to strengthen political democracy, is also needed to create, sustain and expand social and economic democracy. Political representation of the citizens is an ingredient for

legislations which have long term impacts on the socio economic wellbeing of citizens and nation states. Mass media, when functioning in an objective manner, fulfils two roles of information dissemination and public education. Public education role of mass media helps the citizens to identify the necessary characteristics of political representation. Mass media can successfully execute the role of public education only when it is functioning in an objective manner and to do that mass media needs to give utmost importance to objective coverage of news, both when the elections are being conducted and during the election cycles. In India, we have the election cycles across the year, whether it is elections being conducted at the grassroots level like Panchayats, civic councils or the state and national levels. Hence the electorate needs to be well informed to arrive at the decision about which party, alliance, or candidate they will be voting for and why. What is the trade-off for the voters for voting in favour of something or against something. That could be voting in favour of or against an ideology, an issue, a policy etc. For that decision to arrive at voters, they need to be informed which can be achieved only by objective reporting. Once the election cycle is over, it doesn't reduce the necessity of objective reporting, rather it increases the necessity of the same because through that the voters can and must take stock of the policy situation and hold policymakers to account via mass media. If objectivity isn't maintained, the people may not get the desired information in a timely manner on important issues and that can lead to trust deficit between the government, citizens and mass media. Further, lack of objectivity can also create societal tensions or aggravate the existing ones. This can affect the peace and composure of society leading to conflicts and disruptions within and outside the nation states. Lack of objectivity in news leads to generation of information asymmetries, which has the potential of affecting economic decision making in a negative manner. Hence objectivity and objective coverage of news is multifarious in nature.

Consolidation of mass media ownership has affected the objectivity of news, as more and more news outlets have directly or indirectly affiliated themselves to one or the other political ideology or political outfit. Reason for affiliating with a particular ideology or section or faction of political party being, mass media can benefit from economies of scale when they can gather more viewership by creating either the confirmation bias or the sense of insecurity and uncertainty amongst the masses. This is especially seen during the election cycle, but otherwise also, media outlets engage in such practices. Because more viewership leads to more hours of news cycles without investing technical or human resources into identifying and disseminating critical issues, while simultaneously benefiting from the advertising revenue generated by Tele Rating Points (TRP) which is based on viewership during a particular time period. Corporations which have bought considerable stakes into the media industry or the ones which own the media outlets completely, benefit from these information asymmetries and confirmation biases. This, apart from having a serious negative impact on the political environment, can also impact the economic environment negatively.

The level of media bias across the world was also witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the media was seen engaging in justification of decisions taken by governments without taking into account what the scientific community had to say about the decisions. The rationale behind lack of objectivity during the pandemic was given as financial sustainability of organisations being the paramount concern. This is exactly where the mass media and specifically journalism has to be ready to take on the questions from the masses about their commitment to objectivity and what are the long term implications for strengthening objectivity.

The studies conducted by media observers indicated a trend where the lack of objectivity in the reporting and editorials over the issues of governance, economy, politics and security correlate with the bias within the readers about those issues. Which means, lack of objectivity is not just the product of media consolidation or political, ideological affiliations, it also reveals the furtherance of existing socioeconomic biases within the masses and media validating those biases in order to remain relevant in the highly concentrated traditional media industry. The double challenge of lack of objectivity in mass media and inherent societal biases over critical governance issues, may seem less impactful in the short run. But the combination of these factors, further getting enhanced by the state support can be disastrous in the long run, disastrous not just for the democratic functioning but also the feasibility to function as a civilised society.

Apart from objectivity getting questioned in general news coverage, lack of same during the elections can be detrimental to the ability of voters to make informed choices. It is the media which determines what constitutes an "informed choice" because the media owns the power to make or break the public opinion in favour of or against the individuals, the issues or the organisations.
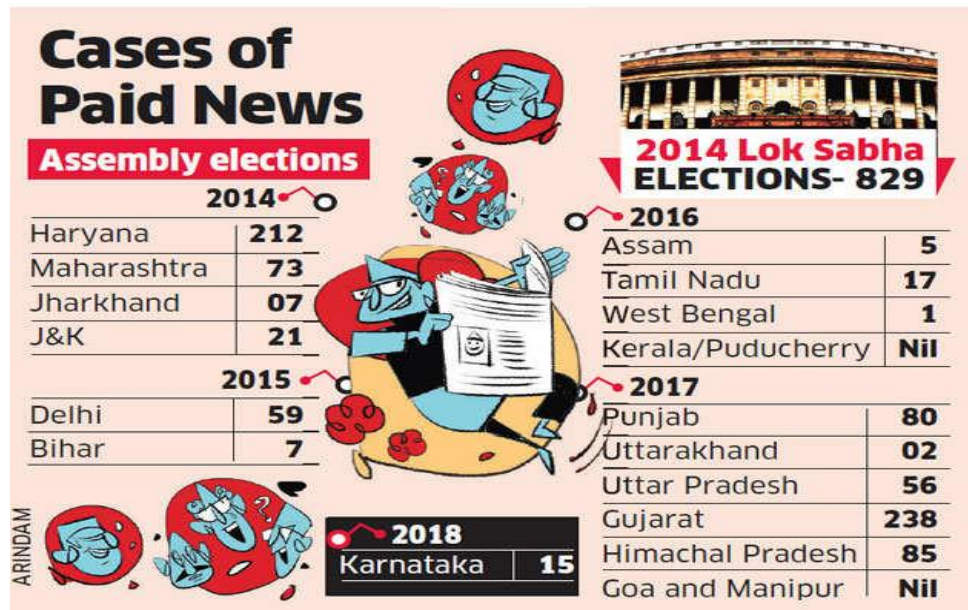
To arrest the decrease in media objectivity, the financing routes of media can be decentralised and ownership patterns can be more democratised. This can be started by small and medium size media firms who have limited resources to begin with but have commitment towards free, fair and objective media. Once the media firms start taking these concrete steps to maintain ethical conduct while not compromising on the financial front, the public support for them will increase.

T.N. Ninan of Business Standard once said: *"We have never reached such a high level of readership and low level of credibility. We have never seen such a proliferation of broadcast media, but at the same time consolidation is going on among top 4 or 5 players at a feverish pitch. We have raised the quality of content to a never before level but at the same time our ethical level has plummeted to a new low. The public for the first time has been maintaining a safe distance from media organisations as a caution, but many consider this as both the best and worst times for the media in the country".*

The unwillingness of the mass media to take stock of the limitations and their functions during elections have created a new set of problems like lack of objectivity in reporting and paid news. This has put the onus on the media to come clean on the accountability parameter, especially in this era of post - truth world.

These changes have affected the core reporting actions of media outlets which in the past were known as "developmental" reporting. Due to break neck speed of news cycles and constant pressure to beat the competitors to get a unique and interesting scoop to capture maximum attention of viewers, media houses have ignored the investments required for maintaining the dedicated beats and resources for core reporting. These are now being taken care of by independent journalists and reporters who understand and follow the basic ethics of journalism and reporting and have genuine interest in carrying out meaningful journalism. The numbers of these journalists are rather low and after a while either they have to co-opt their operations with some large media house or stop the work as it ceases to be economically sensible for them. Due to this, field reporting has seen dramatic and not so positive changes in the past two decades. Because there is a lack of journalists and reporters engaged in field reporting, the understanding of problems of people gets affected and they are highlighted directly during the elections which creates a 'knowledge gap' of sorts in the mass media about the issue. This knowledge gap is then compensated through below average reporting or sensationalism during the elections or otherwise also. It is incumbent upon the media houses and the owners, functionaries of media enterprises to understand the critical opinions of masses about them and what corrective measures can be taken to reinstate the trust.

Another challenge that the democracies are facing when it comes to interaction between the mass media and politics in general and electoral politics in particular is paid news. Paid news is a phenomenon where a narrative is built around a person or an institution which has paid to create a positive perception about oneself amongst the broader masses. The narrative explicitly or implicitly portrays the beneficiary in positive light, except one very important detail, i.e., that narrative in the media is an advertisement disguised as news. To put it simply, someone pays the news organisation to praise their decisions or actions in a positive light instead of being critical. Being critical is a primary requirement for mass media, especially journalism, to be able to disseminate the information in an unbiased manner. Fact that the media outlets are getting monetary benefits and public figures and institutions extending monetary benefits in exchange of positive reporting, is tantamount to corruption. This corruption is not just a legal one but also an ethical one, because mass media and public figures and institutions are short changing the masses and depriving them from the truth about their activities.

Cases of Paid News

Assembly elections

2014

Haryana	212
Maharashtra	73
Jharkhand	07
J&K	21

2015

Delhi	59
Bihar	7

2018

Karnataka	15

2014 Lok Sabha ELECTIONS- 829

2016

Assam	5
Tamil Nadu	17
West Bengal	1
Kerala/Puducherry	Nil

2017

Punjab	80
Uttarakhand	02
Uttar Pradesh	56
Gujarat	238
Himachal Pradesh	85
Goa and Manipur	Nil

WHAT IS 'PAID NEWS'?

'Paid news' has been defined by the Press Council of India as any news or analysis appearing in any media (print & electronic) for a price in cash or kind as consideration.

Bad news about 'paid news'	Dos	Don'ts	Decided case of paid news
● Misleads public and hampers the ability of people to form correct opinions ● Influences voters and affects their right to information ● Seeks to circumvent election expenditure laws/ceiling	● News should be clearly demarcated from advertisements by printing disclaimers ● News must always carry a credit line and should be set in a typeface that would distinguish it from advertisements	● There should not be any discreet exchange of money or favours to ensure positive content or negative content aimed at a political party or any candidate ● No undue credit to be given to political party or any candidate	Print media cases would be sent to ECI, which refers them to the PCI for action; electronic media cases would be referred to National Broadcasters Association. **RAJESH LAKHONI,** Chief Electoral Officer

The enabling environment for paid news is created because of the reliance of political parties on wealthy individuals to support the candidature of them as well as the candidature of those individuals who are not financially well endowed. This affects the intra party democracy negatively further, in most cases, the intra party democracy is non existent already. If not for wealthy individuals contesting elections, the campaign finances are also sometimes taken care of by lobbyists and the corporate sector. The interests of corporate sector, lobbyists, media enterprises are intertwined to get the legislations drafted in their favour to further concentrate the financial and political levers of power. Hence, if not the politicians, the lobby groups or industry bodies can engage in paid news to deliberately push the public opinion in favour of incumbent parties because they need to accrue the returns on investment they have made with the parties or alliances in power.

The inability of many candidates to finance their campaigns and resorting to paid news, for which substantial or full financial assistance is guaranteed by wealthy candidates or the corporate sector, is just one part of the problem in the electoral process. Second and more critical problem is the anonymous nature of donations enabled by legislation and anti defection legislation which do not provide any moral agency to the candidate even if he/she is elected to stand up for or against the issues which their electorate finds resonance with, while going against the party stand. It only further enables the malpractices like paid news getting normalised through other means like being part of media conclaves and making sure that the candidate or the political party is projected as the only alternative for the voters. The paid news in this case becomes the cause as well as the effect of democratic decline and trust deficit amongst the government and masses.

Many times the paid stories are not just limited in the form of general beat reports, but also are used in features, special reports and even editorials, sometimes even getting published in different newspapers on the same day. Only difference would be the positioning of the paid news in different papers. If one paper gives it the space in features columns, another may give space on the editorials page, one other may give space on the OpEd (opposite of editorial) page. It takes years of keen observation and ability to find similarities and differences in editorial stance, that one can see the paid news in action being touted as the "independent voice of the newspaper".

The menace of paid news became more dominant with the foreign portfolio investments into the domestic enterprises, especially the ones which own and operate media outlets either partially or fully. Because of this, many media outlets have started functioning as strategic investment funds across various sectors of the economy rather than just being purveyors of information and news. Excessive flow of money into the campaigns provides media outlets and politicians an opportunity to siphon off the funds and make them legitimate. The reforms of 1991 only expedited the process of media - politics convergence which was more prominent in their collaboration to own the business stakes in strategic sectors of the economy. One advantage big enterprises get when they acquire controlling stake in large media houses is, they get the benefits of IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) at their disposal at very low cost. Helps in streamlining the public relations activities and brand endorsement. Political parties, politicians seen as brands, benefit from these corporate communication solutions given by media houses at a price.

Ninan, in his book "The Turn of the Tortoise" also said, "the politicians are no longer interested in suitcases stuffed with currencies in Swiss, Mauritius or Seychelles bank accounts. Instead, they are smart enough to demand shares in business and that too a controlling stake".

The solid nexus between big money - big business - mass media - politics is now so entrenched since the last two decades that now let alone politicians or bureaucrats, even the judiciary and mass media doesn't find anything wrong in this, it has become a norm now. Paid news helps to generate political capital for individual politicians as well as political parties as a

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whole, but at the same time they also have significant impact on policy direction of economies and public finances. It can affect the economic functioning of the nations severely by creating cognitive blindspots in the minds of their readers.

Check your progress exercise 2:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Write in brief about the objectivity of news reporting.

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Check your progress exercise 3:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Write in brief about the Paid News.

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4.3 ACCOUNTABILITY OF MEDIA:

Mass media is referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy. Although, nowadays it functions more as the annexe within the superstructure of democracy, annexe from which it dictates the terms of public opinions while remaining absent from the accountability. The concept of media accountability naturally assumed significance first in western democracies because the yardsticks of media professionalism are derived from those of best global standards in governance and communication, which are predominantly created in the western hemisphere. Media provide the reflection of societies and its stakeholders engaged in various disciplines viz., Politics, Economics, Finance, Law etc.

Accountability of the media always has to be first with the people and especially with democratic principles. As stated earlier, media exercises or supposed to exercise this accountability by being objective in its coverage of news. Accountability of media is primarily concerned with self regulation of media because media should be free and independent to do its job without any pressure. But it also involves the political system and the masses. Media accountability functions slowly but it has to be a continuous and resilient process nonetheless. Mass media conglomerates can come

together and create Media Accountability Systems (MAS). MAS can sustain the efforts to maintain the freedom of the press while ensuring the moral compass of media professionals is directed right. Like in many industries, in the media industry too, the QA, QC (Quality Assurance, Quality Control) needs to be adhered to. Thus, terms like *self regulation, self control* as processes of quality management are used to show commitment of media outlets to fulfilling the accountability norms. Importance of various tried and tested methods of media self regulations is beyond any doubt.

Media accountability functions on the principle of multistakeholderism, where many stakeholders both financial and ethical, comply with best regulatory standards prevalent in the media industry. UNESCO emphasises in its document on Media Development Indicators: *"Effective self regulation is a matter of both form and culture. National media cultures may have the apparatus of self regulation - codes of ethics, ombudsman, complaints commissions, the printing and broadcasting of retractions and corrections etc. But these may be ineffective without a culture of public or peer scrutiny. Conversely, self regulation can sometimes be effectively achieved without formal national structures or bodies but by local and internal vigilance, responsiveness and transparency on questions of news ethics and accuracy".*

Media Accountability Systems can be classified into three groups. 1. Documents, 2. People and 3. Processes.

Documents

1. An ethics handbook, listing the rules which media professionals have agreed upon.

2. Internal memo reminding the staff of ethical principles.

3. Daily internal self criticism report.

4. Regular 'Letters to the editor' column/programme, including messages critical of the newspaper/magazine/TV channel/radio station.

People

1. An in-house critic, or a 'contents evaluation commision', to scrutinise the newspaper, or monitor the station.

2. An ethics committee or a 'staff review group'.

3. An outside critic paid by a newspaper to write a regular column about the paper.

4. A whistleblower who dares to denounce some abuse within the media company.

Processes

1. A separate course on media ethics required for all students in journalism.

2. Further education for working journalists: one day workshops, one week seminars, six month or one year fellowship at universities.

3. Building a database of all errors (type, cause, person involved) so as to discern patterns and take measures.

4. An ethical audit: external experts come and evaluate the ethical awareness, guidelines, conduct within the newspaper or station.

5. Annual seminar on journalism criticism organised by journalism school.

6. International cooperation to promote media quality and accountability.

   These measures of accountability will be crucial for media outlets to maintain their commitment to democratisation of news and decentralisation of ownership, which is the way forward for a sustainable and people centric approach to media functioning.

Check your progress exercise 4:

Note : Use the space given below for your answer.

Write in brief about Media Accountability.

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CONCLUSION:

In this age of exponential information, role of mass media as an arbiter and arbitrator for civil liberties cannot be more emphasised. The potent mixture of irrationality, rhetoric, and data blindness is impeding the functions of mass media like never before. Despite a very dismal picture overall about the efficacy and efficiency of media, there are certain green shoots. People have started understanding the importance of and correlation between mass media and governance. The demand for data driven, logical, humane journalism is increasing and supply even though unable to match the demand rapidly, is happening. Independent reporters, standalone investigative journalists, and journalist consortiums are coming together.

Policymakers are getting acquainted with the necessity for press freedom not just for the sake of it, but also the existence of democratic systems which

provide space for policymakers. Voices are being gathered and raised against the suppression of media freedom. Academic community is contributing like never before in understanding and mitigating the risks associated with media suppression. Foreign policy initiatives are being crafted to factor in media accountability and press freedom. Social media is both being used as an alternative for information dissemination and fact checking and being seen as a challenge to the monopoly of public opinion in the hands of few.

The mass media is said to be the reflection of the society it operates within, but that should not be the reason for mass media to play to the gallery and be populist in their operations. There is a reason why mass media is referred to as the fourth pillar of democracy. This pillar needs more meaningful participation of people at large, because citizens function both as the producers and consumers of mass media in a hyper connected digital world. The office of Media Ombudsman can be created where it doesn't exist or can be further strengthened where it already exists.

It is incumbent upon the media houses and the owners, functionaries of media enterprises to understand the critical opinions of masses about them and what corrective measures can be taken to reinstate the trust.

In a vibrant democracy, criticism of its institutions is a healthy sign of people seeking accountability from them. Even if the talking points are about the function or dysfunction of media or democracy, the citizens need to be proactive contributors to the working of them. Government, civil society and mass media should be unified in their efforts to advance the democratic ethos, hence they cannot be looked at separately.

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