

# Role of media in india

Media



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Role of Indian Media in the New Age The following is the speech given by Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of HRD and C & IT, on the topic: " Role of Indian Media in the New Ag", presiding as the Chief Guest for the 'Press Club Awards for Excellence in Journalism' , on 5th May, 2012 at The NSCI, Worli, Mumbai. I am privileged to be here with you on a day the media celebrates its exceptional performers. I congratulate all those who have received awards and wish them continued success in their profession.

The media has emerged as a pillar of the modern State. The foundation of a modern democratic State lies in its ability to secure fundamental rights promised to its people, to deliver justice and lead its people to economic and social progress. Democracy is defined by freedom of speech and expression. Media is an embodiment of these rights that define democracy. If we look back into history, the emergence of the modern nation-state where the sovereignty vested in its people is closely related to the spread of the printing press.

Gutenberg's Bible (the first printed book) was a precursor to the spread of democracy and republican thought across the world. Rousseau was mild mannered, but his thoughts disseminated by the newspapers in the coffee houses of Paris resulted in the French Revolution. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity as the slogan for the Revolution owes much to the media of the day. The Indian media has been truly a pillar of the Indian State. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. The Indian media has indeed been vigilant and persuasive in protection of freedoms and awakening thought.

If we have preserved our democracy in the midst of periodic lapses into dictatorships in our neighbourhood, the credit should go to our founding

fathers who created robust institutions and to the media who kept a vigilant watch at preserving these institutions. However, the nature of media has also been changing over the last two decades. The emergence of the electronic media in India over two decades ago since the first war to be witnessed live by millions in the cosy comforts of their homes, brought the power of imagery to the forefront.

The growing dominance of imagery over substance in an era where time is of the essence and competition is intense, has brought about the need for stoking fires, beaming controversies and heated debates in the media. The divergence of approach between the print and the electronic media has been amply demonstrated in the events of the last year. Todaya€™s media does not provide much space for settling differences, it prefers to dog the protagonists forever reminding them of the past. There is a problem with this approach. We do not sufficiently celebrate our achievements, we do not appreciate the progress that we make.

The spread of negative sentiment leads to despondency and inaction. Infact, todaya€™s headline in a prominent newspaper speaks of the fear that stalks the corridors of bureaucracy. Despite the exhortation of the Prime Minister, the civil services today is afraid of action, for any action can be questioned. Faith and trust in all institutions are being eroded. Rampant mistrust, I believe, has slowed governance and if not corrected, can imperil the foundations of democracy. We have much to correct, but it is necessary for room for correction to be available.

When there is a dispute in a family, the members retire to a place of seclusion to settle their differences. Today, there is no such place available

due to the omnipotence of media. Competition spurs innovation, but unhealthy competition can lead to pandering. The rush for eyeballs in a crush of problems leads to extremes being aired rather than the moderate being heard. In such a situation, the responsibility of the media to the larger society gets diluted. At the same time, I would for one strongly oppose attempts to impose responsibility through regulatory action.

It is for the media to ponder and find solutions for itself. If the media fails to do so, just as we are witnessing a clamour for judicial accountability because the judiciary has not succeeded in inculcating responsibility within itself, a similar clamour for media accountability would grow. Another trend that has emerged in the recent years is the growth of the social media riding in the ICT revolution. Social interactions have exploded as never before, aided by the connecting power of the internet. The ability of thoughts to converge and congregate have multiplied manifold.

These interactions have led to questioning of the present order and the search for a better world through the social media. The outpourings of protests all over the world – from “Occupy Wall Street” to the “Arab Spring”, from the “Lokpal agitation” to the million mutinies erupting across the globe - made 2011, the Year of the Protestor. Street dissent in Democracies has become prevalent. Simultaneously, we are witnessing the overthrow of Dictatorships. Thoughts and deeds, actions and reactions jump across the globe to reach the mind-space of people in the twinkling of an eye.

The internet today is the public square of the Grecian city-state democracies. And media is slowly ceding space to the internet as the harbinger of news

and views. Our country is a nation of vast diversity and complexity. We were fortunate that our founding fathers bequeathed us an edifice that we could be proud of. A free media is a pillar of this edifice. It holds up the State and seeks accountability from it. The events of the recent past have led us to introspect on the basic elements of our State. Let the media not stay away from this introspection. Thank you.