



ROLE OF INDIAN MEDIA DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC (A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH)

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Abstract

The word Covid 19 has taken world to the storm. There were many speculations on the virus by many countries, government, media, science, technology, etc. It took a long time for the people to understand the virus. The world had seen the disaster during the first wave of covid 19 and its impact on human lives, trade, industry, commerce, business etc. It took long time for the scientists to identify the virus and first option was only certain parameters of self-protection. The media had and has greater role to play with regard to create and make people aware because media is the strongest pillar of the democracy of a country. In good times or bad times media has to play ethical role in supporting the governance of a country with a sense of responsibility in such pandemic situation. The right information should reach the people in the right time to know the status of any information.

Keywords: - Pandemic, virus, information, role, governance.

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Introduction

As covid -19 continues to spread in the country, testing of virus and the role of media testing also continues in the same. The public authority appears to be somewhat reluctant to allow basic voices to express their opinion about the manner by which the emergency is being managed. There is an unequivocal assumption that the media's inclusion ought to be "positive" and follow the authority line. This paper examines the journalism as an important platform. The deadly spread of Covid-19 proves that this is the challenging health emergency time for government authorities and media all together. At the time of crises, it seem many times the Governments take very dangerous turn by through their decisions. At that time Media has to play a responsible role in any democratic society, because media has ideally observe as credible platform for sharing the information and critical rational discourse. Crises is the best situation when the health of journalism can be examined, But it is also true that conglomerate media bodies also means to become an instrument of the ideological equipment for the state.

When we fight for the covid-19 in our country, we are associated with so many concerns like ill-equipped health system and machinery, lack of planning to control the pandemic and the policies to control the pandemic. All these issues are in the demand for the examination. The main stream media block the expectation and their role in democratic. There was lots of criticism about the migration of labourers in the country during pandemic. At the same time minor community failed to criticize the lack of measures to help them in the crises.

Manipulation of Conversation

Prime Minster Narendra Modi appeal and asked to Media owners of print and electronic media for support the government efforts to control the pandemic and advised them to run the positive news related to covid-10, just before 24 March-2020, announcement of nationwide lock down. Their business interests persuade them for follow the government requests for investigate and reporting the real situation of Lock down. Journalism is an ethical practice in any democracy. But the conglomerate media ownership changed the autonomy and freedom of journalism. And in Indian journalism this was the common feature to watch. As we aware that Indian Media is in very much control by the corporate houses because of this Indian media is the battleground of ideologies and ethics. The media houses fight with each other on their ethics and credibility many times. And

raised the counter voices on the genuine public issues of society during this pandemic. During this lock down , the international media or you can say the internet media and small media houses played a very important role in factual and more variety of information but unfortunately these small platforms does not have such vast access in the masses as the big media houses. In electronic as well as print no English media platforms was seen to playing a responsible role during this outbreak. The English print media in our country also raised some genuine questions in a selected part of readership, but it was very small in number. The government is not in the mood to listen any rational criticism by the media houses during the lockdown. On 31 March, government got a direction that, "no electronic /print media/web portal or social media shall print/public or telecast anything without find out the fact from the separate agency or mechanism of the central government." The most affected community were the migrant labourers after a short notice and announcement of nationwide lockdown. This announcement gave people only four hours to move from here to there. In this short span of time migrant labourers were worst affected. In the absence of work and system in cities, thousands of laborers and their families. With non-availability of transports facility, many labors and their families started their journey on bare foot because they desperately wanted to go their homes. But tragically, many one of these brutally tortured by the police or many of them have died. It was experienced that lock down was worse in comparison to covid-19 especially for the homeless and poor people of the society. While media made visible their difficulty. For the sensational value, some media houses were covered the laborers problems in a prominent way. 24 hours they were running the stories, interview and pictures of the community but it was insufficient. Apart from the sensitization news, journalism still survives by the some sincere journalists in the main stream media. Some of English dailies covered the disaster with ground level investigative reporting with more sensitivity. Even doctors and nurses were heavily trolled on social media platforms whenever they express their grievances because they faces the problems of medical protective equipment's.

Media ugliest moment of Islam phobic Fear

Media awful moment was to coverage the Delhi's Tablighi Jamat Markaj. According to the reported news in media many participants left the Markaz and many more were still in the mosque because of lockdown and were later found infected. Tablighi Jamat was blamed for violating

the lock down norms and it was biased and contradictory coverage on the name of corona jihad, Islamic insurrection or corona terrorism by media. This was the fake news and propagated by the main stream media to attack on Muslims community. Due to this coverage on social media networking sites a public opinion was generated in masses that Muslims are responsible for the pandemic. In January, the virus was firstly identified in India. The inadequate and lack of planning by the government authorities was not questioned by the main stream media. Neither was it asked by the media to the government that why the other religious community gathered in a large number in the places. No one questioned them that whoever given them permission to violate the rules of lockdown. They were never be criticized by the media in the same manner as the Muslims community. However some journalist asked the questions about this they threatened with a legal action.

Media Accountability Matters

Natural growth of media consumption was noticed during the entire lockdown because most of people were at home. So for getting the more information about the Covid -19, people are using various media platforms but what was provided by the media, is it facts or fictions. The media has become the tool of propaganda and sensationalism. A Chinese's conspiracy reported by the some media channels for the spread of Covid-19. In such a "positive" climate, the news identified with workers' mass departure and the markaz was generally introduced because of its exciting worth.

The genuine circumstance would not have acquired consideration in any case, notwithstanding the ground-level reports by the serious writers and web-based media inclusion. People came out in the streets, balcony's, gallery's with clapping, banging utensils, shouting religious slogans showing their masculinity so that they can defeat Covid-19 after the curfew announced. But after some time people forgotten the social distancing. Then people were again remind to switch off their residential lights for nine minutes and asked to light a candle, diyas in their balconies. It was a festival become by the media. It is true that chanting the words of , "go corona", virus not really eradicated. But media sells this with a real hyper experience. The minimization of the emergency and a poisonous "inspiration" is administering the media. The very honest conversations and measures might be taken by the government during the serious threat if Corena-19. And these measures never be in the critical radar

of Journalism. The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) fund has been created by the center government to combat the pandemic. In the same way, many businesses and corporate houses and common people of the country also contributed and donated in this fund. But questions is that what is the need to create this fund as the Prime Minister Relief Fund already been working from 1948. All this issues regarding of creation of Funds required a serious and intensive journalistic investigation for the public interest. It is true that economy of country threatened to deteriorating after the pandemic, this issue also be investigate by the journalistic approach. Media Industry, especially the print media worries about their circulation, readership and advertising revenues during the lock down. Even Media professionals concerns with their job security, health risk, abuses by the police at the stake to cover the Covid-19 situation for their media houses. Even some media houses started cost cutting in their regular expense in terms of cutting the wages and jobs of employees. The media industry has the continuous growth phenomena during the last three decades and Indian media industry converted into the biggest market in the world. This is the always be asked question that what should be the role of government and media in such crucial situation. This is the time to examine the role of corporate houses, state and the media houses to avoid the threatens to democracy. Will this change the society and governance model? Media needs to introspect these questions.

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