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UNVEILING THE BIAS: ANALYZING MEDIA'S SELECTIVE OUTRAGE THROUGH A RELIGIOUS LENS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines, the “Selective outrage” of media and what repercussion it has on the democracy at large and also how does it effect the public trust, My paper draws attention to the few of many incidents where media selected a news to showcase it day/night meanwhile ignoring other news that is of same type or magnitude and this “Selection” is not random but according to the ideological/religious beliefs. Bias exist in media from time of its inception and there is nothing to be agitated by the fact that bias exist in media, at last the media is just an institution which is actually run by people who themselves have some beliefs, faith. And no matter how much a person denies and declares himself to be “unbiased”, the very fact about his belief system and ideology do affect his way of seeing a particular issue.

LITREATURE REVIEW

Media bias is the bias of journalists and news producers within the mass media in the selection of many events and stories that are reported and how they are covered. The term "media bias" implies a pervasive or widespread bias contravening of the standards of journalism, rather than the perspective of an individual journalist or article. The direction and degree of media bias in various countries is widely disputed.

Practical limitations to media neutrality include the inability of journalists to report all available stories and facts, and the requirement that selected facts be linked into a coherent narrative. Government influence, including overt and covert censorship, biases the media in some

countries, for example China, North Korea, Syria and Myanmar. Politics and media bias may interact with each other; the media has the ability to influence politicians, and politicians may have the power to influence the media. This can change the distribution of power in society. Market forces may also cause bias. Examples include bias introduced by the ownership of media, including a concentration of media ownership, the subjective selection of staff, or the perceived preferences of an intended audience.

There are a number of national and international watchdog groups that report on bias of the media, The majority of articles or news cuttings available over internet on the issue of media bias and selective outrage is quite limited and in fact whatever is available over internet mainly represents the narrative of "LEFT" ideology only, my research paper will focus the same issue from Neutral perspective and what are the possible solutions to the problem of selective outrage of media

INTRODUCTION

The media are often accused of bias favoring a particular religion or of bias against a particular religion. In some countries, only reporting approved by a state religion is permitted, whereas in other countries, derogatory statements about any belief system are considered Hate crimes and are illegal.

Scholar Sarah Hughes, in a study published in 2016, argued that the panic "both reflected and shaped a cultural climate dominated by the overlapping worldviews of politically active conservatives" whose ideology "was incorporated into the panic and reinforced through" tabloid media, sensationalist television and magazine reporting, and local news. Although the panic dissipated in the 1990s after it was discredited by journalists and the courts, Hughes argues that the panic has had an enduring influence in American culture and politics even decades later.

In 2012, *Huffington post*, columnist Jacques Berlinerblau argued that secularism has often been misinterpreted in the media as another word for atheism, stating that: "Secularism must be the most misunderstood and mangled ism in the American political lexicon. Commentators on the right and the left routinely equate it with Stalinism, Nazism and Socialism, among other dreaded

isms. In the United States, of late, another false equation has emerged. ¹ That would be the groundless association of secularism with atheism. The religious right has profitably promulgated this misconception at least since the 1970s."

According to Stuart A Wright , an American professor of Sociology there are six factors that contribute to media bias against minority religions: first, the knowledge and familiarity of journalists with the subject matter; second, the degree of cultural accommodation of the targeted religious group; third, limited economic resources available to journalists; fourth, time constraints; fifth, sources of information used by journalists; and finally, the front-end/back-end disproportionality of reporting. According to Yale Law professor Stephen Carter, "it has long been the American habit to be more suspicious of – and more repressive toward – religions that stand outside the mainline Protestant-Roman Catholic-Jewish troika that dominates America's spiritual life." As for front-end/back-end disproportionality, Wright says: "news stories on unpopular or marginal religions frequently are predicated on unsubstantiated allegations or government actions based on faulty or weak evidence occurring at the front-end of an event. As the charges weighed in against material evidence, these cases often disintegrate. Yet rarely is there equal space and attention in the mass media given to the resolution or outcome of the incident. If the accused are innocent, often the public is not made aware.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR MEDIA

Media is considered to be the fourth pillar of democracy, it stands together with THE Legislature, The Judiciary, The executive. the very first case regarding media and its freedom to publish and circulate the same was raised in the famous landmark case of [ROMESH THAPPAR VS STATE OF MADRAS]²

In which Supreme court of India for the very first time recognized that article 19 ³ itself include freedom of media and press there is no need to add any extra provision regarding “press freedom “.

Article 19 of the Indian constitution provides life and oxygen not just to press freedom but freedom at much larger aspect, as by its multiple provisions provides various rights

ARTICLE 19-PROTECTION OF CERTAIN RIGHTS REGARDING FREEDOM OF SPEECH ETC.

19(1)-Freedom of speech and expression

19(2) -freedom to assemble without arms

19(3)-freedom of association

19(4)-freedom of residence

19(5)-freedom of trade and occupation

And as no right ever can be given on absolute terms, to avoid the misuse of the same article 19 is also comes within certain restrictions mentioned in article 19(2) -It empowers the state to make such laws as to provides reasonable restriction on the grounds mentioned below-

1. In interest of sovereignty and integrity of India

2. Public order

The rights mentioned from article 19(1) -19(5) can be curtailed on the above mentioned grounds

Media is that engine that drives democracy forward, based on quest for truth, justice and equality. In today's digital age, the need for journalists to uphold standards of accuracy, impartiality, and responsibility in their reporting is paramount to successfully overcome the challenges posed by the rapidly changing media landscape

ROLE OF MEDIA IN UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY

Before dwelling deep into our topic lets see how does or the role of media in protecting democracy in any setup ⁴

1. providing information-Media is an institution that provides information to the ongoing situation in the world to make people aware about the political events, policies of government and what not, Media is a powerful and essential tool in providing information without restriction

to the public at large which is an important requirement for the functioning of a democratic system of a country. People are unable to take part in the affairs of the country if they are unaware of what is happening in their society or if the actions of those who are ruling or governing them, which makes media as an important medium for them to know this

2.Holding leaders Accountable-The media acts as a watchdog, scrutinizing the actions of government officials and holding them accountable for their actions, if media will be stopped from reporting ,the accountability factor will not exist

3.Encouraging public debate-Media provides the perfect platform for debate and discussion which is actually a “sine quo non” in a democracy

4.Representing diverse perspective-Media kind of aid in making diverse opinion in any healthy democracy there should always be an opposition which can pin point on any scheme, policy of the ruling government which is not in favour of the people of that country,

But recent incidents shows us just the opposite side of media which is quite different from what it supposed to do and what it is doing we have many instances where rather than making the masses aware of the situation media influence them by showing just the one side of the story making a kind of narrative in support with whom there ideology match or now days its not even a hidden fact that political parties keep certain news channels and agency into payroll for showing the news or making all the possible effort to show only the one side of the coin so that the people can get influenced and that will actually aid them during the time of election

We know that, that we are living in the world of “ADVERTISMENT” where you can only sell your goods and services by the way of marketing , but there are certain noble professions which disallow the same practise like for example Rule 36 , chapter II which mention the standard of professional conduct and etiquette for the Advocates prohibits the advertisement by advocates as it is considered as the noble profession ,Same is the case with Media which is regarded as the “NOBLEST” profession of the world , but is it ? is the question whose answers will differ according to the ideology and personal gains or benefit of any individuals. if we take an example of this if you ask this question from any individual believing in the ideology of ‘LEFT’ not in general sense but specifically for reporting of media houses like NDTV , The print , The Hindu , Hindustan times , News laundry etc he will definitely answer it affirmatively same goes with the

other ideologies as well, media is in the pocket of them whom they get paid by , and in this very research paper I will highlight the same instances where we will see the ‘Biases’ shown by media in reporting of any news and how nicely keeping the political agenda in mind picks one news ,while ignore the other.

“SELECTIVE OUTRAGE” OF MEDIA

1.THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC-The COVID 19 pandemic, which started to spread in late December 2019 and which finally resulted in lockdown all over the world with life becoming stagnant , media had the huge role of making people aware about the virus educate them regarding how it spread and all the possible prevention of the same , but what it did in reality it created the ruckus and misinformation regarding the virus by creating a hue and cry among the public, The amount of misinformation and hara-kiri created by the media was so much so that there were various tweets deleted by twitter on request of Indian government. Who can forget the disturbing videos and photos of dead bodies being cremated that were shown by the media without any hesitation and shame and without even considering what effect will such kind of images will create in the mind of public, During the second wave of COVID 19 which caused the major life loss to India these images created a kind of unrest among the masses and made them sceptical about is the current Indian setup capable of handling the pandemic , there can be a counter argument to the this very point that they were just doing there job that is reporting the truth but there is a very thin line between reporting and creating fear in the minds of public in general which media I don’t know when will understand that , During the time of pandemic even the people who don’t read newspaper or watch news on regular basis ,started doing so just as to remain updated with the current numbers and information. That kind of increased the burden on media to report the same with utmost care, which it failed miserably and all this was done just to condemn the Indian government during the time of pandemic to fulfil there personal agenda, same goes with the news agency which were pro-government who blamed the Farmer protest for not giving the way for transportation of goods and services of essential goods at the time of COVID.

Here we can clearly see the bias of media it only report what suits to its agenda, The left media tried every possible manner to bring down the BJP led current NDA government during the COVID times whereas the Right wing media did whatever possible to hide every mistake of government and blaming the third party for failures of the government

2. A tale of two” RAPE”- The Hathras rape incident of September 2020 was one of the another incident that showed us the selective outrage of media, in an alleged incident media initially reported that a 19 year old dalit girl is being gang raped by four men belonging to Rajput community, That’s it the above formula is perfect for a spicy hot and a sensational news about how. A dalit girl was brutally raped by the so called upper class boys. The left media comprehensively covered the issue with the motive of net getting justice for that poor 19 year old girl who after the alleged gang rape died in hospital 2 days after, but to do every bit of thing to bring down the ruling Yogi led BJP in state of Uttar Pradesh, Simultaneously another shameful rape incident happened at that very time where a ‘MUSLIM’ man committed rape of a minor girl and latter set her house on fire. How many of us know about this gruesome act? But we all remember the ‘Hathras’ incident. Maybe because that exactly the media wanted us to know and believe, Rajasthan being a congress ruled state reported about 26 incidents of sexual crimes in about a matter of 3 days at that very time when the Hathras incident took place with 14 being committed against a minor, but forget about the reporting of such an issue there was not even a mention of that issue. My intention here are not to trivialize the Hathras rape incident but to show how much coverage did the another rape incident from a part very much belonging to India as Hathras get in front of Hathras, just because there the accused is from so called minority community and the victim wasn’t from Dalit community or any other lower caste but a ‘BHRAMIN’ media didn’t find that suiting to their propaganda.

The issue is not just about reporting of such issues but what happens after reporting of these issue, a fact that we all will agree is that we are living in such a day and age where there are so many things happening in the world, we read a news and hardly remember anything from it but what we do remember is the news constantly showing up in the news there are various cases where media played a very positive role by highlighting the dead issues and serving the justice in the end ,some of the mentions to this can be famous ‘Tandoor case, Mattoo rape and murder , Nirbhaya rape case , Rape of a German girl by son of DGP Odisha , Jessica lal murder case and

many more. These are some of the cases where media by its reporting brought justice to the case.

But you may wonder what happens to cases that do not attract any TRP, they are simply put in a cold storage of news and when the matter itself went unreported how one can expect justice to be delivered.

3.SLAP ON CHEEKS OR A SLIT ON THROAT ,Which is more graver and what should be reported by media , you might find this question quite absurd but our “UNBAISED MEDIA” already had declared which is more graver in nature and which of the above two incident deserves reporting over another issue , A ‘MUSLIM’ kid was slapped by a hindu priest while he was trying to drink water’

The news broke the internet as the recipe was perfect for yet another “SELECTIVE OUTRAGE” the platform was set for the performance of the artists who often refer themselves as “JOURNALIST”

The left media went absolutely berserk about the incident citing how much unsafe Muslim community is in India , citing various mob lynching incidents that have occurred in past with Muslim community over carrying beef.

In the meanwhile keeping there eyes totally closed in the infamous case of “Udaipur beheading “of 2022 where two Islamist terrorist slit the throat of Kahniya Lal ,a tailor whose mistake was just that his son posted a story on whatsapp supporting Nupur Sharma who made some derogatory remarks on prophet Mohammed, how many “LEFT” media houses covered the issue in fact what I can recall is , A youtuber with left ideology when asked about the incident he totally ridiculed the question. If this isn’t the “SELECTIVE OUTRAGE” what else can be . Where the media who should report the matter as it is pick and choose certain news which suit to there narrative while becomes totally blind when the news is about something going against there agenda

4. Lynching is lynching – Lynching refers to the practise of killing of a human by a crowd or mob. India is the only nation where ‘Lynching’ is also termed as communal or secular . The unfortunate killings of Akhlaq of Dadri in Uttar Pradesh and Ramalingam of Thirubuvanam in Tamil Nadu. “What has been popularly discussed as ‘Dadri lynching’ and later popularised as ‘cow lynching’ by the narrative builders and members of the LEFT gang was a ‘communal’ murder. Look at the headlines in some of the reports. ‘Indian man lynched over beef rumours’, ‘Dadri lynching’ and ‘India’s cow vigilantes’. The ‘akhlaq lynching’ is reminded systematically under some or the other pretext (sic). Mind you, this was all happening under the Samajwadi Party regime and not the ‘Yogi Raj’,” the editorial claims. The same narrative was peddled in the Junaid murder case and Pehlu Khan’s killing, the editorial notes. It adds that in the case of Ramalingam’s lynching, the same media houses have gone silent. Ramalingam was a “Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) activist, he was killed in front of his son. The FIR clearly identifies the motive ‘to warn others’ who oppose the religious conversion by extremists and still the secular silence continues. These double standards and selective outrage are the root cause of communal tensions, It adds that the killing of Akhlaq was used to create an anti-India narrative while the killing of Ramalingam would strengthen the anti-India forces ⁵. These two stories again point out to the major issue of selective outrage by media , like how well the killing of “MUSLIM” man get so much coverage and highlight whereas when the victim is from other community the news don’t get the desired attention. And this fact is not limited just to the victimhood but also extend when the accused is Muslim, There have been numerous instances where the media of left when the Accused is Muslim try to keep the name anonymous whereas when accused belongs to Hindu community they , blatantly show his name and also when the said accused is Hindu the media also try to give it cast angle the best possible example can be -The hathras rape case where media showed that how a dalit girl was ravished by Men belonging to Rajput community, with the sole purpose to make people believe that the present government cannot protect the interest of minority , to create discontent against the ruling government.

MY VIEWS

Media is considered as the fourth pillars of our democratic system , it is the means of communication that reaches or influences people widely, has a significant place in the statecraft

machinery especially in the age of information revolution. It is the source of information for a society regarding any issue be it local, regional or global, people rely and even trust on what is presented to them by media.

The media has become an important tool of the statecraft in the modern era. It is the 'fourth estate' which helps the state to further its interests, objectives and goals. Therefore, media act as an influential and instrumental tool with regards to building confidence or promoting mistrust among people on issues related to national security. This has also enhanced the reach and, therefore, the hold of the electronic media over the viewers' minds. It has, however, also given rise to a multiplicity of players in this field, with consequential concerns of accountability, responsibility and public good. Hence keeping all the above factors in mind media should perform its responsibility. Thus to maintain the trust of the people following principles media should follow:

- Ensuring the objective presentation of news and fair and unbiased comment, to promote the advancement of education and culture.
- Raising and maintain high standards of decency and decorum in all programmes.
- Providing programmes for the young which, by variety and content, will inculcate the principles of good citizenship.
- Promoting communal harmony, religious tolerance and international understanding.
- Treating controversial public issues in an impartial and dispassionate manner.
- Respecting human rights and dignity⁶.

CONCLUSION

Ideally, media should be impartial and free from the propaganda mechanisms. It should provide balanced account to the people. Media educates and keeps the public informed about the national and international political and other human realities taking place in everyday life. The purpose of media is to highlight the trouble spots in the society and press the government and public to devise suitable mechanisms to eliminate those troubles.

However, the potential of media as a force multiplier and a weapon of war must be realized. Failure to recognize and counter enemy's usage of media could lead to unprecedented military and national failures. It must be realized that today decisions are no longer based on events but on how the events are presented.

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