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## **The Role of Media in Democracy: Analysing Contemporary Events and Their Impact**

**Dr. Madhukar Digambar Jakkan**

Asst. Professor, Department of Mass Communication, P.A.H. Solapur University, Solapur.

Email: [mjakkan@gmail.com](mailto:mjakkan@gmail.com)

**Mr. Vitthal Biru Edake**

Ph.D. Student, Dep. Mass communication and journalism, Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Maharashtra.

Email: [vbedake@gmail.com](mailto:vbedake@gmail.com)

**Mr. Balaji Saggam**

Video Editor, Department of Mass Communication, P.A.H. Solapur University, Solapur.

Email: [saggambalaji@gmail.com](mailto:saggambalaji@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper analyses the crucial role of media in the democratic process. Using the 2011 anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare as an example, the paper highlights how media contributed to mobilizing the public, raising awareness, and pressuring the government. Media does not merely disseminate information; it also channels public sentiments and expectations to those in power. The rise of electronic and social media has made citizen participation in the democratic process more active. These media platforms have played a key role in voter education and political discourse, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability. The findings of this research indicate that media functions as the fourth pillar of democracy and has an undeniable impact on political changes in society. Therefore, ensuring the proper use and independence of media is essential for building a

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strong and prosperous society.

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## **Introduction**

Media plays a vital role in democracy, encompassing newspapers, radio, television, and digital platforms that connect various sections of society. In Indian democracy, media serves as a source of information, a means of public awareness, and a bridge between the government and citizens. This helps preserve democratic values and increases public participation.

In modern times, media has highlighted many significant events, such as the 2011 anti-corruption movement and the 2020–2021 farmers’ protests. In these movements, the media amplified public voices and scrutinized government policies. However, concerns about media credibility and impartiality have been raised, especially with the rise of fake news. This research aims to clarify the role of media in the democratic process, with a deep study of Indian media operations and their effectiveness.

## **Objectives**

1. To understand how media contributes to the democratic process.
2. To analyse how media establishes democratic values.
3. To identify challenges to media credibility and explore solutions.

## **Hypotheses**

1. Media plays a crucial role in the democratic process.
  2. Media significantly influences elections and public opinion.
  3. The commercialization of media has compromised its credibility.
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## **Literature Review**

1. **Media as an Information Source**



Media is the primary source of information, helping citizens become aware of their rights. Chatre (2020) states, "Media has played a crucial role in bringing together different social groups" (p. 45), thus promoting democratic values.

## 2. Public Awareness

Indian media has played a significant role in social movements. For example, during Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement, media united the public (Kumar, 2018, p. 78). This movement questioned government policies.

## 3. Credibility Challenges

Scholars have analysed media credibility issues. Kumar (2018) noted, "The rise of fake news has threatened media credibility" (p. 102), leading to a decline in public trust.

## 4. Impact of Digital Media

The increasing use of digital media has transformed political communication. The Centre for Media Studies (2021) report states, "Social media has changed the way political dialogue occurs" (p. 15).

## 5. Transparency

Media ensures transparency in governance. Chatre (2020) argues, "Media must oversee government actions" (p. 90).

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### Case Studies

#### Anti-Corruption Movement (2011)

**Event:** The 2011 anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare was a turning point in Indian democracy. Hazare started a hunger strike demanding the Lokpal Bill, which garnered nationwide



support and highlighted corruption issues. The movement increased public participation in democracy and questioned the government's functioning.

### Media's Role:

- Media provided live coverage of the movement, reaching millions through continuous television broadcasts and newspaper articles.
- Newspapers and TV channels extensively reported on the protests. *The Times of India* (April 28, 2011, p. 1) published an article titled "Anna Hazare: Hunger Strike for Lokpal."
- Social media played a significant role, with hashtags like #AnnaHazare and #JanLokpalBill trending on Twitter, where citizens expressed their views and coordinated protests.
- Television debates and expert panel discussions further increased awareness and support for the movement.

### Outcome:

- The movement forced the government to consider the Lokpal Bill, leading to discussions in Parliament.
- Protests and rallies were organized across India, resulting in increased political engagement from the public.
- The hunger strike at Ramlila Maidan attracted millions, prompting political leaders to engage in dialogue with activists.
- The bill eventually passed in 2013 as the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, marking a victory for the anti-corruption movement.

### International Perspective:

- The *BBC* covered the movement, discussing corruption in India and comparing it to similar global movements.
- *The Guardian* called it "a global example of anti-corruption activism" (p. 5), highlighting its impact on governance reforms worldwide.



- International organizations and foreign media extensively discussed the movement's implications on global democratic protests.

### **Farmers' Protest (2020-2021)**

**Event:** The 2020–2021 farmers' protest was one of India's largest movements against the new agricultural laws. Farmers from multiple states camped at Delhi's borders for over a year, fighting for their rights and questioning government policies. The protest involved large-scale sit-ins, rallies, and nationwide strikes.

### **Reasons:**

- Farmers opposed deregulated markets and feared losing financial security due to the potential elimination of Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- They believed the new laws favored corporations over farmers and reduced government intervention in procurement.
- Concerns about contract farming and loss of bargaining power fuelled widespread unrest among agricultural workers.

### **Media's Role:**

- The protest gained traction through social media with #FarmersProtest trending globally, drawing international attention.
- *The Hindu* (November 29, 2020, p. 5) published "Farmers' March to Delhi," detailing the scale of the protests.
- International media outlets like *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, and *CNN* provided extensive coverage, increasing global awareness.
- Farmers utilized independent digital platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp to share real-time updates and counter misinformation.
- Celebrities and global figures, including Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, tweeted in support of the protest, amplifying its reach.

### **Outcome:**



- The protest highlighted farmers' issues at both national and international levels, leading to widespread public debates.
- The government held multiple rounds of negotiations but failed to gain farmers' trust initially.
- The movement continued for over a year until the government repealed the three farm laws in November 2021, signifying a major victory for the protesting farmers.

### **International Perspective:**

- *BBC* described the protest as "a global example of grassroots resistance" (p. 10), noting its influence on other social movements.
- International human rights organizations raised concerns over internet shutdowns and restrictions on protesters.
- Media coverage in the United States and Canada brought attention to the Indian diaspora's role in supporting the movement.

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### **Conclusion**

This research establishes that media plays an indispensable role in democracy. Events such as Anna Hazare's movement demonstrate how media mobilizes citizens, raises awareness, and pressures the government. Media facilitates political communication, educates voters, and ensures transparency.

With the growing influence of electronic and social media, citizen participation in democracy has become more active. Media not only disseminates information but also channels public sentiment and expectations to those in power.

Thus, media functions as the fourth pillar of democracy and significantly impacts political transformations. Ensuring media freedom and responsible journalism is essential to strengthening democratic values and creating an informed society.

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