**E-CONTENT**

 **MJMC,  SEM-IV, PAPER-XIV (CC-402)

 Topic : Media as Social Auditor (continue..)**

 **Date : 14-01-2020, TIME : 2.00 P.M.-3.00 P.M.**

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**Media as Social Auditor (continue..)**

**Libertarian Model**

Unlike the authoritarian model of controlling the media, the libertarian model

believed that an independent media was an extension of a fundamental human

right, the right to free expression. Libertarianism represented the beginnings of a

free press, one that operated independent of state control and which emphasised

the capacity of the citizenry to make informed and responsible decisions. The

libertarian model was influenced by the thinking of the John Milton (1608–74)

who wrote a pamphlet in England in 1644 titled ***Areopagitica***. In fact it was his

speech to the parliament for unlicensensed printing of books. He stressed the

importance of free speech as a means to create open, public debates through

which, he believed, the truth would inevitably come out. This libertarian model

prevailed throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries and it radically changed the

function of the press, which attempted to free itself from the shackles of

government censorship.

Later trends of psychoanalysis presented some challenges to the libertarian model.

Where reason had previously been lauded as a sovereign principle of human

behaviour, psychoanalysts pointed out that not all human behaviour was rational.

Egalitarianism developed out of the libertarian model in response to the significant

transformation of the media in the 20th century. As a philosophical line of thought,

it focused on social equality and responsibility and two main ethical theories

consequentialism and deontology earlier discussed.

**Self-Regulation**

Many countries have regulatory bodies and laws to govern the behaviour of media.

However, rules and regulations have their limitations. Not all situations are alike

and, frequently, occasions arise that require at least a careful interpretation of

existing regulations to determine the best course of action. Moreover, regulations

and laws, for this very reason, are not exhaustive. Specific circumstances often

demand unique considerations. Self-regulation is considered the best means to

guarantee appropriate behaviour, for two major reasons. First, self-regulation

ensures that the media can continue to operate independently. An independent

media is essential for a thriving democratic society and therefore self-regulation

would be in the interest of the media as well as the state. Second, self-regulation

is a voluntary act that is not imposed externally and hence, carries more credibility

in the eyes of the public. Any state-sponsored regulation, even if brought with the

best of intentions, can be deemed authoritarian, or even draconian, and be opposed

by the media, interest groups and the public in general.

Self-regulation applies not only to media groups and organisations but also to

individual journalists. It is, therefore, of fundamental importance that media

practitioners nurture a strong ethical value system throughout their careers. You

will read more about self regulation in Unit 3 of this Block.

A free media is often described as the cornerstone of democracy: historically, the

press used to be accountable to the powers-that-be, but today those in government

and politics have perhaps to be equally accountable to the media. Recently, there

has been a spurt in instances of violent attacks against journalists, writers and

media organisations in different parts of India. In addition it has often been

criticised and viciously attacked by some politicians, bureaucrats and police

personnel. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had tried to introduce a

Defamation Bill in 1988 which was withdrawn after vehement opposition from

journalists. Earlier, during the Emergency period in 1975–77, the Union

government, headed by Indira Gandhi, had imposed censorship on the press — a

decision that was later publicly regretted by the then Information and Broadcasting

Minister Vidya Charan Shukla. Many supporters and well-wishers of the former

prime minister too felt that this specific move contributed considerably to the

electoral defeat of her party in March 1977.

On occasions, journalists believe they have been unfairly attacked. In 1999, during

the Kargil war, a reporter of the news group New Delhi Television (NDTV) was

accused of endangering the lives of Indian soldiers by using a satellite phone, an

allegation she vehemently denied. These allegations resurfaced in a different form

in December 2008 when the then Indian Navy chief accused a woman television

reporter of behaving in an unethical manner that led to the death of three Indian

soldiers, a charge that was denied by the reporter in question. Earlier, in 1989, a

television journalist was accused of concocting interviews with criminals who

were supposed to have rigged elections in Bihar — a charge she too denies.

Twenty-four hour television channels came under criticism for the manner in

which the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai were reported. Various

sections, including the Indian government, argued that the media acted in a lessthan

responsible manner and violated ethical norms while covering the incidents

of 26–28 November 2008 thereby re-igniting the debate on regulation of television

broadcasts.

Thus it is argued that over a period of time the ‘somewhat special status that the

media enjoyed as the fourth pillar of democracy has been considerably diluted’.

As a result public perception of media has altered and journalists are no longer

seen as belonging to a profession with an element of public service in it. The

‘ignorant reporting and comments’ have taken their toll and it is now up to the

media to introspect its present role and decide for its future.