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Paradigm Shift in the Policy of the Newspapers in India

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ABSTRACT

In India where written Constitution is there in which media freedom has been given a Constitutional Right, the media enjoys vast freedom and proved media. But since its inception the media ownership has been playing a critical role in setting an agenda in the news and views which are directly linked to the relationship with the media owner, has been subject to a lot of criticism for the manner in which they have disregarded their obligation of social responsibility. But since Narendra Modi led BJP comes into the power in the Union in 2014, the situation worsens, as the media has given extra task of spreading pro-incumbent agenda along with its self-interest agenda. As Union has lots of discretionary powers in regulating the media, was used in pressurising the media, results in changing the entire paradigm of the news industry. As a result all most all mainstream media including newspapers started supporting the BJP, its Hindutva and Nationalist agenda, which is unprecedented in the history of media industry in India, as India witnessed media's strong foot even during Emergency regime of Indira Gandhi. In India the media concentration has also helped a lot, as majority of the media is concentrated in the hands of very few, who own other business establishments along with the media. In this paper the researcher tries to study the social responsibility of print media in the wake of media house ownership and the State pressure.

Keywords: *Agenda Setting, Media Ownership, Newspaper, Objectivity in News, Paradigm Shift, Social Responsibility.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite in this new age of Internet Communication, the role of newspaper has its own importance and still newspaper counts first in list of main stream media. Media ownership plays a crucial role in maintaining the freedom of the press. If the ownership rests within the hands of a certain group that have specific political or business affiliations the consequences are a compromised press freedom and unhealthy democracy, which India is facing presently as each and every media house is strongly under the hold of a particular political party either it is

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national media or regional one. The remaining media owned by the independent ones are facing pressure from the Government, hence all most all mainstream media are showing the same agenda of the Union Government and no Government criticism in their reports as a result the Modi Government becomes Teflon coated which adversely affecting the responsibility of both media and the Government.

As of March, 2020, there are about 118,239 publications registered with the Registrar of Newspapers, which include over 36,000 weekly magazines alone.²

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(A) Research Objectives:

- a. To examine how the fourth pillar of democracy has turned its cause from educating the public to favouring its own interest.
- b. To study how self-interested media included the Governments stand.
- c. To know how the media concentration is adversely affecting the plurality in the news and editorial.

(B) Research Hypothesis:

- a. The watchdog of the democracy, which aims at protecting the rights of marginalised and downtrodden classes of the society, mostly indulged in self-interest tactics included supporting the incumbent.
- b. Previously Media house ownership has prominent role to play in its editorial, which gets changed.

(C) Research Methodology:

The present research is qualitative research and content analysis and the Agenda Setting theory were used as research tools to examine how many newspapers has direct political affiliation, and how many of them have no direct political affiliation. Then how along with independent newspapers the anti-BJP newspapers starts supporting the BJP by setting an Agenda which helps in hiding of the failures of the Government is analysed based on the content which the media spreads in a way that public considers it as need of the hour as said in Agenda Setting Theory, it helps to influence the viewers and create a desired public opinion. There after content analysis method is used to critically analyse, to relate such words and concepts which will help

² “List of news channels in India”, (2019) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_news_channels_in_India (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

to make inference from the content of the media.

(D) Limitations:

Due to scarcity of time and space, the researcher analyses the content of only 11 newspapers, which has highest circulation in Hindi and English national media. Similarly no study has done on all aspects, only few recent instances were analysed. No responses from the experts were included.

III. MEDIA OWNERSHIP OF LEADING NEWSPAPERS:

To study the Media Ownership in India, the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM), a research project carried out in India by RSF and the Delhi-based digital media company Data LEADS³ over six months and presented a report in Delhi on May 29, 2019. The MOM analysed 58 leading media outlets with the largest audience shares in India.

(A) Top Circulated Hindi newspapers:

India has no official language despite of this the Hindi language plays a vital role with huge readership, the country's Hindi print media market is highly concentrated in the hands of Four major Hindi Newspapers i.e. Dainik Bhaskar, Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Amar Ujala and has over 76.45% of readership share within the national Hindi language market.

Top five Hindi Newspapers and its Political Affiliation and Editorial Stand:

S.NO	Newspaper	Total Sales	Political Affiliation	Initial Stand	Present Stand
1	Dainik Bhaskar	4,318,377	Nil	Independent	Pro-BJP
2	Dainik Jagron	4,144,706	BJP/ SP	BJP then SP	Pro-BJP
3	Hindustan	2,625,343	INC	INC	Pro-BJP
4	Amar Ujala	2,610,784	Nil	Independent	Pro-BJP
5	Punjab Kesari	1,165,506	BJP	BJP	Independent

³ Data LEADS is a digital media and information initiative aimed to build data-driven storytelling, media innovations through series of reporting, training and media development initiatives, promote media research and creative educational interventions, and strengthen journalism in Asia.

1. Dainik Bhaskar:

Out of these four Newspapers the first one i.e. Dainik Bhaskar stands first with total sales of 4,318,377⁴ for the period of January to June 2018. It is owned by Dainik Bhaskar Group (D B Corp Ltd.), the largest Print Media Company of India. Started in Bhopal in 1958, it expanded in 1983 with the launch of Dainik Bhaskar's Indore edition. Today, Dainik Bhaskar Group is present in 14 states with 63 editions in Hindi, English, Marathi and Gujarati.

The Dainik Bhaskar Newspaper initially has no direct political affiliation, but later on May 24, 2018, obtained an ex-parte order from the Delhi high court restraining Cobrapost from releasing an incriminating documentary showing how Dainik Bhaskar and around two dozen of the country's leading media houses had apparently agreed to an undercover reporter's business proposal offering money for news coverage designed to polarise voters in favour of Hindutva. The web portal, which had scheduled the release of its investigation at a press conference for 3 pm on May 25, 2018, was served the order issued by Justice Valmiki J. Mehta on May 24, 2018, evening. Which states "In view of the arguments urged by the plaintiff [Dainik Bhaskar], till further orders unless varied by the court, the defendants [Cobrapost] are restrained from in any manner releasing in public domain the documentary 'Operation 136: Part II' in any manner including at the Press Club of India on 25.5.2018 at 3.00 pm." Which was announced on May 18, 2018, and mailed the same on May 10, 2018 by the Cobrapost.

In the first part of the Cobrapost, Operation 136⁵, Cobrapost's reporter, Pushp Sharma, posed as a religious activist, Acharya Atal, claiming to represent an unnamed "sangathan", or organisation, whose goal was to help the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls by promoting Hindutva through the media, polarising the electorate, and maligning the BJP's rivals through slanted stories, as a result several media houses were agreed to the said proposal caught on camera.⁶

The manner in which the group obtained ex-parte injunction raises a serious doubt as stated by the Cobrapost.⁷ Which was against the the judgment of the Supreme Court of India in 2011.⁸ All these happened as the employers were clearly indulged in the paid news scandal.⁹

⁴ "Audit Bureau of Circulations Highest Circulated Daily Publications", (2019) available at [http://www.auditbureau.org/files/JJ2018%20Highest%20Circulated%20amongst%20ABC%20Member%20Publications%20\(language%20wise\).pdf](http://www.auditbureau.org/files/JJ2018%20Highest%20Circulated%20amongst%20ABC%20Member%20Publications%20(language%20wise).pdf) (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁵ The number "136" in the title of the documentary is a reference to India's poor ranking in the world press freedom index.

⁶ "Dainik Bhaskar Gets High Court to Block Fake News Expose", (2018) <https://thewire.in/media/dainik-bhaskar-gets-high-court-to-block-fake-news-expose-of-big-media> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ramrameshwari Devi v. Nirmala Devi, (2011) 8 SCC 249.

⁹ "Dainik Bhaskar Gets High Court to Block Fake News Expose" (2018) <https://thewire.in/media/dainik-bhaskar->

2. Dainik Jagron:

Dainik Jagron has second in total sales with 4,144,706¹⁰ for the period of January to June 2018 was founded in 1942 by Puran Chandra Gupta during Quit India movement. Dainik Jagron was launched with the vision of founder Shri Puran Chandra Gupta, to create a newspaper that would reflect the free voice of the people edited by Narendra Mohan¹¹. It is owned by Jagran Prakashan Limited, a publishing house listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange of India. Jagran Prakashan Limited also acquired Mid-Day in 2010 and Naiduniya in 2012.¹²

The Editor of the Dainik Jagron was initially Narendra Mohan Gupta in 1990s, was a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, nominated by the BJP in November 1996. In 1994, Dainik Jagron and Amar Ujala became the target of the “Halla Bol (raise your voice)” campaign, against the Samajwadi Party, which was ruling the State. In 1995 the paper came into conflict with the Bahujan Samaj Party by publishing, an interview on December 7, 1995 with a former party member who claimed Mayawati was the mother of a 12-year-old child born out of wedlock. Again in 2004, Mayawati planned legal action against Dainik Jagron once again for publishing derogatory and casteist headlines. Members of BSP party had reportedly filed FIRs against the editor in chief and other employees under the Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Then also the paper had pleaded accidental error. Then again in 2006, the newspaper had made an unbelievable arrangement with the powerful Samajwadi Party, which has become so powerful in Uttar Pradesh, which results in chairman; Mahendra Mohan Gupta became a Rajya Sabha MP from the Samajwadi Party. Dainik Jagron has business interests that spread from newspapers to cement and real estate, among other things. To protect the Business of Jagron group, it shifted from Samajwadi Party to BJP as it could profit more with the BJP than SP. The Newspaper has degraded to its worst as it was involved in Paid News, before the Uttar Pradesh elections of 2012, the Election Commission had disqualified a member of the legislative assembly from the Rashtriya Parivartan Dal for getting paid news published in two Hindi dailies Dainik Jagron and Amar Ujala. Indeed, that year, the election watchdog confirmed 97 cases of paid news in UP. The paper do not gave much place in their Newspaper the Dadri beef lynching of September 2015, in which BJP workers were

gets-high-court-to-block-fake-news-expose-of-big-media (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

¹⁰ Supra note. 14.

¹¹ “About Jagran New Media”, (2020) <https://www.jagran.com/about-us.html> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

¹² “Dainik jagaran”, (2020) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dainik_Jagran (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

involved.¹³

It has been accused of favouring BJP in 2017, 2019¹⁴. It has also been booked under Section 188¹⁵ of the Indian Penal Code for disobeying the orders of a public servant. Polling agency run by a psychologist Devendra Kumar is considered to be close to the BJP.¹⁶ Despite of all these blunders of Jagran, it never lost its saffron associations, which benefited the Group in all ways from circulation to awards to the editor in chief in response to its strong pro BJP propaganda.

3. Hindustan:

Hindustan is a Hindi language daily newspaper with total sales of 2,625,343¹⁷ for the period of January to June 2018 fourth largest circulated newspaper. Madan Mohan Malaviya started Hindustan in 1936. It is published by Hindustan Media Ventures Limited. Earlier it was part of HT Media Ltd group, which gets separated its Hindi business into a separate company named Hindustan Media Ventures Limited in December 2009.¹⁸

This newspaper was initially inaugurated by Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi in 1924, it played integral roles in the Indian independence movement as a nationalist and pro-Congress daily. The newspaper is owned by Shobhana Bhatia. It is the flagship publication of HT Media, an entity controlled by the KK Birla family. During British regime the paper was pro congress to support independence of India but the media group continues its stand till now by supporting the Indian National Congress (INC) Party's ideology, as a result the Group Chief Shobhana Bhatia was nominated Member of Rajya Sabha in 2012, when INC was ruling the Centre, hence the newspaper stand is always pro INS and against BJP and its allies.

The political controversies of HT Media not only limited to Pro INS, its controversies are so

¹³ Ipsita Chakravarty, "Heartland of the matter: "Dainik Jagran" has been accused of mixing business with politics before", (2007) <https://scroll.in/article/829460/heartland-of-the-matter-dainik-jagran-has-been-accused-of-mixing-business-with-politics-before> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

¹⁴ Representation of the People Act, 1951, s.126A.

¹⁵ Whoever, knowing that, by an order promulgated by a public servant lawfully empowered to promulgate such order, he is directed to abstain from a certain act, or to take certain order with certain property in his possession or under his management disobeys such direction, shall, if such disobedience causes or tends to cause obstruction, annoyance or injury, or risk of obstruction, annoyance or injury, to any persons lawfully employed, be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both and if such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, or causes or tends to cause a riot or affray, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

¹⁶ Abhishek Srivastava, "Why Dainik Jagran will get away with the exit poll" (2017) <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/news/why-dainik-jagran-will-get-away-with-exit-poll-failure-election-commission-identify-pollster-alleged-advertiser> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

¹⁷ Id note. 14.

¹⁸ "Hindustan Media Ventures", About us (2020) <http://www.hmvl.in/aboutus.html> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

strange as the Group employees are working under the pressure from outside the media owners which include the Executive Editor Shishir Gupta removed in 2017, after Frontline reported about editor's emails to Amit Shah and Mr Shah's Officer on Special Duty. The Frontline story detailed how the Prime Minister's Office was taking extraordinary interest in the Delhi Government led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.¹⁹ Then again in the same year Bobby Ghosh removed from the HT Group in September 2017 after Shobhana Bhartia met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, because Bobby Ghosh runs Hate Tracker, a crowd-sourced database on the Hindustan Times website that recorded hate crimes in India.²⁰ The HT Group is unable to stand in its own stand to decide what has to be published based on the journalistic ethics and

4. Amar Ujala:

Amar Ujala is a daily Hindi newspaper with total sales of 2,610,784²¹ for the period of January to June 2018 fifth largest circulated newspaper, which was founded in Agra in the year 1948 by Murari Singh Maheshwari and Dori Singh Agarwal.²²

Amar Ujala newspaper is 100% controlled by Amar Ujala Publications Limited. Rajul Maheshwari and Sneha Lata Maheshwari.²³

Amar Ujala, which initially has strongly supported Nationalism as the time passes this paper also folded into the stream of media which supports particular political ideology, the recent incident of termination the services of its journalist, Priyanshu Gupta after he questioned the role of the newspaper in peddling Hindutva agenda in exchange of money on the social media website Facebook. In a sting operation, news website Cobrapost had revealed that the marketing heads of Amar Ujala along with other media outlets, including India TV, Scoop Whoop and Punjab Keshari, were willing to serve the Hindutva agenda in the garb of spiritual programs to its readers and viewers which is against the interests of the minority community in India.²⁴

¹⁹ "Did Hindustan Times editor Shishir Gupta spy on Kejriwal govt for Modi?", (2017) <http://www.jantakareporter.com/india/hindustan-times-editor-shishir-gupta-spy-kejriwal-govt-modi/91273/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

²⁰ "Hindustan Times Editor's Exit Preceded by Meeting Between Modi, Newspaper Owner", (2017) <https://thewire.in/media/hindustan-times-bobby-ghosh-narendra-modi-shobhana-bhartia> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

²¹ Supra note. 14.

²² "Amar Ujala", (2020) <https://india.mom-rsf.org/en/media/detail/outlet/amar-ujala/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Amar Ujala terminated the employment of its journalists for questioning the editorial stance", (2018) <https://www.newsclack.in/amar-ujala-journalist-terminated-questioning-editorial-stance> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

5. Punjab Kesari:

Punjab Kesari is a daily Hindi newspaper with total sales of 1,165,506²⁵ for the period of January to June 2018 fifth largest circulated Hindi language newspaper in India after Amar Ujala, Punjab Kesari newspaper published from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi in India. It is owned by the Punjab Kesari group also known as The Hind Samachar Ltd, It was launched in 1965 by Lala Jagat Narain, after his assassination, his elder son Romesh Chander had taken over, he also assassinated in 1994, because of the strong anti-terrorism agenda of the newspaper and various activities of the group against the terrorism including establishment of Shaheed Parivar Fund (martyrs' welfare fund) to provide help to the terrorism affected families.²⁶

The Chopra family is the owner of The Hind Samachar Limited, which publishes the daily newspaper, Punjab Kesari. Ashwini Kumar Chopra, was a senior journalist and resident editor of the Punjab Kesari, till his death on January 18, 2020. He got a BJP ticket to contest in 16th Lok Sabha elections from Karnal, and was the eldest son of the third generation from the journalists family who own the Hindsamachar group of newspapers, during his tenure the newspaper is completely pro BJP and any news and views against the BJP and in favour of its opposition will be seemed as bizarre²⁷. After the demise of Ashwin Kumar Chopra the Vinay Kumar Chopra became the chief executive officer and editor in chief of the Punjab Kesari print news organisation. He is a social reformer and received a Padma Shri award in August 2009, he has no much political affiliations as a result many Prominent columnists Khushwant Singh, Shekhar Gurera (Cartoonist), Feroze Varun Gandhi, Poonam I Kaushik, Shanta Kumar Vineet Narain, Virendra Kapur, B G Verghese, Balbir Punj, Mahmood Shaam, Karan Thapar, Kalyani Shankar, Manmohan Sharma, Neera Chopra, Maneka Gandhi, Chandermohan, Chander Trikha, Nerja Chaudhry²⁸ all these columnists were from all political parties hence the newspaper is serving as the better platform for the public to get news which is not related to single agenda, but the recent Cobrapost of March 26, 2018, in which a bribe was offered to the newspaper to publish the BJP political agenda against the congress and its allies by portraying Rahul Gandhi as Pappu (ignorant) and polarise the voters on the Hindutva line at a cost of Rs.

²⁵ Supra note. 14.

²⁶ "Shaheed Parivar Fund", (2001) <https://www.punjabkesari.in/common404.aspx> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

²⁷ Chitleen K Sethi "Ashwini Kumar Chopra, the BJP MP who gave up a cricket career to become a journalist" (2019) <https://theprint.in/politics/ashwini-kumar-chopra-the-bjp-mp-who-gave-up-a-cricket-career-to-become-a-journalist/184535/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

²⁸ "Punjab Kesari", (2018) http://bahujanpedia.com/index.php/Punjab_Kesari#cite_ref-18 (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

1.5 crores²⁹, the management of the newspaper replied by Harish Sharma, Business Executive that he definitely met the senior journalist but fails to recall anything what had transpired between them with regard to the agenda³⁰, which raises serious concerns for non-denial of all accusations raised by the Cobrapost.

(B) English Language National Newspapers:

The above discussed pattern of media ownership is also same in the English language newspaper also the five major circulated daily newspapers are The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, The Telegraph, The Economic Times and Indian Express.

Top six English Newspapers and its Political Affiliation and Editorial Stand:

S.NO	Newspaper	Total Sales	Political Affiliation	Initial Stand	Present Stand
1	Times of India	2,826,164	Independent	INC	Pro-BJP
2	Hindu	1,397,944	CPI/ CPM	Independent	Independent
3	Hindustan Times	1,004,110	INC	INC	Pro-BJP
4	Telegraph	416,438	CPI/ CPM	CPI/ CPM	Pro-BJP
5	Economic Times	380,525	INC	BJP	Pro-BJP
6	Indian Express	-----	Independent	Independent	Pro-INC

The Times Group was founded on 4th November 1838, by publishing Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce which later becomes The Times of India. In 1892 the English Journalist Thomas Jewell Bennett, and Frank Morris Coleman set up a joint stock company Bennett Coleman & Company Limited to acquire the newspaper. In 1946 the company was purchased from British owners by Indian industrialist Ramakrishna Dalmia. Later Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain took over the company by marrying Dalmia's daughter. Since then, the company is fully owned and operated by the Jain Family. The company is primarily owned by the Jain family. The Jain family directly owns a small number of shares in the company but through their subsidiaries

²⁹ Sunil Sharma et all "Punjab Kesari", (2018) <https://www.cobrapost.com/blog/Punjab-Kesari/1021> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

³⁰ "Reactions: Operation 136", <https://www.cobrapost.com/pages/Reactions:%20Operation%20136/7> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

holds majority of the shares in the company³¹. It is largest circulated English daily with 2,826,164³² in January and June 2018.

In the political and business ideology of the Group is primarily pro congress due to the help they got from the Congress many a times, the first incident was the imprisonment of Dalmia for the financial irregularities in 1950's, then again in the 1960s when Jain took the charge of the Company, the Company sold the newsprint in the black market. This was illegal and a breach of trust which resulted in Jain going to jail and also the ownership was taken over by the government of India. But in 1976 during Indira Gandhi imposed emergency the Times Group again returned to the Jain family, as a result the Times Group published news completely pro Congress hence the newspaper got a nick name of Times of Indira, and the most of the Senior Journalists who were critical to the Indira Gandhi and INC were removed.³³

Hindu is a famous newspaper in the UPSC and other competitive exam aspirants because of usage of the complex terminology or jargon in the newspaper it is the second largest circulated English daily newspaper with 1,397,944³⁴ sales in January to June 2018, the Hindu group was owned by the Kasturi and Sons, 100% share of Kasturi & Sons Limited is owned by Kasturi family and shares are divided between 46 family members,³⁵ the policy of the paper is Communist which supports the Public Management of the resources and oppose commercialisation of the resources to the Private Corporations.

The Hindustan Times is the third most read Hindi newspaper with 1,004,110³⁶ sales in January and June 2018, this newspaper is owned by the owners of the Hindustan hindi newspaper i.e. Shobha Bhatia the Nominated Congress Rajya Sabha M.P. hence the political agenda is same as Hindustan Hindi newspaper.

The Telegraph is the fourth most read Hindi newspaper with 416,438³⁷ sales in January and June 2018, this newspaper is owned by the owners of the ABP Group or Anand Bazar Patrika Group a hardcore leftist newspaper that oscillates between glorifying the communist traditions to eulogizing the prominent left wing leaders. The paper is brazenly anti BJP, though it features

³¹ "The Jain Family", (2019) <http://india.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/individual-owners/detail/owner/owner/show/the-jain-family/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

³² Supra note. 14.

³³ "This is why Times of India is pro-Congress, Jain brothers owe their wealth to Gandhi's", (2014) <https://www.opindia.com/2014/12/this-is-why-times-of-india-is-pro-congress-jain-brothers-owe-their-wealth-to-gandhis/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

³⁴ Supra note. 14.

³⁵ "The Hindu", (2019) <https://india.mom-rsf.org/en/media/detail/outlet/the-hindu/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

³⁶ Supra note. 14.

³⁷ Supra note.14.

articles from Swapan Das Gupta time and again. While being married to the leftist cause, the Telegraph is also known to clink a few pegs with the Congress party. In 2018 the resignation of two top editors Punya Prasad Bajpayee and Milind Khandekar of ABP News forced to leave the Channel under government pressure for broadcasting content indigestible to the ruling BJP³⁸.

The Economic Times is a subsidiary newspaper of the Times of India Group which specially focussed on the economic issues, it is the fifth most read English newspaper with 380,525³⁹ sales in January and June 2018 its political and business agenda is same as Times of India.

The Indian Express's Ramnath Goenka, who founded the Indian Express Group was a member of the RSS which ultimately results in pro BJP and its allies. After his death the group has split in two and now there are two newspapers with opposite loyalties. While The Indian Express now supports congress, The New Indian Express continues to support NDA and right wing ideologies.⁴⁰The strong stand of the newspaper in favour of the BJP led to imposing several repressive actions by the ruling INC as a result several landmark judgments of the Supreme Court judgments were laid down on the matters related to the media freedom.

The small circulated English language newspapers also following the same pattern of following the particular Political ideology, The Tribune is a well-known newspaper in the regions of North India such as Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and J&K. It's been known to have a pro-congress attitude when it comes to choosing which news to print on the front page and which news to hide in small columns. The Pioneer is the second oldest English newspaper to be printed in India. It has always shown a pro-BJP, right wing, nationalist ideology. Chandan Mitra, owner and editor in chief of The Pioneer is a BJP member of Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh. The Pioneer has focused on pro-right movements emerging out of the urban middle classes. The statesman has always been a left wing newspaper. It has been the newspaper of the left wing communists out of Kolkata. In recent times its circulation and power has seen a decline but there is no denying where it takes its ideological stand⁴¹.

(C) Regional Language Newspapers:

In Hindi speaking States of North India the above discussed Hindi language newspapers were

³⁸ Amrita Nayak Dutta "Top ABP editors quit, staff say Modi govt may have "arm-twisted channel for criticism", (2018) <https://theprint.in/india/governance/top-abp-editors-quit-staff-say-modi-govt-may-have-arm-twisted-channel-for-criticism/92920/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

³⁹ Supra note.14.

⁴⁰ Aditya Thakur "Top 7 Newspapers Known To Favor Specific Political Parties In India", (2013) <https://hillpost.in/2013/08/top-7-newspapers-known-to-favor-specific-political-parties-in-india/94800/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴¹ Ibid.

dominant and non-Hindi speaking States such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc. States have regional language media markets which are owned by the persons who directly or indirectly has links with the Political and Business Houses and also the media market is highly concentrated in the hands of few.

Top six Telugu and Kannada Newspapers, its Political Affiliation and Editorial Stand:

S.NO	Newspaper	Total Sales	Political Affiliation	Initial Stand	Present Stand
1	Eenadu	3,327,000	TDP	TDP	Pro-TDP/ BJP
2	Sakshi	2,988,000	YSRCP	YSRCP	Pro-YSRCP/BJP
3	Vijayavani	760,738	BJP	BJP	Pro-BJP
4	Vijay Karnataka	693,018	INC/TOI Group	INC	Pro-BJP
5	Prajavani	531,028	Independent	Independent	Independent
6	Udayavani	288,060	Independent	Independent	Independent

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Telugu speaking States the newspapers Eenadu and Sakshi manage to reach 71.13%⁴² of audiences, the Eenadu is owned by the Ramoji Rao Group who is the family relative of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) for two generations⁴³ hence the stand of the newspaper is pro TDP, Similarly the Sakshi media is published by YS Bharati wife of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy the YSRC Party Supremo and incumbent Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, which obviously results the stand of the newspaper becomes the Party Spokes Person. In September 2019, two prominent editors of Sakshi Group, Devulapalli Amar appointed as the National Adviser in Inter-State Media Affairs. Another Editor, Rama Chandra Murthy is appointed as Advisor.⁴⁴

In Karnataka Vijayavani (760,738), Vijay Karnataka (693,018), Prajavani (531,028), Udayavani (288,060) were the major circulated newspapers in Kanada language. Vijayavani

⁴² "Media Ownership Monitor: Who owns the media in India", (2019) <https://rsf.org/en/news/media-ownership-monitor-who-owns-media-india> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴³ "Ramoji Rao Inputs For NTR Biopic", (2018) <https://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Cinema/2018-03-08/Ramoji-Rao-Inputs-For-NTR-Biopic/364418> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴⁴ "AP Secretariat Becoming Sakshi Branch Office", (2019) <https://www.mirchi9.com/politics/andhra-pradesh-secretariat-becoming-sakshi-branch-office/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

was published by VRL Group, which is owned by logistics tycoon Dr. Vijay Sankeshwar, who is a former BJP M.P. from North Dharwad constituency, later on he founded the Kannada Nadu Party, then he joined Janata Paksha of BJP outcast Yeddyurappa, the party eventually merged back with BJP,⁴⁵ as a result the newspaper served as the strong disseminator of BJP ideology in Karnataka State. Similarly the Vijay Karnataka is owned by the a Times of India Group, Prajavani was founded in 1948 in Bangalore by K.N. Guruswamy, the newspaper has history of being a politically independent newspaper, Udayavani Launched in January 1970 by Mohandas Pai and T.Satish U Pai, newspaper claimed it a centrist stand.⁴⁶

This trend is not merely limited to two languages of Telugu and Kannada the same is observed and validated across all regional markets including Tamil, Malayalam, Bangla, Oriya, Punjabi, Kannada, Gujarati, Urdu, Marathi and Assamese.⁴⁷

IV. RESULTS:

In this paper the researcher analysed 17 newspapers in which it is found that, 12 newspapers stand on the strong pro-BJP front irrespective of its political background, the remaining five newspapers were divided among three independent and two INC. This picture clearly shows that how the complete newspaper industry gets polarised towards pro-BJP, this is adversely affecting the plurality and multidimensional function of news and editorial of the newspaper. This type of reporting helped the Modi led BJP Government to become the “Teflon Government” as a result the democratic system of Government criticism, policy criticism completely lost, which is posing serious threat to the Indian Democracy.

This threat is already witnessing India in recent COVID-19 lockdown, as the Hindi newspapers constitute 76.45% of readership within the national Hindi language market, which has strong hold on all most all States of North India. These newspapers were involved in spreading the strong Pro-BJP agenda in their news and editorial. Some of them are as follows, in Hindustan newspaper report of May 17, 2020, in which reportedly 26, persons were killed in an road accident carrying migrant workers during COVID-19 lockdown, to which the Hindustan paper clearly blamed the rash and overs peed of the driver carrying the passengers. Similar reporting happened in Dainik Bhaskar on May 09, 2020, were 16 migrant workers killed by crushing a train while they are sleeping on track after they exhausted of long walk by Migrants, again on

⁴⁵ “Vijay Sankeshwar”, (2020) https://wikivisually.com/wiki/Vijay_Sankeshwar (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴⁶ “Udayavani - Kannada Daily Bangalore Newspaper”, (2019) <https://www.magzter.com/IN/Manipal-Digital-Network-Limited/Udayavani---Kannada-Daily-Bangalore/Newspaper/> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴⁷ “Media Ownership Monitor: Who owns the media in India”, (2020) <https://rsf.org/en/news/media-ownership-monitor-who-owns-media-india> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

May 17, 2020, Dainik Bhaskar printed that the children returned home in lockdown as a brave attempt, the same stand of standing in news is taken by the Dainik Jagran on May 17, 2020, that a courageous differently abled man decided to travel hundreds of Kilometres, in Amar Ujala May 17, the news published that they will spread roti (bread) and slept and thus portrays that the zeal to survive among the migrant labourers as a brave one.⁴⁸ Similar stand has been taken by the Media supporting media along with the Government press briefing while reporting the Tabligi Jamat's role in spreading the COVID-19, these media channels spread the news as they deliberately spread the infection and marked them as Corona Bomb, antinationals working to spoil the health system in India, in this regard various criminal cases were filed by police on Jamats persons, Indians and foreigners, which was clearly denied by the High Court of Bombay, Aurangabad Bench and held that they were made scape goats and ordered the police to quash the FIR against Jamat persons on August 21, 2020.⁴⁹ There after the adverse consequences of lockdown which include economic collapse, loss of employment along with main disease outburst, as India reached among top three worst affected nations by COVID-19. The above stated 12 pro-incumbent newspapers which has highest circulation when compared to the independent newspapers, followed the same agenda of Government support, which results in complete influencing the public opinion, as a result the Government is mere focussing and indulged in media management instead of disease management, economic management, employment management, security management etc.

V. CONCLUSION:

The media has social responsibility and multifarious role to play. It has a diverse task to carry out, hence hundreds of codes of conduct were framed by media and professional groups defining the principles, values and obligations of the profession of journalism, five important core ethical concerns were Truth and Accuracy, Independence, Fairness and Impartiality, Humanity and Accountability. Social responsibility obliges that actions and viewpoints of various groups and individuals has to be given enough space in their media, publishing only one sided story of news is unethical and devoid of its social responsibility, this is happening either because of financial gain i.e. paid news or other pecuniary benefit to ownership of the media, further since 2014 the BJP led Union Government impose further responsibility of

⁴⁸ Aman Abhishek "How the Modi Government Manufactured Public Opinion During the Migrant Crisis" June 25, 2020, retrieved from <https://thewire.in/media/covid-19-migrant-crisis-public-opinion-modi> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

⁴⁹ Sonam Saigal "Bombay High Court quashes FIRs against foreigners who attended Tablighi Jamaat congregation" August 22, 2020, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/bombay-hc-quashes-firs-against-foreigners-attending-tablighi-jamaat-congregation/article32419331.ece> (Site last accessed on August 26, 2020.)

spreading pro-incumbent agenda which further deteriorated the media, as it leaved behind the obligation of watchdog function of media. As a result the plurality in the content of newspaper is completely missing, as the same agenda is spreading by all newspapers and the media consumers were not that aware about the political affiliations of the newspapers and the pressure the newspapers facing from the incumbent to spread the pro-incumbent agenda, they are blindly falling prey to the propaganda of the newspapers which resulted in various calamities including the failure of health system in recent pandemic of COVID-19 and its related consequences.