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# Nationalism, Media and Society: An Indian Context

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## ABSTRACT

*The idea around what exactly is nationalism or what act qualifies as nationalistic has always been at the helm of discussion. While the idea in itself has a lot of meanings, the effects that it has on the society as a whole and subsequently on the nation is largely accepted by all. The present research paper delves into the idea of nationalism and how it affects the society (and in turn the nation) by citing certain examples. From there, the paper focuses on how the media has affected the society. Finally, the paper goes onto see whether media plays any kind of a role in affecting the narrative around nationalism, and if yes, then what are the consequences of this affect that the media brings on the society.*

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Media, Narrative, Effect.

## I. INTRODUCTION

What is nationalism? It is perhaps one of the most contested questions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for which there is no definitive answer. Nationalism as an idea has always been a seductive and confusing ideology for people around the world. For some, nationalism is the ability to be rationally patriotic while respecting the ethos and history of one's nation without being fanatic about it. For others, it is about performing the allocated due honestly, without thinking about self-interest. Many a time, the extreme tendencies of human society are termed nationalism. Standing and supporting the right things that one feels would aid in developing the society and the nation to, the feeling of closeness which one has with his/her nation is also often termed as nationalism. The feeling of unity, harmony, brotherhood and other such emotions that binds people together and drives their emotion to the nation's development and well-being is also termed nationalism.

From the above description, it is pretty evident that there is no definite answer to the question of "What is Nationalism?" theoretically speaking, the word nationalism emerges from the Latin term "natus", which translates into "birth". Initially, this concept had denoted the peculiarities of different communities. As time passed, these communities grew larger and subsequently got

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classified as nationalities. This classification was based not only on the commonalities present between the people of the communities but also on geography. Nationalism is an important social and political phenomenon that involves making the nation and nation-states into definable identity. It is an identity that holds that the nation should be the primary political identity of an individual.

## **II. HISTORY OF THE IDEA**

The French statesman Napoleon Bonaparte, who ruled France from 1799 to 1815, is usually credited with introducing the modern concept of nationalism. It spread throughout Europe as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. This new national feeling went far beyond simple patriotism, which is the love of one's homeland. Patriotism has been a part of human behaviour since the beginning of history. Usually considered noble, it most often found expression in military terms. However, the kind of nationalism that Napoleon Bonaparte introduced was based on a narrow idea. It was mainly limited to religious duty and targeted one stratum of the society, the upper class.

Nationalism as we know it was a product of the French Revolution. In 1789, France was seized by massive protests and revolts, while many of its intellectuals were under the influence of the enlightenment; the ancient regime (old government and social system) of France had run the country deep into debt. Significant economic and demographic shifts had taken place with the growth of cities and industries, and commerce. The classes that participated in such activities, such as skilled and unskilled workers and merchants, were clamouring for more political power. However, the system was still controlled by the Bourbon family, France's absolutist kings who claimed rule by divine right. The disturbances in France eventually brought about a democratic government. French nationalism was thus born in people's minds when their government truly became theirs for the first time. People, formerly known as subjects, became citizens in the new French democracy.

Most scholars who deal with nationalism believe that the growth of nationalism is a fundamental aspect of modernization. Of course, modernization involves more than self-determination; generally, it involves industrialization, urbanization, increased literacy, and secularization. This was as true of European history in the nineteenth century as it is of the history of the decolonizing world—mostly Africa and Asia in the twentieth. Therefore, the growth of nationalism involves two processes: its appearance in people's minds as a sense of loyalty and belonging; and its appearance as a political force, which ultimately works to create nation-states..

The transition to an industrial society often predisposes people to become more nationalistic since the breakdown of traditional village and family structures leaves emotional and moral gaps in individual lives. Also, the centralization of government, which originated in the Middle Ages in the struggle of kings against recalcitrant nobles, was to tap into nationalism as a way to mobilize the population. Napoleon was the first to use this great power of the people by appealing to them with the symbolism and emotions of national unity and a national mission. In the nineteenth century, people began to accept nationalism only gradually. Europe continued to be the primary place where nationalism grew. In the many small states that made up the German cultural realm, nationalists and advocates of greater democracy joined forces. They were at once attracted to the power of nationalism and disturbed by France's use of it against them.

While the idea of nationalism spread throughout Europe, there were several within the continent that opposed the spread of the idea. Leaders of multinational states like Great Britain, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, officials of the Catholic Church and many others for all the different reasons had opposed the idea of nationalism. Despite this diverse and often intense opposition, the twentieth century began with what most people regard as the triumph-or-running -of the national idea. The great powers of Europe, such as Germany, France, and Russia, became imperialistic and sought to expand their power at their neighbours' expense. They were filled with national pride, became aggressive, and organized themselves into massive alliance systems.

### **III. NATIONALISM IN INDIA**

The idea of nationalism has changed tremendously from the times of the French revolution. In today's time, the idea of nationalism engulfs in it not only religious elements but also culturally, social, and political elements. The idea of nationalism propagated by Napoleon, which has persisted in modern times, had the power to both leads to the formation of states and at the same time bring them down. One of the biggest examples of this is the formation of The Republic of India. The kind of nationalism that propagated during the freedom movement of our country had engulfed the idea of an independent nation and also helped break the shackles of the 200-year-old colonial rule.

When the national movement was entering its mass phase in the 1920s, the different possibilities inherent in nationalism had come under critical scrutiny. In the wake of the violence that erupted during the non-cooperation movement, the dialogue between Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi is a pointer towards the anxieties and apprehensions aroused

by aggressive nationalism. While the latter emphasized the emancipatory potential of nationalism, the former drew attention to the aggressive possibilities.

The nationalism present in India during the time of our freedom struggle was broad in nature. During the freedom struggle, nationalism based on certain fundamental principles like equality, justice, human rights, etc. Nationalism for Mahatma Gandhi was inclusive in nature. While he protested against the Britisher's and even faced their beating, he never considered them his enemies. Secondly, for him, the nation was not above the people; instead, it was the people who formed the nation by sacrificing their rights and thus, the **raison d'être** of the nation was to improve the living conditions of the people. The ideas of nationalism present during the time of the freedom struggle aimed at uniting people. Because of these very reasons, the Muslim League was not able to sell their idea of a separate nation until the late 1940s. Neither the idea of nationalism nor the famous leaders of our country in those times represented nationalism as connected to a particular sect or religion. It never was inclined to a particular caste or a community.

Nationalism in those times never meant going back to the Vedic age or establishing the supremacy of Hindus within India, or demonstrating the glories of a Hindu Rashtra. This can be gauged based on Sardar Patel's speech wherein he says "Hindu Raj" is a "Mad idea." Dr B.R. Ambedkar had also said that "if Hindu raj becomes a fact it will be no doubt the biggest calamity. From the instances mentioned above, it is clear that our leaders during the freedom struggle never saw nationalism as representative of one particular community or religion and always thought of it as an inclusive idea consisting of all people from every spectrum of society. It is this notion that helped India achieve the global position that it holds today. In a nutshell, the idea of nationalism during the time of the freedom struggle can be summarised as "the growth and development of anti-colonial sentiment – from a movement for reasonable constitutional reforms to a struggle for complete independence."

#### **IV. THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

In the post-independence period in India, the Constitution did not feature a strict church-state separation as is evident in many western nations; however, it envisaged a "principled distance" between the religion and the state. The government, under this rubric, endeavoured to maintain a measured embrace of India's disparate religious communities without unduly favouring any one group.

Over the decades, as India has undergone loads of changes, so has the idea of nationalism, too (the main credits should go to the politicians who have time and again bent in the way that

fulfils their political compulsion). The leadership of the Indian National Congress (or Congress Party), which ruled India for much of the post-independence period, traditionally has championed its commitment to secular nationalism. However, in practice, the Congress Party often has invoked religious sentiments to suit its changing political interests. This tendency grew in intensity under the reign of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

The era of the 90s was a time when India went under drastic change. While LPG (liberalization, privatization and globalization) had entered the Indian societal structure and started to leave its imprint, several changes were also taking place in the country's political spectrum. Since the late 1990s, India's electoral milieu has seen a surge of religious content with the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). While the Bhartiya Janta Party had dimmed from the national political scene for much of the 2000s, it has undergone a renaissance over the past many years (credits to be given to the incompetency of the incumbent ruling party).

The past many years have brought an alternative nationalism to the fore, one based not on secular principles but rather on religious lines. Nationalism in India in the present time is slowly shedding several of the elements of the past; it is acquiring several new elements which do not align with the elements of the past. Nationalism in India in today's time is slowly shedding its multicultural character. It has become narrower and has also acquired xenophobic and communal elements. This departure from India's secular tradition raises difficult questions about India's political future and its long-standing commitment to the credo of "unity in diversity".

## **V. NATIONALISM AND THE EFFECT ON SOCIETY**

As evident from the above discussion, the idea of nationalism has no strict definition. From times immemorial, the term has been moulded to suit different purposes. However, from an academic point of view, the idea of nationalism would mean "performing actions whose main aim is to achieve the overall development of the nation and its people". These actions may be performed either with aid or against the state machinery.

The idea of nationalism has several positives as well as negatives which have time and again affected society. As far as the positives are concerned, the idea has time and again been used as a tool to unite the people of a country, especially in difficult economic and social situations. A modern-day example where this was reflective was the formation of our nation, "The Republic of India". The constant apathy that the Indians had to go during the time of the British rule, coupled with the ever low economic condition and the feeling of living as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens, had motivated leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Rajguru, Sukhdev, etc. to unite people

to fight against the oppressive British rule. This feeling of fighting against the oppression proved to be a uniting factor, and as history is witness, India became an independent nation in the year 1947.

A similar example can be that of The Republic of South Africa. Like India, wherein British rule had decimated the living conditions, in South Africa, the natives heavily opposed the apartheid regime. The feeling of having a nation free from apartheid motivated leaders like Nelson Mandela to raise their voice and fight against the apartheid regime. The united support that Nelson Mandela got in the fight led to South Africa getting free from this oppressive regime in the year 1994. The example of the fight of black Americans in the 1950s and 1960s against the racially discriminating "Jim Crow" laws is also an example of people uniting together to achieve the nation's overall development.

Another positive of nationalism is that it induces closeness towards one's community and allows people to better identify with their culture. One of the instances wherein this was visible was by the Chipko movement. The Chipko movement, also called Chipko Andolan, was a nonviolent social and ecological movement by rural villagers, particularly women, in India in the 1970s to protect trees and forests slated for government-backed logging. The movement originated in the Himalayan region of Uttar Pradesh (later Uttarakhand) in 1973 and quickly spread throughout the Indian Himalayas. Chandni Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bhaguna mainly led the movement. The movement had spread like wildfire in the different parts of the country, and more and more people came out in support of the movement. As times passed, the movement was able to instil the idea of the importance of the greenery of the country and how the protection is also linked to the protection of the culture of the forest and the tribal communities, which subsequently led to the passing of legislation like the National Biodiversity Act and the Forest Rights Act. Another important movement wherein people came united the Narmada Bachao Andolan. The Narmada Bachao Andolan was a major environmental struggle that went for a decade and was directed against the construction of dams on the Narmada river. The Narmada Bachao Andolan that went on to go for a decade raised essential questions related to the impact of projects on the environment and the successful rehabilitation of people. The Chipko movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, with time, have instilled the ideas of conservation of the environment, the importance of the culture of the tribal and the indigenous communities and the importance of successful rehabilitation of people, which in the long run has benefited the country as a whole.

While all these are instances wherein the citizens at large have come together and this coming together has benefited the country, there are also instances wherein the 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar of our

democracy, that is the Judiciary, has given several such decisions which analyzed today, portray that those decisions have benefited the nation. The first case that comes to the discussion that has made an everlasting impact is *Kesavananda Bharati v. the State of Kerala*. The judgment is often said to be the "judgment that saved India". The case pertained to the Kerala Land Reforms Act, which Sri Kesavananda Bharati Swamiji challenged. While he lost the case, his acts of filing a petition against the act saved the Constitution and saved the nation in the long run. In a 703pg judgment given by 13 judges, the famous doctrine of "**basic structure of the constitution**" was developed. Plainly speaking, the court, in this case, held that while the parliament has the power to amend the Constitution, it should always adhere to the basic structure of the Constitution. Critically analyzing the case, this decision was very much necessary, else every political party with 2/3rd of the majority in the parliament can bring any amendment hampering the basic structure of the Constitution. After applying this decision, the Judiciary, as given by the Constitution, has become the final arbiter to check violations of constitutional provisions and thus by it's this decision also ensured that the acts of the parliament always adhere to the basic structure, thus, in the long run aiding to the development of the nation.

Another case that has significantly contributed to the development of the constitutional jurisprudence (from a legal point of view) and also that of our nation is the case of *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*. Via this judgment, the courts in our country enlarged the scope of article 21 of the Constitution and gave it a broad interpretation. This broad interpretation subsequently has been used to include rights such as Right to Clean Air, Right to Clean Water, Right to freedom from Noise Pollution, Speedy Trial, Legal Aid, Right to Livelihood, Right to Food, Right to Medical Care, Right to Clean Environment, etc. The inclusion of various rights within the ambit of article 21 has helped in ensuring that the citizens can hold the state accountable for their necessities, thus, in turn, ensuring bare necessities for the people. By ensuring necessities for the people, the broad interpretation given in *Maneka Gandhi's* case has undoubtedly contributed to the development of the nation.

Another case that has undoubtedly helped in the development of our country (from an environmental point of view) is the case of *Union Carbide Corporation v. Union of India* (the Bhopal gas tragedy case). The case is considered to be a landmark as it recognized the principle of "absolute liability". The recognition of this principle paved the way for holding multinational companies accountable for the harm they cause to the environment. Read along with the broad interpretation given under article 21, and one can easily deduce that this case is critical from an environmental point of view and has undoubtedly contributed to the development of our



nation.

By a description of the instances mentioned above, movements and case laws, the point that is being made is that the feeling of contributing towards the nation (which for us is the idea of nationalism) has been witnessed time and again in our nation (even in the post-independence period) and has undoubtedly contributed in the development of the nation because if not for these instances, our nation would have been entirely different from what we see today.

## **VI. MEDIA AND SOCIETY**

Human beings express their nature by creating and recreating an organization that guides and controls their behaviour in many ways. This organization liberates and limits the activities of men, sets up standards for them to follow and maintain. This organization which is responsible for the fulfilment of the life of every individual, is called society. Man in every society has suffered from one or the other problems. Men in modern societies are also experiencing various problems, and their behaviour gets affected by many things; media is one of them. Media is the plural of the word medium. Media are the vehicles or channels used to convey information, entertainment, news, education, or promotional messages. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as television, radio, newspapers, billboards, mails, telephone, fax, internet etc. (the primary means of mass communication). The question of the effect of media on an individual's behaviour has always been a controversial arena of study as this sphere is filled with several preconceived notions. In most cases, the public is considered a gullible mass that is vulnerable to an ideological hypodermic needle and the media is often seen as the sole cause of a range of social behaviours. While such preconceived notions have often hampered the research in this arena, the impact of media on society is visible by citing several examples.

At any point in our lives, we would have come across media reports talking about diseases like leprosy or HIV/AIDS. The main aim of all these media reports and the spread of information is to burst the myths attached to these diseases or those who have contracted these diseases. The continuous dissemination of information through various modes of media has undoubtedly helped in bursting several myths and negative notions attached to these diseases and has helped those living with such conditions lead an everyday life (from a social point of view). Another instance wherein the influencing power of the media was visible was in the success of India's Pulse Polio Programme that was started in 1994 aiming at universal vaccination<sup>2</sup>. The widespread dissemination of information relating to polio and why getting infants vaccinated

against it helped India become a “Polio-Free” nation by the year 2014.

Both the above examples show the positive effects of media on society and its influence on achieving a noble cause. However, just like everything, the influencing power of media also has a negative side to it, and ignorance of this side would render this paper also useless. Since media has such massive influencing powers, one of the imperatives is that it remains free and independent from state control or, for that matter, any form of bias. Any form of bias in how a particular form of media functions should be a matter of concern, especially when that media section represents a majority of the market share. An example of this would be the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput in July 2020. The death of the actor was followed by several prime time debates, which included star anchors shouting at the top of their lungs and discussing various aspects related to the death. In a report published, it was found that two major news channels spent over 65% of their time covering the death of the actor. In a survey conducted by Broadcast Audience Research Council, it was found that the news surrounding the death of the actor had dominated the airtime for a sizeable amount of time. The result of this one-sided focus was that there led to the formation of preconceived notions against the prime accused in the case, wherein some cases she was declared to have performed “black magic” on the actor. This one-sided reporting not only mentally affected the prime accused as well as her case, but the over-reporting also acted as a beacon for the government as several essential questions relating to its handling of the covid crisis that could have been asked in that period by the media (and should have been asked) were not put forth.

The above-cited examples show that the influencing power of media is immense; however, what is required is that it performs its task **freely and without any bias**. The example of the late actor showcases how biasness in the dissemination of information can severely impact society, and while academic literature on the impact of media on society is filled with stereotypes, examples like that of above clearly showcase the inherent effect that media has on society.

## **VII. MEDIA AND NATIONALISM**

From the above discussion, it becomes pretty evident that nationalism as an idea and media as a communication tool has significant tendencies to influence society at large and, in turn, affects the development of an entire nation. However, what is essential to see is whether media as a mode of communication influences the narrative of nationalism within society and thus affects the development of society? Two modern-day examples help us in establishing this point.

The first example to establish the connection that media does influence the narrative around nationalism and in turn affects the development of the nation is that of the Russian Federation. 25<sup>th</sup> December 1991 was the fateful day when the erstwhile USSR had disintegrated. Following the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the Russian Federation took over as its modern-day successor in a post-soviet world.

In the year 2000, Vladimir Putin took over as the president of Russia by winning around 53% of the votes. Since then, Vladimir Putin has been at the helm of Russian Politics by winning consecutive presidential elections. One of Putin's ways to ensure that he remains in his position was by controlling Russian media. Soon after becoming the president, Putin's first task was to bring the media under his control. Starting with the national media and then moving onto regional media and independent media houses. While many media houses were brought under the control of the state, those which resisted were either shut down by arresting their owners and members or were sidelined by the administration. It is a well-established fact that media as a mode of communication is responsible for the dissemination of information in a nation, and with a majority of the media in Russia under the control of the state, it was very much evident that the information disseminated by the Russian media ought to be in favour of the government in large and Vladimir Putin in specific. An example of this can be the reports on corruption in Russia. As per a report published in 2011 titled “**Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries: 2000-2009**”, it has been highlighted that between the period in question, around \$427 billion or about \$53 billion a year was lost from the Russian economy as a result of the corruption present in their system. However, much to the dismay, none of it was highlighted by the Russian media. Another instance wherein the Russian media shaped the narrative around nationalism<sup>3</sup> was during the anti-Putin protests in 2011. The media during the time of these protests not only put forth such an image of Vladimir Putin wherein it was claimed that the actions performed by him were towards the overall development of the nation and declared him and his supporters to be “**true nationalists**”, but at the same time the media also disregarded the authenticity of these protests and regarded those who were a part of the protests as “anti national”.

The ever high approval rating of Vladimir Putin despite the economic blunders and the large concentration of Russian wealth in the hands of a selected few show that the media has successfully been used by the government to portray that the actions performed by it are towards the overall growth of the society (thus aptly fitting in the definition of nationalism that

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<sup>3</sup> “Nationalism” here means actions performed for the overall development and benefit of the society and the nation at large

we have adopted for this paper). In the recent constitutional amendment put forth by Vladimir Putin that allows him to stay in power till 2036 and the amendment getting approval of 78% of the Russian population goes onto highlight the role played by media in developing a narrative that the functions performed by Putin are towards the development of the state. This narrative was able to triumph the not so effective attempt of individuals like Alexy Navalny, who time and again tried to appraise the Russian population of the corruption of Vladimir Putin and how he is terrible for the overall Russian society.

Another instance wherein the media has played an essential role in influencing the narrative around the idea of "nationalism", which in turn has affected the society and the country can be that of our nation, i.e., India. India became a democratic republic in the year 1947 after freeing itself from over 200 years of colonial rule. India's freedom struggle was a movement that comprised of individuals coming from different sections of the Indian society. One of the most significant contributors to the Indian freedom struggle was the media. The experience of the freedom struggle showed the positive side of the media wherein the media was a powerful tool in building Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement. Nevertheless, the successful utilization of the press by freedom fighters in itself proves that one cannot ignore the double fact that it could be used for developing a different narrative of nationalism suiting the needs of oneself.

Famous French philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser had described that the press or the media could be turned into an Ideological State Apparatus wherein it is used to propagate the ideas of those in power as the national idea. While most of the press during the time of the Indian freedom struggle subsided with the ideals and the thought process of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, etc., many sections of media propagated extreme tendencies in the name of nationalism.

As back as 1882, journalist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee released his famous work "Anandmath." in which he defined nationalism in a religious sense. Papers like "Samachar Chandrika" and "Kesari" too propagated the idea of nationalism in a religious sense and had acted as an ISA of religious notions. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that in the mid-19th century, there were indeed some sections of the media that supported and propagated nationalism in a religious sense and acted as an ISA of religious notions.

While in the pre-independence period, few sections of media acted as an ISA of a religious notion, it is the post-independence period condition that is of particular concern to us. For analyzing this particular point, the analysis of the period from the 1980s wherein there are

several instances to highlight that the media has acted as an ISA of the state with reflections of religious notions. (An essential incident to this discussion is the "Ram Janma Bhoomi" movement, which perfectly presents the media as becoming an ISA of the state.)

However, to prove that the media starting from the 80s acted as an ISA of the state having reflections of religious notions, the question that needs to be answered is whether the state ideology had any form of inclination towards religious notions of any kind? The answer to this question is in the affirmative. Since the 1980s, Indira Gandhi started to appropriate religious notions (which was the Hindutva ideology). Subsequently, the segregation between communal politics and the existing mainstream politics blurred considerably. The propensity was reiterated by her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, since November 1984. It was evident that his party's campaign for the 1989 general elections was launched from Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, on 3rd November 1989. During Nehru's tenure, or perhaps even till the emergency, the central leadership of the Indian National Congress was refraining from openly demonstrating their inclination towards religious notions in general and Hindutva in particular. This was because it was always perceived that religious notions in general and Hindutva, in particular, propagated a sort of hyper-nationalism which is fundamentally antithetical to the inclusive nationalism on which basis the INC was founded. It was always perceived that religious nationalism of any kind thrives on fascistic tendencies, and hate and violence are the twin facets on which it has been built. It is needless to state that these are inimical to any nation which treats the democratic principles sacrosanct. In this sense, Hindutva becoming an organic ideology and hegemonizing the Indian political sphere is a matter of concern. However, the events from the 80s go onto prove that the state more openly accepted religious notions (Hindutva in particular) in a series of its actions, and thus, one can indeed say that it became an organic ideology of the state.

The press, which is considered the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of democracy in our nation and was expected to protect the nation's secular fabric, did not stand up to the task. For instance, when The Hindu reported on the launch of the election of Rajiv Gandhi from UP, it reported that "Mr. Gandhi lashed out at certain communal and divisive forces, whom he said, were responsible for the partition of the country in 1947 and later for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi". However what the paper did not ask was why Faizabad in particular was chosen as a point of launch of the election campaign, despite the fact that it has been a hotbed of communal politics, as early as 1948-1949. The paper was not ignorant of Mr. Gandhi's intention of showcasing his inclination towards religious notions and this can be seen from the report itself wherein it has been reported that "Mr Gandhi said launching the campaign from Faizabad, where Lord Rama lived, gave him immense satisfaction. " By mentioning this particular point,

it can be seen that the press was well aware of the ideological stand of the state and always in some way or the other tried to project the ideas which the state had shown its allegiance to.

As stated earlier, the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement is a crucial point to understand that the media has acted as an ISA of the state, and this can be seen from the coverage of the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri masjid, which had occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992. In the aftermath of the demolition of the mosque, newspapers like The Times of India, The Hindustan times and many others, instead of holding the centre, state governments and political parties accountable for the demolition, held the "kar sevaks" present at the time of demolition as accountable for the acts. However, an important point to remember here is that the political parties and the state government were absolved from the accountability only until the central government did not hold them accountable. As soon as the central government took actions against the political parties and several of its leaders, the outlook of the media too changed and subsequently, the reportage of the media had closely resonated with the actions of the central government. Again, this incident shows that the media in India has acted as an ISA of the central government.

The year 1991 was a period when the Indian economy was open up to the rest of the world by allowing large scale multinationals to establish themselves in the country. The coming of large scale MNCs has also aided in media becoming an ISA. The "Propaganda Model" given by Herman and Chomsky explains how money and power can filter out news that benefits the state and private players. Their propaganda model consists of 5 filters which are:

1. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
3. The reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
4. "Flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
5. "Anti- communism" as a national religion and control mechanism. In simple terms, the propaganda model states that those news pieces that do not get the approval of the media outlets (which in most cases is big corporations having political ties) do not get published. The propaganda model also perfectly fits the Indian media scenario. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta provides some features of media ownership in India:
  - i. The sheer number of media organizations and outlets often conceals the fact
  - ii. That there is dominance over specific markets and market segments by a few players – in other words, the markets are often oligopolistic. The absence of restrictions on cross-media ownership implies that particular companies or groups, or conglomerates

dominate markets vertically (that is, across different media such as print, radio, television and the internet) and horizontally (namely, in particular, geographical regions). Political parties and persons with political affiliation own/control increasing sections of the media in India.

The promoters and controllers of media groups have traditionally held interests in many other business interests and continue to do so, often using their media outlets to further these. There are a few instances of promoters who have used the profits from their media operations to diversify into other (unrelated) businesses.

The growing corporatization of the Indian media manifests in how large industrial conglomerates are acquiring a direct and indirect interest in media groups. There is also a growing convergence between creators/producers of media content and those who distribute/disseminate the content.

The information provided by Thakurta about media ownership in India perfectly fits the propaganda model. Because of cross-media ownership, the powerful few control the media and subsequently, the information disseminated is to the benefit of the influential group. Since the financial crisis of 2008, more and more media houses have been looking for financiers, which has prompted several big corporations to assume ownership of these media houses. For instance, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has gained ownership of the media houses like Network 18. Network 18 comprise channels like CNBC-TV18 and CNBC Awaaz, together with websites like Web18, newswire18 and magazines such as Forbes India and Overdrive. When a businessman like Mukesh D Ambani, who owns RIL, gets control over the media conglomerates like Network 18, it only expands their influence over the society, and these influences are not only on the decision of a consumer to buy a particular product (like influencing a customer to buy RIL products through continuous advertisements in these media outlets) but are also on the political decision of a person. During the elections, if any candidate gained support from the business elites, they can be promoted through exposing individual or groups of voters to the news that would, directly and indirectly, popularise these candidates. Not to mention that even the politicians themselves exercise control over the media through ownership.

The large scale ownership of media houses by corporate and politicians make it evident that the information that is disseminated is for their ultimate benefit. Linking it with the current Indian context, our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party has been a hot favourite of corporate in terms of funding. Moreover, with Modi in power, it is very much apparent that the

media houses under the control of those who have supported him would eventually disseminate news that ultimately benefits the Prime Minister and his big corporate supporters. This subsequently proves that the media, even in 2021, acts as an Ideological State Apparatus of the government in power.

While we have seen that media in India does act as an ISA of the state, the question remains, how does it affect the narrative around nationalism? The answer to this is that it influences it by pushing forth the idea which the party in power (in this case, the BJP) holds. The BJP has always ridden on an extreme form of nationalism or "Hyper nationalism" (which also has religious notions attached to it). In simple terms, the idea of nationalism that the BJP adheres to is not inclusive or multicultural. It has xenophobic and communal elements in it, and the media also exhibit the same. In a 2019 instance, an anchor of a news channel wore an army uniform while reporting the operations conducted by the Indian army on terrorist camps. Terminologies like "Pakistan is brought to its knees" and "Pakistan's propaganda is busted" is something which news channels have often undertaken (displaying the allegiance of the media houses towards the apparent stand of the government). Another way in which the media in India has often shaped the narrative around nationalism is by terming those who have criticized the actions of the government or those who have questioned them as "anti-nationals". This includes politicians, farmers, lawyers, journalists, students and anyone who has criticized or questioned the government in any way.

A close observation of India's majority media shows that the media in India today shows extensive allegiance to political parties and organization (in this case, the party power). While there is no harm in having political allegiance, as a journalist, it is one's duty to set aside his/her personal affiliations and report out facts. However, it seems the media in India has forgotten this sacrosanct oath. It can be seen that the majority of media houses in India reiterate the ideas of the party in power (which also includes shaping the narrative around nationalism), which includes over the top appreciation of actions of the government (by terming them to be in favour of the nation) and blatantly disregarding any opposition against any particular actions of the government.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, it becomes pretty evident that the media in contemporary India does act as an ISA of the state and heavily pushes forward the ideology of nationalism to which the state adheres to. Its effect is that it muzzles out any opposition against the government's actions and results in unfair treatment of those who show their discontent towards the



government's actions. An example of this can be the treatment of those who were arrested in the 2019 anti-CAA protests wherein, the lawyers of the Hubli Bar Association passed a resolution wherein they decided not to fight the cases of those who were a part of the anti CAA protest on the pretext that these people are "anti-national", "traitor" and these people belong to "Pakistan". **The denial of legal treatment to those who have opposed a particular government policy goes on to show the level of influence the media has played in influencing the narrative around nationalism.** Another decimating effect is that in India, the media is considered the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of democracy. It is expected to act out as the unheard and the voiceless voice and hold the government accountable. However, with the majority of media networks supporting the government and its narrative and delegitimizing opposition against its acts under the garb of them being "anti national", what it also does is renders the concept of accountability useless, which has been held to be of extreme importance constitutionally in cases like **Eureka Forbes Limited v Allahabad Bank and Ors.** With the media favoring the government and not holding it accountable, the government also becomes complacent in its performance towards the citizens of the nation (the recent example of oxygen and medical supplies shortage in the wake of the 2<sup>nd</sup> covid wave is an example.) with this, the paper written, goes onto extensively show that the media does influence the narrative around "nationalism" and the effects of this influence as a whole on the nation.

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