

The Media Hype created over Anna Hazare's struggle- A critical analysis

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ABSTRACT : *[The mass media are considered as an instrument of social change by way of Information, entertainment and education. It helps to bring about change in people's attitude belief and can involve them in the process of socialization. The pluralities of mass media functions are crucial to routine mass transactions. The conventional wisdom for the role of mass media in society goes beyond, information education and entertainment. The swift development in technology accelerated the emergence of new forms of media. The emergence of multiple media, created competition and mass media are often fragmented and superficial. The media nowadays tend to become messy rather than exact. This article critically analyses how media deviate from the key role and rally behind sensational and transient issues, in the light of the media hype created over Anna Hazare's struggle for 'Janlokal'.]*

KEY WORDS: *Mass media, Social Change, Information, Jan Lokpal*

I. INTRODUCTION

The gleeful saga of mass media growth associated with revolutions one or the other way. Mass media evolution was a byproduct of industrial revolution. There after the tumultuous growth of media encountered with many revolutions – communication revolution, information revolutions and so forth, and finally the media itself transformed as a catalyst for revolutions as such as much debated Jasmine revolution, Tulip revolution and so forth. Mass media and revolution are sayamis twins as both can't be separated, and the archaic nexus between the two are baffling verity. Mass media activities have been laudable at any point of time be it informing, education or entertaining. The print and electronic media have had their share of effects on the society; each of these media has been responsible for its own way for changes in social and political aspects. It is found that the birth of any mass media is result if overcoming the short comings associated with the earlier ones and further each new media added new dimension and palatable range of information spate.

From the very beginning of its evolution mass media have been the traditional staple of political activities. Political doyens have discovered that mass media are the ideal tool to carry out their propaganda. The fact that it is striking a chord among the people, if at all it is, should be a source of serious concern, for it underscores the pre-modernity of our society and the shallowness of the roots of our democracy. Mass media not only educates; entertains; inform people, but intervene actively in the political and economical activity of the country through rampantly dissipating meticulously designed information ampoules called news in order to convey their mood to the information hungry mass. There being no single mood; freedom of expression ,ensures that different moods have a chance to be expressed , provided the manner of doing so, takes the debate forward instead of foreclosing it. The whole exercise is meant promote the motive of vested interests and media are just facilitators. The quintessence is that mass media are capable of implicitly carry out a conceptual coup d'état that can catapult the underlying anger of mass against the prevailed social system and the politics ruling the system through making the people actively intervene into the popular methods of protest such as strikes ,meetings and demonstrations.

Mass media not just ignites the revolution but effectively and efficiently carry out the revolutions until its culmination, by then it over through the political or social stigma which it intended to do so by an unconstitutional coup.

II. BACKGROUND OF HAZARE'S STRUGGLE

Right from independence the stories of corruption have pestered India and that jeopardized the serenity of our democracy. The desperate people of the country are trenchantly arguing for a stringent law to curb the menace of corruption. The ruling elites scrupulously avoids it by saying, such law will construate the grandeur of our historic democracy and constitution.

The supporters of Lokpal accentuates that Lokpal by its swift tentacles will curb the menace of corruption and will redeem the exquisite of our democracy. The history of Lokpal goes back to many decades. Each government ruled had come up with many versions of Lokpal, but all ended up fruitless. In that context the recent effort to pass the historic bill is taken as an apocalyptic moment by Anna Hazare and his team.

The seventy four years old Gandhian started his struggle against the 65 year old nation in order to curtail the impedances prevents the passage of the “Historic Bill”. The ruling sacred cows baffled the support gained by ‘modern Gandhi’s’ fast. As the public support swells dry by day, the government reaction was a bewildering by mix of dithering, denial, moral confusion and fear. By giving slap on the face of it, the mass media fulminated the strike by adding frivolous and vexatious discussions on the issue by rallying celebrities and intellectual think tanks behind them. The Hazare struggle also witnessed the ugly spat between the media .In short, with the aid of mass media, the Ramlila ground witnessed the seventy four year old senescence under torrential rainfall, in front of ten thousands, keeping himself awakened and embezzled the sleep of the government. This was one of biggest media coup happened in the history of India.

III. MASS MOBILIZATION BY MEDIA

Mass media played a leading role to popularize the struggle carried out by Anna. In fact if the mass media were not there the struggle would have ended as a local drama in Ramlila grounds. Mr. Hazare created a history by acceding the government to accept his version of Lokpal bill, or ‘Jan Lokpal’. This is not the victory of Anna, but ostensibly this the inimitable victory of the mass media. The mass media flamboyantly carried out the issue and created popular belief among the common man that the Gandhian and his team fighting in his interest. In 2008, ‘Anna Hazare’ was a baffling question appeared in the Indian Civil Service examination, but today, we can see, a lower Kindergarten student wearing ‘I am Anna’ topis and ‘shouting we want Lokpal’. This underscores the hype created by the media over the issue. The ‘Anna Struggle and Lokpal’ is, indeed a curious topic for any mass media researcher. The way the Anna team carried out the media coup is applausive, as it witnessed a media convergence. It is a baffling paradox that Seventy four year old Anna Hazare uses you tube for communicating with the people , and the government which is nine year younger to him still grapples on the written statements for communication .The victory of Anna struggle underscores the unequivocal media planning. Kiran Bedi, Arvind Kejriwal, Prasanth Bhushan –apart from such familiar faces there are many behind the screen. This ‘invisible Anan team’ of about twenty two youngsters embarked in busy media planning in order to throng people behind Anna. The kind of mass media attention which Anna got, bewildered even his critics.

IV. ANALYSIS

There were about thirty OB vans thronged at Ramlila grounds to cater the live updates of the fast. Electronic media head over heels supported Anna. By embarrassing the people, the channels Chief Editors’ themselves appeared on the screen to report the Anna struggle. And the electronic media succeeded in rallying various celebrities behind them, by explaining the nuances of difference between Jan Lokpal and ‘Government Lokpal’. The Anna team, especially the sift youth, were able to whip up enthusiasm among people, with enticing them by songs and dance, electronic media attributed the “Jan Jan Ki He “song as the official song of the struggle. Thus, electronic media extolled Anna for his idealism, and demanded the government to pass the Jan Lokpal, or else Mayhem will follow. The print media has contributed its own way by riding high on issue. Still there is a heated exchange of word over whether the print or electronic media contributed high on making the Hazare struggle success. The curious thing about the print media is that many of them try to equate the Hazare struggle with Jayaprakash Narayan’s mass struggle against emergency. Many of the newspapers supported Anna by, pro Anan as well as Anti Anna thinkers to express their ideologies and argue on their views, and some newspapers reserved their space to criticize Anna rather than supporting him. Whether the news was pro Anna or Anti Anna, Anna was the headline of all the newspapers.

A new feature was the participation of the social media, which helped mobilize people in different corners of the country in support of the team Anna. This was the first ever struggle in India which used social media to mobilize people. Sourav Bakshi, who obtained his MBA from Georgia state University was the head of Anna’s social networking team. Twitter, Face Book, Orkut and other social media sites, blogs, and obviously the emails played a significant part in bringing people together in peaceful demonstrations, candle march and so on. Team Anna may have been the first major beneficiary of the new media technology in India. The mobile phones too played a key role in mobilizing people and rally behind them Anna. The SMS were the main tool used by the people to pass messages in order to organize peaceful protests. “Support Anna” messages were occupied the ‘spectrum’ for many days.

When Anna Hazare ended (according to him only suspended) his 12 day fast, that marked the popularity and the impact of mass media on people as well as it revealed the penetration of mass media in to India's antique teeming land. Surprisingly 'Anna Gandhi' has received much popularity that, if someone pause a doubt, whether Mahatma Gandhi or modern Gandhi was successful in mobilizing the mass? , Should be a question seriously examined.

V. FINDINGS

I am not concerned here with whether the Janlokal Bill is the best piece of legislation on the Subject; no ram I concerned with the possible 'victory' of Anna Hazare. My concern is with the popularity which mass media gained in India, as it is relentlessly siphoning of the intellectuality of the people. Most of the people who did the candle march of, or rally, or other ways of peaceful protestation, do not know even now what is Lokpal. They just enamoured of the mass media information. The Hazare struggle witnessed the convergence of traditional media and new media. From the Hazare struggle we can conclude the following assumptions. Print media still has not lost its charm. The Hazare struggle is an answer for them who say print is dying. The support which Anna Hazare from far villages clearly indicate that the popularity and reach of print media. Many suburban and urban people's participation in struggle indicates popularity of Electronic Media and its influence on mass. The rally of youth behind Anna Hazare accentuate the popular assumption that the youth are addicted to internet mediated social networking sites or so called new media struggles revealed the penetration of social networking sites among the Indian youth. The role played by social networking site make the Hazare struggle success is a dubious question. Hazare struggle showed the government that even self style idol can catapult mass mobilization with the help of news media. The Hazare struggle can be called as a mass media revolution, in India which is similar to the one which is happening in the Middle East countries.

VI. DISCUSSION AND INFERENCES.

The Hazare struggle raised many questions and answered itself, regarding the changing dimension to the functioning of mass media. The functions of mass communication in the sphere of politics are grave importance to India, since more than anything else; the mass media are fully exploited by our leaders for political propaganda. The Hazare struggle finds no exception. At least for a short period of time the whole media in India arrested by the grip of the Anna's charisma. In fact the entire media is drawn into the spell of a baffling, at the same time, a risible political milieu. Media thronged behind Anna and extended their wings to shade him. By doing so, the media have missed the essence of the issue, and forced to portray only contributed reality. The Hazare struggle tampered the social responsibility of mass media. The mass media have the following functions. In the first place, mass communication should provide the citizens the means to understand the substance of politics. Secondly they should perform an 'amplifying function' by giving wide publicity to the actions and views of important individuals. Thirdly they should provide the common fund of information necessary for the formation of public opinion and conduct of the political process. The essence is that the media therefore could help considerably in public participation in national and regional politics. However, in the case of Anna struggle media failed to perform its functions mentioned above. Media indeed performed 'amplifying function' by riding high on the Anna issue, but failed to project he various perspectives of the issue. Majority of the media, let it be Electronic, New, or Print showed a tendency to give colored news, or one dimension of the issue even though there were few exceptions.

All media tried to create a popular belief that Anna's fast is for the people of India. They signal to us that if we don't support the fast, we were not 'true Indians'. The 24 hour channels have decided that there is no other news in the country worth reporting. By doing so, they tried to distribute 'colored news' or only one dimension of the issue. Instead of projecting one dimension of the issue the media should show the three dimensional picture, or the reality. Mass media should inform, educate and thus create a renaissance rather than making people idol worshipers. There is substantial evidence that the victory of Anna struggle was the victory of mass media as the member of Anna team, Arvind Kejriwal thanked all mass media for their support. The Anna Hazare's struggle leaves a dubious questions behind that the powerlessness of mass media. There was a popular belief in India that except perhaps in cities, Media do not exercise much influence in political issues. For one thing, the spread of mass media is mostly restricted to urban areas, for another, the educational standard, and the historic democracy that over shadows any media impact. However the grotesque impact of mass media is evident in Hazare's struggle. The Candle marches, demonstrations, and rallies happened in Indian villages too, to extend the people's support to Anna. This was clear outcome of the influence of media on mass. The media, therefore, can undermine people's belief and rally behind them sensational and transient issues. By doing so Mass media forgetting role of molding a 'mass culture'.

The Hazare struggle also revealed the weakness of government in handling the issue. Since in Indian media has given full freedom of expression, media can do anything they want to do. The examples of Middle East Countries played a key role in hefting a popular appraisal. This popular appraisal soon paved the way for a political revolution. Even though, the countries were the media assisted revolutions started have a stringent media law, they failed to curb the spread of appraisal. The Anna Hazare struggle also pointing out the need to have effective media law in the country that should keep the media away from idol worship. As New media contributed much to the Middle East revolutions, growth and penetration of new media should be a seriously examined. Whether the motive of Hazare struggle is good for the society or not, the kind of attention which Hazare got leaves out many questions to be answered. Here a single idol substitutes the collective subject, the people, by an individual subject; assisted by media. Here the media instead of enlighten the people; try to whip up enthusiasm among them, through the use of meaningless hyperbole. The Hazare struggle invites the attention of the government to look in to the issue of having an effective media laws in the country. The Hazare struggle can be summarized as a media coup- An issue where more serious studies need to happen to take the issue forward. It is clear then that people are by and large active users of mass media. They frequently accept media messages rather than reject or oppose.

VII. FINAL COMMENTS

Mass media right from its beginning used as an effective tool against the ruling government. Reasonable criticism from media is essential. As it may help to open up the eyes' of the governments, if at all it is doing something which is antisocial or anti people. But nowadays especially after the sprout of electronic media and new media, media has taken criticism as its main role. These media go after news which can be anything that entertains the mass. So there is obviously competition started among the media. Each media wanted to increase their rating; in fact each media has taken high TRP as its main goal. This tendency force media to extol idols like Anna Hazare. Here at least for few days Anna became a 'brand' or 'icon'. By rallying behind these kind of self styled idols mass media could compete, collude, as oligopolists, do in the market for good and keep the people in intellectual thralldom. Media always has a trend to be messy, rather than exact. However it is not a good tendency. Media should focus on issues which should have a mass benefit, rather than individual benefit. The quintessence of Anna Hazare's struggle was that it underscored the supremacy of mass media in India. This presumption, however, underscores, tyrannous of media to topple the ruling system to catapult a media coup, ipso facto the issue should seriously be concerned

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