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# Media Hegemony: A critical analysis of Propaganda and Manufacturing consent in India

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## Abstract:

*In the age of globalization, the whole world depends on the media to acquire news and information. Today media play a central role in politics. Especially in India, the biggest democracy in the world, the media has played a significant role not only in freedom movement but also in nation-building after independence. As the fourth pillar of democracy Indian media has played a dominant role in channelizing the opinion of the masses. Media has the power of transmission, which can be used beneficially or adversely. They possess the ability to control and overpower ordinary people's minds and build their version of the truth. Indian television, as a powerful medium, being reachable to ordinary people's daily life, has the power to fabricate the "right" or "wrong" due to their biases. So, it is a crucial question how Indian media participates in imposing its hegemony on the population and how it affects Indian Politics*

*This article examines how Indian mainstream media maintains its hegemony through "manufacturing consent" and "propaganda". This article also focuses on the role of government and corporate organizations in this respect.*

**Key Words:** Media Hegemony, Manufacturing Consent, Propaganda.

## 1. Introduction:

in the age of information, media has been already a powerful tool. But when it is used as an instrument of hegemonic power like the state or corporate, it can freely control all spheres of life. A Famous quotation from the novel 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' by George Orwell- "*He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.*" remind us of media's controlling power. Malcolm X has famously claimed in this context - The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent and that is power. Because they control the minds of the masses (Gupta 2020)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Gupta, S. (2020). Infestation of Media with Propaganda: Effects on Politics in India, Fastforward Justice's Law Journal (2581-6713), 2(4). [fastforwardjustice.com](http://fastforwardjustice.com).

The renowned 'hypodermic needle theory' has similarly supported that mass media (television, radio, or others) has a direct, immediate, and consequential impact capacity on its audience (Hasan 2013)<sup>2</sup>. In 1930, Orson Welles's famous radio broadcast named the 'war of the world' was a classic example of how dominant and impactful a mass media channel could be. However, it triggered a nationwide mass panic as millions of Americans believed the aliens had landed on earth (Salleh 2013)<sup>3</sup>. The Cultivation Theory by Gerbner and Gross has similarly acknowledged the claim that media cultivates and shapes viewers' perceptions. It can construct a version of reality for the entire society (Maharajan 2018)<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, it is evident that ordinary people accomplish their comprehension through television and radio broadcasts. Instead, it is better to say that these broadcasts work as the medium of education for the commons.

In contrast, there were several past incidents where mass media performed adversely on the situation through their propaganda and fake news. Media occasionally suppresses the 'reality' through their blatant lies under political and corporate manipulation. These can be hazardous not only for a country but also for the global community. In India, there are several past incidents where television has been proven to be a propaganda instrument of government (Bose 2022)<sup>5</sup>. For example, we have witnessed some Indian television channels work as the instrument of state propaganda during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Farmers' Movement. Except for a couple of news channels, the electronic media made a concerted effort to project the Indian prime minister's larger-than-life image of revoking the farm laws in 'the national interest'. They voluntarily ignored the human and economic costs incurred by those laws (Salam 2021)<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Literature Review:

Media propaganda and fake news are not entirely novel phenomena. Our media world is quite familiar with both. For example, in 1898, the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst helped to instigate a war between the U.S and Spain by dispersing 'fake news' about Cuba's handling of American citizens (Bose 2022)<sup>7</sup>. Despite the justification of the 'nationalist' proclamation, the real scenario behind it was covering the issue of increased revenue.

<sup>2</sup> Hasan, S. (2013). Mass Communication: Principles and Concepts (2nd edition). New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors Pvt Ltd.

<sup>3</sup> Salleh, S. (2013). Demassification of media and Society: Re-envisioning Toffler by Shahnnon, Published on October 31, 2013. [www.shahnons.blogspot.com](http://www.shahnons.blogspot.com) Accessed on 10th April, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Maharajan, P. (2018). Cultivation Theory. Businesstopia, Published on January 8, 2018. [www.businesstopia.net/communication/cultivation-theory](http://www.businesstopia.net/communication/cultivation-theory) Accessed on 8th April, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Bose, A. K. (2022). Arvind Rajagopal: Media are active agents of a counter-revolution. Frontline, Published on March 25, 2022, p.84. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/interview-arvind-rajagopal-media-are-active-agents-of-a-counter-revolution/article38457371> ece Accessed on 10th April, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Salam, Z. U. (2021). Media turns cheerleader for Narendra Modi's decision to repeal farm laws, tries to put positive spin on climb-down. Frontline, Published on December 17, 2021, page 36 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/media-as-cheerleaders-narendra-modi-decision-to-repeal-farm-laws-tries-to-put-positive-spin-on-climb-down/article37716317> ece Accessed on 8th April, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 5

As far as terminology is concerned, 'propaganda' indicates a deliberate manipulation of thoughts, behavior, attitudes, and beliefs utilizing symbols (words, gestures, images, flags, monuments, music and many others) (Watson & Hill 2015, 253)<sup>8</sup>. The term was initially developed by the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, a committee of cardinals which has been working as the in-charge of missionary activities of the church since 1622 (Watson & Hill 2015, 253)<sup>9</sup>. Later, while defining the efficacy of propaganda, Fritz Hippler, head of Nazi Germany's film propaganda division, narrated the characteristics of effective propaganda. In light of World War II (1982), he claimed that "simplifying a complex issue" and "repeating that simplification over and over again" enhances the efficacy of propaganda (Baran & Davis 2011, 76)<sup>10</sup>. Walter Lippmann has further developed the concept of propaganda in his book *Public Opinion* (1922), claiming that "In order to conduct propaganda, there must be some barrier between the public and the event" (Lipmann 1922, 28)<sup>11</sup>. The classification indicates that media has the potency to manipulate incidents or choose to circulate fragments of information to the public so that the reality can be fabricated. In this context, Lippmann introduced the conceptions of gatekeeping and agenda-setting and claimed that the media can limit public access to information (Lipmann 1922)<sup>12</sup>.

Edward Bernays, known as 'the father of public relations', was another theorist who worked with Propaganda. According to him, "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society" (Bernays, E. L. 2005)<sup>13</sup>. In this respect he describes propagandist as "invisible governors". While explaining the theory of propaganda and its impact level, Harold Lasswell has claimed that economic recession and political turbulence caused tension in the society making the commons vulnerable to the simplest form of propaganda (Lasswell, 1934)<sup>14</sup>. In his discussion, Lasswell introduced the concept of 'master (or collective) symbols' that are associated with strong emotions and possess the power to stimulate beneficial large-scale mass movement if handled wisely (Baran & Davis 2011, 84)<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, the propaganda model of media control narrated that, in general, the propaganda campaigns have been closely associated with the interest of the elites (Herman & Chomsky 2008)<sup>16</sup>. However, some propaganda campaigns are the products of joint venture between the government and the media. The politics of media propaganda campaigns are

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<sup>8</sup> Watson, J. & Hill, A. (2015). *Dictionary of Media and Communication Studies* (9th edition). London: Bloomsbury

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>10</sup> Baran, S. J. & Davis, D. K. (2011). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future* (6th edition). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

<sup>11</sup> Lipmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. USA: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>13</sup> Bernays, E. L. (2005). *Propaganda*. New York: Ig Publishing.

<sup>14</sup> Lasswell, H. D. (1934). *World Politics and Personal Insecurity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>16</sup> Herman, E. S. & Chomsky, N. (2008). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: The Bodley Head.

believed to be multiple filtered systems- ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and anti-communism. (Herman & Chomsky 2008)<sup>17</sup>.

The term “Manufacturing Consent” was coined by Walter Lippman in his famous book “Public Opinion” published in 1922. The term latter used by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media” “Manufacturing consent reveals how the upper-class controls and skews the news to get masses to believe whatever serves them best. It is the manipulation of the norms and values of an audience through mass media used by the government or other institution. The concept found in Gramsci and Althusserian Marxism, in which the dominant class sustains its hegemony through engineering assent. (Chandler and Munday 2011, 250)<sup>18</sup>

To understand the root of media hegemony it is very essential to analyze the work of Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci. In classical Marxism, hegemony means, the political and economic dominance of the bourgeoisie exercised through the legislative and coercive power of the state. For Gramsci, it is the cultural and ideological dominance of the ruling class, which exercises control by using its influence in major institution like mass media and education. (Chandler and Munday 2011, 183)<sup>19</sup>. Though Gramsci suggests, it is essential counter-hegemony (passive revolution) of working class to claim power. ‘Propaganda’, ‘Manufacturing consent’ and ‘hegemony’- the three terms are inter-connected with each other. Propaganda is a tool to manufacture public consent. Hegemony is the ultimate result of Manufacturing Consent.<sup>49</sup> (Kilani, 2018)<sup>20</sup>.

The ruling governments in our country have been adept at using propaganda as a political tool for their hidden advantages. A subtle form of pre-censorship commands what is shown to the country’s citizens and what is brushed under the carpets of political houses. <sup>20</sup>(Gupta 2020)<sup>21</sup>. Here nationalism is mediated and concealed under the hidden layers of cultural expression. These have been consolidated through a “manufacture of consent” engineered by the local agencies of the State in the market and the media. (Bharucha 1998, 115)<sup>22</sup>.

Daya Kishan Thussu has rightly quoted about Doordarshan Such an extraordinary growth shows how much has changed since the introduction of television in India in 1959 as a means for disseminating government policies, public information and state propaganda. Its news coverage

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>18</sup> Chandler, D. & Munday R. (2011). Dictionary of Media and Communication (1st edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 18

<sup>20</sup> Kilani, A. (2018). Comparative Analysis of Media Hegemony: Propaganda and Manufacturing Consent in US Media. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340459904\\_Comparative\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Media\\_Hegemony\\_Propaganda\\_and\\_Manufacturing\\_Consent\\_in\\_US\\_Media](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340459904_Comparative_Analysis_of_Media_Hegemony_Propaganda_and_Manufacturing_Consent_in_US_Media)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 1

<sup>22</sup> Barucha, R. (1998). In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

rarely rose above what critics rightly derided as 'protocol news' (Thussu 2002, 203-212)<sup>23</sup>. The way television news covered the Kargil war in 1999 as India's first broadcasted war (Thussu 2002, 203-212) and the communal violence in Gujarat in 2002 as the first significant riot of India (Jain 2010, 163-179)<sup>24</sup> is indicative of the power of visual media and how they shape the reality to the public (Thussu 2014, 129-141)<sup>25</sup>.

### 3. Objectives:

The study attempts to analyze the following issues:

- i) To find the resent picture of media hegemony and propaganda in India.
- ii) To examine the real intentions of Media houses behind disseminating propaganda.
- iii) To study how media houses manufacture the consent of Indian common people.
- iv) To examine the socio-political and economic impact of media propaganda.
- v) To find the real picture of countering media propaganda and fake news.

### 4. Research Methodology:

This article is based on content analysis of the different articles and interviews published in different newspapers, magazines and online e platforms and a detailed literature review of the related texts and reports. No survey is conducted for the research. This study follows mainly qualitative research methodology to investigate the unexplored matter and to examine research objectives. In this aim, some pictures of media bias, dominated by the state, corporate and upper caste hegemony, have been explained. Some examples of crude media propaganda have been given here. Five filters of Herman and Chomsky have been described in the Indian context. Then the real intentions of media houses behind disseminating propaganda, its impact on Indian society and some counter hegemonic efforts of some journalists and some alternative media, also are reflected in the findings.

### 5. Data Collection Method:

Most of the data is collected through interviews and articles published in newspapers, magazines, and internet. Some survey reports of the independent organization are also used for data.

### 6. Data Analysis:

Data is analyzed descriptively, followed by the appropriate critical analysis. Collected data is analyzed according to the objectives of the study. For this purpose, some data is broadly classified, and some unnecessary data is removed.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 23

<sup>24</sup> Jain, A. (2010). 'Beaming it live': 24-hour Television News, the Spectator and the Spectacle of the 2002 Gujarat Carnage, *South Asian Popular Culture*, 8(2), 163-179.

<sup>25</sup> Thussu, D. K. (2014). Television News and an Indian Infotainment Sphere. In: *Channeling Culture: Television Studies From India* (B. Sen & A. Roy eds). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 129-141.

## 7. Findings:

At present most of the mainstream media are dominated by the upper caste, state, and corporate hegemony. Today's Indian media are entirely elitist. Most of the Media house's newsrooms are monopolized by journalists belonging to upper caste families. Ramon Magsaysay award- holder journalist Palagummi Sainath in this respect expressed his comment at Dr Santinath Desai Memorial Empowerment Lecture at Karnataka Kuvempu University on the first of April in 2022. According to his speech, "India has produced Dalit presidents, judges, chief justice and deputy prime minister, but it would be difficult to find Dalit, Adibasi in today's Indian newsroom. There were hardly any dark-skinned people in the visual media."<sup>26</sup> After searching the country for more than ten years, Journalist of Al Jazeera Sudipta Mandal has been able to find only eight Dalit journalists in the English media. (Bansal S, 2018)<sup>27</sup>.

Indian mainstream media are presently dependent on the government not only for economic compulsion but also for various political pressure. At present, many media owners are directly or indirectly connected to various political parties. Most of them belong to the ruling party. Media baron Subhas Chandra, the owner of Zee Media Corporation, is connected to BJP. He was elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha as an independent candidate supported by BJP. Republic TV was founded by Arnab Goswami and Rajib Chandrasekhar. Rajib Chandrasekhar is at present a member of the BJP and central minister. Arnab Goswami is also remarkably close to BJP. Network 18 Group is owned by Mukesh Ambani. There is no doubt about his closeness to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. That is why the policy of most of the media houses is influenced by Government.

In India, the biggest democracy in the world, Media has a glorious history to criticize the establishment for the sake of the common people. However, at present, especially after 2014, most of the mainstream media's role has been pro-governmental. P Sainath criticized the pro-government role of present Indian media at Dr Santinath Desai Memorial Empowerment Lecture at Karnataka Kuvempu University on the first of April in 2022. He commented, 'At least 90% of the media defend every move of the Government. During emergency, the media crawled when it was asked to bend, but now there is no need to even ask it.'<sup>28</sup>

Not only for media ownership but also for social recognition and product-selling, business houses are to maintain the relationship with media and government. So, there is always a tacit

<sup>26</sup> Newslaundry (2022). '90% of the media defends the government': P Sainath on the state of Indian media. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2022/04/02/90-of-media-defends-the-government-p-sainath-on-the-state-of-indian-media>

<sup>27</sup> Bansal S, (2018) 'The Indian media is politically free but imprisoned by profit: P Sainath' <https://bansalsamarth.medium.com/the-indian-media-is-politically-free-but-imprisoned-by-profit-p-sainath-5191b331c249>

<sup>28</sup> The Hindu, (2022). 'No need to even ask media to bend now, says Sainath.' [https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/no-need-to-even-ask-media-to-bend-now-says-sainath/article65282496.ece/amp/#amp\\_tf=From%20%251%24s&ao=16668060151680&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/no-need-to-even-ask-media-to-bend-now-says-sainath/article65282496.ece/amp/#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&ao=16668060151680&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com)

understanding among government, media, and corporate organization. Moreover, they are closely interlocked. So, destroying all journalistic responsibility, most of the media houses of India are bound to defend the interest of corporations and the government. According to the opinion of P Sainath in this respect, Today's media is driven by revenue, not by reality; by business, not by the community; by profit, not by people; by narrow corporate greed, not by news judgement. (Bansal S, 2018)<sup>29</sup>.

After a prolonged farmer movement Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 19, 2021 announced that the farm laws would be repealed. That movement was historic. 700 farmers died during the movement. Farmers were united irrespective of religion and caste. During the protest, one type of media continuously attacked the movement. They raised question about the motive of the movement. However, after the announcement, they all started praising Modi. 'On The Debate at 9' on Republic TV, Arnab Goswami said loudly "now the elements that wanted to burn the country down by using the farm laws as a lever have nothing, no excuse to riot, no excuse to block the roads, no excuse to support and take support from Pakistanis and Khalistanis....no reason to politicize this for the Uttar Pradesh and Punjab elections. They are so frustrated tonight." (Salam 2021)<sup>30</sup>.

Deepak Chaurasia, consulting editor of News Nation, called it "the Centre's major decision." Aman Chopra of News India 18 praised Modi, calling the day of Modi's announcement as "a big day". According to Aaj Tak's Anjana Om Kashyap, 'the farm laws were intended to get rid of middlemen.' She said, "the farmers had failed to see the positive aspects of the laws." (Salam, 2021)<sup>31</sup>.

The image of Kashmir in mainstream media and the way they depict Kashmir is a burning question to us. From the revocation of article 370 to the debate about the film 'The Kashmir Files' directed by Vivek Agnihotri, there are many examples of media propaganda in India. In the issue of The Kashmir File, documentary film maker Sandeep Ravindranath said Frontline 'News today a political propaganda.' (Bhakto, A. 2022).<sup>32</sup> Describing 'The Kashmir File' as a propaganda film, Historian and writer Ashok Kumar Pandey told Frontline, "it shocks with its sheer violent propaganda surpassing every moral consideration. Here is a film director who openly boasts about his allegiance with the ruling party, and has no reservations in propagating communal hatred, through his film and interview. The hatemongering is blatant. Also, this is the first time

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 28

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>32</sup> Bhakto, A (2022). ' News today a political propaganda.' Frontline. Published on June 17, 2022. Page 51. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/interview-sandeep-ravindranath-news-today-is-political-propaganda/article65462802.ece>



the Prime Minister, the home minister and other important leaders of ruling dispensation are openly supporting a film and promoting it.” (Salam, 2022)<sup>33</sup>. According to the opinion of filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, Hindi cinema is becoming a political weapon of the ruling dispensation. He commented to Frontline, “We see for the first time in our history a Prime Minister becoming a cinema tout to boost the box office sales of a fiction film that incites hatred.” (Salam, 2022)<sup>34</sup>.

The demolition of Muslims houses and shops on 16th April 2022 made a debate in Indian political sphere. Frontline magazine made a cover story on this event describing it as “Bulldozing the idea of India”. When the Supreme Court of India had to intervene and criticized BJP-ruled Delhi Municipal Corporation, some kind of media shamelessly termed it a ‘historic action against illegal encroachment’. Aaj Tak, News 18, Zee Media, India TV were continuously disseminating propaganda news blaming the Muslim community. Those Media used the term “baba” as a prefix to a bulldozer to confer honour to a machine meant for destruction. In the conversation on Aaj Tak TV, Left leader Vivek Srivastava said, “it is not about encroachment, it is about sending a message to Muslims that if they fly, baba’s Bulldozer will come.” Most of the Hindi news anchors were enthusiastic about selling the destructive Bulldozer. Incidentally, baba is a revered title used for Hindu saints (Salam, 2022)<sup>35</sup>.

According to recent Oxfam India, ‘inequality kills’ report, the richest 98 Indian’s wealth is the same as the bottom 552 million people’s wealth. (Mampatta, 2022)<sup>36</sup>. In this situation, Indian media has become an instrument to control the minds and make money out of it. To manufacture the consent of the common people, media follows a propaganda model given by Herman and Chomsky in their book “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media”. In this book, they have given five filters through which news is passed. (Herman & Chomsky 2008)<sup>37</sup>. If we analyze this model in the context of India, then it will be clear that how the news-consuming people is manipulated by the political elite and how consent is manufactured among the population through propaganda (Sing, 2020)<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Salam, Z. U. (2022). Ashok Kumar Pandey: ‘A Clean case of selective portrayal’. Frontline, Published on April 22, 2022, page 67. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation / interview-ashok-kumar-pandey-the-kashmir-files- movie-a-clear-case-of-selective-portrayal /article38466575.ece>

<sup>34</sup> Salam, Z. U. (2022). Anand Patwardhan: ‘Silence is no longer an option’. Frontline, Published on May 6, 2022, page 86. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/arts-and-culture/cinema/interview-anand-patwardhan-silence-is-no-longer-an-option/article38475330.ece>

<sup>35</sup> Salam, Z. U. (2022). ‘Media Sellout’. Frontline, Published on May 20, 2022, page 16-17. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/media-sellout-list-of-tv-news-anchors-toeing-the-governments-line-grows/article38483279.ece>

<sup>36</sup> Mampatta, S. P. (2022). ‘Wealth of richest 98 same as bottom 552 million, says Oxfam report’ Business Standard. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wealth-of-richest-98-same-as-bottom-552-million-says-oxfam-report-22011601095\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/wealth-of-richest-98-same-as-bottom-552-million-says-oxfam-report-22011601095_1.html)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>38</sup> Sing, S. (2020) ‘Manufacturing Consent in India’. <http://campusbeat.in/manufacturing-consent-in-india/>



According to Herman and Chomsky, ownership is the first filter. 90% of the American media is controlled by the 6 media conglomerates: Comcast, News corps, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner and CBS. In India, Easel group, Reliance industry, Bennet and Coleman Co, Star group, Sun TV, ABP group and Sony pictures network are media giants in India. Today's media owner's main aim is to gain profit. To fulfil this aim media houses, promote Hindutva agenda of the state.

According to the cobra post operation- 136, the bigger the media houses the greater was the willingness to carry promotion for Hindutva agenda for large sums of money. The times of India, India Today, Zee news, Hindustan times and Dainik Bhaskar- are all part of this agenda promotion. (Jamil, E. 2020)<sup>39</sup>.

Advertising is the second filter. No doubt, it is the primary source of income for the mass media. So here, advertisers, may be corporate organizations or governments that play an important role in the news industry. According to the book of Herman and Chomsky, Advertisers achieve a de-facto licensing authority. Without their support media house cannot economically survive. The same picture is seen in India. Samir Jain, vice chairman of Bennett, Coleman and Co Ltd, which publishes The Times of India told the New Yorker in October 2012: "we are not in the newspaper business, we are in the advertising business." (Bansal, S. 2018)<sup>40</sup>. Without considering the merit of the government initiative and without analyzing the people perception Media houses blindly campaign for Demonetization and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, through news and advertisement. (Sing, 2020)<sup>41</sup>.

The third filter is 'Sourcing'. The media need raw material for news. So, they need a reliable source of news. Government and Corporate sources are reliable to mass media. (Herman & Chomsky 2008)<sup>42</sup>. For information, Press Information Bureau is the nodal agency of the Indian government. Other than that, the office of the central secretariat, the state secretariat, President and Governor House, Office of the security department, various Court and corporate head offices all are reliable source centers of mass media. So, mass media is to depend on political, executive, and corporate elite for news information.

'Flak' is the fourth filter. Herman and Chomsky describe 'Flak' as a negative response to a media statement or program. In India, most of the media houses try to avoid 'Flak' produced by the government and big corporate. There are many examples of government flak against the anti-establishment media houses. One of the popular news channels in India is NDTV. Both English

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<sup>39</sup>Jamil, E. (2020) 'Manufacturing of consent in the Indian context' <https://www.voiceofmargin.com/manufacturing-of-consent-in-the-indian-context/>

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. 28

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. 39

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. 16

and Hindi NDTV is famous as anti-establishment channel. However, the recent announcement of the acquisition of 29 percent stake of NDTV by Goutam Adani, the wealthiest man in Asia, has created a debate. International media also criticized this step. 'AL Jazeera' made a headline as 'Indian tycoon Adani bids for NDTV in potential hostile takeover'<sup>43</sup>.

Criticizing this step, The Washington Post also made a headline as 'Fears for independent media in India as tycoon eyes major news channel'. (Shih, G and Masih, N. 2022)<sup>44</sup>. 'Frontline' magazine described it as a 'Backdoor ambush' (Sridhar, V 2022)<sup>45</sup>. In the name of breaching national security central government ordered NDTV INDIA to shut down broadcasting for a day in 2016. (Dutta, A .2016)<sup>46</sup>. The central government also ordered the Bengali news channel Kolkata TV to shut down broadcasting. (Ghosh, K. 2022)<sup>47</sup>. Co-founder of Alt news and fact checker Mohammad Juber was arrested for his role in identifying fake and propaganda news. In this respect, fact checker and managing editor of BOOM Jency Jacob told Frontline, "Not just fact checker, it is a dangerous time today to be a ground reporter." (Sayeed, V. A 2022)<sup>48</sup>. According to a study title 'Getting Away with Murder' , 200 severe attacks on journalist was made between 2014 to 2019. <sup>49</sup>. India's position in the World Press Freedom Index is 150 out of 180 countries. (Sampath, G 2022)<sup>50</sup>.

The fifth and final filter is the ideology of Anti-communism. In India, an enemy is produced by the power elite as a control mechanism. Here Muslims, Pakistan and Marxists are used as the enemy. Through mass media, these enemies are produced in front of people. Having produced these imagined enemy's media creates an environment of fear among people. Muslims were blamed for the outbreak of coronavirus in India. After the event of Tableeghi Jamaat, anti-Islam propaganda was circulated through mainstream and social media. (Apoorvanand, 2020)<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Aljazeera. (2022). 'Indian tycoon Adani bids for NDTV in potential hostile takeover' <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/8/24/indian-tycoon-adani-bids-for-ndtv-in-potential-hostile-takeover>

<sup>44</sup>Shih, G and Masi, N (2022). The Washington Post. 'Fears for independent media in India as tycoon eyes major news channel.' <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/24/india-ndtv-adani-media-takeover/>

<sup>45</sup> Sridhar, V (2022). Frontline. 'Backdoor Ambush: Adani attempts to acquire significant stake in NDTV.' <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/backdoor-ambush-adani-attempts-to-acquire-significant-stake-in-ndtv/article65836618.ece>

<sup>46</sup> Dutta, A (2016). Business Standard. 'Govt tells NDTV India to shut down for a day.' <https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-tells-ndtv-india-to-shut-down-for-a-day-116110301624-1.html>

<sup>47</sup> Ghosh, K (2022). Kolkata TV web desk. 'Fer akranto Kolkata TV, nirapottar ajuhate somprachar bondher husiyari kendrer.' <https://kolkataatvonline.in/national/17751/centre-orders-kolkata-TV-to-shut-down>

<sup>48</sup> Sayeed, V. A (2022). 'Jency Jacob: It is a dangerous time to be a ground reporter today.' Frontline. Published on July 29, 2022 page 50-51. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/interview-jency-jacob-its-a-dangerous-time-to-be-a-ground-reporter-today/article65382354.ece>

<sup>49</sup> The Wire (2019), New Delhi. 'Over 200 serious attacks on journalists in India between 2014-19: Report.' <https://thewire.in/media/journalists-killed-attacked-india-report>

<sup>50</sup> Sampath, G (2022). The Hindu. 'India's position on the World Press Freedom Index.' <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-position-on-the-world-press-freedom-index/article65382354.ece>

<sup>51</sup> Apoorvanand, (2020). Aljazeera. 'How the coronavirus outbreak in India was blamed on Muslims.' <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/4/18/how-the-coronavirus-outbreak-in-india-was-blamed-on-muslims>

Producing imagined enemies in front of people, the media divert the common issues which are directly connected to the interest of the ordinary people.

What is real intention of media houses circulating propaganda and fake news? One of the big reasons behind it is the political economy of mass media. Today's mainstream media only aim at TRP, circulation and advertisement. P Sainath has stated in this respect, because of the market the media has a structural compulsion to lie. (Lahiri, I. 2014 171)<sup>52</sup>. Many times, media houses are forced to circulate propaganda for the vested interest of the government. Rajmohan Gandhi, historian and scholar, said frontline, "Most of India's large media houses are understandably fearful of a powerful government. For survival they give prominent space to propaganda even if they dislike it." (Pillai, M. S 2022)<sup>53</sup>.

As the fourth state of the democracy, the opinion builder, the media has a great responsibility to society. As a result of blatant propaganda, journalistic ethics are being destroyed. Indian society is being affected by media propaganda. Vinay Shukla's News documentary 'While we watched' about journalist and anchor Ravish Kumar, won an award at the recent Toronto international film festival. He talks about the duty of news organizations. In this respect he throws some question to the Frontline, "how do we build better system? How do we make sure diverse voices are contributing to the newsroom? News organization need to talk about it. In India, we have tremendous geographical and linguistic diversity. Is that reflected in our news? (Shrikrishna, A 2022)<sup>54</sup>.

The picture of Media propaganda is not homogeneous in India. To counter propaganda and fake news many alternative media like Altnews, BOOM and The Wire have already been launched. To counter the film 'The Kashmir File' documentary filmmaker Sandeep Ravindranath made a 9-minute short film "Anthem for Kashmir". (Bhakto, A 2022)<sup>55</sup>. Fact checker and Managing editor of BOOM Jancy Jacob expressed with determination, "We want to exist and thrive to ensure our democracy to exist and thrives." (Sayeed, V. A 2022)<sup>56</sup>. Among the mainstream media 'NDTV', 'The Hindu' are maintaining their journalistic responsibility. Rajmohan Gandhi expressed his hope in this way, "fortunately, a handful of great media houses continue to give news and comment without fear or favour. Few are more courageous than the brave reporters who from

<sup>52</sup> Lahiri, I. (2014) Unlikely Bedfellows? The Media and Government Relations in West Bengal (1977-2011) University of Stirling. [https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/20410/1/Unlikely%20Bedfellows\\_28.05.2014.pdf](https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/20410/1/Unlikely%20Bedfellows_28.05.2014.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Pillai, M. S (2022). 'I am shaken, but not crushed.' Frontline Published on August 26, 2022. Page 63-64-65-66 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/books/india-at-75-interview-rajmohan-gandhi-i-am-shaken-but-not-crushed/article65730025.ece>

<sup>54</sup> Shrikrishna, A (2022). 'It is difficult to disagree.' Frontline. Published on October 21, 2022. Page, 90-91-92 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/arts-and-culture/cinema/interview-vinay-shukla-on-ravish-kumar-documentary-while-we-watched-a-tired-hero-questioning-his-own-relevance/article65930897.ece>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 33

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 49

every corner of our land file stories and videos of injustice. Major media, whether print or electronic, may not always feature their stories, but India possesses a great number of enterprising, risk-taking journalists.” (Pillai, M. S 2022)<sup>57</sup>.

## 8. Conclusion:

There are countless examples of media propaganda in India. But in two decades, it touched its height. Taking the support of the political elite and corporate elite one kind of mainstream media has been polluting Indian society through blatant lies. Having forgotten all constitutional obligation and journalistic responsibility, they are only blindly campaigning for the ruling party and big corporates. Through propaganda and fake news, they are dividing the society, which is multi-lingual, multi-religion and multi-cultural. The beauty our country is its diversity. To establish harmony among that plurality, the first Prime Minister of India and great freedom fighter Jawaharlal Nehru used the famous phrase ‘unity in diversity’ in his book ‘Discovery of India’. Killing that diversity, present rulers want to establish their one dimensional (Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan) ideological society. To establish this ideology, media is used as an instrument. So Marxist theorist Louis Althusser described those institutions like media as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Watson & Hill 2015, 133).<sup>58</sup> The world of thought and knowledge is being harmed by continuous dispersing of propaganda and fake news. Nevertheless, an intellectual class has been developed here for prevailing democracy over seven decades. Those intellectual class (in the language of Gramsci ‘organic intellectual’) is fearlessly doing anti-campaign against media propaganda through writing in various publications. Many alternative media are playing their duty for the benefit of society. It is true, countering the media hegemony supported by big corporate and the government is very tough, but it is not a Sisyphean task. For that reasons Rajmohan Gandhi, historian and scholar says that the free and democratic India of his boyhood dream is under fearsome assault, but he is not giving up hope (Pillai, M. S 2022).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 54

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 8

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