

IMPACT OF MEDIA TRIAL ON SOCIETY

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With the advent of widespread intrusion of social media, and its assimilation and concentration into the daily life of people from all walks of life, sensitive issues have been going haywire far too often in far too many places

"I would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated press" - **Jawaharlal Nehru**

Media is an indispensable pillar of democracy. It plays a pivotal role in influencing the masses. The term refers to components of the mass media communication industry such as print media, publishing, the news media, photography, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television), and advertising. Newspapers play an important part in shaping public opinion in the present scenario. Editorials scan the programmes and activities of the government and different political parties and point out their positive and negative sides. This scansion helps to mould the opinion of the people who are otherwise incapable of forming any opinion of their own.

Basically, the term 'Media trial' has been popularised in the late 20th and early 21st century to express the impact of television and newspaper coverage on a person's reputation by creating a widespread perception of guilt or innocence regardless of any

verdict in a court of law. India has the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression along with the freedom of press under clause 19 (1) (a), but the limitations to its absolute freedom are stated in its very next clause. Article 19 (2) does not refer to 'administration of justice' but interference of the administration of justice is clearly referred to in the definition of 'criminal contempt' in section 2 of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 and in Sec-3 thereof as amounting to contempt.

In the Romesh Thapar vs State of Madras and Brij Bhushan vs State of Delhi, the Supreme Court took for granted the fact that the freedom of the press was an essential part of the right to freedom of speech and

expression. It was observed by Former Chief Justice Patanjali Sastri that freedom of speech and expression included propagation of ideas, and that freedom was ensured by the freedom of circulation.

The press or newspaper has rights to write the news or disclose the matter of current news, but some of them are still misusing this power by exaggeration of fact. One such example can be found in the Aarushi Talwar Murder case, where without confirming the facts, media presented the news in a manner that public at large, assumed at first instance that her parents were directly liable for the incident and that was even before completion of police investigation. Maybe, this is why Mark

Twain had once remarked - "If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed." With the advent of widespread intrusion of social media, and its assimilation and concentration into the daily life of people from all walks of life, sensitive issues have been going haywire far too often in far too many places. This happens because there is no virtual way to control its fatal ramifications. The June 2018 mob lynching, resulting in death, of two youths in Assam's Karbi Anglong could be considered to understand the growing threat of social media trials. Nilotpal Das and Abhijeet Nath were lynched a misinformed and grossly gullible group of people who had thought that the boys were child lifters, based on some fake news circulated on Facebook and WhatsApp. Although the government has mobilised a vigorous advertisement campaign to check the atrocity of the upheaval wrecked by social media rumour mill, it still continues to have repercussions which tend to shape political opinions to various kinds of biases.

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