

The Role of Journalism in the Era of Digital Media: A Study of Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives in Achieving 'Viksit Bharat @2047'

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Abstract

This paper takes a closer look at how journalism is evolving alongside India's development efforts, especially in light of the national goal of 'Viksit Bharat @2047'. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, it explores how traditional and digital media are being used-not just as tools for spreading information, but also as means of fostering national unity, encouraging public participation, and holding those in power accountable. Through purposive sampling and secondary data analysis, the study analyzes journalistic practices across Indian platforms and compares them with those in the United States, China, and South Korea. The study engages with content and discourse analysis tools to investigate stakeholder narratives-ranging from state propaganda to civil society critiques. The results show that Indian media has a lot of potential to support the developmental agenda, it also has a lot of drawbacks, such as media concentration, ideological alignment, and a lack of critical analysis. Unlike the media in many developed countries, Indian journalism still needs to advance in terms of building strong ethical practices, ensuring independence from political and corporate influence and adopting a public service mindset that includes diverse voices. This study adds to the broader conversation on the role of journalism in development by highlighting how the media-when it acts both as a supporter and a watchdog of government policy-can help promote more inclusive, participatory, and accountable communication strategies aimed at building a 'Viksit Bharat.'

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Introduction

The present era is the age of digital media. Media has played a significant role in redefining the mutual relationship between the state, society, and citizens. As India aspires to become a fully developed nation by 2047, journalism assumes a crucial role in shaping and advancing public discourse. Media not only serves as a source of information but also acts as a platform for public participation, accountability, and national integration (Chatterjee, 2019).

We are currently moving towards a hyper-connected, information-driven society. In such a situation, journalism is playing an important role in shaping public awareness, political participation and national identity. As India progresses on its path to becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) by 2047, the media acts both as a mirror reflecting change and as a driving force supporting this vision. The present moment offers an important opportunity to explore how journalism-particularly in its digital form-contributes to and challenges the country's developmental goals.

The digitalisation of journalism has introduced numerous new dimensions. While traditional media such as television, newspapers and magazines remain operational, digital platforms like social media and online news portals have gained significant popularity. Citizen journalism has emerged prominently as a result of digital media. Digital media has provided a broad and open platform for both information producers and consumers, while also enabling real time communication between them. Despite its many advantages, digital media also presents challenges, including misinformation, echo chambers, and algorithmic bias. Therefore, journalism in the digital age is not just about presenting facts, but it also includes discussing narratives and ideologies and promoting dialogue in a society full of plurality and diversity.

The role of media in a developing democracy like India is not merely informative-it is performative. It shapes opinions, mobilizes action, and creates a sense of belonging or exclusion. As the nation charts its course toward 2047, media institutions are expected to go

beyond the passive transmission of information and embrace an agenda-setting function. This includes informing citizens about national policies, showcasing developmental success stories, exposing institutional failures, and ensuring that the democratic process remains participatory and transparent. In this capacity, journalism becomes a tool for nation-building.

The narrative of 'Viksit Bharat' is shaped not only by government agendas but also by the voices of civil society, academic institutions, and independent media. Thus the media operates within a multi-stakeholder ecosystem. Its role is determined by the complex interactions of economic, political and ideological forces. Media ownership in India is also a topic of discussion. Groups that own media often control multiple platforms, which affects editorial lines to some extent. This raises many questions about media autonomy, impartiality and ethical journalism.

The government's goal of 'Viksit Bharat @2047' is ambitious. It includes improvements in education, health, economy, digital infrastructure and global diplomacy. To contribute in this direction, the media needs to engage critically with these subjects, as well as make efforts to make policies citizen-centric. Apart from this, journalism should also provide a platform to underrepresented voices such as rural people, minorities and women etc. for inclusive development.

This paper is situated within this broader socio-political context. It aims to understand the role of journalism in shaping the developmental trajectory of India by 2047. It begins by acknowledging the multifaceted nature of media and its potential as both a facilitator and a disruptor. It recognizes that media's developmental role cannot be analysed in isolation; it must be seen in relation to its audience, ownership, and regulatory frameworks.

The study emphasizes three primary dimensions: first, the existing contributions of Indian journalism toward the national development discourse; second, the mechanisms through which journalism attempts to influence or challenge this discourse; and third, whether Indian media is structurally and ideologically equipped to carry forward the vision of Viksit Bharat, especially in light of global precedents.

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To explore the key questions of this research, the study relies on secondary data sourced from media reports, policy papers, and academic studies. It also uses a comparative approach by looking at case studies from countries like the United States, China and South Korea. These countries represent different types of media systems and have followed unique paths in their development. Comparing their experiences helps highlight where Indian media stands today-what it's doing well, and where there is room for improvement.

Ultimately, this introduction establishes the rationale and significance of the study. In an age of digital acceleration, media is not a neutral observer-it is a dynamic actor capable of reshaping national priorities. If harnessed effectively and ethically, journalism can serve as a cornerstone of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision. However, realizing these potential demands critical reflection, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and a renewed commitment to journalistic integrity.

In summary, this study seeks to reframe our understanding of journalism's role not merely as chronicler of events but as a proactive agent of development. By exploring how journalism aligns with, supports, or diverges from the national development agenda, this paper aims to offer insights into how media can contribute meaningfully to the vision of a prosperous, inclusive, and empowered India by 2047.

Review of Literature

Media and Development: The development communication paradigm is proposed by Lerner (1958) and later developed by Schramm (1964). According to this theory, media plays a vital role in the modernization of a society. Rogers (1962) diffusion of innovations theory also considers media to be important in spreading ideas that drive development. In the Southeast Asian context, Scholars of development communication have long critiqued the limitations of top-down approaches, advocating for more participatory and dialogical models that empower communities to take an active role in media and development processes (Ascroft & Masilela, 1994; Jayaweera & Amunugama, 1987).

Media in India: Scholars such as Chatterjee (2019) and Thussu (2000) have conducted in-depth analysis of the role of Indian classical

media in nation building. Chatterjee presents the argument that digital journalism has now moved away from historical sites to models based on market demand, although digital journalism still exists. Thus

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(2000) has identified the tension between political influence and journalistic autonomy as a defining feature of Indian journalism. Prasar Bharati, which seeks to act as a public service media, has been unable to play an effective role in development-related discourse due to struggle with political influence limiting its role in development discourse (Chatterjee, 2019).

In today's times, social media has provided a platform where alternative viewpoints can be presented, overcoming the limitations of traditional media. Banaji and Bhat (2021) argue that social media environments facilitate new forms of civic expression, particularly among youth and politically marginalized communities, thereby expanding the sphere of public engagement.

However, this participatory affordance coexists with structural vulnerabilities. Algorithmically curated media environments contribute to ideological clustering, fostering what Sunstein (2018) describes as "echo chambers", which are discursive spaces in which individuals are predominantly exposed to like-minded viewpoints, reinforcing polarization and limiting deliberative exchange. Nevertheless, scholars such as Rajagopal (2001) argue that if governed through credible structures, digital public spheres can make significant contributions to grassroots mass mobilisation.

Journalism and Development in the US: US journalism has traditionally been known as a watchdog on power (Schudson, 2003). The Watergate scandal established the media as a powerful tool for holding power to account. Post 9/11, US journalism has attempted to balance nationalism and accountability, but the influence of corporate ownership and vested interests on the media has become ever more pronounced (McChesney, 2004).

Public broadcasting media such as PBS and NPR have traditionally been the carriers of educational content and social development, but their reach has been limited compared to commercial media. Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the US

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Constitution, making the media landscape diverse, though not entirely free from ideological bias (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) .

Journalism and State-Controlled Development in China:

China's media system promotes a development-oriented agenda while remaining subservient to the state. According to Zhao (2008), Chinese media is not only a medium of propaganda but also a vehicle for economic reforms. The evolution of China Central Television (CCTV) and Xinhua has paralleled national policy shifts, playing key roles in aligning public opinion with state objectives.

Although dissenting voices are suppressed through censorship, the media is used to raise public awareness and mobilize the masses. Social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo are strictly monitored but are used by the government as a means to publicize its plans and engage youth in the nation-building process (Harwit, 2017).

Media and Modernization in South Korea : South Korea's media transformation was closely intertwined with its post-war developmental state and subsequent democratization. During the authoritarian regimes of the 1960s and 1970s, media institutions operated within a state-centric framework aligned with national modernization goals. However, following the democratic transition of 1987, South Korean journalism evolved toward greater pluralism and investigative autonomy (Youm, 1987).

Public broadcaster KBS played a significant role in national education and developmental messaging, though its independence expanded only after democratization. In the contemporary period, South Korea's media ecosystem reflects a hybrid model that is commercially competitive yet supported by strong traditions of investigative reporting and digital civic participation. Scholars such as Jin (2016) highlight how high internet penetration and youth-driven digital engagement have further reshaped the country's public sphere.

Comparative Insights and Lessons for India : A comparison of the media models of the US, China and South Korea throws up several important lessons for India. The US's free and pluralistic framework, China's state-controlled but development-oriented model, and South Korea's democratic and market-oriented system-all

represent different balances between control, freedom and accountability.

India's media system reflects a hybrid model that combines commercial expansion, democratic pluralism, and residual developmental-state aspirations. While media penetration and digital access have grown substantially, scholars argue that institutional accountability and regulatory coherence remain inconsistent (Ninan, 2007; Thakurta, 2009). Public broadcasting reforms have struggled to fully insulate institutions such as Prasar Bharati from political influence, limiting their developmental potential. If India seeks to align its media architecture with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat @2047,' strengthening public service broadcasting, safeguarding journalistic autonomy, and establishing transparent regulatory mechanisms will be essential to ensuring that media contributes meaningfully to nation-building rather than merely reflecting market-driven priorities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate what Indian media is doing to contribute to the realization of the vision of 'Viksit Bharat @2047'.
2. To understand the methods and mechanisms through which media influences development.
3. To evaluate whether Indian media is on the right trajectory by comparing its functioning with media in developed nations such as the USA, China, and South Korea.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative analytical methodology. The study is based on secondary sources obtained from credible media institutions, policy documents, social media platforms and scholarly publications. Content analysis method has been used to identify issues and discourses related to development and nationalism. To fulfil objective 3, a comparative international approach has been applied, reviewing journalistic practices and policy alignments in the USA, China and South Korea during their developmental stages.

The study adopts a qualitative research framework based on interpretive methodology. Given its conceptual nature, the aim is not to generalise statistical data but to understand the meanings, trends

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and attitudes associated with the role of journalism in the vision of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'. The design of the study is therefore exploratory and descriptive.

Sampling Technique : This study uses purposive sampling technique for secondary data collection, which aims to identify data sources and media platforms that are directly related to the objectives of the study. The unit of analysis includes the following elements:

1. National media coverage on major Indian news portals (e.g. The Hindu, Times of India, Scroll.in etc.)
2. Government policy announcements and content of digital campaigns (e.g. PIB India, MyGov)
3. Critical comments from civil society and think tank organisations (e.g. ORF, PRS India)
4. Discourse on social media (e.g. hashtags and posts like #ViksitBharat, #DigitalIndia)
5. Peer-reviewed academic research literature

Sampling Strategy for International Comparison : This study adopts a purposive sampling strategy to include an international perspective, aiming to represent a variety of media systems. These include:

- US public broadcasters and watchdog journalism platforms (e.g. NPR, PBS)
- Chinese state-run media agencies (e.g. Xinhua, CCTV)
- South Korean public and independent media organisations (e.g. KBS, Hankyoreh)

Data Collection Tools and Procedure: Since the study is based on secondary data, the following analytical tools and procedures were used :

- **Content Analysis Framework:** To identify key themes, narratives, and agenda-setting patterns
- **Discourse Analysis:** To interpret the ideological implications of media texts
- **Comparative Media Matrix:** To map differences in media structures and practices across countries

Data collection for this study was carried out between October 2023 and March 2024. The process involved systematically compiling news articles, government publications, academic commentaries, and social media threads. Representative content was selected to understand the perspectives of each key stakeholder-the government, civil society, media organizations, and the public-to triangulate claims and identify emerging trends.

The study provided proper references to all sources to maintain ethics, confirm the authenticity of sources, and avoid any kind of misinterpretation. Since the study is entirely based on publicly available secondary data, no human participants were directly involved.

Justification of Design : The selected qualitative research framework is appropriate for this study as it allows for policy-level analysis and conceptual examination of the role of media in shaping development discourse. By comparing India's media model with that of developed countries-such as the US, China, and South Korea-this design provides a comparative approach that not only highlights the possibilities and limitations of indigenous perspectives, but also strengthens the analysis in line with global standards.

This research design supports the descriptive objectives of the study, while also laying a theoretical foundation for future empirical research-such as audience surveys, newsroom-based ethnographies, or media impact evaluations.

Analysis

Indian media has played various developmental roles, such as:

- disseminating information on government schemes (e.g. Digital India, Make in India),
- encouraging awareness and participation among citizens,
- highlighting social issues such as gender equality and climate change,
- promoting innovation and entrepreneurship (Economic Times, 2022).

However, structural challenges persist. Increasing corporate ownership concentration, political polarization, and the proliferation of misinformation have raised concerns about institutional

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accountability and editorial autonomy (Thakurta, 2009; Udupa, 2015). The expansion of digital media has democratized voice and enabled citizen participation, yet it has also contributed to fragmented public spheres and ideologically polarized discourse.

Comparatively, US media emphasised press freedom and surveillance journalism during its industrial development phase (Schudson, 2003). In contrast, China institutionalized a state-guided developmental communication framework in which media organizations operate within a party-state structure, balancing market reforms with ideological control (Zhao, 2008). Digital platforms in China function within a regulated ecosystem characterized by censorship and strategic information management (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013).

South Korea presents a transitional model. During its authoritarian developmental phase, media institutions aligned with modernization goals; however, democratic reforms following 1987 strengthened journalistic autonomy and investigative traditions (Youm, 1987). Contemporary South Korean media operates within a commercially competitive yet digitally advanced environment, where civic participation and high internet penetration significantly shape public discourse (Jin, 2016).

As a stakeholder, the government views journalism as a tool for public relations, public awareness, and mobilising mass movements on development issues. Political leaders, in particular, rely on it to promote national pride, showcase their accomplishments, and communicate their policies to a wide audience. Civil society organizations, on the other hand, use the media as an effective platform to advocate for transparency, social justice, and participatory governance.

Media entrepreneurs and corporate owners, on the other hand, view digital journalism as a market-driven ecosystem. In contrast, youth, digital content creators, and alternative media embody a vibrant cultural shift where media is not just a tool for consumption but is constantly being remade and redefined through conversations, memes, live streams, and vlogs.

Discussion

The analysis of journalism's engagement with the vision of 'Viksit

Bharat @2047' reveals a mixed narrative of promise, progress, and persistent limitations. On one hand, Indian media has increasingly embraced its developmental role, particularly in the dissemination of government-led schemes, civic awareness campaigns, and social reform narratives. However, this involvement has not always been balanced with journalistic scrutiny, leading to a skewed representation of development discourse.

A prominent finding is the Indian media's deep entanglement with political and corporate interests. Ownership patterns suggest a concentration of media power in the hands of a few conglomerates, which has a significant influence on editorial policy. While this structure may enhance the scale and reach of developmental messaging, it often limits critical coverage of the government's shortcomings. As a result, there is a noticeable alignment with the state narrative of development, but not necessarily with its democratic critique.

Further, the increasing reliance on digital platforms has democratized media production and consumption. Social media, YouTube journalism, and regional digital portals have enabled new actors to enter the media landscape. This diversification has allowed for greater representation of marginal voices and issues that mainstream media often overlooks. However, it has also contributed to the proliferation of misinformation and a lack of editorial oversight, which complicates the developmental messaging aimed at fostering national consensus.

In contrast to countries like the United States, where the media retains a strong watchdog role, Indian journalism tends to oscillate between advocacy and acquiescence. The U.S. model benefits from strong institutional independence, robust journalistic training, and legal safeguards for press freedom. In China, although the media operates under state supervision, it functions as a sophisticated tool for steering public opinion in line with long-term national strategies. South Korea presents a hybrid example, where journalistic freedom and state cooperation have coexisted to produce a robust developmental discourse during its rise to developed nation status.

India, however, remains somewhere in the middle. The country has the technological infrastructure, intellectual capital, and cultural diversity to foster a truly pluralistic and constructive media ecosystem. Yet, the institutional support for independent journalism-through

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funding, training, or legal protection-is insufficient. There is also a lack of emphasis on media literacy, which affects how developmental messages are received and interpreted by the public.

Another key observation is the disparity between urban and rural media access and coverage. While urban centers benefit from rapid digital penetration and diverse media options, rural areas are often underserved, both in terms of infrastructure and relevant content. This urban-centric bias in media production limits the inclusive potential of journalism in supporting the Viksit Bharat vision.

Moreover, the idea of development itself is often presented in narrow economic or technological terms, ignoring broader socio-cultural indicators such as human rights, gender equity, and environmental sustainability. Journalism, if truly aligned with developmental goals, must expand its thematic scope and engage with these multidimensional aspects of progress.

From a stakeholder perspective, it is evident that while the government uses media as a tool for mass mobilization, civil society seeks to hold it accountable. Media professionals, caught between these competing interests, often struggle to maintain objectivity and public service values. There is an urgent need for cross-sectoral dialogue to redefine the norms, ethics, and expectations surrounding journalism's role in national development.

In light of the international comparisons, India must strive for a balanced media model that values both critical independence and constructive engagement. Public broadcasting needs to be revitalized, private media must diversify ownership, and alternative platforms should be nurtured through policy support. Furthermore, the regulatory framework should evolve to ensure transparency, prevent monopolistic practices, and uphold press freedom.

Findings

Ultimately, Indian journalism stands at a crossroads. Its historical role as a voice for the voiceless and a watchdog of power must now be recalibrated for the digital age, where speed often trumps accuracy and virality overshadows value. The media must reclaim its role not just as a mirror of society but as a conscious architect of its democratic and developmental ideals.

- Indian media has strong potential as a development partner but

- requires greater autonomy and credibility.
- There is a noticeable alignment with government visions but less critical interrogation.
- In contrast to developed nations, Indian media needs stronger ethical frameworks and public service orientation.

Conclusion

Journalism in India is positioned to play a pivotal role in the realization of 'Viksit Bharat @2047'. However, to emulate the successful trajectories of developed nations, Indian media must prioritize public interest, foster constructive discourse, and navigate the challenges of commercialization and politicization. A multi-stakeholder perspective reveals that journalism can thrive as a developmental force only when supported by ethical integrity, institutional independence, and active citizen engagement.

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