CAN MEDIA LEAD TO DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING? THEORY AND EVIDENCE FROM INDIA

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Media and Mobilization
- Democratic Deepening
- Vernacular Media and Political Transformation
- Hindi Media and Political Mobilization
MEDIA AND MOBILIZATION

- Media play a vital role in introducing the issues into external arenas.
- Studies have highlighted positive impacts of news media on increasing political participation and political discussion (Aarts and Semetko 2003; Dimock and Popkin 1997; Gunter 1987; Newton 1999; Norris 1996; Keane 1991; McNair 2000)
- “What does not exist in the media does not exist in the public mind” (Castells 2007)
MEDIA AND MOBILIZATION

Focus of these studies

- Mostly developed countries
- Macro-conditions such as election campaigns and political knowledge
- Informed, individual citizen – political role

News media as “mobilizer”
DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING


- Decline of “Congress System” (Rajni Kothari 1964, 1974)

  - the one party domination of Indian politics from 1951 to 1967
DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING

- Regionalization of Indian politics after 1967
- Entry of new social groups into the political arena since the 1970s
- The process of regionalization intensified in the decades of 1980s
- Yogendra Yadav (1996; 2000) “democratic upsurge” and “second democratic upsurge”
DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING

- Zoya Hasan (2000) “[democratic] upsurge is most marked among the socially underprivileged in the caste and class hierarchy”
- Christophe Jaffrelot (2001) “India’s silent revolution”
- Concerned with electoral politics of marginalized groups
Main argument

- vernacular media have played a key role in the process of the deepening of India’s democracy.
REGIONALIZATION OF INDIAN POLITICS AND THE RISE OF VERNACULAR MEDIA

% share of English and Hindi dailies in total dailies circulation, 1961-2006

Years

Percentage
Indira Gandhi on Emergency

“it was the newspapers which were inciting the people and creating a terrible situation”

“the agitation was only in the newspapers and once the newspapers were placed under censorship there was no agitation”

Indira Gandhi
All newspapers were categorized based on their response to the Emergency

- A = friendly
- B = hostile
- C = neutral

Nai Duniya (Madhya Pradesh)
Vernacular media and political transformation

- “It is the Press in Indian languages, more than the English-language Press, that can help in democratizing communication” - Second Press Commission report, 1982

- Focus of politics shifted from national to state level during the same period when vernacular media became robust
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
<th>Tamil Nadu</th>
<th>Madhya Pradesh</th>
<th>Uttar Pradesh</th>
<th>India</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1966</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Press in India
### % Concentration of English and Hindi Newspapers, 1978-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Metropolitan cities</th>
<th>State Capitals</th>
<th>Cities (population over 100,000)</th>
<th>Small Towns (population less than 100,000)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>62.43</td>
<td>13.40</td>
<td>14.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>61.96</td>
<td>16.27</td>
<td>14.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>62.49</td>
<td>19.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>62.79</td>
<td>19.73</td>
<td>15.16</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>61.33</td>
<td>19.88</td>
<td>15.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>17.38</td>
<td>60.07</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>15.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Press in India

- Dominance of vernacular media in the rural and semi-urban areas and cities
- Increased their presence in state capitals since the mid-1980s
VERNACULAR MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

- Changing course of Indian politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s
- Ramjanambhoomi movement led to the destruction of Babri mosque in 1992
- Mandalization led to the empowerment of Dalits and Other Backward Class (OBC) groups
- Leading role of Hindi newspapers during the period
Destruction of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992
VERNACULAR MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

- "one hundred 'kar sevaks' had died on the spot in indiscriminate police firing on Ram Bhaktas".
  
  Dainik Jagran, November 2, 1990

- “Shri Ram Kranti Brigade Will Cut off Hands and Feet of Mulayam by Next Month”,
  
  Dainik Jagran, November 18, 1990
VERNACULAR MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

“Come to Ayodhya Only After Being Armed, VHP Should Have Mulayam Torn by Dogs, Advani Should Have no Illusion that Muslims are Either Weak or Cowards

*Aaj*, November 1, 1990

“Hours of Firing on Unarmed Worshippers of Ram After Rounding Them Up-200 die, Ayodhya Bathed in Blood”

*Aaj*, November 3, 1990
VERNACULAR MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

- "The tragedy of Ayodhya overshadows the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh",
  Swatantra Bharat, November 3, 1990 (Lucknow)

- "The UP government has surpassed Aurangzeb’s atrocities’ record” and "The streets of Ayodhya are red with the blood of kar sevaks"
  Swatantra Chetna, November 3, 1990
Muslim driver of L K Advani's chariot was "encouraging Muslims at several places to offer kar seva in Ayodhya”

October 23, 1990, *The Pioneer* (Lucknow)

"Five thousand Muslims to demolish Masjid”.

October 23, 1990, *The Pioneer* (Lucknow)
VERNACULAR MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

Dailies per thousands, 1981-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>76</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
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Increasing political participation in Madhya Pradesh since 1980s

- Increasing newspaper circulation
CASES
Level of Flood Water Receded, Danger Averted
3 September 2006, Dainik Bhaskar

Mentioned about Dhanraj’s critical condition and an appeal for immediate help
Finally: Dhanraj Died.
4 September 2006, Dainik Bhaskar

Lackluster attitude of administration in providing help
“Tulsa will have to abandon her husband’s body”

_Dainik Bhaskar_, October 12, 2006

I am Shilpy Sharma, calling from California. I read the news about Tulsabai in the Internet edition of _Dainik Bhaskar_. I want to help her, please let me know the way.

The story was about a wife whose husband was electrocuted on October 12, 2006.
“From Bhopal to California, people raised their hands to help”

_Dainik Bhaskar_, October 13, 2006

- Setting up an Emergency Fund to help needy people
- So that we don’t need to beg from the government”

_Dainik Bhaskar_, October 14, 2006

- Alternative-arena activities are very important in dealing with development issues
SUM UP

- Media can act as mobilizer of social groups and connect these groups in a networks of dialogues and negotiations.
- Contributed to subjectification of the diversity of people.
- Expanding the definition of democratic deepening beyond participation in electoral politics.
THANK YOU