The Multi-Dimensional Role of Media in Shaping India's 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' Vision: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

India's vision 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' envisions the country as a developed economy on its hundredth year of independence. This article analyses the central and multi-dimensional role of media – from traditional print, broadcast, to fast-changing digital media – towards the fulfilment of the national vision. The article uses development communication models, agenda-setting, framing, and public sphere theories to critically analyse how the media functions as an informant, educator, mobilizer, and watchdog in fulfilling Viksit Bharat. The article analyses the potential of the media in communicating the vision's objective, in disseminating government schemes, in inspiring citizen participation, in reflecting on developmental gains, and in promoting national integration. It also critically analyses the necessary constraints, such as the spread of disinformation and misinformation, concentration and partisanship in media ownership, ongoing digital divide, ethical issues, and attacks on press freedom, which can negatively affect the productive role of the media. According to the article, though the media is an important collaborator in fulfilling Viksit Bharat, its success lies in maintaining journalistic ethics, being accessible, disseminating media literacy, and creating an environment for productive critical critique. The Indian media, such as television, newspapers, and the internet, has seen tremendous transformation over the years. It began with government regulation after independence and has evolved into a lively but multilayered media system today. It is a constituent of democracy today. Media can access far-flung areas and different segments of society and is therefore a powerful tool to construct the nation. Media plays a very crucial role in the development of India and has to align its objectives with the national vision (NITI Aayog, 2022).

Keywords: Viksit Bharat, Media, Development Communication, India, National Development, Digital Media, Public Sphere, Agenda Setting, Misinformation, Press Freedom.

I. Introduction

India is at the crossroads, developing a vision for its future: 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' – developed India in the 100th year of independence. A vision of this kind has transformational goals, ranging from strong economic growth, social progress, infrastructural development, technological leadership, green growth, and good governance (Government of India, 2023). Achievement of such a transformational agenda is possible by engaging the active participation and sensitization of its large and plural population. In this context, the media in all its forms becomes an important institution, having the unique ability of shaping opinion, influencing public perception, and serving as a bridge between the state and the people.

The pervasiveness of media in modern India – from traditional newspapers and television news channels to pervasive social media and online news sites – makes it a key participant in the agenda of national development. It plays not only the role of information dissemination but also agenda-setting, framing, public debate facilitation, and institution-holding. It is hence important to observe where media gathers the Viksit Bharat story to gauge the likely trajectory of the initiative and spot enablers and bottlenecks. This research essay attempts to provide the answer to the central research question: What is the multi-dimensional role of Indian media in supporting or delaying the realization of the 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' vision? It attempts to:

• Describe the potential positive effect of media (information, education, mobilization, participation).

• Examine the loopholes and shortcomings of the media to act as a powerful developmental influence (bias, disinformation, digital divide, freedom of the press problems).

• State the implications for policymakers, media practitioners, and citizens.

The focus is laid on India's mainstream print and electronic media and the emerging dominant digital and social media platform. Regional variations are observed, but focus is laid on the national-level Viksit Bharat debate.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Media contribution to national development is extensively researched. Early *Development Communication theory*, at times attributed to researchers like Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964), was founded on the use of media in modernizing societies through information, pro-development

attitudes, and education. While these linear models have been criticized as top-down and Western-oriented, the presumptive assumption that media can impact development processes remains worthwhile to explore (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). Later theories were concerned with participatory communication and media empowerment of community groups (Freire, 1970; Servaes, 1999).

Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) posits that the media don't so much tell people *what* to think, but *what to think about*. In Viksit Bharat, the media bring certain of the goals, plans, and achievements in relation to the vision into salience in people's minds. Very closely allied to this is *Framing Theory* (Entman, 1993), which examines the ways the media select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, and hence induces a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. The way Viksit Bharat is framed – as a national project for all, a government program, an economic necessity, etc. – will strongly influence public perception and participation.

One such framework is *Habermas's Public Sphere theory* of 1989. Ideally speaking, the media should be an arena of rational-critical deliberation where the citizens could participate freely in public debates on common issues, e.g., national developmental goals. To what level that Indian media actually offers a public sphere which is open and deliberative as far as Viksit Bharat is concerned, where divergent views and critical assessment can be conducted is under close observation. Research on the Indian media space speaks of its richness, diversity, and increasing commercialization and concentration of ownership (Sonwalkar, 2002; Ninan, 2007; Jeffrey, 2010). Digital media has helped fragment audiences and create echo chambers, but gave new room for citizen engagement and citizen journalism (Rodrigues & Niemann, 2017). Media reporting on specific government initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) and Digital India has been examined, with the usual finding being that promotional reporting is combined with critical reporting, and polarized bias by ownership and political orientation (e.g., Kumar & Sahu, 2020). But a serious work specifically on the overall 'Viksit Bharat' vision and the media's different roles within it is a lacuna this paper attempts to fill.

III. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach, employing primarily critical review and synthesis of recent academic literature, policy reports, government press releases on Viksit Bharat, media

watchdog reports, and representative Indian media content samples (news reports, editorials, TV debates, social media trends). Development communication theoretical models, agenda-setting, framing, and public sphere theory are employed to analyse the functions and challenges of the media for interpreting the functions and challenges of the media. Not relying on primary empirical data collection such as content analysis or surveys, this conceptual paper structures the existing knowledge and theoretical contributions to provide a synoptic overview and critical evaluation of the role of the media in the Viksit Bharat discourse.

IV. Role Of Media in Viksit Bharat: Analysis and Discussion

The role of the media in the Viksit Bharat program can be explained in terms of several functions:

1. Sharing the Vision and Setting the Agenda

Media is the initial platform where the vision of Viksit Bharat is thought of in the minds of the masses. Official advertisement campaigns, official interviews, expert opinions provide the fundamental pillars of the vision – economic goals, technological goals, infrastructural recommendations, social welfare goals. Reiteration of the same facts helps media to decide the national agenda so that Viksit Bharat becomes a matter of discussion among the masses (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Ruling party-controlled media is sure to follow the official line, other media may have alternative stories, or some points may be emphasized.

Shaping what is discussed is one of the most important functions of media. Media decides what issues are important enough to be discussed by the public, and this has an effect on how policies are formulated. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Digital India campaigns became so popular mainly due to regular media coverage. These campaigns demonstrate how media can get citizens involved and bring about social change. For instance, the Swachh Bharat Mission contributed towards the dissemination of cleanliness and alerted people to the health problems owing to sanitation. The success of such campaigns reveals how the media can shape individuals' behaviour and promote collective accountability.

2. Enhancing Development Plans and Scheme Awareness

Viksit Bharat includes diverse government schemes (e.g., Make in India, Skill India, Ayushman Bharat, PM Gati Shakti). Media is responsible for sensitizing the citizens regarding the schemes, benefits, eligibility, and how to take, with success stories motivating the citizens to take it and

creating positive attitudes. Television, radio (All India Radio), and electronic media and government-operated apps serve as the medium for communicating with diverse strata of the population, including rural dwellers (Schramm, 1964).

3. Promoting National Integration and Mobilizing Support

Media can bring people together and mobilize popular support to the Viksit Bharat target by generating a wide sense of common cause and national identity throughout the Viksit Bharat vision. By presenting development achievements across the country, juxtaposing the cultural heritage and advances in technology, and projecting Viksit Bharat as people's national efforts, media can bring people together and mobilize popular support. Patriotic reporting and reporting of national success stories (e.g., space programmes, economic achievements) necessarily connect directly or indirectly to the Viksit Bharat vision.

4. Facilitating Public Debate and Participation

In theory, the media can provide public spaces for debate of the objectives, strategy, and implications of Viksit Bharat (Habermas, 1989). Editorials, columns, talk shows, and online forums can provide citizens with an opportunity to provide opinions, provide comments, and engage with policy-makers. Social media and new media offer new spaces for interactive communication and mobilization of citizens, with direct engagement with the Viksit Bharat theme, though in polarized form.

5. The Watchdog Role: Encouraging Accountability and Transparency

Independent media possess one of the most crucial roles of watchdog, monitoring the execution of Viksit Bharat schemes. Investigative reporting has the potential to reveal corruption, inefficiency, policy loopholes, or unintended negative consequences of development schemes. Through holding the government and other stakeholders accountable, media can make good governance and equitable and sustainable distribution of the dividends of development possible. The role is vital to prevent the Viksit Bharat vision from becoming a mere slogan.

In a democratic nation, media is a watchdog that oversees the government's activities and reveals corruption, inefficiency, and malpractices. Investigative journalism has always been the pioneer in unearthing gigantic scams, such as the 2G spectrum scam, coal allocation scam, and other cases of corruption at the regional level. This accountability system reinforces democracy and ensures that those in power are accountable to the public. In Viksit Bharat, media interventions are necessary to

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INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL
OF
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
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UBIQUITOUS SCHOLARSHIP

IJDUS

Special Issue – March 2025

ISSN: 3048-9113 (Online)

keep things clear regarding development plans, expenditure on the budget, and the manner in which the welfare schemes are implemented.

6. Instruction and Sharing Information

Education programs and infotainment programs provide a platform for lifelong learning. Media can support the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by broadcasting curriculum-based programs in local languages, thus making quality education more democratic. Media house and ed-tech platform collaborations can assist in bridging the digital divide and facilitating skill development.

7. Behavioural Change and Social Reforms

Media can change individuals' perception and bring about social change through public service announcements, documentaries, and storytelling. For example, representing women's empowerment on television and social media has fought against stereotypes and supported gender equality. Doordarshan's rural-oriented programs, such as "Krishi Darshan" and other health programs, have traveled a long way in spreading awareness in rural areas. These efforts contribute to the cause of Viksit Bharat by curbing rural-urban imbalances and promoting inclusivity.

V. Challenges and Criticisms

While promising, the role of the media in Viksit Bharat is beset with problems:

1. Misinformation, Disinformation, and Propaganda

The digital era has made the dissemination of false and misleading information only more robust. Disinformation (deliberate falsehood) and misinformation (unintended falsehood) about development plans, economic facts, or social effects can warp public opinion and erode trust. Media are also propaganda machinery, disseminating skewed, excessively optimistic accounts of Viksit Bharat and silencing critics or uncomfortable realities.

2. Media Ownership, Bias, and Political Economy

One of the major concerns in the Indian media industry is that a limited number of companies own most media outlets. This reduces the ability to acquire diverse viewpoints. Consequently, there are biases in reporting and critical journalism is impaired. Reporters Without Borders (2023) indicates that India ranks 161 out of 180 nations in the World Press Freedom Index, with concerns about press freedom. Ownership concentration with politically influential or large business houses raises the prospects of bias and diversity of views (Ninan, 2007; Jeffrey, 2010). Media outlets are also

susceptible to prioritizing commercial or political agendas at the expense of public interest reporting and thereby biased reporting on Viksit Bharat – too promotional or too critical, based on the orientation of the platform. The squeeze on profits can also result in sensationalism at the expense of substance development reporting.

3. TRP-Based Sensationalism

The struggle for more TRPs (Television Rating Points) tends to force channels to focus on sensationalized news rather than serious reporting. This has spawned the cult of celebrity culture, crime reporting, and polarized political debate at the expense of serious issues such as climate change, education, and rural development.

4. The Digital Divide and Information Inequality

While new possibilities are created by the digital media, access in India is not geographical, or socio-economic, or gender, or by the level of digital literacy. This 'digital divide' implies that large segments of the population might not have access to the information and platforms necessary in order to be able to fully comprehend or engage in the Viksit Bharat debate, and thus its inclusive growth.

5. Sensationalism and Erosion of Public Trust

An extremely competitive news environment will naturally give rise to sensationalism, controversy, conflict, or trivialization at the expense of earnest coverage of complex development news. These, coupled with perceived bias and dissemination of false information, can foster public suspicion of the media institutions and undermine their ability to play positively.

6. Under-representation and lack of diversity

Mainstream media does not normally reflect the voices of marginalized sections, including those from tribal areas, Dalits, and religious minorities. An advanced nation needs to make all groups heard by the media. Inclusive journalism is required to reflect the country's democratic principles.

7. Press Freedom Issues

An independent and free media should be in a position to perform its role appropriately as a watchdog. Problems of declining press freedom in India, like instances of pressure exerted on the media, intimidation, and censorship-related legislation, can significantly impede the ability of the media to conduct critical analysis of the Viksit Bharat program and hold those in authority

accountable (Reporters Without Borders, V-Dem Institute). Media self-censorship can also limit the scope of critical analysis.

VI. Media Opportunities during the Era of Digitization

1.   Digital Access and Citizen Reporting

India possesses more than 850 million internet users (TRAI, 2023), and digital platforms are therefore significantly important to media. Social media and citizen journalism based on smartphones allow regular people to report live and local events. This form of journalism is able to support mainstream media and show stories that are under-covered.

2.   Technological Integration

With the use of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and machine learning in newsrooms, journalism can be improved. They can automate repetitive tasks, enhance reporting with data, and identify fake news by pattern recognition. Serving up content that is similar to what individuals like can also increase user engagement.

3.   Several Languages and Community Outreach

Producing content in Indian languages other than Hindi and English ensures that the benefit of media reach is also for non-English and non-Hindi speakers. Platforms such as YouTube, local news websites, and podcasts in native tongues can assist in bridging different languages and cultures.

4.   Enhancing India's International Perception

Indian films, music, and web series are gaining immense popularity globally across streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube. This global popularity is boosting India's soft power and aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat, which envisions India positioning itself as a global cultural and technological leader.

VII. Media and Governance

1. Improving Government-Citizen Communication

Media helps citizens and the government to communicate with each other. Initiatives like "Mann Ki Baat," the MyGov platform, and online town halls enable citizens to bring their problems to the fore and provide suggestions on policies. These channels are a part of making citizens engage in governance.

2. Role in Disaster Management and Public Safety

During natural disasters and emergencies, the media has a significant role to play in providing timely information and safety instructions. For example, during cyclones and the COVID-19 pandemic, real-time information via television, radio, and social media saved lives and controlled chaos.

3. Encouraging Government Schemes and Benefits

Media awareness campaigns have motivated more individuals to join schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, and Ayushman Bharat. Government departments can reach more individuals and make welfare schemes work more effectively by collaborating with the media.

VIII. Vision 2047: The Way Ahead

As India prepares to celebrate its centenary of independence, Vision 2047 is intended to transform the country into a developed nation that is inclusive, innovative, and respected across the world. For the media to contribute to this vision, several strategic steps are required:

1. Media Literacy Campaigns

There is too much information available on the internet nowadays, so we need to be very careful about what we read. Media literacy should be taught in schools and colleges so that students can better comprehend information. Media literacy keeps individuals from being deceived by false information and internet tricks. Workshops should be organized by the government and community groups to create awareness about digital issues, particularly in rural and small-town communities.

2. Support for Local Journalism

Rural and local media need to be funded by grants, training initiatives, and policy environments that protect press freedom. Local media cover stories that have direct implications for citizens, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and governance. Empowering community radio, hyper-local news websites, and regional language media will empower communities and decentralize information flows.

3. Public Broadcaster Reforms

To ensure that developmental content reaches a large audience, India's public broadcasters like Doordarshan and All India Radio should be improved. This includes upgrading technology, providing autonomy to editors, presenting programs in numerous languages, and providing interactive platforms. The broadcasters must also cooperate with schools and NGOs to disseminate education and development content that is contextually relevant.

4. Ethical Standards and Regulatory Framework

A free and robust media system is required to guarantee press freedom while at the same time being responsible. The system must safeguard whistleblowers, sanction propagators of false news, and practice good journalism ethics. Independent ombudsman agencies at the state and national levels can serve as watchdogs without infringing on journalistic freedom.

5. Media Research and Innovation

To keep pace with emerging technology and viewer habits, media have to inculcate an innovation culture. Media research centers and think tanks can create new tools for storytelling, data visualization, and engaging the audience. Through collaboration, media companies, universities, and start-ups can bring new ideas to the delivery of content.

6. Gaining Skills and Acquiring Abilities

The media industry must invest in training journalists in digital technology, data analysis, fact-checking, and multimedia reporting. Government media training schools and collaboration with international schools of journalism can provide a future-proof media industry workforce. Special focus needs to be laid on training journalists from disadvantaged groups.

7. Collaborating and Sharing Globally

As India's influence increases globally, cooperation with international media can provide Indian journalists with the opportunity to acquire good practice and learn about global issues. This may also assist in dispelling distorted global perceptions and allow India to speak for itself to all. The media need to look for alternative ways of generating funds other than from advertising. Subscription, crowd-funding, donations, and co-ownership can make independent media companies financially fit without losing control of their content.

8. Sustainable Business Models for Independent Media

The media must diversify revenue streams beyond advertising. Subscription models, crowd-funding, philanthropic support, and cooperative ownership structures can help independent media outlets remain financially viable without compromising editorial independence.

IX. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. General

Media is among the key facilitators of India's ambitious mission to realize the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, a vision for making India an entirely developed, inclusive, and prosperous country

when it will achieve its 100th anniversary of independence. Media, in its immense influence in the established media of print, radio, and television, and in evolving digital and social media, has unmatched ability to influence public opinion, narrate stories, and enhance collective consciousness. Media, as an educational institution, source of news, mobilizer, and empowering entity, is the bedrock of robust democracy. Through sustained dissemination of national dreams, policy-making, and accomplishments, media platforms can facilitate greater public knowledge of the Viksit Bharat initiative and streamlining its aspirations in reaching out to people with varied backgrounds. Such facilitation can demystify complex policies through simple stories, foster grassroots participation, and digging up innovations at the national and local levels. Whether they are writing about the success of digitalization, the success of women entrepreneurs, or the success of green technologies, the media can best weave diverse developments into a single national mission.

Besides this, media is a tool of great responsibility and accountability. Media empowers citizens to put institutions and representatives on the ground through investigative reports, interviews, panel debates, and live television. Media serves as a watchdog holding government accountable to citizens' interests. Media gives space to the disadvantaged sections—workers, farmers, minorities, and the differently abled—whose voices play an important role in shaping inclusive growth. But even as it holds out the promise of transformation, the modern media landscape is seriously structurally and ethically at risk. The dissemination of misinformation and disinformation—especially on social media—directly threatens public knowledge and trust. Fake news viruses can spread quick and far, spreading untruths that influence elections, inspire violence, or mislead people on high-stakes topics like health, climate, or economics. The lack of effective fact-checking mechanisms heightens this threat.

The concentration of media ownership and intersections of media companies with political or commercial interests have evoked profound concerns regarding editorial independence. Where media companies are more concerned with profitability or ideological purity than with journalistic balance, it can lead to half-reporting, selective reporting of facts, and exclusion of opposing view. These practices can distort public perception and suppress fair discussion on issues of national interest. The digital divide further exacerbates such issues. Millions of rural and disadvantaged Indians still lack internet, smartphone, or computing literacy. This disconnects them from meaningfully interacting with content and denies them the capacity to contribute to deepening the

national conversation. More media becoming digital translates into access to information on a level being not merely a technical challenge but a development imperative. Freedom of the press is increasingly becoming a concern. Censorship, intimidation, and harassment of journalists, particularly those that challenge mainstream narratives, erode the media's role as a free and essential pillar of democracy. When journalists operate under duress, diversity and depth of coverage are adversely affected, which further erodes the democratic process.

In an effort to be able to accomplish the role of the media towards creating a Viksit Bharat, these problems need to be dealt with proactively. Media literacy of citizens and even more so among the youth can guarantee immunity from misinformation. Editorial autonomy in favour of policies, transparency of ownership, and ethics guidelines for journalism are essential. Expansion of access to digital infrastructure and guarantees for journalists' security are also essential. In fact, media could be an awesome driver of growth for India's path but should be developed, nurtured, and chiselled during the early years. Only then will it reflect and nurture a billion Indians' aspirations as they move towards 2047.

2. For The Government

• Enforce and defend press freedom as a fundamental element of democracy and accountability.

• Encourage transparency and provide unhampered access to information pertaining to Viksit Bharat plans.

• Invest heavily in bridging the digital divide and subsidizing digital literacy programs and state media.

• Use public broadcasting and new media strategically for development communication, extended to marginalized social groups.

3. For Media Organisations and Practitioners

• Apply rigorous journalistic principles, prioritizing accuracy, fairness, and objectivity.

• Invest in serious, fact-based reporting of development news that resists simplistic promotion or criticism.

• Enact rigorous fact-checking mechanisms to counter misinformation.

• Create representational diversity in newsrooms and in reporting to reflect India's diversity.

• Avoid pressures that undermine editorial independence.

4. For Citizens

• Develop critical viewing habits for media to distinguish fact from misinformation and bias.

• Engage actively in a range of sources of information and constructively in public debate.

• Promote and insist on independent, quality reporting.

Lastly, how the media role will be played in Viksit Bharat will be determined by the interplay among these actors and the social and political ethos. An autonomous, ethical, open, and public interest-based media space will be required if it is to be a good collaborator in realizing the lofty aspirations of as developed an India as possible by 2047.

X. Future Research

Systematic media content analysis of media coverage of Viksit Bharat across media platforms, longitudinal trend analysis of media framing and public opinion, impact study of chosen media campaigns on development schemes, and more in-depth research on the role of regional and vernacular media in shaping perception of Viksit Bharat at sub-national levels are some of the directions of future research. The possible role of Artificial Intelligence in news consumption and generation on this topic also has to be explored.

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Special Issue – March 2025   ISSN: 3048-9113 (Online)

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