

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to provide the literature for the Cartoons, Political Cartoons, Political Communication and Indian news media, which is the focus of the study. The first section talks about cartoons where the literature of cartoons, history of cartoons, functions of political cartoons, and communicative power of cartoons are reviewed and discussed. The second section is dedicated to Political communication and leading actors, where the role of media in political communication, Indian news media, diversity in Indian news media and electoral politics in Indian news media have been reviewed and discussed. Third section talks about the Agenda-Setting theory and Propaganda model in the context of India. Lastly, the research gaps identified in the literature has discussed in the last section of the chapter.

2.1 Cartoons

The term cartoon was first introduced in 1360 BC in Egypt when an anonymous artist skewered Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti's pharaoh husband (Navasky, 2013). "William Hogarth is generally called the father of English caricature" (Ibid), and Martin Luther is credited for the birth of political cartoons (Navasky, 2013). The cartoon is a composition of two elements, caricature and allusion. A caricature is that which parodies and exaggerates the features of an individual or any person. At the same time, allusion is the situation and context in which cartoonists place caricature, so we can say that without allusion, caricature is inadequate. A cartoon is a combination of allusion or context and caricature. According to Kleeman (2006, p.144), the term cartoon is

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Ivan Brunette, in her book *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice* (2011), has made some clarity over terms such as cartooning, cartoon, comic book, and graphic novel. She states that all these terms can be used interchangeably and occasionally appear similar depending on the context and syntax in which they are used. Brunette (2011, p.12) defined

“Cartooning is the process, a language, and an art form. Cartoons are the things a cartoonist creates. Comics is also a term used for this same language/art form and the actual finished object—the term strip for a short sequence of panels or even an entire comic page. A graphic novel is a physical object (a book containing comics), to be sure, but also an art form or even an aesthetic movement (which we can alternatively call art comics to differentiate it from the commercially driven product).”

The Five C’s of cartooning are calligraphy, composition, clarity, consistency, and communication, reinforcing one another. Kleeman (2006, p. 144) defined the term ‘cartoon’ –

“originally used to describe a full-size preliminary drawing of a painting or tapestry – has, since the mid-19th century, been used to signify a humorous or satirical illustration, published in newspapers and magazines.”

Mainly, cartoons “highlight current public topics, personalities, events, or societal trends to make a point about them” (ibid). Well-crafted cartoons can distil even the most complicated subjects into a format understandable to a larger (non-expert) audience.

2.1.1 Types of cartoons

Although there are four general categories of cartoons, it might not be easy to classify them by genre at times. The four types of cartoons are “caricature, editorial (or political), gag (or pocket), and comic strip.” Rafaie (2009, p. 184-185) defines

“political cartoons as typically found on a newspaper’s editorial page and focusing on the crucial topic of the day, such as a particular issue, person, event, or trend. On the other hand, humorous cartoons and caricatures are commonly used to accompany important stories and can be found throughout a newspaper or magazine. Comic strips are often gathered in one section of a newspaper and published regularly (many of them are syndicated across numerous newspapers and magazines) (sometimes daily).”

Political (or editorial) cartoons frequently aim to encourage a reevaluation of dominant social attitudes and values as a continuing reflection on social change. Political cartoons typically highlight and comment on what the cartoonists (or their editors) believe to be the most important news of the day in order to influence the viewer to adopt a particular viewpoint and predispose him or her to follow a particular course of action (Rafaie,

2009). Political cartoons express one's right to free speech and, according to Scumaci (2010), are cartoons that relate to political decisions, events, or ideas, an art form that encourages people to think about other opinions.

Rafaie (2003, p.186) state that political cartoons consist of two elements: caricature, which mocks the subject, and allusion, which fabricates the circumstance or setting in which the subject is set. The styles of political cartoons can vary greatly. However, the majority use "symbolism, visual metaphors, and caricatures to satirically or humorously" convey difficult political and social issues. Regardless of their approach, they are a powerful tool for defining the "parameters of public discourse" and discussion. Political cartoons frequently (though not always) adhere to the "political and social views" of the journal in which they are published and, in some cases, do so as well. The cartoonist is typically free to take positions on issues that disagree with the editorial slant of the newspaper or magazine. However, this is only the case in circumstances where diversity of viewpoints is encouraged, and journalistic independence is recognised.

Pocket cartoons, sometimes known as gag cartoons, are brief drawings that accompany a particular article or report. Caricatures are works of art that exaggerate or distort an individual's or a group of individuals' appearance and characteristics (or their essential characteristics) to create an instantly recognisable visual likeness. The term "caricature" comes from the Italian verb caricare, which means "to load," as in a vessel or a weapon. According to Balcioglu (1973, p. 7), "the Caricature seems to set off more anxiety than any other style of cartoon." According to Italian caricaturist Annibale Carracci:

"Is not the caricaturist's task the same as the classical artist's? Both see the lasting truth beneath the surface of mere outward appearance. Both try to help nature accomplish its plan. One may strive to visualise the perfect form and realise it in his work, the other to grasp perfect deformity (a high ambition) and thus reveal the very essence of a personality. Like every work of art, a good caricature is truer to life than reality itself."
(Blakemore and Jennett, 2018)

Caricatures of well-known public figures can be seen in the majority of editorial cartoons, humour cartoons, and comic strips. Other caricatures are created in a style that mocks the subject and occasionally tries to make the viewer laugh. Individual "caricatures differ from editorial cartoons in at least one fundamental sense" (Ibid). The

concept is presented first in editorial cartoons, followed by the artwork. In contrast, a caricature is a vague representation of a person's frequently distorted or exaggerated traits. Caricatures must be inflated and specific to the person. As a result, cartoons are employed to convey social or political viewpoints, whereas caricatures are a sort of portraiture. Cartoons called comic strips employed various images to tell a story. These might be made purely for entertainment or function similarly in political and editorial cartoons.

Political cartoons use five main strategies to convey their messages to the reader: symbolism, exaggeration, label and captioning, analogy, and irony (Scumaci, 2010). Symbolism is when cartoonists use symbols to convey any ideas or concept, and the meaning of those symbols may be universal or local depending on society's culture. Exaggeration is the cartoon's physical characteristics, and exaggerating them makes it sarcastic. Label and Caption are the information given by the cartoonist with the cartoon and are sometimes also used to limit the audience's interpretation. Analogy denotes to a "comparison between unlike things or people that nonetheless share some characteristics" but are used to depict similarities between them (like one of the videos of "So Sorry" politoons they tried to compare America and India because one has the Statue of Liberty and the other have Statue of Unity). The irony is the "difference between the ways things are and the ways things are expected to be." As the name reflects irony, the irony is a cartoonist's perception and opinion regarding any issue, which is used to criticise any issue, event or person.

2.1.2 Functions of Political Cartoons

In 1981, De-Sousa and Medhurst's model identified "four functions of political cartoons: entertainment, aggression reduction, agenda setting, and framing function," in their analysis of the political cartoons of the 1980 presidential election. De-Sousa and Medhurst (1982, p. 92) define it as

"Political Cartoons may contribute to the agenda-setting generally attributed to the major media in the sense that they provide readers with some sense of the most significant issues, events, or topics."

De-Sousa and Medhurst contend that political cartoons can entertain audiences by making them laugh at various situations and characters. Secondly, using political cartoons for aggression reduction gives readers a way to express their displeasure and annoyance with specific events. Thirdly, political cartoons can serve as agenda-setting tools by amusingly presenting a position. Lastly, political cartoons serve as framing devices by offering particular frames regarding a problem in constrained dimensions.

De-Sousa and Medhurst's Entertainment Function makes us laugh at people and events. Political cartoons may be considered funny because they depict and critique common human flaws in a bite-sized fashion. However, "the actors in these cartoons" are not consenting participants. They are public figures with a reputation for "moral or ethical" transgression, deceit, hypocrisy or idiocy. Their penalty is ridiculed by being shown in a compromising or unattractive light on the editorial page. The comedic function changes the reader's psychological condition as it progresses from humour "to morals and then to a cultural sense of morality" (ibid).

In the Aggression-Reducing Function, "how the powerless succeed in deflating the powerful via symbols indicates the tremendous stock we place in the destructive potential of symbolic forms" (Jaffe, 1977, p. 260-261). Typically, we have to be content with "using the symbolic derogation we can utilise as symbol users to knock them down a peg or two." The capacity to symbolically channel hostility through the political cartoon may have specific political benefits or downsides, depending on one's ideological orientation, in addition to satisfying our primal human urge to communicate our inner moods. Political cartoons can serve as a platform and a release for protests that could otherwise take on more overtly political guises. The ability to express hatred through socially acceptable symbolic behaviours may minimise or even eliminate the need for violent violence, as Duncan (1962) has persuasively demonstrated.

The Agenda-Setting Function of the political cartoons is the result of their reliance on timeliness because, while many of their editorial cartoons may communicate to a broad audience with timeless messages, the majority are invariably based on the now, in today's headline. In that they give readers a sense of the most critical issues, events, or themes, political cartoons may help with the agenda setting typically attributed to the mainstream press. In this interpretation, setting the agenda entails more than just allocating things according to their relevance. Instead, the designation of significance

may spark further public discussion, which may lead to a shift in the attitudes of the discussion's participants. Declaring a matter essential is the first step toward its discussion, which will ultimately win or lose supporters for the issue at hand. Setting the agenda in political cartoons can be seen as a simple but crucial first step in addressing societal problems.

The political cartoon's Framing Function stems from caricature being a "highly condensed form of expression" in and of itself. For the cartoonist, it is crucial to use the forms inside that frame effectively. The cartoonist needs to establish a clear understanding with the reader. In order to accomplish this, the cartoonist must create captivating and potent imagery, typically using resonant symbols from political and cultural mythology. The political cartoon's compressed structure enables it to simplify complex subjects into a single graphic theme. As Gombrich (1963) has argued, the cartoon functions to give the viewer the satisfaction of imitation vision. The political cartoon gives the viewer an alluring sense of comprehension by distilling a complicated problem or event into a straightforward metaphorical form that can act as a guide for further contemplation or action. Using cartoons to frame events and concerns is congruent with media research, which claims that different media play a more significant role when the "topic is one the consumer has limited personal experience" with. Similarly, political cartoons seek to give readers concise summaries of complex problems by acting as a communication system within an effective medium (newspaper). They are appealing despite being frequently oversimplified characterisations because they use well-known forms to draw symbolic links.

2.1.3 Communicative Power of Cartoons

Political cartoons play a crucial role in society. It relates to (Scumaci, 2010) political decisions, events, or ideas. It is a form of art that stimulates contemplation of many viewpoints. It is a means of expressing one's right to free speech. Novin (2011) described the "communicative power of political cartoons as their ability to convey frequently complex themes, events, and trends in an easy-to-understand manner." It is one of the most effective means of expressing disagreement in political communication. Cartoons are also easy ways of "delivering political messages to society concerning critical issues, influencing the public's stance on such matters" (ibid). According to Harriuson (1981), political cartoons frequently lead power elites to interfere directly or

indirectly with them. However, if the groups in power have control over cartoonists and publications/ media outlets in which cartoons appear, the cartoons may become a tool for the power elite. According to Lambourne (1983), caricature was a potent tool of instruction and persuasion during World War II, particularly in the form of propaganda.

As we live in modern society, we are familiar with illustrations. Political illustrations play a significant role in every form of mass communication. Newspapers typically have a small section in the corner that is decorated with political illustrations. This segment has also been acknowledged as a powerful and influential educational tool that attracts viewers from all backgrounds. Indian news media, especially newsprints, have a long and rich history of political cartooning. It is pertinent that the mass media has developed into a prominent statement channel that captures the general public's attention by using various tools to communicate ideas and thoughts from a specific point of view. After the emergence of 24*7 television news, the contemporary media scenario changed worldwide and in India is quite visible. Moreover, with this change, political cartoons have also transformed themselves. The transformation of political cartoons into an expression of Indian editorials, as well as the roles that outline distinctions in the awareness of the organisational system and the techniques used in modern society, are the primary concern of this study.

As Rafaie (2003, p. 186) points out:

“Political cartoons generally operate on two distinct levels: on one level, they tell an imaginary story about a make-believe world, while on a second, more abstract level, they refer to real-life events and characters. This relationship between the two levels of meaning is essentially metaphorical, inviting people to map properties from a more tangible area of reality onto one that is more abstract. A viewer who understands a cartoon on the level of its fictional narrative may struggle to discern its real-life referents since this interpretation requires some interest in public affairs and knowledge of politics. The metaphorical combination of the real and the imaginary is one of the features of cartoons that distinguish them from other newspaper images such as press photographs and illustrative drawings.”

To understand the power of cartoons, one needs to consider content, imagery, psychology and the “context” in which the “reader” comes across them. Cartoons depict the context in which they were made, the historical era in which they were produced, the

current political issues, societal norms, ideologies, and behaviours. Political spin and rhetoric in political cartoons help to reveal the hidden reality of political problems to an audience. Caricatures are only significant to those familiar with the person depicted, and cartoons are only meaningful to those familiar with the cartoonist's subject matter. According to Navasky (2013, p. 85), the cartoonists would make use of "distortions, stereotypes, and group defamations" in addition to the "discredited pseudoscience of physiognomy (which connected physical traits to character)."

Rafaie (2003) concludes that a person's sociopolitical experiences and cultural background impact how they view a cartoon. Understanding the "context of the subject being addressed, recognising the cartoonist's viewpoint" (ibid), and agreeing or disagreeing with that viewpoint are all crucial components of understanding this distinctive style of artistic expression. The most effective cartoons use well-executed visual satire to communicate a point of view and elicit a reaction from the viewer. The relevance of the cartoon comes from its ability to preserve a sense of both individual identity and cultural togetherness. In light of this, it is crucial to consider how viewers use cartoons to understand their society or maintain their sense of self within it, rather than what cartoonists intend to transmit or what beliefs, values, or attitudes they hope to sway.

2.1.4 History of Cartoons

The first known cartoon or caricature was created in Egypt in 1360 BC by an unidentified artist who made fun of Queen Nefertiti's pharaoh husband, Akhenaten. Others point to Gianlorenzo Bernini's 1676 drawing of Pope Innocent XI as one of the earliest examples to support their assertion that no one is exempt from ridicule. Werner Hofmann, a Viennese art historian, claims that Albrecht Dürer's "Ten Heads in Profile" (1513) is a precursor to the caricature. Lucas Cranach the Elder created a woodcut titled *The Birth and Origin of the Pope* (1545). A caricature is described as an expansion of reality brought to its logical extreme in Leonardo DaVinci's "Five Grotesques" (1490), which many consider being the invention of the form.

William Hogarth is accredited as the "Father" of "English caricature." In his famous piece "Characters and Caricatures" (1743), he contrasted the two, saying afterwards that there are rarely two things more basically different than characters and caricatures.

Caricatures are different entirely, whereas characters are portrayals that reflect reality. Caricature, he continued, “may be regarded to be a sort of lines made by the hand of luck rather than art.” The famous historian and philosopher David Thorn asserts that Martin Luther is responsible for inventing political caricatures and cartoons. In the sixteenth century, when he and Pope Leo were engaged in a contentious theological debate, Luther believed he could win the support of the peasant masses for the reforms he wanted the church to enact. Martin Luther utilised one-page posters and illustrated booklets to promote his message since he was aware that most of the peasant masses could not read. According to Navasky (2013, p. 61),

“David Thorn states that Luther displayed reproductions of biblical scenarios that everyone could easily recognise in these pictures, and besides to them, he would print the identical photos but with caricatures of Catholic Church members in the positions of the adversary.”

The political cartoon originated here and spread fast throughout Europe.

It is conceivable that an ancient Greek caveman who painted graphic images on cave walls was the world’s first comic. The oldest known evidence, however, generally points to the Italian brothers Annibale and Agostini Carracci. They produced a series of sketches around 1590 known as the “*ritratini carichi*” (loaded portraits). Benjamin Franklin created the first editorial cartoon printed in an American newspaper in 1754, claims Brands (2002). Franklin’s parody featured a serpent with the words “Join, or Die” imprinted on it with a severed head. The purpose of the cartoon was to convince the various colonies to become a part of what would eventually become the United States.

Through the caricature-heavy works of Hogarth, Rowlandson, and Gillray, the cartoon emerged as a crucial and productive element of journalism in 18th-century England. Daumier became well-known throughout France thanks to his brutally satirical artwork. By the middle of the nineteenth century, editorial cartoons were familiar in American newspapers, and sports cartoons and humorous illustrations soon followed. In 1871 and 1873, “the power of political cartoons on public opinion” was eloquently demonstrated when Thomas Nast’s illustrations for Harper’s Weekly played a crucial role in overthrowing Tammany Hall’s rule and locking up Boss Tweed. Rollin Kirby of the

New York World won the first Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning in 1922, claims Stephen (2010).

2.1.5 History of Cartoons in India

The cartoon first appeared in India with the British, but it has since developed into a highly popular, stylised, and self-contained genre. The late K Shankar Pillai is the Father of Indian Cartooning. Each region of India has its breed of cartoonists who have gained cult status among their followers. These clever warriors who use humour to address serious subjects are in high demand by newspapers. Every area and state in India has produced several outstanding leaders who have become independent cartooning heroes and inspired an entire generation of creators to carry their legacy.

The 1984 Roman Magsaysay Award recipient RK Laxman is a prime example of such talent garnering widespread attention. One of the first Indian cartoons to have political sway was published in the 1870s by the Bengali daily *Sulav Samachar* and highlighted a blatant injustice. Poorer Indians were regularly attacked by Europeans, often killing them. If the case went to court, the victim's "enlarged spleen" would be held responsible for his demise. One of Laxman's cartoons showed a dead coolie with his wife by his side in sorrow. Although parody and caricature have been a part of Indian art since antiquity, the systematic use of caricature as a tool for social critique dates back to the nineteenth century and the popular Kalighat art movement, which had its beginnings in colonial Calcutta.

Modern caricature as a type of journalism was brought to India by British ex-pats when it gained popularity in the United Kingdom. They took their hilarious art cues from Rowlandson. However, compared to other humorous publications, the English comic book magazine *Punch* had a more significant impact in India. The *Delhi Sketch Book*, *Momus*, *The Indian Charivari*, *The Oudh Punch*, *The Delhi Punch*, *The Punjab Punch*, *The Indian Punch*, *Urdu Punch*, *Gujarati Punch*, *Hindi Punch*, *Parsi Punch*, and *Pumeah Punch* from a remote Bengal town (Laxman, 2005) are a few of the periodicals from the second half of the 20th century in India. *Punch*, the inventor of the term "cartoon," represented Victorian respectability in contrast to Gillray, Rowlandson, and Cruikshank, and British-owned comic publications in India eagerly imitated his style. Comics created in India or the United Kingdom mirrored an imperial attitude.

Early in the nineteenth century, artists like Sir Charles D'Oyly derided the Anglo-Indian way of life, but they soon turned their amusement to the Indians. It is fascinating to note that early Indian cartoonists did the same. Instead of using their newfound weapon against the Raj, Indian cartoonists pursued piercing self-parody and social critique. In contrast, "British cartoonists" in India approached Indian themes from lofty heights of moral conviction. Social mores were highlighted in "Bengali cartoons" with the same ruthless candour as Gillray and Rowlandson. The "British community, now confined to clubs, cantonments, and hill stations," had ossified into a benevolent dictatorship while becoming increasingly racially exclusive. That could account for the British lack of self-criticism. One of the best expatriate living descriptions is in "G.P. Atkinson's Curry and Rice or The Ingredients of Social Life at Our 'Station' in India" (1859).

Since 1947, RK Laxman has regularly published cartoons in the Times of India that cover every facet of Indian social and political life. Time magazine referred to RK Laxman as "the nation's sharpest cartoonist and political satire." To many Indians, though, Laxman represents much more. His daily cartoons have become a national habit, providing millions of readers with a way to cope with the morning newspaper's confusing and frequently enraging headlines: his colourful, distinctive, and occasionally hilarious portrayals of Indianness. In "Laxman's Common Man cartoons, the Common Man," like the stereotypical Indian, silently "observes everything around him," from political fighting to domestic disputes. Laxman (2005, p. 156) state that cartoons

"are sharp and pointed observations on the nation's rampant corruption, social injustice, financial fiascos, and political byplays that have plagued the country since its inception. On the other hand, his political cartoons are fantastic parodies of our larger-than-life politicians' personalities and policies."

The cartoons of Laxman offer an insightful, amusing, philosophical, and, above all, naughty perspective on life that is uniquely Indian. He is arguably India's most well-known cartoonist for these factors. The best cartoons drawn by Laxman throughout his sixty-year career are collected in *Brushing Up the Years: A Cartoonist's History of India 1947 to the Present*. These cartoons trace a perceptive, provocative, and humorous history of modern India, from the country's first general elections to Nehru's Five-Year Plans, from the wars with China and Pakistan to Indira Gandhi's rule and the emergency, from Rajiv Gandhi's administration, the rise of regional politics, and the destruction of

the Babri Masjid to economic liberalisation, the BJP's rule, and the Congress's comeback to power (Laxman, 2005). *Brushing Up the Years* is a one-of-a-kind book depicting modern India's core.

2.2 Political Communication and Political Actors

There are different views regarding the term political communication. Denton and Woodward characterise political communication in terms of the intentions of its senders to influence the political environment. The main aspect that makes communication "political" is not the message's sender but its content and purpose, which leads to "public discussion." Hollihan (2001) has argued that political communication refers to the techniques used among various parties and individuals to highlight their similarities and convey their differences. Political parties in a democratic country like India usually express their agreement or disagreement with the government. Political communication is a phenomenon that deserves to be studied in order to shed light on the state of politics. Tuman (2008, p.8) asserts that

"Political communication is the discursive process by which political information is shared and promotes awareness, ignorance, manipulation, consent, dissent, action or passivity. Political communication is an ongoing process in which media information is spread, sometimes leading to big public discussion. It is also a misnomer that manipulates the audience, sets propaganda, and shares a half-truth."

In this modern age, the rhetorical artefacts of political communication are political speeches and political debates, which help manipulate the voters during elections. In a country like India, this takes the form of media repeatedly showing some clips of the speech or debate which support or diverge from a particular political party. There are three main elements (McNair, 2017) in political communication or three essential players: Political Organisations, Media, and Citizens. Political organisations are the political actors who influence the decision-making process. This category includes political parties (like in India; Congress, BJP, *Aam Adami* Party etc.), Public organisations (consumers, associations, NGOs etc.), and Pressure groups (single issues groups like anti-poll tax campaigns, global warming, anti-nuclear movement), and terrorist organisations.

Media organisations (McNair, 2017) are the second actor in this political communication. It is essential because it is an intermediary between political organisations and citizens. Media organisations currently comprise print, broadcasting, and online channels, including blogs, independent sites like wiki leaks, and social networking sites. Media organisations do not simply report any issue neutrally and fairly; the message is produced or encoded by the producer and then broadcast. According to Hall (1973, p. 507), “this process has four main elements: production- circulation- use-reproduction.” In this process, Production: producer creates the message (where encoding happens), Circulation: how people perceive certain things: visual vs written, use: (distribution/consumption) people interpret the message where decoding happens, Reproduction: what the individuals do with the message afterwards. According to Kaid (1991, p. 119),

“political ‘reality’ comprises three categories; the first is the objective political reality, in which political event occurs in their actual form. The second is a subjective reality, the ‘reality’ of political events as actors and citizens perceive them, and the third is constructed reality, events covered by media.”

The Citizen (audience) is the third actor in the Political Communication process. Citizens can also coordinate with media or become part of media, like in the case of opinion polls, letters, blogs, and citizen journalism. Stuart Hall (1973) suggests three types of hypothetical positions from which decoding televisual discourse is constructed. Dominant reading- reader fully accepts the Preferred reading (Hall, 1973, p. 509), the audience read the text the way the author intended them so that the code seems natural and transparent. Whereas, in the Negotiated reading- the reader partially believes the code and broadly accepts the preferred reading but sometimes modify it in a way that reflects their position, experiences, and interests. The Oppositional reading- the reader’s social position places them in an oppositional relation to the dominant code. They reject the reading.

In this segment, we have discussed three main elements of political communication and political actors. In the next segment, we have discussed the media as a political actor.

2.2.1 Indian News Media

In India, the news media is one of the most complicated forms of communication to be found elsewhere (Athique, 2012). In a nutshell, when seen from the outside, the most noticeable feature of India's media system is its sheer size and complexity. In India, the media sectors – television to telecommunications, films to software, radio to the internet – have all undergone fast development. India's interaction with globalisation begins with the watershed year of 1991, when the Soviet bloc collapsed, causing a seismic upheaval in international relations.

In the same year, the Indian government announced its intention to pursue a path of economic liberalisation. International satellite broadcasting began transmitting over and above the old terrestrial state broadcast system, which was significant for those interested in the media's role in this new era. According to McDowell, the liberalisation of economic policy in India was linked to changes in Indian society and challenges with Indian governability as a result of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's populist politics (Rodrigues and Ranganathan, 2015). He says (McDowell 1997: 81),

“It was not the simple failure of economic development but emerging social factors and shifting international pressures which were of great importance in creating the “need” for a policy change in India.”

Globalisation has been given a defined periodisation in India in this respect. Due to the collapse of the “socialist world economy,” India embarked on a policy change to deregulate key areas formerly under state control (Rodrigues and Ranganathan, 2015). This included allowing private, mainly foreign, investment in the media industry. “Private entertainment-based television channels, new media technologies, and 24-hour news channels proliferated as a result of the deregulation of the television industry” (Chadha, 2017; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000). By the end of the “1990s, half a dozen 24-hour news networks” had developed in India, dramatically altering the character of television news in the country. Several media corporations, notably Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, have invested in television news networks providing their audiences with fast-paced news, celebrity gossip, and political scandals (Thussu, 2008; Kohli-Khandekar, 2008).

The “globalisation via media” concept points to the growth of Bangalore, a city in southern India, as a key centre of activity for the global information technology sector (Aoyama 2003; Parthasarathy 2004). Information technology, such as computing applications and telecommunications, have also played an important role in the recent growth of a new industry in India, that of offering business processing to international firms (Dossani and Kenney 2009; Nadeem 2011). The rise of India’s advertising business is another area where the media sphere’s expansion may be seen as supporting the interests of a larger consumer economy (Mazarella 2003). The “globalisation of media markets” thesis leads us to an examination of media flows in and out of India, with a focus on cinema and television formats, both in terms of national/international origins of content and the specific import and export trajectories that ‘stitch’ India into the larger audio-visual field of globalisation (Thussu 2007a; Ranganathan and Rodrigues 2010). We look at shifting ownership patterns and the general political economics of the Indian media sectors in the last category, a “growing global media apparatus” (Athique 2009; Thomas 2010).

2.2.2 Diversity in Indian News Media

Despite the trend toward increasing domination of elite economic and political interests in India’s news media, it would be wrong to treat the media as entirely homogenous. Many scholars working on India’s media have treated media as a “homogenous entity and have underestimated the complex variables,” (Athique, 2012; Kureel, 2021; Mehta, 2008; Saeed, 2012; Thassu, 2006) such as language, region, religion, demography, socioeconomic status, caste, mode, and others (Karppinen, 2007; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007; Raeijmaekers and Maesele, 2015). Nevertheless, it is essential to distinguish between media diversity and media pluralism before entering India’s news media diversity.

In debates on media performance, the terms “media pluralism and media diversity” are frequently interchanged, and there is considerable ambiguity about the distinction between these notions. Karppinen (2007) states that the notion of media diversity is generally used in a more empirical or tangible meaning, whereas pluralism refers to a more diffuse societal value or an underlying orientation. In other words, diversity refers primarily to “physical or empirical differences,” such as a wide range of “identities and concerns (differences within society).” In contrast, pluralism has been

defined in terms of “ideological differences, such as discursive practices and strategies in the (re)production of identities and concerns (differences about society)” (Karppinen, 2007; Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007; Raeijmaekers and Maesele, 2015).

In what follows, we will discuss mode, language, and caste. When it comes to mode, we distinguish between print media, television and digital media. Many researchers and analysts predicted that the arrival of privately owned television news channels would lead to the demise of newspapers in India (Neyazi, 2017). However, the print media has responded to technological change by altering content, style, and design, thereby repositioning itself as a relevant medium.

India was named under the world’s fastest-growing newspaper market in 2011 (Jeannine and Schwalbe, 2013). The print media, according to Jeffrey, passes through three stages: rare, elite, and mass (Vardhan, 2021). The tremendous increase of newspapers has coincided with the increasing dominance of electronic media. Newspapers have been able to create new places of readership and retain their share of advertising revenue by digitalising and localising their content and bringing out regional, district, and local editions in the face of rising competition from electronic media. The Coronavirus pandemic and the world’s strictest lockdown in India have brought about different changes. The lockdown has plummeted print circulation, and advertisements have declined. Workers have been laid off, pay cuts and closure of print editions have taken place across the country (the caravan magazine, 2020). According to the “2021 Digital news report” (Krishnan, 2021), a study conducted by the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*:

“India is one of the strongest mobile-focused markets in the global survey, with 73% accessing news through smartphones. Among respondents, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are widely used for news, and there have been serious problems with misinformation.”

Next, there is language. In India, 44% of the population speaks the Hindi language. According to Registrar of Newspaper of India (RNI), 2019-20 data, Hindi media dailies have an overall press circulation of 200 million copies, compared to 53 million copies of English dailies, 34 million copies of Marathi dailies (“language spoken primarily in the state of Maharashtra”), followed by 27 million copies of Telugu (“language spoken

primarily in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh”), 26 million of Urdu (“language spoken in different parts of India like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, Jammu and Kashmir, etc.”), 21 million of Gujarati (“language spoken primarily in the state of Gujarat”), etc (RNI, 2019-2020; Sharma, 2019).

The “growth of the Hindi press during the early 1980s” has given voice to rural people whose voices were unheard by the English press. Ninan has argued that in the 1980s and 1990s, the “penetration of Hindi newspapers into the rural heartland” was fuelled by a demand for more local news, which the Hindi dailies responded to by publishing more local editions (Yadav, 2020). Jeffrey (2020) has examined the expansion of the vernacular press in the decades between 1977 to 1999 and argued that an expanding economy and growing consumer base in India’s hinterlands led to an increase in advertising revenues, allowing non-English-language news dailies to grow at an exponential rate.

Regarding television news channels, *Republic Bharat* (2020), a Hindi news channel within the Republic Media network with an audience of over 278 million people, was India’s most-watched news channel.

News Channel	Language	Viewership in millions
Republic Bharat	Hindi	278
Aaj Tak	Hindi	198
TV9 Bharatvarsh	Hindi	149
India TV	Hindi	143
News18 India	Hindi	119
Republic TV.	English	6
Times Now	English	2

Table 2.1: India’s most-watched news channel,

Source: Statista Research Department.

There is a total of “392 news channels in India” (Krishnan, 2021), with a “regional language” (Reporters Without Borders) network. There are nearly forty Hindi news channels, nineteen Telugu, fourteen Tamil, and twelve Kannada, followed by Gujarati,

Bangla, Malayalam, etc (Statista Research, 2021). Telugu has the highest number of news channels among regional languages. This data has shown that of all the mainstream media, the regional Indian media has grown significantly into a force to be reckoned with. Media commentators have praised the presence and strength of regional language media in India (Shendurnikar, 2011). In India's mainstream media structure, caste is a rarely discussed topic. Bhushan has argued, it has been a raging issue in India for several years that our newsrooms are monochromatic, upper-caste driven and do not have a democratic representation (Ajith, 2019). According to the report published in 2019 by the *Newslaundry*, an independent news media company has provided striking data:

“Of the 121 newsroom leadership positions—editor-in-chief, managing editor, executive editor, bureau chief, input/output editor—across the newspapers, TV news channels, news websites, and magazines under study, 106 are occupied by journalists from the upper castes and none by those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.” (Tiwari, 2019)

According to Yadav, Upper caste Hindus dominate the media, accounting for 71% of significant decision-makers (Yadav, 2006). Furthermore, the *Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)* performed a Delhi media survey, which indicated that 90% of the decision-makers in newspapers were from the upper caste (Das, 2019). Paul & Dowling have argued that the Dalits, the lowest caste in India, rarely worked in mainstream news media because of a combination of institutional and ideological barriers that made it extremely difficult for Dalits to enter or advance in journalism, (Paul & Dowling, 2018).

2.2.3. News Media and Electoral Politics

In India, media and politics always go hand in hand, and they have unique relationships. “Narendra Modi had been friendly with the media” in his early political career. However, the “news coverage of the Gujarat riots changed the Modi-media equation” significantly (Sardesai, 2014, p. 226). After his memorable televised “interview with a well-known Indian journalist, Karan Thapar, on CNN-IBN, a 24-hour English news channel,” Modi's resistance to the mainstream media was strengthened. Modi walked out of the discussion because he was uncomfortable with questions about his participation in the 2002 riots (Mukhopadhyay, 2013). He began criticising top journalists in subsequent years,

accusing them of misrepresenting facts, charging corruption, and calling them “news traders” (Khera, 2019; Sonwalker, 2016). Modi avoided press conferences and limited media interviews in favour of using Google Hangouts, online TV, broadcast Town Hall meetings, 3D holographic technology, and mobile apps like as his own NaMo app to “interact” directly with people (Zain, 2019; Chadha and Guha, 2016; Jaffrelot, 2015).

Despite Modi’s lack of contact with them, his speeches and public appearances received substantial attention in India’s major news media, particularly during the 2014 and 2019 election campaigns. His election remarks will be broadcast live on “India’s highly competitive 24-hour television news stations” (Sardesai, 2014). As a result, Modi received approximately 35 percent of prime-time news coverage throughout the election campaign, compared to his opponent, Rahul Gandhi, who received only 4.33 percent (Rukmini, 2016). Right-wing observers praised his decision to exclude mainstream news media off the campaign trail, notably the English-language press.

Modi virtually shut off all engagement with professional journalists as Prime Minister, instead relying on social media, smartphone applications, and his fortnightly radio monologue *Mann Ki Baat*, which is broadcast on the “government-run public broadcasting agency.” He declined to designate a media adviser and ceased bringing journalists along on state trips. His government is said to have formed a 200-strong special team charged with “monitoring television news networks across the country and producing reports on ‘pro-BJP’ and ‘anti-BJP news coverage” (Sharma, 2018). Several corporate media owners have allegedly ordered staff who had previously been deemed “anti-Modi or anti-BJP to either soften their criticism or resign their employment due to a mix of political and economic pressures” (Vij, 2014; Ohm, 2015). For example, in 2019, the Modi administration targeted three prominent English newspapers for negative coverage by removing government ads, resulting in a 15% loss in revenue for those publications (Ghoshal, 2019). Since 2014, when they came into power, Modi’s “government has tried to control the media” (ibid).

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Modi Government has become more aggressive in responding to criticism from the media about its handling of the crisis. Working conditions of journalists in India have deteriorated. Thus, more than 50 Indian journalists who tried to show the government in poor light have been arrested or had police complaints registered against them, or been physically assaulted in July 2020 (Raza,

2020). Prominent media figures and journalists have resigned recently due to the controversy their investigative reporting caused (Bajpai, 2018). In July 2021, Tax raids were carried out in the offices of *Danik Baskar*, which is one of the widely read and popular “Hindi newspapers, after months of critical coverage of the government’s handling of the Covid-19 pandemic” (Petersen, 2021; Goyal & Singh, 2021). On 10th Sept. 2021, the Indian tax authority raided the *Newslick* and *Newslaundry* (independent news media outlets) offices. These are evident intimidation techniques directed at two publications known to be critical of authorities. According to the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, India has been classified as a “bad” country for journalism and is “one of the most hazardous places in the world for journalists” (The Wire Staff, 2021). In 2020, 67 journalists were imprisoned, and almost 200 were physically assaulted (Biswas, 2021).

The BJP’s “financial and political influence aided the formation of several right-wing media” outfits. News sites such as “*Swarajya.com*, *OpIndia.com*, *tfipost.com*, *Satyavijayi.com*, *Thetruepicture.org*, *Mynation.com*, and *Indiafacts.org*” are among the first of these sites, claiming to counter what they call the mainstream media’s liberal bias (The Hoot, 2015). These websites have attempted to “reorient India towards a majoritarian philosophy with a deep contempt for secularism” by utilising the internet’s opportunity structures and affordances (Khan, 2015). There are “roughly ten right-wing alternative news sites in India, at least two of which are in the top 1000 most frequented websites” (*opindia.com*, 2022). Several members of Parliament, business CEOs, economists, entrepreneurs, and retired bureaucrats who are thought to be sympathetic to the BJP and the Hindu nationalist movement have linked up with these right-wing alternative websites, (Bhat, 2020, p.31). While some financially support these sites by investing money, others have joined the editorial board, adding legitimacy and a veneer of respectability to these publications, (Kumar, 2020).

In addition to reading overtly ideological news websites, there is a slew of right-wing Facebook pages and groups that do not generate news or opinion pieces but rather serve as online gathering places for “Hindu nationalists” (Gittinger, 2018). These sites “frequently publish content created by right-wing alternative media,” which is subsequently multicast (many-to-many) and replayed by page followers using social media features like ‘likes’ and ‘shares,’ increasing the reach of such information

(Kumar, 2020).

Aside from news portals, BJP-affiliated Ministers have founded “Republic TV,” a 24-hour news channel. “Republic TV became the country’s most-watched English television” news outlet within its first week of broadcasting, riding a nationalist wave (Ahluwalia, 2017). The station began carrying news in Hindi prior to the 2019 legislative elections. At the same time, the television network is controlled by a “BJP Member of Parliament” (Daniyal and Venkataramakrishnan, 2017). The success of this news channel can be ascribed to Arnab Goswami, its star anchor, who took over editorial management of the channel after leaving Times Now. He achieved prominence with his sensationalised coverage of emotional themes such as Pakistan, Kashmir, and the Hindu-Muslim conflict, connecting with the right-wing audience. He was known for his “hectoring style” (Crabtree, 2015) and anti-liberal viewpoints. BJP has nurtured a substantial internet support base for several years, aiding the construction of websites and television (Therwath, 2012).

BJP has been investing resources in studying election data and developing digital tactics for social media exposure since 2007, taking advantage of India’s fast internet and mobile technology (Bhat, 2020). According to estimates, the BJP will have over 100,000 internet volunteers from the country and diaspora by 2017. (Udupa, 2019). During the 2014 Parliamentary elections, these ideologically driven volunteers played a crucial role in influencing potential voters by deploying “targeted micro-messaging,” which journalists dubbed “multimedia carpet bombing” (Sardesai, 2014: 44). Udupa (2019) found that “many of these online 38 Hindu nationalist volunteers were engaged” in

“Fact-checking to contest the mainstream media narratives, archive the confrontations for evidence and future use, create memes, tweets, and offer repetitive summaries of Hindu first ideology and boost the Internet traffic for Hindutva reasoning through tags, retweets, mentions, and likes, complemented the crafted bots of Hindutva with actual human labour and confront opposing views with an arsenal of stinging ridicule accusations and abuse” (p. 3150).

Twitter is one of the “most active social media platforms for Hindutva online volunteers, who utilise it as a discursive arena to counter mainstream media narratives” (Chaturvedi, 2016). The web portals, television networks, and online Hindu nationalists, three

constituent aspects of India's rising right-wing media, share a primary suspicion of mainstream news media and a constant drive to criticise and destroy faith in established media. Rather than proposing improvements to "professional journalism," they want to build an "alternative media" sector by "forming institutions" that compete with established news organisations.

2.3 Agenda-Setting Theory and Propaganda Model in the Context of India

2.3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Since the late 1960s, empirical mass communication research has placed a significant emphasis on the mass media's capacity to shape the public agenda. McCombs and Shaw (1972) used their Chapel Hill study to show how the media may shape public opinion during the 1968 U.S. presidential election campaign. Agenda-setting research has resulted in more than 450 peer-reviewed publications that have been published by academic journals in English since this seminal investigation of the relationship between the public agenda and the mass media agenda until 2012. (Zhou et al., 2013). The agenda-setting theory has developed over time, moving from a first level that focused on the prominence of objects (like candidates) to a second level called attribute agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002). The second level is associated with the transmission of the prominence of an object's properties, including emotive and substantive attributes (such as the personalities of candidates) (Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2004; Takeshita, 1997, 2007). The subject of how media content changes become crucial due to the extensive empirical evidence of the media's capacity to affect the public's agenda.

Although the media landscape in India is more diverse than that of the West (Shahin, Zheng, Sturm, & Fadnis, 2016), national newspapers have a significant impact on the local press. Hence, national newspapers set the agenda for other media sources (Haque & Narag, 1983; McCombs, 2014). Most newspapers are published in Hindi, out of all the languages used in India. India is also the largest English-language publishing market outside of the United States and the United Kingdom (Sarkar, 1994). Second, the Times of India and Hindustan are two of the nation's most significant daily publications that extensively cover national politics in their respective languages. Both magazines are

among the newspapers with the most readers worldwide (Indian Readership Survey, 2014).

Studies that have already been done in the context of India have discovered proof of the historical linkages between specific media outlets and political parties (e.g. Butler, Lahiri, & Roy, 1995). The emergence of populist politics in India (Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield, 2003) as well as media commercialization, however, may have a moderating impact on the power that political parties wield on the media. Additionally, the highly regarded Election Commission of India, the independent constitutional body in charge of overseeing election procedures, keeps an eye on party behaviour to prevent overt political influence in media coverage. Investigation into the influence of political campaigns on the media in India confirms earlier studies' findings that the news media aspires to serve as a fair "fourth estate," at the very least at the scale of the biggest national newspapers (Baumann, 2016; de Swert & Walgrave, 2006).

The 2014 Indian general elections were the greatest democratic exercise the world has ever seen, with over 800 million Indians eligible to vote. Prior research demonstrates that, despite the breadth and depth of Indian democracy, Western-style agenda-setting procedures are also present in India. Yet, the relationship between political party campaigns and media coverage turned out to be mostly bidirectional at both levels of agenda-setting and only marginally significant. It demonstrated that, despite the close relationship between party platforms and media agendas, parties rarely succeed in directly influencing the platforms of significant and prosperous newspapers.

2.3.2 Propaganda Model

One of the most significant books of media *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economics of the Mass Media* by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman on the corporate news industry's systemic bias serves as a useful framework for election analysis. A bias protecting these interests permeates the information provided to consumers, according to the Propaganda Model, because major media outlets typically are corporations or subsidiaries of conglomerates. Conflicts of interest can arise as a result of this on many different levels, including the explicit promotion of political party interests and the suppression of news that is contrary to the corporation's objectives. The

largest news conglomerate in India, the Network 18 Group, is controlled by Reliance Industries, and Subhash Chandra owns Zee News. The Bharatiya Janata Party supported Chandra's bid for the Rajya Parliament (BJP). Republic TV is a member of a consortium in which a BJP lawmaker is one of the major investors.

Major media outlets rely heavily on advertising for the majority of their funding, so news organisations must accommodate the economic and political preferences of their sponsors. Some Indian news organisations were eager to sell paid content as news, fully aware that the information was thinly veiled political propaganda intended to polarise voters and influence elections, according to a sting by the Indian media portal Cobrapost earlier this year. By lowering the cost of the media's information production and acquisition, the massive bureaucracies of the wealthy can subsidise the mass media and obtain preferential access. By merely relaying the official narrative to the news consumer without any scrutiny, this reliance on government or privileged sources may become motivated enough to win over the powers that be. The recent arrests of activists and intellectuals branded "urban Naxals" by some major TV news networks are a prime example of how, at its worst, the media may actively conspire with those in authority to carry out their wishes. Zee News went a step further last week by claiming that activists and intellectuals were planning to start a "civil war" in order to "defeat (prime minister) Narendra Modi" in the general elections in 2019. Zee News, which has a much larger audience that is primarily Hindi-speaking than its English-language competitors, made this claim.

Noam Chomsky cautioned that the transformation of reporting into propaganda could silence other opponents of the current regime as well as democratic opposition in general. Recent allegations of a coordinated smear effort by the Indian government in cooperation with a few English-language news networks have been made by Organizations including Amnesty International and Greenpeace. The controversy that erupted last week following an interview with Modi by the news agency ANI is an example of this. Flak describes actions taken by governments, advertisers, businesses, and private influence groups against media organisations that don't follow the rules. The media outlet may incur costs as a result of this, including lost advertising revenue and defence expenses. Reliance Infrastructure, which is managed by Anil Ambani, has

recently filed a number of defamation lawsuits against news media organisations for raising unsettling concerns over the Rafale deal.

In order to control public perception and quell potential resistance, false worries are developed. These anxieties have historically been presented in the western news media as communism, terrorism, and illegal immigration. In India, a portion of the media that earlier this year lent credence to the worry of a pervasive “urban Naxal” menace has incited vigilantism among the populace. In order to further the preferred agenda of the right-wing in the states of West Bengal and Assam, the same section constantly emphasised the threat posed by “illegal immigrants” from Bangladesh this year. Additional instances of the type Chomsky has brought to light include engulfing readers in a sea of insignificance, misrepresenting or trivialising significant events, and largely disregarding still other events that are not deemed noteworthy enough.

2.4 Research Gaps

Surprisingly, studies utilising agenda-setting effects (Baumann, Zheng & McCombs, 2018) and propaganda models (Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, 2018) have not been conducted much in India, mainly in television news media. The agenda-setting effect and propaganda model-based research’s geographic distribution is generally very imbalanced. Although researchers have begun to examine the agenda-setting effect and propaganda model in non-western nations in recent years (Song, 2007; King, 1997; Takeshita, 2007; Pedro-Carañana, Broudy, and Klaehn, 2018), there are still “only a small number of studies” specifically focused on non-western contexts, such as “Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, the three most advanced Asian democracies” (McCombs et al., 2004). The “2019 Lok Sabha elections” served as an epitome event to fill this research gap.

Studies on the “agenda-setting effect” and the propaganda model in developing nations are lacking behind. It is unexpected because the “agenda-setting effect” of mass media and the propaganda model of media performance implicitly permits a better and more sophisticated explanation of fundamental democratic processes like “public opinion formation and the interaction of politics and the media.” Astonishingly, India’s vibrant and rapidly expanding media ecosystem has been entirely left out of this research. India, one of the most influential and most potent developing nations, provides a prime

example for extending the geographic reach of agenda-setting effect and propaganda model-based research and enhancing both the theory/model's global applicability due to its massive media market and unique cultural and media system structure (Baumann, 2016). Representing the "2019 Lok Sabha elections" through moving political cartoons broadcast on television news channels and other social media platforms served as a supreme occasion to fill this research gap.