

Social Media coming of age

The recent political campaigns of the AAP government and the BJP spurred a revolution for good governance among the Indian masses. Earlier, nobody used to talk about the need for a good government but only good governance. The change that the 2014 elections brought in the history of national politics was possible because of effective mass communication, which though changed the government, fell a little short in transforming the governance.



"The implied relationship between Mass Communication and the government is that the former can transform the latter," said Jawhar Sircar, CEO, Prasar Bharati, at the second LILA PRISM lecture on 'Mass Communication and Transformative Governance'.

Jawhar Sircar's well-structured lecture began with a quick prelude tracing the evolution of mass communication from the days of the drum beater through the advent of the audio-visual media to the social media networks, which are so prevalent in today's age.

Explaining the concept of media studies and its impact on the governance of the country, Sircar said, "India is a country with 130-crore-populated space, it has more than 1,00,000 newspapers, but the reach of print media is only 19.2 per cent. In the case of electronic media, out of the 75 crore TV viewers in the country, only 7.5 per cent watch the news, and out of that only 0.1 per cent watches English news. However, the percentage of viewership is much higher when it comes to other programmes such as movies and serials."

Though the TV and print media has taken a hit, the social media has grown wildly popular. "Out of the 30 crore internet users in the country, about 20 per cent use Social Media. This accessibility has brought in a new level of transparency in mass communication—digital openness in the connected world. Coupled with this has arrived the Right To Information revolution—and it now seems mass communication can indeed function as a 'kingmaker,'" said Sircar.

The facets of this transparency are interesting — some take the form of 'heads must roll', as in the case against Suresh Kalmadi and some could also aggravate mass movements, such as 'Bring Lokpal' campaign and the Nirbhaya outrage, which not only raised awareness among people but also nudged them into activism.

Digital revolution, in today's world, happens to be the key enabler of the public opinion but as they say, with great power comes great responsibility, the flip side of this enormous revolution is its negligible security. It can work to the advantage of people and the disadvantage of the establishments, as we saw in the cases of Wikileaks founder Assange and Snowden. Hence, governments tend to get very cautious about the digital alphabet. But, for the people, the first and the most significant hope for transformation of governance, is the notable shift in power that has assembled into their hands, where the decision is one simple click away.