IMPACT

INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CREATIVE THINKING

A JOURNAL FOR MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

National Flag

National Anthem

State Emblem
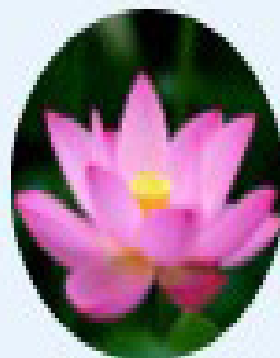
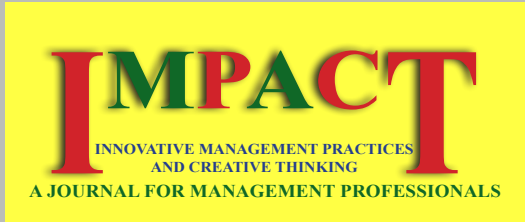National Bird

National Identity Elements

National Animal

National Flower

National Tree

Greetings from IMPACT

Dear Readers,

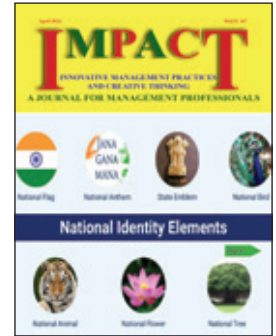### Key Issues of 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in India are marked by several crucial issues that resonate with the electorate. Let's delve into some of these key concerns:

1. Economic Recovery and Growth: The pandemic-induced economic slowdown has left its impact on various sectors. Voters are keenly observing how each party plans to revive the economy, create jobs, and foster sustainable growth.

2. Healthcare and COVID-19 Management: The handling of the pandemic remains a critical issue. Citizens are evaluating the effectiveness of healthcare infrastructure, vaccination drives, and preparedness for potential future waves.

3. Agriculture and Farmer Distress: Agrarian issues continue to be significant. Farmers' protests, crop prices, loan waivers, and access to markets are central to this debate.

4. Unemployment and Skill Development: Job creation and skill enhancement programs are pivotal. Youth and working-class voters seek assurances regarding employment opportunities.

5. National Security and Terrorism: Security concerns, border tensions, and counterterrorism strategies are on voters' minds. Parties' stances on defense and foreign policy matter.

6. Environment and Climate Change: Climate action, pollution control, and sustainable development are gaining prominence. Voters want to know how parties plan to address environmental challenges.

7. Social Justice and Caste Dynamics: Issues related to caste-based reservations, social inclusion, and minority rights are crucial. Parties' commitment to social justice matters.

8. Education and Digital Infrastructure: Access to quality education, digital connectivity, and technological advancements are key concerns for citizens.

9. Women's Safety and Empowerment: Gender equality, safety, and women's rights are being discussed. Voters expect concrete steps to ensure safety and empowerment.

10. Corruption and Governance: Transparency, accountability, and efficient governance are non-negotiable. Parties' track records and anti-corruption measures are under scrutiny.

Remember, these issues are multifaceted, and voters will weigh them differently based on their priorities and regional context. The election outcome will shape India's trajectory for the next few years.

Editorial Team

INSIDE
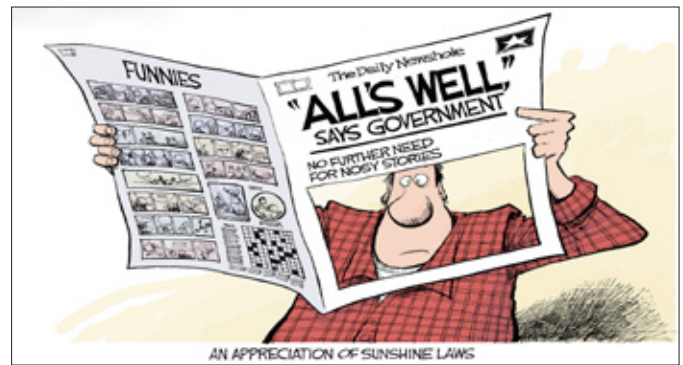
National Identity

Sometimes I wonder, whether the peacock, the royal Bengal tiger or the gigantic dolphin have the consciousness of being the national bird, animal and aquatic animal respectively of India! Whether they have any consciousness of the term India itself that depicts a specific geographical region, as these birds and animals are free, though they are adapted to certain climatic regions without knowing its name. We human beings are also born free, but then chained up socially and culturally.

On one hand, while some of the social impacts help us to survive and grow experiencing a more cohesive and meaningful social life, on the other hand, certain socio cultural practices limit our human potentials to experience the unlimited power that lies within us. In terms of the process of adaptation and habitats, and natural selection, most of the plants and animals are equipped with very intrigued creative ways of surviving in a particular

INDIA IS THE LARGEST DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD, THE 7TH LARGEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, AND ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS.

geographical region adapting to those climatic conditions and their food habits and settlement and reproduction processes are unique and fixed. But when it comes to we human beings, isn't it that, our adaptation abilities are dynamic and our settlement process and food habits and also the other social aspects like clothing, family bonding and festivals and celebrations etc are also dynamic!

In Fact, a particular way of living or cultural practices is the result of a very long interaction of a group of people with a given natural region where they happen to grow. And this is the most beautiful aspect of human intelligence, where the people develop myriads of ways of survival technique in terms of the basic requirements of food, clothes and shelters. And over the time, the creative abilities lead to the invention and propagation of various forms of dwelling habits, fashion statements and food habits that in turn become identity symbols of a particular group of people who have evolved

constantly over a particular region. Like, when we say Japan, we immediately get connected with the mental map of the particular island nation and its ethnic groups and their ways of living.

Same way when we say India, we link our thoughts to that particular map about which we have studied in our geography, the cultural practices we have studied in our social textbooks, the economic practices we have read in our books of commerce and economics and the political processes depicted in our books of political studies and above all the history of all these aspects mentioned in our historical texts and scriptures or monuments and inscriptions.

Without the ability to speak or the beautiful mechanism of assigning meaning to things and processes around us through some symbols and sounds, our consciousness would have been like those of the animals and birds. Our national Identity is having its origin from the very term called nation and the conscious efforts to propagate the feeling of national Identity. In this regard, the texts or the education system plays an important role; be it of formal education or traditional knowledge sharing from generation to generation.

The ability to speak and the ability to assign symbols to sounds and to particular things around us has helped us to generate enormous amount of materials from the given natural resources. The entire process of encounter and interaction with the natural surroundings has resulted in the evolution of layers of social and cultural surroundings.

Every social, political, cultural and economic activity has a link with a particular way of interaction with a particular natural region of a particular group who intern tried to pass on the suitable ways of surviving from generation to generation that became our tradition and our tradition became our identities linked up with a particular region. Unlike the flora and fauna, human beings have exhibited dynamism in terms

of the consciousness of being unique despite being the same human being. Here, the texts and studies pertaining to social science plays an important role in the propagation of national Identity while retaining the unique regional identities. And yes, it is very much possible in a huge country like ours where the geographical extent is huge ranging from 8°4' north to 37°6' north latitude and 68°7' east to 97°25' east longitude covering an aerial coverage of 3,287,263 sq km with a land frontier of 15,200km and a coastline of 7,516.6 km making it the seventh largest country in the world.

Since independences this is the geographical area depicting the sovereignty of government of India with certain border issues that keep our armed forces alert like the hawks and the DRDO busy developing sophisticated missiles and state of the art arms and ammunitions.

The defense ties with the advanced nations is like going for the insurance policies, where huge amounts are spent anticipating a disaster and being ready to face it. The current issue being that of the kachchativu island on which prime minister Narendra Modiji has expressed concerns on the past actions of the then Tamil Nadu chief minister Late Karunanidhiji during the reign of Indira Gandhi ji at the centre. As per the plate tectonics, the landmasses are under constant movement merging at the boundaries of convergence forming the huge fold mountains like that of the Himalayas and diverging at the boundaries of divergence forming the newer crusts and the underwater ridges like that of the Atlantic Ocean ridges expanding the

boundaries of the Atlantic Ocean and on the other side the Pacific Ocean getting contracted at the Pacific ring of fire.So, isn't it that,the geographical boundaries are under constant change challenging the human claim over it.

Yet, these geographical boundaries maintain peace among nations though the flora and fauna and even the people on either side of the borders don't feel much alienated .The same feeling is experienced within the nation at the boundaries of linguistic states. India is home to 22 constitutionally recognized languages and our state boundaries are based on linguistic coherence. And the state borders are zones of cultural assimilation. While on one hand several languages form the basis to separate the states to retain diversity, on the other hand one foreign language has formed the basis to unite the states administratively and we witness several issues of internal arguments on the supremacy of one language being given the national status.

Indeed, it's a huge challenge for a nation to create a sense of belonging and pride among its citizens while respecting individual differences and multiculturalism. Mathematics is all about solving the problems and it says if there is a problem or a challenge then it must have a solution too.Or we can say, if problems are thereby solving them,

we can create a discipline or field of study called mathematics. If India is a land of several cultural traits, the challenge of retaining it's unity amidst such huge diversity can give rise to a unique field of study and our ancient Indic traditional knowledge system is that very field of study regaining it's lost momentum.

In the Vishnu Purana, it's mentioned:"Uttaram yat Samudrasya,Himadreschaiva dakshinam,varsham tad Bharatam nama Bharati yatra santatih",meaning the country that lies to the north of the ocean and the south of the snowy mountains is called Bharat as there dwell the descendants of Bharat.In the Hindu scriptures, Bharatvarsh is identified as part of a larger geographical entity called Jambudweep. Bharata,whose descendants were said to be living in a particular area in Vishnu purana,is commonly thought to be King Bharata, the son of Dushyant and Shakuntala and an ancestor of the Kauravas and Pandavas.That also explains the name of the "Mahabharata", which chronicles the war between Bharata's descendants.In the Vedas, Bharat is the name of a tribe.Its mentioned as,King Sudasa of Bharat tribe fights a war against the puru tribe of which the Bharat tribe was a part.

This is something like the logic of Tamil Nadu meaning the land of the Tamil speaking people.

National Identity Elements

National Flag | National Bird | National Flower | National Tree
National Anthem | State Emblem | National Calendar
National Animal | National Song | Currency Symbol

Tamil is a language and also an identity of a particular group of people and the region where they live is called their land- Tamil Nadu.Same way for the Odia people.In the past the current region of Odisha was inhabited by the people who were speaking the language Odra and in ancient times, Odisha is referred to as Odradesha.

The identity of a particular group as tribe,or as a linguistic group or a particular group of people speaking a particular language and getting addressed as a tribe based on that particular language has seen several ways of addressing. For example,in our current time,in the corporate sector, tribes are referred as social groups linked by a leader,shared purpose or goal, common culture or organisational boundaries.These groups band together and establish rules to create a sense of safety and belonging,fight a common enemy or accomplish something meaningful.

Hence,evolutionarily speaking, humans are conditioned to seek affiliation through families and tribes. And over a period of time,the reference gets differently communicated sometimes creating confusions regarding the origin of a particular tribe and the geographical extent of that particular tribe.

It's beyond my ability to justify, how, when,where and what language emerged first on earth.As an individual my mother tongue was my first language and today in the era of globalisation when we are going global and through our language system adopted by our school education system we have picked up quite a few languages,the mother tongue is not a single language anymore.Yet,our basic identity gets derived from our parents.Despite efforts to retain the purity of various cultural groups, human history has witnessed constant intermixing of diverse cultural groups through

trade movements,warfares colonialism and now globalisation.

Our personal and socio-cultural identity gets propagated through our family which is the first place of social interaction.Gradually, when we go outside the family and the friend circle or peer circle gets established,we come to know about other cultural traits particularly if we happen to live in places where people from different parts live as neighbours .And most of such movements are witnessed insearch of suitable job or livelihood opportunities given the current trend of economic activities.Then, the schools that lay the foundation of almost every form of consciousness be it social, cultural, political, economic or psychological,play the most crucial role in propagating the consciousness of national Identity.

The school curriculum and the syllabus help in developing a deeper sense of belonging to the greater geographical region called country or nation and also exposes us to the existence of other cultural groups as our neighbours within the country and as international neighbours beyond our national boundaries.However,the national consciousness is more of a psychological feeling while the immediate family and neighbours forms the tangible local or regional identity.When people move out of the national boundaries, they tend to form cultural affiliation in foreign lands coming together as Indian diaspora and such diasporas further tend to get linked up based on their very original identity.

For example, the Malayalam people form their groups and the Punjabi people form their groups and the Telugu people form their groups.Within India, within a particular linguistic state,distance might have separated families,but in a foreign land,such families from two far away place of a same state tend to come together.Same way, within India, when lots of people migrate to different parts, their cultural identity brings them together through regular interactions and communications at a far away place from their place of birth or origin.Bangalore has become a hub of several Odia people based on the IT companies.

एक चिड़िया अनेक चिड़ियाँ

Tamil Nadu has attracted several skilled labour forces from West Bengal,Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.Based on the performance of various state governments, the migration trends are changing within the country and between the countries.These processes of international and intranational movements have led to national and regional affiliation away from the place of origin.However, economically advanced groups tend to exhibit their original identity, while not so affluent groups tend to hide their local identity.Based on rigorous studies and research papers,such connections can be stated more scientifically.

On a general parlance,the family,the peer group,the school and the college and the education system in general and the social media and government interventions play major roles in fostering the consciousness of various identities. However,the forces of competition and cooperation act constantly on us and the survival instincts make us either affiliated or alienated.During those moments,the balance between national identity and regional diversity becomes crucial.

India being a huge country and the home to several equally rich cultural groups,the fostering of national belonging while respecting the regional affiliation is a big challenge and giving respect to the current geopolitical issues post World war II and the formation of The UN, India has been a highly successful democracy post independence and several measures have helped to retain the national identity and also foster the feeling of national pride in its citizens.

"Mile sur mera tumhara"used to be one of my favourite songs and I feel thankful to the YouTube channel in which I am able to witness those childhood memories of great happiness.

The cartoon depicting the concept of unity through the song Ek Chidiya,Anek Chidiya still blinks in my memories.

The All India Services form the thread of uniting the states administratively.

The constitutional provisions of sharing of power between the centre and the states helps to pose a striking balance retaining national pride while fostering regional developments.

The establishments of national institutions throughout the country promote regional competition to excel at the national level.

By conducting national sports meets, national literary competitions, national science exhibitions, national film festivals,national cultural meets etc,the people from various cultural backgrounds tend to excel in their respective regions to make it to the national forums making India qualify for international representations.Such moments of achievements,foster regional talent and also develop the feeling of national pride .The performance of Indian sports persons at the international level,make every Indian proud and foster the sense of national pride.

Be it, science, architecture, medicine,space science, engineering, development, disaster management,any world class achievement fosters the sense of great national pride despite their regional occurrences. Same way, any world-class performances in terms of culture, cinema, festivals, large scale planning and execution,sports, or

गिले सुर गेरा तुम्हारा

Mile sur mera tumhaara

Lyrics in original languages

organising international meetings like the G-20 or handling of the pandemic situations or carrying out rescue operations or extending help at the international platforms, every such activity helps to foster a more deeper sense of national pride.

The Indian arm forces, the NCC,the Scouts and Guides and the NSS etc creates a deeper sense of service to the land and its people under the flag.

The national anthem,the national song,the national pledge,the national celebrations of Independence day and Republic Day keeps reminding us of our national identity and the sacrifices made by our forefathers to unite us together as one nation under the national flag.

Personally I feel that the concept of multiculturalism and national identity can be compared with our human body itself.

We are human as a whole and we grow from a tiny zygote formed from the egg and the sperm coming from the female and male respectively. May be the various states or nations have grown over time as social entity from any two male and female who have given birth to their progenies and the population has increased over the years and so also their interactions with themselves and their surroundings creating the cultural practices just the way the zygote grows in size and the endoderm,mesoderm and the ectoderm gets developed giving rise to the various organ systems. All these organ systems function together and the infant is born as a single entity.

Same way, the nations have grown over the years giving birth to several regional cultural groups who might have a common origin and that common bond holds us together as a single nation just like the invisible consciousness that exists in every cell and the organ to the organ systems and the whole human being.The national capital is like the brain and the All India Services system is like the nervous system carrying message to every nook and corner of the country.The education system is like the blood vessels supplying oxygen to every part.

The legal system is like the immune system and the political system is like the Dermal layer covering the entire country.The economic activities are like the food that gives energy to survive and grow and the socio cultural activities are like the body aesthetics.

And just the way, every part functions together to make the individual survive and grow, every system and every regional cultural group must work together to survive and grow as a single nation while fostering multiculturalism.

Jai Hind…

Ms.Chinmayee

Am a full-time homemaker and a self-taught passionate artist and an amateur writer looking forward to take my passions to a professional level.I have written certain situational stanzas in English and an amateur autobiography of my life experiences from 1999 to 2021 in Odia titled Baishi Pahache meaning on the 22 nd step.

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What a Startup Is and What's Involved in Getting One Off the Ground

What Is a Startup?

The term startup refers to a company in the first stages of operations. Startups are founded by one or more entrepreneurs who want to develop a product or service for which they believe there is demand. These companies generally start with high costs and limited revenue, which is why they look for capital from a variety of sources such as venture capitalists.

Key Takeaways

- A startup is a company that's in the initial stages of business.
- Founders normally finance their startups and may attempt to attract outside investment before they get off the ground.
- Funding sources include family and friends, venture capitalists, crowdfunding, and loans.

- Startups must also consider where they'll do business and their legal structure.
- Startups come with high risk as failure is very possible but they can also be very unique places to work with great benefits, a focus on innovation, and great opportunities to learn.

Understanding Startups

Startups are companies or ventures that are focused on a single product or service that the founders want to bring to market. These companies typically don't have a fully developed business model and, more crucially, lack adequate capital to move onto the next phase of business. Most of these companies are initially funded by their founders.

Many startups turn to others for more funding, including family, friends, and venture capitalists. Silicon Valley is known for its strong venture capitalist community and is a popular destination for startups, but is also widely considered the most demanding arena.

Startups can use seed capital to invest in research and to develop their business plans. Market research helps determine the demand for a product or service, while a comprehensive business plan outlines the company's mission statement, vision, and goals, as well as management and marketing strategies.

The first few years are very important for startups This is the time that entrepreneurs should use to concentrate on raising capital and developing a business model.

Special Considerations

There are a number of different factors that entrepreneurs must think of as they try to get their new business off the ground and begin operations. We've listed some of the most common ones below.

Location

Location can make or break any business. And it's often one of the most important considerations for anyone starting up in the business world. Startups must decide whether their business is conducted online, in an office or home office, or in a store. The location depends on the product or service being offered.

For example, a technology startup selling virtual reality hardware may need a physical storefront to give customers a face-to-face demonstration of the product's complex features.

Legal Structure

Startups need to consider what legal structure best fits their entity. A sole proprietorship is suited for a founder who is also the key employee of a business. Partnerships are a viable legal structure for businesses that consist of several people who have joint ownership, and they're also fairly straightforward to establish. Personal liability can be reduced by registering a startup as a limited liability company (LLC).

Funding

Startups often raise funds by turning to family and friends or by using venture capitalists. This is a group of professional investors that specialize in funding startups. Crowd funding has become

a viable way for many people to get access to the cash they need to move forward in the business process. The entrepreneur sets up a crowdfunding page online, allowing people who believe in the company to donate money.

Startups may use credit to commence their operations. A perfect credit history may allow the startup to use a line of credit as funding. This option carries the most risk, particularly if the startup is unsuccessful. Other companies choose small business loans to help fuel growth. Banks typically have several specialized options available for small businesses—a microloan is a short-term, low-interest product tailored for startups. A detailed business plan is often required in order to qualify.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Startups

There are a variety of advantages to working for a startup. More responsibility and opportunities to learn are two. As startups have fewer employees than large, established companies, employees tend to wear many hats, working in a variety of roles, which leads to more responsibility as well as opportunities to learn.

Startups tend to be more relaxed in nature, making the workplace more of a communal experience, with flexible hours, increased employee interaction, and flexibility. Startups tend to also have better workplace benefits, such as nurseries for children, free food, and shorter workweeks.

The work at startups can also be more rewarding as innovation is welcomed and managers allow talented employees to run with ideas with little supervision.

One of the primary disadvantages of a startup is increased risk. This primarily applies to the success and longevity of a startup. New businesses need to prove themselves and raise capital before they can start turning a profit. Keeping investors happy with the startup's progress is critical. The risk of shutting down or not having enough capital to

continue operations before turning a profit is ever-present.

Long hours are characteristic of startups as everyone is working toward the same goal—to see the startup succeed. This can lead to high-stress moments and sometimes compensation that isn't commensurate with the hours worked. Competition is also always high as there tend to be a handful of startups working on the same idea.

Pros

- More opportunities to learn
- Increased responsibility
- Flexibility
- Workplace benefits
- Innovation is encouraged
- Flexible hours

Cons

- Risk of failure
- Having to raise capital

- High stress
- Competitive business environment

Examples of Startups

Dotcoms were a common startup in the 1990s. Venture capital was extremely easy to obtain during this time due to a frenzy among investors to speculate on the emergence of these new businesses. Unfortunately, most of these internet startups eventually went bust due to major flaws in their business plans, such as lacking a path to sustainable revenue. However, a handful of companies survived when the dotcom bubble burst. Amazon (AMZN) and eBay (EBAY) are just two examples.

Many startups fail within the first few years. That's why this initial period is important. Entrepreneurs need to find money, create a business model and business plan, hire key personnel, work out intricate details such as equity stakes for partners and investors, and plan for the long run. Many of today's most successful companies—Microsoft (MSFT), Apple (AAPL), and Meta (META),
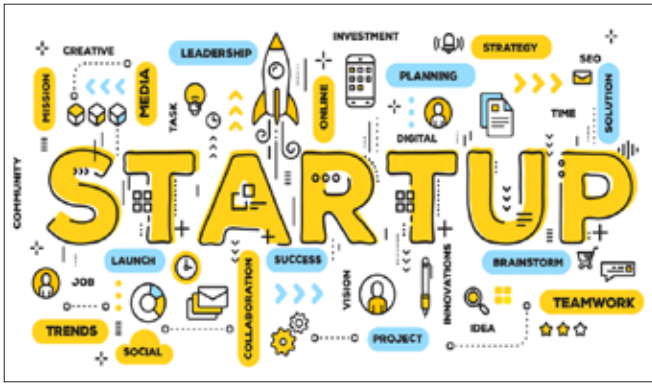
formerly Facebook, to name a few—began as startups and ended up becoming publicly traded companies.

How Do You Start a Startup Company?

The first step in starting a startup is having a great idea. From there, market research is the next step to determine how feasible the idea is and what the current marketplace looks like for your idea. After the market research, creating a business plan that outlines your company structure, goals, mission, values, and objectives, is the next step.

One of the most important steps is obtaining funding. This can come from savings, friends, family, investors, or a loan. After raising funding, make sure you've done all the correct legal and paperwork. This means registering your business and obtaining any required licenses or permits. After this, establish a business location. From there, create an advertising plan to attract customers, establish a customer base, and adapt as your business grows.

How Do You Get a Startup Business Loan?

A startup can obtain a loan from a bank, certain organizations, or friends and family. One of the best and first options should be working with the U.S. Small Business Administration, which provides microloans to small businesses. The average SBA loan is $13,000 and the max loan amount is $50,000.

These loans are usually from nonprofit community lenders and can be easier to obtain than traditional loans from banks.1

What Are the Benefits of Working for a Startup?

The benefits of working at a startup include greater opportunities to learn, increased responsibility, flexible work hours, a relaxed work environment, increased employee interaction, good workplace benefits, and innovation.

How Do You Value a Startup Company?

Valuing a startup can be difficult as startups don't usually have longevity in which to determine their success. Startups also don't generate profits or even revenue for a few years after starting. As such, using the traditional financial statement metrics for valuations doesn't apply. Some of the best ways to value a startup include the cost to duplicate, market multiples, discounted cash flow, and valuation by stage.

The Bottom Line

Starting a company can be a difficult venture but a rewarding one. Having a great idea and attempting to bring it to market comes with a host of challenges, such as attracting capital, employees, marketing, legal work, and managing finances. Keep in mind, though, that startups lead to increased job satisfaction and the possibility of leaving a legacy.
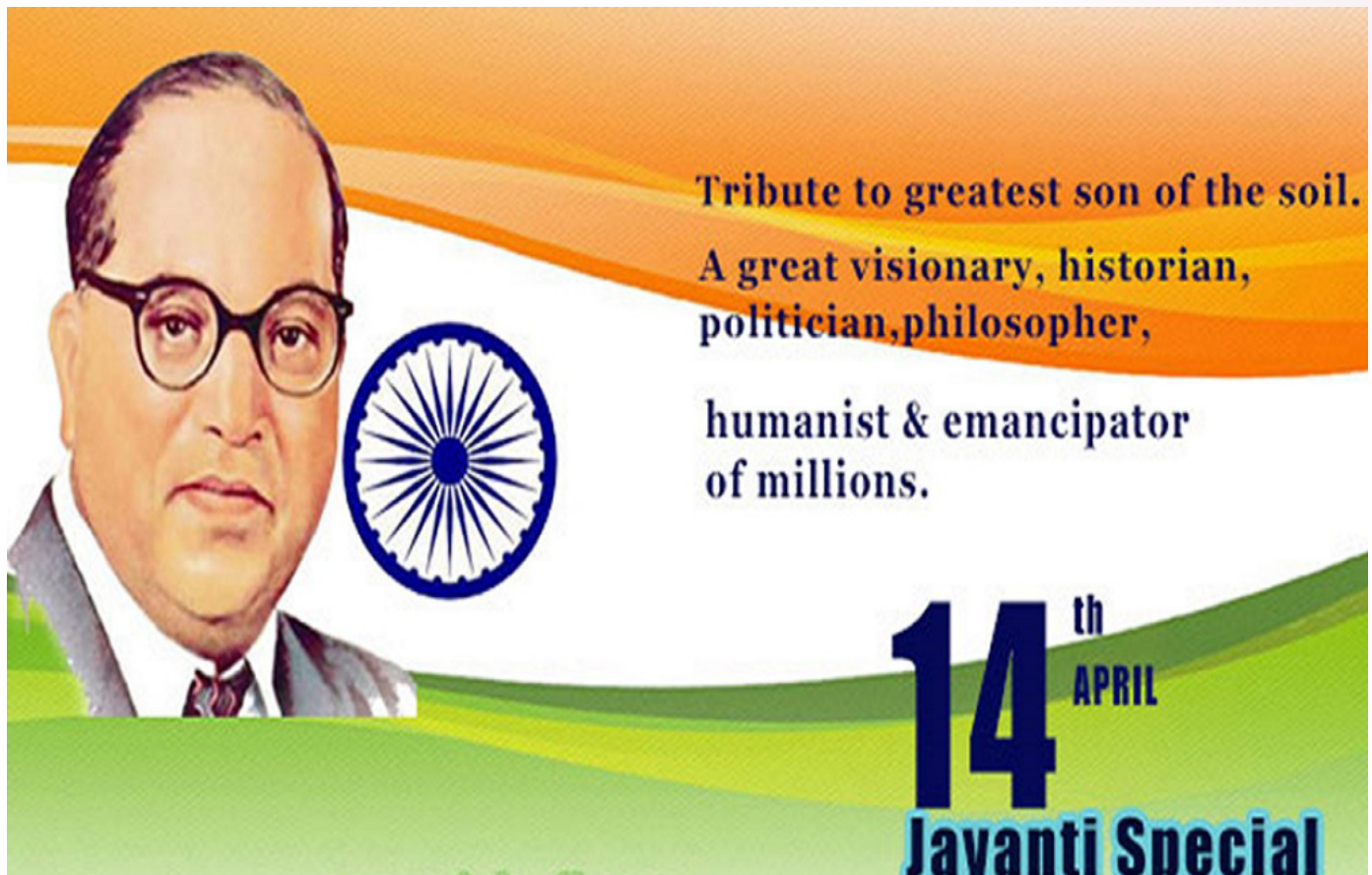
Author: Mitchell Grant
Source Courtesy: https://www.investopedia.com

Dr. B.R. Amebdkar Was A Staunch Nationalist

Unfortunately, the varied facets of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar are still not adequately known to the present generation. More than anything else, he was a staunch Nationalist, who was constantly worried about the future of the Country. Here is a portion of his concluding speech delivered in the Constitutent Assembly on 25th November 1949, while finalising the Indian Constitution, which came into existence the next day, i.e on 26th November.

".......... Here I could have ended. But my mind is so full of the future of our Country that I ought to take this occasion to give expression to some of my reflections thereon. On 26 January 1950, India will be an Independent Country. (Cheers) What would happen to her Independence? Will she maintain her Independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence

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she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only has India once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people. In the invasion of Sind by Mahommed-Bin-Kasim, the military commanders of King Dahar accepted bribes from the agents of Mahommed-Bin-Kasim and refused to fight on the side of their King. It was Jaichand who invited Mahommed Ghori to invade India and fight against Prithvi Raj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki Kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of Hindus, the other Maratha noblemen and the Rajput Kings were fighting the battle on the side of the Moghul Emperors. When the British were trying to destroy the Sikh Rulers, Gulab Singh, their principal Commander, sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857, when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, some stood and

watched the event as silent spectators. Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety".

Persons belonging to the present generation, would do well to read the above speech of DR. B.R. Ambedkar, delivered in our Constitutent Assembly on 25th November 1949.

Dr. H.V. Hande

Former Health Minister of Government of Tamilnadu. Founder& Director of Hande Hospital.

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Collective hypocrisy or selective bias: Why Indian media reports the way it does?

As an avid news reader, I start my day by going through newspapers around the globe spending the most time reading online editions of Indian newspapers and news magazines.

Every passing year this timeshare has dwindled for good reasons. Rising instances of biased news have meant that rational Indian citizens rely lesser and lesser on the mainstream media for their individual decision-making.

The separation between writing and advertising has blurred. Yet many still expect the newspapers to do the immense amount of thinking for their part.

Just like governance was sourced to our elected representatives and selected babudom, we voluntarily agreed to let media help us with abstruse issues ranging from economy to national security and use that information to make an opinion and electoral choices.

And its not just common citizens. Be it government reports or court pronouncements, many of our highest policy interventions and judicial decisions make use of media reporting. Indian courts and statutory bodies like the National Commission for Women and National Human Rights Commission regularly take suo motu cognisance of news reporting.

Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech (which covers news reporting and subjected to reasonable restorations defined under Article 19–2). Press freedom in India cannot be correctly measured by laughable and flawed rankings like those coming from World Press Freedom Index that ranks India at 138th out of 180 countries behind nations like Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. Media intimidation is surely a reality but a threat faced mostly by local reporters based in smaller towns and mining areas where a murder of journalists rarely manages to draw wider attention on the issue.

Particularly since 2014, I observe a growing trend of selective bias in media reporting by major Indian newspapers. The claim of gross media bias in reporting is now a fact accepted by a majority

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of journalists and citizens alike even when they disagree on factors and forms of this bias.

While instances of media bias are nothing new (going back to good old Doordarshan that was regularly used as a propaganda tool by PM Indira and son Sanjay), it has now stretched far beyond the tolerable limits.

Changing Media landscape

Press freedom in India is vastly protected and is only threatened by the ever-growing nexus between politicians and corrupt publishers.

India is home to one of the biggest and rapidly expanding media industry in the world that is also a major source of employment. A career in journalism requiring no minimum qualification has opened doors to engineers, diplomats, doctors and lawyers alike. There happen to be over 100,000 publications

registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India in a country that is deemed to be the second largest newspaper market in the world.

According to the Indian Readership Survey, 39% of Indians "read" newspapers with growing readership volume. Most of this circulation is dominated by regional languages lead by Hindi (38%) and followed by English at 16%. Hindi and English newspapers together make more than half of the total circulation. But when it comes to their influence, that's a different story. Blame it on colonialism or social attitude, it is the English 'elite media' that has the most influence on politics and culture. This has effectively surged with "corporatisation" of journalism and interference of political appointees in the editorial boards of the major newspapers.

When I say "major Indian newspapers" I refer to the big 4 of the Indian media — The Times of India,

Indian Express, Hindustan Times and The Hindu. Together these 4 newspapers set the narrative and the course of the political debate on a daily basis. In the last 4 years, we have also witnessed a rapid expansion of a number of online media outlets be it Scroll, Swarajya or HuffingtonPost India or the latest additions like 'The Print'. Most of these are mere smartphone friendly and attractively packaged spinoffs from the media barons who were in the past associated with the big 4 of the India media.

Beside this, we have the powerful and influential electronic media with strong domestic viewership. Indian media space is now effectively controlled by this electronic media with a pronounced set of political affiliations. Thanks to massive investment from corporate players, electronic media is the battleground for political and electoral debates. While until 2014, Indian electronic media space was completely dominated by Congress backed media houses like NDTV, it is no more the case anymore.

The emergence of news outlets like Republic TV and Times Now (part of Times Group) have helped increase the plurality in news reporting while older players like NDTV now devoid of political patronage are finally facing the law for tax frauds. Here one has to be mindful of the fact that the majority of the players in electronic media are owned by the same publishing groups that own the mainstream media in India. But the bias in news reporting can neither be driven out by competition from a rival news agency nor by media with an opposing bias.

Those who expected the growing media competition to correct this bias problem have been proved wrong. Market competition has failed to check the expansion of media bias and sponsored news content.

And then there are the vastly resourceful foreign media players like the New York Times, The Washington Post and The Guardian that hold substantial power in terms of leading a 'global discourse' about the India story. It is this foreign media that works as the window to India for foreign investors, tourists and even governments. Most of the Indian mainstream newspaper also source their reporting from American and international publishers. No wonder, the Indian government is far more sensitive and responsive to their reporting compared to local language media with far greater readership among the electorates.

Where's the bias?

Now that we have a background, let me come back to the issue that troubles me.

Has the India media really become more biased than in the past?

Unlike in the past when sections of India media could be identified with their ideological affiliations, the current Indian media suffers from a political affiliation that is undermining the freedom of the press and fair reporting. Headlines in mainstream media have seen a surge in connecting every incident of law and order breakdown to the office of the Prime Minister and a failure of the BJP current government in its first term. That's not to say that there is no bias in favour of the ruling BJP. Surely there is, but it is too minuscule when compared to a dominant narrative that favours the Congress-Communist alliance. This is most evident when one looks at the reporting of violent incidents, crimes, and recent political scandals.

An organised attempt to paint India as a land of rampant caste discrimination and communal hate, riots, rapes and "intolerance" has been the key narrative in the last 4 years. But here too, the "big 4" of the Indian media selectively pinpoint cases to suit this set narrative.

As such, certain rape cases in one part of India leads to a national outrage while others are cornered. A custodial death in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao is a national headline while the brutal killing of a youth in custody of Kerala is sidelined. The coverage of Islamic terrorism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is regularly presented as a problem of dialogue and integration. Death of a Muslim man in a train seat dispute is bracketed as a "lynching by Hindu mob" but a crowd of thousands of violent Muslim men is referred to as "stone-pelters".

In the last two years, many sections in the social media have questioned headlines that refer to the religion of the victim or the perpetrator. While such headlines would be termed grossly communal in any civilised society, somehow it is a communal issue for Indian media only in cases where highlighted perpetrators are from a Muslim background. Whether an incident is a law and

order problem, riot, communal violence, lynching or hate crime is conveniently decided, declared and dumped as a sensational headline.

Similarly, reaching out to business interests of BJP President Amit Shah's family is heralded as an investigative endeavour but questioning or for that matter even covering 'secret' foreign trips of Sonia Gandhi is absent. While we regularly come across the coverage of PM Modi's family in various forms, reaching out to the family of Congress President Rahul Gandhi is out of the question and presumed to be in violation of privacy.

Outfits like RSS are questioned on an almost daily basis while highly deplorable fatwas issued by Islamic seminaries or secessionist speeches coming from religious leadership among the Islamic community or outfits like AIMPLB are a non-issue. Drawing cartoons of Sita-Ram to poke fun on certain view is celebrated and "retweeted" by celebrity journalists who will never dare to do the same using caricature of Muhammed. This is nothing but bias wrapped around hypocrisy at best!

Some in social media has referred to this as the "big media bias".

A closer look into the ownership pattern and editorial control lead us to interesting findings. Thanks to reforms in our electoral system, we are updated on the background and assets of our political representatives who are required to file a sworn affidavit at the time of elections. But it is not the case for media barons who run the media enterprise of India. A handful of families and individuals that today own the entire mainstream media are not a creation of yesterday. They acquired their holdings by openly supporting political elites like Nehru-Gandhi family for years. As of today, the Indian Express is managed by its chief editor Raj Kamal Jha. Mr. Jha who is a vocal critic of Indian PM Modi also happens to be the cousin of a national spokesperson for the Congress Party. But this is just a tip of the iceberg.

Hindi and English newspapers still remain the most important source of news and information in India

An influential consulting Editor and political commentator at The Indian Express is the wife of senior Indian Communist leader Sitaram Yechury. Perhaps a coincidence of sorts? Another member of the big-4 is Hindustan Times group that publishes the Hindustan Times newspaper. Shobhana Bhartia who comes from the illustrious Birla family inherited the post of chairperson and editorial director of the Hindustan Times Group from her father. The close links between the Nehru-Gandhi family and Birla go way back in time. Within a year of UPA coming to power, Shobhana Bhartia was awarded Padma Shri by Sonia-Manmohan government (besides other pro-Congress media names like Rajdeep Sardesai and Barkha Dutt). The following year, she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Beside these two newspapers,.

The Hindu and Times of India are equally vocal about their affiliations. The Hindu is owned by N Ram who enjoys close links with the Chinese communist party to the extent that her daughter earned the privilege of spending a year in China "teaching English". Malini Parthasarathy is a former editor of The Hindu and its current co-chairperson of the Group. She is a close friend of Sonia Gandhi and never miss an opportunity to eulogise her leadership. As for the 'Times of India' under Vineet Jain, they seemed to have gained from everyone in power and masterfully use the craft of a balanced bias. The extent to which Times of India and its sister publications compromised its journalism during the last Uttar Pradesh Assembly election coincided with the opening of its private university (Bennett University) in UP that was completed with an active backing from former CM Akhilesh Yadav.

Most of the challenge to this Congress favoured bias in mainstream English print media comes from the electronic media where likes of Zee News and India TV are seen as pro-BJP media outlets. But they do not enjoy the grasp on the narrative which is securely restricted with the big four as for now.

All this has huge implications on how Indian media is perceived by the general masses. Many journalists have used their connections to launch a political connection. While there is no bar to that, a compromise on fair and balanced reporting has made the Indian media as one of the least trusted institutions in the country.

This crisis of credibility has vastly undermined the political discourse in the country. There has been a surge in defamation cases against the journalists and increased instances of murdering investigative journalists. There is an ongoing demand for a minimum media regulation but every such initiative comes with political undertones amid claims to compromise the independence of the press.

But surely our media and journalism are compromised when politically aligned names like Shekhar Gupta or Rajdeep Sardesai turn out to be its most influential voices. The lack of marginalised and backward Hindu communities in the powerful positions of Indian media is a major cause of concern for media's credibility. There is a clear class basis in the editorial boards of English media that favours the privileged convent educated and foreign returned kith and kin of bureaucrats, politicians and "eminent intellectuals".

A leading journalist like Barkha Dutt who was named and much maligned in the 2010 Nira Radia Tapes Scandal continues to enjoy much

fanfare among the national and global media. The then government in power and the mainstream media closed its eyes to the scandal and no public probe on the lines of Leveson Inquiry was ever commissioned.

This absolute disdain for any sense of accountability among media professionals is the new norm. Surely this compromises the effective voice of media in shaping public opinion and reduces it to mere propaganda tool for the political masters. The issue is further complicated by poor editing standard, deplorable quality control, and inaccurate reporting. The expansion of "Fake News" has strengthened in India and vastly helped by the political class that see it as an opportunity for electoral gains. A compromised Indian media has no qualms in putting narrative over facts and regularly misquoting statements under the garb of translation.

Media bias can have a variety of sources. While a small part of this bias can be blamed on professional laxity and lack of editorial supervision, much of this comes from a selective-bias of the media barons.

It can be well distinguished when one looks at the use of terminologies. So whether a victim of a violent crime is identified by his age, caste, religion or geographical location is adapted as per the narrative. This bias originates with journalists having a preference for news reports that fit into a form that can help construct outrage. Editors and publishers tolerate this bias since it provides political patronage and helps increase profits through election advertising in a nation that is perpetually on an election trail.

Guardians, Gatekeepers or Cheerleaders?

Our free press is presumed to be one of the great achievements of India's thriving democracy. Perhaps right next to our comparatively independent judiciary. The conscience of a journalist is as much a guardian of our democracy as that is the valour of armed forces and prudence of a judge. Media can no longer claim to be the shield against the sword of authoritarianism when it deliberately and systematically suppresses facts in lieu of a political compromise by some senior editors.

As it stands today, dominant sections of Indian media is selectively picking news reports to attack the chosen target. The conversion of media space into an 'information industry' is worst impacted when journalist become henchmen of a political party in desperation for relevance as happened in the amplified media coverage of Justice Loya case. A deliberate attempt to misinform the Indian public and attack democratic institutions like judiciary is part of this trend.

It is for the wider Indian media and journalists to stand against this selective bias or otherwise accept their complicity in collective hypocrisy. While it is the discretion of the editors alone to decide which news has to be covered or probed and to what extent, ignoring news of equal magnitude because it does not suit the editorial agenda cannot be accepted. In this age of social media (that has

emerged as the antithesis to this selective bias), no newspaper can get away with inaccurate reporting of facts.

As India heads towards its 2019 general elections, these issues gain urgent attention. Media will be the platform for debate on the performance of Modi led BJP government and questioning the government on its many shortcomings.

There is a growing demand for a US Presidential style debate among Prime Minister Contenders or leaders of major political parties. But can the Indian media barons be trusted with this rather crucial task? I have serious reservations about that.

We have seen how easy it was for despotic Erdogan regime in Turkey to shut down the voice of media once media lost credibility among the voters. Congress government of Indira Gandhi had censored media in the past and later her son Rajiv Gandhi came close to doing that.

Though an uphill task, the only solution ahead for the Indian media is to pledge itself towards a course correction and point down those compromising journalistic ethics in newsrooms or opinion pages and bringing disrepute to the profession. The lobby of big publishers is very strong and shall surely resist this any such effort coming from the media industry.

The publishers directly gain when peddling "paid propaganda" disguised as news in favour of politicians and as such will be quick to deter any effort for increased transparency by making overused claims of "attack on media". Media bodies like Editors Guild of India lack national representation and have members with an active political role and open affiliations with political parties. The primary objective of this organisation is now attacking any opinion that dare takes upon the big media bias. The complaint mechanism under the statutory Press Council of India has fallen short of its objective. As such, there is a greater responsibility on part of the readers who must develop a culture of scrutiny of the press by demanding bigger say to reader feedback on published news.

Re-claiming the fourth pillar

The government must step in as well where needed by creating and updating institutions for self-regulation and penalising propaganda coming from headlines to incite communal hate. Our constitution has tasked the state for the protection of free speech and strengthen the constitutional guarantees of an independent media. The cases where news reporting is in violation of the law of the land including instances of publishing name or pictures of a dead minor should be penalised in strictest forms.

The role of media in a democracy is informing the public about issues with fairness and accuracy using objective and factual reporting. This is not the case among the mainstream media of India which is ideologically biased and politically aligned. News reporting has become opinion-mongering by celebrity journalists with their western rooted ideas on liberalism and tolerance delivered with conscious and intelligent manipulation. We can not let the Indian media be managed by proprietors running profit-maximising news organisations. They have turned our newspapers into real estate advertising pamphlets and this must be resisted.

The freedom, independence, and pluralism of the Indian media are at stake.
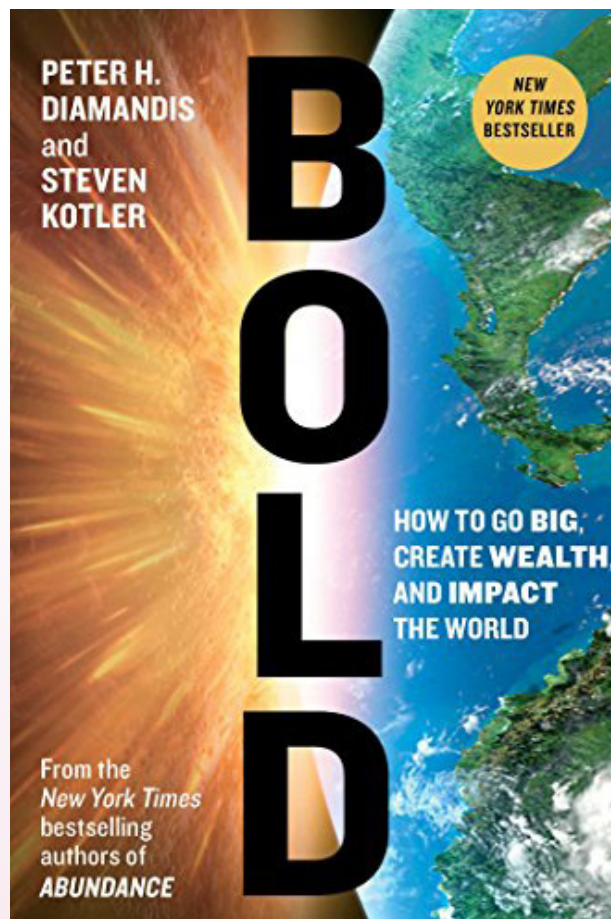
Author: Mr.Ravi Kant
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BOLD

By

PETER H. DIAMANDIS & STEVEN KOTLER

USA Former President Bill Clinton has praised this book- BOLD- as a visionary road map for people who believe they can change the world- and offers invaluable advice about bringing together the partners and technologies to help them do it.

This book is published by Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

Authors- Peter H Diamandis is from Santa Monica California and Steven Kotler is from Chimayo New Maxico.

For Whom this Book?

This is for today's exponential entrepreneur, any one interested in going big, creating wealth and impacting the world. It is about seriously improving your abilities.

This book inspires the reader to get off the couch and change the world.

BOLD unfolds in three Parts-

Part I focuses on the exponential technologies which are disrupting today's Fortune 500 and enabling upstart entrepreneurs to go faster in their efforts to run a billion dollar company.

Six Ds of Exponentials-

Digitalization

Deception

Disruption

Demonetization

Dematerialization and

Democratization.

Thus Part I of BOLD talks of Technologies.

Vision is the core mental trait of great business leaders like Steve Jobs, Sam Walton, Jack Welch, Bill Gates, Walt Disney and JP Morgan.
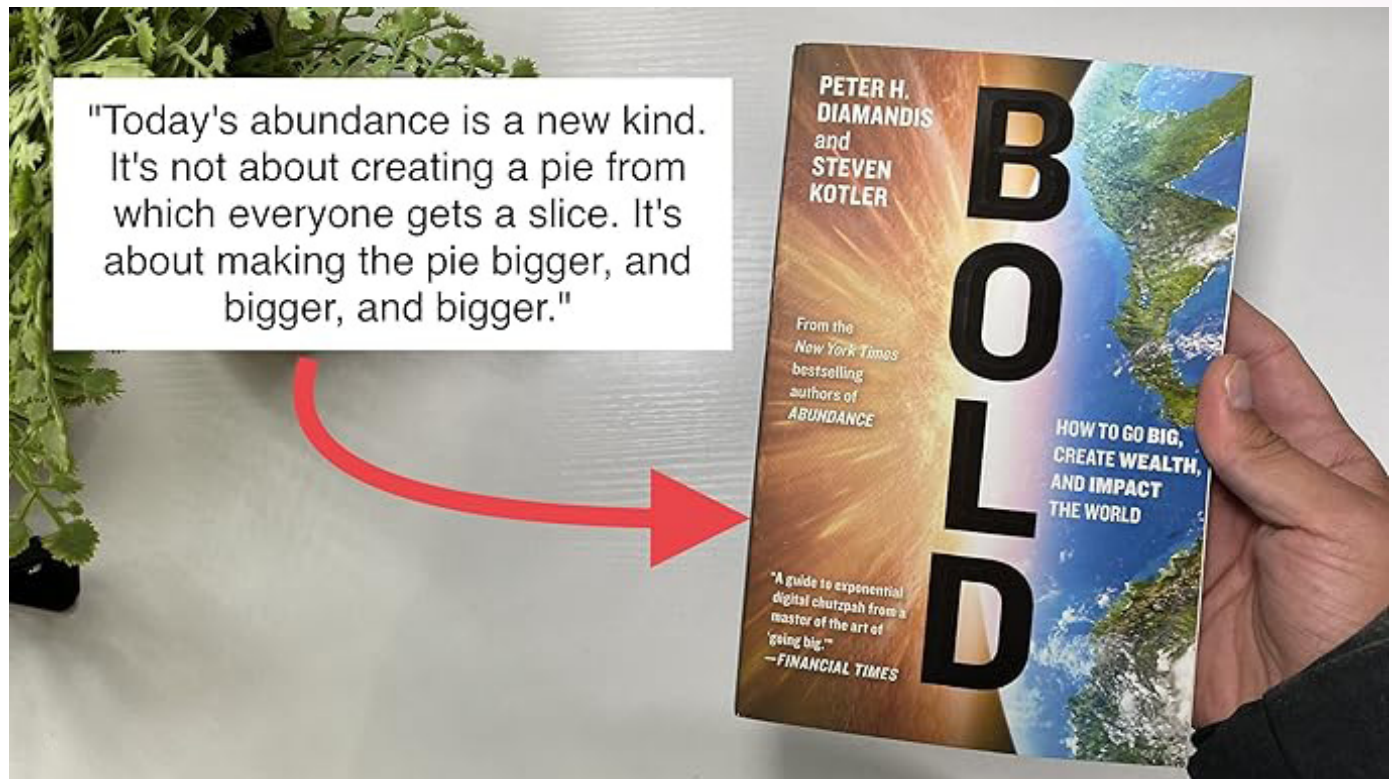
Part II focuses on the psychology of BOLD and includes detailed advice from technology Gurus such as Larry Page, Elon Musk, Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos.

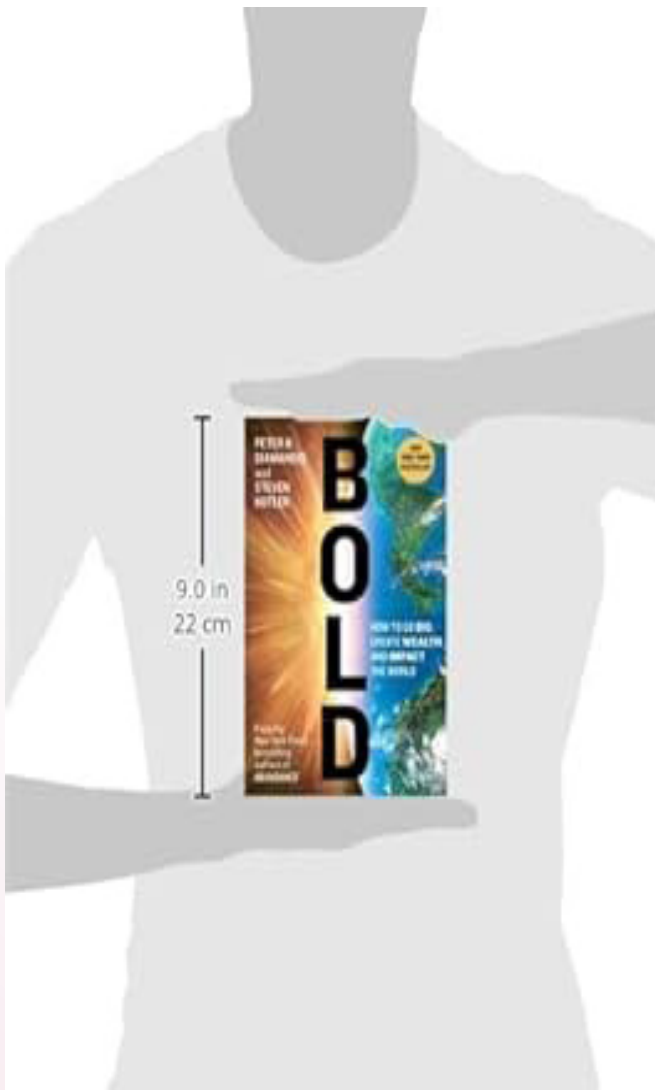Google's Eight Innovation Principles-

Focus on the User.

Share Everything

Look for ideas Everywhere

"Today's abundance is a new kind. It's not about creating a pie from which everyone gets a slice. It's about making the pie bigger, and bigger, and bigger."

PETER H. DIAMANDIS and STEVEN KOTLER

BOLD

From the New York Times bestselling authors of ABUNDANCE

HOW TO GO BIG, CREATE WEALTH, AND IMPACT THE WORLD

"A guide to exponential digital chutzpah from a master of the art of 'going big.'" —FINANCIAL TIMES

The first one deals with some of the best practices of crowd sourcing-

Do your research

Just get busy

Turn to the Message Boards

Establish contact & be specific

Prepare your data set

Qualify your workers

Define clear, simple and specific roles

Communicate clearly, in detail & often.

The second tool is-

Where we are going next- the incredible innovation accelerator & community building strategy.

Thus this book BOLD is a radical, how to guide for using exponential technologies and crowd-powered tools to create wealth while also positively impacting the lives of billions.

Think Big but Start Small

Never fail to fail

Spark with imagination, Fuel with Data

Be a Platform and

Have a Mission that matters.

Part III closes the book with a look at the incredible power that allows any one to leverage today's hyper-connected crowd like never before.

This Part deals with two of the exponential crowd sourcing tools-

R. Venugopal

Mr. Venugopal has served in LIC of India from 1968 to 2006 for 38 years and retired as an Executive Director.

AI's Pivotal Role in the 2024 Indian Elections: A Double-Edged Sword

The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI in the political sphere is reshaping not just the strategy but also the very fabric of Indian elections. As India stands on the cusp of crucial electoral battles, understanding and navigating the implications of these technologies becomes pivotal.

Introduction

As India, the world's largest democracy, gears up for its 2024 general elections, an unexpected player is poised to take center stage: artificial intelligence (AI). With its ability to process vast amounts of

data, personalize messaging, and even generate convincing fake content, AI has the potential to revolutionize electoral campaigns—for better and for worse. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the fabric of Indian electoral politics marks a revolutionary shift in how campaigns are conducted, how voters are engaged, and the overall democratic process. The upcoming 2024 Indian general elections serve as a pivotal arena for AI's influence, showcasing both its remarkable potential for fostering engagement and its risks for manipulation and misinformation. This article will explore how AI is being leveraged by political parties, the risks of misuse, and the steps being taken to ensure the integrity of the democratic process.

Embracing AI for Electoral Advantage

Forward-thinking political strategists recognize AI as a game-changer. Machine learning algorithms can analyze troves of demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data to micro-target voters with tailored messages . AI-powered chatbots can engage citizens 24/7, answering queries and gathering valuable data. Computer vision can identify voter sentiment from social media images. The BJP, India's ruling party, has been an early adopter, using AI to personalize hundreds of thousands of emails and SMSes in the 2019 elections.

Political entities in India are increasingly capitalizing on AI's data-processing prowess for micro-targeting voters with personalized messaging. This precision in voter outreach allows parties to convey tailored messages that resonate with individual voters' preferences and concerns. AI-powered tools like chatbots offer real-time engagement, broadening the interface between political campaigns and the electorate. Moreover, predictive analytics facilitate a more strategic allocation of campaign resources by forecasting voter behavior and electoral outcomes with significant accuracy.

"AI enables an unprecedented level of personalized outreach," says Priya Shah, a political data analyst. "By understanding each voter's unique needs and beliefs, campaigns can forge deeper connections and mobilize supporters more effectively than ever before."

One example of this targeted approach is the Congress party's 'Shakti' app, which uses AI to match volunteers with tasks based on their location, interests, and skills. By optimizing resource allocation, the app helped the party make significant gains in the 2019 state elections.

AI is also being used to predict voter behavior and simulate electoral outcomes. Predictive models, fed with historical voting data, polling, and real-time social media sentiment, can forecast results with increasing accuracy. This allows parties to strategically focus their efforts on swing states and undecided voters.

The Specter of Manipulation and Misinformation

Despite its transformative potential, AI's capacity for generating and spreading fake news, doctored images, and deepfakes poses grave threats to the electoral integrity and democratic fabric of India. The creation of synthetic media that can convincingly impersonate public figures to disseminate false narratives threatens to undermine the trust in democratic institutions and distort the electoral process. Furthermore, the echo chambers and filter bubbles amplified by AI algorithms can

exacerbate political divides, limiting voters' exposure to diverse viewpoints and critical discourse.

AI's power to persuade can be misused. Bad actors could deploy AI to generate and spread fake news, doctored images, and deepfake videos to deceive and polarize the electorate. A recent study by the Oxford Internet Institute found that computational propaganda, including AI-generated content, is on the rise globally.

Deepfakes, AI-generated synthetic media that can make anyone appear to say or do anything, pose a particular threat. In 2019, a deepfake video of Indian journalist Rana Ayyub went viral, showing her making inflammatory statements she never actually made. While the video was debunked, it demonstrates the potential for deepfakes to be weaponized against not just candidates, but anyone in the public eye.

"A well-timed deepfake, released days before the election, could swing the results before the truth comes out," cautions Anika Gupta, a cybersecurity expert. "And with the increasing sophistication of the technology, it's getting harder to tell what's real and what's fake."

AI-generated text is another concern. Large language models like GPT-4 can churn out human-like prose at scale, enabling the mass-production of misleading articles, comments, and social media posts. By flooding the information ecosystem with synthetic content, bad actors can drown out genuine discourse and manipulate public opinion.

Ensuring Election Integrity in the Age of AI

To their credit, Indian authorities recognize the challenges posed by AI. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has established a committee to recommend guidelines for AI's responsible use in elections. They are exploring AI-powered tools to detect deepfakes and trace sources of disinformation.

The ECI has also partnered with social media platforms to establish a 'Voluntary Code of Ethics' for the 2024 elections. The code includes provisions for transparency in political advertising, prompt action on reported violations, and the appointment of dedicated grievance officers.

"We're committed to working with the ECI to ensure a free and fair election," says Amit Jain, Facebook's Director of Public Policy for India. "By combining our AI capabilities with the Commission's expertise, we can create a more secure and transparent electoral environment."

However, some experts worry that voluntary measures aren't enough. "Self-regulation has proven inadequate," argues Mihir Desai, a social media researcher. "We need a robust legal framework to hold platforms accountable and deter bad actors."

Promoting AI and Media Literacy

Combating AI-powered misinformation isn't just the responsibility of authorities and platforms. Experts stress the importance of promoting AI and media literacy among Indian citizens. By understanding how AI can be used to manipulate information, voters can be more discerning consumers of political content.

The government of India is taking steps in this direction. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in India, has launched a 'Digital Literacy Library' with resources on identifying fake news and online scams. The National Council of Educational Research and Training in India is updating school curricula to include lessons on responsible digital citizenship.

Civil society organizations in India are also playing a key role. The Digital Empowerment Foundation has trained over 15,000 'Digital Sathis' (Digital Companions) to help rural communities navigate the online world safely. Fact-checking initiatives like Alt News and Boom Live are using AI to debunk viral hoaxes and educate readers on media literacy.

The Road Ahead

As the 2024 elections approach, one thing is clear: AI will play a pivotal role, for good and for ill. Much will depend on the actions taken by stakeholders in the coming months. Will political parties use AI responsibly, or will they succumb to the temptation of manipulation? Will authorities strike the right balance between regulation and free speech? And will citizens rise to the challenge of navigating a hyper-personalized, post-truth information landscape?

"The 2024 elections may be a trial by fire for Indian democracy in the age of AI," reflects Arjun Reddy, a digital rights activist. "But with the right mix of innovation, vigilance, and civic engagement, I believe we can harness AI to strengthen rather than undermine our democratic values. It won't be easy, but the stakes couldn't be higher."

Only one thing is certain: the road to India 2024 runs through an algorithmic minefield. How India navigates it may well define the future of democracy in the 21st century for the entire world. It is up to the Citizens of India to stay informed, engaged, and ever vigilant.

For in an age of AI-powered persuasion, the price of liberty is eternal skepticism.

Source Courtesy: https://www.linkedin.com

Harsha Srivatsa

I help visionary companies build standout products | Technical Product Leader, Data Architect, Tech Bricoleur | Expertise in AI, IoT, Data, Innovation, Systems Thinking | Worked @Apple, Accenture, AT&T, Verizon, Startups