

SAMAGRA VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: THE IMPERATIVE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN INDIA'S QUEST FOR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The country is speaking of being Viksit or Developed by 2047, and when it comes to the development then there are various aspects which can be used to monitor and evaluate the growth. Parameters such as socio-environmental and economic mainly. This paper explores one of the key factors which determines the level of growth and development of a nation i.e. its press freedom. It also explores the impact of freedom of the press of a nation on its economic, social, and environmental indicators. The methodology used is using secondary data such as research reports and previous research to find the impact of press freedom on various factors such as economic growth, happiness index and human development index, environmental sustainability, improved governance, enhancing accountability and transparency which contributes to the overall development of society. This study also explores the status of press freedom in India and its changing place in the global arena. To validate the result this research also utilizes secondary data from 21 countries to explore the association between press freedom and various indices: GDP per capita, the Happiness Index, the Health Index, the Education Index, and the Human Development Index. The results reveal the deteriorating conditions of press freedom in India in comparison to other countries. The results reveal a weak correlation between the press freedom index and GDP per capita and education, a moderate correlation with happiness and health, and a strong correlation with the Human Development Index. The study concludes that achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat:2047 is contingent upon prioritizing press freedom, as it is a crucial aspect of development. Moreover, press freedom not only has individual effects but also influences other development indicators. Thus, for holistic

development and the realization of a Samagra Viksit Bharat, supporting a free press in the nation is imperative.

INTRODUCTION

A messenger should not be killed according to the principles of righteousness, O best of kings (Mahabharata)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched "Viksit Bharat 2047" in December 2021 (Mahida, 2024). Aiming to make India a developed nation by its 100th Independence Day. This ambitious plan prioritizes economic growth, social progress, environmental well-being, and strong governance. As previously mentioned, the term "Viksit" denotes the process of growth and progress. What does development involve? In addition to economic prosperity and technological innovation, it requires efficient governance and administration, transparency, adherence to ethical standards, and accountability. Indicators of development can be economic, social, or economic (Dalevska, Khobta, Kwilinski, & Kravchenko, 2019). Economic indicators usually used are Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Unemployment rates. Social indicators can be the Human Development Index (HDI), Literacy Rate, and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). Environmental Indicators can be Environmental Sustainability Indicators and Access to Clean Water and Sanitation. At most of the economic and technological parameters, India is showing growth, but still, there are areas where India needs to work.

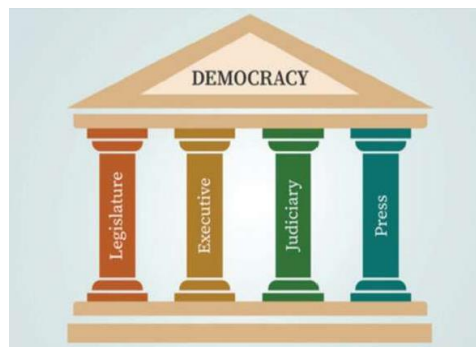


Figure: Four key pillars of democracy. Image Source

(<https://medium.com/@pratikgsalvi03/four-pillars-one-ruler-the-crushing-grip-of-power-on-indian-democracy-4e7e0943ed7b>)

India's high growth is of no use without the proper integration of democracy as without that it would be like China showing high growth without fulfilling the aspect of freedom. There are four pillars of democracy, the press being the most important. The first one is the Legislature which makes laws, represents citizens, and debates the policies of the nation. The next is the Executive which implements laws, leads government, and enforces decisions. The third one is the Judiciary which interprets laws, ensures justice, and protects rights. The last and most important is the Press which informs the public, checks power, and fosters accountability (Ukka, 2019). The press, as the most important among them all, plays a pivotal role in informing the public, shaping opinions, and promoting transparency. It holds power accountable, exposes corruption, amplifies voices, and monitors governance while also investigating wrongdoing, thereby cultivating awareness, and facilitating debate within society.

Press freedom is the unrestricted ability of media outlets to operate independently, report news

without censorship or external interference, and hold power accountable (Lebovic, 2016).

Becker, Vlad, & Nusser (2007) examined four key media freedom measures by “Freedom House”, “Reporters sans frontières”, “IREX”, and the “Committee to Protect Journalists”, for promoting press freedom through combating censorship worldwide, advocating transparency, and promoting safety to reporters.

Table 1: Examples of Media changing the fate of countries

Year	Country	Governme t Overthrown	Media Influence
1972	USA	Richard Nixon	Media investigation of the Watergate scandal led
Year	Country	Government Overthrown	Media Influence
			to resignation (Feldstein, 2004).
1977	India	Indira Gandhi	Media coverage of emergencies and public discontent (Jaffrelot& Anil, 2021).
1989	Pakistan	Zia-ul-Haq	The press played a key role in exposing human rights abuses (Hussain, 1994).
2014	India	Manmohan Singh	Media scrutiny of corruption scandals influenced election results (Vasudevan, 2017).
2017	Pakistan	Nawaz Sharif	Media investigations into the Panama Papers led to resignation (Gohar, Khan, &Noareen, 2022).

Media's investigative efforts unearthed scandals, compelling high-profile resignations and reshaping political landscapes in various countries, as evident from the table.

The importance of press freedom exceeds that of economic growth in a country, both in terms of the methods used to achieve it and the fundamental reasoning behind it. For ensuring the protection and preservation of democracy, the freedom of the press is important. It ensures transparency and accountability in government, which is essential for the effective operation of a democratic system. Furthermore, it enables the revelation of violations of human rights, thus fostering the advancement of justice and societal development. Public awareness is cultivated through the dissemination of crucial information, enabling citizens to make informed decisions. Having a watchdog is essential in any country as it plays a vital role in combating corruption by uncovering corrupt practices and promoting ethical conduct in public institutions. Holding complete authority over the media can potentially lead to the formation of a dictatorship or anarchy. An independent and unrestricted media can establish mechanisms to verify and control the exercise of power, thus safeguarding against the rise of authoritarianism and misuse of power, Table 1, explains the examples of how media

changes the fate of countries.

In a country, the economy should not be the only priority; social transformation is equally important or more important in fact. The media plays a vital role in accelerating this change. It fosters dialogues on social matters, enhancing the probability of constructive societal transformation and reforms. Freedom of the press improves a nation's international standing, thus enticing faith in the country and hence foreign investments.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess India's declining press freedom rank by Reporters Without Borders.
- To examine journalist fatalities in India compared to global conflicts.
- To investigate correlations between press freedom and key development indicators.
- To evaluate the impact of press freedom on economic, health, and happiness indices.
- To review the literature on press freedom's influence on the economy, governance, and environment.

The introduction is followed by the literature review, where the impact of press freedom is showcased on transparency, accountability, economic growth, and social development through various past studies. It is followed by the section research methodology which describes the process and design of the study. Followed by the discussion where the findings of the study are interpreted and analysed. In the end, the conclusion and policy implication chapter concludes that press freedom leads to sustainable development. Recommendations for strengthening legal safeguards for journalists, promoting media pluralism, and investing in media literacy to ensure a free and secure media environment are made in the end.

LITERATURE REVIEW

India's development growth is possible only through the smooth conduct of all the pillars of democracy, particularly and most importantly the press (Heller, 2012). The press keeps all other institutions in check and maintains a balance. A robust democracy not only ensures the opportunity for political representation and a say for all but also facilitates transparency and accountability in governance, which is crucial for the nation's sustainable long-term development (Mohammadi, Boccia, & Tohidi, 2023). The press acts as a regulator, uncovering corruption, advocating for the citizens' rights, and providing a platform for diverse voices to be heard and informing and updating them with correct information at right time (Norris, 2009). Studies have shown that a free press associates significantly and positively with economic growth and social development, as it exposes inefficiencies in the system and encourages significant and necessary reforms required (DellaVigna & La Ferrara, 2015; Brunetti & Weder, 2003). For instance, investigative or watchdog journalism in India in the past has shed light on significant issues regarding the concerns in governance to environmental degradation, prompting policy interventions and societal mobilization (Chatterjee, 2011). Moreover, the press and media play a vital role in holding and maintaining different power structures intact, accountable, and answerable, thereby fostering citizens' trust in the institutions, and promoting good governance (Akhtar, Malla, & Gregson, 2000). The media's ability to scrutinize policies and actions enhances public participation in the decision-making processes, contributing to a more inclusive, accountable, and responsive governance framework with less corruption (Norris, 2009).

Historical examples such as the Watergate scandal and the Panama Papers underscore the profound impact and consequences of media on the government's accountability and

societal change (Tumber & Waisbord, 2019). The Watergate scandal, investigated by journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, revealed the extent of political corruption within the Nixon administration, ultimately leading to its conclusion in the form of the President's resignation (Morgan, 1996). Similarly, the Panama Papers leak, spearheaded by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), exposed global tax evasion and money laundering schemes involving high-profile figures around the globe (Haines, 2016). The extensive media coverage of this scandal prompted widespread public outrage, triggering investigations and reforms across jurisdictions (Toms, 2019). Such instances highlight the indispensable role of a free and independent press in safeguarding democracy and promoting societal progress.

The current state of press freedom in India is subject to scrutiny, with concerns raised about increasing censorship, intimidation of journalists, and threats to media pluralism (Chadha, 2022). The media has been currently divided into two distinct narratives and categories: "Godi Media" and "Anti-national Media." Corporate control over the major media is not just India's but a global issue, narratives can be controlled by a few billionaires (Sen, 2023, January 6). The future of media is shifting towards YouTube and freelance journalism as traditional media corporate monopolization (Faleiro, 2023, December 19).

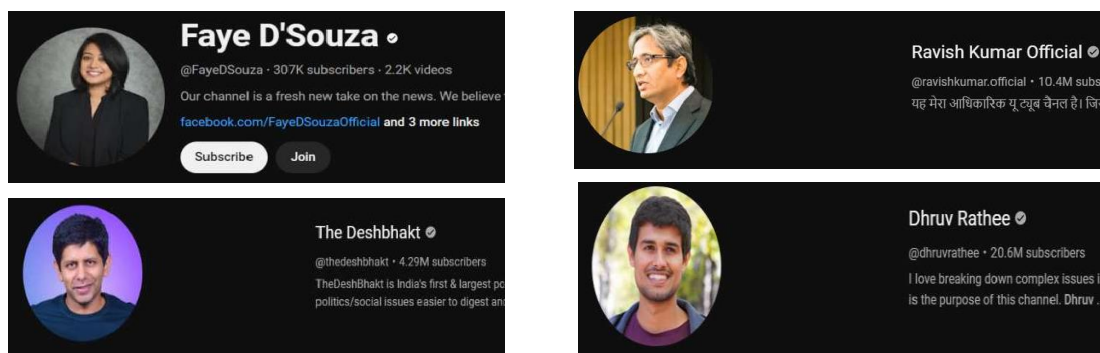


Figure: Several journalists exclusively use social media and are not affiliated with any mainstream media outlets.

Paranjoy Guha Thakurta: I personally believe that media freedom today is under greater threat than ever before, certainly since the mid-1970s. To be precise, the period between July 1975 and January 1977 when the government of Indira Gandhi imposed an emergency (Roy, 2023, April 21).

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and expression, instances of government interference in media affairs have raised alarm bells among civil society and international observers (Buyse, 2018). The arbitrary use of laws such as filing sedition and defamation cases stifles disagreement and silences critical voices. It undermines the democratic ethos and inhibits investigative journalism, which is critical for any democracy (Yadav, 2023). Moreover, attacks on the journalists, both physically and verbally, have created a climate of fear and censorship, compromising the media's ability to fulfil its role of questioning, and checking effectively (Chadha & Arya, 2021; Jamil & Sohal, 2021). The rise of misinformation and propaganda further exacerbates challenges to press freedom, eroding public trust in credible news sources and undermining democratic discourse (Persily, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article, titled "Samagra Viksit Bharat 2047: The Imperative of Press Freedom in India's Quest for Development," explores the influence of press freedom on the economic and social development of a nation. This study uses a mixed research method for the analysis. It also utilizes secondary data to conclude. This article examines the concept of press freedom and evaluates the different criteria employed to assess it. The article introduces the concept of Viksit Bharat: 2047. The work analyses the indicators of development. In addition, the article explores the importance of the press in democracy and its development. The research is descriptive, as it offers a comprehensive analysis of the current state of press freedom and its consequent effects. The study utilises secondary data from renowned sources such as Reporters Without Borders, the World Bank, the World Happiness Report, and the United Nations. This study employed secondary data from 21 countries concerning press freedom indices. Data only from 21 countries was utilised as it was difficult to find data of countries on all the parameters.

Countries which were used for quantitative analysis:

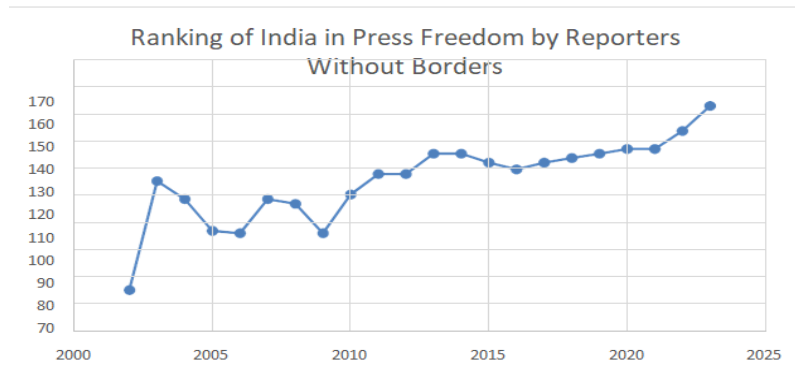
Australia	Finland	Netherland
Austria	Germany	New Zealand
Belgium	Iceland	Norway
Canada	Ireland	Portugal
Chez Republic	Latvia	Sweden
Denmark	Lithuania	Switzerland
Estonia	Luxembourg	United Kingdom

The Pearson correlation coefficient is employed to investigate the associations between press freedom and different development indicators, as it is suitable for quantifying the linear association between two different continuous variables. In addition, literature, including previous research and secondary research reports, was used to analyse the declining position of press freedom in India. The study aimed to find the influence of press freedom on development, with a specific focus on indicators related to the economy, health, happiness, and education. In addition, it examined the deteriorating position of India in terms of press freedom and the potential implications of that scenario.

DISCUSSIONS

India's rank by Reporters Without Borders

India's press freedom ranking, as per Reporters Without Borders, has seen a worrying decline over the years. From 80th in 2002 to a concerning 161st in 2023, the trend indicates a worsening situation. This alarming trend suggests growing challenges to media independence and its freedom of expression in the country. They also stated that few business houses owning major media houses leads to the end of pluralism in the mainstream media. It was further observed that even countries like Taiwan (35), Tonga (44), Niger (61), Mongolia (88), Pakistan (150), and Palestine (156) demonstrated relatively better press freedom standings compared to India. Conversely, just a few countries like Russia (164), Iraq (167), Syria (175), China (179), and North Korea (180) ranked lower, indicating more significant challenges in press freedom than India.



Source (Reporters Without Borders, 2024).

GLOBAL JOURNALIST FATALITIES

The researcher examined data from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2024), a prominent organization dedicated to monitoring and advocating for press freedom. Over the past decade, a total of 772 journalists worldwide were killed. Surprisingly, India accounted for 32 of these deaths (List Given Below), surpassing countries like Pakistan (23) and Ukraine (27), despite ongoing conflicts in the latter. Notably, the United States reported 11 journalist deaths, while the UK and Saudi Arabia each had 1. Conversely, countries like Singapore, Australia, Japan, Germany, Bhutan, and Luxembourg recorded zero journalist fatalities. The data underscores the alarming risks which journalists face globally, with India exhibiting a trend of journalist fatalities despite the geopolitical tensions in countries like Ukraine, they have reported fewer journalist deaths than India, indicating a complex landscape of press freedom and safety concerns of the media personnel. These statistics highlight the need for concerted efforts to safeguard journalists' rights and ensure a free and secure media environment which is deteriorating in India.

Table: 2 Names of journalists killed in India from 2014 to 2024.

Name	Organization	Date
Achyutananda Sahu	Doordarshan	October 30, 2018
Akhilesh Pratap	Taaza TV	May 12, 2016
Akshay Singh	Aaj Tak	July 4, 2015
Avinash Jha	BNN News	November 9-12, 2021
Chandan Tiwari	Aj Newspaper	October 30, 2018
Chennakeshavalu	EV5	August 8, 2021
Dharmendra Singh	Dainik Bhaskar	November 12, 2016
Gauri Lankesh	Gauri Lankesh Patrike	September 5, 2017
Hemant Yadav	TV24	October 3, 2015
Jagendra Singh	Freelance	June 8, 2015
Karun Misra	Jansandesh Times	February 13, 2016
Katha Satyanarayana	Andhra Jyothy	October 15, 2019
Kishore Dave	Jai Hind	August 22, 2016
Manish Kumar Singh	Sudarshan TV	August 8 - 10, 2021
MVN Shankar	Andhra Prabha	November 26, 2014
Naveen Gupta	Hindustan	November 30, 2017
Navin Nischal	Dainik Bhaskar	March 25, 2018

Name	Organization	Date
Rajdev Ranjan	Hindustan	May 13, 2016
Rajesh Mishra	Dainik Jagran	October 21, 2017
Rakesh Singh	Rashtriya Swaroop	November 28, 2020

Raman Kashyap	Sadhna Plus TV	October 3-4, 2021
Rohit Biswal	Dharitri	February 5, 2022
Sandeep Kothari	Freelance	June 19 or 20, 2015
Sandeep Sharma	News World	March 26, 2018
Shantanu Bhowmik	Dinraat	September 20, 2017
Shashikant Warishe	Mahanagari Times	February 7, 2023
Shubham Mani Tripathi	Kampu Mail	June 19, 2020
Shujaat Bukhari	Rising Kashmir	June 14, 2018
Subhash Kumar Mahto	City News	May 20, 2022
Sudip Dutta Bhaumik	Syandan Patrika	November 21, 2017
Sulabh Srivastava	ABP News, ABP Ganga	June 13, 2021
Tarun Kumar Acharya	Kanak TV, Sambad	May 27, 2014

PRESS FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT CORRELATIONS: SECONDARY RESEARCH

This portion of the study focuses on the Pearson correlations (Pearson correlation coefficient) between the Freedom of Press Index and various critical developmental indicators of 21 countries. Only 21 countries were picked as researchers could find all the indices of all the countries under study from these many nations. A correlation between press freedom and various indicators/parameters, including the Human Development Index, GDP per capita, the Happiness Index, and the Education Index was found. Data for this analysis was taken only from reputable and reliable sources such as Reporters Without Borders and The World Bank. The correlation coefficients and their corresponding p-values showcase these associations and significance levels, revealing insights into the relationship or association between societal progress factors and press freedom and vice versa. The correlations among the five development parameters are presented in Table: 3, the "Freedom of Press Index" (sourced from Reporters without Boundaries), is obtained from The World Bank; the "Happiness Index", which is taken from the World Happiness Report; the "Health Index", which is obtained from the Global Health Security Index; the "Education Index", which is taken from the World Population Review; and the "Human Development Index", which is derived from UN Development Reports. The correlation coefficients and p-values for each parameter are found and presented in the table showcasing correlation coefficients and p-values, utilising data from 21 countries for which such information was accessible and available.

Table: 3 Press Freedom and Development Correlations

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Significance
Freedom of Press vs GDP per capita	0.217	0.098	(p > 0.05)
Freedom of Press vs Happiness Index	0.318	0.012	** (p < 0.01)
Freedom of Press vs Health Index	0.272	0.025	* (p < 0.05)
Freedom of Press vs Education Index	0.176	0.078	(p > 0.05)
Freedom of Press vs Human Development Index	0.344	0.007	** (p < 0.01)

*(p < 0.05) - Indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level. ** (p < 0.01) - Indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

Source: Collected from different sources.

The table presents correlation coefficients and p-values for the relationships between freedom of the press and various development indicators. Here is an interpretation of the results:

Freedom of Press vs GDP per capita (0.217, p = 0.098):

The correlation coefficient suggests a weak positive relationship between freedom of the press and GDP per capita, i.e. with the increase in press freedom the GDP per capita also rises. However, the p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that this relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that we cannot conclude that there is a true association between freedom of the press and GDP per capita based on this data.

Freedom of Press vs Happiness Index (0.318, p = 0.012):

There is a moderate positive correlation between freedom of the press and the happiness index. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that this relationship is statistically significant at the

0.05 level. Thus, we can infer that there is a significant association between freedom of the press and happiness, the higher the press is free in a nation the happier its citizens would be.

Freedom of Press vs Health Index (0.272, p = 0.025):

There is a moderate positive correlation between freedom of the press and the health index. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a significant association between freedom of the press and health.

Freedom of Press vs Education Index (0.176, p = 0.078):

There is a weak positive correlation between freedom of the press and the education index. The p-value is greater than 0.05, suggesting that this relationship is not statistically significant at the

0.05 level. Hence, we cannot confidently conclude a true association between freedom of the press and education based on this data.

Freedom of Press vs Human Development Index (0.344, p = 0.007):

There is a moderate positive correlation between freedom of the press and the human development index. The p-value is less than 0.01, indicating statistical significance at the 0.01 level. Therefore, there is a highly significant association between freedom of the press and human development.

The results suggest that freedom of the press is significantly associated with happiness, health, and human development. While there is a positive correlation between freedom of the press and GDP per capita, it is not statistically significant. The correlation between freedom of the press and education is weak and not statistically significant. These findings imply that a free press might play a crucial role in promoting happiness, health, and overall human development within a society, but its impact on economic indicators like GDP per capita or educational outcomes may be less pronounced or not directly observable in this dataset. Researchers believe and suggest the second reason to be more correct. Further research and analysis could delve deeper into the mechanisms behind these relationships and explore causality.

PRESS FREEDOM'S MULTIFACETED IMPACT: LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem lies in the fact that we are not the first ones to assert or discover this; it has been thoroughly examined and deemed significant by the literature mentioned below. The influence of the press freedom index on the economy, growth, environment, governance, and

happiness.

Table: 4 Literature Review

Reference	Area of Study	Findings
Nguyen, Valadkhani, Nguyen, & Wake (2021).	Economy	Deteriorations in press freedom are detrimental to a nation's economy and countries do not fully recover economically if their press freedoms are compromised once, even if the rights of media are restored.
(Wake, Valadkhani, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2021, April 7).	Economic growth	Press freedom is crucial for economic growth; curbs on it result in a 1%-2% GDP drop. Even after restoration, growth does not
Reference	Area of Study	Findings
		fully recover.
(Hokkanen, J. (2023, April 26).	Economic factors	The research investigates the inverse correlation between economic factors, such as GDP growth, unemployment, and inflation, and their significant influence on levels of press freedom.
(Chen, 2005).	Growth	After analysing a diverse range of countries, studies have determined that, when considering the initial per-capita GDP and other institutional factors, the level of press freedom at the beginning is the most reliable and significant predictor of future growth relative to other factors. Press freedom is now considered an economic measuring parameter of equal importance.
(Ike, Jeff, & Aghazadeh, 2022).	Environment	The study examines the correlation between press freedom and internet accessibility concerning their influence on global environmental consequences, considering the role of the industry. Research shows a correlation between press freedom and a decrease in CO2 emissions.
(Riti, Shu, & Kamah, 2021).	Environment	The study investigates press freedom's impact on CO ₂ emissions, finding it lowers emissions in countries with greater press freedom.
(Dutta, & Roy, 2016).	Governance	The positive influence of press freedom in reducing corruption is substantial, thereby demonstrating the empowering influence of media accessibility on press freedom specifically, and on enhanced governance in general.
Reference	Area of Study	Findings
(Guseva, Nakaa, Pekkala, Souberou, & Stouli, 2008).	Development	Press freedom positively influences development by informing governments of people's needs, enhancing accountability, and fostering transparency, thus contributing to achieving development goals.
(Masrorkhah & Lehnert, 2017).	Stock market	The level of press freedom differs worldwide, which affects the way news is distributed. In nations that have a press that is not restricted, stock markets respond with greater immediacy to economic data. Stock markets in nations that uphold press freedom demonstrate increased volatility.
(Tandoc & Takahashi, 2013).	Happiness Index	Press freedom, along with other forms of capital, predicts life satisfaction globally, emphasizing interconnections in achieving

		happiness.
(Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel, 2008).	Happiness Index	Increased free choice, economic development, democratization, and social tolerance correlate with rising happiness levels globally.
(Ejigu & Gebru, 2020).	Human Development Index	Press freedom's dimensions significantly predict human development.
(Novel, 2006).	GDP per capita	A strong correlation exists between high GDP per capita and press freedom.
(Brulé & Veenhoven, 2014)	Happiness Index	It finds positive correlations, with psychological freedom strongly linked to happiness.

In the research, it was found that press freedom is crucial for economic and social growth. Economic and social growth is hindered by curbing press freedom. Additionally, it was observed that economic factors not only impact press freedom but are also influenced by it. The review highlighted that press freedom can help in predicting future growth. Furthermore, beyond its effects on the economy and governance, press freedom was found to have a significant impact on the environment and sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It can be concluded from this research that press freedom has a crucial effect on both society and the economy. Only a society that is free to question and respond, where its press is free can make advancements. Free press results in improved governance, accountability, and transparency in a country. It was found that press freedom and economic growth have a positive association with each other. The most significant aspect is its enduring and long-lasting effects, the impact on economic aspects even when things improve, even when press freedom is improved. As it keeps hampering the economy and continues to restrict growth even in the event of improved press freedom in future. Press freedom affects the economy and has its socio-environmental impacts on a country as well. It was found in this study that freedom of the press impacts the ecological environment and other sociological parameters such as human development, happiness, and well-being indices.

If India aspires to be considered a developed or Viksit nation, it must address the area where its situation is most consistently deteriorating, i.e., the freedom of the press index or its position globally. Without the freedom of the press, achieving economic, social, environmental, and sustainable development would be difficult and meaningless even if it is achieved. The nation should strengthen the legal safeguards for its journalists and media organizations and make policies for their protection. It is necessary to enact measures to guarantee the security of journalists and reporters and this security is not just from the physical threats but also the mental threats by trolling on social media. In addition, to promote media pluralism, it is necessary to foster diverse ownership and representation in the media industry, which can be attained through various anti-competitive laws in place, which will require a strong political and demographic will.

The policymakers must adhere to the guidelines set by prominent international organisations such as Freedom House, Reporters sans frontières, IREX, and the Committee to Protect Journalists and media houses for the protection of the press. It should be also considered that while it may be tempting and convenient to criticise these agencies for poor ratings in the country, this approach will not solve the problem. Instead, self-introspection is crucial and will certainly yield some positive outcomes. Moreover, if we do consider the improved ratings in the ease of doing business by similar agencies then why not consider rating for press freedom? Investing in media literacy is crucial, and educating

the public on how to differentiate between credible information and misinformation is necessary that too from early childhood.

Furthermore, the country must safeguard the freedom of individuals (including journalists and reporters) to express divergent viewpoints without facing any form of retaliation, backlash, or life threat. That too not only of those in mainstream media but also on other mediums like social media. The nation should reinforce more investigative journalism by allocating resources and offering incentives to encourage more in-depth reporting on crucial matters to improve transparency and reduction of corruption. Policies should also be formed to moderate or monitor the funds received by such media houses. In addition, Indian media organisations should establish collaborations with international entities to protect press freedom, bring more transparency and ensure that authorities are held responsible for any efforts to suppress it. Moreover, just like the other indices such as GDP, it is important for the country or agencies to consistently evaluate and tackle any decreases in rankings related to press freedom as well as active functioning to check it is very important. Only by incorporating press freedom into the overall development strategies, and policy-making can lead to the actual development. The rise of online media has demonstrated the effectiveness of Citizen Journalism in empowering individuals to independently report news and achieve positive outcomes. It encourages users to authenticate information and counteract misinformation most importantly it dares to share divergent views. Therefore, social media should also be supported and protected. Overall, it can be concluded that to achieve not just "being Viksit" but for being truly "being Samagra Viksit," freedom of the press is essential. "Viksit" without "Svatantrata" would be incomplete.

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EXHIBITS





French journalist Vanessa Dognac leaves India after journalism permit revoked

February 16, 2024 12:20 PM EST

New York, February 16, 2024—The Committee to Protect Journalists urges Indian authorities to immediately reinstate French reporter Vanessa Dognac's journalism permit and cease using legal technicalities to prevent journalists from carrying out their duties. Indian authorities compelled Dognac, a former South Asia correspondent for multiple international news organizations who is married to an Indian citizen,...

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March 4, 2024 7:21 AM EST

New York, March 4, 2024—The Committee to Protect Journalists on Monday expressed alarm over the re-arrest of Kashmiri journalist Aasif Sultan two days after he was freed from more than five years of arbitrary detention and called on Indian authorities to immediately cease harassing him in retaliation for his work. On February 27, Sultan was...

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