

"A Critical Analysis on Normative Theories:
Which one is suitable in Bangladesh
Perspective"

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A Critical Analysis of Normative Theories: Which One is Suitable in Bangladesh's Perspective

If we want to analyze communication and mass media, we have to go back to history as well as various theories and information. Nowadays, in addition to the basic needs of the people, there is an urgent need to know information. Most of the civilized countries of the world have enacted RTI laws for the people. Including Bangladesh. And the media is always working to give information to people in the form of messages. Although different forms and motives of the media come out in the context of different events. We resort to various theories to analyze them.

Today we will analyze different aspects of the media in the light of different theories, as well as briefly shed light on which theory is information and people-friendly for the media in Bangladesh.

Normative theories were first proposed by Fred, Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm in their book called 'Four Theories of the Press'. At first, the word 'Normative Theory' was pronounced in the USA during the height of the 'cold war' with communism and the Soviets. Often it is called Western theories of mass media. A Normative theory describes an ideal way for a media system to be controlled and operated by the government, authority, leader, and public. These theories are different from other communication theories because normative theories of the press are not providing any scientific explanations or predictions. At the same, these 'four theories of the press' came from many sources rather than a single source. Sometimes media practitioners, social critics, and academics are also involved to develop these normative theories. Normative theories are more focused on the relationship between Press and the Government than the press and the audience. These theories are

more concerned about the ownership of the media and who controls the press or media in the country.

Normative theories are divided into the following categories:

- 1. Authoritarian**
- 2. Libertarian Theory**
- 3. Communism**
- 4. Social Responsibility Theory**

What is Authoritarian?

- ✓ Direct governmental control of the media. Typical of pre-democratic societies, where the government consists of a very small ruling class.
- ✓ No printing that could undermine the established authority or offense to the existing political setup.
- ✓ The government may punish anyone who questions the state's ideology and the Media professionals are not allowed to have any independence within the media organization.
- ✓ Registration of the media by the state.

What is a Libertarian?

- ✓ Journalists and media professionals ought to have full autonomy within the media organization.
- ✓ There is no explicit connection between the government and the media.
- ✓ The press is free from censorship
- ✓ It is accountable to the law for any consequences of its activities that infringe on other individuals' rights or the legitimate claims of society.
- ✓ In rebelling against authoritarian theory early libertarians argued that there should be no laws governing media operations. Free press means that all forms of media must be unregulated.

What is Communism?

- ✓ The media is a collective agitator, propagandist, and educator in the building of communism.
- ✓ No private ownership of the media.
- ✓ The government is superior to the media institutions.
- ✓ Press contributes to the success of the state.

- ✓ Only legal party members can publish and no one can criticize the party.
- ✓ Government has “influence” over the press.
- ✓ closely tied to a specific ideology—the communist

What is Social Responsibility?

Denis McQuail's eight principles of Social Responsibility Theory

- ✓ Mass Media will be responsible and liable for some specific issues in the society
- ✓ Mass media will meet the responsibilities through honesty, objectivity, balance, and high professionalism
- ✓ Media will take responsibility in a self-regulating approach according to the existing laws and regulations of the society
- ✓ Mass media will be restricted from presenting such content that inspires crime, public instability, corruption, etc. Mass media won't undermine the minority
- ✓ Mass media will reflect cultural pluralism, cultural diversity, and mass people
- ✓ Alternative discourse or counterarguments will be promoted in mass media and mass media will promote self-defense of any party
- ✓ Media will be responsible to mass people, the state, and the society

Which one is suitable from Bangladesh's Perspective?

I think the theory of Social Responsibility Theory is the most acceptable in the context of Bengal.

Although the media of Bangladesh can be explained with different theories at different times, in general, the Social Responsibility Theory is more suitable in the context of Bangladesh. If we look carefully at the eight features of the theory, we can see that it is the most accurate.

This theory keeps certain areas free for the Press but at the same time puts a lot of responsibility on the media. As discussed in the beginning the media is not just seen as an enterprise like others in the business sector of any society, but due to its unique nature, society expects a particular role that media must play in getting rid of social evils, educating people, criticizing government policies and exposing other wrongdoings in a society. The sense of responsibility has been emphasized more in this theory as compared to any other.

Social Responsibility Theory came from Hachten. Hachten also proposed five theories or concepts of the press emphasizing politics and economics: authoritarian, Western, Communist, revolutionary, and developmental or third world. His conception of authoritarianism was similar to that of Siebert and Lowenstein. However, his Western concept encompassed both the libertarian and social-responsibility models with its defining characteristic being that it is relatively free of arbitrary government controls. Under the Communist concept, media are tools that serve as implements of revelation (by revealing the purposes and goals of party leaders) as well as instruments of unity and consensus. The

main difference between authoritarian and Communist systems is ownership. In authoritarian systems, the press can be privately owned as opposed to state ownership in Communist systems. Hachten defined the revolutionary concept as being illegal and subversive mass communication utilizing the press. Finally, the developmental model was seen to have arisen out of a combination of Communist ideas, anti-Americanism, and social-responsibility ideals.

So for whatever reason,
this theory is suitable for Bangladesh-

- ✚ Media should act in the interests of and be controlled by the working class;
- ✚ Media should not be under private control;
- ✚ Media should perform positive functions for society, such as social education, the supply of information, motivation, and mobilization of the masses;
- ✚ Media should respond to the desire and needs of their recipients;
- ✚ Society has the right to use censorship and other legal measures to prevent and punish antisocial publication;
- ✚ Media should reflect a complete and objective view of the world and society in terms of Marxist-Leninist principles;
- ✚ Media should support communist movements everywhere.

In politically and economically advanced societies the change is based on new information and telecommunications technologies, which affected the media industries in terms of economic restructuring, and on a new social and political environment, as reflected by media content. Training and continuing development of professionalism can be done to advance and nurture balanced and impartial news presentations.

End

1. Hachten, W. (1981). The world news prism. Ames: Iowa State University.
2. McQuail, D. (1994). Mass communication theory: An introduction. London: Sage.
3. Theories of Press, an article by Tripty