ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE 16TH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Representative democracy is based on elections. Democracy, therefore, demands free and fair elections. In India, we have an election commission which is constitutionally conferred with the power of superintendence, control and conduction of free and fair elections. The role of media in the context of elections in particular, is no less important. Media is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy. While its role in general is appreciated as a means of educating, informing and training the public opinion to decide most rationally, it is also accused of being politically biased, irresponsible, misrepresentative and manipulative.

In India, media has played or even determined the rise and fall of candidates during elections. It is often alleged that by opinion polls, it influences the election outcome. In a subtle manner, it drills and manipulates opinion formation.

It is this concern and urge to evaluate the role of media during elections that we undertook "The Role of Media in the 16th Lok Sabha Elections" as our research project under the supervision of Dr. S. Chowdhury, Department of Political Science. We selected 3 national television channels- NDTV, Times Now and CNN-IBN, 1 regional channel - 24 Ghanta Bangla, Twitter and Facebook to cover social media.

The time frame for conducting the Research Project was April 2014 to January 2015. During this span of 10 months, we studied the 16th Lok Sabha elections in two phases: Pre and post polls. The 16th Lok Sabha elections have been politically significant as we witnessed the event directly and many of us were first time voters.

As for the methodology, we largely relied on Content Analysis of the selected programmes and shows watched in the selected channels. Occasional use of library research of election studies across the country was done for validation, analysis and comparative study of our findings.

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