

ROLE OF MASS MEDIA

Mass media is virtually a current awareness service informing people about current events and activities of human beings and also about every significant natural phenomenon and such others of public interest. It encompasses almost every conceivable subject and the focus is on a wide audience, irrespective of their background and knowledge. Scholars, laypersons, professionals, scientists, artists, musicians, in fact, every group of persons get something of their interest provided by mass media. Its influence is profound on human life.

Mass media today is regarded as the Fourth Estate that shapes, influences and indirectly governs public affairs in a democratic set-up. Although the media does not have any constitutional authority to control the affairs of a state, it is a powerful instrument for moulding public opinion on any issue of importance in democratic governance and contributes very significantly in arriving at an acceptable public policy.

Media here refer not only to the physical modes of communication through which information is transmitted but also refer to the varied channels such as print as well as the non-print, through which news and information are disseminated to the users.

Mass media comprise predominantly:

- The print media, primarily daily newspapers, popular periodicals and such others;
- Radio Broadcasting
- Television ;
- Audio-visuals, CD, DVD, etc.; and
- Motion Films

According to Wilbur Schramm, the role of media in development can be divided into three parts i.e. (i) to inform (ii) to instruct and (iii) to participate.

To inform: for the development of the society, correct social, political and economic influence is the main criteria. This information should be both national and international. People should be aware of the areas or facts which hamper the development process.

To instruct: Mass literacy is an essential criteria to development. This is possible by imbibing basic skills among the people. Mass media plays an important role in this. Mass media can instruct people and educate them. Projects like Educational Television and Gyan Darshan are few such examples where media is used to instruct people, educate them and teach them basic skills. These basic skills help people to develop their standard of living.

To participate: Voluntary and steady participation of the citizen of the country is necessary for its overall development. Such participation is possible in a liberal society. Such awareness is possible through debate, conflict and discussion. Discussions and debate helps people to

know current issues, participate in developmental programme and bring a change in the standard of living of the society.

COMPONENTS OF MASS MEDIA

Print Media

The main function of the print media, particularly the daily newspapers are to inform, influence, and shape public opinions on every major issue of public importance.

Among the print media that channels mass communication, the daily newspaper occupies the central position. Daily newspapers are published in different editions. Some of the top newspaper agencies publish their dailies from different cities to focus on regional news, events and activities. Sunday editions carry weekly magazines, special advertisements, and other supplements. Everyday the dailies publish one or more supplements on specific topics such as education and training, business and economics, industry and trade, sports and games, arts and music. Keen competition exists among the newspaper agencies to expand their market.

In India daily newspapers are published in almost all regional languages, some of which have very wide circulation. Generally the daily newspapers carry news, commentaries and analysis on political/ economic/social topics, on current events, personalities, and feature articles on different subjects of public interest, general information on weather, local programmes and activities, business information, share market data and news and many other types of information. Editorials on current specific topics are a daily feature except the Sunday editions, which have a very special value as they may express dispassionate views on important issues of public importance.

After Independence during the Five Year Plans, initiated by the government for planned development, it was the newspapers which gave great importance to development themes. They wrote on various government development programs and how the people could make use of them. They covered a variety of subjects like farming, weather, market rates, availability of improved seeds and agricultural innovations. With a wide variety of National, Regional and Vernacular newspapers, print media remains one of the powerful media among the rural people. The Government regularly interacts with the Press mainly through the Press Information Bureau (PIB).

Frequent press conferences, press tours and workshops are organised through PIB, with the financial assistance from the Ministry, to sensitize press persons about Rural Development Programs. For the purpose of creating awareness in respect of rural development programs among the general public and opinion makers and for disseminating information about new initiatives, the Ministry issues advertisements at regular intervals in national and regional press through DAVP. To enable people in rural areas to access information on Rural Development Programs a booklet 'Gram Vikas' Programs at a glance is brought out in regional languages.

Radio Broadcasting

Radio broadcasting has entertained and informed listeners for several decades from the beginning of this century without any competition until the mid fifties of the last century. Like other media, the radio stations broadcast news, round the clock, give periodical summaries of news, reviews and analysis and critical comments on current events and activities, entertainment programmes of various interests like music, serials, plays, many programmes of general interest to women, children, farmers, industrialists and useful information for children of different age groups, running commentaries of events of sports and games, and many others. Radio is adaptable and personal, and potentially as responsive to privatisation as recorded music but with greater variety of content. It is a portable and supplementary medium, and does not demand as much undivided attention as television or books. With these strengths, the radio continues to have a special place in the present day communication and information society, despite stifling competition from TV.

Programming the right mix of news, music, talks of specific issues of public interest, commercials for broadcast is the key to success for today's radio station. Like the general newspapers, the radio also influences, shapes and develops fashion and tastes and contributes to entertainment.

Radio Rural Forum: All India Radio has been the forerunner in the process of implementing communication strategy adopted by the government. The Radio Rural Forum experiment of 1956, covered 156 villages. It contained 30 minute duration program two days a week on different issues like agriculture and varied subjects that could promote rural development. Efforts are being constantly made to use radio for social change. Apart from radio rural forum, other continuous efforts are being made to bring in development. As in the case of project taken up to promote adult literacy in the 1980s. More recently, NGOs have helped broadcast program on women and legal rights etc.

Local Service of AIR: On the basis of the Verghese Committee (1978) report which recommended a franchise system for promoting local radio for education and development. Several NGOs use local radio to further their development activities. For instance, Chetana of Kolkata records their program on adult education, in the field using local talents. **School Broadcast:** Programs for school are broadcast from the metros and other centers of AIR. Many teachers make excellent broadcast through this platform. AIR draws up these programs on the advice of Consultative Panels for School Broadcast.

Gyan Vani (2001) - In March 2000, when FM frequency licenses were auctioned, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) had been given a frequency for educational broadcasting in each of the 40 cities. The ministry handed the task to IGNOU as it already had some experience telecasting education on Gyan Darshan. Gyan Vani began operations in 2001 as a collaborative media initiative of Human Resource Development and Information and Broadcasting ministries. IGNOU was the nodal organization running the channels. Initially the broadcasting started in Allahabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Coimbatore,

Lucknow and Vishakhapatnam. This was to expand to 40 other cities in two years. Today Gyan Vani's Educational FM Radio Network has spread to 37 cities and towns across the country. Gyan Vani stations operate as a media cooperative with the day-to-day programs being contributed by various educational institutions, NGOs, government and semi-government organizations, UN agencies, ministries such as Agriculture, Environment, Health, Women and Child Welfare, Science & Technology, etc. besides national level institutions such as NCERT, NIOS and state open universities. Each Gyan Vani station has a range of about 60 km and covers an entire city including the adjoining rural areas. The medium of broadcast is English, Hindi or language of the region. On October 1, 2014, due to discontinuation of payments by IGNOU from April 1, 2013, resulting in accumulation of dues to the tune of Rs 21.64 crore, operation of Gyan Vani channels were stopped by AIR.

Television

Television holds a very dominant position in our lives. It is a young mass medium, growing and developing fast to reach a very high level of sophistication. As it combines visuals and audio, it lures young and old alike. In fact, its influence on the young is so much that sociologists are apprehensive of its bad influence. It performs almost of the functions of a media and does everything to fashion the behaviour of individuals and groups.

Its programmes range from entertainment to highly organised and structured teleconferencing to project world opinion on a number of issues pertaining to political, social and cultural affairs. A great number and variety of persons get involved in the conceiving, planning, designing, execution and production of various television programmes. News, views and commentaries of current events and activities, instructional programmes for students at all levels, educating people on science and technology and their relations to social living, live telecasts of national and international sports and games and other events of general public interest are regularly telecasted.

Television as a mass medium has a huge appeal to common person. For such reason, television is used in a planned manner to motivate people to participate in developmental programs. Feature, documentaries or development campaigns should be such that it creates interest in the mind of viewers, contents should be contemporary to attract people of all ages and should be capable of influencing viewers to take part in the developmental programs.

Television in rural and tribal area: television as a Medium for Development Communication: TV in India was introduced in 1959, on an experimental basis. Its very inception was with the aim to see what TV could achieve in community development and formal education. From this we can very well understand the importance of television for development communication. Today, after 50 years of Indian television, we see that broadcasters still broadcast program with an eye on social responsibility, serials that incorporate socially relevant themes, interactive talk shows and open forums with government representatives responding to audience queries are popular programmes. In 1967, Delhi Television centre launched Krishi Darshan Program at the behest of Dr. Bikram

Sarabhai and Prof R. S. Swaminathan. The object of this program was popularisation of modern method in agriculture through the television.

TV has been used as an aid to satellite communication technology to effectively bring in development. Satellite communications technology offers unique capability of being able to reach out to very large numbers spread over large distances even in the most remote corners of the country. In India, ISRO has continuously pursued the utilization of space technology for education and development. This has been done through different projects like Educational TV (ETV), SITE, Kheda project and Country wide classroom (CWC) project. Over a period of last 30 years, these programmes have been designed to cater to the country's need for education, training, and general awareness among the rural poor. Among them few efforts shall be discussed in the following Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE, 1975-76): This one year project was primarily undertaken to develop special development programmes through the satellite communication to six rural clusters, which included a total of 2330 villages of 20 districts spread over six states—Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Its objectives were:

1. Improve the rural primary education.
2. Provide training to teachers.
3. Improve agriculture, health, hygiene, and nutritional practices and
4. Contribute to family planning and national integration.

Kheda Communication Project (KCP, (1975-89): SITE demonstrated that the centralization, inherent in the technology of direct broadcasting, was a limitation, hence the idea of 'limited rebroadcast' was conceived, giving birth to the KCP. This project was launched in 1975. 607 community television sets have been installed in 443 villages of Kheda district of Gujrat. Doordarshan and space application centre produces programme for one hour everyday. The programmes mainly concentrate on and discussed the problem of the poorer classes. Evaluation of Kheda project revealed that women in particular gained knowledge from TV viewing. The serials generated self-confidence, realization of equality etc.

Educational Television (ETV): Education is a vital instrument of social transformation and important input in development effort. The Indian National Satellite (INSAT) is being used to provide Educational TV (ETV), services for primary school children in six states. University Grants Commission (UGC) is using this for its countrywide classroom programme on higher education (college sector). INSAT is also used by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for distance education programmes and Doordarshan for Science Channel programmes. To meet the needs of development ISRO has taken up the 'TeleEducation' by launching EDUSAT, a satellite totally dedicated to the nation's need for education.

EDUSAT strengthens education efforts by augmenting curriculum based teaching, providing effective teachers' training, and community participation. The networks are capable of facilitating live lectures/power point presentations with student interaction, web based

learning, interactive training, virtual laboratory, video conferencing, data/video broadcast, database access for reference material/library/recorded lectures etc., on line examination and admissions, distribution of administrative information, etc.

Motion Films

Entertainment movie films, documentaries and such others also are important components of mass media. These involve high technology and an array of persons of various categories and intellectuals, actors and actresses with supporting casts, camerapersons, make-up persons, sound experts, lyricists, music setters, orchestra artists, illumination experts, editors, production experts, directors, and a host of other categories of workers of various kinds. Shooting experts in studios with several settings and experts in outside shooting. The financial investments in these types of media are almost astronomical and the market is highly competitive.

Newspaper

as a medium of Development Communication: The power of the press arises from its ability of appealing to the minds of the people and being capable of moving their hearts. However, it has been noticed that the press has not met the requisite interest in developmental communication. In order to correct the imbalances noticed in the media coverage of Rural Development Programs and to ensure that these program are portrayed in proper perspective, several steps are taken to sensitize the media about issues relating to rural development.

The Ministry on a regular basis interacts with the Press mainly through the Press Information Bureau (PIB). Review press conference, press tours and workshops are organised through PIB, with the financial assistance from the Ministry, so as to sensitize press persons about Rural Development Program. For the purpose of creating awareness in respect of rural develop programs among the general public and opinion makers and for disseminating information about new initiatives, the Ministry issues advertisements at regular intervals in national and regional press through DAVP. To enable people in rural areas to access information on Rural Development Program a booklet 'Gram Vikas' Programs at a glance is brought out in regional languages.

E-choupal: Traditionally, choupal is known as the central gathering place in the village, a kind of rural forum, where people discuss, debate and decide on their course of action about some burning issues in the community. E-choupals in the digital age share information through the Internet while retaining their pristine, democratic character. The Internet has started revolutionising the way Indian farmers do business.

The system constitutes an Internet enabled kiosk in a village, manned by a villager. He is familiar with computers and known as the choupal sanchalak (one who conducts the forum). The sanchalak acts as the interface between the computer and the farmer. Farmers can use the kiosks to check the current market prices of agricultural commodities, access market data better farming practices. Initially apprehensive, farmers have slowly but steadily familiarised themselves with the new system. New Media's interactivity and easy access have made it a commendable medium for development communication.

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