



MEDIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE: CURRENT TRENDS IN INDIA

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I. Introduction:

The mass media is an important social institution which caters social and economic needs of wider social groups and it has been playing vital role in developing countries like India. Especially in the post globalization era, media has to educate people for changing their traditional attitude to suite the modern progressive needs.

In the age of globalization social movements are somewhat declining, because everything is being examined in the materialist view point. It has been rightly pointed that “Movements also importantly build upon existing human and material resources.”⁽¹⁾ In developing countries such resources are limited and problems are more complex. About social movement in the age of globalization it has been pointed that “The term globalization has become to dominate discourses of social, economic and cultural developments in contemporary society.”⁽²⁾ In the country like India the process of globalization has not only affected urban societies, but also it is influencing rural communities. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand media’s role in contemporary society, while changing the perspective of people. If media is used properly it can accelerate growth rate at one hand and it can also awaken people for sustainable development. Discussions in Durban Summit have also promoted views regarding promotion of sustainable development.⁽³⁾

Understanding different facets of media and social change is a most challenging phenomenon for Asia, Africa and Latin American countries. In this paper grass root analysis of Indian problems has been made.

II. Sociological perspective:

Dennis Mcquail has described media as engine of change.⁽⁴⁾ The question arises whether media truly working as an engine of social change or not. Media should come out of infotainment syndrome. Media is a means of socialization. A.A. Berger has opined that

“What is important about informal socialization is that people generally do not recognize that they are being taught what roles to play and how to play them, what values to espouse, what attitudes to have, what goals to strive for, and so on.”⁽⁵⁾ The specific role that media can play in country like India can be very well examined here. In the post globalization era, value erosion is a serious problem. Media can sustain to resist collapse of values in the materialist world. It has been observed that “Media critics must be aware of the values demonstrated by the characters portrayed in mass mediated production and should examine what these values suggest about society.”⁽⁶⁾ Media can strengthen moral and spiritual values in the cross cultural and multi dimensional society. The content in media is based on public arts and Berger has rightly observed that “Media analysis need to bear in mind that they are concerned with works of art when they examine sitcoms.”⁽⁷⁾ In India whether directly or indirectly the TV programs are affecting social mind set which can be described as social milieu and cultural ethos. Gisbert has rightly pointed that “Institutions are usually defined as certain enduring and accepted forms of procedure governing the relations between individuals and groups.”⁽⁸⁾ Media is such a social institution having role, relevance and effectivity in the contemporary period. Mass media is closely related to traditional folk media. It has been observed that “Intimately related to customs and institutions, with which we have been dealing so far, is the question of folkways and mores.”⁽⁹⁾ Folk media is a vehicle of social change and it can be used in modern electronic media for bring social change. At present the folk content in electronic media is not less than 4%.⁽¹⁰⁾

III. Media and social change : Challenges ahead:

At present media has to face many challenges in bring social change. Sahoo has observed that “Interest in sustainable development and reduction of poverty has grown along with the spread of globalization.”⁽¹¹⁾ In agro based society in India media can educate people for bringing awareness regarding sustainable development. However, the role of media can be effective and supporting when good governance is attained. It has been noted that “Dreams will be realized only when honest, efficient and foresighted selfless governance is manifested in all fields and all states.”⁽¹²⁾ In India socio economic development programs are more in number but their faster implementation alone can bring change.

Inclusive growth for sustainable development is the motto of 12th Five Year Plan in India. India is trying to maintain and improve high growth rate. Sahoo has further observed that “Higher rate of growth and inclusive or widespread growth are not antithetical to each other. In vast country benefitting larger number of people belonging to all sections of society,

people require conscious and careful planning and sympathetic governance.”⁽¹³⁾ But it should reflect changing profile of society.

Mass media in India have to bridge urban rural gaps, because the fruits of development are not equally shared by people in villages. In India 2004 it has been observed that life of the people in ancient period was “peaceful and fruitful as there were limited desires of the people.”⁽¹⁴⁾ In order to fulfill rising hopes and aspirations of millions of people in India, media has to reflect their hopes and aspirations. .

In the democratic system, grievances of the people can be heard and social justice can be imparted to them. In the medieval feudal structure, “rulers were never bothered for people and only acted in their own interest.”⁽¹⁵⁾ Now India being sovereign secular democratic republic there is a need to understand social problems effectively. Good governance can help to attain greatest happiness in greatest number.

In the British period very limited transfer of power was made. In so called decentralization, Britishers it was merely an arrangement to suit their imperial requirements.”⁽¹⁶⁾ Now in Gram Swaraj in India local self governments are focusing on reflecting hopes of villagers through Gram Sabhas.

Media can be vehicle of social and cultural change. Nair and White have observed that “Socio cultural change is the goal of development communication.”⁽¹⁷⁾

IV. New Model:

Indian communication media must develop new model to encompass action, communication and transformation. It has been rightly observed that “Useful models must focus on the people at the grass roots enabling them to become self reliant, speaking for themselves and directly to the power elite.”⁽¹⁸⁾ In such model self respect pride and confidence of the common people has to be elevated. The responsible citizens of India must feel elevated to face social problems of distressed and agony. Women should be respected. The SC/ST as well as minority should be properly shared in the development process.

In India SITE 1975 and further more Kheda project was an experiment of media and social change. Nair and White have opined that “The Kheda project also relied heavily on audience research (Contingency IV). The SITE Continuity Research Center (SCRC) helped identify three areas of specific social interest to the Kheda viewers: (a) Bondage and oppression by feudal landlords, (b) Ritual and superstition which were used to reinforce the class structure and (c) Failure of the government machinery in implementing national and state programs.”⁽¹⁹⁾ Media can bring awareness about such failure and it can provide attention for correcting the system.

Hence in this connection a new model is required to share people's grievances on large scale.

V. Changing priorities:

Mass media in the process of social change should provide new opportunities in changing world. Jonny Joseph has observed that feedback is essential for increasing accuracy. (20) At present feedback is very poor in media. It has been further observed that "The term mass communication must imply at least five things (a) relatively large audiences (b) fairly undifferentiated audiences composition (c) some form of message reproduction (d) rapid distribution and delivery and (e) low unit cost of the consumer." (21) In this context mass media in India is only urban phenomenon. It can be truly mass based if media is available at cheaper rate to the poor people. There is a need of modification of media processes to improve stimulus responses. (22) Media has to change accordingly to meet future challenges.

VI. Summary:

There are communication gaps between media and society. What is more important is bringing awareness at different level. India requires communication on more coequal basis is ethically correct and practically more relevant and useful." (23) Thus there are many challenges for bringing social change in India. At present mass media is not properly useful for promoting sustainable rural development. Hence the future perspectives can be more progressive if media's power is properly harnessed. It has been rightly observed that the social capital be built by forming self groups for collective action under the guidance of NGOs and that the presence of social capital is crucial for the successful functioning of participatory programs." (24)

Thus all these aspects are significant wherein mass media can promote more participatory development on different levels.. Media can involve large number of people in social change. It can persuade progressive values and finally it can transform Indian society from tradition to modern by developing it as information community which means rich in information and advanced in technology. Information automation and use of mass media only can be way for future change.

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