



Review Article

Transformation of Indian Society with the Emergence of Means of Mass Communication: Radio and Television

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Abstract

The current paper aims to highlight the transforming impact of radio and television on Indian society. Nineteenth century brought revolutionary changes in the lifestyle, behavior, attitude of Indian citizens with emergence of radio and television. Radio played a vital role in the nationalism movement in India before independence. Radio and television were instruments of change as they offered new perspectives, new realities and new experience with their audio and audio-visual appeal respectively through programs of different genres. They blurred the distinction between masses and classes. Television, in particular, has gained supreme power over the other media of mass communication, especially in urban India but radio is also an effective medium through which millions of people are able to become unified in urban as well as rural India. Radio and television have introduced innovative methods to inform, educate and entertain. They have reached out to a huge portion of population. At the same time with the technological inventions mass media became more accessible to people. The mass media, especially the electronic media, is quicker in making its impact on the people and the impact is also long lasting. Television is a powerful medium for appealing to mass audiences it reaches people regardless of age, sex, income, or educational level. In addition, television offers sight and sound, and it makes dramatic and life-like representations of people and products.

Over the years, radio and TV have evolved in variety and content. They have become hugely popular over the years and have had a tremendous impact on molding popular taste in art and culture. Increasing impact of radio and television has proliferated a kind of homogenization that strives to minimize cultural diversity. To support the research topic reference of models of communication given by eminent scholar in the area of communication Dennis McQuail and research findings are included in the paper.

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INTRODUCTION

Social transformation can be defined as the drastic change or transition in society with the emergence of an idea, ideology, event or person. Indian society witnessed and experienced social transformation in various stages of its development. Many movements and ideologies emerged in the western countries which had their repercussions in India and a long-lasting impact on Indian people and society such as Feminism, Marxism etc.

Social transformation brings drastic changes in societal patterns and structures as well as within organizations and individuals. These changing realities through social transformation can be observed at local, regional, national and sometimes at international level. There can be different factors responsible for social transformation such as political, cultural, economic, historical, ideological, literary etc. Mass media which rose in the form of print media and it gained importance slowly and gradually with its increasing impact on masses and reached the peak of popularity with the emergence of electronic media like radio and television because of its sensitivity to the issues related to common man and day-to-day life. Dennis McQuail has stated in his book *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* "Radio and television have a ninety and sixty plus year history as mass media and both grew out of pre-existing technologies – telephone, telegraph, moving, and still photography and sound recording . . . These two can be viewed as response to a demand of common folk." (McQuail 34)

Social Transformation through Radio

With the emergence of radio and television the gap between two distinct poles, the authorities or decision-makers in different areas such as educationists, politicians etc. and common people who are affected with the changing realities is bridged. As it is stated "What is more obvious to us is the link that broadcasting provides between the home and the world." (Manvell, xi, Introduction) Therefore audience are exposed to the current happenings and social issues which are known to masses through regular daily news such as atrocities against women, awareness about social issues such as importance of education, consumer guidance etc. The name, structure and administration of All India Radio were shaped during British raj. With majority of Indian population from rural background having lower literacy rate radio has been affordable, effective and important medium for providing information. With its effective sound appeal, portability, flexibility in use and diversity of content radio had mesmerized common folks. The regional services of radio reached to major linguistic and cultural groups. Each state and union territory is covered by it. Radio designed programs for armed forces, women and children, tribal people, students, industrial workers etc. as well as family welfare health programs and got widespread response. Radio can be called as "localized medium, with special appeal to a well-defined demographic group." (Sharma 169)

Radio reached the average household to offer novel experience with the daily broadcast of news, live cricket commentary, interviews and cultural segments such as dance, drama including Hindi film entertainment. It brought the country

together for moments of national importance including presidential addresses. Radio connected people at home to the larger world. The power of radio increased its popularity with its live presence in the house. This was the era in which on-air personalities such as Amin Sayani began gaining listeners at a rapid pace. In spite of the rise of television, and later the Internet, radio continues to occupy a place in modern media. National radio channel such as All India Radio still broadcast regular segments on topics of common interest such as agriculture, education, politics, current affairs, sports, business and weather to keep audience informed of all age groups as well as entertainment, music and film industries are flourished with FM channels. Radio gives society an opportunity to listen to live and recorded music free of charge. There are live radio shows where audiences request and listen to their favorite music. Radio provides a platform for social campaigns targeting the larger society due to its wide coverage.

Social Transformation through Television

Television can be called as technological extension of radio but at the same time it reached common household and surprised with audio-visual appeal. Television with its technological novelty influenced personal and social lives of audience from all age groups and from different social strata.

Television has contributed greatly in modifying attitudes and behavior to promote, progress and development as well as it has shaped popular culture. Television service started in India on September 15, 1959. It began as a medium to create social awareness with the chief objective to support the strategy and programs of social and economic development such as improvement in literacy rate, awareness of social issues, cultivating civic consciousness and respect for law and order, setting national goals, agricultural development etc. From its beginning in all its moves television has reflected progressive values. Television audience experienced intimacy and personal involvement. It can be considered as the most massive medium in terms of its reach, popularity and broadcasting. Television brought mass and class together thereby bridging the gap between the otherwise fragmented and individuated society.

Television with its national, regional and local services covered diverse issues in different domains ranging from social, political, economic, educational, literary etc. With television new age of communication and education began. Doordarshan since its inception influenced the common people about social issues through various informative programs such as 'Surabhi', educational programs such as 'Countrywide classroom', consumer awakening through talk shows and interviews etc. Gradually with its development black and white TV took new form in the Eastman color to make audience crazy with something they had seen never before. The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's address to the nation on August 15, 1982 was Doordarshan's first direct color transmission over the national network. Television with its visual appeal reached the rural population with lower literacy rate at one side and beyond boundaries of our country on another side. With emergence of private channels television audience were open with multiple choice but still doordarshan has retained its importance in

regional and rural parts. Indeed “Television has played a vital role in promoting unity and national integrity in India” (Sharma, 178). Till today television is serving the purpose of creating social awareness with advertisements on current social issues such as ‘Save Girl child’, ‘Women’s Education’, ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan’ etc. Television brought next stage in the revolution in the human communication which is characteristic of twentieth century. Many industries such as advertising, beauty, music, film and entertainment are flourished with television. Therefore “Television takes its place beside the great developments of the twentieth century alongside atomic energy and supersonic flight.” (Manvell 115)

Models of Mass Communication

Social transformation of Indian society with emergence of radio and television can be analyzed with four models of mass communication. Eminent scholar in the area of communication Denis McQuail in *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* has given detailed account of four models of mass communication, namely, transmission model, expressive or ritual model, publicity model and reception model. The process of mass communication incorporates features of mass production, reproduction and distribution which are significant in creating and enhancing impact of means of mass communication such as radio and television.

Transmission model

The first model, transmission model views communication as a process of transmission of information from sender to receiver. In the context of current paper this model identifies “a new communication role between society and audience.”(McQuail, 70) The transmission model suggests that media gives access to the views and voices of larger audience with complete neutrality in a secular society as they contribute to the work of other social institutes. Radio and television contributed to social transformation with its power to rule minds of larger groups called masses.

Expressive or Ritual model

The second model, the expressive or ritual model emphasizes role of audience who are also receivers. Here source is constitutive of events, views and voices and audiences are receivers. This model suggests that radio and television selectively play the role of mass communicators and selection is undertaken according to assessment of what the audience find interesting i. e. feedback. This model considers that mass communication as a self-regulating process because it is guided by interests and demands of audience and therefore it is strongly shaped by its feedback. It views satisfaction of the audience as a result of effective information transfer. With reference to this model it can be stated that radio and television played audience-centered role as means of mass communication. They became agents of social transformation. The ritual or expressive model of communication considers process of mass communication as ritual and therefore it is associated with terms such as sharing, participation, fellowship and possession of common faith. The model suggests that

communication depends on shared understanding or emotion. It emphasizes the complete satisfaction of receivers. It aims at more integration for social relationships identifying role of mass media as an unifying agent. These characteristics of communication can be traced in radio and television.

Publicity model

The third model, publicity model stresses on gaining audience revenue as economic goal which means notwithstanding the function of mass communication of information and persuasion attention gaining, arousing emotions and stimulating interest are other significant functions of mass communication. With the rise of radio and television the involvement and participation of audience in the transfer of content is increased. It contributed to the gratification of senses which resulted in the popularity and demand of radio and television.

Reception model

The fourth and last model, reception model is associated with semiology and discourse which lays stress on “polysemic” (McQuail, 73) nature of media messages as they have multiple meanings. Author Dennis McQuail identifies television programs or any equivalent media messages as meaningful discourse. Therefore, media messages are interpreted with reference to the context. After the message is transferred from sender to receiver it is received, interpreted, reinterpreted and sometimes rejected. He states key principles of the model as “the multiplicity of meanings of media content; the existence of varied ‘interpretive’ communities and the primacy of the receiver in determining meaning. (McQuail 74)

The transmission model is more applicable to the institutional structure of society. It is appropriate to analyze media activities which are instructional, informative or propagandist. The expressive or ritual model is applicable to aesthetic content or artistic presentation of media message. As the name itself suggests the publicity model reflects the central media goals of attracting audience. It covers large sector of media activities engaged in advertising directly or indirectly. Finally, the fourth model emphasizes the role of receivers to mould the media content. Though the analysis of process of mass communication through models of communication process gives us an insight of the long-lasting impact of radio and television on Indian society since their inception the effects of radio and television on society are far more diverse and determinant that the analysis based on these models.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

To validate the idea of current research paper samples fifty undergraduates of mass media studies studying in Smt. P. N. Doshi College, Ghatkopar (west), Mumbai was collected. When they were asked, “Do you think radio and television could bring social transformation in Indian society?” the reply was emphatically positive by all the students. When the students were asked to give reasons for considering that radio and television could bring social transformation in Indian society their response was as follows:

1. 50% students stated that with radio and television audience played active role in the process of mass communication as they got a platform to express their views. This can be associated with the expressive model of mass communication.
2. 23% students said that awareness about social, educational, political, regional and many significant current issues and contemporary realities of national and international importance could be effectively created through mass media.
3. 20% students identified the significant role of television in giving information. They said knowledge gaining process is facilitated through various channels on television such as History, National Geographic, discovery channel etc.
4. 7% students emphasized on role of radio and television to flourish advertising industry as with the emergence and growth of means of mass communication advertising industry too developed. Advertisements are major publicity tools which have transformed role of audiences from consumers to producers. This can be related to publicity model of mass communication. Emergence and spread of means of mass communication resulted in rapid growth of advertising industry which increased job opportunities.

The abovementioned research findings of the survey conducted of mass media students support the research topic that radio and television as means of mass communication could bring social transformation which led to further transforming changes in the lives of Indian people.

CONCLUSION

Considering the multilingual nature of audience in India broadcasting has been an interesting and challenging phenomenon. As author Diwakar Sharma has stated in the book *Mass Communication Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* “most people still maintain that broadcasting can and does substantially contribute to the well-being of society . . . it could revolutionize public opinion, develop or transform public taste.” (Sharma 165) There came a period of transition all over the world with broadcasting. Very soon after their introduction television and radio became powerful agents of socialization. Social transformation through radio and television was unplanned, unexpected and people became part of this change unknowingly.

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