

BMC-III PAPER-IV (MEDIA ISSUES)

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FREEDOM OF MEDIA

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

The media in India enjoys a lot of freedom. The Constitution of India, however, does not guarantee absolute freedom for the different mass media. But the Indian Constitution guarantees *freedom of speech and expression* to all citizens of India. This provision, according to interpretations by the courts, includes freedom of the mass media.

While the Constitution of India grants freedom to the different media, there are many reasonable restrictions also.

But what is important is that there have been many occasions when various Governments in power have tried to control the media.

In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects media freedom. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

1.0 Objectives

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Presentation of Content
 - 1.2.1 Media Freedom- A Global Perspective
 - 1.2.2 Media Freedom- An Indian Perspective
- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Key Words
- 1.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 1.6 References/Suggested Reading

1.0 OBJECTIVES:

Freedom means an atmosphere where one can work with out fear. Freedom is important for mass media as they perform many crucial tasks as part of their objectives. Certain countries recognize this and have created such situations of freedom through legislation, etc. But in most

countries the Press and other mass media work under constant vigil of Government bodies. There have been many instances when the freedom of media has been suppressed. There have been cases of oppression against the mass media.

In this lesson we shall try to cover the various aspects of media freedom. Specifically, the objectives of this lesson are:

- To have a Global Perspective about Freedom of Media, and
- To have an Indian Perspective about Media Freedom

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Legislation in the shape of Laws and Acts, etc., is a convenient way of controlling the mass media. Many countries have tried this method since a long time now. Other means of suppressing media freedom are oppressive measures like raids, seizures, arrests, fines, etc.

Only few countries like the USA have ensured freedom of media in a direct manner. Most countries, like in India, have some indirect measure. Almost all countries have provisions that impose restrictions in a reasonable manner.

In India, much legislation has been enacted in this direction. Most Governments feel that they have the right to enact such Acts and Laws with a view towards restricting the freedom of expression *in the interest of the State, with regard to friendly relations with foreign States, with regard to public order, with regard to decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence.*

The various aspects of media freedom, both in the global and Indian contexts, shall be discussed in this lesson.

1.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

Media Freedom- A Global Perspective

Media Freedom- An Indian Perspective

1.2.1 MEDIA FREEDOM- A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

Freedom of the various mass media has always been a contentious issue all over the world. Mass media all over face a wide variety of problems and setbacks with regard to freedom. It is surprising that even in today's modern era, the mass media still face freedom related problems.

According to a major research study conducted in 2006, media freedom suffered setbacks in a number of important countries in Asia and Africa in the last few years. The most significant declines occurred in Asia (East Timor, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand), Africa (Uganda, Botswana, and Ethiopia), and the former Soviet Union (Russia and Uzbekistan). The study, *"Freedom of the Press 2006: A Global Survey of Media Independence,"* showed continued volatility in Africa, as well as a continuation of a longer-term pattern of decline in press freedom in Latin America and the former Soviet Union.

These findings are a source of real concern. It is particularly surprising and disturbing that even in countries that have achieved overall democratic progress, media are not free. The report, however, did find some improvements in a number of countries in Africa, such as Kenya, Mauritania, and Liberia, as well as in Egypt, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

The survey, first launched in 1980, assesses the degree of print, broadcast, and Internet freedom in every country in the world. It assigns each country a numerical score from 0 to 100 that determines a category rating of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. Ratings are determined by examining three broad categories: the legal environment in which media operate, political influences on reporting and access to information, and economic pressures on content and the dissemination of news.

The survey, which analyzed events during the 2006 calendar year, bases its ratings not only on government actions and policies but also on the behavior of the press (and other media) itself in testing boundaries, even in restrictive environments.

GLOBAL TRENDS:

Out of the 194 countries and territories examined, the following were the results:

- *73 countries (38 percent) were rated Free,*
- *54 countries (28 percent) were rated Partly Free, and*
- *67 countries (34 percent) were rated Not Free.*

In terms of population, 17 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries that enjoy a Free press, while 40 percent have a Partly Free press and 43 percent have a Not Free press. According to the 2006 survey, two countries improved in category while two declined. On the positive side, two African countries, Kenya and Mauritania, improved from Not Free to Partly Free. Showing declines from Free to Partly Free status were Botswana and East Timor.

In a key finding, the survey showed a pattern of continued decline in media freedom in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past fifteen years. The number of Free press

countries dropped from 23 in 1990 to 17 in 2005, the most significant decline for any region. Another region to undergo a notable decline was the former Soviet Union, which showed an increase of Not Free countries from 7 in 1995 to 10 in 2005.

Modest gains were registered by several countries in the Middle East and North Africa, most notably Egypt, where Internet and satellite television have expanded access to information, and where journalists are pushing the envelope of a slightly more tolerant political environment. However, the vast majority of countries in the region (84%) remain in the Not Free category.

These improvements are largely due to the impact of new media, including the Internet, as well as to the courage of individual journalists and editors and their increasing willingness to push the boundaries.

REGIONAL TRENDS:

In the Americas, 17 countries (49 percent) were rated Free, 14 countries (40 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 4 countries (11 percent) were rated Not Free in 2006. Of special concern are Mexico, whose score declined largely due to a continuing wave of violence against journalists; Venezuela, where the government of President Hugo Chavez has continued its efforts to control the press; and Argentina, where the national and state governments have made widespread use of advertising to dominate the press.

The Asia Pacific region exhibited a relatively high level of freedom, with 17 countries (42.5 percent) rated Free, 8 countries (20 percent) rated Partly Free, and 15 countries (37.5 percent) rated Not Free.

Press freedom declined in the Philippines because of a continued high level of physical violence directed against reporters coupled with increasing official intolerance towards investigative journalists. In Thailand, sustained attempts to intimidate and control the media through the use of exorbitant libel suits against individual journalists, as well as economic means such as buying shares in newspapers, led to a more restricted environment.

Conditions in Nepal declined as media faced heightened pressures as part of a broader crackdown on civil liberties that followed a February 2005 "palace coup" in which King Gyanendra assumed executive powers and imposed a state of emergency. Censorship was instituted at major media outlets, journalists were subject to arrest and detention, and the government pushed through restrictive amendments to the media laws and attempted to shut down independent radio stations.

In Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, 8 countries (30 percent) were classified as Free, 9 countries (33 percent) as Partly Free, and 10 countries (37 percent) as Not Free.

The Middle- East region continued to show the lowest region-wide ratings, with 1 country (5 percent)--Israel--rated Free, 2 countries (11 percent) rated Partly Free, and 16 countries (84 percent)--including the Israeli-Occupied Territories and Palestinian Authority--rated Not Free.

In the Sub-Saharan Africa, 7 countries (14.5 percent) were rated Free, 19 countries (39.5 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 22 countries (46 percent) remain rated Not Free.

Western Europe continued to claim the highest level of press freedom worldwide. In 2005, 23 countries (92 percent) were rated Free and 2 countries (8 percent) were rated Partly Free. In 2003, Italy joined Turkey as the only countries in the region to be rated Partly Free, which was the first time since 1988 that media in a EU member state have been rated by the survey as Partly Free.

WORST OF THE WORST:

The five worst rated countries in 2006 continued to be Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, and Turkmenistan. In these states, independent media are either nonexistent or barely able to operate, the role of the press is reduced to serving as a mouthpiece for the ruling regime, and citizens' access to unbiased information is severely limited.

Press freedom conditions also remained dire in Belarus, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe, where authoritarian governments used legal pressure, imprisonment, and other forms of harassment to severely curtail the ability of independent media to report freely.

RAYS OF HOPE- TOWARDS FREEDOM:

Britain's public figures are getting ready for a new era of media intrusion into their lives following a ruling by the country's highest court. This ruling now allows newspapers to print virtually anything in the name of "public interest."

Now, journalists will not risk prosecution for libel for publishing potentially defamatory allegations that later turn out to be untrue provided they can show that at the time they decided to publish them they honestly believed these to be true and in the public interest.

The British media have unanimously hailed this judgment as a "victory" for free press. This ruling grants journalists the right to publish defamatory allegations as part of their duty to

raise matters of public interest. The fear of libel will not discourage them from reporting issues of substance and public importance so long as they act in good faith and with responsibility.

The key test in deciding libel in future would be whether a newspaper or a media organization behaved "fairly and responsibly in gathering and publishing the information." If they did behave fairly and responsibly and the allegations were in public interest, then it would not matter if they were defamatory and could not be proved.

While deciding a libel case, courts would still rely on the nature of sources of information behind a story and whether the information had been properly checked but the overriding test would be public interest and the editor's good sense. Courts would "normally expect that the source or sources were ones which the publisher had good reason to think reliable, that the publisher himself believed the information to be true, and that he had done what he could to check it," one of the judges said.

Media law experts say, the judgment now frees serious investigative journalism from the "chilling effect" of libel action. It also allows journalists to publish and defend stories without jeopardizing their sources.

1.2.2 MEDIA FREEDOM- AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE:

The present Government's Media Policy includes a draft *Broadcast Services Regulation Bill*. This Bill envisages the creation of a Broadcast Regulatory Authority, empowered to administer a content code. This Bill will also allow the government to restrict cross-media holdings of media enterprises.

The Government's proposed legislative initiative against the media has been branded as "undemocratic". Many media experts opine that a threat to the freedom of the media is a serious threat to the country's economic viability. Others point out that, these new initiatives are a threat to the media's freedom to report, inform and educate. Many say, "In a democratic society, content in the media should only be subject to self-regulation". Experts opine that a sufficient framework of laws exists to ensure that the media did not misuse the freedom guaranteed by the Constitution.

Voicing concern over the proposed restrictions on cross-media holdings, experts and media owners say, "newspaper enterprises have made large investments in the broadcast media, in which the investment market has also taken a significant position. These investments could not be jeopardized.

In this context, it is important to understand the historical background media freedom in India.

MEDIA FREEDOM IN INDIA- THE EARLY HISTORY:

The very first printed newspaper in India was James Augustus Hicky's Bengal Gazette. This newspaper was published in 1780. This paper continued with a lot of difficulties for about one year. It stopped when the printing press was confiscated and its editor-publisher was arrested and deported back to England. Hicky faced a lot of oppressive and suppressive measures.

Attempts at curbing the freedom of media started even before Hicky's Gazette was published. In 1776, a former East India Company employee, William Bolts wanted to publish a newspaper. Immediately, the British Government ordered William Bolts to leave the country.

Many newspapers were published subsequently. But the oppressive measures and harassment by the British Government continued. In 1795, *censorship* was introduced for the first time. The other oppressive measures like *deportation* and *denial of postal privileges* continued.

In 1799, Marquess of Wellesley enacted the first Press regulations. The Wellesley regulation required the newspapers to print the names of printers, publishers, and editors. This regulation also continued with pre-censorship. Thankfully, Warren Hastings abolished these regulations.

Governor General John Adams enacted the next major regulation in 1823. He introduced *licensing of the Press* . This regulation was replaced by the Metcalfe's Act in 1835. Metcalfe's Act required a newspaper to declare the address of the printer and of the publication.

In 1857, Metcalfe's Act was abolished and Lord Canning reintroduced *licensing of the Press* . Now it was compulsory to declare even printers, publishers, and editors of other publications like books, etc., in addition to newspapers. This paved way for the *Press and Registration of Books Act* that was enacted in 1867.

But before that, in 1860, the Indian Penal Code was enacted. This was a very comprehensive Act. The IPC contained Press related issues like *defamation* and *obscenity* . Sedition was introduced in 1870.

As we have already discussed, in 1867, the *Press and Registration of Books Act* was enacted. This is the oldest surviving Law related to the Press.

In 1878, a law specifically meant for the regional Press was enacted. This was called the *Vernacular Press Act*. This Act empowered the Government to enter and search newspaper premises. However, this Act was repealed in 1881.

The *Criminal Procedure Act* (Cr.P.C) was enacted in 1882. This Act was consolidated in 1898 and empowered the Government to search and forfeit publications.

In 1908, the *Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act* was enacted. This was followed by the enactment of the *Indian Press Act* in 1910.

The next major Press related law was the *Official Secrets Act*. This Act was enacted in 1923.

So it is quite clear that the media did not enjoy much freedom during the British Raj.

MEDIA FREEDOM IN INDIA- THE POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY:

The first major Act that was enacted in Independent India was the *Press (Objectionable Matter) Act*. This was enacted in 1951. In the same year the *First Press Commission* was established. Following the recommendations of the *First Press Commission*, the *Working Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act* was enacted in 1955. This was followed by the *Working Journalists (Fixation of Rates of Wage) Act* was enacted in 1958.

Before this, the *Newspaper (Price and Page Schedule) Act* was enacted in 1956. However, the Supreme Court in the *Sakal Papers vs. Union of India* case struck down this Act as unconstitutional in 1962.

In 1956, the *Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication Act)* was enacted. This Act was popularly known as the Firoze Gandhi Act.

The next year, in 1957, the *Copy Right Act* was enacted.

The next Act was the *Press Council Act* that was enacted in 1965. This Act was repealed in 1976 by Mrs Indira Gandhi's government. It was again re-enacted in 1978, by the Janata Party government.

The *Contempt of Court Act* was enacted in 1971.

ADVERTISING AND FREEDOM OF MEDIA:

It is often said that *advertising controls most of the mass media*. This is because most of the mass media, except perhaps books, are at the mercy of advertisers. Most mass media including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet are dependent on advertising.

In other words, advertising does control mass media. Advertisers have the upper hand here as the mass media earn maximum revenue through advertisements. Advertisers exercise a lot of control over the functioning of mass media. Negative stories about advertisers cannot be published or broadcast in mass media. Also advertisers tell mass media to publish or broadcast positive stories. Some advertisers go to the extent of controlling editorial policy of media to whom they give ads.

This is a sad state of affairs as interference by advertisers amounts to curtailing the freedom of mass media.

Mass media often always thrive on credibility. This is earned in a hard way after years and decades of dedicated work. Credibility is the back bone any mass medium's success and popularity. Mass media that are controlled by advertisers suffer loss of credibility. Also media lose influence with loss of credibility.

This problem is very severe in case of the broadcast media. In case of radio, and particularly television, advertisers pay for both the television commercials as well as many of the programmes. In case of Public Service broadcasters like BBC and Doordarshan, only some programmes are sponsored. But in case of private television channels, almost all the programmes are sponsored. In fact, in some TV news channels, even the headlines and the weather segments are sponsored. Advertisers exert considerable pressure and influence over the content of such sponsored programmes.

From the very beginning, mass media have failed to generate enough revenues from their consumers. In most cases, what the audiences pay to the media is pittance. Thus they have always depended on Government support, patronage by political parties, and advertising revenues.

1.3 SUMMARY:

- Only few countries like the USA have ensured freedom of media in a direct manner. Most countries, like in India, have some indirect measure. Almost all countries have provisions that impose restrictions in a reasonable manner.
- In India, much legislation has been enacted in this direction. Most Governments feel that they have the right to enact such Acts and Laws with a view towards restricting the freedom of expression *in the interest of the State, with regard to friendly relations with foreign States, with regard to public order, with regard to decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence.*

- In the Americas, 17 countries (49 percent) were rated Free, 14 countries (40 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 4 countries (11 percent) were rated Not Free in 2006. Of special concern are Mexico, whose score declined largely due to a continuing wave of violence against journalists; Venezuela, where the government of President Hugo Chavez has continued its efforts to control the press; and Argentina, where the national and state governments have made widespread use of advertising to dominate the press.
- The Asia Pacific region exhibited a relatively high level of freedom, with 17 countries (42.5 percent) rated Free, 8 countries (20 percent) rated Partly Free, and 15 countries (37.5 percent) rated Not Free.
- Attempts at curbing the freedom of media started even before Hicky's Gazette was published. In 1776, a former East India Company employee, William Bolts wanted to publish a newspaper. Immediately, the British Government ordered William Bolts to leave the country.
- In 1795, *censorship* was introduced for the first time. The other oppressive measures like *deportation* and *denial of postal privileges* continued.
- Governor General John Adams enacted the next major regulation in 1823. He introduced *licensing of the Press*. This regulation was replaced by the Metcalfe's Act in 1835. Metcalfe's Act required a newspaper to declare the address of the printer and of the publication.
- In 1857, Metcalfe's Act was abolished and Lord Canning reintroduced *licensing of the Press*. Now it was compulsory to declare even printers, publishers, and editors of other publications like books, etc., in addition to newspapers. This paved way for the *Press and Registration of Books Act* that was enacted in 1867.
- In 1878, a law specifically meant for the regional Press was enacted. This was called the *Vernacular Press Act*. This Act empowered the Government to enter and search newspaper premises. However, this Act was repealed in 1881.
- The *Criminal Procedure Act* (Cr.P.C) was enacted in 1882. This Act was consolidated in 1898 and empowered the Government to search and forfeit publications. In 1908, the *Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act* was enacted. This was followed by the enactment of the *Indian Press Act* in 1910. The next major Press related law was the *Official Secrets Act*. This Act was enacted in 1923.
- The first major Act that was enacted in Independent India was the *Press (Objectionable Matter) Act*. This was enacted in 1951. In the same year the *First Press Commission* was established. Following the recommendations of the *First Press Commission*, the *Working*

Journalists and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act was enacted in 1955. This was followed by the *Working Journalists (Fixation of Rates of Wage)* was enacted in 1958.

- In 1956, the *Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication Act)* was enacted. This Act was popularly known as the Firoze Gandhi Act. The next year, in 1957, the *Copy Right Act* was enacted. The next Act was the *Press Council Act* that was enacted in 1965. This Act was repealed in 1976 by Mrs Indira Gandhi's government. It was again re-enacted in 1978, by the Janata Party government. The *Contempt of Court Act* was enacted in 1971.
- It is often said that *advertising controls most of the mass media*. This is because most of the mass media, except perhaps books, are at the mercy of advertisers. Most mass media including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet are dependent on advertising.
- Mass media often always thrive on credibility. This is earned in a hard way after years and decades of dedicated work. Credibility is the back bone any mass medium's success and popularity. Mass media that are controlled by advertisers suffer loss of credibility. Also media lose influence with loss of credibility.

1.4 KEY WORDS:

Mass Media and Advertising: It is often said that *advertising controls most of the mass media*. This is because most of the mass media, except perhaps books, are at the mercy of advertisers. Most mass media including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet are dependent on advertising.

Mass media and Credibility: Mass media often always thrive on credibility. This is earned in a hard way after years and decades of dedicated work. Credibility is the back bone any mass medium's success and popularity. Mass media that are controlled by advertisers suffer loss of credibility. Also media lose influence with loss of credibility.

1.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed essay on freedom of media.
2. Throw light on freedom of media in India.
3. The Indian media has gone through many problematic phases with regard to freedom during its history. Discuss in detail.

4. Discuss the interrelationship between media and Government with regard to freedom and suppression.

1.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

History of Press, Press Laws and Communications; by B. N. Ahuja; 1988.

Laws of the Press; by Durga Das Basu, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1986.

Press Laws; by Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 1971.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

Over seventy countries around the world have implemented some form of freedom of information legislation. Such legislation sets rules on access to information or records held by government bodies. The oldest of such laws is Sweden's *Freedom of the Press Act of 1766*. Many countries have some legislation with regard to right to information. Many more countries are working towards introducing such laws.

In general, such laws define a legal process by which government information is available to the public. In many countries there are vague constitutional guarantees for the right of access to information, but usually these are useless without specific legislation to support them. After long years of deliberations, India finally has a Right to Information Act.

In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects of right to information, specifically in the Indian context. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

2.0 Objectives

2.1 *Introduction*

2.2 *Presentation of Content*

2.2.1 *Background*

2.2.2 *State-level Acts*

2.2.3 *Freedom of Information Act*

2.2.4 *Enactment*

2.2.5 *Scope*

2.2.6 *Facilities*

2.2.7 *Process*

2.2.8 *Provisions*

2.2.9 *Information defined*

2.2.10 *Right to information*

- 2.2.11 *What is not open to disclosure?*
- 2.2.12 *Exclusions*
- 2.2.13 *Role of the government*
- 2.2.14 *Officers and their obligations*
- 2.2.15 *RTI Legislation in Different Countries*
- 2.3 *Summary*
- 2.4 *Key Words*
- 2.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*
- 2.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

People require information held by the governmental bodies and organizations for a wide variety of reasons. These organizations do not always want to part with most information. This necessitates legislation for ensuring right to information.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about various aspects of right to information. Specifically, the objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Know About the Background of the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the State-level Acts*
- *To Know About the Freedom of Information Act*
- *To Know About the Enactment of the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the Scope of the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the Facilities in the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the Process of the Getting Information through the RTI Act*
- *To Know About the Provisions of the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the Information defined*
- *To Know About the Right to information*
- *To Know About the What is not open to disclosure in the RTI Act?*
- *To Know About the Exclusions in the Right to Information Act*
- *To Know About the Role of the government*
- *To Know About the Officers and their obligations*
- *RTI Legislation in Different Countries*

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

A basic principle behind most freedom of information legislation is that the burden of proof falls on the organization asked for information, not the person asking for it. The requester does not usually have to give an explanation for their request, but if the information is not disclosed a valid reason has to be given. This is why many countries do not want such legislation. However quite a few countries have legislation related to right to information.

Many countries around the world have Laws or Acts related to right to information. Some countries with existing legislation are: Albania, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Zimbabwe.

India is one of the latest entrants to the Right to Information club. The Right to Information Act 2005 (Act No. 22/2005)[1] was a law enacted by the Parliament of India giving Indians (except those in the State of Jammu and Kashmir who have their own special law) access to Government records. Under the terms of the Act, any person may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or instrumentality of State), which is expected to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came into force on 13 October 2005. The Official Secrets Act 1923 and various other special laws, which the new RTI Act now overrides, hitherto restricted information disclosure in India.

2.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Background*
- *State-level Acts*
- *Freedom of Information Act*
- *Enactment*
- *Scope*
- *Facilities*
- *Process*

- *Provisions*
- *Information defined*
- *Right to information*
- *What is not open to disclosure?*
- *Exclusions*
- *Role of the government*
- *Officers and their obligations*

2.2.1 BACKGROUND:

A law enacted during the British rule, the Official Secrets Act of 1889 that was last amended in 1923, governed disclosure of government-related information in India. Though the intent of this law was to secure only information related to security of the State, sovereignty of the country and friendly relations with foreign states, it contained provisions, which could make it a crime to disclose even non-classified information. Civil Service Conduct Rules and the Indian Evidence Act put further restrictions on government officials' powers to disclose information to the public.

In 1975, the Supreme Court delivered a judgement, which held that *"the people have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries"*.

2.2.2 STATES WITH RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACTS:

A few state governments have successfully enacted the RTI Laws: Tamil Nadu (1997), Goa (1997), Rajasthan (2000), Karnataka (2000), Delhi (2001), Maharashtra (2002), Madhya Pradesh (2003), Assam (2002), and Jammu and Kashmir (2004).

2.2.3 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:

Passage of a national level law related to right to information proved to be a difficult task. Given the experience of state governments in passing practicable legislation, the Central Government appointed a working group under H. D. Shourie and assigned it the task of drafting legislation. The Shourie Draft, in an extremely diluted form, was the basis for the Freedom of Information Bill, 2000 that eventually became law under the Freedom of Information Act, 2002.

This Act was severely criticized for permitting too many exemptions, not only under the standard grounds of national security and sovereignty, but also for requests that would involve "disproportionate diversion of the resources of a public authority". There was no upper limit on the charges that could be levied. There were no penalties for not complying with a request for information. The Freedom of Information Act, consequently, never came into effective force.

2.2.4 ENACTMENT OF THE RTI ACT:

The doomed Freedom of Information Act led to sustained pressure for a better National RTI enactment. The first draft of the Right to Information Bill was presented to Parliament on 22 December 2004. After intense debate, more than a hundred amendments to the draft Bill were made between December 2004 and 15 June 2005, when the bill finally passed. Finally the Right to information Act came into effect on 13 October 2005.

2.2.5 SCOPE:

The Act covers the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir. It is applicable to all constitutional authorities, including the executive, legislature and judiciary; any institution or body established or constituted by an act of Parliament or a state legislature or by order or notification of appropriate government. In special circumstances bodies "owned, controlled or substantially financed" by government, or non-Government organizations "substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds" provided by the government are also covered.

The Indian Right to Information Act was introduced to the Indian Parliament in July 2000. It came into effect on 12 Oct 2005. Under this law the information has become a fundamental right of the citizen. Under this law all Government Bodies or Government funded agencies have to designate a Public Information officer (PIO). The PIO's responsibility is to ensure that information requested is disclosed to the petitioner within 30 days or within 48 hours in case of information concerning the life and liberty of a person.

The law was inspired by previous legislations from select states (among them Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Delhi etc) that allowed the right to information (to different degrees) to citizens about activities of any State Government body.

A number of high profile disclosures revealed corruption in various government schemes such as scams in Public Distribution Systems (ration stores), disaster relief, construction of highways etc. The law itself has been hailed as a landmark in India's drive towards more openness and accountability.

However the RTI India has certain weaknesses that hamper implementation. There have been questions on the lack speedy appeal to non-compliance to requests. The lack of a central PIO makes it difficult to pinpoint the correct PIO to approach for requests. The PIO being an officer of the Govt. institution may have a vested interest in disclosing damaging information on activities of his/her Institution, This therefore creates a conflict of interest. In the state of Maharashtra it was estimated that only 30% of the requests are actually realized under the

Maharashtra Right to Information act. The law also bares disclosure of information that affects national security, defense, and other matters that are deemed of national interest.

2.2.6 FACILITIES:

The Act specifies that citizens have a right to:

- Request any information (as defined)
- Take copies of documents
- Inspect documents, works and records
- Take certified samples of materials of work.
- Obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

2.2.7 PROCESS:

Under the Act, all complying departments have to designate an official as the Public Information Officer (PIO). Any citizen of India may submit a request to the PIO for information in any format, paper or electronic. It is the PIO's responsibility to ensure that the information is obtained from the appropriate department or section. If the request pertains to another public authority (in whole or part) it is the PIO's responsibility to transfer/forward the concerned portions of the request to a PIO of the other within 5 days.

In addition, the Central government has designated certain officials as Assistant Public Information Officers (APIOs). Their charge is not confined to any specific department, but they have the responsibility of receiving all RTI requests and forwarding it to the PIOs of the appropriate departments.

The person making the request is not obliged to explain why the information is needed. The Act specifies timeframes for complying with the request.

- If the request has been made to the PIO, compliance is expected within 30 days.
- If the request has been made to an APIO, compliance is expected within 35 days.
- If the PIO transfers the request to some other department (better concerned with the information requested), the time allowed is 35 days.
- Information about Human Rights violations by Security agencies have to be provided within 45 days.
- However, in any of the above cases, if life or liberty is involved, the PIO has to comply within 48 hours.

Since the information is to be paid for, the time between the reply of the PIO and the time taken to deposit the further fees for information is excluded from the time allowed. If information is not provided within this period, it is treated as a refusal. Refusal with or without reasons may be ground for appeal.

For Central departments as of 2006, there is a fee of Rs. 10 for filing the request, Rs. 2 per page of information and Rs. 5 for each hour of inspection after the first hour. States fix their own rules.

2.2.8 PROVISIONS:

The Right to Information Act has the following important provisions:

- Obligations of public authorities
- Designation of Public Information Officers and Assistant Public Information Officers
- Constitution of Central Information Commission
- Constitution of State Information Commission
- Non-applicability of the Act to Intelligence and Security Organizations
- Power to make rules to carry out the provisions of the act.

2.2.9 INFORMATION DEFINED:

In terms of the section 2(f) of the Act, information has been defined as:

Any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.

2.2.10 RIGHT TO INFORMATION:

Under the Act, right to information includes the right to -

- Inspect works, documents, and records.
- Take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records.
- Take certified samples of material.
- Obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, and videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

2.2.11 WHAT IS NOT OPEN TO DISCLOSURE?

The following is exempt from disclosure:

- Information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State, relation with foreign State or lead to incitement of an offence
- Information which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court;
- Information, the disclosure of which would cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or the State Legislature;
- Information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information;
- Information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information;
- Information received in confidence from foreign Government;
- Information, the disclosure of which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or identify the source of information or assistance given in confidence for law enforcement or security purposes;
- Information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders;
- Cabinet papers including records of deliberations of the Council of Ministers, Secretaries and other officers;
- Information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual;
- Notwithstanding any of the exemptions listed above, a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to the protected interests.

2.2.12 EXCLUSIONS:

Central Intelligence and Security agencies specified in the Second Schedule like IB, RAW, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Enforcement, Narcotics Control Bureau, Aviation Research Centre, Special Frontier Force, BSF,

CRPF, ITBP, CISF, NSG, Assam Rifles, Special Service Bureau, Special Branch (CID), Andaman and Nicobar, The Crime Branch-CID-CB, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Special Branch, Lakshadweep Police. Agencies specified by the State Governments through a Notification will also be excluded.

The exclusion, however, is not absolute and these organizations have an obligation to provide information pertaining to allegations of corruption and human rights violations. Further, information relating to allegations of human rights valuations could be given but only with the approval of the Central or State Information Commission

2.2.13 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:

As stated in the section 26 of the Act, the Act enjoins upon the federal government, as also the state governments of the Republic of India to initiate necessary steps to:

- Develop educational programmes for the public especially disadvantaged communities on RTI.
- Encourage Public Authorities to participate in the development and organization of such programmes.
- Promote timely dissemination of accurate information to the public.
- Train officers and develop training materials.
- Compile and disseminate a User Guide for the public in the respective official language.
- Publish names, designation postal addresses and contact details of PIOs and other information such as notices regarding fees to be paid, remedies available in law if request is rejected etc.

POWER TO MAKE RULES:

Central Government, State Governments and the Competent Authority as defined in the Act are vested with powers to make rules to carry out the provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions in the Act, the Central Government may, by Order published in the Official Gazette, make provisions necessary/expedient for removing the difficulty.

2.2.14 OFFICERS AND THEIR OBLIGATIONS:

Here is some basic information about the officials associated with the RTI Act.

What are the obligations of public authority?

What does a "public authority" mean?

Who are Public Information Officers (PIOs)?

What are the duties of a PIO?

What are the obligations of public authority?

It shall publish within one hundred and twenty days of the enactment:

- The particulars of its organization, functions and duties;
- The powers and duties of its officers and employees;
- The procedure followed in its decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability;
- The norms set by it for the discharge of its functions;
- The rules, regulations, instructions, manuals and records used by its employees for discharging its functions;
- A statement of the categories of the documents held by it or under its control;
- The particulars of any arrangement that exists for consultation with, or representation by the members of the public, in relation to the formulation of policy or implementation thereof;
- A statement of the boards, councils, committees and other bodies consisting of two or more persons constituted by it. Additionally, information as to whether the meetings of these are open to the public, or the minutes' of such meetings are accessible to the public;
- A directory of its officers and employees;
- The monthly remuneration received by each of its officers and employees, including the system of compensation as provided in its regulations;
- The budget allocated to each of its agency, indicating the particulars of all plans, proposed expenditures and reports on disbursements made;
- The manner of execution of subsidy programmes, including the amounts allocated and the details and beneficiaries of such programmes;
- Particulars of recipients of concessions, permits or authorizations granted by it;
- Details of the information available to, or held by it, reduced in an electronic form;
- The particulars of facilities available to citizens for obtaining information, including the working hours of a library or reading room, if maintained for public use;
- The names, designations and other particulars of the Public Information Officers. [S.4 (1)(b)]

What does a "public authority" mean?

It means any authority or body or institution of self-government established or constituted:

- By or under the Constitution;
- By any other law made by Parliament;
- By any other law made by State Legislature;
- By notification issued or order made by the appropriate Government and includes any-body owned, controlled or substantially financed non-Government organization substantially financed directly or indirectly by the appropriate Government.

Who are Public Information Officers (PIOs)?

PIOs are officers designated by the public authorities in all administrative units or offices under it to provide information to the citizens requesting for information under the Act. Any officer, whose assistance has been sought by the PIO for the proper discharge of his or her duties, shall render all assistance and for the purpose of contraventions of the provisions of this Act, such other officer shall be treated as a PIO.

What are the duties of a PIO?

- PIO shall deal with requests from persons seeking information and where the request cannot be made in writing, to render reasonable assistance to the person to reduce the same in writing.
- If the information requested for is held by or its subject matter is closely connected with the function of another public authority, the PIO shall transfer, within 5 days, the request to that other public authority and inform the applicant immediately.
- PIO may seek the assistance of any other officer for the proper discharge of his/her duties.
- PIO, on receipt of a request, shall as expeditiously as possible, and in any case within 30 days of the receipt of the request, either provide the information on payment of such fee as may be prescribed or reject the request for any of the reasons specified in S.8 or S.9.
- Where the information requested for concerns the life or liberty of a person, the same shall be provided within forty-eight hours of the receipt of the request.
- If the PIO fails to give decision on the request within the period specified, he shall be deemed to have refused the request.
- Where a request has been rejected, the PIO shall communicate to the requester - (i) the reasons for such rejection, (ii) the period within which an appeal against such rejection may be preferred, and (iii) the particulars of the Appellate Authority.

- PIO shall provide information in the form in which it is sought unless it would disproportionately divert the resources of the Public Authority or would be detrimental to the safety or preservation of the record in question.
- If allowing partial access, the PIO shall give a notice to the applicant, informing:
 - i. That only part of the record requested, after severance of the record containing information, which is exempt from disclosure, is being provided;
 - ii. The reasons for the decision, including any findings on any material question of fact, referring to the material on which those findings were based;
 - iii. The name and designation of the person giving the decision;
 - iv. The details of the fees calculated by him or her and the amount of fee which the applicant is required to deposit; and
 - v. His or her rights with respect to review of the decision regarding non-disclosure of part of the information, the amount of fee charged or the form of access provided.
- If information sought has been supplied by third party or is treated as confidential by that third party, the PIO shall give a written notice to the third party within 5 days from the receipt of the request and take its representation into consideration.
- Third party must be given a chance to make a representation before the PIO within 10 days from the date of receipt of such notice.

2.2.15 RIGHT TO INFORMATION LEGISLATION IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES:

Here are brief summarized notes on the Right to Information legislation in various countries:

AUSTRALIA: In Australia, the Freedom of Information Act 1982 was passed at the federal level in 1982, applying to all "ministers, departments and public authorities" of the Commonwealth. There is similar legislation in all states and territories: Australian Capital Territory, the Freedom of Information Act 1989; New South Wales, the Freedom of Information Act 1989; Northern Territory, the Information Act 2003[3]; Queensland, the Freedom of Information Act 1992; South Australia, the Freedom of Information Act 1991; Tasmania, the Freedom of Information Act 1991; Victoria, the Freedom of Information Act 1982[4]; and Western Australia, the Freedom of Information Act 1992[5].

BULGARIA: In Bulgaria, the Access to Public Information Act was passed in 2000, following a 1996 recommendation from the Constitutional Court to implement such a law.

CANADA: In Canada, the Access to Information Act allows citizens to demand records from federal bodies. The Information Commissioner of Canada enforces this. There is also a complementary Privacy Act, introduced in 1983. The purpose of the Privacy Act is to extend the present laws of Canada that protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by a federal government institution and that provide individuals with a right of access to that information. It is a Crown copyright. Complaints for possible violations of the Act may be reported to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

The various provinces and territories of Canada also have legislation governing access to government information; in many cases, this is also the provincial privacy legislation. For example, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act applies to the province of Ontario's provincial ministries and agencies, boards and most commissions, as well as community colleges and district health councils. In Quebec the Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information governs access to government information.

CHILE: In Chile, there is a constitutional provision for the freedom of information, but no Access to Public Information law. The right provided by the Constitution is regulated in the articles 11 of Law No 19,653, which modified Law No 18,575. In it, it is stated that administrative activities in the agencies of the public administration and documents of organizations that work with them are public. The public can request information with the following requirements: it has to be in a written matter and it does not have to be information already available to the public. Information has to be delivered in 48 hours.

COLOMBIA: In Colombia, the constitution gives a right of access to public information.

CROATIA: In Croatia, the Zakon O Pravu Na Pristup Informacijama (Act on the Right of Access to Information) of 2003 extends to all public authorities.

CZECH REPUBLIC: In the Czech Republic, the Act on Free Access to Information covers the "state agencies, territorial self-administration authorities and public institutions managing public funds" as well as any body authorized by the law to reach legal decisions relating to the public sector, to the extend of such authorization.

DENMARK: In Denmark, the Access to Public Administration Files Act of 1985 applies to most public agencies, and an unusual clause extends coverage to most private or public energy suppliers.

ECUADOR: In Ecuador, the Transparency and Access to Information Law of 2004 declares that the right of access to information is guaranteed by the state.

ESTONIA: In Estonia, the Public Information Act of 2000 extends to all "holders of information", which is clarified as being all government and local government bodies, legal persons in public law and legal persons in private law if they are performing public duties (providing health, education etc).

EUROPEAN UNION: Regulation 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission grants a right of access to documents of the three institutions to any Union citizen and to any natural or legal person residing, or having its registered office, in a Member State. "Document" is defined broadly and it is assumed that all documents, even if classified, may be subject to right of access unless it falls under one of the exceptions. If access is refused, the applicant is allowed a confirmatory request. A complaint against a refusal can be made with the European Ombudsman or an appeal can be brought before the Court of First Instance.

Finland: In Finland, the Act on the Openness of General Documents of 1951 established the openness of all records and documents in the possession of officials of the state, municipalities, and registered religious communities. Exceptions to the basic principle could only be made by law, or by an executive order for specific enumerated reasons such as national security. The openness of unsigned draft documents was not mandated, but up to the consideration of the public official.

This weakness of the law was removed when the law was revised in the 1990's. The revised law, the Act on the Openness of Government Activities of 1999, also extended the principle of openness to corporations that perform legally mandated public duties, such as pension funds and public utilities, and to computer documents.

FRANCE: In France, the accountability of public servants is a constitutional right, according to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It has set as a general rule that citizens can demand a copy of any administrative document (in paper, digitized or other form), and established a Commission to oversee the process.

GEORGIA: In Georgia, the General Administrative Code contains a Law on Freedom of Information.

GERMANY: In Germany, the federal government passed a freedom of information law in 2005.

GREECE: In Greece, the Right to Access Administrative Documents introduced the right of all citizens to read most administrative documents. This right is now codified as the Document Access of the Administrative Procedures Law.

Under this article citizens have a right to know the contents of administrative documents. Administrative documents are defined as those drafted by public sector entities, such as reports, studies, minutes, statistical data, circulars, instructions, responses, consolatory responses, and decisions. In addition, those with a legal interest can also access private documents stored by public services.

This right cannot be exercised if the document concerns the private or family life of others, or if there are specific legal provisions regarding the document's confidentiality. Furthermore, the public body can refuse access if the document refers to discussions of the Cabinet Council, or if accessing the document can seriously hamper crime or administrative violation investigations of legal, police, or military authorities.

Citizens can study the documents where they are located, or they can obtain a copy at their own cost. Access to medical data is provided with the help of a doctor. Access to documents should take into account that those may be covered by copyright, patent, or trade secret regulations.

HUNGARY: In Hungary, the Act on the Protection of Personal Data and Public Access to Data of Public Interest extends a right of access to all data of public interest, defined as any information processed by a body performing a governmental function. Complaints and contested applications may be appealed to the Data Protection Commissioner.

IRELAND: In Ireland the Freedom of Information Act came into effect in April, 1998. The Act has led to a sea change in the relationship between the citizen, journalists, government departments and public bodies. There are very few restrictions on the information that can be made public. A notable feature is the presumption that anything not restricted by the Act is accessible. In this regard it is a much more liberal Act than the UK Act. The Information Commissioner may review decisions of public bodies in relation to requests for information.

One particular controversy which has caused concern to journalists and historians is that traditionally government ministers would annotate and sign any major policy or report documents which they had seen. However this practice has fallen out of favour because of the new openness. This annotation and signing of documents has often given a paper trail and

unique insight as to "what the minister knew" about a controversy or how he or she formed an opinion on a matter.

Also civil and public servants have become more informal, in keeping written records of potentially controversial meeting and avoiding writing memos as a result. While this information would not often be released, and sometimes only under the thirty year rule, the fact that government ministers now do not annotate and sign documents creates the concerns that while government is open it is not accountable as to who did or saw what or how decision making process works.

ISRAEL: In Israel, the Freedom of Information Law, supported by the Freedom of Information regulations, controls freedom of information. It defines the bodies subject to the legislation by a set of listed categories - essentially, most public bodies - and provides for the government to publish a list of all affected bodies. However, this list does not seem to have been made publicly available, if indeed it was ever compiled.

Many public bodies are not obliged to follow the law, which limits the potential for use by the public. Currently, the freedom of information regime in Israel is unusual in that it is the only country where public universities and colleges are not subject to the legislation on a national basis; the justice minister, however, has looked into extending the law to cover these institutions.

JAMAICA: In Jamaica, the relevant legislation is the Access to Information Act, 2002.

JAPAN: In Japan, "Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs" was promulgated in 1999. The law was enforced in 2001. In many local governments, it establishes the regulations about information disclosure from the latter half of 1980's.

MONTENEGRO: A freedom of information law was passed in Montenegro late in 2005, after a process of several years.

NEW ZEALAND: In New Zealand, the relevant legislation is the Official Information Act 1982. This implemented a general policy of openness regarding official documents and replaced the Official Secrets Act.

NORWAY: The Freedom of Information Act of 19 June 1970 is the implementation of freedom of information legislation in Norway on a national level. Article 100 of the Constitution gives access to public documents.

PAKISTAN: President Pervez Musharraf promulgated the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 in October 2002. The law allows any citizen access to public records held by a public body of the federal government including ministries, departments, boards, councils, courts and

tribunals. It does not apply to government owned corporations or provincial governments. The bodies must respond within 21 days.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: The Law of the Republic of Moldova on Access to Information.

ROMANIA: Since 2001 there is one law on Freedom of Information and one on transparent decision-making processes in public administration.

SERBIA: In Serbia, the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance gives access to documents of public authorities.

SLOVENIA: Slovenia passed the Access to Public Information Act in March 2003. The Act governs the procedure which ensures everyone free access to public information held by state bodies, local government bodies, public agencies, public funds and other entities of public law, public powers holders and public service contractors.

SOUTH AFRICA: South Africa passed the Promotion of Access to Information Act on 2 February 2000. It is intended "To give effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by the State and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights"; the right of access to privately held information is an interesting feature, as most freedom of information laws only cover governmental bodies.

SWEDEN: In Sweden, the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766 granted public access to government documents. It thus became an integral part of the Swedish Constitution, and the first ever piece of freedom of information legislation in the modern sense. In Swedish this is known as The Principle of Public Access and has been valid since.

The Principle of Public Access means that the general public are to be guaranteed an unimpeded view of activities pursued by the government and local authorities; all documents handled by the authorities are public unless legislation explicitly and specifically states otherwise, and even then each request for potentially sensitive information must be handled individually, and a refusal is subject to appeal.

Further, the constitution grants the Right to Inform, meaning that even some (most) types of secret information may be passed on to the press or other media without risk of criminal charges. Instead, investigation of the informer's identity is a criminal offense.

THAILAND: In Thailand, the relevant legislation is the Official Information Act of 1997.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: In Trinidad and Tobago, the relevant legislation is the Freedom of Information Act, 1999.

TURKEY: "TURKISH LAW ON THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION" came into force on April 24th, 2004.

UNITED KINGDOM: The Freedom of Information Act 2000 is the implementation of freedom of information legislation in the United Kingdom on a national level, with the exception of Scottish bodies, which are covered by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

UNITED STATES: In the United States the Freedom of Information Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 4, 1966 and went into effect the following year. President Bill Clinton signed the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments on October 2, 1996.

The Act applies only to federal agencies. However, all of the states, as well as the District of Columbia and some territories, have enacted similar statutes to require disclosures by agencies of the state and of local governments, though some are significantly broader than others. Many combine this with Open Meetings legislation, which requires government meetings to be held publicly.

ZIMBABWE: President Mugabe signed In Zimbabwe, the Access to Information and Privacy Act (AIPPA) in February 2002.

Countries with pending legislation

- In Argentina, national freedom of information legislation is pending, though some individual regions have legislation on a local level.
- Armenia passed a Law on Freedom of Information in 2003
- In Azerbaijan, a FOIA law was approved in 2005. It has gone into effect.
- In Botswana, as of 2003, the government was quoted as saying, "The Freedom of Information Bill is not a priority for the new ministry, but some activities like information gathering and initial planning will start."^[28]
- In Fiji, the constitution gives a general right of access, but enabling legislation has not yet been passed. A draft Freedom of Information Bill was circulated in 2000 but derailed by political unrest; the government has not yet begun work on a second bill.
- In Ghana, the Freedom of Information Bill was resubmitted to the Cabinet in 2005.
- In Indonesia, the House of Representatives drafted and submitted a freedom of information bill in 2004, but as of 2005 it remained dormant, with the government taking no action.
- In Jordan, there is a draft Law on the Guarantee of Access to Information, which may be voted on by the end of 2006.
- In Kenya, the draft Freedom of Information Act 2005 has not been introduced into the Parliament.

- In Lesotho, the Access and Receipt of Information Bill was before Parliament in 2003-4, but the current status of the legislation is unknown
- In the Maldives, there is currently no freedom of information legislation. In 2004, the government announced that a bill was expected to be passed in that year, but this has not yet transpired.
- In Mozambique, the government produced a draft Freedom of Information Bill in August 2005. It is expected to become law within two years.
- In Nauru, the Freedom of Information Act 2004 was laid before the parliament in that year, but was not passed. Further work on the legislation is currently being held back, pending a review of the country's Constitution.
- In Nigeria, the Senate approved the Freedom of Information Bill in November 2006. It must now be reconciled with the version approved by the House and signed by the President.
- In Sri Lanka, the 2004 draft Freedom of Information Act has been endorsed by both major parties, but had not been passed as of January 2005.

In Uganda, the Access to Information Act was approved in 2005 and went into effect in 2006.

2.3 SUMMARY:

- Right to Information laws define a legal process by which government information is available to the public. In many countries there are no such constitutional or legal provisions. Some countries have vague constitutional guarantees for the right of access to information, but usually these are useless without specific legislation to support them.
- Many countries around the world have Laws or Acts related to right to information. Some countries with existing legislation are: Albania, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Zimbabwe.
- The Indian Right to Information Act was introduced to the Indian Parliament in July 2000. It came into effect on 12 Oct 2005. Under this law the information has become a fundamental right of the citizen. Under this law all Government Bodies or Government

funded agencies have to designate a Public Information officer (PIO). The PIO's responsibility is to ensure that information requested is disclosed to the petitioner within 30 days or within 48 hours in case of information concerning the life and liberty of a person.

- A few state governments have successfully enacted the RTI Laws: Tamil Nadu (1997), Goa (1997), Rajasthan (2000), Karnataka (2000), Delhi (2001), Maharashtra (2002), Madhya Pradesh (2003), Assam (2002), and Jammu and Kashmir (2004).
- In terms of the section 2(f) of the RTI Act, information has been defined as: *Any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.*
- **The RTI Act specifies that citizens have a right to: Request any information (as defined); Take copies of documents; Inspect documents, works and records; Take certified samples of materials of work; and Obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.**
- The Right to Information Act has the following important provisions: Obligations of public authorities; Designation of Public Information Officers and Assistant Public Information Officers; Constitution of Central Information Commission; Constitution of State Information Commission; Non-applicability of the Act to Intelligence and Security Organizations; and Power to make rules to carry out the provisions of the act.
- The following is exempt from disclosure: Information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State, relation with foreign State or lead to incitement of an offence; Information which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court; Information, the disclosure of which would cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or the State Legislature; Information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information; etc.

2.4 KEY WORDS:

Need for Right to Information Legislation: People require information held by the governmental bodies and organizations for a wide variety of reasons. These organizations do not always want to part with most information. This necessitates legislation for ensuring right to information.

Right to Information Legislation in India: India is one of the latest entrants to the Right to Information club. The Right to Information Act 2005 (Act No. 22/2005)[1] was a law enacted by the Parliament of India giving Indians (except those in the State of Jammu and Kashmir who have their own special law) access to Government records. Under the terms of the Act, any person may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or instrumentality of State), which is expected to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

Facilities in the RTI Act: **The RTI Act specifies that citizens have a right to: Request any information (as defined); Take copies of documents; Inspect documents, works and records; Take certified samples of materials of work; and Obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.**

Process of Getting Information: **Under the Act, all complying departments has to designate an official as the Public Information Officer (PIO). Any citizen of India may submit a request to the PIO for information in any format, paper or electronic. It is the PIO's responsibility to ensure that the information is obtained from the appropriate department or section. If the request pertains to another public authority (in whole or part) it is the PIO's responsibility to transfer/forward the concerned portions of the request to a PIO of the other within 5 days.**

Provisions of the Right to Information Act: The Right to Information Act has the following important provisions: Obligations of public authorities; Designation of Public Information Officers and Assistant Public Information Officers; Constitution of Central Information Commission; Constitution of State Information Commission; Non-applicability of the Act to Intelligence and Security Organizations; and Power to make rules to carry out the provisions of the act.

Information: **In terms of the section 2(f) of the RTI Act, information has been defined as: *Any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.***

Information Related Rights of the People: **Under the Act, right to information includes the right to: *Inspect works, documents, and records; Take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records; Take certified samples of material; and Obtain information in***

form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, and videocassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

Information not Open for Disclosure: **The following is exempt from disclosure: Information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State, relation with foreign State or lead to incitement of an offence; Information which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court; Information, the disclosure of which would cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or the State Legislature; Information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information; Information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information; Information received in confidence from foreign Government; etc.**

2.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed essay on Right to Information.
2. Throw light on the Right to Information Act in India.
3. The right to information legislation in India has many interesting provisions. Discuss in detail.
4. Discuss the interrelationship between media and Government with regard to Right to Information.

2.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Govt. Notification; Right to Information Act, 2005.

History of Press, Press Laws and Communications; by B. N. Ahuja; 1988.

Laws of the Press; by Durga Das Basu, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1986.

Press Laws; by Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 1971.

CENSORSHIP

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

Freedom means an opportunity *to work with out fear*. Media, like any other creative field, thrives on freedom. However, only the American Constitution guarantees absolute freedom for the different mass media in the USA. The Indian Constitution guarantees *freedom of speech and expression* to all citizens of India. This provision, according to interpretations by the courts, includes freedom of the mass media. While the Constitution of India grants freedom to the different media, there are many reasonable restrictions also. These restrictions are understandable as these are meant for greater causes or objectives.

But what is important is that there have been many occasions when various Governments in power have tried to control the media. A major tool of controlling the mass media is censorship. In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects media freedom. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

3.0 Objectives

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Presentation of Content
 - 3.2.1 Censorship- An Overview
 - 3.2.2 Types of Censorship
 - 3.2.3 Censorship Practices in India
 - 3.2.4 Film Censorship in India
- 3.3 Summary
- 3.4 Key Words
- 3.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 3.6 References/Suggested Reading

3.0 OBJECTIVES:

Freedom is important for mass media for performing their duties. Only a few countries ensure freedom of mass media through legislation. But in most countries the Press and other mass media work under constant vigil of Government bodies. There have been many cases of oppression and suppression against the mass media in different countries from time to time. In addition, Governments have used censorship to control mass media. Censorship becomes a major tool in the hands of the governments during times of emergency, or war, etc. But in many countries, censorship continues even in times of peace as a very normal practice.

In this lesson we shall try to cover the various aspects of media censorship. Specifically, the objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Have an Overview of Censorship*
- *To Know About Various Types of Censorship*
- *To Know About Censorship Practices in India*
- *To Know About Film Censorship in India*

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

Mass media are very powerful. The governments of different countries recognize this fact. Accordingly, different countries use different means to control the mass media. Legislation is a common way of controlling the mass media. Other means of controlling media freedom are oppressive measures like raids, seizures, arrests, fines, etc.

The USA and only few other countries have ensured freedom of media in a direct manner. Most countries have some indirect measure, as in India. Almost all countries have laws and acts that impose restrictions in a reasonable manner.

Many countries have systems of censorship for exercising checks on the mass media. Most countries have censorship for cinema. In almost all autocratic countries there is censorship for all mass media. In case of emergencies, many countries resort to censorship. The communist countries had a highly vigilant and stringent system of censorship.

There are no common practices with regard to censorship all over the globe. The practices differ according to the prevailing media system. In the free media systems, there is hardly any censorship. In some countries, there is rudimentary censorship.

The various aspects of media censorship shall be discussed in this lesson.

3.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

Censorship is closely tied in as a concept with freedom of speech and other forms of human expression. When this practice is tightly exerted is often allied with human rights abuse, dictatorship and repression.

In this lesson, the content will be presented as follows:

- *Censorship- An Overview*
- *Types of Censorship*
- *Censorship practices in India*
- *Film Censorship in India*

3.2.1 CENSORSHIP- AN OVERVIEW:

Censorship is the removal of information from the public, or the prevention of circulation of information, where it is desired or felt best by some controlling group or body that others are not allowed accessing the information, which is being censored. Typically censorship is undertaken by governments, or by established bodies (religions or the mass media).

Self-censorship is another form of censorship. But that is a very proactive practice on part of the media.

Censorship of any sensitive information, such as commercial secrets and intellectual property, official secrets, and legal privilege, are not usually described as censorship, provided that they remain within bounds, which are recognized in general as being reasonable. For this reason, the term "censorship" often carries with it a sense of untoward, inappropriate or repressive secrecy as opposed to a reasonable and expected level.

Censorship is often means that some group is controlling certain information, and is using this control improperly or for its own benefit. Also it is not allowing others access to information that should be made readily accessible.

According to the Webster Dictionary, **to censor means to examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable**. In other words, it means *to suppress or delete anything considered bad for public viewing, according to the standards applied by whoever is judging the matter*.

The visible motive of censorship is often to stabilize, improve or persuade the society group that the censoring organization would have control over. It is most commonly applied to acts that occur in public circumstances. What is censored may range from specific words to entire concepts and it may be influenced by value systems. However, currently the most common reasons for censoring ("omitting") information are the particular interests of those

involved, and (where applicable for non-governmental bodies) their owners and their commercial and political connections.

Sanitization (removal) and whitewashing are almost interchangeable terms that refer to a particular form of censorship via omission. This usually seeks to "clean up" the portrayal of particular issues and/or facts that are already known, but that may be in conflict with the point of view of the censor.

In England, censorship began with the introduction of copyright laws, which gave the Monarchy the power to license publishing. Without government approval, printing was not allowed. For a court or other governmental body to prevent a person from speaking or publishing before the act has taken place is sometimes called prior restraint. This is viewed as worse than punishment received after someone speaks, as in libel suits.

Censorship can be explicit, as in laws passed to prevent select positions from being published or propagated. It can be implicit, taking the form of intimidation by government, where people are afraid to express or support certain opinions for fear of losing their jobs, their position in society, their credibility, or their lives. The latter form is prevalent in a number of countries.

3.2.2 TYPES OF CENSORSHIP:

The logic for censorship is different for various types of data censored. There are five main types of censorship:

- *Moral censorship*
- *Military censorship*
- *Political censorship*
- *Religious censorship*
- *Corporate censorship*

Moral censorship: It is the means by which any material that contains material of questionable morality is removed. Pornography, for example, is often censored under this logic.

Military censorship: It is the process of keeping military intelligence and tactics confidential and away from the enemy. This is used to counter espionage, which is the process of collecting military information. Additionally, military censorship may involve a restriction on information or media coverage that can be released to the public. For example, in Iraq, the U.S. government

restricts the photographing or filming of dead soldiers or their caskets and its subsequent broadcast in the U.S.

This is done to avoid public reaction similar to that, which occurred during the Vietnam War or the Iran Hostage Crisis. This is also considered acceptable by even democratic governments as necessary for the preservation of national security.

Political censorship: This occurs when governments conceal information from their citizens. The logic is to prevent the free expression needed to revolt. Democracies do not officially approve of political censorship but often endorse it privately.

Religious censorship: This is the means by which any material objectionable to a certain faith or religion is removed. This often involves a dominant religion forcing limitations on less dominant religions. Alternatively, one religion may disapprove and censor the works of another when they believe the content is not appropriate for their faith.

Corporate censorship: This is the process by which editors in corporate media outlets intervene to halt the publishing of information that portrays their business or business partners negatively. Privately owned corporations in the business of reporting the news also sometimes refuse to distribute information due to the potential loss of advertiser revenue or shareholder value which adverse publicity may bring.

In addition to the above two other important censorship related practices are: censorship of secrets and censorship of educational sources.

Censorship of secrets: In wartime, explicit censorship is carried out with the objective of preventing the release of information that might be useful to an enemy. It involves keeping information like times or locations secret, or delaying the release of information (e.g., an operational objective) until it is of no possible use to enemy forces. The moral issues here are often seen as somewhat different, as release of tactical information usually presents a greater risk of casualties among one's own forces and could possibly lead to loss of the overall conflict.

During World War I letters written by British soldiers were censored. This consisted of officers going through letters with a black marker and crossing out anything, which might compromise operational secrecy before the letter was sent. The World War II catchphrase

"Loose lips sink ships" was used as a common justification to exercise official wartime censorship and encourage individual restraint when sharing potentially sensitive information.

Censorship of Educational Sources: The content of school textbooks is often the issue of debate, since their target audience is young people, and the term "whitewashing" is the one commonly used to refer to selective removal of critical or damaging evidence or comment. The reporting of military atrocities in history is extremely controversial. The representation of every society's flaws or misconduct is typically downplayed in favor of a more nationalist, favorable or patriotic view.

Also, some religious groups have at times attempted to block the teaching of evolution in schools, as evolutionary theory appears to contradict their religious beliefs. The teaching of sexual education in school and the inclusion of information about sexual health and contraceptive practices in school textbooks is another area where suppression of information occurs.

3.2.3 CENSORSHIP PRACTICES IN INDIA:

Censorship in India mainly targets religious and security-related issues. It is justified by the government as necessary to maintain communal harmony, peace and tranquility, given the history of communal tension in India.

The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech but places "reasonable restrictions" "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order or morality." Here are a few controversial issues in India that come under the purview of reasonable restrictions.

Obscenity:

Pornography is illegal and attracts several penal provisions. Some media dealing with sex are frequently banned. Films, television shows and music videos are especially prone, however if any literature is banned, it is not usually for pornographic reasons. Pornographic magazines are technically illegal, but many soft-porn Indian publications are available through many newsvendors, who often stock them at the bottom of a stack of non-pornographic magazines, and make them available on request. In practice, the police usually ignore this as long as the display itself does not display nudity. Most non-Indian publications (including Playboy) are usually harder to find, whether soft porn or hard porn. Mailing pornographic magazines to India

from a country where they are legal is also illegal in India. In practice, the magazines are almost always confiscated by Customs and entered as evidence of law breaking, which then undergoes detailed scrutiny.

Blasphemy:

Blasphemy is religious or any other serious kind of profanity or defamation. Media that defames a religion are frequently banned.

National security:

The Official Secrets Act 1923 is used for the protection of official information, mainly related to national security.

Here are some examples of works like books and drama, etc. that have been banned in India recently:

In 1999 Maharashtra government banned the Marathi play *'Me Nathuram Godse Boltoy'* or *'I am Nathuram Godse Speaking'*

Books, which are critical of India, Indian foreign policy, Kashmir, or those that contain sex or defame a religion, are frequently banned in India. Further, books, which are critical of national icons such as *Nehru*, are usually met with a hostile reception and are also banned.

In 1989, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* was banned in India, as it was in many countries, for its purported attacks on Islam. India was the first country in the world to ban the book.

The book *Understanding Islam through Hadis* by Ram Swarup was also banned. In 1990 the Hindi translation of the book was banned, and in March 1991 the English original became banned as well. Books by Taslima Nasrin were banned in West Bengal.

A book on the Maharashtrian prince, Shivaji, by Queens University Professor Jayant Lele was also banned. This book asked the question of who was the father of Shivaji. Shortly thereafter, the Central government of the time, which contained the Shiv Sena, banned *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, penned by American scholar James Laine, and another book *The Epic of Shivaji*, which contained the objectionable phrase "Oedipal rebel".

In 2004, *Yahoo! Groups*, a discussion forum were blocked because of fears the group, the *Kynhun* forum, had links with banned militant separatists. The ban resulted in the entire

Yahoo! Groups being banned due to the Internet service providers' inability to implement a sub-group ban. This way a huge range of harmless material was made inaccessible.

The government used new information technology laws to force Indian Internet service providers to block the forum after Yahoo! refused to comply. The ban sparked outrage and led to many people calling for the ban to be lifted. Concerns have been voiced that despite the inherent power of ruling bodies, the actions of the Indian government are actually illegal.

India has blocked Internet access to several blogs and web sites in July 2006 because of the 11 July 2006 Mumbai train bombings.

3.2.4 FILM CENSORSHIP IN INDIA:

The Central Board of Film Certification, the regulatory film body of India, regularly orders film directors to remove anything it deems offensive, including sex, nudity, violence or subjects considered politically subversive.

In 2002, the Indian filmmaker and then Chairman of the Film Censor Board, Vijay Anand, kicked up a controversy with a proposal to legalise the exhibition of X-rated films in selected cinemas across the country, saying "Porn is shown everywhere in India clandestinely... and the best way to fight this onslaught of blue movies is to show them openly in theatres with legally authorized licenses".

Here are some examples of recent actions taken by the Film Censor Board.

In 2004, the documentary *Final Solution*, which looks at religious rioting between Hindus and Muslims, was banned. The film follows 2002 clashes in the western state of Gujarat, which left more than 1,000 people dead. The Censor Board justified the ban, saying it was "highly provocative and may trigger off unrest and communal violence".

In 2006, some states including Nagaland, Punjab, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh have banned the release or exhibition of the Hollywood movie *The Da Vinci Code* (and also the book), although the Central Board of Film Certification cleared the film for adult viewing throughout India.

Raj Kapoor was taken to court over Satyam Shivam Sundaram. The telefilms *Honee-Anhonee*, *Tamas* and *Ore Ore Gramathille* in the late 1980s were released due to court intervention and led to a flowering of pro-speech Supreme Court judgments.

The *Bandit Queen* case of 1998 defended free speech, reposing faith in India's pre-release censorship system. Courts have allowed displays of *Beyond Genocide* on Bhopal,

Aakrosh on Gujarat, Chand Bujh Gaya on rioting and many others. The Black Friday case on the Bombay bomb blasts is before Supreme Court.

But fundamentalist censorship, often called street censorship, continues. Deepa Mehta was not allowed to make her film Water in Benaras after her film Fire suffered protests.

The Sikhs were annoyed with the film Jo Bole So Nihaal that was removed from many Punjab theatres. Recently films of Aamir Khan were not allowed to be screened in Gujarat.

Another controversial film was The Da Vinci Code, which portrays Jesus as a prophet and suggests he produced a line of descent amidst centuries of papal cover-up. The Catholic Church is annoyed.

Dan Brown's book on which the film is based has been widely read in India and is available even through street vendors. The book is not banned. The demand is that the film should be. On these matters, the Indian government normally evades deciding anything on principle.

3.3 SUMMARY:

- Mass media are very powerful. The governments of different countries recognize this fact. Accordingly, different countries use different means to control the mass media. Legislation is a common way of controlling the mass media. Other means of controlling media freedom are oppressive measures like raids, seizures, arrests, fines, etc. On many occasions Governments in power try to control the media. A major tool of controlling the mass media is censorship.
- Many countries have systems of censorship for exercising checks on the mass media. Most countries have censorship for cinema. In almost all autocratic countries there is censorship for all mass media. In case of emergencies, many countries resort to censorship. The communist countries had a highly vigilant and stringent system of censorship. There are no common practices with regard to censorship all over the globe.
- Censorship is often means that some group is controlling certain information, and is using this control improperly or for its own benefit. Also it is not allowing others access to information that should be made readily accessible. According to the Webster Dictionary, **to censor means to examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable**. In other words, it means *to suppress or delete anything considered bad for public viewing, according to the standards applied by whoever is judging the matter*.

- The visible motive of censorship is often to stabilize, improve or persuade the society group that the censoring organization would have control over. However, currently the most common reasons for censoring ("omitting") information are the particular interests of those involved, and (where applicable for non-governmental bodies) their owners and their commercial and political connections. Sanitization (removal) and whitewashing are almost interchangeable terms that refer to a particular form of censorship via omission. This usually seeks to "clean up" the portrayal of particular issues and/or facts that are already known, but that may be in conflict with the point of view of the censor.
- Moral censorship is the means by which any material that contains material of questionable morality is removed. Pornography, for example, is often censored under this logic.
- Military censorship is the process of keeping military intelligence and tactics confidential and away from the enemy. This is used to counter espionage, which is the process of collecting military information. Additionally, military censorship may involve a restriction on information or media coverage that can be released to the public.
- Political censorship occurs when governments conceal information from their citizens. The logic is to prevent the free expression needed to revolt. Democracies do not officially approve of political censorship but often endorse it privately.
- Religious censorship is the means by which any material objectionable to a certain faith or religion is removed. This often involves a dominant religion forcing limitations on less dominant religions. Alternatively, one religion may disapprove and censor the works of another when they believe the content is not appropriate for their faith.
- Corporate censorship is the process by which editors in corporate media outlets intervene to halt the publishing of information that portrays their business or business partners negatively. Privately owned corporations in the business of reporting the news also sometimes refuse to distribute information due to the potential loss of advertiser revenue or shareholder value which adverse publicity may bring.
- The content of school textbooks is often the issue of debate, since their target audience is young people, and the term "whitewashing" is the one commonly used to refer to selective removal of critical or damaging evidence or comment. The reporting of military atrocities in history is extremely controversial. The representation of every society's flaws or misconduct is typically downplayed in favor of a more nationalist, favorable or patriotic view.
- Pornography is illegal and attracts several penal provisions. Some media dealing with sex are frequently banned. Films, television shows and music videos are especially prone,

however if any literature is banned, it is not usually for pornographic reasons. Pornographic magazines are technically illegal, but many soft-porn Indian publications are available through many newsvendors, who often stock them at the bottom of a stack of non-pornographic magazines, and make them available on request. In practice, the police usually ignore this as long as the display itself does not display nudity.

- Blasphemy is religious or any other serious kind of profanity or defamation. Media that defames a religion are frequently banned.
- The Central Board of Film Certification, the regulatory film body of India, regularly orders film directors to remove anything it deems offensive, including sex, nudity, violence or subjects considered politically subversive.

3.4 KEY WORDS:

Censorship: Censorship often means that some group is controlling certain information, and is using this control improperly or for its own benefit. Also it is not allowing others access to information that should be made readily accessible. According to the Webster Dictionary, **to censor means to examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable.** In other words, it means *to suppress or delete anything considered bad for public viewing, according to the standards applied by whoever is judging the matter.*

Motives of Censorship: The visible motive of censorship is often to stabilize, improve or persuade the society group that the censoring organization would have control over. However, currently the most common reasons for censoring ("omitting") information are the particular interests of those involved, and (where applicable for non-governmental bodies) their owners and their commercial and political connections. This usually seeks to "clean up" the portrayal of particular issues and/or facts that are already known, but that may be in conflict with the point of view of the censor.

Moral censorship: It is the means by which any material that contains material of questionable morality is removed. Pornography, for example, is often censored under this logic.

Military censorship: It is the process of keeping military intelligence and tactics confidential and away from the enemy. This is used to counter espionage, which is the process of collecting military information. Additionally, military censorship may involve a restriction on information or media coverage that can be released to the public. For example, in Iraq, the U.S. government restricts the photographing or filming of dead soldiers or their caskets and its subsequent broadcast in the U.S.

Political censorship: This occurs when governments conceal information from their citizens. The logic is to prevent the free expression needed to revolt. Democracies do not officially approve of political censorship but often endorse it privately.

Religious censorship: This is the means by which any material objectionable to a certain faith or religion is removed. This often involves a dominant religion forcing limitations on less dominant religions. Alternatively, one religion may disapprove and censor the works of another when they believe the content is not appropriate for their faith.

Corporate censorship: This is the process by which editors in corporate media outlets intervene to halt the publishing of information that portrays their business or business partners negatively. Privately owned corporations in the business of reporting the news also sometimes refuse to distribute information due to the potential loss of advertiser revenue or shareholder value which adverse publicity may bring.

Censorship of Educational Sources: The content of school textbooks is often the issue of debate, since their target audience is young people, and the term "whitewashing" is the one commonly used to refer to selective removal of critical or damaging evidence or comment. The reporting of military atrocities in history is extremely controversial. The representation of every society's flaws or misconduct is typically downplayed in favor of a more nationalist, favorable or patriotic view.

Obscenity: Pornography is illegal and attracts several penal provisions. Some media dealing with sex are frequently banned. Films, television shows and music videos are especially prone, however if any literature is banned, it is not usually for pornographic reasons.

Blasphemy: Blasphemy is religious or any other serious kind of profanity or defamation. Media that defames a religion are frequently banned.

CBFC: The Central Board of Film Certification, the regulatory film body of India, regularly orders film directors to remove anything it deems offensive, including sex, nudity, violence or subjects considered politically subversive.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

1. Write a detailed note on censorship. Give suitable examples.
2. What is censorship? Discuss in detail with examples.
3. What are the various types of censorship? Discuss in detail.
4. Write a detailed note on censorship practices in India giving suitable examples.
5. Write a detailed note on film censorship in India. Give suitable examples.

3.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED BOOKS:

History of Press, Press Laws and Communications; by B. N. Ahuja; 1988.

Laws of the Press; by Durga Das Basu, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1986.

Press Laws; by Press Institute of India, New Delhi, 1971.

Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year)

MEDIA ISSUES (Paper: IV)

Block: B Unit: II Lesson: 4

MEDIA AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Writer: Sh. Mihir Ranjan Patra

Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

Man's need for information, entertainment and generally to be in touch with the outside world along with the immense technological advancements have resulted in an wide array of mass media. All these various mass media emerge out of the social, political, economic, cultural situations prevailing in the different countries. Through a network of technology-enabled media vehicles, these media connect the audience members and the society as a whole. And today the world has shrunk, as Marshal McLuhan put it, in to a 'global village'. In addition the mass media play many important roles in the society.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about the various aspects of media and social responsibility. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- .2 Presentation of Content
- 4.2.1 Various Media Systems
- 4.2.2 Social Responsibilities of Media
- 4.2.3 Social Responsibility and Indian Media
- 4.3 Summary
- 4.4 Key Words
- 4.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 4.6 References/Suggested Reading

4.0 OBJECTIVES:

Mass media inform, educate, entertain and persuade. They also have been instrumental in bringing down governments, starting wars, bringing about and felicitating change and development. They have grown into such statures that they are considered to be the fourth pillar

of democracy. The mass media in certain countries are considered social institutions. The mass media are expected to function in a socially responsible manner.

We shall try to cover the various aspects of media and social responsibility in this lesson.

The specific objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To know about the Various Media Systems*
- *To know about the Social Responsibilities of Media*
- *Social Responsibility and Indian Media*

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

From the birth of time and human community, the mass media in its various forms have remained part and parcel of society. The relationship between the media and society is very symbiotic. Both media and society are dependent on each other. The mass media's duty is to process and present information and entertainment, etc. But there seems to be a total disregard to the expected journalistic practices.

In many countries, from the early period till date, journalists have contributed in great measures in moving the country forward and also sustaining development. In their wholesome efforts of the operators of the mass media, they still owe society and individual members the sacred duty of managing information given to them with a sense of duty, responsibility and tact in order not to cause undesired harm and misgivings among different classes of persons in any given society.

Very often we find information on individuals and issues presented in such an unprofessional and unethical manner to cause unnecessary disaffection in society. This is because; journalists and publishers do not have any concern for the society.

This has emerged as a major concern for many. The issue of social responsibility of the mass media is often hotly discussed. In this lesson, we shall discuss some aspects of this issue.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

In the democratic countries of the world, journalists no matter their medium have a sacred duty to interpret political developments and activities to sustain society and democracy. Media personnel have a sensitive role to play in the control of the usual violence, turmoil in politics as well as in the social, cultural and economic life of the people.

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Various Media Systems*

- *Social Responsibilities of Media*
- *Social Responsibility and Indian Media*

4.2.1 VARIOUS MEDIA SYSTEMS:

Mass media operate differently in different countries. Media do not grow up in a vacuum. The mass media have emerged, grown, changed and even may die as a result of geographical, technological, economic, cultural and other forces.

Different countries have different governmental systems, political situations, and socioeconomic and cultural conditions. They have different goals and approaches towards achieving these goals. And in different countries, different systems have evolved with regard to the functioning of the mass media. For example countries like the USA, which are free societies, the media enjoy a lot of freedom. In fact, the First Amendment of the Constitution of USA ensures the freedom of Press (and thus all mass media).

Countries ruled by dictators or Kings and monarchs exercise a lot of control over the media. In many such countries censorship is a common practice. Many countries don't interfere with the functioning of media. The mass media, in these countries, are considered social institutions, which function in a socially responsible manner.

But before that let us discuss about the various other practices with relation to the mass media. These are variously known as media theories or media systems.

AUTHORITARIAN MEDIA SYSTEM:

Dictatorial, monarchical and democratic governments use this system to exert authoritarian control over the mass media. The strictness with which the 'Official secrets Act' is enforced both in Britain and India goes to prove that even democracies practice authoritarianism. This system holds the State in higher status than any other entity. The saying "*State is the Law*" fits this theory. Kings, monarchs, dictators, military rulers and even democratically elected governments have tried to control the flow of information in the mass media. According to this theory, mass media should abide by the governments dictates. The media are expected to be subordinate to the established authority. The authority expects the mass media not to offend majority morals, political and economic values.

Under this system, media personnel lack freedom and independence. Their reports often have to be submitted for advance censorship. This censorship is justified on the ground that the

State must always take precedence over others. Such censorship is more rigidly enforced during times of emergency as experienced in India during the 1975-1977 days of emergency.

The authoritarian system resorts such control measures as pre-censorship and banning. Many laws and acts have been enacted in different countries by different regimes. And these legislations are enforced strictly. '*Licensing*' is another means of authoritarian control. In the authoritarian system, stringent measures are taken against those who raise their voices against the State or the ruling classes.

This authoritarian system was prevalent throughout the 17th century and extended its reign till the later half of the 18th century. While a majority of countries do not adhere to this complete authoritarian system, some countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East etc. still operate under this system.

The Authoritarian system was slowly taken over by the Libertarian system in the early part of the 19th century. However, authoritarianism still remains in the certain degrees as different kinds of control are exercised over mass media in many countries even now.

LIBERTARIAN MEDIA SYSTEM:

By early in the 17th century, people voiced against this authoritarian approach. Slowly this movement became stronger and by the early 19th century, Libertarianism was being practiced in many countries. This great change was the result of changing political philosophies and the coming of democratic governments.

Libertarians regarded 'public enlightenment' as a major function of the press (later all mass media). Many thinkers consider the press as an important partner in the search for truth. Libertarians considered the press as a *feeder* of information (so that man could form his own ideas), as a *stimulator* by presenting ideas of others. This way the press was considered as one of the most pervasive (wide spread) and inexpensive of educators.

Mass media perform many functions, which include information, entertainment, education and persuasion. These media help discover truth by presenting all manner of evidence. Media also function as watchdogs - keeping an eye on all kind of happenings and bringing them to fore. This 'watchdog' function of the media (press, in the earlier days) was not taken lightly by the authorities and they had clamped restrictions.

According the libertarian theory, the individual, and not the state is supreme. Thus popular will is granted precedence over the power of the State. This theory argues that 'truth'

can be arrived at only through freedom of speech and diverse points of views. Thus a free press (media) is highly essential to a free society and to uphold the dignity of the individual.

One criticism of the libertarian theory is that it provides the so-called 'freedom' to only a privileged few. Only the rich and the elite have access to the media and the large mass of poor people get marginalized further because of lack of access to media. The poor does not have either access or affordability to use media as tools of free expression.

SOVIET MEDIA SYSTEM:

This is an extension of the authoritarian system. It has developed from the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist philosophy. Following the 1917 Revolution, Lenin advised the communist press to "*Learn, organize and propagandize*". Lenin viewed the press as "*a powerful instrument, no less than bombs and machine guns*". The Soviet press, accordingly, was to be controlled by the Communist Party. Later on other media were also subjected to a similar treatment.

The basic assumption of the Soviet media theory was that "the individual needs to be changed so that he or she will share with and support society as a whole". Its main purpose was to support the Communist Party in its efforts to revolutionize society, to make each person work for the good of the whole society rather than his or her own interests. Thus the mass media were owned by the State i.e. the Communist Party. Every piece of information and every idea disseminated through the media had to be interpreted by members of the Communist party.

Lenin was of the view that the government must not be criticized when it did what it believed to be right. However, criticism was not totally banned. Criticism and exposure (mostly of anti-party and anti-government activities and persons) was the chief function of the media. Even party workers and bureaucrats were not spared. But Institutions could not be criticized.

Under this system, the media were used to "socialize" the people. The primary function of media, thus, was to *educate, inform, motivate and mobilize* people; and to support progressive movements everywhere in the country. Censorship and other restrictions on media were legitimized under this system.

However, the era of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* under Mikhail Gorbachov brought sweeping changes in this system. So much so that the once powerful and united Soviet Union broke up. Sweeping changes have also occurred in other countries where this system was prevalent. These countries include Romania and Poland.

4.2.2 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIA:

It is quite clear that the free-market approach does not ensure public good. The libertarian theory, while having quite good points, has its own shortcomings. To find out these shortcomings and the means of overcoming them, the Commission of Freedom of the Press was instituted in the USA in 1949. This Commission found out that the free-market approach to press-freedom had not met the informational and social needs of the less well-off people. On the other hand, this free approach had increased the power of the rich and elite.

Also by this time other media like films, radio and television had emerged. The emerging scenario demanded a fresh approach. The burning question was the accountability of the media. Also some kind of public control was suggested.

Thus emerged the social-responsibility theory. This theory is based on the proposition: "*Whoever enjoys freedom has certain obligations to society*". Proponents of this theory, like those supporting the libertarian theory, say that the press (and other media) has to perform the function of enlightening the public, safe guarding civil liberties etc.

However, the social-responsibility theorists say that the media, which enjoy protected and privileged positions (as in case of US media that are guaranteed freedom under the first Amendment of the American Constitution. In India, the press is privileged but not protected. The Indian Constitution does not guarantee any exclusive freedom for the press). In return, the media should pay back by being socially responsible.

This theory shifts the focus from the individual to the society. Also excluded from its purview are profit-making as the sole motive and political patronage. *Horace Greeley*, who shaped the American press to a great extent in the mid 19th century, wanted the press to ignore profit making and political bondage (being subservient to some political party).

Henry Raymond of the New York Times called on newspapers "*to give readers the broadest possible coverage and to actively promote community welfare*". Later William Rockhill Nelson (of the Kansas City star) wanted newspapers to be an *aggressive force for community betterment*. Still later Joseph Pulitzer advocated commercialism to be banned from the editorial room. He was of the opinion that *commercialism in the editorial room was a degradation and destroyer of moral power*. Pulitzer also said "Without high ethical ideals a newspaper not only in stripped of its splendid possibilities for public service, but may become a positive danger to the community".

Many other eminent media personalities in the 20th century have reminded their fellow media men of the responsibilities which went with freedom.

This sense of responsibility has been represented by codes setting ethical standards for the media. One of the first such codes of ethics was the Canons for Journalists, adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1923. These are perhaps the most comprehensive codes and include *acting with responsibility to the general welfare, truthfulness, sincerity, impartiality, fair-play, decency and respect for individual privacy.*

These codes of ethics are more attuned to libertarian theory. The codes enumerated for films and the broadcasting media in most parts of the world are much more restrictive. The codes for the Press have mostly been self regulatory being developed by the media men themselves. Most of the codes for the Press that have followed concern with high professional standards including *truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.*

On the other hand, the codes for electronic media have been marked by government intervention and regulation. Examples such codes in India are the Cinematograph Act, broadcasting under for AIR and Doordarshan, Cable TV Regulation Act.

However, under the social responsibility theory, public interest is of greater value than unregulated freedom of expression. Thus news offensive to religious and ethnic minorities, or news likely to lead to social tension and violence needed to be under-played. Self-regulation became the key to social responsibility. Thus Press Councils were established.

These councils evaluate the state of the media from time to time and draw up codes of ethics. Anti-monopoly legislations (in the face of growing concentration of media leading to monopolies) also were by products of this theory. While the media evolved their own self-regulating codes, this theory also legitimized state and public intervention to keep check on unwanted practices by the media.

This system exists largely in most democracies of Western Europe and the more developed countries of Asia.

Most media organizations have to perform well to survive. Competitive pressure means that they produce higher quality products for cheaper prices. But there is no evidence that journalistic integrity is a key feature in this highly competitive environment. Media people choose their news source on the basis of interesting scoops. And currently, the media that feature the barely bikini-clad photos of celebrities in the jungle are more popular.

What is the social responsibility of a media organization? Here is a list:

- *To tell the truth,*
- *To accord people a general expectation of privacy and dignity,*
- *To expose wrongs, but equally to allow that no one is perfect,*

- *To entertain, for sure, but also to inform, and*
- *To avoid conflicts of interest.*

Regulation, in the form of laws and rules, is for minimum standards. The best practice is self-regulation.

Media organizations have to establish clear values, show leadership in embedding those values, and establish policies and processes for ensuring they don't fall short of them. The media industry currently believes it is so noble by inherent virtue of its calling that it needs to do few of these things. They are wrong.

Liberalization of the media industry has given birth to intense competition and a lowering of the quality of the media. With the way things are often politicized or commercialized, the media has gradually lost its focus.

Aside from the lack of professionalism, there has been an overemphasis on trivial or sensational inside stories. When the media gradually loses its self-discipline, it becomes a tool for politicians and people with vested interests.

Many believe in the power of the press. However, the practice of verifying the sources of news has in many cases become nothing but empty talk.

Perhaps this is the only constructive way to strengthen media discipline and professionalism. Institutional reform is not perfect and often is only the first step to provide a fair competition environment for the media. Public monitoring constitutes the key to mature media competition and a well-implemented social responsibility of the media.

The four original theories of press (media) are mostly in tune with the political philosophies and socioeconomic circumstances of the developed western world. The developing third world countries with their prevailing political, social, economic and cultural conditions could not directly follow these systems. For these countries - especially those in Asia, Africa and Latin America - two other theories have been developed. These are the Development Communication theory and the Democratic Participation thing.

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION:

None of the four theories of media is fully applicable to the developing countries. This is because of the peculiar situations prevailing in these countries. First the press in many of these countries is free and commercially run. The broadcasting media in Asia and Africa to a great extent are run by the state. The broadcast media in Latin America is privately owned. Another

feature of these countries is that they are dependent on the developed world to a great extent for both hardware and software. Although, these countries have stated producing on their own, they are far from being self-reliant.

The most common feature of these countries is their commitment to social and economic development. For this reason, these countries want to use the mass media as tools of development. Unlike in the above-mentioned theories, the emphasis here is on the larger national interest and public good.

So certain freedom of the media is curbed and certain limitations are imposed. These curbs and restrictions are in the interest of causes like national integration and nation building.

Development communication means the media have the responsibility to support the national governments in their efforts of nation building including eradicating illiteracy, promoting family planning, increasing production and employment. The mass media are expected to work in close contact with the government officials to promote (and help implement) the various developmental plans, programmes and projects of the governments.

This theory also has a shortcoming. Media people often equate 'development' with government propaganda and thus do not believe what the government has to say.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION:

In most parts of the world and especially in the affluent West, the mass media have become highly commercialized. These media are considered to be 'commodities' and efforts are made to 'sell' them. Another feature of mass media around the world is top-down, one-way and non-participative nature of the communication. The communicators usually plan prepare communication programmes sitting in ivory towers and have no idea about ground realities. The resultant communication is kind of an imposition on the receivers (readers, listeners and viewers). Such communication does not take into account the audience's needs and wants, does not involve them and thus is not very effective.

Many critics raised protests against this non-participative nature of mass media. Most of these critics were from Latin America and they included *Paulo Freire*, *Reyes Matta*, *Luis Beltran*, *Diaz Bardenave* and *Fuen Zalida*. These critics emphasized the positive uses of the media and also on the need for "access" to the media and "right to communicate"

Thus emerged the Democratic Participation theory. It is also called the participatory theory or the democratization theory. This theory lays stress on the need for local and community participation in media and specifically news and programme production.

Participatory theorists argue that people must speak for themselves and not *spoken through* by professional journalists and programme producers.

Also Participatory theorists oppose any kind of commercial, political or bureaucratic control of media. Their view is that the media exist to serve the people and not the interests of governments or commercial enterprises. Another feature of this theory is 'demassification'. The ultimate purpose is to put the media in the hands of communities. Examples of these are the small community newspapers and radio stations in many Latin American countries where the people own and run them. *Farmers working as reporters and subeditors run 'Adike Patrike' of Karnataka.*

Participating theorists claim, that such a system would lead to the 'liberation' of the people (politically, economically and culturally) through a process of conscientization.

4.2.3 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIAN MEDIA:

The story of Indian mass media is often summarized as follows: From Mission to Profession to Industry. It is obvious that the media began with very positive objectives. But crass commercialization has changed most of that. The principle of modern journalism or media practices can be understood from this saying: "When a dog bites a man it is no news, but when a man bites a dog, it is news".

Social responsibility of media was an extremely important issue, especially in a developing democracy like ours. The pioneering role and the intellectual leadership provided intellectual discourse in the country.

Our vast, varied and vibrant media was a national asset and a pillar of strength for our democracy, which had been made richer by the plurality of our free press. In a diverse nation of a billion people, there are bound to be differences in taste and opinion, in attitude and ideology and in linguistic and political preferences. The plurality of our society is reflected in the diversity of our media. The importance of a free press lies in the fact that it is the ultimate check against the tyranny of authority and a mirror that enables people in authority to get a continuous reality check. It remained an important role for the media, despite the increasing pressures of commercialization. On many occasions, the media has played a constructive and socially responsible role of sensitizing authorities about important events, and issues.

The media had a crucial role in tracking the process of creating a modern, progressive, inclusive and dynamic society, built on a rapidly growing economy and in guiding it as well through reportage and criticisms. Media play an active role to strengthen the processes of our democracy and empower the citizens so that they could take more informed decisions in life. It

is important that the information and opinion purveyed by the media should be credible, balanced and well researched.

Some observers say that the media continues to uphold the glorious traditions and the values of Indian journalism. But a mute question remains. Does the media still consider journalism as a mission? Because media indulges in many practices like sensationalism and scurrilous writing.

Mass media should leave no stone unturned to uphold the values of secularism, social justice, equality and democracy. The need of the hour is to rise above all forms of parochialism and continuing to work for the all-round development. A primary task of the media is to reflect the feelings of the people and present public opinion with reality. The role of the press in a democracy is most crucial one of the four pillars of our democracy. This necessitates that the work with sincerity, convey facts to the people and reflect the feelings of the voiceless people. In a nutshell, media needs to work with social responsibility.

The media are expected to give importance to the problems of the people and allot more space for covering news relating to the people. However, all over the world, more importance is being given in the media for sensationalism. For example, when former US president Bill Clinton visited India, his morning walk and playing with dogs had figured prominently as headlines on the front pages of newspapers. The same day, starvation deaths in Andhra Pradesh and rape of dalits in Karnataka found place on inside pages insignificantly.

The media should not to give importance to glamour and sensationalism, but should pay attention to the problems of the people. There is an urgent need for serious journalism and the media should also follow ethical values. The mass media should not work against the people. Media should stand by the people, helping them with facts, comprehensive information and comments with social responsibility.

4.3 SUMMARY:

- Mass media inform, educate, entertain and persuade. They also have been instrumental in bringing down governments, starting wars, bringing about and felicitating change and development. They have grown into such statures that they are considered to be the fourth pillar of democracy.
- Mass media operate differently in different countries. Different countries have different governmental systems, political situations, and socioeconomic and cultural conditions. And in different countries, different systems have evolved with regard to the functioning of the

mass media. For example countries like the USA, which are free societies, the media enjoy a lot of freedom. But everywhere, the media are expected to be socially responsible.

- Mass media perform many functions, which include information, entertainment, education and persuasion. These media help discover truth by presenting all manner of evidence. Media also function as watchdogs - keeping an eye on all kind of happenings and bringing them to fore. This 'watchdog' function of the media (press, in the earlier days) was not taken lightly by the authorities and they had clamped restrictions.

4.4 KEY WORDS:

Authoritarian Control: Dictatorial, monarchical and democratic governments use this system to exert authoritarian control over the mass media. The saying "*State is the Law*" fits this theory. Kings, monarchs, dictators, military rulers and even democratically elected governments have tried to control the flow of information in the mass media. According to this theory, mass media should abide by the governments dictates. The media are expected to be subordinate to the established authority. Under this system, media personnel lack freedom and independence. Their reports often have to be submitted for advance censorship. This censorship is justified on the ground that the State must always take precedence over others.

Libertarian Approach: 'public enlightenment' is regarded as a major function of all mass media. Many thinkers consider the media as an important partner in the search for truth. Mass media perform many functions, which include information, entertainment, education and persuasion. These media help discover truth by presenting all manner of evidence. Media also function as watchdogs - keeping an eye on all kind of happenings and bringing them to fore.

Social Responsibility: The burning question for a long time has been the accountability of the media. From this emerged the social-responsibility theory. This theory is based on the proposition: "*Whoever enjoys freedom has certain obligations to society*". Proponents of this theory, like those supporting the libertarian theory, say that the press (and other media) has to perform the function of enlightening the public, safe guarding civil liberties etc.

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write a detailed note on the various media related systems.
2. Why do you think media have social responsibilities? Discuss in detail.
3. Throw some light on the social responsibility of media. Give suitable examples.
4. Discuss in detail the social responsibility of the Indian media.

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VIOLENCE IN MEDIA

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LESSON STRUCTURE

More than ten thousand studies have been conducted all over the world on the impact of violence in media. Over three thousand studies have been conducted during the past forty years in the United States alone that suggest that there is a 'correlation' between social aggression and the viewing of violence on the big and small screens. According to the American Psychological Association, by the time an average American child is ten or eleven years old, he/she would have seen 8,000 murders and 10,000 acts of violence on television.

Few studies on the subject have been conducted in India. Indian children are not yet exposed to the excessive violence that American children are, at least on television. However, with the arrival of satellite television, the Indian child is now exposed to more and more violent fare. Of course, popular Indian films too have excessive violence. Much of this violence is stylized, but some of it vivid and realistic.

In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects violence in media. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

5.0 Objectives

5.1 *Introduction*

5.2 *Presentation of Content*

5.2.1 *Violence in Media and Violence in Society*

5.2.2 *Violence in Media and Impact on Children*

5.2.3 *Impact of Violence in Media*

5.2.4 *Violence in Entertainment Media*

5.3 *Summary*

5.4 *Key Words*

5.5 *Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)*

5.6 *References/Suggested Reading*

5.0 OBJECTIVES:

Explicit pictures of slow-motion bullets exploding from people's chests, and dead bodies surrounded by pools of blood, are now commonplace in the mass media. Millions of viewers worldwide, many of them children, watch female World Wrestling Entertainment wrestlers try to tear out each other's hair and rip off each other's clothing. And some of the top-selling video games in the world present both violence and sex in equal doses.

So violence in media is a major concern. In this lesson we shall try to discuss the various issues related to media and violence. The specific objectives of this lesson are:

- *Violence in Media and Violence in Society*
- *Violence in Media and Impact on Children*
- *Impact of Violence in Media*
- *Violence in Entertainment Media*

5.1 INTRODUCCION:

Before the average American child leaves elementary school, researchers estimate that he or she will have witnessed more than 8,000 murders on television. Has this steady diet of reel violence made America the world leader in real crime and violence? The situation in other countries is not much different. Most countries have very alarming crime rates. But the question is how much of the violence in society is caused by violence that is presented in media.

The various issues related to media and violence shall be discussed in this lesson.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- Violence in the Media and Violence in Society
- Violence in Media and Impact on Children
- Impact of Violence in Media
- Violence in Entertainment Media

5.2.1 VIOLENCE IN MEDIA AND VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY:

There is no doubt that there is excessive violence in media content. The impact of violence as shown in media is quite far-reaching. There have been cases of children and adults imitating on-screen violence and the activities of gangsters, robbers and murderers.

But does it mean that cinema or television violence is the primary cause of violence in our society. No. At the most, screen violence may be one of the many contributory factors. More influential factors are poverty, frustration, unemployment, revenge, family clashes, urban decay, loss of self-esteem, a sense of failure, etc. In other words, a combination of sociological, psychological, economic and cultural factors is primary reasons behind violence in society.

However, communication scholars and psychologists opine that there are 'correlations' between screen violence and individual acts of violence. Others say that this does not mean that screen violence has 'caused' the violent behaviour. Statistical correlations, however significant, may point to an 'association' but hardly ever to a cause-and-effect relationship. What is of greater concern is the effect of 'desensitization', which could result from repeated exposure to scenes of violence in programmes, news and cartoons.

Exposure to violence constantly and on a daily basis can desensitize us to violence in real life. Violence against women and children, for instance, will shock or move us much less than we ought to as human beings. Further, we might be convinced that violence is a part of society, and that it is normal, even glamorous to be aggressive and 'macho' in one's behaviour. It might lead us to believe that some groups (for instance, tribal people, dalits and leftists) are naturally violent, and such stereotypes might endure.

5.2.2 VIOLENCE IN MEDIA AND IMPACT ON CHILDREN:

How do the world's children spend most of their leisure time? The answer watching television may come as no great surprise, but the UNESCO Global Media Violence Study, the largest ever intercultural project on this topic, sheds light on the striking similarities of television's impact in vastly different cultural, economic and social contexts.

With the easy availability of mass media, including television and more recently, video and computer games, children and teenagers are exposed to increasingly higher doses of aggressive images. In many countries, there is an average of five to ten aggressive acts per hour of television. Violence among youth is also on the rise, making it plausible to correlate the two, even though the primary causes for aggressive behaviour in children are to be found in their family environment, and the social and economic conditions in which they are raised.

Nonetheless, media plays a major role in the development of cultural orientations, worldviews and beliefs. Most studies show that the relation between media violence and 'real' violence is interactive: media can contribute to an aggressive culture; people who are already aggressive use the media as further confirmation of their beliefs and attitudes, which, in turn, are

reinforced through media content. As the basis for this study, the UNESCO study formulated the compass theory. Depending on a child's already existing experiences, values and the cultural environment, media content offers an orientation, a frame of reference, which determines the direction of one's own behaviour. Viewers do not necessarily adapt what they have observed, but they measure their own behaviour in terms of distance to the perceived media models. For instance, if cruelty is 'common', 'just' kicking the other seems to be innocent by comparison if the cultural environment has not established an alternative frame of reference.

A remarkable number of children from both groups (44%) report a strong overlap in what they perceive as reality and what they see on the screen. Nearly one third of the group living in high-aggression environments think that most people in the world are evil, a perception reinforced by media content.

The impact of media violence can primarily be explained by the fact that aggressive behaviour is more systematically rewarded than more conciliatory ways of coping with one's life. It is often presented as gratuitous, thrilling, and interpreted as a good problem-solver in a variety of situations.

Violence has always been an ingredient of children's adventure and suspense movies, what is critical is the dominance and extreme it has reached. Furthermore, as the media becomes even more perfect with the introduction of three dimensions (virtual reality) and interactivity (computer games and multimedia), the representation of violence 'merges' increasingly with reality. Censorship is not the adequate answer. Instead, codes of conduct and self-control must be developed among media professionals. Debate must be fostered between politicians, producers and teachers to find a common ground.

Violence in the news and in comic strips is rarely talked about. While the portrayal of violence in the press and broadcast media is condoned because it is 'factual' and deals with real-life incidents, the caricatures of violent fights and clashes between heroes and villains are condoned because they are presented in a light and humorous manner. There has been hardly any study in India or elsewhere in Asia about the influence of such violent portrayals on society.

The violence on the Indian television screen is mostly in the popular Hindi and regional language films. Violence on Indian television is also there in cartoons and other children's programmes like WWE wrestling.

On the plus side, violence is not related to crime alone. It must take into account state violence, like that of the police and the armed forces, or the violence of the law which does not bring the guilty to book, or which delays justice, or worse, punishes the innocent. Such violence

too is sometimes the subject of cinema and television. The portrayal of such violence could help raise consciousness and thus lead to social reform (e.g. the film *Ardh Satya*, and the television serial, *Tamas*).

Violence in the mass media is frequently associated with sex. Indeed, rape or forced sex is the most violent crime that is often depicted graphically on the big and small screen. In recent years, a rape sequence has almost become obligatory in the popular film. Scenes of blood and gore sometimes follow rape sequences, since scores have to be settled and the rape avenged. Further, villains need to frequent nightclubs where titillating cabarets are put on for their entertainment. The censors come down heavily on a few films, but the majority of popular films are 'passed' as okay for the entire family.

5.2.3 EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE IN MEDIA:

Whether or not exposure to media violence causes increased levels of aggression and violence in young people is the perennial question of media effects research. Some experts argue that fifty years of research evidence show *"that exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later."* Others maintain *"the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them to it."*

It presents a classic case of *Many Studies, Many Conclusions*. The lack of consensus about media effects reflects three "gray areas" or constraints contained in the research itself.

First, media violence is notoriously hard to define and measure. Some experts who track violence in television programming, such as George Gerbner, define violence as the act (or threat) of injuring or killing someone, independent of the method used or the surrounding context. Accordingly, Gerbner includes cartoon violence in his data-set. But others exclude cartoon violence from their research because of its comical and unrealistic presentation.

Second, researchers disagree over the type of relationship the data. Some argue that exposure to media violence causes aggression. Others say that the two are associated, but that there is no causal connection. And others say the data supports the conclusion that there is no relationship between the two at all.

Third, even those who agree that there is a connection between media violence and aggression disagree about how the one affects the other. Some say that the mechanism is a psychological one, rooted in the ways we learn. For example, experts argue that as they watch violent shows, children learn to internalize scripts that use violence as an appropriate method of

problem solving. Other researchers argue that it is the physiological effects of media violence that cause aggressive behaviour.

Exposure to violent imagery is linked to increased heart rate, faster respiration and higher blood pressure. Some think that this simulated "fight-or-flight" response predisposes people to act aggressively in the real world.

Most studies opine that there is "a positive, though weak, relation between exposure to television violence and aggressive behaviour." Here is an example: Children who consume high levels of media violence are more likely to be aggressive in the real world. In 1956, researchers took to the laboratory to compare the behaviour of 24 children watching TV. Half watched a violent episode of the cartoon Woody Woodpecker, and the other 12 watched the non-violent cartoon The Little Red Hen. During play afterwards, the researchers observed that the children who watched the violent cartoon were much more likely to hit other children and break toys.

Another research studied the effect of exposure to real-world violence, television violence, and cartoon violence. The researchers divided 100 preschool children into four groups. The first group watched a real person shout insults at an inflatable doll while hitting it with a mallet. The second group watched the incident on television. The third watched a cartoon version of the same scene, and the fourth watched nothing. When all the children were later exposed to a frustrating situation, the first three groups responded with more aggression than the control group. The children who watched the incident on television were just as aggressive as those who had watched the real person use the mallet; and both were more aggressive than those who had only watched the cartoon.

Over the years, laboratory experiments such as these have consistently shown that exposure to violence is associated with increased heartbeat, blood pressure and respiration rate. However, this line of enquiry has been criticized because of its focus on short-term results and the artificial nature of the viewing environment.

Other scientists have sought to establish a connection between media violence and aggression outside the laboratory. For example, a number of surveys indicate that children and young people who report a preference for violent entertainment also score higher on aggression indexes than those who watch less violent shows.

Children who watch high levels of media violence are at increased risk of aggressive behaviour as adults. Studies have found that the children who watched violent television at home behaved more aggressively in school.

The introduction of television into a community could lead to an increase in violent behaviour. Researchers have also pursued the link between media violence and real life aggression by examining communities before and after the introduction of television.

Media violence stimulates fear in some children. A number of studies have reported that watching media violence frightens young children, and that the effects of this may be long lasting. Incidences of psychological trauma (including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress) increased in proportion to the number of hours of television watched each day. A 1999 survey of 500 parents revealed that the presence of a television in a child's bedroom makes it more likely that the child will suffer from sleep disturbances.

Although children can easily distinguish cartoons, westerns and spy thrillers from reality, they often confuse realistic programmes with the real world. When they are unable to integrate the violence in these shows because they can't follow the plot, they are much more likely to become anxious. This is particularly problematic because the children reported that they prefer realistic programmes, which they equate with fun and excitement.

Media violence desensitizes people to real violence. A number of studies in the 1970's showed that people who are repeatedly exposed to media violence tend to be less disturbed when they witness real world violence, and have less sympathy for its victims. Studies also confirm that children are more likely to tolerate aggressive behaviour in the real world if they first watch TV shows or films that contain violent content.

People who watch a lot of media violence tend to believe that the world is more dangerous than it is in reality. George Gerbner has conducted the longest running study of television violence. His research suggests that heavy TV viewers tend to perceive the world in ways that are consistent with the images on TV. As viewers' perceptions of the world come to conform to the depictions they see on TV, they become more passive, more anxious, and more fearful. Gerbner calls this the "Mean World Syndrome."

Gerbner's research found that those who watch greater amounts of television are more likely to:

- Overestimate their risk of being victimized by crime
- Believe their neighbourhoods are unsafe
- Believe "fear of crime is a very serious personal problem"
- Assume the crime rate is increasing, even when it is not.

Family attitudes to violent content are more important than the images themselves. A number of studies suggest that media is only one of a number of variables that put children at risk of aggressive behaviour. On the other hand, researchers report that parental attitudes towards media violence can counter the impact it has on children. Family attitudes and social class are stronger determinants of attitudes toward aggression than is the amount of exposure to TV, which is nevertheless a significant but weaker predictor.

5.2.4 VIOLENCE IN MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT:

Between 2000 B.C. and 44 A.D., the ancient Egyptians entertained themselves with plays re-enacting the murder of their gods. The ancient Romans were given to lethal spectator sports as well, and the society was addicted to gladiator games and the fascination of bloodshed.

Violence has always played a role in entertainment. But there's a growing consensus that, in recent years, something about media violence has changed.

For one thing, there's more of it. In 2002, a study was conducted of six major Canadian television networks over a seven-year period, examining films, situation comedies, dramatic series, and children's programming (though not cartoons). The study found that between 1993 and 2001, incidents of physical violence increased by 378 per cent. TV shows in 2001 averaged 40 acts of violence per hour.

There is also a disturbing increase in psychological violence, especially in the last few years. The study found that incidents of psychological violence remained relatively stable from 1993 to 1999, but increased 325 per cent from 1999 to 2001. Such incidents now occur more frequently than physical violence.

Many research studies indicate that media violence has not just increased in quantity; it has also become much more graphic, much more sexual, and much more sadistic.

VIOLENCE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES OR MORAL JUDGMENT:

The notion of violence as a means of problem solving is reinforced by entertainment in which both villains and heroes resort to violence on a continual basis. The Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA), which has studied violence in television, movies and music videos for a decade, reports that the "good guys" commit nearly half of all violence. The violence was simply presented as justifiable, natural and inevitable -- the most obvious way to solve the problem.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN:

In movie theatres, there is some control over who watches what. But at home, there's little to stop children from watching a restricted movie on one of the many emerging specialty channels. Kids may also have access to adult video games at the local video store. In December 2001, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission reported that retailers allowed 78 per cent of unaccompanied minors, ages 13 to 16, to purchase video games rated "mature."

Music and music videos are pushing into new and increasingly violent territory. When singer Jordan Knight, formerly of the popular New Kids on the Block group, released a solo album in 1999, Canadian activists called for a boycott of the album because it included a song advocating date rape.

Violence in general, and sexual violence in particular, is also a staple of the video game industry. The current trend is for players to be the bad guys, acting out criminal fantasies and earning points for attacking and killing innocent bystanders. Although these games are rated M, for mature audiences, it's common knowledge that they are popular among pre-teens and teenaged boys. The level of violence in the gaming habits of young people is disturbingly high.

Virtual violence is also readily available on the World Wide Web. Children and young people can download violent lyrics (including lyrics that have been censored from retail versions of songs), and visit Web sites that feature violent images and video clips. Much of the violence is also sexual in nature.

The presence of violence, degradation and cruelty in a range of media means that children are exposed to a continuum of violence, which ranges from the in-your-face attitude of shows to extreme depictions of misogyny and sadism.

A critical engagement with the media inspires young people to question how violence is portrayed in films or video games—and even to ask why it's there in the first place. Is violence essential to the plot, or is it factored in for thrills and excitement? Does the violence have realistic consequences, or does it show people smashing through plate glass windows with barely a scratch? And is the psychological trauma of violence and injury shown, or does the story just proceed without skipping a beat? Violence used to be the territory of the "bad guy" but there's been a major shift in the last few decades to violence as the hero's prerogative. Do positive motives justify violent action?

A search for patterns in the portrayal of media violence helps young people to understand media entertainment for what it is—fiction. Crime plays a far greater role in movies than it does in our society.

Though there are many challenging non-violent computer and video games, in the last few years video games have become almost synonymous with violence. Their trademark movie-like realism, combined with enormous marketing budgets, has made this entertainment industry the second most profitable in the world.

5.3 SUMMARY:

- According to the American Psychological Association, by the time an average American child is ten or eleven years old, he/she would have seen 8,000 murders and 10,000 acts of violence on television. With the arrival of satellite television, the Indian child is now exposed to more and more violent fare. Of course, popular Indian films too have excessive violence. Much of this violence is stylized, but some of it vivid and realistic.
- Communication scholars and psychologists opine that there are 'correlations' between screen violence and individual acts of violence. Others say that this does not mean that screen violence has 'caused' the violent behaviour. Statistical correlations, however significant, may point to an 'association' but hardly ever to a cause-and-effect relationship. Exposure to violence constantly and on a daily basis can desensitize us to violence in real life: violence against women and children, for instance, will shock or move us much less than we ought to as human beings.
- The impact of media violence can primarily be explained by the fact that aggressive behaviour is more systematically rewarded than more conciliatory ways of coping with one's life. It is often presented as gratuitous, thrilling, and interpreted as a good problem-solver in a variety of situations.
- Children and teenagers are exposed to increasingly higher doses of aggressive images. In many countries, there is an average of five to ten aggressive acts per hour of television. Violence among youth is also on the rise, making it plausible to correlate the two, even though the primary causes for aggressive behaviour in children are to be found in their family environment, and the social and economic conditions in which they are raised.
- Violence has always been an ingredient of children's adventure and suspense movies, what is critical is the dominance and extreme it has reached. Furthermore, as the media becomes even more perfect with the introduction of three dimensions (virtual reality) and interactivity (computer games and multimedia), the representation of violence 'merges' increasingly with reality. Censorship is not the adequate answer. Instead, codes of conduct and self-control must be developed among media professionals. Debate must be fostered between

politicians, producers and teachers to find a common ground. Most importantly, media education must be furthered to create competent and critical media users

- Some experts argue that fifty years of research evidence show *"that exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later."* Others maintain *"the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them to it."*
- Over the years, laboratory experiments such as these have consistently shown that exposure to violence is associated with increased heartbeat, blood pressure and respiration rate. However, this line of enquiry has been criticized because of its focus on short-term results and the artificial nature of the viewing environment.
- Violence has always been an ingredient of children's adventure and suspense movies, what is critical is the dominance and extreme it has reached. Furthermore, as the media becomes even more perfect with the introduction of three dimensions (virtual reality) and interactivity (computer games and multimedia), the representation of violence 'merges' increasingly with reality. Censorship is not the adequate answer. Instead, codes of conduct and self-control must be developed among media professionals. Debate must be fostered between politicians, producers and teachers to find a common ground.
- The presence of violence, degradation and cruelty in a range of media means that children are exposed to a continuum of violence, which ranges from the in-your-face attitude of shows to extreme depictions of misogyny and sadism.
- Media violence stimulates fear in some children. A number of studies have reported that watching media violence frightens young children, and that the effects of this may be long lasting. Incidences of psychological trauma (including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress) increased in proportion to the number of hours of television watched each day. Although children can easily distinguish cartoons, westerns and spy thrillers from reality, they often confuse realistic programmes with the real world.
- Media violence desensitizes people to real violence.
- People who watch a lot of media violence tend to believe that the world is more dangerous than it is in reality. George Gerbner calls this the "Mean World Syndrome."

5.4 KEY WORDS:

Violence in Media: Violence has always been an ingredient of children's adventure and suspense movies, what is critical is the dominance and extreme it has reached. Furthermore, as

the media becomes even more perfect with the introduction of three dimensions (virtual reality) and interactivity (computer games and multimedia), the representation of violence 'merges' increasingly with reality. Censorship is not the adequate answer. Instead, codes of conduct and self-control must be developed among media professionals. Debate must be fostered between politicians, producers and teachers to find a common ground.

Impact of Violence: Some experts argue that fifty years of research evidence show "*that exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later.*" Others maintain "*the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them to it.*"

Physiological Effects of Violence: Over the years, laboratory experiments such as these have consistently shown that exposure to violence is associated with increased heartbeat, blood pressure and respiration rate. However, this line of enquiry has been criticized because of its focus on short-term results and the artificial nature of the viewing environment.

Virtual violence: Virtual violence is also readily available on the World Wide Web. Children and young people can download violent lyrics (including lyrics that have been censored from retail versions of songs), and visit Web sites that feature violent images and video clips. Much of the violence is also sexual in nature.

Violence and Fear Stimulation: *Media violence stimulates fear in some children.* A number of studies have reported that watching media violence frightens young children, and that the effects of this may be long lasting. Incidences of psychological trauma (including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress) increased in proportion to the number of hours of television watched each day. A 1999 survey of 500 parents revealed that the presence of a television in a child's bedroom makes it more likely that the child will suffer from sleep disturbances.

Violence and desensitization: *Media violence desensitizes people to real violence.* A number of studies in the 1970's showed that people who are repeatedly exposed to media violence tend to be less disturbed when they witness real world violence, and have less sympathy for its victims. Studies also confirm that children are more likely to tolerate aggressive behaviour in the real world if they first watch TV shows or films that contain violent content.

Violence and Distortion of Perceptions: *People who watch a lot of media violence tend to believe that the world is more dangerous than it is in reality.* George Gerbner has conducted the longest running study of television violence. His research suggests that heavy TV viewers tend to perceive the world in ways that are consistent with the images on TV. As viewers' perceptions

of the world come to conform to the depictions they see on TV, they become more passive, more anxious, and more fearful. Gerbner calls this the "Mean World Syndrome."

5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:

6. Write a detailed note on violence on mass media. Give suitable examples.
7. What are the effects of violence in media? Discuss in detail with examples.
8. Write a detailed note on violence on television. Give suitable examples.
9. Write a detailed note on violence in entertainment content of mass media. Give suitable examples.
10. Write a detailed note on the impact of violence as shown in media on children. Give suitable examples.

5.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED BOOKS:

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MEDIA AND RELIGION

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LESSON STRUCTURE

When religion is flooded with reasoning, much of what it holds will get washed away; what remains is pure spirituality. Religion is a technique to become spiritual. Spirituality is nothing but Life Engineering. It is a quality in you that enables you to live a life centered not on material things, but on the miracles of Existence, on the firm conviction that you are part of a macrocosmic orchestra that is being conducted by the Existential Energy. It keeps you in a liberated state inside while you perform in the outer world, intelligently and effortlessly. It keeps you in tune with the Existential Energy. Man has always researched what created this beautiful universe; what created this beautiful earth. He concluded that there was an Energy making all this happen. He then worked on how to establish a connection with that Energy.

The first people to make this conclusion and establish a connection with this Energy were the ancient Rishis. All of them spoke about the same experience of Existential energy. But what do we do? We cling onto the formula and forget the whole purpose of the formula. Because of this, we don't even get a glimpse of the real experience.

Religion has now moved out of our hearts and minds. It has now come to the biggest platform- the mass media. Almost all media give ample space and time to religion- related content. But why? And with what results? We shall try to find the answers.

In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects media and religion. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Presentation of Content
 - 6.2.1 Religion and Media- An Overview
 - 6.2.2 Society and Media
 - 6.2.3 Religion and Role of Media
 - 6.2.4 Television and Media

- 6.3 Summary
- 6.4 Key Words
- 6.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 6.6 References/Suggested Reading

6.0 OBJECTIVES:

Religion is nothing but a stepping-stone to go inside yourself and understand your spiritual nature and live life in a blissful way.

Those who fight in the name of religion are those who have not had a taste of any spiritual experience. If they can understand how religion took root and what the whole purpose of religion is, they will see how they are missing the whole thing. When religion takes you to spirituality, you will understand that spirituality is nothing but life itself. Religion is quantity; spirituality is quality. Because religion is quantity and it takes time, we want to finish up all our responsibilities and turn towards spirituality at the fag end of our lives.

Fanatics use religion for their own ends. But then media also uses religion. This lesson is an attempt to understand the interrelationships between media and religion. The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Get an Over view of Religion and Media*
- *To Know About Society and Media*
- *To Know About Religion and Role of Media*
- *To Know About Television and Media*

6.1 INTRODUCION:

For much of the 20th century, thinking and research in media and religion were constrained by seeing media and religion as two different domains. Media were seen primarily as providers of entertainment or tools to be used for communicating religious ideas. Religion was understood primarily as specific ideas and practices defined to a large extent by religious institutions.

New ways of thinking about media and religion have been emerging over the last two decades that recast these in a totally different light and give new directions to research and understanding in the area. This new study of media and religion from a cultural perspective looks at things like:

- *How people build their own eclectic religious and/or spiritual meaning in everyday practice, using visual, material, technological and institutional mediated sources?*

- *How the characteristics of media in a culture influence the conceptualization and construction of religious ideas, structures and material practices, not just their transmission?*
- *How differences in religious thinking and practice occur when religion and spirituality are differently mediated, both on a broad cultural level, a communal level and an individual level?*
- *How the ideas and practices of religious institutions are linked to the media, economic, political, class, and intellectual dynamics within which they have grown?*

Now another question arises. Do media have the potential to affect our religiousness? "Religion and Media" is a vast theme. In this lesson, the references mainly will focus on television, which is a dominant medium.

6.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Religion and Media- An Overview*
- *Society and Media*
- *Religion and Role of Media*
- *Television and Media*

6.2.1 RELIGION AND MEDIA- AN OVERVIEW:

In the 21st century, religion is difficult to imagine detached from the mass media. A dizzying array of media amplifies and circulates religious ideas and practices. People are now beginning to recognize the significance of this development, but there are few research studies conducted on this issue.

In the contemporary world, the ways that religion and media mutually complement and supplement each other are part of globalizing processes. Yet there are specific cultural meanings associated to the related issues in different local conditions. This bifocality, which looks at both the global and the local, is essential to any work hoping to comprehend such a phenomena like religion. It is said that the broadcast on Indian television of Hindu "mythological films" and TV serials in the early 1990s helped to escalate the rise of the Hindu National Party and religious violence within India; their overseas broadcast helped to mobilize support for that cause in the global South Asian Diaspora.

In other words, contemporary mass media have an extraordinary capacity to shrink both space and time in ways that have profound implications for religious experience. They can bring people together who are at a distance from each other spatially, thus making almost instantaneous processes that might have taken years in the past. For example, the tele-visual experience of religious preachers on television and now on the Internet is totally different from going to a religious congregation. This experience is in contrast with older forms of communication that mediated religious community building more slowly.

Religious ideas, of course, have circulated through a variety of media for millennia. In India, we had the tradition of SHRUTI or the oral tradition. People heard and remembered. The came books as a medium of religious propagation. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* along with other *shastras* and *puranas* have been the great sources of religious thoughts. We have come across the religious and related scriptures in various forms; from written, spoken, dramatized, etc.

In Christianity, spectacles such as the crucifixion or the revelation of divine knowledge in different textual and other forms have been crucial in shaping religious experience.

Rather than assuming the connection between Religion and Media to be uniquely modern, we understand their relationship to encompass a broad range of tools. These tools or media range from the historical circulation of portable print texts such as Hindu scriptures on palm-leaves, Buddhist sutras and the Jewish Torah; to the spread of Koranic Tafsir throughout the Muslim world on audiocassettes and the worldwide circulation of Christian evangelical broadcasting, and most recently, the proliferation of religious practices of all sorts on the internet.

So religions have taken the help of a wide variety of tools and media from face-to-face interactions; group congregations; mass gatherings; textual tools like books, pamphlets, booklets, posters, etc. In the modern times of mass media, all media have been used for this purpose. Newspapers have religious preachers writing articles and even columns. Some newspapers even have special pages or supplements devoted to religious matters. The number of religious magazines has increased many folds in the recent years. Radio, television and now the Internet are being extensively used religious bodies.

Despite these developments, the relationship between religion and modern mass media has been, until recently, remarkably understudied. In 1996, Hoover and Venturelli argued that religion and media are each other's blind spots, particularly in the representation and analysis of non-western religions in the West. This neglect, with the exception of a few works, is particularly

striking, given the significance of the rapid growth of all kinds of media in the expression, circulation, and representation (or misrepresentation) of religious life worldwide.

In the last five years, several important studies have been conducted in field of Religion and Media. These include: Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby's *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (1997); Hent DeVries and Samuel Weber's *Religion and Media* (2001) and Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark's *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media* (2001). Unfortunately, no great research study has been conducted in India in this field.

One can see a shared project and trajectory in these works: to recognize the significance of the study of media as an aspect of religious practice. Representing different intellectual traditions, this new work moves beyond a prevailing intellectual prejudice against popular media as a degrading influence on, if not an opposing force or competitor with, religious life.

These studies recognize in the religious use of media such as television, the renewed appearance of classic themes in the study of religion such as charisma, authority, ritual, suffering, salvation, and community.

6.2.2 SOCIETY AND MEDIA:

There are at least three considerations to take into account in dealing with the theme. First there is the pluralist character of modern society. Social mobility and geography give rise to conglomerates of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Second is the place of media in modern societies. The source of information and value training is more and more often the media. A well-known theologian used to say that we have to read the Bible and the newspaper together. But which newspaper? Which newspapers tell the truth, bring the information of what really is happening in the world? Who decides what the news and its contents are to be? The objective of almost all media is to reach the largest audience in order to obtain the greatest profit. What chance do we have of knowing ourselves and others' problems, needs and dreams, if our voices and theirs are forced to pass through filters that hold back all that affects the interests of the owners of the media?

Third is the nature of the media. The audio-visual media (cinema, television, etc.) populate their hours with an immense number of people in an endless attempt to excite our senses. The media invade our privacy, and we still do not know the effects that such a multiplicity of stimuli has on us.

The fragmentation of the image, of information, the manipulation involved in 'montage', creates a kind of partial 'truth', which prevents authentic communication. The subtlest form of

dominance is that of the mind. The most detestable sort of dependence is not material but spiritual: people have lost the power to think critically for themselves. The moment people lose this power; they are not able to communicate. They can only ape. Does media perpetuate this notion? This is not an easy question to answer.

6.2.3 RELIGION AND ROLE OF MEDIA:

The attitudes of people of religion towards the media are extremely varied from uncritical acceptance to total rejection of media's presence in the life of society.

The advent of the mass media was well received by the religious bodies. However, they expressed certain fears. For this reason, some religious bodies tried to reduce the media to being instruments at their service in the beginning. Perhaps these religious bodies did not trust of the audience. They thought that the audience had to be protected, directed and controlled.

Today, the biggest criticism leveled by people of religion is that media are drastically changing religion's place in society. That is to give shape to a value system and to express the essence of a culture. For some people, for example, television has come to be a kind of religion. Some experts say that at least three threats to religion.

Firstly, it is derailing the greater part of interests, motivations, satisfactions and energies that are the purpose of religion. Religious people have feared the media especially because the media threaten traditional religious values and beliefs. They see how, as one result, the temples, mosques, and churches are emptying.

Secondly, religious language is being appropriated. New symbols, images and rites are being created. The mass media - especially television - have taken command of the minds of people. This is not acceptable to religious bodies.

Thirdly, religious themes that have no connection with organized religion are being developed. The mass media are playing an important role in this field.

6.2.4 TELEVISION AND MEDIA:

Television is a medium that traffics in fantasy that creates images and ideas that are not true always. This medium is autonomous and is capable of creating its own dynamic communication structure. Some people call television and the Internet a "fourth temptation" because of their addictive nature. So some people opine "this medium, because of its very nature, does not lend itself to constructive purposes." On the contrary, religious bodies are using television, the Internet, and other media very extensively.

The perception that television is not that useful for religious propagation is based on the conception that faiths are timeless and there is a need to protect and sustain their purity and integrity. But preachers often overlook the manipulative and deceptive nature of the mass media.

The television screen is saturated with profane happenings, associated with the world of commercialism and entertainment. But the medium is so powerful that it also accommodates what many call the "electronic temples", the "electronic mosques", and "electronic churches".

Here the following things need to be taken into consideration:

- *The importance of the media in a context that includes technical, financial, political and cultural aspects;*
- *That using an electronic medium, like it or not, is a political act;*
- *Doing everything possible not to isolate the medium from reality;*
- *Preventing technical questions from alienating the medium from reality (problems of quality, montage, etc.);*
- *Encouraging public participation, forestalling passivity.*

We have to accept that in our world today mass media are more and more becoming the most important source of information and entertainment for us. We also need to recognize that the mass media can play a significant role in encouraging participation in the search for a more just and peaceful world.

We live in a pluralist society in which the relationship of people to organized religion has been weakened. And yet spiritual needs appear more evident. Is it possible and desirable to use the media as new channels for manifestations of the spirit? There are no simple answers to this question.

Many different considerations have to be taken into account: media ownership, legislation, professional rivalry, economic interests, social and cultural mores, the media as supermarket of religion, guidelines for commercial advertising as a communication criterion and many more. What must not be forgotten is that communication is not offered to mass audiences. People receive, select and interpret the messages sent to them from their own social and cultural viewpoints and, on the basis of that interpretation, draw their own conclusions. For this reason, a genuine encounter between media and religion carries with it an attitude of respect for the dignity of people.

6.3 SUMMARY:

Religious ideas, of course, have circulated through a variety of media for millennia. In India, we had the tradition of SHRUTI or the oral tradition. People heard and remembered. The came books as a medium of religious propagation. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* along with other *shastras* and *puranas* have been the great sources of religious thoughts. We have come across the religious and related scriptures in various forms; from written, spoken, dramatized, etc.

Contemporary mass media have an extraordinary capacity to shrink both space and time in ways that have profound implications for religious experience. They can bring people together who are at a distance from each other spatially, thus making almost instantaneous processes that might have taken years in the past. For example, the tele-visual experience of religious preachers on television and now on the Internet is totally different from going to a religious congregation. This experience is in contrast with older forms of communication that mediated religious community building more slowly.

In the last five years, several important studies have been conducted in field of Religion and Media. These include: Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby's *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (1997); Hent DeVries and Samuel Weber's *Religion and Media* (2001) and Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark's *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media* (2001). Unfortunately, no great research study has been conducted in India in this field.

Television is a medium that traffics in fantasy that creates images and ideas that are not true always. This medium is autonomous and is capable of creating its own dynamic communication structure. Some people call television and the Internet a "fourth temptation" because of their addictive nature.

6.4 KEY WORDS:

Power of Media: Contemporary mass media have an extraordinary capacity to shrink both space and time in ways that have profound implications for religious experience. They can bring people together who are at a distance from each other spatially, thus making almost instantaneous processes that might have taken years in the past. For example, the tele-visual experience of religious preachers on television and now on the Internet is totally different from going to a religious congregation. This experience is in contrast with older forms of communication that mediated religious community building more slowly.

Television and Religion: Television is a medium that traffics in fantasy that creates images and ideas that are not true always. This medium is autonomous and is capable of creating its own dynamic communication structure. Some people call television and the Internet a "fourth temptation" because of their addictive nature. So some people opine "this medium, because of its very nature, does not lend itself to constructive purposes." On the contrary, religious bodies are using television, the Internet, and other media very extensively.

6.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

11. Write a detailed note on religion on mass media. Give suitable examples.
12. What are the interrelationships of media and religion? Discuss in detail with examples.
13. Write a detailed note on religion on television. Give suitable examples.
14. Write a detailed note on religious content of mass media. Give suitable examples.
15. Write a detailed note on the impact of religious content as shown in media on society. Give suitable examples.

6.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READINGS:

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Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year) MEDIA ISSUES (Paper: IV)

Block: D Unit: I Lesson: 7

MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

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LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects media and development. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Presentation of Content

7.2.1 Development - An Overview

7.2.2 Development Communication- An Overview

7.2.3 Media & Development: The Indian Experience

7.3 Summary

7.4 Key Words

7.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

7.6 References/Suggested Reading

7.0 OBJECTIVES:

'Development' is perhaps one of the most fiercely debated concepts in the contemporary social sciences. The concept is often equated with 'modernization', 'industrialization', 'social change', 'progress', and 'growth', and like these other terms is invariably seen as something desirable and positive for society in general, and for the community in particular.

Also, 'development' as a socioeconomic phenomenon is seen as necessary, even inevitable; as good and salutary. Rarely is development discussed as possibly hazardous and destructive of the environment, or of social values and cultures. Indeed, rarely is development framed in the context of history, culture and values, or looked at in relative terms.

Development is in the main seen as absolute, inevitable, and universal; it is promoted as a laudable goal no matter what the society, the culture, the people and their resources and traditions.

In this lesson, we shall focus on the various aspects of development with relation to the mass media. Specifically, the objectives of this lesson are:

- *To have an Overview of the Development Concept*
- *To have an Overview of the Concept of Development Communication*
- *Media & Development: The Indian Experience*

7.1 INTRODUCTION:

The concept of 'development' has evolved since World War II. It has developed from a narrow econometric term into a comprehensive and dynamic one, taking within its ambit almost every aspect of human existence. For, in its fundamental meaning, all 'development' is human development. The focus of development is the human being, the quality of his/her life, and the environment in which that quality of life is sustained.

The early concept of development overlooked the human and the environmental factors. Having been inspired by the Western industrialization process, the concept was initially restricted to 'an almost exclusive concern with a narrowly conceived economic dimension and to reliance on a traditional Western market-oriented model of industrialization and growth.' The stress was on modernization imposed from above, at the expense of tradition and culture.

New dimensions were added to the original concept in the fifties. The social dimension, through such aspects as health and education, was then given prominence. But the talk of such notions as 'functional literacy' and 'human resources' revealed that the concept of development was still dominated by economic growth theories. Rural development and communications were yet to be given any serious thought.

From the seventies, however, the development concept was refined and broadened through the addition of first, the ecological dimensions: population, food, employment, human sentiments, and lately, science and technology including technology transfer. In keeping with the trend today towards more holistic paradigms, there is a growing recognition of still another crucial dimension: the cultural dimension, or seen from another angle, the communications and information dimension.

In this context, it is important to understand what role communication, particularly the mass media, play in the process of development.

7.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson is presented as follows:

- Development- An Overview
- Development Communication- An Overview
- Media and Development: The Indian Experience

7.2.1 DEVELOPMENT- AN OVERVIEW:

Development is an integral value-loaded, cultural process. Development depends on the natural environment, social relations, education, production, consumption and welfare. The approach to development depends upon the local cultural or national situations. In other words, development springs from the heart of each society, relying on its history and traditions, as also its own strengths and resources as far as possible.

Until the 1960s, economic theories of development explained 'underdevelopment' as a consequence of industrial and technical backwardness, while sociological theories put the blame on the superstition and fatalism of the illiterate masses.

Thus, the quickest solution to 'underdevelopment' was believed to be the borrowing of 'modernization' strategies of Western societies, which were considered as 'developed'. These strategies, however, needed the necessary know-how as well as the capital, which the industrialized countries alone could provide at the time.

So multinational corporations (MNCs) were allowed to enter the poorer countries to provide this capital and know-how. International aid agencies and financing institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and USAID, too rushed in to assist the poorer countries; so did specialists and advisers in 'development'.

Two such advisers who had a great influence on Indian approaches to development were *Wilbur Schramm* and *Everett Rogers*. *Wilbur Schramm* was a UNESCO adviser on development communication to the Government of India. He helped establish the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. *Everett Rogers* was also a communication expert. He believed in innovation and diffusion. He promoted research in Indian agriculture.

7.2.2 DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION- AN OVERVIEW:

'Development Communication' has been practiced since time immemorial. But it emerged as a field of mass communication studies during the post-World War II years. This was when the

countries of Asia, Africa and South America were asserting their right to independence, self-reliance and nonalignment. These very same countries were in a hurry to find solutions to the most urgent needs of their people: the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

Colonial rule had established massive bureaucracies, skeleton transport and communication infrastructures, few educational and professional institutes, and fewer industries and public services.

Centralized economic planning, large-scale industrialization and the development of the mass media appeared at the time to be the most effective strategies for 'catching up' with the industrialized nations. This indeed was the advice proffered by Western financial institutions, United Nations experts, and foreign advisers to national governments.

'MODERNIZATION' MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION:

Perhaps the most influential work in the emergence and growth of Development Communication as a field of mass communication studies was Daniel Lerner's study titled *The Passing of Traditional Society*. This was also known as *'Modernizing the Middle-East'*.

But this study was part of a large research project of the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR), at the Columbia University in New York City. The Voice of America (VOA) funded the project. VOA was keen on finding out the extent of listenership to this overseas service, which was promoted and funded directly by the United States government.

Lerner was involved in social research projects and communication studies. He looked upon the mass media, especially radio, as the means for bringing about development of newly independent nations. He thought that they were forces, which would motivate people to leave traditional practices and embrace 'modernization'. But unfortunately, he equated 'modernization' with 'Westernization'.

He also thought his model of 'modernization' to be universally relevant and applicable. The media were for Lerner, powerful tools for changing people's perceptions, attitudes and aspirations.

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS:

Everett Rogers was trained in modern agriculture. His own people were not interested in his innovations in agriculture. But outside his country he had a marked influence in the field of agricultural extension. His most popular work was his textbook titled *The Diffusion of Innovations*.

Rogers developed his concepts and theories of the diffusion of innovations from a synthesis of diffusion research studies in the United States. Rogers defined 'innovation' as 'an idea perceived as new by people'. He thought that it is the newness of the idea to the individual that determines his reaction to it.

Later he considered 'innovation' as a 'practice thought as new by an individual.' Still later, Rogers used 'technology' as a synonym for 'innovation'. He urged for the adoption of a 'convergence model'.

In the mid-seventies, Rogers proclaimed the 'passing of the dominant paradigm - the modernization model- though apparently excluding his own 'diffusion of innovation' model, the basic principles of which were derived from the United States experience of agricultural extension. He propagated his model of modernization in developing countries urging that it had cross-cultural applications. Rogers' work was in fact an extension of Lerner's; he adopted Lerner's notions of 'empathy', 'cosmopolitanism', and 'attitude change' his unit of analysis was the individual, and his main concern was with the 'social mind', and the change of culture, attitudes and ideas.

MASS MEDIA AS MAGIC MULTIPLIERS:

Wilbur Schramm extended the arguments of Lerner and Rogers in favour of 'modernization' through the mass media. He termed the mass media as 'the magic multipliers'. His work was part of the efforts of the United Nations and UNESCO for a programme of concrete action to build up press, radio broadcasting, and film and television facilities in countries in the process of economic and social development.

Wilbur Schramm thought of the mass media as 'agents of social change'. He thought the media are 'almost miraculous' in their power to bring about development related changes. Schramm often argued that the mass media could help accomplish the transitions to new customs and practices.

The process, as Schramm elaborated, was simple.

First Step: The awareness of a need, which is not satisfied by present customs and behaviour;

Second Step: The need to invent or borrow behaviour that comes close to meeting the need. Hence a nation that wants to accelerate the process of development will try to make its people more widely and quickly aware of needs and of the opportunities for

meeting them, will facilitate the decision process, and will help the people put the new practices smoothly and swiftly into effect.

Unlike Rogers, Schramm took into account the cultural linkages. He also acknowledged the existence of 'resistance to change'. Finally he urged for 'an understanding participation'. However, his model of communication was still manipulative of behaviour towards the desired end of innovation adoption. This model still cited empirical evidences of a strong relation between high media exposure and development.

Schramm argued that the mass media had the potential to widen horizons. He thought that the media have the power to focus attention, to raise aspirations and to create a climate for development. The mass media also had the potential to confer status, to enforce social norms, to help form tastes, and could affect attitudes lightly held. He was optimistic about the potential of the mass media in all types of education and training, including development related changes.

After talking about the absolute power of media for a long time, finally he conceded though that 'the mass media can help only indirectly to change strongly held attitudes and valued practices'.

He therefore recommended that:

A developing country should review its restrictions on the importing of informational materials,

Should not hesitate to make use of new technical developments in communication, in cases where these new developments fit its needs and capabilities'.

The challenge, he concluded, was to put the resources and the power of modern communication skillfully and fully behind economic and social development.

Schramm was very confident of the power of mass media as change agents. The following statement gives us an idea about his conviction about the absolute power of the mass media:

'It is hardly possible to imagine national economic and social development without some modern information multiplier; and indeed, without mass communication probably the great freedom movements and national stirrings of the last few decades would never have come about at all'.

7.2.3 MEDIA & DEVELOPMENT- THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE:

From the early stages of the mass media in India, various attempts were made to exploit their potential for developmental purposes. As early as 1933, *rural radio listening communities* were

formed in Bhiwandi (near Bombay). During this period, rural programmes were broadcast regularly in Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada. Allahabad and Dehra Dun beamed their first rural broadcasts in 1936. By 1939 there were over a hundred-community radio sets for rural listening in the North West Frontier Province alone.

Broadcasting as Public Service:

The Indian Broadcasting Company was set up on July 15, 1927 after merging the radio clubs at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. There was an earnest desire that Radio in India would work in a spirit of public service. It was also thought that Radio would overcome the problems of distance, and of different languages and cultures, etc.

The Government took it over on April 1, 1930. It was renamed as the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS). Later, in 1936, it was again renamed as All India Radio (AIR). More than public service, however, the Government was concerned with the prevention of grave menace to the peace and tranquility of India. Accordingly the Governor-General was given 'unrestricted powers' to deal with such a menace under the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act (1935). The Act continues to be in operation to this day.

SITE (SATELLITE INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION EXPERIMENT):

In 1967 a UNESCO expert mission conducted, with the cooperation of the Indian Government, a study on the use of a satellite for national development. Accordingly, in 1969 the Department of Atomic Energy entered into an agreement with the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States for the loan of a satellite free of cost for one full year starting from August 1975.

It was the first experiment ever to relay educational television programmes direct (not from relay stations) from a satellite to receivers (with front-end converters) in 2400 villages (some unelectrified) scattered over six selected regions in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Besides, conventional receivers in 2500 villages and towns got the programmes through earth transmitters, which picked up the satellite signals through Receive-only Stations.

SITE PROGRAMME: The four-hour telecast beamed every day from earth stations at Delhi and Ahmedabad concentrated on programmes on education, agriculture, health and family planning. These were planned and produced by AIR at Production Centres set up in Delhi, Hyderabad

and Cuttack, with the help of committees which included Central and State Government representatives and experts from universities, teacher training colleges, and social workers. Besides, the ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) set up its own Audio-Visual Instruction Division to plan and produce programmes according to schedule.

However, as the satellite had only one video channel and two audio channels it could transmit just one picture at a time with synchronized sound in two different languages. So it was possible to beam programmes to only two linguistic regions at a time.

SCHOOL TELECASTS: Of the 4-hour daily telecast, an hour and a half was aimed at pre-primary and primary school children aged 5 to 12. During this duration, programmes were telecast for 22 minutes each day in Telegu, Kannada, Oriya and Hindi - and were watched on community receivers installed in schools, so that TV was regarded as part of the education system. (Adults watched social education programmes later on the same sets).

The goals of these school broadcasts were two-fold:

- To make school more interesting, and so reduce the drop out rate.
- To improve children's basic concepts and skills, promote aesthetic sensitivity; instill habits of healthy living, bringing awareness of modernization of life and society.

However, the social evaluation report on SITE in two volumes by ISRO, published in September 1977, observes on page 5 of the Foreword:

'The observed fact that the school enrolment of the drop-out rate was not affected by the introduction of TV in schools proves that these factors depend primarily on social and economic parameters and not on the attractiveness or otherwise of the school curriculum; the children do not have an independent choice in the matter. So unless circumstances are changed so that parents do not have to make use of child labour for economic reasons, TV in schools is not going to affect enrolment or the dropout rate.'

AGRICULTURE: The Ministry of Agriculture set out the following objectives for SITE:

- *Dissemination of information and demonstration of dry land farming etc., advice on poultry and animal husbandry, recommendation of practices for crops and their management, and so forth.*
- *Broadcast of information regarding organizations in districts, which are responsible for supply of agriculture inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, implements, and for services in marketing, credit and so forth.*
- *Giving advice and demonstration on pests and their control.*
- *Broadcast of weather forecasts and market trends.*

- *Narration of success stories of farmers, preferably within the region, and other relevant news.*

SITE had an ambitious goal in promoting new agricultural practices like dry-land farming and use of fertilizers, pest control, market trends and weather forecasts. It broadcast programmes on agriculture for 30 minutes each day for each linguistic group, plus 30-minute entertainment programmes in Hindi.

The ISRO conducted a study on SITE and concluded that there was 'some gain though it is not statistically significant'.

THE POWER OF TV:

Television is considered very powerful as an instrument of change and development. TV cannot bring about changes on its own. It can work as a change agent. It can be an effective tool for disseminating information. The effectiveness of TV depends on a host of factors like infrastructure support, practicability of recommendations, follow-up on the programmes, etc. The choice of the medium, as in case of TV, should be determined not by the glamour but by assessing the needs of the situation, people, and experiences of the educator.

RADIO RURAL FORUMS:

Radio Rural Forums or 'Charcha Mandals' were very innovative and highly participatory platforms. These were started in Pune in 1959 in collaboration with UNESCO. The Radio Rural Forums were based on the *Canadian Farm Forum Project*.

By 1965 the number of Mandals (of 15-20 members) rose from 900 to 12,000 in various parts of the country. But they reached only the more advanced sections of the -rural population. Membership of the Mandals showed a fairly high preference for the more advanced sections of the village community. The small farmers, landless cultivators, artisans, craftsmen and women had only a token and inactive membership.

More than 70,000 community radio sets were installed all over the country in the early seventies. But later studies found that 50% of them were not working on any given day. The 'transistor' revolution in the more prosperous villages gradually put paid to the experiments in community listening. Later in the eighties, the onslaught of television almost wiped radio out.

During the mid-1990s fresh attempts were made to revive community or local radio, both by All India Radio and social action groups. The new thrust was towards *local radio for development*. Community Radio was established in many places. The radio programmes were

broadcast in the dialect of the local people. The focus of news and entertainment programmes was health and family welfare, women's empowerment, micro-credit, watershed management, rural development and non-formal education. But this also failed soon.

RURAL BROADCASTS:

Since 1966 All India Radio has been putting out Farm and Home Broadcasts to keep farmers informed on the use of fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and new implements. There are many such units in the country, but they are inadequately staffed. There is a dearth of personnel qualified in agriculture. The Rural-Urban programmes, and the Intensive Nutrition programmes introduced some years ago cater in the main to rural elites. All AIR stations beam programmes for rural audiences, but these add up to a measly 7% of the total transmission time.

MEDIA AND FAMILY PLANNING:

Family planning has been adopted as a national policy since the early fifties. During the sixties, Extension Officers in family planning were posted at select AIR centres. They worked in close coordination with government and voluntary agencies. Radio, films and the press carried the message of family planning to the masses in feverish campaigns that reached their climax during the Emergency.

Studies carried out by the National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, demonstrated that 'extensive awareness' among people of the principles and practice of family planning was brought about, but that the gap between awareness and acceptance was very wide. A UNESCO study conducted in 1969 came to the same conclusion, and recommends the use of the oral-and traditional media for propagating the message.

G.N.S. Raghavan once wrote, "If the practitioners of traditional media internalize the message of family planning and incorporate it into some of the locally popular tunes, for group singing, or singing accompanied by dance, there will be achieved an interaction and reinforcement of the message, in a pleasant and persuasive form, which can be rivaled by no other means of communications."

And, Dr Bhaskara Rao found from his survey of the usage of the condom in rural and urban areas that only 6% of potential users of the condom in rural areas used the device, whereas 20% used it in urban areas. He also found that interpersonal communication between health workers and others was more effective in propagating the family planning message rather than any mass media. Indeed, the most effective canvasser for family planning has been a

person sterilized himself who passes on the message by word of mouth. The interpersonal relationship of the opinion leaders with the local people is also of great importance, as also the availability of the devices, the purchasing power of the local people, and the social and religious sanctions of the community.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT:

There are the clear advantages of using traditional media, of even integrating them into the mass media. In India, such media have played important roles in the communication and promotion of new ideas and the adjustment to a new or evolving social or political situation.

We know that interpersonal exchanges cannot be dispensed with in the effort to change attitudes and behaviour. The folk media allow for such interactions, for they are essentially participatory, flexible, and familiar. Since they are not usually pure art forms, developmental messages can be introduced through them.

Only a few folk forms lend themselves easily (without shocking the audience) to the propagation of developmental messages. It is evident that the local people identify most with their own folk forms and the characters in them (the performers, if they are well known, are liked by the audience, and respected for their talent and skills). What is more, the folk forms- drama, song and dance, and religious discourses- can be adapted to suit local conditions, local dialects and local concerns and interests.

SONG AND DRAMA DIVISION:

The Central Government realized the potential of the folk media in bringing about development long back and it set up the Song and Drama Division under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Regional Offices of this organization work in collaboration with the Field Units spread all over the country. Block Development Officers, Village Level Workers, extension officers and other local leaders also help them.

Over 60 departmental troupes and 600 private troupes sponsored by the Song and Drama Division put up nearly 20,000 performances each year. The programmes include folk plays; poetry recitation; (Kavi Sammelan, Mushaira, Kavi Darbar); folk recitals like Qawalis, Palla, Villupatu, Ra, Kakigan; puppet shows; religious discourses (Harikatha, Bhagwat Katha, Daskathia); folk songs; and folk dances.

However, the troupes comprise largely urban-bred artistes whose chaste or pure literary language are unfamiliar to the dialect-speaking rural folk. These performances fail to reach the poor in remote areas.

POLITICS AND MEDIA

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LESSON STRUCTURE

“Politics is the last resort of scoundrels.” “Politics is bad”. “Politics is nasty.” Such sayings and opinions reflect the fact that many people are disgruntled with politics. Many people avoid politics. Many people do not take part in politics. Many people also do not use their right to vote and avoid elections.

But politics is an unavoidable reality. Whether we like it or we hate it, it is there to stay. What is interesting is that politics for a long time has been bread and butter for the mass media. People may not like to get involved in politics or political processes, but they all love to know what is happening in the political arena. Thus mass media continue to feed the audiences with political coverage.

In such a scenario, it is important to understand the interrelationship between politics and media. In this lesson we shall focus on the various aspects politics and media. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Presentation of Content
 - 8.2.1 Media and Politics- The American Experience
 - 8.2.2 Media and Politics- The Indian Experience
 - 8.2.3 What Media Should Do?
 - 8.2.4 Politics-Media Nexus
 - 8.2.5 Media and Persuasion
 - 8.2.6 Media and Propaganda
- 8.3 Summary
- 8.4 Key Words
- 8.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

8.6 References/Suggested Reading

8.0 OBJECTIVES:

It is a reasonable expectation that the mass media, particularly the news media, will gather the facts and report the news fairly, accurately and responsibly. The audience or the public relies on the media for a great deal of its information. *The role of the media in politics has become a major source of discussion and controversy in recent years.* One question often raised in this context is, *Does the media present the news fairly, accurately, and completely?* The answer is no. This lesson will examine the media and its influence and effects on politics and government. Specifically we shall discuss the following:

- *Media and Politics- The American Experience*
- *Media and Politics- The Indian Experience*
- *What Media Should Do?*
- *Politics-Media Nexus*
- *Media and Persuasion*
- *Media and Propaganda*

8.1 INTRODUCCION:

'*Publick Occurrences*' was the first newspaper to appear in America. With the publication of this newspaper began the history of the media and its effects on politics and government in America. '*Publick Occurrences*' was very active politically. This newspaper was closed down soon and its publishers arrested.

'The Bengal Gazette' or 'The Calcutta general Advertiser', popularly known as the 'Hickey's Gazette' was the first printed newspaper in India. It was a highly political paper. It had strong political views and expressed them fearlessly. But the newspaper was closed down very soon and its editor deported back to England.

Thus it is safe to say that the history of media's role and influence on politics is as old as the media themselves.

In this lesson, we shall discuss the role of media with relation to politics in detail.

8.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Media and Politics- The American Experience*

- *Media and Politics- The Indian Experience*
- *What Media Should Do?*
- *Politics-Media Nexus*
- *Media and Persuasion*
- *Media and Propaganda*

8.2.1 MEDIA AND POLITICS- THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE:

Since the first newspaper, *Publick Occurrences*, was published in the USA, the number of printed newspapers in America continued to grow and soon there were approximately forty-three newspapers available. They played an important role, informing the public, in the political affairs of the nation. The First Amendment allowed freedom of the press and protected newspapers in the USA. American newspapers played an important and influential function in local and national politics.

Newspapers were originally a luxury only enjoyed by the wealthy and the literate minority. It was during the 1830's, that newspapers became more widespread in USA. This resulted from the invention of the "Penny Press."

Advances in technology made it possible to reduce the cost of newspapers and increase their availability to the public. The concept of Penny Press meant that newspapers were available for one penny, equivalent of one paise. With the invention and development of photographs, newspapers included pictures accompanying the news stories.

The above brief history of newspapers demonstrates the growth of a free press in America. The benefits of a free press in a democracy include:

- *The free and open exchange of ideas including ideas critical of government,*
- *Widespread distribution of differing views on controversial issues,*
- *Open debate during local and national elections, and*
- *Access to information by a literate public.*

However, a free press is not free of problems. Also it is not true that the media are always responsible and truthful. Let us now discuss about some problem areas associated with free media.

YELLOW JOURNALISM:

One example of how the media could affect and influence the views of its readers and the politics of a nation came at the end of the nineteenth century. This new thing or practice got the name yellow journalism. *Joseph Pulitzer*, publisher of the *New York World*, and *William Randolph Hearst*, publisher of the *New York Journal*, battled each other for increased circulation. In *New York the World* and the *New York Journal* were ranked number one and two respectively. Pulitzer and Hearst revolutionized journalism and maintained a heated rivalry for increased circulation. It was this "bitter rivalry (that) gave birth to new type of sensationalism known as 'yellow journalism'.

Yellow journalism began mainly as a way to put more papers in circulation. It was sensationalism at its peak. It ranged from activities like:

- *Distortion,*
- *Staging of events,*
- *Disinformation and*
- *Systematic manufacturing of news.*

Perhaps the most vivid example of yellow journalism came after the explosion of an American battleship, the *USS Maine*. Yellow journalists stirred up public frenzy, deliberately reported misinformation, and convinced much of the public to support a war with Spain. Once the public supported war, it was only a matter of time before the president moved for a declaration of war.

Historians argue that yellow journals, through sensationalism and misrepresentation, created an atmosphere that actually resulted in a war that could possibly have been avoided. The successful manipulation of public opinion through the use of yellow journalism affected national policy and persuaded a nation to go to war.

This idea of the media stirring up a public frenzy can be related to today's international concern for the war on terrorism. Although the circumstances are different in the twenty-first century global community, the media play a huge role in the pursuit of the present war on terrorism. For example, the FBI recently released pictures of possible terrorists who entered the United States with fake identification. Shortly after the pictures were aired, it was discovered that one of the fugitives was not a terrorist and wasn't even in the United States. It was a picture of a man who currently lives in Pakistan and has never set foot in America. Although this error was not intentional and therefore not an example of yellow journalism, it illustrates how the media continue to influence the public.

The rush to "scoop" a story or do an "exclusive" can and does affect the lives of those who are mentioned in the reports as well as those who read and are influenced by the reports. It must be remembered that all forms of mass media are commercial businesses. *The need to be first with the story has become more important than the need to report the facts and events responsibly.*

Irresponsible reporting created the sensational brand of journalism known as yellow journalism and continues to be present in the media today as reporters, broadcasters, and editors strive to be first with the news.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND POLITICS:

By the beginning of the twentieth century the influence of the media extended beyond the printed word to include broadcasting. In the 1920's radio broadcasting began on a commercial basis. By 1930 commercial radio was solidly established. Franklin D. Roosevelt successfully persuaded the American public to accept his candidature as President with the help of radio. His discussions and chats were a regular feature of prime time radio.

This example demonstrates how the innovative use of radio was used to shape public opinion and gain support for national policy. However, the radio's dominance in mass media was short-lived. By the middle of the 1950's television became the dominant mass medium. Technological advances continued throughout the twentieth century to extend broadcasting to include cable television, satellites, and Internet access. These developments changed the face of news.

One of the first demonstrations of the power of television came in 1952 when in just one broadcast it transformed Richard M. Nixon from a negative Vice-Presidential candidate, into a martyr and an asset to Dwight D. Eisenhower's Presidential campaign.

The power of television could also be seen in the Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates of 1960. Americans who viewed the debates on television apparently were more concerned with the image they saw of the candidate and less concerned with the candidates views on particular issues. Vice President Nixon came off poorly during the television debates and lost the election.

The American public relies on the media to report the news accurately and fairly. One expects them to do more than create "images" of local and national candidates. We rely on them to present the facts in a balanced and fair way. Without doubt, the media are more pervasive today than they were just thirty years ago. The expanded availability and use of mass media are part and parcel of American life.

Today, most media critics opine that the citizens of a democratic republic need to be informed and not misled. Imaginative use of the media can create healthy public perceptions.

A new form of journalism is *advocacy journalism*. It is the practice of using news stories to support issue positions advocated by the journalist. Critics of this form of journalism argue that journalists who practice advocacy journalism are abandoning objectivity. The public is not getting a fair and accurate news report but a biased view of the news to advance a favored position. Many research studies have shown that TV newscasters intentionally reporting misleading statistics on AIDS and homelessness, etc., in order to raise public interest about such social problems.

The controversy surrounding advocacy journalism is not easily solved. Any attempt to regulate the media would interfere with the freedom of the press guaranteed by the Constitution. However, the public is not always aware when reporters and journalists are reporting and when they are advocating.

There is an important issue here. The point is that journalists rarely have any professional training. Journalism is not a profession in the sense of medicine or law or science. Journalists do not go through years of academic training designed to inculcate adherence to an agreed-upon code of ethics (such as the *Hippocratic oath*). There is no agreed-upon method of *truth determining* (such as the method of scientific inquiry). Without a public recognized standard, journalists and broadcasters are free to report the news as they see it.

The public has a reasonable expectation that the media will gather the facts and report the news fairly, accurately and responsibly; with regard to politics or any other subject. But the truth is that the media report the news it is not always fair and accurate. Practices like *yellow journalism* and *advocacy journalism* demonstrate that the influence the media have on politics, government and public opinion.

In a democracy any attempt to regulate the influence of the media will conflict with the constitutional protection of Freedom of Press. The antidote for an overly influential media is an educated public. But that is not very easy to achieve.

8.2.2 MEDIA AND POLITICS- THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE:

In India, as in the United States, scandals related to abuse of information are the headlines. In India, the Amar Singh phone-taping case was a major news item. The big news before that was the *Parliament Bribery for Questioning* case. The oil-for-food scam exposed by Paul Volcker was also very prominent.

In Today's time, politics, money and the media are interrelated and interlinked. Because of the power of information, politics uses media heavily.

In India, in 2006, Parliament expelled 11 members (10 from the Lok Sabha and one from the Rajya Sabha) who were caught in a cash-for-questions sting operation. Some have opposed this decision on procedural grounds. Some say the conduct of the expelled MPs was more a reflection of their stupidity at having been caught, given the level of corruption that pervades the system.

The Lok Sabha committee that investigated the scandal did an extremely poor job at analysis and it produced a very shoddy report. This Committee, headed by Pawan Kumar Bansal, arrived at its conclusions in just five days. The sting operation show was broadcast on December 12. The committee started its work on the 14th. On December 18 it interviewed some of the MPs to hear their side of the story; on the 19th, it viewed further tapes; on the 20th its draft report was ready, which was presented the following day to the Lok Sabha.

MEDIA AND POLITICS IN INDIAN- A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The first newspaper in India started with a commercial motive. James Augustus Hicky's '*The Bengal Gazette*' also had another name and motive. The entire front page of Hicky's Gazette was filled with advertisements and it had an appropriate second name, '*The Calcutta General Advertiser*'. Although politically motivated, Hicky's Gazette was politically very active.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy started the next major newspaper venture in India. He was a social reformer and his newspapers reflected his passion. Both *Sambad Kaumudi* and *Miratul-Akhbar* aimed at promoting social causes like widow remarriage, anti-Sati movements, etc.

The next phase was a continuation of the missionary zeal. Many politicians by now had realized the power of media. Thus many newspapers were started to promote the cause of Freedom Struggle in the country. From Annie Besant to Tilak, from Gokhle to Mahatma Gandhi, and even Pandit Nehru also started newspapers. These newspapers continued for a long time and served the Freedom Movement.

In the post-Independence era, commercialism took over. Most newspapers of this time were started with a motive of making a profit. Even the newspapers surviving from the previous era also converted in a commercial mode. Newspapers were run like any other business organizations. People earlier worked in newspapers for free or because they were motivated. In the post-Independence era, journalists became professionals. Journalism thus became a profession.

In the next phase, newspapers became an industry. Many big industrial houses entered the newspaper business.

This way the journey of newspapers in India can be described in the following manner: *Mission to Profession to Industry*.

Now newspapers and other media do not promote social causes as they did in earlier days. Now media are *market-driven*.

MEDIA AND POLITICS IN INDIA- THE PRESENT SCENARIO:

There is no doubt that the Indian media, like the media in most countries, is *market-driven*. But that does not mean that media can do without politics. It is easy to see that politics still gets maximum coverage in most media. Both political events and political issues get ample coverage.

In the recent past, however, political issues are not getting much coverage. But the predominance of political events in the Indian Media continues.

8.2.3 WHAT MEDIA SHOULD DO:

There exists an intimate relationship between the politics and mass media. The functions of mass communication in the sphere of politics are of grave importance to India, since more than anything else, the mass media are fully exploited by our leaders for political propaganda. The party in power uses Doordarshan and All India Radio as propaganda tools. Even private-owned TV channels and press are charged with political news, biased frequently in favour of one party or another.

In the first place, mass media should provide the citizen the means to *understand the substance of policies*. Secondly, they should perform an *amplifying function*, by giving wide publicity to the actions and views of important individuals. Thirdly, they should *provide the information necessary for the formation of public opinion and the conduct of the political process*.

Further, the mass media should attempt to provide standards, by which political actions can be judged, the common frame of reference which must unite rulers and ruled in a democratic political structure. The media, therefore, could help, considerably in public participation in national and regional policies.

8.2.4 POLITICS-MEDIA NEXUS:

The reality, however, is that the coverage of politics by the mass media is often fragmented and superficial. The sensational and the transient are given predominance over the kind of information relevant to political education about political leaders and parties, which are of great significance to the political outcome.

Earlier, except perhaps in the cities, the media did not exercise much influence in national or state elections. The major reason behind this was that the spread of the mass media was mostly restricted to the urban areas. The limited impact of the mass media was evident in the result of the 1977, 1980 and 1985, elections. Both the public and the private media played up the benefits of emergency rule; yet the ruling Congress Party was routed at the polls. Similarly, the Janata regime spared no effort in publicizing the 'excesses of the emergency'; yet, the Congress Party returned to power with a resounding victory in 1980.

During the 1989 Tamilnadu assembly elections the broadcast media went all out to project the Indira Congress; yet the DMK won hands down. Yadava (1986), however, is of the view that despite the limited circulation and reach of the press in rural areas and among the poor, through the interplay of mass media and integral communication, the essence of major political issues of the time gets disseminated widely. As a result, the media help the electorate form their impressions and opinions about political leaders and parties, which are of great significance to the political outcome.

It appears, therefore, that while the mass media do play a role in political education, they are powerless against more mighty factors such as caste, community and religion. Interpersonal communication is given much greater credence than group media or mass media. One major reason for this almost total lack of credibility of the mass media is that they are urban and elite-oriented and have little relevance to the rural masses. It is clear then that people are, by and large, active readers of the mass media: they frequently reject or oppose media messages.

8.2.5 MEDIA AND PERSUASION:

Persuasion is the art of winning friends and influencing people. It's an art that does not employ force or deliberate manipulation of people's minds. Its success depends rather on attention to and comprehension of the persuader's message, and acceptance of it voluntarily, as well as on the content of the message, the manner of presentation, and other crucial situation/cultural factors. Of equal importance are predispositional factors such as responsiveness to emotional appeals, to logical arguments and to prestigious sources.

However, the resistance to persuasive communication is no less strong. It's not as easy as media people imagine 'brainwashing' or persuading or manipulating people's minds. Mass communication generally fails to produce any marked changes in social attitudes or actions. The slight effects brought about by the mass media reinforce prevailing beliefs and values of an audience. The mass media are in fact status-quoist and conservative. They are usually not a major force for social change.

Audience Expectations: The degree of acceptance of messages that comes over the mass media is related to the initial expectations of an audience. In an instructional situation, for example, acceptance is high because the audience expects to be helped by the communicator. But in a persuasive situation, interfering expectations operate to decrease acceptance. These include (1) expectations of being manipulated, (2) expectations of being wrong in assessing the message, and (3) expectations of social disapproval from one's community or group, which does not share the communicator's views.

Further, some people are more easily persuaded than others. Educated people are, for instance, likely to be persuaded more effectively when the presentation refutes the arguments of the other side, while projecting one's own, and uneducated and uninformed people are taken in by a one-sided presentation. Changes in attitudes generally come about after a lapse of time than immediately.

8.2.6 MEDIA AND PROPAGANDA:

Propaganda is the deliberate manipulation by means of symbols such as words, gestures, flags, images, monuments, music and the like, of people's thoughts or actions with respect to their beliefs, values and behaviours. Propaganda, therefore, is not casual or instructional communication. It is opposed to any free exchange of ideas, for the propagandist never doubts his own beliefs and value system, and the necessity of propagating them to others. His is a closed mind, for unlike the educator or the persuader he presents only one side - his side - of an issue, for no other side exists for him. He does not trust the listener to make up his own mind; the propagandist decides what kind of mind others should have.

Vladimir Lenin made a distinction between 'propaganda' and 'agitation'. Propaganda, he held, was the reasoned use of arguments from philosophy, history and science to influence the educated and reasonable few. Agitation, on the other hand, was the use of emotional slogans, Aesopian probable, and half-truths to influence the uneducated, the semi-educated, and the unreasonable. However, people's response to propaganda or 'agitation' is not as simple as is

often made out to be. In most cases, they respond favourably if they share the ideology of the propagandist, but are rather hostile if they get the impression that they are being taken for a ride. So it is clearly possible that some groups and individuals would resist messages that come to them over the media, especially those like advertising they do not trust. It is also possible that some groups remain neutral or indifferent in the face of propaganda, or are even turned off by shame-faced attempts to brainwash them. It is, therefore, often impossible to say how precisely audiences will react to attempts of propagandists and campaigners to manipulate them.

8.3 SUMMARY:

- The benefits of a free press in a democracy include: The free and open exchange of ideas including ideas critical of government, *Widespread distribution of differing views on controversial issues*, *Open debate during local and national elections*, and *Access to information by a literate public*.
- *Joseph Pulitzer*, publisher of the *New York World*, and *William Randolph Hearst*, publisher of the *New York Journal*, battled each other for increased circulation. In *New York the World* and the *New York Journal* were ranked number one and two respectively. Pulitzer and Hearst revolutionized journalism and maintained a heated rivalry for increased circulation. It was this bitter rivalry that gave birth to new type of sensationalism known as '*yellow journalism*'. It was sensationalism at its peak. It ranged from activities like: *Distortion*, *Staging of events*, *Disinformation* and *Systematic manufacturing of news*.
- One of the first demonstrations of the power of television came in 1952 when in just one broadcast it transformed Richard M. Nixon from a negative Vice-Presidential candidate, into a martyr and an asset to Dwight D. Eisenhower's Presidential campaign. The power of television could also be seen in the Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates of 1960. Americans who viewed the debates on television apparently were more concerned with the image they saw of the candidate and less concerned with the candidates views on particular issues. Vice President Nixon came off poorly during the television debates and lost the election.
- Advocacy Journalism is the practice of using news stories to support issue positions advocated by the journalist. Critics of this form of journalism argue that journalists who practice advocacy journalism are abandoning objectivity. The public is not getting a fair and accurate news report but a biased view of the news to advance a favored position. Many research studies have shown that TV newscasters of intentionally reporting misleading

statistics on AIDS and homelessness, etc., in order to raise public interest about such social problems.

- o Mass media should provide the citizen the means to *understand the substance of policies*. Secondly, they should perform an *amplifying function*, by giving wide publicity to the actions and views of important individuals. Thirdly, they should *provide the information necessary for the formation of public opinion and the conduct of the political process*. Further, the mass media should attempt to provide standards, by which political actions can be judged, the common frame of reference which must unite rulers and ruled in a democratic political structure. The media, therefore, could help, considerably in public participation in national and regional policies.

8.4 KEY WORDS:

Yellow Journalism: *Yellow journalism* is sensationalism at its peak. It ranges from activities like: *Distortion, Staging of events, Disinformation and Systematic manufacturing of news*.

Advocacy Journalism: It is the practice of using news stories to support issue positions advocated by the journalist. Critics of this form of journalism argue that journalists who practice advocacy journalism are abandoning objectivity. The public is not getting a fair and accurate news report but a biased view of the news to advance a favored position. Many research studies have shown that TV newscasters intentionally reporting misleading statistics on AIDS and homelessness, etc., in order to raise public interest about such social problems.

8.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

5. Write a detailed note on the role Media plays in politics in India.
6. Throw light on the politics-media nexus in India.
7. The Indian media has gone through many phases during its history. Discuss the interrelationship between media and politics during these phases.

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CHILDREN AND MEDIA

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

In this lesson we shall focus on the various issues related to children and media. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

9.0 Objectives

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Presentation of Content
 - 9.2.1 Children and Television
 - 9.2.2 Children and Media Violence
 - 9.2.3 Effects of Video Games on Children
 - 9.2.4 Computer and Video Game Addiction
 - 9.2.5 Media's Effect On Girls: Body Image And Gender Identity
 - 9.2.6 Professional Wrestling on TV and Children
 - 9.2.7 Kids and Internet Pornography
 - 9.2.8 Children and Advertising
 - 9.2.9 Internet Filters: Making Web Surfing Safer For Children
 - 9.2.10 Power of Media Messages
- 9.3 Summary
- 9.4 Key Words
- 9.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 9.6 References/Suggested Reading

9.0 OBJECTIVES:

Media have very powerful influence in all spheres of our lives. The various media affect all of us differently. They affect elders and children alike. Thus it is important to understand the impact of media on children and teenagers.

Here are a few examples of media influence on children. Today, most children can mimic movie or TV characters, sing advertising jingles, etc. Sadly, these examples also include naming a popular brand of cigarette, striking a "sexy" pose, or imitate fighting poses. Children only have to put a movie into the VCR, open a magazine, click on a Web site, or watch TV to experience all kinds of messages. Children have become so used to media appliances that they find it very easy to operate them.

Media offer entertainment, culture, news, sports, and education. They are an important part of our lives and have much to teach. But some of what they teach may not be what we want children to learn.

This lesson will give an overview of some of the negative or harmful effects of media. In this lesson we shall try to cover the various issues of children and media. Specifically, the objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Know About Children and Television*
- *To Know About Children and Media Violence*
- *To Understand the Effects of Video Games on Children*
- *To Know About Computer and Video Game Addiction*
- *To Understand the Media's Effect On Girls: Body Image And Gender Identity*
- *To Know About Professional Wrestling on TV and Children*
- *To Know About Kids and Internet Pornography*
- *To Know About Children and Advertising*
- *To Understand About Internet Filters*
- *To Know About Power of Media Messages*

9.1 INTRODUCTION:

In the United States of America, one in four children under two have a TV in their bedroom. This shows the high exposure level of TV in the lives of American children. In India, we are fast approaching such a situation.

Children in "heavy" TV households are less likely to read. The more TV children watch, the less likely they are to read.

Parents believe in educational value of TV and computers. This is a common perception majority of parents share. But the truth is that while TV and other media have some educational values, the negative impacts of uncontrolled TV watching are more dangerous.

Even the very youngest children in America are growing up immersed in media. They spend hours a day watching TV and videos; they also use computers and play video games. Children aged six years and under spend an average of two hours a day using screen media. They spend about the same amount of time playing outside.

The situation is not much different in India and other developing countries. In addition to TV, video, video games, and computers; new interactive digital media have become an integral part of children's lives. It's not just teenagers who are wired up and tuned in to the various media; babies in diapers are also exposed to media to a great extent. Much of media content is being targeted at children; including infants and toddlers. So it's critical that we learn more about the impact of media on children.

The various issues of children and media shall be discussed in this lesson.

9.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Children and Television*
- *Children and Media Violence*
- *Effects of Video Games on Children*
- *Computer and Video Game Addiction*
- *Media's Effect On Girls: Body Image And Gender Identity*
- *Professional Wrestling on TV and Children*
- *Kids and Internet Pornography*
- *Children and Advertising*
- *Internet Filters: Making Web Surfing Safer For Children*
- *Power of Media Messages*

9.2.1 CHILDREN AND TELEVISION:

Here are some interesting facts about children and TV viewing:

- 99% of American families have TV sets, with the average family owning 2.75 sets.
- American children, ages 2-17, watch television on average almost 25 hours per week or 3 ½ hours a day. Almost one in five watch more than 44 hours of TV each week.
- Television is the top after school activity chosen by children ages 6 to 17.
- 28% of children's television shows contain four or more acts of violence.

- One in five educational/informational children's programmes have little or no educational value.
- 44% of children and teens report watching different programmes when their parents are not around.

A big question arises in one's mind- what is happening? The answer is that television has become a focal point for children's media entertainment. Many studies have shown that the amount of violence in children's shows remains high and that most of the children's programmes are neither informative, nor educational.

Here are some tips for healthy media usage:

- Prevent impulse watching; learn about the programmes before turning on the TV set.
- Children need active play to promote their developmental, physical and social skills.
- Keep television sets out of children's bedrooms.

9.2.2 CHILDREN AND MEDIA VIOLENCE:

By the time a child is eighteen years old, he or she will witness on television (with average viewing time) 200,000 acts of violence including 40,000 murders. Children, ages 8 to 18, spend more time (44.5 hours per week- 6 1/2 hours daily) in front of computer, television, and game screens than any other activity in their lives except sleeping. Since the 1950s, more than 1,000 studies have been done on the effects of violence in television and movies in the US alone. The majority of these studies conclude that: children who watch significant amounts of television and movie violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, attitudes and values.

Media affects children at any age, but young children are most vulnerable to the effects of media violence. **Young children are more easily impressionable, have a harder time distinguishing between fantasy and reality, cannot easily discern motives for violence, and learn by observing and imitating.**

Young children who see media violence have a greater chance of exhibiting violent and aggressive behavior later in life, than children who have not seen violent media. Violent video games can cause people to have more aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and decrease empathetic, helpful behaviors with peers. Children who watch more TV and play more video games are not only exposed to more media violence, but are more likely to act more aggressively with peers and tend to assume the worst in their interactions with peers. Violence

(homicide, suicide, and trauma) is a leading cause of death for children, adolescents and young adults, more prevalent than disease, cancer or congenital disorders.

Did you know about all these? It all sounds strange. But these are facts collected from research conducted all over the world.

What then is happening? Organizations and academies of Pediatrics, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychological Organizations, Medical Organizations, etc., warn of the following effects of media violence on children:

- Children will increase anti-social and aggressive behavior.
- Children may become less sensitive to violence and those who suffer from violence.
- Children may view the world as violent and mean, becoming more fearful of being a victim of violence.
- Children will desire to see more violence in entertainment and real life.
- Children will view violence as an acceptable way to settle conflicts.

Different factors in the portrayal of media violence have different kinds of effects on children and teens:

- What are the consequences for aggressive behavior? Is it rewarded or punished? Aggressive behavior on screen that lacks consequences, portrayed as justified, or is rewarded will have a greater effect on children.
- When the violence is committed by an attractive or charismatic hero, with whom the child identifies, the effect of that violence will be greater.
- When the child's attention is focused on the violence on the screen, causing the child to be engaged or aroused, the impact is greater.
- If the child sees the violence in the show as being realistic, reflecting real life, the impact will be greater.

9.2.3 EFFECTS OF VIDEO GAMES ON CHILDREN:

Video games have a wide range of effects on children. Some of the positive effects are as follows. *Video game playing introduces children to computer technology. Some games provide practice in problem solving and logic. Games can provide practice in use of fine motor and spatial skills. Games can provide occasions for parent and child to play together. Players are introduced to information technology. Some games have therapeutic applications with patients. Games are entertaining and fun.*

The negative effects of video game playing are many. These include:

- Over-dependence on video games could foster social isolation, as they are often played alone.
- Practicing violent acts may contribute more to aggressive behavior than passive television watching.
- Women are often portrayed as weaker characters that are helpless or sexually provocative.
- Game environments are often based on plots of violence, aggression and gender bias.
- Many games only offer an arena of weapons, killings, kicking, stabbing and shooting.
- Many games do not offer action that requires independent thought or creativity.
- Games can confuse reality and fantasy.
- In many violent games, players must become more violent to win.

Many questions arise here: *Is the violence rewarded or punished? What are the consequences? How graphic is the violence? Is the violence against humans or inanimate objects? Is the violence sexual?* The answers unfortunately are not very favourable.

So why do children play video games? Reasons children give for playing video games include the following:

- *It's fun*
- *Like to feel in control*
- *Releases tension*
- *Relieves boredom*
- *Develops gaming skills*
- *Feel a sense of mastery*

9.2.4 COMPUTERS AND VIDEO GAME ADDICTION:

Computers, video games, and the Internet have become very common features of our daily lives. Computer use has reached beyond work and is now a major source of fun and entertainment for many people. For most people, computer use and video game play is integrated into their lives in a balanced healthy manner. For others, time spent on the computer or video game is out of balance, and has displaced work, school, friends, and even family.

Now can computers be addictive? The answer is YES. What, then, is computer and video game addiction? *When time spent on the computer, playing video games or cruising the Internet*

reaches a point that it harms a child's or adult's family and social relationships, or disrupts school or work life, that person may be caught in a cycle of addiction.

Like other addictions, the computer or video game has replaced friends and family as the source of a child's emotional life. Increasingly, to feel good, the addicted child spends more time playing video games or searching the Internet. Time away from the computer or game causes moodiness or withdrawal.

When a child spends six to eight hours a day or more playing games, surfing the net, visiting chat rooms, etc., that is addiction.

The symptoms of computer or video game addiction for children are: *Most of non-school hours are spent on the computer or playing video games. Falling asleep in school. Not keeping up with assignments. Falling grades. Lying about computer or video game use. Choosing to use the computer or play video games, rather than see friends. Dropping out of other social groups (clubs or sports). Irritable when not playing a video game or on the computer.*

There are even physical symptoms that may point to addiction: Sleep disturbances, backaches, neck aches, headaches, dry eyes, and failure to eat regularly or neglect personal hygiene

9.2.5 MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON GIRLS:

Gender identity begins in early childhood. A child's body image is influenced by how people around her react to her body and how she looks. A pre-adolescent becomes increasingly aware of what society's standards are for the "ideal body."

The popular media (television, movies, magazines, etc.) promote a thinner and thinner body as the ideal for women. The ideal man is also presented as trim, but muscular. The result: more and more young girls try to lose weight.

Research studies reveal that many young girls are "unhappy with their bodies." Teen-age girls who watch advertisements depicting super-thin models feel less confident, angrier and more dissatisfied with their weight and appearance.

MEDIA'S EFFECT ON GENDER IDENTITY:

Many children watch between two and four hours of television per day. How women and men, girls and boys are presented, and what activities they participate in on the screen powerfully affect how children view their role in the world. Studies looking at cartoons, regular television,

and commercials show that although many changes have occurred and girls, in particular have a wider range of role models, for girls "how they look" is more important than "what they do." Children perceive most TV characters in stereotypical ways: boys as violent and active and girls as domestic, interested in boys, and concerned with appearances.

9.2.6 PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ON TV AND CHILDREN:

"Raw is War". This is perhaps one of the most read and heard slogans of all times. 5 million households watch the World Wrestling Federation TV show weekly. This makes it the highest rated cable television show. WWF's home videos are often ranked number 1 in the US. Both WWF and WCW (World Championship Wrestling) produce 15 hours of wrestling per week attracting 15 million viewers.

Both adults and children watch the WWF and WCW programmes. It's estimated that 15% of the audience for wrestling shows (more than 1 million viewers) is 11 years old or younger. (U.S. News and World Report, 1999)

Here is some thing to startle you. WWF is one of the first businesses outside of pornography to make a profit on the Internet by offering live video streaming for downloading to home computers. Business profits come from advertising, live ticket sales, pay per views, CDs, toys, restaurant, Internet, etc.

Research on World Wrestling Federation's "Raw is War" has revealed instances of sexual and violent interactions:

- Crotch grabbing or pointing,
- Garbage cans, chairs, tables and brooms used in wrestling,
- Kicks to the groin,
- Profane descriptions of people,
- Obscene finger gesture,
- Simulated sexual activity,
- Scantily clad women.

To many adults, these shows represent only over-the-top fantasy with lots of rock music, light shows, and soap opera drama. However, young children often cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality. There is no way children can escape the lewdness, violence, and sexual aggression on these shows. On these shows, children also see: racial stereotyping, sexual violence, inappropriate role models, etc.

9.2.7 KIDS AND INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY:

There was a big controversy when a few years ago, hidden pornographic sequences were discovered in the popular video game Grand Theft Auto. More serious than such computer games is the issue that pornography is freely available on the Internet. Thus it is important that parents to be vigilant in monitoring their children's media use, particularly Internet access of children. In an age where one can access the Internet on cell phones, send pictures in the blink of an eye, and play increasingly sophisticated online games, a whole world of pornography and inappropriate content are within easy reach of children.

The Internet is full of both opportunities and pitfalls. Kids today have more information at their fingertips than we could have dreamed of just twenty years ago. On the other hand, they have access to more inappropriate content than we could have feared.

Chances are, if a child uses the Internet, he or she have seen pornographic content whether knowingly or otherwise.

9.2.8 CHILDREN AND ADVERTISING:

The average American child may watch as many as 40,000 television commercials every year. In a country like India, the figure is only slightly lower. Curiously, children as young as age three recognize brand logos. Brand loyalty influence starts at age two. More alarming is the fact that young children are not able to distinguish between commercials and TV programs. They do not recognize that commercials are trying to sell something. And children aged 12 years and under, directly and indirectly, influence buying of many products. The world over, billions of dollars are spent on television advertisements directed at children.

Children, who watch a lot of television, want more toys seen in advertisements. Research tells us that children also want to eat more advertised food than children who do not watch as much television.

In the past the most effective way to sell children's products was through mom and dad. Now the opposite is true, children are the focal point for intense advertising pressure seeking to influence family spending. Advertisers are aware that children influence the purchase of not just kid's products anymore, but everything in the household from cars to toothpaste. Children themselves have assumed more crucial roles in making purchasing decisions than ever before. Marketing tools beyond the ever-present television have spread into many facets of children's lives. Magazines aimed at children have blossomed. Cartoon and toy characters are used on all

kinds of products, seeking to catch the children's eyes and purchases. Logos on all types of merchandise are being used everywhere children go.

9.2.9 FILTERING THE INTERNET:

The Internet initially was the domain of adult users. It has rapidly become a place where people of all ages surf for fun and information. Children increasingly have easy access to the Internet through school, libraries, and home computers. The world of information is at a child's fingertips for school projects, homework, interest areas, hobbies, and play. Many children carve out their own space on the Web with homepages they construct.

The Web has responded to this with thousands of sites geared to children, from teenagers to the youngest preschool computer user. Many educational institutions, organizations, companies, and corporations have their own kid pages or kid pages linked with information geared for parents and other adults. Some sites offer the opportunity to visit with children from other countries, exchanging news, ideas, pictures, and writings. Whole classrooms link up with classrooms around the world.

The danger for children on the World Wide Web comes with its openness. The web is completely unregulated. Anyone can post information on the Web and provide links to other pages. The danger for children lies in four areas:

1. *Children may link to a page with information, pictures or conversation that the parent deems too sexual, violent, racist, or offensive.*
2. *In chat rooms the child may become a target of unwanted attention from adults, older teens, or other children.*
3. *Children have become a target market on the net, with companies offering prizes, games, etc. for family information.*
4. *Some commercial sites seemingly offering educational information or entertainment are really deceptive advertising, selling products to children.*

How does one overcome these problems? How can a parent provide some cyber safety? Here are a few tips:

- By using software for Internet blocking or filtering.
- Establishing rules about Internet use.

Internet filtering falls in two categories. There is software that the parent can load onto the computer at home. Also programs can be activated through the Internet provider, which will filter web sites for you.

The filtering mechanism on these programs work by: scanning sites and blocking those that contain specific words, blocking sites that are found to contain sexually explicit, violent or hateful material, limiting a child's search to a predefined set of sites or to sites that meet certain criteria, etc.

However, no product will work 100% to keep children from accessing sites that are inappropriate. To help keep children safe it is still best to monitor children's internet use, and discuss with them how to safely use the net.

INTERNET ADVERTISING AND CHILDREN:

As the numbers of children and teens using the Internet grows the focus of online marketers intensifies. Children are attracted to Internet commercial sites because they are designed to be child friendly. They are colorful and engaging, offering games, information, and items and products the child recognizes.

Major companies focus on the teen and younger market to build brand familiarity. Branding consists of building a positive impression of a product, linking its name or logo with a positive image or feeling in the mind of the buyer. For instance, by placing successful cartoon characters on a product, companies are able to increase sales whether they are selling breakfast cereal or shampoo.

Offering free music downloads, chat rooms, or games on an interactive site snags a child or teen and keeps them coming back. By focusing site design on what interests teens and kids, companies build brand loyalty. Gathering information on children or teens' likes or dislikes also helps companies to create products and tailor their marketing directly to this younger group of consumers.

On television there is a distinct division between advertising and content. Not so for the Internet. The line between educational or informational content and advertising on the Internet is blurred.

9.2.10 POWER OF MEDIA MESSAGES:

Sometimes we can see the impact of media on children right away. For example, when a child watches superheroes fighting and he or she copies their moves. But most of the time the impact is not so immediate or obvious.

Whatever form they take (ads, movies, computer games, music videos), messages can be good or bad for children. Just as you would limit certain foods in a child's diet that may be unhealthy, you also should limit his/her media diet of messages.

Messages about tobacco and alcohol are everywhere in media. Kids see characters on screen smoking and drinking. They see signs for tobacco and alcohol products at concerts and sporting events. Advertising and movies send kids the message that smoking and drinking make a person sexy or cool and that "everyone does it."

Advertisers of tobacco and alcohol purposely leave out the negative information about their products. As a result, young people often do not know what the health risks are when they use these products. Sometimes TV broadcasts and print articles do the same thing. For example, a magazine might do a story about the common causes of cancer but not mention smoking as a top cause.

Media heavily promote unhealthy foods while at the same time telling people they need to lose weight and be thin. Heavy media use can also take time away from physical activity.

Studies show that girls of all ages worry about their weight. Many of them are starting to diet at early ages. Media can promote an unrealistic image of how people look.

Children learn their attitudes about violence at a very young age and these attitudes tend to last. Although TV violence has been studied the most, researchers are finding that violence in other media impacts children and teens in many of the same harmful ways.

From media violence children learn to behave aggressively toward others. They are taught to use violence instead of self-control to take care of problems or conflicts.

Violence in the "media world" may make children more accepting of real-world violence and less caring toward others. Children who see a lot of violence from movies, TV shows, or video games may become more fearful and look at the real world as a mean and scary place.

Although the effects of media on children might not be apparent right away, children are being negatively affected. Sometimes children may not act out violently until their teen or young-adult years.

Parents need to set limits and be actively involved with the TV shows, computer games, magazines, and other media that children use. But this is only one step in helping media play a positive role in children's lives. Because media surround us and cannot always be avoided, one way to filter their messages is to develop the skills to question, analyze, and evaluate them. This is called media literacy or media education.

Each media form uses its own language. Newspapers make headlines large to attract readers to certain stories. Media with sound may use music to make people feel a range of emotions. When children learn about these techniques they are able to understand how a message is delivered instead of only being affected by it.

No two people experience the same media message in exactly the same way. How a person interprets a message depends on things unique to that person's life. These can include age, values, memories, and education.

Media messages have their own values and points of view. These are built into the message itself. Children should compare the promoted values against their own values. It is important for children to learn that they have a choice in whether to accept the values that are being promoted in any media message.

9.3 SUMMARY:

- Media offer entertainment, culture, news, sports, and education. They are an important part of our lives and have much to teach. But some of what they teach may not be what we want children to learn.
- Parents believe in educational value of TV and computers. This is a common perception majority of parents share. But the truth is that while TV and other media have some educational values, the negative impacts of uncontrolled TV watching are more dangerous.

9.4 KEY WORDS:

Media violence: Narratives, acts and scenes of violence depicted, created or reproduced in the media, either real or imagined.

Media education: Developing the skills to question, analyze, and evaluate media's content to filter its messages.

Sensationalism: Presenting of facts or stories in a way that is intended to produce strong feelings of shock, anger or excitement.

Media's messages: The intended or unintended messages from the media, especially emanating from the advertising copies and multimedia, which persuades the readers/viewers—subtly or aggressively— to change their habits, behaviours and thinking

Media world: Recreation/reproduction of the real world in the media. It may be radically different from the real world depending on the ideology and agenda of the news outlets in different societies

UN Convention of the Right of the Child: A charter of universal rights for children enshrined as a convention by the UN and ratified by member countries

Stereotyping: Portraying of an issue or an individual or a group by the media in a manner that leads a lot of people to have a fixed idea about it/them that may be false in many cases

9.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. How do media affect children's behaviour? Cite examples.
2. Are media portrayals of children satisfactory? Discuss.
3. What are the effects of media violence on children? Suggest measures to curb them?

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Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year) MEDIA ISSUES (Paper: IV)

Block: E Unit: II Lesson: 10

GENDER PORTRAYAL IN MEDIA

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

Media can be a powerful agent of social change. Through sustained campaigns, media educate the public about the social ills of the society. On the other hand, the mass media are also guilty of perpetuating certain stereotypes. Media also widen the social divide between different groups, either intentionally or unintentionally. One example of media created concern is in the gender portrayal.

In this lesson we shall focus on the various issues related to gender portrayal in media.

The lesson structure shall be as follows:

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Presentation of Content

10.2.1 Media Coverage of Women

10.2.2 Issues of gender portrayal within media

10.2.3 Gender representation in the media

10.2.4 Women-related Issues that do not Get Covered

10.2.5 Steps to Improve Media Coverage of Women

10.3 Summary

10.4 Key Words

10.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

10.6 References/Suggested Reading

10.0 OBJECTIVES:

The portrayal of gender in the media is a matter of great concern. Particularly because it makes lopsided, distorted, and highly biased presentations of gender related issues. The concern areas are not only how femininity is presented, but it also includes the presentation of masculinity in the media. The most common form is the coverage provided to the beauty pageants and mega models. In this lesson we shall focus on the various issues related to gender portrayal in media.

The specific objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Know About Media Coverage of Women*
- *To Know About Issues of gender portrayal within media*
- *To Know About Gender representation in the media*
- *To Know About Women-related Issues that do not Get Covered*
- *To Know About Steps to Improve Media Coverage of Women*

10.1 INTRODUCTION:

"What women suffer is more insidious than invisibility. It is deliberate erasure." This is the unanimous opinion of all scholars and researchers with regard to women's portrayal in media.

Women professionals and athletes continue to be under-represented in news coverage, and are often stereotypically portrayed when they are included.

Although there has been a steady increase in the number of women professionals over the past 20 years, most mainstream press coverage continues to rely on men as experts in the fields of business, politics and economics. Women in the news are more likely to be featured in stories about accidents, natural disasters, or domestic violence than in stories about their professional abilities or expertise.

Women in politics are similarly sidelined. Many studies have revealed that journalists tend to focus on the domestic aspects of the politically active woman's personal life rather than her position on the issues.

In the media, women's views are solicited mainly in the framework of "average citizens" and rarely as experts. And political or economic success stories were overwhelmingly masculine. The number of female politicians interviewed is disproportionate to their number in Parliament or in the Assembly.

In such a situation, it is important to understand the various aspects of gender portrayal in media.

10.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Media Coverage of Women*
- *Issues of gender portrayal within media*
- *Gender representation in the media*
- *Women-related Issues that do not Get Covered*
- *Steps to Improve Media Coverage of Women*

10.2.1 MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN:

Inadequate women's coverage is a worldwide phenomenon. Some time back, the Association of Women Journalists (AFJ) conducted a study of news coverage of women and women's issues in 70 countries. It reported that only 18 per cent of stories quote women, and that the number of women-related stories came to barely 10 per cent of total news coverage.

News talk shows are equally problematic. Only speak 10 per cent of the time women come in such shows. That leaves 90 per cent of the discussion to the male guests.

Another problem is that the media often stereotypes politically active women. When Hillary Clinton was still first lady, she was referred to as a "witch" or "witchlike" at least 50 times in the press. Rivers writes, "male political figures may be called mean and nasty names, but those words don't usually reflect stereotypes.

Women athletes are also not given ample space in the media. Only about nine per cent of airtime is devoted to women's sports, in contrast to the 88 per cent devoted to male athletes. In India, women sportspersons get very little coverage.

Also commentators (97 per cent of whom are men) use different language when they talk about female athletes. Men are described as "big," "strong," "brilliant," "gutsy" and "aggressive". Women are more often referred to as "fatigued," "frustrated," "panicked," "vulnerable" and "choking."

Often journalists take keen interest in any of the athletes' poses that could be seen as suggestive. A classic case is the excessive attention accorded Anna Kournikova—for her beauty rather than her game.

Media images of women in sports are also very different from the familiar pictures of male athletes in action. Female athletes are increasingly photographed in "hyper-sexualized poses."

Most of the women journalists on TV have the added burden of looking good. Many women journalists have surgically altered their faces to appear younger and more "beautiful."

So one can conclude that women's portrayal in media has become a painful reminder of women's inequality. Not being; but looking smart, smarter, smartest a big necessity for women on media.

10.2.2 ISSUES OF GENDER PORTRAYAL:

Portrayal of gender in media has been a controversial issue for a long time. Thus it forms a favourite topic for media research. Many research studies have been conducted on this issue. Most of these studies reveal the one-sided representation in media with regard to gender. Men usually get represented more and in generally favourable manners. Women, on the other hand get second-class treatment in the media. Here are some major findings of research on gender portrayal in media.

Gender representation is biased:

Men are portrayed in many diverse roles, women almost always in traditional feminine roles.

Women get less coverage:

Women and women-related issues account for 7 per cent of the time in hard news and 14 per cent in all news programmes.

Analysis of any media reveals women getting less amount of coverage in terms of time and space. Coverage of women and women-related issues gets relegated to weekly 'gender or women pages'. Female presence was more through advertisements, news of crime and social events.

Promotion of stereotypes and symbols:

The media draws from a ready reservoir of gender differentiating stereotypes, myths, legends and symbols. Women are portrayed in sex roles as *sati-savitri*, and vamps. Men are portrayed as breadwinners, decision-makers. *Jo apni biwi se karta ho pyar, who Prestige se kaise kare inkar!* (He who really loves his wife can never say no to Prestige Pressure Cooker?). This is an example of gender stereotyping.

Masculinity' as a value:

The promotion of masculinity as a value works as a mechanism to promote patriarchy. Masculinity is projected through roles of policemen, authoritarian leaders, successful businessmen, and bureaucrats, etc. Popular films are full of such message 'manly men control / protect their women' – (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gam* – Sharukh Khan marries to safeguard Kajol when she loses her protector, her father).

Honour, glory and martyrdom are linked to masculine identity and a 'masculine' notion.

10.2.3 GENDER REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA:

The place of women in genuine journalistic role in Indian language newspapers is minimal. Their (women journalists') numbers are less, the jobs are few and prejudices against them are formidable.

Another such area is portrayal of women in TV serials. What worries most people is that so many women are coming into television as directors and writers and there is still no change in the stereotyping of women in popular television serials.

A recent study by the Press Institute of India for the National Commission on Women on the status of women journalists in the print media confirms this trend. Pamela Bhagat coordinated the research with the support of media representatives from various regions, who together formed a National Study Group.

Major concerns that emerged from the study were job insecurity. This is because journalists are employed like daily wage labourers. Other problems include: contract system of employment; neglect of maternity, negligible or no child-care provisions, and sexual harassment. Other issues raised by respondents were: Women journalists are conscientious, diligent and people relate more easily to us. However, male bosses do not give credit for professionalism -- instead speak of women exploiting their gender. Then there is no transparency in policy matters - entitlements, rights and promotion criteria.

Sexual harassment also emerged as a major concern of most respondents. But when asked whether they had to put up with sexist remarks / gestures or if they had been sexually harassed in any way at their workplace or in association with their work, 22.7 percent said they had. An interesting finding is that, of those who had experienced sexual harassment, 31.5 percent said it had 'seriously' undermined their confidence and affected their work.

What, then, are the barriers to opportunities for women journalists? Newspapers are high-pressure environments where male gender, talent and hustle are incontrovertible tickets to

success. Women are sometimes hampered because they refuse to assimilate into the work culture.

10.2.4 GENDER DIFFERENCES:

The conventional journalism of male-owned media reports news in the third person. Women's journalism reports its news in the first person, allowing the newsmakers to speak for themselves. Both claim their styles result in greater accuracy.

Men tend to define "news" as conflict and violence- fights (political, economic, physical), murders, suicides, floods, fires, and catastrophes of all kinds. Attacks and name-calling usually guarantee a well-attended press conference and subsequent news coverage.

Women-owned media define news differently. They seek to generate harmony and interconnection by taking good care of the words and images. Women journalists refuse to print works, which are racist, classist, culturally elitist, which may create further divisions among people

The objective of women journalists is to transform the violent macho role models, and create media heroes and heroines who are intelligent instead of belligerent, cooperative rather than combative, nurturing rather than destructive.

Male-owned media claim a journalistic goal of "objectivity." The journalistic goal of women's media is the "effective use of media as an instrument of change." They claim that, "More than a simple conveyor belt of information, it has also served as an agent for change.

10.2.5 WOMEN RELATED ISSUES THAT DO NOT GET COVERED:

The following are the essential categories of essential women's issues that do not get reported at all in the mass media. These are:

Health and safety issues: Health and safety information, such as where to go to find shelter from abuse, information on devices or drugs that are dangerous to women, etc.

Economic issues: Economic information, such as what to do when you experience discrimination; location of child care centers and their costs; income sources such as educational opportunities, training, scholarships, loans, and fellowships available to women; how to go into business, and how women have handled special problems that arise.

Political issues: Political information, such as legislation with special reference to women; positions on issues of special concern to women; information on political injustices to women and where to offer or get support and assistance; etc.

10.2.6 STEPS TO IMPROVE COVERAGE OF WOMEN IN MEDIA:

There is an urgent call for greater media diversity in all areas - ownership, content and audiences. A large number of studies have highlighted how the media is failing in one of its core functions - giving voice to the voiceless. Globalization has concentrated media ownership and the dissemination of news in a few male hands, and has increased the tendency to portray women as sex objects rather than holistic beings.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) has found that across the world women constitute 21 percent of news sources (19 percent in Southern Africa). The HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study shows that HIV and AIDS constitutes less than four percent of media coverage and that People with HIV constitute less than three percent of sources on the topic. Many other studies show that women and men across the globe would like to see women portrayed in a more diverse range of roles; that the kind of topics that interest women most (like education, HIV and AIDS and social issues) get no coverage in the news; and that women and men would like more local, human interest and positive news stories.

Here are a few a suggestions that could improve coverage of women and women-related issues in the mass media:

- *Doing research on why women aren't forthcoming as sources; build the capacity of women to be more confident in their dealings with the media.*
- *Developing resource directories for journalists.*
- *Extending gender and media monitoring to areas such as soap operas and advertising.*
- *Launching HIV and AIDS and Gender policies.*
- *Ensuring that media NGOs also develop HIV and AIDS and gender policies.*
- *Developing editorial codes of good practice on images.*
- *Providing training in management and financial negotiation for women in media.*
- *Devising simple tools for the media to inter act more with its audiences, including simple audience questionnaires that can be administered by E mail, SMS, poll questions on web-sites and questions on radio talk shows.*
- *Encouraging women to participate more actively in media matters.*
- *Increasing gender and media literacy, particularly people in the rural areas with a special focus on audio/radio literacy.*

10.3 SUMMARY:

- Although there has been a steady increase in the number of women professionals over the past 20 years, most mainstream press coverage continues to rely on men as experts in the fields of business, politics and economics. Women in the news are more likely to be featured in stories about accidents, natural disasters, or domestic violence than in stories about their professional abilities or expertise. Women in politics are similarly sidelined. Many studies have revealed that journalists tend to focus on the domestic aspects of the politically active woman's personal life rather than her position on the issues.
- Inadequate women's coverage is a worldwide phenomenon. Some time back, the Association of Women Journalists (AFJ) conducted a study of news coverage of women and women's issues in 70 countries. It reported that only 18 per cent of stories quote women, and that the number of women-related stories came to barely 10 per cent of total news coverage.
- Media images of women in sports are also very different from the familiar pictures of male athletes in action. Female athletes are increasingly photographed in "hyper-sexualized poses." Most of the women journalists on TV have the added burden of looking good. Many women journalists have surgically altered their faces to appear younger and more "beautiful." So one can conclude that women's portrayal in media has become a painful reminder of women's inequality. Not being; but looking smart, smarter, smartest a big necessity for women on media.
- Here are some major findings of research on gender portrayal in media. Men are portrayed in many diverse roles, women almost always in traditional feminine roles. Women and women-related issues account for 7 per cent of the time in hard news and 14 per cent in all news programmes. Analysis of any media reveals women getting less amount of coverage in terms of time and space. Coverage of women and women-related issues gets relegated to weekly 'gender or women pages'.
- Female presence is more through advertisements, news of crime and social events. The media draws from a ready reservoir of gender differentiating stereotypes, myths, legends and symbols. Women are portrayed in sex roles as *sati-savitri*, and vamps. Men are portrayed as breadwinners, decision-makers. *Jo apni biwi se karta ho pyar, who Prestige se kaise kare inkar!* (He who really loves his wife can never say no to Prestige Pressure Cooker?). This is an example of gender stereotyping.
- The promotion of masculinity as a value works as a mechanism to promote patriarchy. Masculinity is projected through roles of policemen, authoritarian leaders, successful

businessmen, and bureaucrats, etc. Popular films are full of such message 'manly men control / protect their women' – (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gam* – Sharukh Khan marries to safeguard Kajol when she loses her protector, her father). Honour, glory and martyrdom are linked to masculine identity and a 'masculine' notion.

10.4 KEY WORDS:

Portrayal of Women: Despite a steady increase in the number of women professionals over the past 20 years, most mainstream press coverage continues to rely on men as experts in the fields of business, politics and economics. Women in the news are more likely to be featured in stories about accidents, natural disasters, or domestic violence than in stories about their professional abilities or expertise. Women in politics are similarly sidelined. Many studies have revealed that journalists tend to focus on the domestic aspects of the politically active woman's personal life rather than her position on the issues.

Media Images of Women: Media images of women in sports are also very different from the familiar pictures of male athletes in action. Female athletes are increasingly photographed in "hyper-sexualized poses." Most of the women journalists on TV have the added burden of looking good. Many women journalists have surgically altered their faces to appear younger and more "beautiful." So one can conclude that women's portrayal in media has become a painful reminder of women's inequality. Not being; but looking smart, smarter, smartest a big necessity for women on media.

Biased Gender representation: Men are portrayed in many diverse roles, women almost always in traditional feminine roles.

Women get less coverage: Women and women-related issues account for 7 per cent of the time in hard news and 14 per cent in all news programmes.

Analysis of any media reveals women getting less amount of coverage in terms of time and space. Coverage of women and women-related issues gets relegated to weekly 'gender or women pages'. Female presence was more through advertisements, news of crime and social events.

Promotion of stereotypes and symbols: The media draws from a ready reservoir of gender differentiating stereotypes, myths, legends and symbols. Women are portrayed in sex roles as *sati-savitri*, and vamps. Men are portrayed as breadwinners, decision-makers. *Jo apni biwi se karta ho pyar, who Prestige se kaise kare inkar!* (He who really loves his wife can never say no to Prestige Pressure Cooker?). This is an example of gender stereotyping.

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10.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

4. How do media present and project women? Cite examples.
5. Are media portrayals of women satisfactory? Discuss in detail.
6. What are the major issues of media coverage of women? Suggest measures to improve media coverage of women?

10.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

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