

(Jovilton): **Modern means of communication: a critical approach**

Among the most powerful forces that have affected cultural change in the world, from the beginning of the twentieth century, are the modern means of communication, widely known as mass media. Mass media, an expression introduced by the Americans, is used throughout the world; the Church in Vatican II, however, has preferred the expression “Instruments of social communication”. With the advent of techniques and technology, mass media has undergone enormous changes. Mass media like the press, newspaper, radio, T.V, internet, mobiles and other hi-fi digital media are among the wonderful technical inventions which foster communication between human beings in leaps and bounds.

The prominent role of mass media in society is to inform, to educate and to entertain—and that it has met these ends is beyond doubt. It has, however, also influenced and affected the value priorities drastically, for it promotes good and bad values simultaneously. Other than just values and drawbacks of media, we also see that it has affected the lives of thousands of people.

If we see the advantages or pros of mass media, then its first merit is to foster a greater closeness of people, drawing them nearer and binding them together. Mass media also promotes social causes such as environmental cleanliness, abolition of child labour, equal rights of the girl child, etc. During natural catastrophes the newspapers and television news channels carry appeals for national and international aid. Other than these, mass media promotes a new and creative education which can arouse in young people the ability that will enable them to discover positive values.

Like the two sides of one coin mass media has its pros as well as cons. As George Bernard Shaw says, “The problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished, it has only accomplished investing our lives with artificial and arbitrary values”. The cons of media are that it is managed and controlled by the government and the richer classes of society. Therefore, the news that we read in newspapers, or see on Television, is sometimes manipulated by these people with their power and money. And, speaking sarcastically, it is the money that speaks -- not the reporter on the Television. Secondly, mass media is generally entertainment oriented. Earlier, for entertainment radios were used through which people relaxed from

exhaustion; nowadays T.V. and mobiles have become the main source of entertainment; although their primary use was different. Similarly, the internet has become an indispensable part of our lives. Though it has become very powerful and successful, as it is the fastest and the quickest means to acquire information, send emails and so on, it has also become a failure due to a rise in cyber crimes, cyber bullying, fake Id, hacking and spam messages, transmission of viruses etc.

When mass media, first made an impact on the world it was a tool used for advertising and broadcasting news. And now it rules the life of the people right from children to adults. Children are the ones who are most affected and impacted by the media. When advertisers decide how to promote their product their main focus is to target kids. Today the largest consumers are kids more than adults. Advertisements are made in such a way that they will attract the young minds and, in turn, these will force their parents to buy the product. Some of these advertisements which children fall a prey to are Crispy and Crunchy potato chips, utterly butterly delicious Amul milk products, transforming toys and Barbie dolls etc. Television also has an effect on a child's mind. Children are glued to their television sets day in and day out, watching meaningless programs on violence and crime that do not help them to increase their knowledge but rather deplete it. By watching such programs they feel that violence and crime are an acceptable means towards solving a conflict.

Similarly, we see that today's youth, the future of the country, are also impacted by mass media on a very large scale. Some teenagers today, have laptops and others already have in their pockets the latest mobiles or i-phones. To the youth, it seems a fashion to have the latest branded mobiles, but in reality it is truly a waste of money, time and talent. Besides, teenagers are in search of an identity and they imitate their models. Therefore the latest jeans and t-shirts are worn by them to ape their favourite hero or heroine, whom they see on television, unmindful of whether the clothes are decent or not. Also, many a time the word "Love" is misinterpreted by the media. There are umpteen songs, advertisements and erotic films based on this word "Love". The reality of true love is rarely portrayed. And the effect of this is seen in hideous crimes.

As it does children and teenagers, mass media influences adults too, albeit not on the same scale. The main and endless quest of adults is for material comforts. Therefore, due to mass media, consumerism has largely

increased out of the blue. Some adults want a luxurious and hassle free lifestyle due to which they are tempted towards products which guarantee freedom from aging. Further on, this consumerism results in making more money and leads to “Buy-one-and-get-one-free” -- that is buying stress, anxiety for making money and getting free sickness and other ailments! Also, with the advent of T.V. at home the evening time that was usually spent in family conversation has become a time of isolation and solitude.

All this clearly stresses that modern means of communication influence people of every walk of life. However, it depends on oneself, how one perceives it. As someone has rightly said, all of us who professionally use the media are the shapers of society, we can vulgarize it, we can brutalize it or we can raise it to a higher level. And, to shape society we should remember the words of Shakespeare, “What cannot be cured must be endured.” Therefore we should see and work on the positive influence of mass media.

Mass media came into being unexpectedly, has developed unpredictably and now has also been successful miraculously. Mass media like the newspapers and magazines communicate news and keep us up-dated about the happenings of the world. The radio also has affected most people deeply, for its language is easy, direct and accessible to all. Television, on the other hand, has had an amazing impact on the economical, educational and recreational environment of most of the world. It offers to its viewers great advantages like showing a world otherwise unknown to them. And last, but not the least, with the advent of the internet millions of people are able to acquire information in no time, chat with friends, download etc. Surely mass media has made life quicker and better. Therefore we should make good use of this means of communication. And as Martin Luther King said, “I have a dream”; we too should say that we have a dream that one day we will be able to make these modern means of communication a boon to the whole world.

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