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➤ INTRODUCTION

(a) **Meaning of Media**

- (i) Everything ranging from the stall at the local fair to the programme that you see on TV can be called media.
- (ii) Media is the plural form of the word 'medium' and it describes the various ways through which we communicate in society.
- (iii) In our daily life, we use various forms of communication such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, documentary movies, e-mail and public meetings.
- (iv) When we use these channels to communicate to the public or masses then they are called media.
- (v) Media is made to communicate to the public.
- (vi) The letter and e-mails are called Personal Communication while certain media which reach the mass or large group of people such as TV, films and radio, magazines and newspapers are called Mass Communication.

➤ CLASSIFICATION OF MEDIA

Road plays and dramas were some of the methods by which communication was practised in the olden days but as technology developed, electronic and print media came as a new means of communication.

Electronic Media

The growth of electronic media has brought lots of changes in the quality of images and sounds. It has also become a popular method of expression of public opinion. It reaches the public faster and even the illiterate people get benefits a lot out of this media. The media is able to bring forth the truth to public. It covers the

injustice done to people, corrupt actions of politicians and many sensational informations which reach public in no time. The opinions of public are also telecast which at times help the politicians to change their decisions also.

Print Media

The press is usually called the print media which is a strong political weapon and a pillar of democracy. Print media has different forms like magazines, journals, news letters and books. It helps us to make aware of the events and incidents across the border. Press has always played an effective role right from the freedom struggle. It was through the newspapers only the national leaders fought for the freedom of our country. Some of the newspapers were started by our national leaders. These are as follows :

Kesari by Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Harijan by Mahatma Gandhi

Al-Hilah – Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

The press is expected to report about the events correctly and without any bias. Sometimes even the press is compelled to write certain things by force. The freedom of press must not be curbed by anybody or any agency. The Newspaper is one of the important media which brings out all informations to the people.

The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Indian Express, The Hindu are some of the leading newspapers in India. Magazines and journals are also popular print media but these cater to specific groups of readers only.

Business Today, India Today, Frontline, Outlook are some of the leading magazines in our country. Apart from dailies which are printed in English, there are newspapers in regional languages too.

➤ MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

- (i) It would probably be difficult for you to imagine your life without the media. But cable television and the widespread use of the internet is a recent phenomenon. These have been around for less than twenty years. The technology that mass media uses keeps changing.
- (ii) Newspapers, television and radio can reach millions of people because they use certain technologies. We also tend to discuss newspapers and magazines as the print media and TV and radio as the electronic media. Why do you think newspaper are called print media ? As you read further, you will find that this naming is related to the different technologies that these media use. The following photographs will give you a sense of the ways in which technology that mass media uses has changed over the years and continues to change.
- (iii) Changing technology, or machines, and making technology more modern, helps media to reach more people. It also improves the quality of sound and the images that you see. But technology does more than this. It also changes the ways in which we think about our lives. For example, today it is quite difficult for us to think of ourselves as members of a larger global world. Television images travel huge distances through satellites and cables.
- (iv) This allows us to view news and entertainment channels from other parts of the world. Most of the cartoons that you see on television are mostly from Japan or the United States. We can now be sitting in Chennai or Jammu and can see images of a storm that has hit the coast of Florida in the United States. Television has brought the world closer to us.

➤ MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

- (i) In a democracy, the media plays a very important role in providing news and discussing events taking place in the country and the world. It is on the basis of this information that citizens can, for example, learn how government works. And often, if they wish to, they can take action on the basis of the news stories.
- (ii) Some of the ways in which they can do this is by writing letters to the concerned minister, organizing a public protest, starting a signature camping, asking the government to rethink its programme, etc.
- (iii) Given the role that the media plays in providing information, it is important that the information be balanced. Let us understand what we mean by a balanced media report by reading two versions of the same news event given on the next page.
- (iv) The fact is that if you had read either newspaper you would only know one side of the story. If you had read the News of India you would most likely think of the protestors as a nuisance. Their disrupting traffic and continually all polluting the city with their factories leaves, you with a bad impression about them. But on the other hand, if you had read the story in the India. Daily, you would know that the protests are because a lot of livelihoods will be lost if the factories close because the relocation efforts have not been adequate. Neither of these stories is balanced report. A balanced report is on that discusses all points of view of a particular story and then leaves it to the readers to make up their minds.
- (v) Writing a balanced report, however, depends on the media being independent. An independent media means that no one should control and influence its coverage of news. No one should tell the media what can be included and what should not be included in a news story. An independent media is important in a democracy. As you read above, it is on the basis of the information that the media provides that we take action as citizens, so it is important that this information is reliable and not biased.
- (vi) However, the reality is that media is far from independent. This is mainly because of two reasons The first is the control that the government has on the media. When the government prevents either a news item, or scenes from a movie, or the lyrics of a song from being shared with the large public, this is referred to as censorship. There have been periods in India history when the government censored the media The worst of these was the emergency of 1975-1977.
- (vii) While the government does continue to censor films, it does not really censor the media's coverage of news despite the absence of censorship by the government, most newspaper nowadays still fail to provide a balanced story. The reasons for this are complicated. Persons who research the media have said that this happens because business houses control the media. At times, it is in the interest of these businesses to focus on only one side of the story. Media's demand for money and its links to advertising means that it becomes difficult for media to be reporting against people who give them advertisements. Media is thus, no longer considered independent because of its close links to business.
- (viii) Besides the above, the media also tends to focus on a particular aspect of a story because they believe this makes the story interesting. Also, if they want to increase public support for an issue they often do this by focusing on one side of a story.

➤ SETTING AGENDAS

- (i) The media also plays an important role in deciding what stories to focus on, and therefore, decides on what is newsworthy. For example, the annual function of your school is unlikely to make the news. But if a famous actor is invited as the Chief Guest., then the media might be interested in covering it. By focusing on particular issues, the media influences our thoughts, feelings and actions, and brings those issues to our

attention. Due to the significant influence it plays in our lives and in shaping our thoughts, it is commonly said that the media sets the agenda.

- (ii) Very recently, the media drew our attention to alarming levels of pesticides in cola drinks. They published reports that indicated the high level of pesticides and, thus, made us aware of the need to regularly monitor these colas according to international quality and safety standards they did this despite the government's resistance by boldly declaring that colas were unsafe. In covering this story, the media positively helped us focus on an issue that affects our lives and one that we might not even have been aware of it had it not been for media reporting.
- (iii) There are several instances when the media fails to focus on issues that are significant in our lives. For example, drinking water is a major problem in the country. Every year, thousands of people suffer and die because they do not get safe drinking water. However we seldom find the media discussing this issue. A well known Indian journalist wrote of how the Fashion Week, in which clothes designers show their new creation to rich people, formed the front page headlines of all the newspapers while several slums were being demolished in Mumbai, the very same week, and this was not even noticed.
- (iv) As citizens of a democracy, the media has a very important role to play in our lives because it is through the media that we hear about issues related to the working of the government. The media decides what to focus on and in this way it sets the agenda.
- (v) The government can at times, prevent the media from publishing a story and this is called censorship. Nowadays, media's close relationship with business often means that a balanced report is difficult to come by. Given this, it is important for us to be aware that the 'factual information' that a news report provides is often not complete and can be one-sided. We, therefore, need to analyse the news by asking the following questions : What is the information is not being provided? From whose point of view is the article being written ? Whose point of view is being left out and why ?

➤ MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION

In democracy, public opinion plays an important role since people are given the freedom to express their opinions and also raise objection to certain policies. Any ruling party can remain in power as long as it retains the public opinion in its favour. It is the media through which strong or balanced public opinions are given. The government cannot ignore the opinions of the public. It must take the views of people and modify its policies or else it may lose its power. However, all media must follow certain rules and regulations set by the government vide **Broadcasting Code** in 1962 in order to regulate the functioning of media.

The main aim of media is to work for public interest. Hence, it should not be controlled by few people. If it covers only partial news then it becomes biased information which will not serve the purpose. Public also must be careful to see that in formations are not manipulated and affect the thoughts and feelings of anyone.

The media also acts as a check on the elected representatives and it also helps in the proper administration by bringing in light the corrupt activities of the people in power. It also welcomes the participation of citizens in policy making.

➤ RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT (RTI)

In October 2005, the RTI was passed and that has given the people the right to information. Through this act people could learn and know on demand the happenings in government.

The government has to give the needful information to public within 30 days or at times within 24 hours in case the matter is serious. The act has made the department and government offices more accountable to public. RTI is applicable all over India except J & K.



NEED FOR MEDIA

The media must have a free hand and should not be curbed. An uncensored media has the responsibility of providing unbiased information. In case of elections, the media should project candidates of all parties and must also cover all issues that came before the elections.

During 1975-76, when emergency was declared, all types of freedom were suspended. No media person was permitted to give any type of report against the Government.