



MASS MEDIA - THE FOURTH PILLAR OF THE MODERN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

"Media" holds a special position because its raw material is really the public mind and it trades chiefly in "moral values". The institution whose raw material is the public mind is a great institution. The study of the human mind is the most interesting thing and even more interesting is to inform guide, teach and help it in coming to a decision. Media should give more space to cover wide ranging of articles regarding communal harmony. They should cover festivals celebrated in certain parts of the country where different communities together join and celebrate. Some of the media are giving awards for the people who are working in the area of communal harmony. This is a wonderful sign of increasing media role in promoting harmony among people.

Key words : Role of Media - Importance, Modern Society & Morality.

The term 'media' generally refers to the "mass media" which is specifically envisioned and designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state. Media includes mass media like TV, News channels, News papers, Radio, journals, magazines and most importantly internet and email. The sphere of influence of media is increasing day by day as the coverage of a small news article is very wide these days. And more importantly in this modern knowledge-society, media plays the role of facilitator of development, disseminator of information, and being an agent of change. Today, media is considered the fourth pillar of the state all over the world. More importantly this is very true in the context of a biggest democracy like India.

The Mass Media is an unique feature of modern society. It's development has accompanied an increase in the magnitude and complexity of societal actions and engagements, rapid social change, technological innovation, rising personal income and standard of life and the decline of some traditional forms of control and authority. There is an association between the development of mass media and social change, although the degree and direction of this association is still debated upon even after years of study into media influence. Many of the consequences, either detrimental or beneficial, which have been attributed to the mass media, are almost undoubtedly due to other tendencies within the society. Few sociologists would refuse the importance of the mass media, and mass communications as a whole, as being a major factor in the construction and circulation of social understanding and social imagery in modern societies. Therefore it is argued that the mass media is used as, "an instrument", both more powerful and more flexible than anything in previous existence, for influencing people into certain modes of belief and understanding within society.

According to the old notion, the newspaper was responsible advisor to the public. Its first duty was to provide the news, "uncoloured by any motive". Its second duty was to present "a certain view of



public policy" which it believed to be for the good of the state and community. It treated life as a "serious matter". It had an antiquated respect for truth and believed in the moral governance of things. It aimed at something and that something was guarded for the good of the society. This made Wickman Steed to say that "the printing and the selling of news is a social service". It is an aid administration and a spokesman of the public. It will bridge the gulf between the public and the government and the governed. It is a profession where so many decisions involving so great a responsibility are to be taken at such a pace.

"Media" holds a special position because its raw material is really the public mind and it trades chiefly in "moral values". The institution whose raw material is the public mind is a great institution. The study of the human mind is the most interesting thing and even more interesting is to inform guide, teach and help it in coming to a decision.

The press is the most important, effective, extensive, popular and convenient; cheapest and the surest method of moulding and formulating public opinion. It is the most important of the elements which constitutes public opinion itself. Communal disharmony is a problem which attributes to various factors. Among those factors media also gives its contribution. This media which acts disseminates of information to the public plays vital role in promoting communal harmony.

Over the last century, India has been rocked by communal, caste, linguistic or regional violence, of this; communal riots have assumed dangerous proportions from the beginning of eighties. The innumerable incidents of small or big proportions have sharpened the communal intensity leading to an emotional upsurge in the country, which added to the communal tension. The responsibility of the media in such situations is undeniable. Unfortunately, the Press has not always covered these events dispassionately and objectively. Without going too far back in the time, if we analyse the situation since 90's, between 1991-92, some section of the media got carried away by the turn of the tide in this very city. Else where, the militants and terrorists were openly glorified for serving the cause of their community.

The modern media often tends to forget some of its basic social responsibilities. Instead they often indulge in sensationalising of news. For example, the news of Amitabh Bachhan going to temple is being covered in wide way than the cracking of a terror module by a Delhi police. Media channels are more worried about their TRP ratings rather than the issue of social responsibility. And this trend is needed to be changed. If you take the role of media in coverage of communal riots in the past, riots of late 60's, the violence of 1980-81, the separatist movement of mid-eighties and early 90's, the incidents at Ayodhya, Mumbai, Gujarat the media played different kinds of roles. During these periods, the media which enjoys the utmost freedom of expression, has a great and vital role to play in moulding public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need of friendly and harmonious relations between various communities and religious groups and thus promote national solidarity. The role of media in such situations is to be peacemakers and not abettors, to be trouble-shooters and not troublemakers.

Media is the fourth pillar of the society but sometimes tries to outsmart the other three pillars like judiciary, executive, and legislature. This creates an imbalance in the system and ultimately fails in doing its role. For example, in the wake of the Tamil Nadu speaker's action against journalists, many media bosses have called for the need to codify privileges of parliament and state legislatures. Thus they want to curb the rights of MPs and MLAs.

Many times they had tried to curb the power of the Judiciary also. For example, the press maintains that truth must be the basis of consideration in matters of contempt of court cases. But the media does not hesitate to report untruth when it suits its interests.

But, irrespective of the age we live in, newspapers must continue to pursue a higher purpose than mere profit making. And, this purpose is best served when a newspaper, without fear or favour, keeps its readers fully informed and provides space to a plurality of views. As I have often said, free speech is the life- blood of a democracy. It is also one of our fundamental rights. But this right comes along



with responsibility. The responsibility not to sensationalize events. The responsibility to guard communal harmony and national unity. The responsibility to strengthen the social fabric of our multi-religious and multi-lingual country.

There are also lots of columnists in the newspapers who work for the communal harmony and they have been recognized, the examples are: Author Tanveer Jafri is a columnist based in India. He is related with hundreds of most popular daily news papers/portals in India and abroad. Jafri, almost writes in the field of communal harmony, world peace, anti communalism, anti terrorism, national integration, national & international politics etc. He is a devoted social activist for world peace, unity, integrity & global brotherhood. Tanveer Jafri is also a member of Haryana Sahitya Academy & Haryana Urdu Academy. Thousands articles of the author have been published in different newspapers, websites & news portals.

In the wake of recent rising conflicts among communities in the country, each and every journalist should take the responsibilities in promoting the communal harmony. And they should follow certain basic principles while writing about communal clashes:

1. Journalists and columnists owe a very special responsibility to their country in promoting communal peace and amity. Their writings are not a mere reflection of their own feelings but help to large extent in moulding the feelings and sentiments of the society at large. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that they use their pen with circumspection and restraint.
2. News, views or comments relating to communal or religious disputes/ clashes shall be published after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to communal harmony, amity and peace. Sensational, provocative and alarming headlines are to be avoided. Acts of communal violence or vandalism shall be reported in a manner and may not undermine the people's confidence in the law and order machinery of the state. Giving community-wise figures of the victims of communal riot, or writing about the incident in a style which is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the communities/ religious groups concerned, or which has a potential to exacerbate the trouble, shall be avoided.
3. The media, as a chronicle of tomorrow's history, owes an undeniable duty to the future to record events as simple untailed facts. The analysis of the events and opinion thereon are a different genre altogether. The treatment of the two also to be necessarily different. In times of crisis, facts unadorned and simply put, with due care and restraint, cannot be reasonably objected to in a democracy. However, a heavy responsibility devolves on the opinion of the author on the articles. The author has to ensure that not only his or her analyse is free from any personal preference, prejudices or notions, but also they are based on verified, accurate and established facts and do not tend to foment disharmony or enmity between castes, communities and races.

Recently, some of the TV channels have shown the coexistence of Hindus and Christians while the clash between them in Kandhamal and other areas. Media should give more space to cover wide ranging of articles regarding communal harmony. They should cover festivals celebrated in certain parts of the country where different communities together join and celebrate. For example, Nagore dargha annual festival, Velankanni flag festivals in Tamilnadu are the ones celebrated with the cooperation of different communities.

Some of the media are giving awards for the people who are working in the area of communal harmony. This is a wonderful sign of increasing media role in promoting harmony among people. Founding Fathers of our constitution believed that secularism is the antithesis of and the anti-dote to communalism. Therefore, they made secularism, in all its ramifications, one of the basic pillars of the Constitution. They enshrined it as one of the prime objectives in the Preamble of the Constitution. I am sure it is possible with the active role of media and it is the real mandate for them right now.



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