

Society- A Rudimentary Media with Respect to India

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Abstract:

Is mass media confined to television, radio, newspaper and new media or it has a wider perspective? There is other way also through which we receive information which is also the ancient way and which is also the basic media, that is society or the collection of people. All the mass media are connected to this media.

Keyword: no

“Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.” Society was the first media of journalism to pass on traditions, rituals, languages, culture etc. We can call this Society journalism. In one-way communication, information is transferred from the sender to the receiver without any opportunity for the receiver to give feedback to the sender. Society journalism or society media can be considered as one-way communication but here feedback may or may not be given depending on the receiver and the information is constantly being transferred.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the term media means “the main ways that large people receive information and entertainment, that is television, radio, newspapers and the internet.” Is there any other way also by which we receive information which is also the ancient way? Yes, we- The Society. Society means as a collection of people. Robert Morrison Maclver, along with his co-writer Charles Page, defined “society” in his book- Society: An Introductory Analysis (1949) as “It (society) is a system of usages and procedures, of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and of liberties. This ever changing, complex system we call society.” Society is an intangible entity so; we may see the people but cannot see the society or social structure but only its external aspects...society is distinct from physical reality. Society is also acting as the media as it is the society which has delivered the very first message of the ancient people, that is the language. “Language” the initial information which is passed on by the society.

LANGUAGE

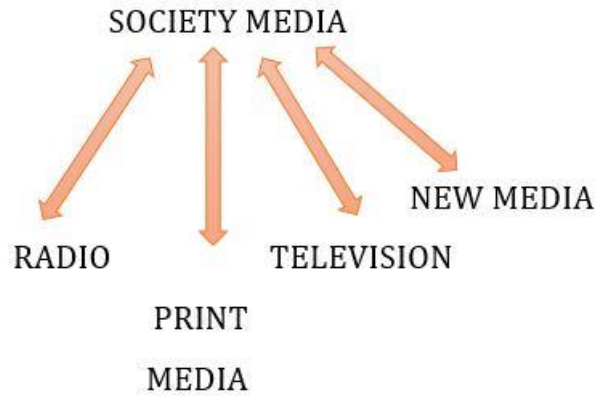
The first known language of the land was Sumerian. It was gradually replaced by Akkadian around 2400 BCE when Akkadian speakers arrived. So; here Akkadian speakers were acting as medium. This language thrived till about Alexander’s time (336-323 BCE). From 1400 BCE, Aramaic also seeped in. This language, similar to Hebrew, became broadly spoken after 1000 BCE. It is still spoken in parts of Iraq. This was the journey of the first known language of the world and the language evolved from it still exists.

Who has played the major role in this? It is the people or the society.

Now, take the example of the English language to show how its impact has been many sided and paradoxical in India. English continues to be a mark of privilege in India. Not knowing English is a hindrance in the job market. This is due to the impact of colonialism in India. Colonialism brought many structural changes in India. Colonialism simple mean the establishment of rule by one country over another. India's past has been marked by the entry of numerous groups of people at different times who have established their rule over different parts of what constitutes modern India today. Britishers decided that higher education will only be in English medium and now the society has accepted that. Today, English speaking professionals are selected for the job in India. This is because the group of people which was the colony spread the message that English is the sign of wisdom and prestige. We even follow this today. How a land of Sanskrit language became a land of English-speaking people. Earlier in India "Ramayana" was composed in Sanskrit by Maharishi Valmiki but nowadays English is preferred over Sanskrit. This is the effect of group of people who came to India, ruled and spread this ideology. Sanskrit is the only language that transcended the barriers of region and boundaries in India. From north to south and from east to west, there is no part in India that has not contributed to or has been affected by the Sanskrit language but at present it is language which has been forgotten.

Script has also progressed with time. A script is also known as writing system or orthography. It is a standard for representing the parts of a spoken language by making specific marks on a medium (paper, rocks, birch-bark, etc). The Mesopotamian cuneiform script can be traced furthest back into prehistory to an eighth millennium BCE counting system using clay to-kens of multiple shapes. The development from tokens to script reveals that writing emerged from counting and accounting. After four millennia, the token system led to writing in Sumer and Eloom, present-day western Iran. The second phase in the evolution of the Mesopotamian script, characterized by the creation of phonetic signs, not only resulted in the parting of writing from accounting, but also its spreading out of Sumer to neighbouring regions. The invention of the alphabet about 1500 BCE steered in the third phase in the evolution of writing in the ancient Near East (Sass 2005). The invention of numerals, which separated the notion of numerosity from that of the item counted, was a crucial fourth step in concept. The phonetics units marked a fifth step of concept, since the signs no longer referred to the objects pictured, but rather the sound of the word they evoked. Phonetics allowed writing to shift from a depictive to a conceptual linguistic system which enabled writing to enter the world of words. The point here is how was the progress conveyed so that it can be used- it was through society. No newspapers were there that time which might have published that readers now we have been upgraded to writing. It was adapted.

Society media is the basic of all other means of communication. The newspapers publish the stories related to what is happening in the surroundings or the world. Same is with the radio and the television. The shows of the television are inspired with the real life. In fact, the fictional shows or movies are related to the real world but with superficial facts.



The spirituality of each religion is vested in the sacred books and physical spaces where people get together to pray. Religion is very powerful tool in the hands of the powerful people and they use it to break and make communal ties.

There are many religions in the world-

- Christianity
 - Hinduism
 - Islam
 - Buddhism
 - Jainism
 - Sikhism
 - Zoroastrianism
 - Judaism
 - Baha'I
 - Confucianism
 - Shinto
 - Taoism
- influenced
by
sacred
books
written
by
person
or
people

The holy books of each and every religion must have been compiled over time by a person or people. These sacred books are a resemblance of the society of that time. In ancient India there were two type of texts- “Shruti” and “Smriti”. Shruti works are considered to have been heard and transmitted by earthly sages whereas Smriti works are that which is remembered by ordinary human beings. Though Shruti is considered to be more commanding, in practice the Smriti texts are more influential in modern Hinduism. Smriti texts are Ramayana and Mahabharata and Shruti texts are Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyaka and Upanishads. These texts have a great stimulus in Hinduism and they all are part of human memory. Thus, society or people have played a vital role here.

There are prominent sects under Hinduism- Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism. Vaishnavism- Followers consider Vishnu as the supreme lord. Shaivism- considers Shiva as the supreme lord. Shaktism- considers feminine or goddess as supreme. Smartism- based on the teachings of Puranas. These all sects were not documented but as people started following; it came into practice and then historians gave it a name. There are also evident sects under Vaishnavism-

- Varkari Panth or Varkari Sampradaya- The followers in this community are devotees of Lord Vishnu, in his manifestation as Vithoba and the worship is centered on Vithoba’s temple in Maharashtra. Important figures under this sect include Jnaneshwar (1275-1296), Namdev (1270-1350), Eknath

(1533-1599) and Tukaram (1598-1650). The traditions of this sect is passed on and the above mentioned figures were the head of this sect in their period.

- Ramanandi Sampradaya- Adheres to the teachings of Advaita scholar Ramananda. They worship Lord Rama, one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Have we ever seen the incarnations of Vishnu? I haven't, but still, I believe and society plays a primary role in this. I have listened stories of God from my grandmother and I have seen them following the traditions which I also follow.
- Brahma Sampradaya- Associated with Lord Vishnu and its founder was Madhvacharya. ISKCON belongs to this sampradaya. ISKCON is widespread worldwide and even non-Hindu also follow it. This is because its founder Prabhupada has popularised it long before when there was no social media. First ISKCON temple was built in New York, USA. See, how a man with a vision compassed belief in the religion in the country and its people in which that religion was minority. Here medium was the founder and the people.
- Pushti Marg Sampradaya- Founded by Vallabhacharya around 1500 AD. All followers are expected to do Seva to their personal idol of Lord Krishna. There are many followers of this in India.
- Nimbarka Sampradaya- Its followers worship Radha and Krishna deities.

These sects are being followed since years and no radio, no television and no newspaper had published that this group of people will follow this sect and that group of people will follow this. It's the society which has spread it; not only in their country but also abroad. Our lives are greatly impacted by the society. We dress up according to the society. Nobody comes and tell us that you have to wear this here and so on. We notice and silently society conveys.

Evident sects under Shaivism-

- Nathpanthi- Ahere to the teachings of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath and worship Adinath, a form of Shiva
- Lingayatism- The tradition was established in the 12th century AD by Basava.
- Dashanami Sanyasis- They are the disciples of Adi Shankaracharya.
- Aghoris- Devotees of Lord Shiva and are monists who seek salvation from the cycle of reincarnation. Not a single person but the people who practised it spread it.
- Siddhars- Believed to be also the founders of Varmam- a martial art for self- defence and a medical treatment at the same time.

Even many problems of Hinduism like the domination of Brahmans, Sati, Child marriage, etc. have been eliminated or reduced after Britishers came and western ideals of equality, several thinkers propelled to change the situation and they started movements to curve these social evils. Important ones being Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, etc.

Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century AD and spread over the world through a large empire. Those who submit to God and follow the preaching of Prophet Muhammad are called Muslims. It is said that an angel revealed the message of God to Prophet Muhammad on the mountains. He recited these injunctions to his followers. The followers then spread it around the world. There is abundant role of the society in spreading Islam.

The largest religion of the world, Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ in Jerusalem and after his and after his prosecution and resurrection after three days, it started to get more and more followers. After some time, there were several reform movements in Christianity and sects like Protestants, Methodists, etc. became widespread. One of their main practices is Baptism where a child or any

individual enters the church's service. There were two stages of the spread of Christianity in India: the first was in the medieval period and the second was during the 18th century Missionary work under the aegis of the British. The Portuguese also brought Christian missionaries with them who took permission from the emperor Akbar and subsequently Jahangir to preach their teachings.

In the second phase i.e., in the 18th century; the missionaries reached Bengal and affected the religious atmosphere by converting people. The missionaries started concentrating in bringing modern (English) education to those who converted and gave them medical assistance.

Without the contribution of people, the spread of Christianity was not possible. Unlike nowadays, there was no social media in earlier times. There was society media which will be prevalent always. Society has participated tremendously in the expansion of Christianity. There are several smaller denominations like the Syrian Christians of Kerela, Protestant groups, etc. which are active and flourishing.

The history of Sikhism commences with the life, times and teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), who is the founder of this religion. There are eleven gurus who travelled and spread the message of love and brotherhood. They didn't force to convert but people who liked its teachings started following it. Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book of Sikhism.

Zoroastrianism has its origin in Persia by the prophet Zarathushtra around 7th century BC. The first interaction of the Zoroastrians with India was probably between 8th-10th century AD when they fled from Iran because of Islamic invasions.

Judaism is one of the oldest religions and yet it has been prosecuted the most. The followers of Judaism are called Jews and several empires had targeted them. Abraham was the ancestor of all Jews. This religion predates Christianity and Islam, in fact, these two religions have borrowed a lot from Judaic philosophers. Baghdadi Jews came to West Asia as traders and settled mainly around Surat.

Baha'i was founded in 1844 by Mirza Ali Mohammad of Shiraz in Iran who assumed the title of the Bab. One of the earliest disciples and strongest exponents was Baha' Allah who later appointed his son Abd al-Baha (1844-1921), to be the leader of the Baha'i community. He actively administered the movement's affairs and spread the faith to North America, Europe and other continents.

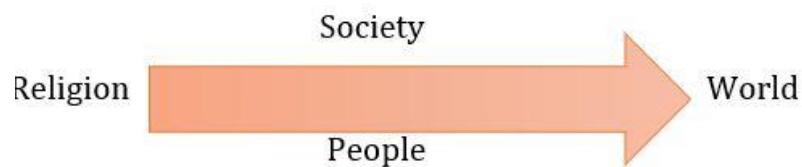
Confucianism is the way of life propagated by Confucius in the 6th-5th century BCE and followed by the Chinese people for more than two millennia. During the Han Dynasty, Confucianism expanded into the Korean peninsula and then in Japan. Korean scholar Wani transmitted Confucian principles. Here, Wani acted as the medium of communication.

Buddhism is to follow traditions, beliefs and practices of Siddhartha who came to be known as Buddha. Buddhism spread in the four Buddhist councils under the patronage of kings. First council was held around 483 BC under the patronage of King Ajatashatru where Upali recited Vinaya Pitaka, which contains the rules of the Buddhist order. Second council was held in 383 BC under the patronage of King Kalasoka, mainly due to the ten disputed points under the Vinaya Pitaka. Third council was held in 250 BC under the patronage of King Ashoka where compilation of Abhidhamma Pitaka took place which contains summary of the Buddha's teachings. Fourth council was held in 72 AD under the patronage of King Kanishka, where Buddhism was divided into Hinayana and Mahayana sect and all the deliberations were made in Sanskrit.

King Ashoka played an important role in the spread of Buddhism to Central Asia, West Asia and Sri Lanka, gradually transforming into a world religion.

Jainism teachings were first preserved as an oral tradition, but later they were recorded. It is based on the teachings of Mahavira. The early Jainas adopted Prakrit language of the common people to preach their doctrines and discarded Sanskrit language (which was mainly patronised by the Brahmanas). This greatly helped in widening the followers base of Jainism and with the support of kings who greatly patronised Jainism, like Chandragupta Maurya, it became popular in southern India.

Thus, the spread of religions has been a part of the process by which groups and societies have been required to define themselves. The values and beliefs of the religion are being passed from generation to generation.



CULTURE & TRADITIONS

Cultural diffusion spreads as cultures interact with each other. Culture diffusion can also happen through migration. If a large group of immigrants emigrates to a new country, they will bring their culture with them to that place. Culture can also spread through trade.

King Ashoka sent his son and daughter to Sri Lanka to spread Buddhism. In 1st century BCE, Indian traders travelled to countries like Indonesia and Cambodia in search of gold which caused culture diffusion there. The naval trade with various countries during the ancient and medieval times played a great role in the spread of Indian culture abroad.

Many cultures were formed but they were confined to small regions. Indian culture can be known as First World Culture.

Indian food is famous worldwide and we can see Indian restaurants all over the globe. The Indian universities were the most important centres of cultural interaction. The world's first university Takshila established around 700 BCE. More than ten thousand five hundred students from all over the world studied more than sixty subjects there and that's how the influence of Indian Universities went abroad. Travelers who came to India wrote about the affairs of the court while some focused on contemporary style of architecture and monuments or depicted the social and economic life. Every such account acts as the medium which presents the true picture of the then Indian Civilisation. Main or the basic medium were the travellers.

Megasthenes was an ancient Greek historian, diplomat and explorer. He visited India between 302 to 288 BCE as an ambassador of a Greek warrior. He visited India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. He described India in his book "Indica". Unfortunately, the original copy of this book was lost but later, famous Greek writers referred to Indica in their works. This is how we came to know that there was some book "Indica" which contained the details of the rich heritage of India. This was possible because of the people of that time. Fa-Hien, a Chinese pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Vikramaditya around 400 AD. He compiled a travelogue "Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms" which contained details about the religious and social life of Indians at that time. Hiuen Tsang was a Chinese traveller who came to India through Silk route between 629-644 AD during the reign of Harshavardhana. From his famous book "Si-Yu-Ki", many details of administrative, political, religious, economic and social conditions during those days in India can be found. He described mainly the city life in India in terms of construction of various types of houses, city-streets etc. He also mentioned that Harshavardhana

was quite laborious and a welfare focused leader. His journey to India was recorded in detail in the classic Chinese text “Great Tang Record on the Western Regions”. We get the account of the facts of the past through the works of the people of those days. They were acting as the medium of communication between present and the past. Al-Biruni, in his book “Kitab-Ul-Hind” tried to explain the caste system in India by looking for parallels in other societies known to him. Marco Polo, an Italian merchant, adventurer and writer mentioned that China had large area and great wealth at that time in around 13th century AD in his book “The Travels of Marco Polo”. He visited Kakatiya kingdom in India in 1289 AD during the reign of Rudramadevi. It can be found from his works that a woman named Rudramadevi had inherited her father’s throne and ruled the dynasty as a king and benevolent ruler. Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan traveller who visited India in 1332-33 AD during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. In his book “Rihla”, he provides intense details about the social and cultural life of India in the 14th century. He even wrote about Indian cities which according to him were lively and densely populated. He particularly wrote about Delhi in detail. He also mentions that the postal system was very efficient then which was not only used to send information and remit credit across long distances but was also used to dispatch goods. Nicolo De Conti entered India in 1420-1421 AD. In his work he confirmed gold and spice trade amongst India, Sumatra and China. Domingo Paes was a Portuguese explorer who visited India between 1520-1522 AD. In his work “Chronica dos reis de Bisnaga” he provided in depth information about Vijayanagara empire. He reported some important features of that time like advanced irrigation technology, busy market of precious stones and the city’s size was comparable to Rome with plentiful vegetation and artificial lakes. Jean-Baptiste was a French gem merchant and traveller. He made many sea voyages to India and Persia. In his book, he had expansively discussed about diamond and the diamond mines of India.

“Communication is the name we give to the countless ways that humans have of keeping in touch- not just words and music, pictures and print, nods and becks, postures and plumages; to every move that catches someone’s eye and every sound that resonates upon another’s ear.” The works of people, the efforts of people because of whom we still in touch of our earlier times whether it is culture, traditions, language, religion, history is also communication and the main medium of this type of communication are the people, who makes a society so; this type of communication is “Society media”.

The present day active tribes like Sentinelese tribe of Andaman and Nicobar Islands give us a account of the lifestyle of early people. They are also acting as a medium between us and the early people. They can be said as society media.

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