

Impact of Television on Rural Society: A Sociological Study

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The word Television was first used by constantin Perskyi in a scientific paper he presented at the International Electricity Congress held at Paris on 25 August 1900. Perskyi described an apparatus based on the magnetic properties of selenium, an element that helped in the transmission of pictures through electromagnetic radiation. According to Shirley Biagi, the word first appeared in the U.S. in the June 1907 issue of scientific American. Before this word became widely accepted, inventors used “telephoto”, ‘telectroscope’, ‘wireless pictures”, visual wireless, visual radio, electric vision, electric telescope and other terms to describe the precursors of the television. The biggest invention was that of the iconoscope which could send not only visual images in dots through the atmosphere to distant places but also help the receiver capture signals and convert them back to visual images. Soon after World War IJ hundreds of television channels appeared and television made a significant mark on the cultural lives of Americans. With the growth of cable television, many ultra high frequency station began to rely on cable technology to carry their signals to homes. Cable television was the most important technical development in television in 1970's. Originally, cable TV was known as community Antenna Television. From 1972 onwards, cable TV was utilized by Time, Inc's Home Box Office for showing movies to subscribers who had to pay a fee every month for the service, Dozens of cable television networks offer a variety of programming through local channels to subscribers :- children's programmes, women's programmes and special programmes for ethnic minorities in U.S.

All India Radio (AIR) in collaboration with UNESCO setup a television centre in New Delhi on 15 September 1959 purely as an educational experiment. The Ford Foundation donated 250 television set to selected schools in Delhi area. In a few months, television was extended to another 250 schools. Gradually, some community sets were installed in the suburbs of Delhi. Telectubs were established for viewers to discuss programme contents, effectiveness etc. Programmes were telecast from a temporary studio in the AIR building, using a 500 watt transmitter with a range of 25 km. All the programmes were meant for children. Then some programmes came for the general public in the suburbs of Delhi. A few weeks later, there were programmes for agriculturalists in the suburban villages of Delhi. In 1972, TV stations were opened in Bombay and Madras, in 1973, a relay station started operation in Poona, a 100 miles from Bombay. On April 1, 1976, the television unit was separated from AIR and given the name 'Doordarshan' (DD) meaning door (far) and darshan meaning sight or vision. The activities of television were increased. Today, almost a thousand

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transmitters send programmes to different stations located in all the metropolitan cities, large industrial towns, state capitals and a few rural areas.

The four radio centres of New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai have the DD-1, DD-2, and DD-3 channels. There are eleven regional centres where DD-1 and DD-2 channels operate. There are also twenty one local channels, specially in the rural areas where low power transmitters (LPTs) are setup expand only with improvement in living conditions and higher standards of income though steady employment and health care. PAS-1 and PAS-4 are satellites whose transponders help in the telecasting of DD programmes in half the regions of the world.

One of the most extensive educational and social research projects, perhaps the largest national television experiment in the world, has been Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE). The Indian National Satellite (INSAT) was put into orbit following the favourable results of SITE. The effectiveness of television as a medium for educating the masses in rural areas was underscored by this experiment. It was with the help of NASA, UNDP, ITU and UNESCO that the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) succeeded in launching SITE on 1 August 1975 using the US-supplied Applications Technology Satellite, ATS-6. Thousands of messages on topics generally considered development-oriented were telecast to community television sets kept in 2,400 villages in 20 districts spread across six Indian states: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. The experiment ended on 31 July 1976. The programmes telecast dealt with high-yielding varieties of seeds, better farming methods and management, family planning, public health, social and educational improvement of women and children, better learning and teaching methods.

The one-year experiment led to the unprecedented expansion of television in India. SITE influenced the course of television in India; it led to the establishment of HPT's (high-power transmitters) in most urban areas and LPTs in some selected rural areas. Eminent scientists such as Vikram Sarabhai and others saw in television a great scope for reaching the rural population with educational and scientific messages. If messages could be transmitted through images, conventional alphabet-based literacy would not act as a stumbling block, they argued. All-out efforts were made to provide the technical infrastructure in most parts of India for the spread of television.

In spite of the best intentions, the medium has reached its ultimate, real goal, namely, the marketing of products mostly affordable to the rich sectors of the urban and rural population. To look at the programme content is a futile exercise, because the most significant content is advertising. And in that television has fared extremely well. Therefore, the social effects of television will depend on the philosophy of life, attitude to social objectives and views about what will interest the maximum number of viewers prevalent among programme producers and media users and, above all, the economic status of the audience. The major trends in television content in India will depend on the major content producers, who happen to be the leading media owners of the world, who also happen to be in the rich and technologically advanced countries. In the 1960s, countries were categorized into three 'worlds': the First World of rich, technologically - advanced capitalist nations of Europe and North America; the Second World of socialist countries of Europe, particularly the countries that were led by the Soviet Union; and the Third World of mostly poor, technologically less advanced former colonies of the First World in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Cable TV has influenced local media formats, especially in the news and film entertainment provided by television and in advertising. Television in India is oriented totally towards entertainment; it has become a mini version of the cine screen. Television was introduced in India and other countries of the East with great expectations that it would become a channel for reaching their millions with highly useful and essential messages of social change. The objectives of Doordarshan, for example, are a testimony to this social purpose.

When television was introduced in India in the late 1950s, the noble goals set by the decision-makers were as follows:

- To act a catalyst for social change.
- To promote national integration.
- To stimulate a scientific temper in the minds of the people.
- To disseminate the message of family planning as a means of population control and family welfare.
- To provide essential information and knowledge in order to stimulate greater agricultural production.
- To promote and help preserve environment and ecological balance.
- To highlight the need for social welfare measures including welfare of women, children and the less privileged.
- To promote interest in games and sports.
- To create values of appraisal of art and cultural heritage.

An analysis of the programmes on Doordarshan or any other channel operating in India will convince us that the above goals are not given due importance, particularly the goals of social change, creation of scientific temper and social welfare measures. Entertainment through serials, film-derived material, sports and games is given all the importance. Social change is not even of secondary importance to the media. Instead, the main objective of every channel appears to be the advertising of goods and a few services, persuading viewers to buy them. The very *raison d'être* of television all over the world seems to be the selling of goods through persuasive and attractive commercial messages and achieved through the repeated presentation of news and views, discussions, debates, and so on.

In the 1960s, communication scholars and media experts were quite sure that television and other media of mass communication would help national development. The media were considered the prime motivators of development. Stalwarts in communication and development studies such as Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm and Everett M. Rogers, who based their theories of development and media efficacy on the important work of Walter Rostow, namely, *The Stages of Economic Growth*., stressed that the economic and technological development achieved by the Western nations were the result of increased media use. If only the people of the 'developing countries' could follow the path of modernization initiated by the West, they would leapfrog centuries of inaction and underdevelopment and reach the stage of mass consumption in which the modernized West was placed in the 20th century. From decade to decade, old paradigms were packaged in new

bottles under new labels and presented by the developed world for the consumption of the elite in poor countries, who made vital decisions on communication and media planning. In the 1950s, it was 'growth through psychic mobility'; in the 1960s, it was 'education for development'; in the 1970s, it was 'satellite communication for development'; and in the 1980s and 1990s, it was 'computerized communication systems'. The process continues today, in the 21st century, under the banner of 'information technology' or IT, for streamlining administration and creating market-friendly economies through privatized micro and macro media. Today, liberalization, privatization and globalization are thriving everywhere, but the old problems of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and poor health persist.

Objectives:

The present study was taken with specific objectives to find out-

1. The nature and frequency of watching Television.
2. Types of programme on Television.
3. Sources of dissemination of agricultural knowledge.
4. Role of Television in the rural community.

An attempt has been made to find out the role of Television in the dissemination of agricultural knowledge in the rural society.

Sample selection;

For this purpose, three hundred farmers on the basis of caste, land holding and socioeconomic status of the two villages viz., Umarahan and Barain of the Chirgaon Block of the Varanasi District have been selected.

In contemporary Indian rural society, there has been a considerable explosion of knowledge. Not only are the villages being influenced within the all pervading mass-media but there has been significant inflow in various other ways of new agricultural ideas and techniques to the farmers at the grassroot level. Sources of such dissemination of knowledge are varied, though they may be broadly classified into two channels - formal and informal. Among the informal ones, experience of the old and big farmers continue to remain as the most potential motivating and imitating factors to other cultivators in the area. Among the formal channels, radio, documentary films, and newspaper are the most influential channels which simultaneously affect a vast number of farmers scattered over a large area through indirect and impersonal ways by audiovisual aids or printed literature. With the increasing concern shown by the state in the welfare of farmers, many developmental agencies, either governmental or semi-governmental, have come up. Such agencies through direct and personal means are approaching the farmers and equipping them with new developmental techniques. Thus in recent time the farmers in the villages are exposed to various sources of dissemination of agricultural knowledge. In order to understand the impact of these sources, the respondents in the present study have been asked to specify the agency which has been most useful to them in their acquiring new agricultural knowledge.

The data gathered in this regard indicate that 13 per cent respondents have been influenced mostly by the experiences of the old or big farmers in and around their villages. There are 15.33 per cent respondents who have been influenced by newspapers, magazines and other printed materials. There are 28.33 per cent respondents who have benefited most from the specialized programmes for farmers broadcast by the radio. There are 5 per cent respondents who get new information from documentaries and films means for the agriculturists. Most of the respondents' (38.33 per cent) in the sample have accepted that they have benefited most from the developmental agencies such as block development office, co-operatives, extension centres, etc.

The break-up of the data according to the caste status of the respondents reveals that developmental agency has been noted as the main source of new agricultural knowledge comparatively in higher proportion by the high caste respondents (48.35 per cent) than the backward (34.72 per cent) and Scheduled Caste (32.31 per cent) respondents. Similarly, newspapers etc. have been considered as the most influential agency of dissemination of new agricultural knowledge by the high caste respondents (21.98 per cent). It is significant to note that among the illiterate and low income group Scheduled Caste respondents, apart from developmental agency, experienced farmers (29.23 per cent) and radio programme (30.77 per cent) have been noted as the other two important sources of new agricultural knowledge. The association is significant at .001 level.

On the basis of landholding status of the respondents it is found that big landholders (43.13 per cent) in comparatively higher proportion have admitted developmental agency as the main source of agricultural knowledge. Newspapers has been noted as the major source again by the big landholders (29.41 per cent). Experienced farmers as the source of new agricultural knowledge have counted more with the marginal (15.20 per cent) than by the small or big farmers. Radio programme is treated as the most influential source by marginal farmers (33.92 per cent). The relationship is significant at .001 level.

On the basis of socio-economic status, it is found that developmental agency is considered as the most important source by the high socio-economic status respondents (43.48 per cent), and less by medium (33.33 per cent) and low (41.40 per cent) respondents. Radio programme has been considered as the most influential source by the low socio-economic status respondents (31.85 per cent), and less by those of the other socio-economic statuses. Experienced farmers have been noted as important source by the low socio-economic status respondents (14.01 per cent). The relationship is significant at .05 level.

On the basis of adoption level of the respondents it is found that developmental agency has been considered as the most influential source by the high adopters (41.80 per cent) and less by the low (21.95 per cent) and medium (40.74 per cent) adopters. Radio programme has been noted as the major source by the high adopters (30.23 per cent), newspapers again by the high adopters (18.60 per cent) and experienced farmers by the low adopters (36.57 per cent). The association is significant at .001 level.

Case No. 1:

MN is aged 41 years. He is educated upto intermediate. He is Brahmin by caste and he own 15 acres of farm land. He is considered to be a successful farmer. His major crops are wheat

and paddy. He also raises cash crops such as potato, brinjal and tomato, etc. With adequate irrigation facility he has been able to raise double crops in a year in some of his plots. When asked to explain the sources from where he obtains new agricultural knowledge, he answered that his main source is Block Dev. Office. Sometimes he gets information from newspapers and documentary films/T.V. also. He keeps regular contacts with VLW, ADOs and other important functionaries at the block office. Each fortnight he makes a visit to the block office and discusses his problems with the block officials. He says that many new things about HYV seeds, fertilizers and pesticides etc. have come to be known to him through the block office. He finds the ADO (Agriculture) and ADO (Plant Protection) of his block as most educative and informative people. He attributes his success in crop-production to the help and advice regularly given by the block officials to him.

Case No. 2:

GY is 33 years old. He is educated upto Class five and belongs to Nonia caste. He owns 2 acres of farmland. Mostly he raises cash crops such as brinjal, tomato, potato, etc. When he was approached to explain the sources of his new agricultural knowledge, he stated that he has been benefited mostly by the old and experienced farmers of the village. Whenever he faces a problem regarding cultivation, irrigation or seeds, etc., he consults the experienced farmers who tell them what to do or not to do in such circumstances. Such advice has proved beneficial to him.

Case No. 3:

TN is 40 years old. He is educated upto High School. He belongs to Kurmi caste. He owns 4 acres of land. He raises paddy and cash crops, such as potato, tomato, cabbage, etc. When he was asked to explain the sources of the agricultural knowledge, he stated that the main sources which have benefited him are the special programmes known as 'Krishi Jagat' broadcast by Television Channel and Akashvani station of Varanasi and Gorakhpur. He says that it is his habit to listen to these programmes regularly. Many new things about the cash crops pertaining to their disease and preventive cures, he has come to know through the radio programmes. Sometimes he discusses the problems with block officials but their responses are not very encouraging. He says that in radio programmes he has an opportunity to listen to those experienced farmers who have actually coped with particular problems and knowhow to solve them. In many other ways also the talks given by the experts in agriculture are very illuminating to him.

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