

Unit 2

Mass Media and Society

Introduction

You have learned in the previous unit that no social activity is possible without communication. Can you imagine a world without media? Certainly not! They play vital roles in our daily life. The basic mission of mass media is to create ties in human society. It may be at personal, national or international level. In the modern world, media have some more roles to play. They inform, entertain, educate, set social agenda, shape our political system, form public opinion, support public demands,

Key Concepts

- Types of Mass Media
- Characteristics of Mass Media
- Functions of Mass Media
- Media Literacy

reveal social realities, transmit culture, create new trends and prosper cultural values. To have a better understanding of the role of media in our society, we need to learn the types of mass media, their features and functions. Similarly, as responsible citizens, we shall be able to watch the functions of media by acquiring media

literacy.

From this unit you learn various types of mass media and the way they influence our society and reflect our culture. Also, you will learn how to use media in a sophisticated and responsible way by acquiring media literacy.

At first let's discuss the types of media and their characteristics.

Types of mass media

Mass media can be classified according to their physical form, the technology involved and the nature of the communication process.

The general classification on this basis is as follows:

- a. Traditional Media
- b. Print Media
- c. Electronic Media
- d. New Media

Traditional media

Traditional media are the oldest of all other media and are connected with the folk art forms of the society. Every country has its own unique folk art forms, as we have *Theyyam*, *Padyani*, *Oppana* and *Margam Kali* in Kerala to express our cultural messages. They connect people with their rich heritage and tell the stories of the past to the present generation. The folk art forms are closely related with the rituals of agrarian and marginalized groups. These traditional art forms like songs, dances and other performance in such societies are considered as traditional media since they inform, educate and entertain people by oral tradition. The origin of rural theatre and street drama is rooted in folk art forms.

India is rich with folk art forms and oral tradition of communication. Like other states in India, Kerala has a rich collection of folk art forms. *Theyyam*, *Thira*, *Chavittu Nadakam*, *Pulluvanpattu*, *Thumbithullal*, *Kalampattu*, *Balikkalam*, *Kakkarassi Nadakam*, *Kalamezhuthu*, *Nagappattu*, *Oppana*, *Kolkali*, *Dufmuttu*, *Arabanamuttu*, *Mudiyettu*, *Margamkali*, *Gadhiga*, *Parichamuttu*, *Koithupattu* are some of them.

Characteristics of traditional media

The following are the general features of traditional media. The nature of each medium may change depending on its type and cultural context.

1. The stage for performance of traditional art forms is natural, known and friendly.
2. The performers and the audience are known to each other.
3. The contents are simple and familiar.
4. Unlike other modern media, people never get tired of them.
5. The performances are spontaneous and most often made on the spot.
6. The performer can make changes in the content according to the level of the audience.
7. The traditional arts and folk arts combine several art forms like dance, music, songs and theatre to attract audiences.



Fig. 2.1 Various Folk media forms in Kerala

Let us do

Prepare a chart depicting the photographs of different folk art forms in India.

Check Your Progress

- Identify any five folk art forms performed in our state.
- What sense do the term traditional media convey?
- State the characteristics of traditional media.

Print media

Johannes Guttenberg's movable metal types facilitated mass production of printed materials. As a result, press and publications spread rapidly across Europe and later to other continents. Mass production of printed documents led to democratization of knowledge and thus education was made accessible to common people. It was exactly a revolution because till then knowledge was considered the property of the elite. For several centuries, print media served as the major means of communication reaching a wide audience. Major forms of print media are :

- a. Newspapers
- b. Magazines and periodicals
- c. Books

Newspapers

As a mass medium, newspapers influence people in many significant ways. Capability to be used for future reference make newspapers favourite medium of the people. Diversity of content is another feature of this medium. It can carry a rich mix of news, features, articles, columns, cartoons, graphics, editorial, etc. Readers can select what they want from the entire content.

Characteristics of newspapers

Primarily newspapers are print media even though digital age offers online newspapers and e-newspapers. That is why it has all the features that any print medium has. Major features of news papers are given below:

- **Predominance of news-oriented content:** There are three types of content in newspapers: news, views and advertisements. Of these news overshadows the others because newspapers are primarily meant for the dissemination of news.
- **Regular periodicity:** Newspapers may be published daily or weekly. Periodicity may vary but, regularity should be kept. Every newspaper keeps a particular regularity in publication.
- **Future reference facility:** Being a print medium, newspapers can be kept for future use. This archive ability makes newspapers one of the main sources of historical research.
- **Choice of the time of use:** Unlike television and radio, we can read newspapers at any time. Some read in the morning while others in the evening after work. This facility increases the popularity of newspapers.
- **The literates' medium:** Unlike television and radio, newspaper demands literacy from the part of the audience.
- **Low cost:** Compared to other media, newspaper is a cost effective medium. Anybody can afford a newspaper and use everywhere. Electronic media requires power supply and the new media need digital technology.
- **Textual medium:** Text is the soul of newspapers, though they carry images and graphics.

• **Multiple users:** Many readers can read a copy of the newspaper simultaneously or separately.

Peking Gazette of China, *London Gazette* of Britain, *Avisa Relation Oder Zeitung* of Germany, *Publick Occurrences* of America, *Daily Courant* of Britain etc. were some of the early newspapers published in

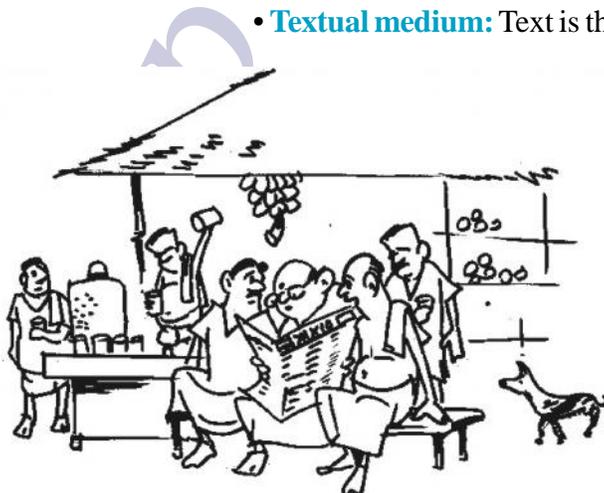


Fig. 2.2 Group reading of newspaper - A common scene at tea shops in Kerala

the world. The first newspaper published in India was *The Bengal Gazette* by James Augustus Hicky on 29 January 1780. In Kerala, *Rajyasamacharam* is the first newspaper published in Malayalam by Dr. Herman Gundert on June 1847 from Thalassery.

Let us do

Prepare a class room wall newspaper highlighting the important events in your school and premises.

Magazines

Magazine is originally a French word which means *store house*. In journalistic terms, magazine is a collection of materials like stories, poems, and other items. *The Spectator* published by Joseph Addison of England in 1711 is considered to be the first full-fledged magazine in English.

Usually they cover non-news items though there are news magazines too. Magazines contain a variety of topics like current affairs, business, women, children, finance, gadgets, photography, science and technology, education, career, health, luxury, life style, beauty, fashion, entertainment and travel. Magazines are considered the mass medium that spread culture and nationalism.

Industrial growth after the industrial revolution and the market boom led to an influx of advertisements to mass media. Magazines benefited from this opportunity. Frank Munsey, an American magazine owner showed advertising could pay most of production costs of a magazine. Its low price attracted millions. This is how magazine industry expanded as lucrative business in media sector. Sensational news, private life of celebrities, novels and short stories etc were the most favoured items in magazines in the early 20th century. In the later part of the



Fig. 2.3 Reading magazine in a relaxed mood

20th century, wide reach of television posed challenges to magazines as television began to broadcast visual adaptations of the sensuous and entertainment mix of magazine contents.

Characteristics of magazines

What makes magazines different from newspapers? Let's look at some distinctive features of magazines.

1. Magazines are published at regular intervals. According to their periodicity, magazines are categorized as weekly, biweekly or fortnightly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly.
2. Unlike loose sheets of newspapers, magazines are produced as bound volumes.
3. Most of the magazines are meant for light reading and mainly for entertainment, rather than serious reading for information gathering as in the case of books and newspapers.
4. Magazines contain diverse contents ranging from poems to comics and cartoons to photo features.
5. They most often target audiences with distinctive characteristics.
6. Magazines generally focus on special areas like culture, politics, current affairs, health, wealth, women's and children's life.
7. They are printed in high quality paper as they are to be used for a longer period. Newspapers are printed using cheap newsprint material as they are meant for one-day use.
8. Normally, magazines do not have different editions as in the case of newspapers. They have only one print cycle, except for some international news and financial magazines like *News Week*, *Time*, *Forbes* and *Fortune* which publish various regional editions for Asia and Africa.

9. They provide room for in-depth analysis and criticism as the publishers get more time for preparation.
10. Magazines are easier to preserve than newspapers.

Let us do

Prepare a list of as many Malayalam magazines as you can and categorize them according to their areas of focus.

Books

The *Papyrus* (from which the word paper is derived) rolls of the Chinese are considered the ancestors of modern books. The concept of books existed in China and in Babylonian way back in 3000 B.C. The Chinese used papyrus rolls made of bamboo strips while the Babylonians used clay tablets for writing. In Rome, animal skins were used to prepare books. Though the introduction of paper popularized books, the absence of easy printing method blocked their mass production. Earlier books were hand written and were called manuscripts. The printed books appeared in 868AD. The first book in India ' *The Spiritual Compendium of the Christian Life* ' was printed in 1561 and the first one in Malayalam '*Sampkshepa Vedartham*' in 1772.



Fig 2.4 Reading library books

Characteristics of books

What differentiate books from other types of media? Let's us discuss.

1. Books are portable and compact, and thus have an advantage over other media forms.
2. Unlike other print media, books most often deal with a single

subject. Thus, we can read books piece by piece for days or weeks with convenient intervals, without losing concentration.

3. While newspapers and magazines get old soon due to their time limitations, books remain afresh since they deal with subjects significant for a longer period.
4. Unlike magazines and newspapers, books are stored for longer period in public or private libraries.
5. Content in the books is in an organized manner so that readers can have access to the interested parts easily.
6. They have index which helps the reader some sort of navigation from one subject to the other.
7. Books are stored for future reference.
8. They are published after adequate verification and research. So, the content of the books is more authentic than that of newspapers and magazines.
9. The language level of the books is audience specific or subject specific while newspaper or magazine language is general in nature, intelligible to larger groups of people.

Let us do

Based on the discussions above, prepare an assignment on the common characteristics of print media.

Check Your Progress

- What are the common print media available to us?
- Mention any five features of print medium.
- Which print medium attracts you the most? State your answer with suitable reason.

Electronic media

The history of electronic media starts with the invention of cinematographe by Lumiere Brothers who conducted the premier show of cinema in 1895. Later radio was invented by Guglielmo Marconi. The first radio station was set up in Pittsburg, New York and Chicago in the 1920s. Following this, the European countries also started radio stations for broadcasting news and entertainment content. The colonial powers like Britain and France set up radio stations in Asian and African countries in the early years of the 20th century. Television broadcasting was initiated in the US on an experimental basis during 1920s. But, the dramatic impact of television as a mass medium began only in 1950s. Parallel to these, recording industry also boomed in the western countries. In short, the term electronic media mainly include

1. Film
2. Radio
3. Television

Film

The Lumiere brothers made their first film *La sortie des usines Lumiere* (Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory) using the camera patented by them in 1895 at the Eden Theatre in France. This minute-and-a-half-long movie depicted workers coming out of the factory during their lunch break. They named their invention as Cinematographe. It is from this word we get the term 'cinema' for moving pictures. At first it was the age of silent movies.

The first feature film made on the Indian soil is *Raja Harischandra*, directed by Dhundiraj Govind

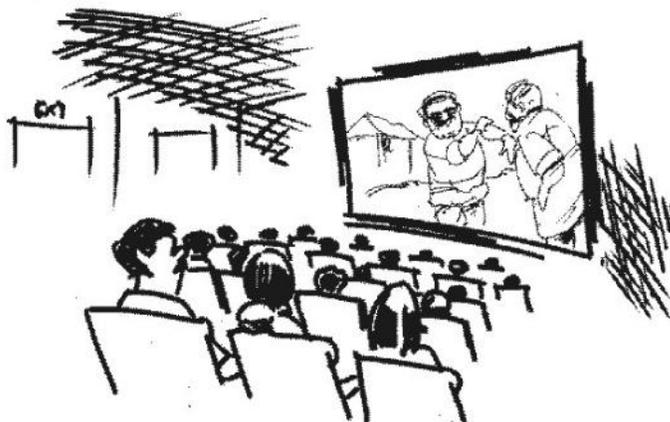


Fig. 2.5 Watching film in a cinema hall

Phalke in 1913. It was based on the story of King Harischandra. Vigatha Kumaran (The Lost Child) directed by J C Daniel, is the first film in Malayalam.

Radio

Guglielmo Marconi of Italy invented the mode of transmitting sound signals without using wires. By 1901, Marconi succeeded in creating a wireless communication link between Europe and North America. Later in 1906, Lee Forest and John Fleming invented vacuum tube, which made clear transmission of voice possible. This led to the first ever radio broadcast in 1906 in USA. Later, radio stations were started all over the world.

In India, radio broadcasting was started by amateur radio clubs. In June 1923, the Radio Club of Bombay made the first ever broadcast in the country. In 1927, the Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) was formed. In 1930, the government took over their transmitters and formed the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS). In 1935, Lionel Fielden of BBC assumed charge as the first Controller of Broadcasting in India. In 1936, the Delhi station started functioning. The same year the company was renamed as All India Radio (AIR). From 1956 onwards AIR got another name 'Akashvani'. The Sanskrit word 'Akashvani' meaning 'celestial announcement' was coined by M.V.Gopaldaswamy.

On March 12, 1943, Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore inaugurated the Travancore State Broadcasting Station in Thiruvananthapuram. It was the first radio station in Kerala. Later, the station was merged with All India Radio.

Television

The word television literally means seeing things from distant places. In April 1925 John Logie Baird of London had set up his television apparatus in a London department store and demonstrated the first crude functioning of television.

Television was started as a modest affair in India on September

15, 1959 when the AIR set up an experimental television service in Delhi. It was soon converted into a full-fledged telecasting station. Thus begins the age of telecasting in India. A major milestone in the history of Indian television was the coverage of the Ninth Asian Games in 1982 which turned television



Fig. 2.6 Watching television programme

transmission in India from black and white to colour. Now the television field in India is flooded with wide variety of channels - news, entertainment, religious, sports, cartoon, movie and music channels. Most of them telecast programmes round the clock.

Television was introduced in Kerala with the commissioning of a Low Power Transmitter (LPT) of Doordarshan on November 19, 1982 in Thiruvananthapuram for telecasting the Asian Games held in New Delhi. On January 1, 1985, regional television became a reality with the commissioning of a full-fledged Programme Production Centre in Thiruvananthapuram at Kudappanakunnu. In 1993, Asianet, the first private television channel in India began telecasting. Indiavision, the first Malayalam news channel started telecast in 2003.

Characteristics of electronic media

Given below are some of the general features of electronic media.

1. Radio is a medium for ears but television and films are for both ears and eyes.
2. One needs to have some technical knowledge to use electronic media.
3. The technology of these media is changing at a very fast pace due to frequent technological upgradations.

4. The programmes in radio and television are available throughout the day.
5. Radio, television and film are enjoyed by people with audio-visual disabilities and the illiterates.
6. Satellite transmission makes electronic media programmes instantly available over a wide geographical area.
7. Programmes in radio and television are ephemeral in nature.
8. Live coverage is possible on radio and television.

Check Your Progress

- Identify the mass media which come under the term electronic media.
- What are the characteristics that make television a unique medium?
- Name the first feature film produced in India.
- Who invented radio?

New media

The invention of the Internet and the World Wide Web opened up several new avenues for mass communication which include e-mail, websites, podcasts, e-books, blogging, social networking sites, Internet Protocol Television, Internet radio and the like. These kinds of online and digital means of producing, transmitting and receiving messages are called new media.

The World Wide Web emerged as a powerful mass medium in 1990s. Web is the system that allows global linking of information modules in user-determined sequences. Basically it is a collection of sites that use HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) to connect each other and that have access through browser, which is a programme for viewing web pages. Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome are examples of browsers. Tim Berners-Lee is the master mind behind the World Wide Web. His invention of hypertext materialized the

dream of browsing documents on millions of computers connected through the Internet. We use search engines, like Google, to find information on the Internet.

Social networking is a major facility available in new media format. Social networking is defined as a social structure connecting relationships between individuals or organizations. A social networking site is an online platform where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users around the world. Social



Fig. 2.7 A New Media user

networking sites allow you to meet other Internet users directly. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube are some such sites.

Let us do

Prepare a chart of social networking sites. The chart should contain name, logos, history and features of the sites.

Characteristics of new media

The features of new media change rapidly in tune with the new developments in communication technology. Let's discuss some fundamental characteristics of new media.

1. The new media facilitate instant interaction between senders and receivers. Thus, this medium gives us the latest developments of events without any delay.
2. If internet connectivity is available, one can access new media from any part of the globe.
3. The new media contents are written in a hyper textual language, using hyperlinks. Thus, the users are gifted with large resources of data. For example, one can link to all sister



Media Convergence is the process where several media channels or formats come together to exist and operate in synergy in a single

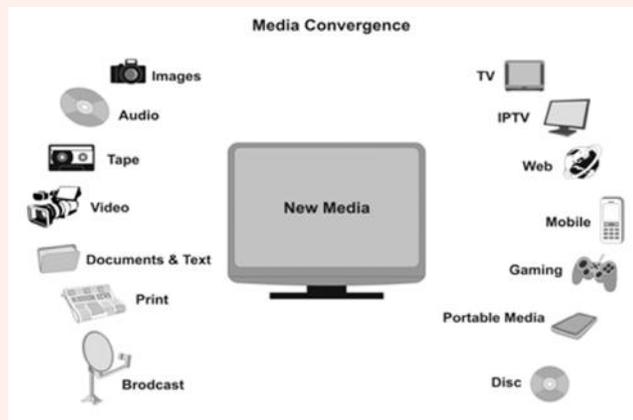


Fig. 2.8 Media Convergence

device. It is a merger of different mass media. Convergence of media is visible in every one's life. For example, now we use mobile phones to talk to friends, listen to music, watch movies, send mails, surf the web, read newspapers, take photographs or videos and to do more. Earlier we used separate devices like tape recorder, radio, newspapers, television, still cameras and video cameras for these activities.

publications of a newspaper from its home page. Multiple pagination facility enables websites to combine hundreds or thousands of web pages.

4. As the content is stored in digital format, new media are highly technological and upgraded frequently.

5. Above all, new media facilitate convergence of the various types of content like audio, video, text, image and data on a single device. This phenomenon is **media convergence.**

Check Your Progress

- Identify the popular social networking sites.
- State the characteristics that make new media the fifth estate of the present century.
- Expand HTML

We have learned the major types of media and their characteristics. Now let's examine their functions in our society.

Functions of mass media

In a society like ours, mass media have a responsible role to play in fostering democracy, plurality and communal harmony through the functions listed below.

- 1 Information and education.
- 2 Socialization
- 3 Entertainment
- 4 Political awareness
- 5 Cultural transmission
- 6 Catalyst to development

After having a discussion on these ideal functions of mass media in any society, you will be able to analyze how our mass media perform their functions in our own society.

Information and education functions

Mass media carry a lot of information which are essential for our day to day life. We get examination results, weather forecasts, current affairs, traffic regulations, alerts, precautions, government policies etc. from mass media. The core of media's information function is performed by the media content called news. Good media try to carry accurate, objective and complete information since biased or incomplete reports will keep the audience away from the media.

Mass media are mass educators too. Education is systematically organized information with predefined objectives. Schools and colleges are the primary source of formal education in our society. After finishing their formal education, members of the society depend on mass media for life-long education. They provide the society with updated educational content on a wide variety of



Education supplements

Recently, mass media in Kerala directly participated in our educational system by publishing educational supplements for school children. Education Plus of *The Hindu*, Padippura of *Malayala Manorama*, Kutty.com of *Mathrubhumi*, Velicham of *Madhyamam*, Aksharamuttom of *Deshabhimani* are examples. Moreover, we have a number of educational TV channels. VICTERS channel of IT @ School Project of Kerala Government, Vyas Channel of the Consortium of Educational Communication under the University Grants Commission and Gyandarshan of Doordarshan are some of such efforts. The Gyanvani is an educational radio channel of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

subjects at the lowest cost. News based contents like reports, features, photos, cartoons and editorials and non news contents like advertisements educate people about the newest trends in their surroundings. Mass media assist formal education system also, by publicizing information on educational programmes, publishing special educational supplements and inspiring society to acquire higher education. Educational supplements published by various

Malayalam newspapers, educational television and radio channels are examples for educational services of mass media.

Socialization

Mass media function as an agency for socialization. Socialization means empowering people to acquire norms and experiences of the group as a whole, to maintain cultural consensus and communal harmony. It is through mass media that we know the cultural and social norms of various groups in our society. On the basis of this information, individuals honour others and behave according to the common values and thus create an integrated society.

Entertainment

We all need entertainment to break the monotony of our hectic, stressful life and divert our attention from the troubles and tensions. All media have entertainment content. Newspapers publish cartoons, comics, puzzles and special weekend supplements. The lion's share of magazine content such as short stories, novels, satires and comics are also intended to entertain the audience. Movies

are another big stock for entertainment. Broadcast media such as television and radio primarily concentrate on entertainment function through their programmes based on sports, film, serials, music, dance, comedy, animation and fashion shows. Nowadays, entertainment has become a big industry comprising motion picture companies, music firms, theatre groups and game developers.

Political functions

If you analyze the mass media, be it television or newspapers, most of their content, especially news, is centered on politics in our society. We see our leaders criticize officials and political leaders and advocate for better living conditions during panel discussions on television. Similarly, journalists expose corruption, show up developments, and condemn or praise political activities considering their merits. Actually, these actions of the media make our democracy vibrant. Thus mass media assume a key role in setting the agenda for the entire political system and policy making by forming public opinion on various issues. This process is called **agenda setting** function. Mass media do this by highlighting some issues and avoiding the others. There are instances in which business tycoons and political leaders misuse this agenda setting ability of media to keep their vested interests.

Likewise, media keep themselves alert about misdoings and violations. We call the mass media as watchdog or guardian angel of democratic society. This function is as important as that of other estates of democracy - the legislature, the bureaucracy and the judiciary. Thus the media is regarded as the **Fourth Estate** of Democracy.

Cultural transmission

Mass media are the bridge between our past and present. They report day to day affairs which will become the history of tomorrow. The best records of modern history are newspapers of yester years. We get our cultural tradition from history and we follow the best of them. In keeping our culture flowing, media play a vital role. It focuses on the genuine aspects of our culture and points out the undesirable trends.

Do media have any role in introducing new life styles and values? The answer is certainly affirmative. We all imbibe new fashions from films and fashion magazines and television programmes. You might have watched various programmes that introduce fashions, gadgets, food items, vehicles and the like.

In short, media enrich our culture in two ways:

- a. transmitting culture and heritage from generation to generation and
- b. introducing and spreading cultural values across various segments of the society.

Development support communication

You might have seen reports in newspapers urging the authorities

to build new roads and bridges in your locality or campaigning for betterment of the living conditions of underprivileged classes. Mass media report problems faced by people in different walks of life and make the administrators aware of them. Media also make people aware of their rights, the details of government subsidies, development policies etc. They point out the merits and demerits of certain projects. In short, the media support development either being the advocates of government -sponsored development or critics of



What is development?

- Nobel Laureate economist Amartiya Sen's view on development:
"Development must be judged by its impact on people, not only by changes in their income, but more generally in terms of their choices, capabilities and freedoms; and we should be concerned about the distribution of these improvement, not just the simple average for a society."
- Dr. Mahbub ul Haq, economist defines that, " the human development is not merely an expansion of income and wealth but a process of enhancing human functioning and capabilities. The basic goal of development is to create conditions where people can live meaningful lives."
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines Sustainable development as: " Development which improves people's quality of life, within the carrying capacity of earth's life support systems."

development projects which needs to be amended. This development oriented function of media is termed as Development Communication. Development Communication has been recognized as a specialized area in communication studies and research.

Check Your Progress

- What is socialization?
- Explain the information and education functions of mass media?
- How do media carry out the function of cultural transmission?
- Describe the role of media in rendering the developmental support in nation building.

Let us do

Listen / Watch an educational programme in radio / television and attempt a review of it.

This is how media ought to work in a society. While they function in a perfect manner, socially desirable acts like cooperation, tolerance, sharing, communal harmony and patriotism will bloom in the society. But there are criticisms that mass media can provoke behaviours that violate the prevailing desirable social norms. For example, some communication media carry contents featuring pornography and violence. Research studies show that over exposure to media contents, especially visual media contents, featuring violence and criminality can provoke violent behaviour in viewers, particularly among youths and children. Media can reinforce sex-role and communal stereotypes that lead to sexism and communalism. Excessive advertising may manipulate people into buying things they don't really want.

Over exposure to media can have impact on our most intimate and valued relationships since it consumes more and more of our available free time. Excessive use of television may reduce community involvement in various day to day issues and too much

of social networking may displace face-to-face relationships. Communication media may affect physical health also. Over watching of television is associated with obesity in children. Cartoons with rapidly changing images and extreme colors may cause damages to brain and eyes.

How can we overcome these ill effects of media? Would we be able to use them for the welfare and development of the society? If children use media intelligently will it help to mould their character? We all must strive to find answers to these questions.

A media literate person uses mass media with clear objectives and in responsible ways. Let's know what media literacy is all about.

Media literacy

Media literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized and how to use them wisely. The goal of media literacy is to develop a literate person, who is able to read, analyze and evaluate communications in a variety of media.

Media Literacy involves:

- learning to use media wisely and effectively
- engaging in critical thinking while evaluating media messages
- evaluating the credibility of information from various sources
- recognizing media's influences on beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours and the democratic process



W. James Potter is a world famous media analyst who had worked as the Professor of Media Studies in the University of California, Indiana University and Florida State University. He developed Media Literacy as an integrated approach to media studies

- achieving greater understanding and appreciating multiple perspectives
- learning to express one's ideas using different forms of media.

Reputed media analyst, James Potter says that in this media rich world we live in two worlds: the real world and the media world. The media world bombards us with messages, often with sublimity, that invade our real world space. Media messages are multi-layered and not always what they seem to be. A media literate is able to unwrap these layers and choose what he/she wants to believe, reclaiming the ability to perceive the real world.

Let us do

Take a keen watch on messages in an advertisement. Evaluate its aim, target audience, effect, appeal and gender perspective.

Now you have got a clear picture of the different mass media and their functions, as well as the ways by which you should use them. You need not mug up all that media present before you. A critical reading of the media makes you more responsible. Responsible media foster democracy and ensure development.

Let us sum up

In this chapter you have learnt that mass media is an inevitable part of our society. Mass media is all around us in the form of newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, film and recently new media. Their characteristics, functions and convergence is also dealt in detail. They give us a lot of information, educate the masses, entertain our society through various means and also set some social agenda. Mass media are an essential entity for a democratic political system. They are also an effective tool for creating public opinion and support public demands. Mass media reveal the social realities before its audience. They help in transmitting culture from one generation to another. We also discussed the need for every citizen to be media literate to use media in a sophisticated and responsible manner.

Significant Learning Outcomes

This chapter enables the learner to

- identify the various types of mass media
- analyse the characteristics of various mass media
- understand the ideal functions of mass media

- examine the common criticisms against the mass media
- understand the concept of media literacy

Let us assess

1. Laymen use the term 'mass' in different contexts like mass audience, mass petition, mass movement and so on. As a journalism student state your views on the term 'mass'.
2. 'Society and mass media are interlocked'. Do you agree with this statement? Explain with examples.
3. While returning home you may notice people in different walks of life use media for various purposes. Try to depict five different situations of such use of the media.
4. Do you agree with the opinion that mass media is essential for your daily living? Justify your answer.
5. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of print medium over electronic medium.
6. Would you prefer to watch a cricket match on TV or listen to it on radio? State reasons.
7. A lot of changes in our society are the result of effective media intervention. Can you cite any two changes from recent incidents?
8. Suppose the media club of your school has decided to conduct a seminar on 'Media Literacy'. As the secretary of the club prepare a speech about media literacy.
9. 'All the messages in the media are constructed'. How far you agree with this statement? Substantiate your views with suitable examples.
10. The press is considered the 'fourth estate' whereas the social networking sites, advertisements and PR works as the 'fifth estate'. Compare them in the light of the present day media environment.

Extended activities

- Conduct a seminar on the challenges faced by the various folk media forms in the present day Kerala society.
- Make a list of the educational pull outs of Malayalam newspapers and prepare a write up about their content highlighting their nature, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses.
- If possible, conduct an interview with a folk artist. ■