

# Media as a discipline

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Is there any individual who could say that the Media of different kinds after their such an intricate integration have no direct or otherwise role in his/her life? If anyone replies in the affirmative he would either be beast (sorry to say) or an angle. Therefore, perhaps no one dare say it.

The Media of which radio, television, newspaper, magazine, books and now of course the computer are the major gadgets, have all pervasive effects on every person and in a wider sense on the societies as a whole. Of them Radio and television are the electronic mediums, whereas, the other are print versions. Insofar, as the effects of the media on individual and societies are concerned it has now been a debatable questions for quite some time.

In different times various theories and models were evolved to gauge the effects of media. However, no concrete answer could be withdrawn. So, some decades back the theory of "Media Dependency" was proposed by Roekeach. Instead of arguing a definite Media 'influence' the theory explains that the Media effects vary from society to society and individual to individual. Making a premise that greater the scale of instability in a society more would be its dependency on the Media. Less would be the effects if there are a number of Media sources, the theory further says. However, the most interesting thing in the "dependency theory" is that it contends that the Media do not function independently but infact the society has also had a reverse influence on them. In other words as media reflect the society like a mirror so no one can easily measure the significance of media in ones life and this is ever-increasing. This amply shows that media with their multi-faceted role in public life have become a vast discipline to be taught in education institutions.

The role of media in making the world a 'global village' is a pivotal one. The shrinking world due to technological advancements in media has given rise to many benefits but corresponding problems also. The people around the world and in particular countries like Pakistan are finding it hard to adjust to the new media-induced social trends. Those

War II period is replete with instances when the Western powers have used the media like their house maids for their own ends. Through media they have been opposing or supporting the parties involved in international disputes or co-operation keeping in view their own vested interest. In the period of de colonisation media have a monumental share in their global influencing of the world.

Here one would has to boggle ones mind over the theory presented by Altshul in which he says that "media are the agents of those who social, political and economic power and they cannot go against the wishes of their pay masters". Today the aptness of the Altshull's theory can be felt with more severity. The media business has become a multi-billion dollar affair. It is not only expensive but also tiresome and complex to undertake it. So, only those who can dare take the initiative of establishing a media organisation who have some 'other' motives in mind. That is also the reason that though the channels and mediums are multiplying with a swift pace, yet few new people are entering the field. This is also conspicuous from the surfacing of media conglomerates, like group of newspapers, TV channels, publishing houses etc. Rupert Murdoch, Ted Turner and Berltsman are the well-known international media barons owing media chains are conglomerates. Whereas, in Pakistan Jang Group, which owns a number of newspapers and magazines besides a publishing house is endeavouring hard to start a TV channel, but so far has failed to get a go ahead signal from the government. The recent row between the two was primarily due to that reason. Because, the Jang group wants to

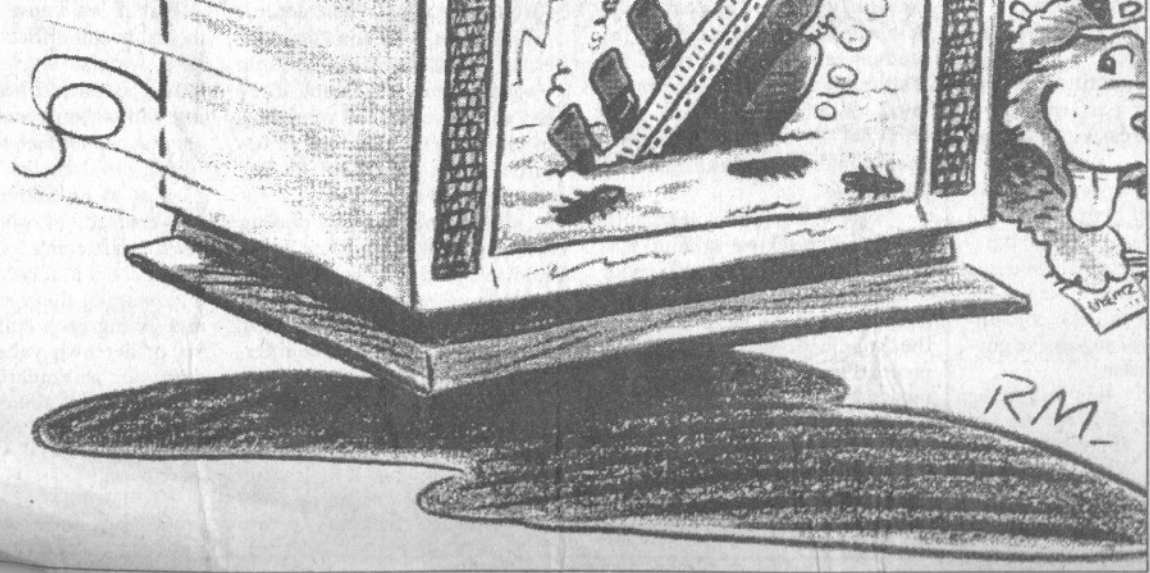


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As people of the world are becoming more interactive due to media transcending of national borders and they now have an increasingly better understanding of the people of other regions. However, the problem is that media have their channel of interaction, therefore, it assumes great power in triggering international co-operation or conflict. As the western countries have a hegemony over the world media, they have a tremendous power over their use. And the post W

which owns a number of newspapers and magazines besides a publishing house is endeavouring hard to start a TV channel, but so far has failed to get a go ahead signal from the government. The recent row between the two was primarily due to that reason. Because, the Jang group wants to expand its sphere of 'influence' while the government is not ready to have a private TV channel that may undermine its traditional control over the electronic media. The ownership of the media also give birth to another labyrinthine question that who sets the media agenda? Theoretically speaking those events and issues should form the media agenda that have the greatest interest for the public and benefit them. Albeit it would



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be an unending debate to decide that which issue or event has any human interest and in what proportion. As media can be described as the presenter of contemporary history, therefore, they should not create a history of their own by providing the people such material to think over such issues that are of minuscule significance to them but presented in such a way that people start thinking them as essential to consider. It has been widely observed that media have been exceedingly involve in such absurd practices. In Pakistan the situation is even worst. The media have work extensively on the signals of their paymasters with little regard for the public interest. Their approach has been market-oriented instead of consumer-oriented. The upshot of which is that they could not help in bringing about a positive social change. The absence of public service material in their contents is an apparent example.

The role of media in establishing and strengthening democratic institutions and hence a popular culture is substantial. If today the western country's have well entrenched democracies it could only be possible due to their centuries old strong and developed media system. Unfortunately, in our country we have not had such a media system due to which democracy could not take a firm root because the ruling classes rather oligarchies, did not want to have one for obvious reason. The extent of freedom which media enjoy in a country is reflective of its popular nature, however, in case of Pakistan the scenario has been dismal.

Today we talk of cultural invasion of aliens through media-induced proximity but have done little to counter it. The fact of the matter is that we cannot unless we know the nature and working of media in the

mass media messages they receive should be properly qualified in understanding the various aspects of media. On the country the people should also gradually strive to know by themselves the meaning and interpretation of mass media messages and also that who is the right person to consult. Generally, it has been seen that in our peculiar circumstances people resort to such persons which they perceive as there opinion leaders who have a bit more exposure to the media. But this leaves a lot to cherish because they cannot give the appropriate or ad rem interpretation of mass media messages. And now when the man in the street have access to a number of media sources, especially the mushroom growth of TV channels on satellite have made the task of opinion leader more adroit and dextrous with the common man who is being engulfed by media in a state of consternation. The traditional opinion leader can no longer cater to the demand of rapid fire changing media trends.

Media has always had a responsibility towards the society but in different times and at separate regions they have live up to the expectation of the societies with varying degrees. If they did not fulfil their responsibility it was also very much due to the reason that the society did not demand from them to come and play it due to the ignorance of the people in understanding the media, their role and working. With the ever expanding populations the media to work responsibility is felt with such emphasis that was never felt before.

In the context of above discussion it transpires that media have occupied a some what central role in the modern day living and they have massive impact on our lives. So it has become imminent that it should be introduced as a discipline with well framed curricula for university and college level. Though presently universities offer Mass Communication/Journalism degrees both at graduate and post graduate level but the syllabus is restricted to print media or Journalism. Particularly in NWFP where university of Peshawar and Gomal University D.I. Khan have Journalism and Mass communication departments but the courses they

Pakistan the scenario has been dismal.

Today we talk of cultural invasion of aliens through media-induced proximity but have done little to counter it. The fact of the matter is that we cannot unless we know the nature and working of media in the modern world and its effects. The art of harnessing the media is technical and cannot be achieved through lip service. It needs the framing of a viable and workable strategy so that the media can be put to the best of use.

It is also a great riddle that whether the media are fulfilling its persuasive and informational purposes or not and how can they be made to function so? To know what we receive is mere propaganda directed to satisfy self-centred ends. For this the opinion leaders from which the masses get approval of

Though presently universities offer Mass Communication/Journalism degrees both at graduate and post graduate level but the syllabus is restricted to print media or Journalism. Particularly in NWFP where university of Peshawar and Gomal University D.I. Khan have Journalism and Mass communication departments but the courses they offer are quite outdated with almost no research facilities available and there are also no programmes for M. Phil and Ph. D. in the field. There is an exigency to expand the existing departments with fully equipped media research centres besides upgrading the curricula all encompassing new media trends. The introduction of media studies in the colleges is also equally imperative. It should not also be incepted as a professional subject but a disciple for better understanding of the media world.

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