UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to introduce to you the fundamentals of communications and the way they operate. The study of the various aspects of communications will help us to understand the dynamics of the communication process and the importance of communications in our social and professional life. After having studied this unit you should be able to:

- define communication and explain its meaning;
- explain its importance;
- diagram the communication process;
- identify and discuss the essential elements of communication and the role each of these elements plays in communication process;
- compare and contrast different types of communications;
- identify different mass media and trace their reach and access; and
- discuss the impact of mass communication.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is universal to all human beings and is central to our lives. In fact, it regulates and shapes all human behaviour. Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of the concepts of communication. What is communication? Why is it important to us? How does it work? What are the elements in the communication process and how do they relate and set the communication process in motion? And what are the different types of communication that we are engaged in? These are some of the questions that are dealt with here. Keeping these questions in mind while we study this unit will help us not only in understanding the meaning and process of communication but also in identifying tools for effective communication.
1.2 COMMUNICATION

We shall start now with the definitions and meanings of communication. In this sub-section we will also discuss the functions, process and elements of communication.

Activity 1

Before you start reading this unit, please quieten yourself, calm yourself. Now list down all the things that you have done in the last 24 hours. For example, you might have written a letter to your friend, or you might have read the newspaper. May be you helped a fellow passenger in a crowded bus or you might have quarrelled with a person over the possession of a seat in the compartment of a train.

While doing such things you must have conveyed something to a person or some persons. These are all acts of communication. You have used different ways to give or get information. Think of all these ways and also the information you sought to give and get. Use the space below for your activity.

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1.2.1 Meaning and Definition

Dreaming, talking with someone, arguing in a discussion, speaking in public, reading a newspaper, watching a TV programme etc. are all different kinds of communication that we are engaged in every day. It means that we are constantly exchanging our thoughts, ideas, and motions with someone or other either to satisfy our physical, emotional or other needs or to get work done. It is obvious that communication is an integral part of one’s life. In fact, society cannot survive in the absence of communication.

There are numerous definitions of communication, and there is yet no agreement on any single definition. Some of the more functional definitions of communication describe it as “the transfer or conveying of meaning” (Oxford Dictionary), “transmission of stimuli” (Colin Cherry), “one mind affecting another” (Claude Shannon); “one system influences another” (Charles E. Osgood), “the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop”, or “sharing of experience on the basis of commonness” (Wilbur Schramm).

Communication is more than mere transferring or transmission of ideas or thoughts. It is not a static act as some of the earlier definitions suggest but it is a dynamic process of action and interaction towards a desired goal, as suggested by later definitions. Communication is, therefore, a process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols.

What do we find in this definition? It says that two or more persons are involved in the act, the one who gives information (sender) and the one who receives it (receiver). What is being shared? — An idea or an information or an attitude (message). And through what means? The information is shared or exchanged through certain signs and symbols; it could be language, oral or written. While
sharing and exchanging ideas or information with others, we are actually interacting with people and establishing a kind of relationship that helps us to achieve the task set before us.

1.2.2 Functions of Communication

You have just been acquainted with some definitions of communication. Communication needs a sender, a receiver, and a channel, be it language, paint, song, or anything. Just think what will happen if you are asked not to communicate with anyone for a period of one month: no talking or writing, no singing or shouting, no painting or anything else which may enable you to give expression to your ideas, attitudes, and emotions. You may discover that life is meaningless. You may feel that your survival is threatened.

Communication is vital for human existence, and for the progress of humanity. No person, group or society can exist without interaction with others. Think for a moment what would happen to us if we did not talk with anyone at home; didn’t listen to lectures at school or college, didn’t speak to friends and co-workers, or didn’t play games or watch TV or films? And what would life be like in the absence of news, views, facts, figures or information? Obviously, we would be miserable and would miss out on many opportunities and challenges offering us security and success in our personal and professional life. Being at the heart of all social action and interaction, communication functions as a relating tool that creates understanding, facilitates work, and strengthens collective living among people.

Essentially, the primary function of communication is to inform, instruct/educate, entertain and influence/persuade people to make them function smoothly and effectively. Besides, communication has a secondary function to perform as well; through debates and discussion, cultural promotion and integration, it fosters consensus, creativity, and understanding among people, groups, and societies so that they live in peace and harmony. Each of these functions has been discussed below:

1) Information: Suppose you were not informed about Ayodhya incident, bomb blasts in Bombay and Calcutta, and preventive measures which could be adopted to avoid AIDS disease. The quality of your life would be poorer without these bits of information. In the Western countries, information is now regarded as power. The more informed you are, the more powerful you become. Those who have access to information can take advantage of it in their own interest. Communication provides us enormous information about the environment in which we live. Information such as news of war, danger, crisis, famine etc. is important for that helps us in taking appropriate steps to safeguard our interests.
2) **Instruction**: One of the major functions of communication is to instruct, educate, and socialize the members of the society. All these functions start early in life, at home or in school, and continue till one completes the full cycle of life. Communication provides a fund of knowledge, expertise, and skills that enable people to operate as effective members of society. It also creates awareness, gives direction and opportunity to people so that they actively participate in public life.

3) **Entertainment**: Human beings must be entertained to break the monotony of routine and divert their attention from the troubles and tensions of daily life. The diversion should not be taken as a negative element. Such diversion has a positive role in our life; it revitalises our personality and even educates us. I am sure you must have watched some Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy movies. They entertain and at the same time comment on life. We cannot but learn a lot about life from these comedies. Communication provides boundless entertainment to people through pictures, films, music, drama, dance, art, literature, comedy, sports, games etc.

4) **Persuasion**: One of the most important functions of communication is to persuade the other party (Aristotle). Why is it so? Because persuasion helps in reaching decision or consensus on public policy so that it is possible to control and govern. But it is possible that one may resort to persuasion with a bad motive. The receiver must be careful about the source of such persuasion.

5) **Debate and Discussion**: It is through debate and discussion in media that the public can clarify different viewpoints on issues of public interest and arrive at a general agreement on matters that concern all. It is important for them to find out the reasons for such debates and discussions. Are the contending sides represented equally? Is any of the contending parties under pressure to toe a certain line? Such critical appraisal of debates and discussions would benefit the users.
6) **Cultural Promotion**: Communication provides opportunity for culture to be preserved and promoted. It stimulates individuals to pursue and fulfill their creative urges. But, then, one must be critical and ask questions: whose culture is being promoted, anyway? Ultimately, what motives do the senders of such cultural programmes have?

7) **Integration**: Communication is a great integrating tool. Through a fund of knowledge or information, individuals, groups or cultures come to know one another, understand and appreciate other’s ways of life and thereby develop tolerance towards one another. It can also be the greatest disintegrating tool. Whose culture do we watch in the telecasts of Doordarshan everyday? Are these programmes helping us to understand our cultural ethos better? One must constantly ponder over this.

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**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note**:  
1. Use the space below for your answers.  
2. Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) You have just learnt the different functions of communication. These are information, education, entertainment, persuasion, debate and discussion, cultural promotion and integration. You must be viewing Doordarshan programmes. Please make an assessment of the following Doordarshan programmes as per their functions.

- News, Surabhi, The World This Week, Parakh, and the telecast of Hindi films on Saturdays.

**Activity 2**

1) Try to find out how much time you devote each day on communicating (a) with yourself, (b) with others at home, (c) at college with classmates and teachers, at work place with co-workers, and (d) at pleasure haunts. Also, find out for how much time each day you are not communicating at all. Think about the purpose behind each communication and analyse the outcome of it in terms of success and failure.
1.3.3 Process and Elements of Communication

Communication is a dynamic process involving a series of actions and reactions with a view to achieving a goal. How does it work? Think that you are in conversation with your friend. You, as a sender or communicator, formulate (encode) an idea or message as best as you can, and pass on the message to your friend, who to the best of his ability receives or acts on the message (decodes). He responds by formulating his own message and communicates to you (feedback). If you think your message is understood or well received by your friend, then you go ahead with the next idea that you have in mind and the conversation goes on and on. Communication is, therefore, a two way process, that is, the ability to receive is as important as the ability to send. For successful communication, feedback is crucial because it tells how your messages are being interpreted. It can make or break the communication process. A complete act of communication is shown in Diagram 1.

![Diagram 1.1: A Complete Act of Communication](image)

Here the communicator is the encoder, the message is symbol (verbal or non-verbal), the channel is one of the transmission medium, the receiver is the decoder, feedback is the response to the message, and noise is any interruption that breaks down the communication.

These, in fact, are the essential elements or ingredients which facilitate the communication process. Let us examine what role each element plays in the entire communication process and how all of them are important in making communication effective.

Communicator (sender or encoder) is the one who initiates the communication process. He may be an editor, a reporter, a film maker, a teacher, a writer, a speaker, a leader or anybody who takes the initiative to start a dialogue. Before one speaks or writes, the message is conceptualised first and then encoded. An effective communication depends on the communication skill, knowledge level, and attitude of the communicator and how he desires to affect his receiver (David K. Berlo). An ability to think, to organise thoughts quickly, and express himself effectively are some of the attributes of a good communicator.

The criteria of communication skill, knowledge level, and attitude mentioned in the preceding para need a little elaboration and explanation. What is meant by 'communication skill'? Somebody who uses appropriate words, sentences, tone, etc. may be called a good communicator. He does not fumble, does not look for words and all that he says is accompanied by appropriate gestures and delivered at an acceptable pace. (In this light, try to find out whether or not you are a good communicator). Another element which is mentioned here is knowledge level. We must be able to find out the knowledge level of persons on a particular topic before we start the dialogue. Suppose Mr. A would like to talk about the political systems of Italy to Mr. B. And Mr. B does not know anything about Italy's political system. How would they communicate? And what would happen to the process of communication? Then, we mentioned the word 'attitude'. A person must never look down upon the people with whom he communicates. He must never think that the receivers are inferior to him. The attitude of a person should be mature and the minimum respect due to the other person must be extended to him.
Encoding is the formulation of messages in the communicator's mind, that is, the communicator not only translates his purpose (ideas, thoughts or information) into a message but also decides on the medium to communicate his planned message. He must choose the media (speaking, writing, signaling or gesturing) that the receiver can comprehend well. For instance, an illiterate receiver will fail to understand a written message, but can understand it well if told orally.

A message is what a communicator actually produces for transmission using spoken or written words, photographs, paintings, films, posters, etc. A great deal of skill and effort is required to formulate a message, the meaning of which should be understandable to the receiver. Actually the purpose of communication is to influence the receiver and get favourable responses so that appropriate decisions can be taken. The success of communication, therefore, depends on what we say and how we say it. A message can enhance or distort effective communication. For instance, in an interview your intention is to impress interviewer; but if you give answers whose meaning is not clear, the interviewer may perceive that you are incompetent for the job.

A channel is the vehicle through which a message is carried from the communicator to the receiver. The channels of communication are many—written, spoken, verbal, non-verbal, mass media like TV, radio, newspapers, books etc. Choosing the appropriate channel, one most suitable for the message as well as the receiver, is a complicated task. Success and failure of communication depends on the selection of the right channel. For example, if you have prepared a campaign on 'National Integration', what media would you choose to reach the intended audience? And even after selecting the media you have to decide if it is feasible costwise; taking into account the number of people and the kind of people who will be exposed to your message, and certain other factors. Actually your intention or desire would be to reach out to the maximum number of people but for efficient communication your attempt should be to minimise time and cost in the total information exchange effort.

The receiver, at the other end of the communication, is the recipient of the message and must possess the same orientation as the communicator. If the receiver does not have the ability to listen, to read, to think, he will not be able to receive and decode the messages in the manner the communicator wants him to. For effective communication, the receiver is the most important link in the communication process.

Decoding is the interpretation of the message by the receiver. Actually, the receiver looks for the meaning in the message which is common to both the receiver and the communicator.

Feedback is the response or acknowledgement of receiver to the communicator's message. The exchange is possible only if the receiver responds. Even through fluttering eyelids, raising an eyebrow, making a face, organising a point and asking for explanation, the message is shaped and reshaped by the communicator and the receiver until the meaning becomes clear. In this way both participants in communication interact and constantly exchange roles. In face-to-face communication the receiver responds naturally, directly and immediately. This provides the communicator an opportunity to improve and make his communication effective. Feedback, thus, provides an opportunity to evaluate what is right or wrong about a particular communication. It helps to regulate the conversation among two or more individuals and also stimulates and reinforces an idea that is desired to be communicated.

Noise is an interruption that can creep in at any point of the communication process and make it ineffective. Environment is one major cause that interferes with message reception: like noises from the roadside, constant chattering of individuals outside the communication act, blaring loudspeaker, faulty transmission etc. Noise can occur in other forms also; poor handwriting, heavy accent or soft speech, communication in a poorly lit room etc. In fact, these are barriers to effective communication. For smooth and effective communication, it is necessary to eliminate or reduce noise as far as possible.
Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

Suppose you have been asked to talk to the young people of a village about the benefits of planting trees. As a person with fairly good exposure in communication, how would you present your talk? What are the communication materials which you think could be of great help?

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1.3 KINDS OF COMMUNICATION

Human beings are engaged in a variety of communication acts. These are (i) Intrapersonal Communication; (ii) Interpersonal Communication (iii) Group Communication; and (iv) Mass Communication. Although each type appears to have distinctive features, they are all much alike in the sense that one enters into a meaningful relationship with one or more persons by means of signs and symbols. The following discussion on types of communication will provide us with the understanding of different communication situations in which people interact with each other or disseminate information.

1.3.1 Intrapersonal Communication

It refers to communication that transpires inside a person; and this happens all the time. It is like talking to oneself, listening to oneself and relating one to oneself. Intrapersonal or auto-communication, therefore, is important in contemplating, conceptualizing and formulating our thoughts or ideas before we actually indulge in overt communication. Just think about your daily activities and involvement with others in the form of a dialogue, etc. Every time you do something or speak you rehearse it first within yourself. Isn’t it?

1.3.2 Interpersonal Communication

This is the universal form of communication that takes place between two individuals. Since it is person-to-person contact, it includes everyday exchanges that may be formal or informal and can take place anywhere by means of words, sounds, facial expression, gestures and postures.

In interpersonal communication, there is face-to-face interaction between two persons, that is, both are sending and receiving messages. This is an ideal and
effective communication situation because you can get immediate feedback. You can clarify and emphasize many points through your expressions, gestures and voice. In interpersonal communication, therefore, it is possible to influence the other person and persuade him or her to accept your point of view. Since there is proximity between sender and receiver, interpersonal communication has emotional appeal too; it can motivate, encourage, and coordinate work more effectively than any other form of communication. Also, in a crisis, through interpersonal channel, flow of information is tremendous e.g. news of violence, famine or disaster.

1.3.3 Group Communication

Group communication is an extension of interpersonal communication where more than two individuals are involved in exchange of ideas, skills, and interests. Groups provide an opportunity for people to come together to discuss and exchange views of common interest. There could be many different groups for as many different reasons. For instance, casually formed groups with friends over a drink, coffee break, games, dances or religious gatherings have a different purpose than that of groups attending a meeting or seminar to help fight AIDS or interacting with committee members to draft a proposal.

Communication in a group, small or big, serves many goals including collective decision making, self-expression, increasing one’s effect, elevating one’s status, and relaxation.

Group communication is considered effective as it provides an opportunity for direct interaction among the members of the group, it helps in bringing about changes in attitude and beliefs. Group communication has limitations too, as group interaction is time consuming and often inefficient, especially in an emergency. Besides, imbalances in status, skills and goals, may distort the process and the outcome sharply.

1.3.4 Mass Communication

Outside the realm of interpersonal communication exists another form of communication which involves communication with mass audiences and hence the name mass communication; and the channels through which this kind of communication takes place are referred to as mass media. Both mass communication and mass media are generally considered synonymous for the sake of convenience. Mass communication is unique and different from interpersonal communication as is evident from the following definition. Any mechanical device that multiplies messages and takes it to a large number of people simultaneously is called mass communication. The media through which messages are being transmitted include radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, films, records, tape recorders, video cassette recorders, etc., and require large organisations and electronic devices to put across the messages.

Looking at the definition, it is clear that mass communication is a special kind of communication in which the nature of the audience and the feedback is different from that of interpersonal communication. An examination of these components will help in understanding the nature of mass communication itself.
Introduction to Communications

Audience: Whosoever is the recipient of mass media content constitutes its audience. For instance, individuals reading newspapers, watching a film in a theater, listening to radio or watching television, are situations where audience is large, heterogeneous, anonymous in character and physically separated from the communicator both in terms of space and time. A large audience means that the receivers are masses of people not assembled at a single place. It may come in different sizes depending upon the media through which the message is sent. For TV network programmes, for example, there could be millions of viewers, but only a few thousand readers for a book or a journal. By anonymous, we mean that the receivers of the messages tend to be strangers to one another and to the source of those messages. So with respect to the communicator, the message is addressed "to whom it may concern". Also the audience tends to be heterogeneous rather than homogeneous in the sense that messages are sent to people in all walks of life each person with unique characteristics.

Feedback: As compared to interpersonal communication, feedback in mass media is slow and weak. It is not instantaneous or direct as in face to face exchange and is invariably delayed. Feedback in mass media is rather a cumulative response which the source gets after a considerable gap in time. It is often expressed in quantitative terms: like circulation figures of newspapers and magazines, the popularity of a movie at box office, success of a book on the basis of its sales, or the findings of public opinion polls and on the basis of other feedback devices which are used to determine what is acceptable or unacceptable to different audiences. In all such cases, considerable time and money are required to process the feedback received from the audience. Therefore, delayed and expensive feedback is ingrained in mass media.

1.4 MASS MEDIA

The mass media, the vehicles of mass communication, are many. The prominent ones which have become household names are newspapers, magazines, books, radio, film, television and, more recently, satellite TV and cable TV. Mass Media is broadly divided into print media and electronic media. While the print media are the oldest, having a history of about five hundred years, the electronic media are products of the 20th century technological revolution. All media are expensive and need huge organisations to collect, process, formulate and disseminate information, views, entertainment and advertising to enormous, scattered, heterogeneous audiences simultaneously.

The mass media have assumed a significant place in our life. Individually or collectively they serve the needs of various audiences who have specific preferences. Some audiences want entertainment, sports news, films, plays, serials, dance, music, etc. Others may have greater interest in news and views. Yet others seek guidance to solve their socio-economic problems. Each medium is powerful in its own right in serving people and each has gone through several stages of development due to pressure and competition from newer communication technologies.

Print Media which include newspapers, magazines, books and other printed matter, have served the literate society for long. Their growth, however, was slow in the beginning but as the demand for education and information increased, they evolved quickly and flourished greatly. The twentieth century has seen the rapid growth of the newspaper industry and, to withstand the challenges posed by newer electronic communication, newspapers have adopted the latest technology, like computerisation, to speed up the production process and improve their quality. Newspapers have added coloured Sunday and Saturday supplements to sustain the interest of the readers. Coloured glossy magazines, which appeal to specific segments of the society, have mushroomed.
Traditionally, newspapers have a local emphasis which serves the interests of a specific community with news, comments, features, photographs and advertising. Now we have all kinds of newspapers—big, medium and small. The majority of them are local in nature but there are some big metropolitan dailies, national in character, catering to the interests of audiences in many parts of the country. Some big newspapers have multiple editions coming out from several cities. Among such newspapers are 'The Hindustan Times', 'Navbharat Times', 'The Times of India', 'Indian Express' and 'The Statesman'.

Electronic Media are radio, television, satellite TV, Cable TV, cinema etc. which are essentially entertainment media. They are different from print media in many ways. They provide instantaneous communication and their impact is greater. They need electricity for speedy delivery of messages across distances and to the masses that are geographically, culturally, intellectually, and emotionally separated from one another. Electronic media are quicker than print media the latter takes more time for mass production and delivery to a widely dispersed population.

The Radio: Our nation’s radio audience has grown manifold since its inception in the 1920s. The network has expanded a great deal and it offers a daily service for many hours transmitting news, comments, songs, music, comedies, thrillers, sports, besides special programmes for children, youth, and farmers. One of the best advantages that radio has over other media is that it can serve and entertain an
audience which is otherwise occupied. For instance, people can listen to it while working at home, in the fields and factories and while travelling.

However, the radio medium has suffered a setback in the recent times under the dynamic impact of TV; it has lost a lot of its listening audience, especially urban population which can afford TV and video for entertainment. But during a crisis it is the radio that people turn to for news because it can report with speed. TV takes time to reach the spot of occurrence with its heavy equipment and camera crew. And, at times it may miss out prized information during war, violence, or accidents. In such times radio has a clear advantage over TV. Therefore, radio’s importance has not diminished but has rather enhanced because it is easy to handle while at work, or during a walk or travel.

Recording industries too are thriving by providing popular music on tapes, cassettes, audio-discs etc. Cassettes are also being used extensively in education.

Television, unlike other forms of mass media, has now become one of the most powerful media of mass communication. With a modest beginning in the 1930s, it has grown into a massive network of mass information and mass entertainment in the world today. The attraction of the 'visualness' of the medium, the capacity to beam images of actual events, people and places, is so great that people remain glued to the TV set for hours.

Millions watched the live coverage of the war in the Persian Gulf and other important happenings in recent times. This was possible due to the newer development in network technologies Satellite-Cable television. Through the many satellites in space which are linked via cable to the TV at home, TV now has assumed a significant role in providing the ‘latest’ and the ‘best’ happenings in the world. This technological innovation has made unprecedented inroads into the audiences that were earlier served in the spirit of public service broadcasting by Doordarshan in India. The grip of foreign networks grip over millions in metropolitan cities and smaller towns is getting tighter as they offer many channels (CNN, STAR TV, BBC World Service, Zee TV and ATN) transmitting different programmes simultaneously round the clock. Audiences now have multiple choices ranging from news and information to entertainment of wide variety. Besides being exposed to actual events, audiences of TV enjoy packages full of fiction, drama, culture, sex, crime, violence, to mention just a few.

‘Invasion’ from the sky has thus shattered Doordarshan’s monopoly. Unless Doordarshan meets the challenges posed by the media giants like CNN, BBC and others by producing indigenous programmes of competitive quality, its future seems bleak.

Films are considered a major mass medium because of their mass appeal and influence on society. India is the largest producer of feature films in the world. Commercial cinema is all glamour and fantasy. The usual ingredients are sex, songs, dances, crime, fights, melodrama, and comedy, all bordering on unreality. The idea is to prepare a cocktail of popular entertainment to ensure box office success. It is these ‘masala’ films which are popular among the masses. These films set trends in styles and tastes, dominate the popular radio and television entertainment programmes, provide spicy reading material not only for film magazines, which are published in large numbers and are widely read, but also for most of the other popular magazines.

In the discussion that follows, we will examine the extent of the reach of mass media in India, and the influence mass communication has on people in particular, and society in general.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: 

i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.
1) Write two benefits that one can derive from each of the following types of communication:

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Benefit 1</th>
<th>Benefit 2</th>
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<td>Interpersonal</td>
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<td>Group</td>
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<td>Mass</td>
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<td>Print medium</td>
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<td>Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
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2) Write 10 points against television as a medium of mass communication.

1.4.1 Reach and Access

There has been rapid expansion of mass media all over the world in recent times. Consequently, the mass media have become a major feature of our daily life. We cannot do without the telephone, telex, film, radio, television, newspapers, etc. Outside home and office, innumerable forms of mass media confront us — billboards, wall writing, writings on all kinds of vehicles, pamphlets, leaflets, brochures, booklets etc. People now have more access to mass media whose reach is getting wider and wider due to technological advancement. The extent of expansion of mass media can be gauged by the increase over the past one decade, in circulation of newspapers, number of radio and television receivers, satellites and cable television operators.

The mass media are now not limited to urban population but have made inroads into small towns and villages. Their expansion is evident practically in all the countries of the world. The events that take place in the United States, Europe, Russia or the Middle East, come immediately into our living rooms. In fact, the...
information and thereby have become more informed and educated, and are better entertained and less apprehensive about each other's way of life that they were a few decades ago.

However, despite the phenomenal growth of newspapers, TV, satellite and cable TV, radio network and films, their reach is largely limited to urban areas in India. The vast rural population in the country still doesn't have access to mass media because of various factors like low purchasing power, high illiteracy rates, non-availability of electricity and channels.

The print media, though a powerful means of dissemination of news, comments and knowledge, cater only to audiences that are literate. There are about 20,000 newspapers and other printed matter produced and consumed in major metropolitan and big cities in the country but barely a small fraction of it reaches the rural masses. The circulation is still low i.e. about 2 copies per 100 persons, but the readership is much higher as each copy is read by 5-10 persons, especially in rural areas. Even the illiterate masses have indirect access to this medium through educated newspaper readers.

The television network has increased tremendously in the last one decade covering 78 per cent of the population. But TV receiving sets are mostly available in urban homes and TV is out of reach of the majority of the rural masses. Only the rich in a village have access to it. More recently satellite and cable television has stormed the urban Indian homes. It has broken nation-state boundaries and opened the sky for television. There are about 25,000 cable operators providing services all over the country. But these are costly ventures and cater to the needs and aspirations of upper and middle classes. And even if audiences in small towns and villages have access to these sophisticated media, the messages are lost on them because they are not area specific and lack local cultural flavour and relevance, which is so essential for audiences to identify with and understand.

Radio is one of the significant media of mass communication. Government owned All India Radio (AIR) has now the largest broadcasting network in the world. It covers 80 per cent of the area and 90 per cent of the country's population, but broadcast receiving facilities are limited. The total number of radio/transistor sets in the country is estimated around 30 million which works out to 4.4 sets for 100 persons. Besides, there is a marked imbalance between the availability of radio sets in rural and urban areas. It is estimated that over 80 per cent of radio sets are in the hands of people living in urban areas who constitute only about 20 per cent of the country's population. Inspite of the imbalance, radio is the only medium which is said to be truly a mass medium in India because it is a low cost mobile means of communication. The portable radio, in fact, is the poor man's companion and hence has extended its reach widely.

Film has become a major medium of popular entertainment. About 800 films are produced in India annually. Many of these are in Hindi and are very popular with the masses. A large number of films are produced regionally also, particularly in the south, and their reach is wide. This may be so because regional films can better present the social reality and cultural ethos of the people in a defined region in the local language. As in the case of other media, film exhibition facilities in the country are limited, too. Most of the cinema houses are in the metropolitan cities and large towns. According to an estimate, there are about 8 seats for a population of one thousand. Comparatively, southern states have more cinema houses and touring talkies than those in northern India. Inspite of the lack of screening facilities, the lure for films makes people travel long distances to cities. This is so perhaps because they want to escape from their dreary existence.

In the light of the limited reach of mass media and peoples' restricted access to traditional media like folk songs, folk dance, folk theatre etc. are the real channels of information and entertainment in rural India. Their reach is wide because they are less expensive, more accessible, closer to the heart of the people, participatory in nature, and can be understood even by illiterate people.

In conclusion, it can be said that despite the growth of mass media in India, there is still a huge gap between the haves and have-nots. The rural masses are largely left out of the media echo chamber, and this is a matter of concern for the democratic process in India.
I.4.2 Impact of Mass Communication

As stated earlier, we live in the age of mass communication in which mass communication performs certain functions that are useful to us. Who wouldn't want to be informed about events that significantly touch and influence one's life? Don't we need some entertainment to get away from the drudgery of day to day living? In a democracy, is it not necessary to shape the opinion of the public before appropriate decisions are taken? Mass communication fulfills all these needs; and additionally promotes extensive selling through advertising. While doing all this, mass communication obviously influences people and society. But the question is, what is the extent and nature of its impact?

Millions are exposed to a variety of messages each day. While many consumers of media are satisfied with any single channel of mass communication, there are others who seek exposure to more than one channel. There is increasing anxiety about the adverse effect of mass communication on society in general and individuals in particular. There are obvious fears. Are the consumers of mass media being manipulated or brainwashed? Do the violence, crime or sex in media affect young
minds? Are the foreign programmes a threat to cultural and national identity? And so on. Answers to these questions are not easy to come by as mass media do not operate in the society in isolation. However, some observations can be made on the positive and negative impact of mass communication on people.

By and large, mass communication messages are positive i.e. pro-communal harmony, pro-environmental pro-national, anti-drugs, anti-AIDS, anti-war, anti-terrorism, anti-social evils and so on. In fact, mass communication has helped in promoting national integration and knowledge of our cultural heritage and creating awareness among people about the socio-economic and political development of the country. The Press, for instance, has played a significant role in shaping public opinion against colonial rule and later in the development of independent modern India. Broadcasting, under the government control, has been used as an instrument of education, development, and social change. Even Bombay 'masala films', which are often accused of creating unhealthy social values, attitudes, and habits, have contributed a great deal in promoting national integration, common culture, and the national language of Hindi, throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The adverse effect of mass communication have been felt not so much from print media as from exciting media like television and satellite cable TV. The audiences of these electronic media, in the hope of getting lively entertainment at little cost, are lapping up all that comes through the 'open sky', without discrimination, without realizing their good or bad effects. In fact they are becoming helpless victims of these pervasive media. The danger is from the programmes made with a western perspective which are going to influence the world view and life style in India and other Asian countries.

Besides, excessive advertising, 'alien' programmes, and mesmerising images have tremendous impact on young minds. They give children ideas about a materialistic culture that does not exist in their environment and create in them the desire for things they can't possibly afford to have. An overdose of TV is bad, but an overdose of foreign programmes is even more detrimental. Parents and teachers express their concern about the adverse effect of 24 hours TV on children's studies and health.

Thus, despite the restricted reach of mass media and the even more restricted access to it especially in rural and far flung areas, mass communication affects our lives positively by informing about the new developments around us, by entertaining us, and influencing our attitudes, opinions, and actions vis-a-vis a variety of subjects and issues.

We shall discuss in greater detail the impact of mass communication in Unit-V of this block.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Give examples of 5 negative impacts the television may have on the young people of our society.

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2) How can one minimise these five negative impact?

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Activity 3

List the number of mass media you are exposed to.

Which ones influence you the most?

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Communication is central to all human activities and is an integral part of one's life. It is an essential dimension for meaningful coexistence and harmonious group living. Communication is a dynamic two-way process in which two or more people share or exchange ideas, information, knowledge, attitudes or feelings through certain signs and symbols. The functions it performs are many, but the primary ones are those of informing, educating, persuading and entertaining.

For communication to occur, it requires a sender, a message, a channel, and a receiver. The receiver's response to the sender's message, i.e. feedback, affects the course of future communication. With the presence of any interruption, i.e. noise, the message is likely to be contaminated before reaching the receiver.

Human beings are engaged in a variety of communication processes; intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass communication, the last one being unique in the sense that it differs somewhat from other forms of communication because of a mechanical device interposed between sender and receiver. The process of mass communication is similar to the basic process of human communication except that the messages are multiplied, receivers are too many and are separated from one another and the feedback is delayed. Newspapers, magazines, books, radio, TV, video etc. are some of the mass media that constitute the communication society of which we are a part. Although there has been rapid expansion of mass media the world over, their reach and access to them are limited in a developing country like India because of various factors like low purchasing power, high illiteracy rate, lack of distribution channels, etc.

In spite of limited reach, mass communication is so central to society that life seems inconceivable without mass media. They inform and shape our social life. Their influence is positive if they are able to fulfill the information and entertainment needs of people in accordance with the existing norms, values and culture in society; but what concerns us most is their negative influence. An overdose of foreign programmes, excessive television viewing and advertising, exposure to violence, crime, sex, etc. can adversely affect people, especially children, in societies that are traditional.
1.6 FURTHER READING


2) Hiebert/Ungurait/Bohn, 1974, Mass Media : An Introduction to Modern Communication, Longman Inc.,


1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

News : Information
Surabhi : Environment, Information, Education, Cultural Promotion
The World This Week : Information, Entertainment
Parakh : Entertainment, Information, Education, Cultural Promotion and Integration
Hindi Films : Entertainment, Cultural Promotion

Check Your Progress 2

I think the following communication materials can be used in a village situation :

a) Posters
b) Photographs of the environment of the village
c) One/two thematic songs (Sung by the residents of the village)
d) A skit (performed by the children of the village)

There must be enough time for interaction.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Intrapersonal
   a) helps in organising one’s thoughts.
   b) helps a person to formulate a strategy.

Interpersonal
   a) provides with immediate feedback.
   b) better relationship can be established.

Group
   a) individuals can get encouragement as many like-minded people gather together for a common cause/purpose.
   b) helps in gathering knowledge and thus elevates the quality of a person.
Mass
a) acts as a unifying element in the society.
b) can provide a large audience with the best educational programmes.

Print
a) helps the people to keep alive their reading habits.
b) provides the readers with enough relevant information.

Radio
a) both literates and illiterates can make use of radio to satisfy their specific needs.
b) cheap form of entertainment.

TV
a) can provide the viewers with visuals of events and places in far away countries.
b) can provide audiences with live coverages of sports.

2) a) It is urban-centered.
b) The culture of the urban citizens is given importance.
c) It is an expensive medium.
d) Producing programmes for TV is complicated.
e) It does not help people to imagine creatively.
f) The viewers need to be locked up in places.
g) It may provide the children with negative values.
h) It may help the rich nations to invade the poor countries culturally.
i) It may reduce the financial gains of the cinema industry.
j) The technology is expensive and is in the hands of the rich nations. Therefore, the poor nations find it difficult to meet the expenses of acquiring the ever developing sophisticated technology.

Check Your Progress 4

1) ‘Reach’ is explained as the spread of a particular medium. So, it is from the point of view of the medium. ‘Access’ is explained as the availability of a particular medium to a person. So, it is from the point of view of the people/person/audience.

2) Yes.
   - The telecasts cover almost the total geographical area of India, but only a small percentage of our population has access to it.
   - The reach is almost total but few million own TV sets.
   - The newspapers are centered in urban areas.
   - High rate of illiteracy.
   - Very high percentage of population living below the poverty line.

3) 1) Increase the rate of literacy.
    2) Provide each and every village panchayat with these electronic gadgets.
Introduction to Communications

Check Your Progress 5

1) • watching TV for long hours — less time to study
   • the creative instinct and faculties may not develop
   • becoming very familiar with the world of the adults
   • inculcate in them negative values of the adults
   • violence may have permanent impact

2) • minimise TV viewing hours
   • produce programmes which may help their creative faculties develop
   • minimise telecasting adult-related programmes early in the evening
   • produce more children's programmes
   • highlight the positive values
   • censorship to restrict the violent scenes from getting incorporated in programmes should be strictly followed.