

IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA ON THE FORMATION OF MASS CULTURE AMONG THE BENGALI SPEAKING PEOPLE OF WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

The Indo-Aryan Bengali language has come across the diverse historic situational changes. Its rich tradition accompanying with cultural elements and media is the modern phenomenon of culture. The media plays significant role in the post-modern era. Diverse cultural elements are intermingled with the complexities and abstraction of society. The language plays a pivotal role towards shaping a tangible image of a specified culture. It meditates the plural nature of Indian masses. The process of modernization and the onslaught of globalization, culture lost its traditionalist appeal and represents mixed culture. The media is a representative of a cultural institution and its artifact. It is a contributory action of people that create their personal identity within social atmosphere. McLuhan (2012) argues that it is not only artifact but has the commitment to creativity. Modern media has the capacity to reach people ceaselessly. Mass culture is preponderant and reachable to every person in the society and its primary aim is entertainment. The social and technological change has gradually been evident in the society and every day life of the Bengali people as well. This paper focuses on cultural influence on development and mould of a particular language. To find out the role of language in creation of socio-cultural integration through mass media. It explores the reason behind the creation of a strong public opinion in a particular locality & language through mass media. It tries to search the extent of success achieved by mass media in formation and development of a mass culture among Bengali people of west Bengal.

Key words: Language, Cultural assimilation, Mass Media, Media culture, Mass culture.

INTRODUCTION

Bengali language, one of the sweetest languages of the world, has the distinctive cultural elements which reflect from its rich tradition. It is not only recognized at the local, regional or national levels but also highly acclaimed at the international sphere. At least 200 million people around the globe prefer to talk in Bengali. Moreover, the Constitution of India proclaimed that it is one of the 23 national languages. Language is a system and a series of symbols that has to be learnt. It represents an element of culture. It is differentiated and hierarchical to the people as well as societies. Therefore, it has an immense social impact. The Indo-Aryan Bengali language has come across through the diverse historic situational changes i.e. from ancient to modern through medieval. It has rich tradition associated with cultural elements and media is the modern phenomenon of culture. With the process of modernization, culture puts emphasis on various processes of society and its complexities, the media plays important role here. Media has been considered as the most influential form of culture (Kellner, 2020).

The term ‘culture’ means the way of life of the people and combination of past and present traditions, values, beliefs and practices of social events like birth, death, marriage, music, dance drama, clothing, public tastes and religion. Culture of a society is influenced by the different wings of media and the media is the representative of that culture. It is a contributory action of people that form and generate their individuality and society as a whole. It figures out people’s prospective capabilities for action, imagination and nurture their inventiveness, language and speech. Moreover it is a new quest for the humanity. In modern times, their culture has been converted into media culture. The foundation of everyday life has been changed by the emergence of media culture in twentieth century. It also helps people to change their leisure time activities, social and political behavior and outlook, able to suppress own identity. The revealed instruments like radio, television, film, music, newspaper, magazines, internet and social networking along with the rise of new media platforms facilitate to form our idea about social class, identity of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality etc. Media culture categorizes people into “us” and “them” and symbolize as friends and foes (Kellner,2020). Moreover, in the changing world scenario, neo-liberal approaches favour open market, big investments and competition. The distinctive elements of the society have been reflected by the media of its all forms. The Constitution of India, in

its Eight Schedule, recognizes twenty three national languages including two official (English & Hindi) languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focal point of media and culture is to proper understanding of historical, contextual, and cultural sides of media. It can be examined through cultural, economic, philosophical, political questions and contextual grounded analysis. There are number of approaches like social and political theory of Marxism, critical race theory, oral history, realism, expressive style, cultural and intellectual history that helpful for meaningful presentation of culture and media.

Media culture has been arising out of mass production and mass consumption. Theoretical orientation of media and culture can be understood through the realm of tangible phenomena available in the modern society and its historicity. Culture industries today make artifacts in such manner that create confrontation during social interactions and also resistance evident in opposition to divergent thoughts. Media culture gives types of dogmatic supremacy that replicate present power relations. It is challenging territories where contesting political powers try to penetrate as well establish their supremacy constantly. In our society individuals create their distinctiveness partially with the help of media culture. It is evident that the influence of politics on media culture is strong and entangled with the political battle of the period.

Media or cultural studies pointed out that society is the ground of dominance and opposition, and criticized on the phenomenon that media culture plunge in creating state of supremacy and subjugation. Though it can move onward the benefit of marginal and insignificant portion of people of society (Kellner, 2020). Adorno (1963) argued that the interest of the culture industry is to maintain a close association with the sources of sustenance i.e. capital. He cautioned that the pervasive influence of media should not be gauged softly The consumer of mas media should not be involved while continuously providing information. Because of the fact that it is the technique of spreading illusion to the masses by the mass media. Culture industry disseminates false values and coordinates interests of the individuals with the society. Peoples are totally engaged in it and passing time with the digital devices. He further suggested that it is better not to criticize media for their own interest. "In advanced capitalist societies, media and consumer culture work hand in hand to generate thought and behavior that conform to existing values, institutions, beliefs, and practices, and certain forms of media culture may influence individuals to accept dominant political ideologies, attitudes, parties, and figures" (Kellner, 2020). Prof M.N. Srinivas (1968) viewed that the only imitation model to plural groups of people of Indian society was the higher-caste Hindus. Though, Habermas (1987) commented that modernity is an incomplete task for India. The Liberal and radical critics have viewed that it is a genuine reflection of overt sensation and refuse the concept of high culture or elite culture. The construction of popular culture, according to conflict theorists, is the creation of capitalist and products may be forged but also a means of ideological dominance. S. L. Doshi (2010) has also opined that the Indian society is ever more becoming postmodern. The phenomenon of ethnicity gave birth and growth of post-modernity to a great extent. On the issue of 'popular culture' and 'subculture' as evident in the societies can be referred from the works of Chambers and Bennett et al. (1986) and Marshall, (1998).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify the birth and growth of a particular culture and its flow among the masses through the rapid development and influence of mass media. Whenever media enters into a particular locality and language speaking people, how far they are able to form public opinion among them. To know the way of influence of mass media on Bengali language speaking people is able to create Bengali media culture or not.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper considers following points as objectives: What role does language plays in creation of socio-cultural integration? Can the media (both electronic and printing) create a strong public opinion even in a particular locality & language speaking people? Does media influence a particular culture? And what extent does Bengali language able to contribute and create a Bengali media culture?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is purely based on secondary sources of information. A qualitative approach has to be used to represent the topic under study. Thus, no sample was chosen for the study, only relevant books, journals, online materials and the observation of major Bengali news channels, their different programmes, clippings, audio-video presentations through popular electric and electronic mediums available in West Bengal.

INDIA'S TRADITIONAL IMPRINT ON LANGUAGE

Language is a preference of an individual and that should be valued by the others. Language is a system that should be enlightened. It is based on grammar; though it is able to create social relationships with diverse means of communication. In all civilized societies, language has played a pivotal role in building up of knowledge among the members. It is the reflections of language of its diverse nature and hierarchical position of people in society. It is also true for Bengali language. It has a social characteristic, due to which the manifestation can be seen its differential association in diverse strata in Bengali society. There are large variations in local and regional levels in Bengali language and its dialects.

Language is the one of the strong mediums of social Integration. It is a dynamic force of society that changes with the demands of historical situations. In today's world we also prepare our medium of communication to bridge the gap of understanding on the basis of our need. But the culture of Indian society and political power equation had been transformed a lot. The resultant effect of which was reflected in language, religion and culture. Hindu culture remained unaltered even after continuous exodus of foreign invasion and rule for a long period of history of India. The primary cause behind the recurring problems of language was rooted with the introduction of British Rule in India. The policy of imparting education in English was successful in India. After independence, many local and regional leaders have claimed for linguistic autonomy in place of Hindi and English as official languages. It also pacifies inter-language rivalry between the people of the country. The language situation is sensitive and complicated even in post independent India.

UNRESTRAINED EXPANSION OF MASS MEDIA

The period indicates between 1860 to 1930 was the decisive stage of mass media. It is indicative of large-scale organization using print, radio, television as technologies to communicate with large numbers of people with ease i.e. mass communication. The period, mentioned above, invented series of diverse new technologies in the world which reflected a part of wider transformation in popular culture. It was the mark of significant development of leisure industries along with concentrated capitalization. We have been facing the consequences of it and to address mass audiences accordingly. After 1930s, the main concern was in the power element attached with media technologies like television and radio. The use of radio by A. Hitler for spreading propaganda was a successful mission at that time. It was the technique of the powerful elites of the society to control and dominate passive masses. Media organizations are bureaucratic and corporate in nature and its effectiveness is regulated by the concerned government of the state. On the context, mental life of the people of modern society has been controlled by mass media. The consequence of mass communication to the people may be counted on several component like values, beliefs, emotion, social class, social context etc. (Marshall, '98). Television broadcasting as a development in the field of mass communication particularly from post war years in Europe, America and some part of Asia was a significant move of public service broadcasting. It is the emergence of communication technologies as a part of new age of global media corporation. The aim of this new trend was to capture fresh set of audiences. A neo-liberal approach is in favour of opening up of media markets to a greater competition. The notion of broadcasting for public service or social good has been under threat for this approach. The emergence of global media organizations offers new prospects and vast market for the development of consumerism (news corporations). In today's world information is being produced in a very faster rate than that of consumption of information. Media globalization represents to massive investment in the field of ever growing media sector which is controlled by the multinational corporate. The resultant advent of a global form of political system which dominate mass media in an integrated manner and dissemination technology in its latest forms like instrumental, printing, electrical, electronic and satellite telecommunication, publishing houses, content providers through internet and digital media (Lyons, 2005).

INCESSANT ASSIMILATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MASS CULTURE

Culture has the capability to be a subsystem of a greater social system and contribute significantly to other subsystems. The culture of India is an amalgamation of these diverse sub-cultures spread all over the Indian subcontinent and traditions that are several millennia old. Multiculturalism promotes to maintain a distinctiveness of diverse cultures and which contrasted to other settlement policies such as social integration, cultural assimilation and racial segregation. The process of modernization and the onslaught of globalization, culture lost its traditionalist appeal and represents 'mixed culture'. In the complex Indian society, each group of people has their own ethnic identity and several cultural identities are evident here. Therefore, it reflects the plural nature of Indian masses. There are ninety-one culture areas available in India (Singh, '92). These areas comprised of attributes of pluralism.

Postmodern perspective has also dealt with pluralism of Indian society. Therefore, the characteristics and phenomena inherent into it. It is evident in simple societies that single integrated culture shared by everybody and in complex societies, accommodates many levels of cultures and subcultures. The term 'popular culture' is sometimes coterminous with 'mass culture'. It is predominant and accessible to every person in the society.

The primary aim of popular culture is entertainment but in USA and Europe it exhibits through television, film, popular music and sports. The 'high culture', on the contrary, demonstrates serious novels, classical music, poetry, film, high levels of art form, architectural engraving and other cultural product recognized by small section of educated people. From the sociological perspective, popular culture presented a framework for mass awareness and imperative ingredient of harmony as well as separation among social forms.

COMMUNICATION, MASS MEDIA AND MODERNITY

Modern communication media is capable of interacting with and to reach to the majority of people in the world uninterrupted. It can be evident when communication channels or system are exposed via email, internet and telecommunication. However, both traditional and modern media or mass media having disposition on numerous communications including social media. Modernity indicates both a period of human history as well as a particular socio-economic norm, attitudes and practices that arose in the wake of the Renaissance.

The judgement of individuals, their advancement in knowledge base, technique of explanation, decrease in importance of spiritual views, outgrowth of officialdom, fast development of urban areas, accelerated fiscal transaction and connectedness, and moreover the emergence of nation-states etc. all are directly connected with modernity. Media as one of the mediums of general communication in society in modern era like as newspapers, radio, television, telecommunication etc. Indian society has accepted an all-encompassing influence from the sources of newspapers, television, cell phone and other diverse fonts. Obviously, the wave of impact spreads accordingly in its ever-changing institutions. Our customs, traditions and ethnicity would not disappear altogether even with the birth and development of the phenomenon of modernity. On the contrary, media, technology and modernity create an atmosphere to regenerate their foregoing traditions through diverse options. Each regions of India are conscious of their own historical and ethnic distinctiveness. These elements of identity have emerged with the help of the influence of modernity. And with the advent of technology, traditions and ethnicity have also become reinforced and augmented. This augmented ethnicity gradually unfolds its distinctiveness, multiplicity, and adopts mechanization of a particular culture area (Doshi, 2010). The beginning of human communication was evident from designed channels, ancient cave paintings, drawn-maps to writings. The Canadian communication theorist McLuhan (2012) first use the modern application of media connecting to communication channels. He argued in favour of media that they are not artifacts or they should not be under dominance of any authoritative regime. They should be committed to creative activity. The wide-ranging application of the term has been evident in North America and the United Kingdom in the mid-1960s.

The term 'media' signifies mode of expression of the individuals and/or means of communication between themselves. It also encompasses the commodification of symbolic form and involves production, distribution and reception of information. The term started to maneuver from 1920 and the concept centered only in print media even beyond the World War-II. Varieties of media had been developed with the invention of science and technology in phases of world history. It comprises of three divisions, such as Print Electronic and the New Age Media comprised of Mobile Phone, Computer and Internet. It can also be subdivided on the basis of its existing nature as visual and non-visual. It has been considered as the fourth pillar of Indian democracy and played unforgettable role in the freedom struggle. With the effect of globalization media has experienced sweeping changes. Nowadays, India is being considered as one of the leading markets in media and amusement business enterprise in the world.

A significant argument made by Arendt (1961) that a market-driven media would lead to the dislocation of culture by the commands of entertainment in the globalized world. The most substantial and coherent values can be derived from our entertainment industries which has been subverting our standard of significance. We, most of the time, believe in it because it representing lively and continuously haunting to our brain. Culture puts enunciation on various processes of society and its inherent complexities of its own style. It is acceptable to all of us that a particular culture reflects a particular way of life and people. Therefore, it is obvious that people are the product of a culture.

CONCLUSION

It has been a common feature to the provinces of India that media convincingly established its strong holds and rests on regional languages. Both electronic and print media has perpetually been trying to capture local contents and themes to popularize the regional sentiments. Particularly traditional and folk cultural elements are their targeted areas of interests. Cultural festivals are the symbolic representation of the specific region or locality. However, ethnicity performs on the platform of public culture. They prepared and present programmes according to the demand and taste of regional people. Through this initiative they attract targeted media audience. Due to the emergence of number of local or regional media (printing and electronic) a significant number of them are unable to communicate with the desired number of specific languages spoken people. They are neither able to connect nor create any acquaintance or impact on them. This is true for the

Bengali speaking people too. Therefore, the purpose will not be successful until and unless they think otherwise.

Our education system can bring a desired change in the society. The habit of reading newspapers, periodicals based on diverse social issues, magazines in regional languages may encourage students' right from their school and college levels. These can inspire them even for contribution to indigenous publication. The Bengali press has been successful to attract a huge number of readers with different ages through applicable techniques. It is not only lucid expression and presentation but also adopting technique and strategies to retain their readers. The Bengali newspapers and channels have been creating a huge impact upon the rural people and that can help towards survival of Bengali language.

The birth of linguistic states in India has created a situation of parochialism and provincialism on the way to destroying the potentiality of national integration. It is the symbol of national integration when the people of India sang national anthem which was written in Bengali language. It is worthwhile to mention that Bengal and its language contributed a lot in the effort of spreading national sentiment and national integration in the country. The influence of modern media upon the cultural scenario of India is immense. The place of communication in Indian history was a significant affair that has been recognized as social and technological changes. It inclined towards cultural augmentation and change. Even though Indian society possess the element of rejection of culture of the people, it has been gradually emerged and developed in the everyday life situation among the Bengali people across Bengal with the help and intervention or proper exposure of their sufferings time to time. The information technology has created media a justifiable height of transformation after intensifying modernity in the entire world.

Everyday life has been governed by media culture, helping to create an omnipresent setting. It encourages individuals to accept the recognized institutions of society, but it also renders resources that can authorize individuals confront in opposition to present social order and perceptiveness. It requires going deep into the existing phenomena, occurrences and also the background of creating a particular culture among the masses. More precisely one should comprehend the process of assimilation and the phenomenon of mixing of course along with mass acceptance that nurture among the people of that society. India and its people are the perfect example of the fact. Obviously, entire assortment has the influence upon its prevailing languages and consequently on culture. It can be said following Adorno, that the primary objective of the culture industry is to prepare its contents attractive and go deep into the minds of weaker people and break the value of culture. It also creates notional happiness and unrealized imagery for the masses so that they can't oppose to fulfill their latent desire.

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