

New Media and Sustainable Development in India

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Abstract: *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without negotiating the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development can be construed in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often contending, needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society. India makes up 2.4 percent of the world's land, while supporting 16 percent of the world's population. Currently, India is facing rapid and widespread environmental degradation at alarming rates. Mismanagement and overuse of India's once abundant forests has resulted in desertification, contamination, and soil depletion throughout the sub-continent. This has serious repercussions for the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of Indians that live off the land. Sustainable growth and development, Green growth, Human development, Social protection Urbanization, Land reforms, public sector institutions, Centre-State co-operation, Federal Republic of India and Regional co-operation. For the sum-up these challenges, media plays a vital role especially the new media because it trending the youth in a very passionate manner. After the Independence, these newspapers were initially not sure about their role in the democracy because now the governments at the Centre and at the states were run by the natives. They could not thus continue the anti-establishment stance. Internet was born in USA in 1960s to aid defence and scientific project. In India also, Internet was introduced by research institutes. India had approx. 80,000,000 Internet users (not subscribers) in 2011 compared to 5,000,000 at the turn of the last century. The recent developments can be cited at the websites like planningcommission.nic.in, e-choupal.com, http://agmarknet.nic.in etc. Now in this paper we are going to empirically testify the trends and scenario of the sustainable development in India on new media.*

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Human development, Social protection, Urbanization, New Media.

1. Introduction

We know that the digital based media (basically based on binary system) is known as New Media. It came into the light in 1990 with the discovery of practice of Internet.

New Media is a 21st Century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. In fact, the definition of new media changes daily, and will continue to do so. New media evolves and morphs continuously. What it will be tomorrow is virtually unpredictable for most of us, but we do know that it will continue to evolve in fast and furious ways. However, in order to understand an extremely complex and amorphous concept we need a base line.

The forms of communicating in the digital world, which is primarily online via the Internet, but also publishing on CDs and DVDs. It implies that the user obtains the material via desktop and laptop computers, smart phones and tablets. Every company in the developed world is involved with new media. Contrast with old media.

The concept that people with similar interests congregate online and share, sell and swap information and goods. New media also allows everyone to have a voice in their community and in the world in general.

The Internet or the new media is the world's largest interconnected environment. It is the most recent communication tool of the world where a user can transcend borders and have access to the encyclopedias, newspapers, bulletin boards, video arcades, hypermall, broadcast stations, the movies, grapevine, travel agency, and mail

order - all at one stop, in a global village (Rahmah Hashim, 2001, p. 72). With the advent of the New Media (Internet), the government is faced with the challenge of how it can be used to enhance national development. The new media allows interactivity coupled with the fact that it is difficult to be controlled and monitored as compared to the traditional or conventional mass media. The new media and ICT in general are seen as a means to speed up and accelerate development if applied properly.

2. Benefits of the New Media (Internet) for Development

The Internet offers various useful tools for communication, among which we might mention electronic mail, the World Wide Web, newsgroups, remote access, file transfer and text-based and voiced-based chat. The net has become the most important e-mail system in the world because it connects so many people worldwide, creating a productivity gain. Organizations use it to facilitate communication between employees and offices, and to communicate with customers and suppliers. Friends and family use e-mail in replacement to snail mail, due to its speed and flexibility.

Information retrieval is the second basic Internet function. Many use the Internet to locate and download some of the free, quality computer software that has been made available by developers on computers all over the world. The only major problem would be finding what you need from among the storehouses of data found in databases and libraries. It is therefore necessary to explain the two major methods of accessing computers and locating files without which the information retrieval function would not be possible. File

transfer protocol (FTP) issued to access a remote computer and retrieve files from it. FTP is a quick and easy method if you know the remote computer site where the file is stored. Once a file has been located, there are now even virtual libraries and full degree programs – all available online. As a result of these innovations, already there is for example, the University of the Web™, fully accredited, and up and running in the United States, with several programs for Bachelors and Masters degrees (Jones International University). And this is just one example of many as a host of other universities are now innovating to offer Bachelors and Masters Degrees and even research doctoral (Ph.D.) programs online (Leigh, 2004, p. 11).

Commerce on the Internet is already a reality. The communication facilities which are on offer have rapidly become integrated as core business tools. Thus most of the business functions are communicative in nature. The emphasis to date has been on use of the Internet for communications with customers and other companies operating on collaborative ventures. However, an increasing number are concentrating on transactions between businesses and on-line sales. The Internet Mall companies offer everything from books to flowers to travel. It is estimated that over USD 300 billion in goods and services would have been exchanged over the Internet by 2002 (Laudon and Laudon, 2001, p. 24). There are other benefits such as e-government, e-procurement, outsourcing etc. to be derived from using Internet.

3. Theoretical Frame Work of the Study

Before empirical research begun, it was believed that the mass media produce direct, immediate and powerful influence on society about sustainable development. Arguably accumulation theory provides an explanation for the role of the media in changing people attitudes about topics such as information and politics over a period of time. In modern and postmodern society there is a consistent flow of new products, ideas and solutions to providing new interpretation and other kinds of innovations. According to environmentalists every environment friendly innovation is taken up by people in a particular society in a rather regular process which can be explained by the Uses and Gratification theory.

The basic assumption of uses and gratification research is that people are active and goal oriented with an ability to evaluate different types of functions media may serve, and users are considered to actively seek out media messages to satisfy their social and psychological want and needs. The rise of uses and gratification research therefore indicates a shift in media effect research by examining „what people do with media rather than what media do to people. Because of the user - centered perspective uses and gratifications research has served as a cutting-edge theoretical approach to better understand the specific motivations for using newly emerging communication media. Many scholars have employed and argued that the uses and gratification approach is to examine how and why people are using the Internet and its interactive application such as e-mail, bulletin boards, social network surfing, chat rooms and use of online media. Further some of the studies have examined

the motivation for using political blogs, and social media for information has found strong motives: political surveillance/guidance, information seeking/convenience, social utility and entertainment. Further it is examined that what factor predicted diverse motivations for accessing political blogs and found that political efficacy, political involvement and strength of party affiliation were significant predictors of motivations for using political blogs and political information in new media. Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) Is the new media really emerging as a new player in India for the sustainable development?
- 2) How has and how will the New Media continue to change the scenario of the development in India?
- 3) How new media convert its users to be aware about new developments?
- 4) Does New Media in India is providing the platform for its users to engage actively in development process?
- 5) How the development is very much essential for next generations?
- 6) Will New Media help in the development?

4. Methodology

The present study is in the nature of qualitative and deep understanding about the particular case, its features and its impact. The richness of the study is to complement the theoretical framework and answer to research questions. In general, theory is designed to rationally and clearly explain a phenomenon. The basic unit analysis is the use of new media in formation of protest group of a relationship between new media and development. The term relationship deserves same specific attention with regard to the use of new media in development is viewed as set of elements embedded up a massive protest and role of new media in sustainable development.

The present study is focusing methodologically on information flows, rises and uses that in turn to provide a deeper understanding of uses gratifications. In this research the researchers have tried to analyze the emerging behavior patterns and their uses of new media like internet, social networking sites in the development in India from individuals and community for political participation. The study analyzed the Facebook, twitter, social blogs, search engines, and micro-blogs in disseminating and mobilizing in political participation in the development. Uses and gratification is a psychological communication perspective that examines how individuals use mass media. An audience base theoretical framework is grounded on the assumption that individuals select new media exercises to fulfill felt needs and wants. These needs are expressed as motives for adopting particular exercises use, and are connected to the social psychological makeup of the individual and society. Based on perceived needs, social and psychological characteristics, and media attributes, individuals use media and experience related gratifications. Further the theories of uses and gratification have been intensively used to explain the aspects and answer to research questions.

5. Indian Media

Indian newspapers played a very important role in the freedom struggle. Newspapers in English and non-English languages published from cities and rural areas took on the might of the British rulers. They effectively countered the anti-freedom struggle campaigns undertaken by the British-owned newspapers of the day. The newspapers largely devoted their space to politics. Non-English publications debated social issues also. Coverage of issues of development was rare.

After the Independence, these newspapers were initially not sure about their role in the democracy because now the governments at the Centre and at the states were run by the natives. They could not thus continue the anti-establishment stance. Like the common people and the government servants, journalists were overawed by the charismatic personality of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who remained at the helm until his death in 1964. Owners, editors, and journalists gradually woke up to write about the social and economic issues although politics remained top priority for some decades later.

Politics of Mrs Indira Gandhi and her opponents dominated newspapers in the turbulent seventies. Yet newspapers had provided space to issues of the common people as special features on droughts, scarcity of food, and problems of deprived sections such as women, children, tribals, and slum-dwellers. Newspapers had space earmarked for debates and question-and-answers in Parliament and state assemblies. Government-run Akashvani and Doordashan broadcast programmes that discussed such problems and experts were on their panels to offer advice and solutions to the listeners.

The scenario gradually changed when colour television made its appearance for the Asiad Games in 1982. Although the electronic media was still state-controlled, newspapers felt that there was now stiff competition from television, which could provide live coverage of major events. The policies for globalization, liberalization, and privatization were introduced in 1991 that brought in the subsequent years, among other things, private television channels, private telephone operators and Internet. The users had more options to get news and entertainment. Daily newspapers and other print publications changed their strategies and tried to offer what the 24-hour channels telecast.

The electronic media did not provide any threat in terms of circulation and advertisement revenue to the newspapers, like the US traditional media experienced during the last two decades. Yet, the India print media became more aggressive as the publishers added pages, brought out more supplements, editions from other centres, and even publications in other languages, with colour printing on glossy art papers. Some leading publishers have begun exploiting convergence of media technology, as they now own television and private FM radio stations. Some newspapers have Internet portals offering a variety of contents including latest news, jokes and counselling.

The globalization and open economy have brought in India multi-nationals and new players in engineering and service industry. This has offered substantial ad support and sponsorships to at least leading media in English and non-English languages.

In this flurry of activity in media of India, casualty seems to be serious coverage of pressing development issues. Newspapers ape the formats of news and entertainment channels that have no space or inclination to cover such issues. Parliament coverage is available on state-run Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha channels, but newspapers do not any more carry columns such as 'Today in Parliament' wherein they used to publish important government decisions announced in both the Houses. The popular media cover political issues that include intra-party or inter-party feuds presuming that this is newsworthy and that the audiences are eager to watch or read only these. No serious nation-wide surveys have been carried out to find out if this presumption is correct. Television channels are happy with the TRPs (Television Rating Points) collected from few viewers in metros.

Against this background, Internet has become a very important and useful tool to fill in the vacuum created by the traditional print and electronic media who ignore development issues. This paper attempts to highlight the role of Internet and other new technologies play to do what the traditional media have chosen to ignore.

It will be too presumptuous to argue that Internet has been very effective in reporting, discussing, and motivating the target audiences to act for development. There are limitations to the use of Internet in a vast sub-continent of India, but it is worthwhile documenting how the Net is trying to play a role in its nascent stage. After all, the web emerged as recently as in 1995 when it was available only in the metros. The real thrust to introduction of Internet was received in the initial years of the new millennium when broadband and mobile telephony were made available to the people.

6. Internet in India and Development

Internet was born in USA in 1960s to aid defence and scientific project. In India also, Internet was introduced by research institutes. India had 42,000,000 Internet users (not subscribers) in July 2007 compared to 5,000,000 at the turn of the last century. This showed an impressive 740 per cent usage growth. Yet for a population of 1,129,667,528, the penetration was just 3.7 per cent. When contrasted with tiny Japan, India's progress in this area would seem unimpressive: Japan (population: 128,646,345) had 86,300,000 Internet users, which meant that the penetration was 67.1 per cent. The usage growth during the seven years ending 2007 was 83.3 per cent.

It would have to be acknowledged, however, that India made rapid progress in Information and Communication Technology within a very short span. This had to be viewed against the backdrop that Internet for private use was first available only in 1995. Within the first three years, there were 1,400,000 users while the number went up to

5,500,000 at the turn of the century though it meant a penetration of only half a percent for a population of 1,094,870,677. Thanks to a series of initiatives taken by the Union Government, the dial-up connectivity was available to government and local-self-government offices, commercial establishments, educational institutions, domestic users and cyber café owners taking the number of Net users to 42,000,000 for a population that had gone up to 1,129,667,528 in year 2007. The penetration was only 3.7 per cent. Broadband connectivity was available in major cities in 2003. From a mere 19,000 broadband connections in 2004, the country had 1.82 million connections in September 2006 by which time dial-up connections had gone up to 8.8 million.

7. Education and Research Network (ERNET)

The Department of Electronics initiated, under financial assistance from UNDP in 1986, the Education and Research Network (ERNET) which became the first major step in ushering in Internet era in the country. It practically brought Internet in India. It succeeded in building a large network for scientists and academics. The government adopted ERNET as the platform for launching a science and technology network in the country. The founding fathers were National Centre for Software Technology, Mumbai, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, five Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi, Mumbai, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Chennai, and the Department of Electronics, New Delhi.

ERNET eventually became the largest nationwide terrestrial and satellite network of premiere educational and research institutions in major cities of India. Focus of ERNET is not limited to just providing connectivity, but to meet the entire needs of the educational and research institutions by hosting and providing relevant information to their users.

National Informatics Centre (NIC)

An important decision of the government in seventies was to set up National Informatics Centre (NIC) as the initiative of the Department of Information Technology. If ERNET's mission was to network the science and academic community, NIC was created to provide network backbone and e-Governance support to government administration. Its mandate was to provide Information and Communication Technology services to Central Government, State Governments, Union Territory Administrations, Districts, and other Government bodies in India.

The NIC offers a wide range of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services including Nationwide Communication Network for decentralized planning, improvement in Government services and wider transparency of national and local Governments. NIC assists in implementing Information Technology Projects, in close collaboration with Central and State Governments, in the areas of (a) Centrally sponsored schemes and Central sector schemes, (b) State sector and State sponsored projects, and (c) District Administration sponsored projects. NIC endeavors to ensure that the latest technology in all areas of IT is available to its users. (<http://nic.gov.in/>)

8. Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd

Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd, then a state-owned monopoly corporation, launched commercial Internet service in 1995 for industry, trade, home-users, and so on. In February 2002, the Government of India, as per its disinvestments plan, released 25% of VSNL's equity to Tata's. The Tata-Indicom and other private service providers have since been offering connectivity to the net users in all parts of the country. Along with these developments, private telephone operators have been spreading their markets with handsets that have camera, audio-visual add-ons and even a communicator incorporating MS Office which can send and receive e-mails. These developments have given a major push to ICT, mostly in major cities but also in smaller places in the countryside. Government and non-government agencies, enterprising institutions, and innovative individuals have been trying to effectively use the new generation tools not only for entertainment but also for development of the society.

9. Public Broadcasters and government web sites

The Public Broadcasters, Doordarshan and All India Radio have continued to cover, besides spot news, Science and Technology, Agriculture and Rural Development, Women and Children, Arts/Culture/Entertainment, Education and Social sector and so on. Those interested in the proceedings of both houses of Parliament can watch exclusive live coverage from channels dedicated for the purpose.

The Union government harnessed Internet technology to post these proceedings also at the web sites <http://rajyasabha.gov.in/> and <http://loksabha.gov.in/>. Similarly, state governments have set up their own web sites to project the plans and achievement of the respective government. There are web site that provide some static details of respective state assemblies, but most do not have question-and-answers, government's announcement, and reports of various committees as are posted at the web sites of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Besides these, there are websites of Press Information Bureau (<http://pib.nic.in/>) that offers press notes and photographs about announcements of central government, Doordarshan (<http://www.ddnews.gov.in/>) and, All India Radio (www.newsonair.com). The NIC has designed and hosted websites for ministries and departments providing details about the policies and schemes.

Thus, enough resources are available on the websites hosted by the government which has made commitment to people about e-governance, transparency and the Right to Information Act. Administrations in the states, including local civic bodies, have transferred essential information on the net enabling people to get their work within minutes, and not days together as used to happen only in the recent past. An extract of the land record (or 7/12 as it is popularly known) is one of these transactions that were time-consuming and sources of rampant corruption.

This is not to say that these efforts of the government are adequate for the development of society. It is only submitted that these resources were not available earlier with the popular media, and whatever the newspapers in the past did for development is also not being offered to the people through their columns. The new technology has made it possible to provide essential contents in real time and also with very little cost.

9.1 Centre for Agricultural Media (www.farmedia.org)

Centre for Agricultural Media (CAM) came into existence in Dharwad, Karnataka, on December 3, 2000. It has been expanding its activities successfully to accomplish its objective of strengthening the farmer friendly communication system. It is now registered as a trust under the India Trust Act.

CAM supports any pro-farmer issue in all possible ways. This is the first venture of its kind in India. This forum has initiated several activities, with the support from likeminded experts in farm and rural development journalism. It has been effectively using new media tools:

Web activities: CAM maintains this website (www.farmedia.org) which acts complementary to CAM's activities. Two important issues of water and organic farming have been addressed extensively in this website. Two separate sections have been created for the purpose.

Media for sustainable development: CAM introduced a programme called, 'Media for Sustainable Development' to facilitate media to focus on the positive efforts carried out in the rural areas.

As an extension of CAM's efforts, the Centre ventured into book publication in 2005 and has published two books and is in the process of publishing the third one.

Issue based networking: CAM has indicated a promising future in creating issue-based awareness through Internet. The center has played an active role in drawing the public attention on the issue of endosulfan tragedy in certain districts of Kerala. Through its bulletins, CAM has disseminated related information to concerned people, which helped the people's movement considerably.

CAM-Net: CAM has released 50 e-bulletins through CAM-Net until it became defunct due to lack of technical support. The bulletins reached over 10 thousand people across the world.

Reuters Market Light: A service to farmers

A novel initiative to harness mobile telephone technology has been undertaken by Reuters and Maharashtra government since October 2011. Under the service called Reuters Market Light (RML) introduced first time in the world, farmers receive through their mobile telephones local and customized prices of agro-products, news and weather updates in Marathi.

The idea is to help farmers take informed and quick decisions to dispatch their produce to a market place where the price is more attractive. Weather updates and advice

about farm practices are intended to help the farmers take precautionary measures when sudden changes in the climate occur. This service is, thus, intended to aid farmers to develop their financial status using the modern communication technology and credibility of the Reuters.

For a monthly fee of Rs. 80, the scheme was a big draw within few days after Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar formally launched it. Over 90,000 farmers subscribed in October and two months later the subscriptions rose to 12,800.

On December 20, 2011, the Reuters announced that the RML would be available in local post offices across the state. It entered into a partnership with Maharashtra's Postal Circle, to distribute, sell and support the RML.

RML promises help to farmers to enhance their crop yields and improve their productivity over a very wide range of produce including onions, cotton, soybean, pulses, pomegranates, and oranges.

The initiative thus acknowledges the need to combine modern technology, with the tried and tasted traditional postal service that reaches the remotest villages.

9.2 NGOsIndia.com

NGOsIndia.com is an online web directory and resource center of Indian NGOs. The portal contains information about grass root level Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government agencies, funding Agencies, social activists and concerned stakeholders, Funding Agencies, issues, projects, job opportunities in social sector, success stories of individuals as well as organizations, and other relevant links.

This web site has been set up by Delhi-based Srishti Sansthan. It has, among other things, alphabetically organized database of non-governmental organizations located in the states of the country. According to its vision and mission, it is committed to

- Social justice, sustainable development and human rights. The right to communicate freely is a basic human right and a necessity for sustainable development. Access to information is essential to informed decision-making at all levels.
- Dissemination of information and promotion of sustainable development initiatives, in response to the needs of under represented and marginalized sectors of society.
- Develop and establish an ideal medium for the participation and exchange of a trusted and accurate source of quality information.

9.3 ITC's e-choupals (e-choupal.com)

ITC Ltd is one of India's foremost private sector companies with a market capitalization of nearly US \$ 18 billion and a turnover of over US \$ 4.75 billion. Its e-choupal initiative, started in year 2000, is claimed to be the world's largest rural digital infrastructure empowering over four million farmers.

Around 80,000 hectares of plantations by marginal farmers have been supported by ITC's R & D based propagation programme. More than 35,000 hectares have been brought under ITC's watershed development projects. Integrated animal husbandry programmes have been extended to 1,75,000 milch animals. Its women empowerment programmes have created over 11,000 rural women entrepreneurs and its supplementary education support has touched the lives of 100,000 children in rural India.

Choupal in Hindi means a meeting place in a village. The e-choupal concept has been borrowed from the age-old tradition of an earmarked place for such meeting. In the e-concept, an Internet kiosk is set up with the support of the ITC that also has a constantly updated database. Farmers assemble and use the new technology for the better their lot and to bring about rural development.

The ITC, as part of its corporate social responsibility, funded the initiative and provided expertise to run the project successfully. Farmers now log on to the site through these Internet kiosks in their villages to order high quality agri-inputs, get information on best farming practices, prevailing market prices for their crops at home and abroad and the weather forecast – all in the local language.

In the very first full season of e-Choupal operations in Madhya Pradesh, soya farmers sold nearly 50,000 tons of their produce through the e-Choupal Internet platform, which has more than doubled since then. The result marked the beginning of a transparent and cost-effective marketing channel.

9.4 Agricultural Marketing Information System Network (<http://agmarknet.nic.in/>)

This initiative undertaken in the tenth plan period is another example, this one by the government and its agencies, to use new communication technology to help the farmers in improving their earnings and make farming remunerative. The website explains its purpose as follows:

Almost all the States and Union Territories are providing market information in one form or the other for the benefits of market users like producers, traders, and consumers. However, the information is collected and disseminated by use of conventional methods, which cause inordinate delay in communicating the information to different target groups, and thus adversely affects their economic interest.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to bring improvement in the present market information system by linking (i) all Agricultural Produce Wholesale markets in the States and Union Territories, and (ii) the State Agricultural Marketing Boards and State Directorates of Agricultural Marketing, with the Directorate of Marketing & Inspection of the Union Ministry of Agriculture, for effective and efficient information exchange. Investment in networking of about 7000 Wholesale Agricultural Produce Markets in the Country will facilitate globalization of Indian Agriculture (and also globalization of Indian Markets) in addition to strategically establish Supply-Chain Model (SCM).

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, in the Union Ministry of Agriculture sanctioned a Central Sector Scheme 'NICNET Based Agricultural Marketing Information Network (AGMARK-NET)', with a Project Cost estimate of about Rs. ten crore. Under the project, it was envisaged to link 810 nodes (735 agricultural markets and 75 State Marketing Boards/DMI offices) to begin with, through its attached office, Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI), during the year 2000-02. During the tenth five year plan, further expansion to 2000 additional markets, Regional Portals and GIS based National atlas of Markets has also been approved. As part of the expansion programme, about 1400 more markets are being networked.

10. Limitations

The use of new media tools has just begun in India during the last decade. Those who are harnessing the technology have been making sincere experiments to participate in the development processes. The examples discussed here are picked up from scores of websites and cannot be termed as representative. Intention to site them in this paper was to document such initiatives and not to carry out a critical analysis.

It must be acknowledged here that these initiatives suffer from several factors that hamper the efforts for the all-round development of the deprived sections. Some of these factors are:

- Paucity of funds to provide computer and Internet connectivity at every place
- Non-availability of uninterrupted electricity to use the new technology
- Non-availability of technical support to run the centers at remote area of India
- Non-availability of trainers to train people to use the technology
- Computer and Internet illiteracy. Computers in most places do not have regional language fonts that can be used to read contents in the web sites.
- Limitations to use regional languages to enable farmers to use contents of the web-linked databases
- Most of the contents available in English.

11. Conclusion & Suggestions

Media Community expert Rostow, Lerner and Schramm discussed the importance of development communication in communication process. But how much effective have development communication been, is a question that arises in our mind. This is because, even after the omnipresence of media in our society; there is a vast difference between the rich and the poor in most developing countries.

According to experts the main obstruction in the path to development is that the scope of information is not available to everybody and that the development brought through development communication should be equally shared by all section of the society. Opening up of different mass media is necessary so that common people have easy access to them. Availability of information will open up new avenues of development. In Indian context, mass-media expert

functions in a manner as if development communication is a favour they are doing to common people. Development communication sadly is not given its due importance to a large and developing country like India. Politicians and bureaucrats still believe that different economical and infrastructural projects undertaken by the government is enough to eradicate poverty. Development communicator of our country laid more stress on the projects undertaken by the government rather than communicating these information to the mass.

India, despite the communication and information technology revolution, there does not appear to be a commensurate change in the lives of millions of the poor. Indeed for the poor the promise of the new information age — knowledge for all- seems as a distant star.

With the advent of electronic media it was thought that the print media will loose its importance, and ultimately perish. But, this never happened. Print media with its features and advantages not only competed with electronic media but is still a favourite among many, especially the educated class who are info-holic, prefer interpretation and love reading in their leisure hours. However, print media has become highly commercialized, and social responsibility has taken a back seat. Today a key feature of print media, unfortunately, is the glossy reporting. With the increasing cost of news –print and production, and the pressure of market imperatives, newspaper house has started and is following the trend of carrying ad-friendly fluff at the cost of more serious developmental reports. There have been trends of leading dailies over the past few years to drop their special sections devoted to development and health.

The government controlled media has been more or less toeing a centralized form of communication. AIR (All India Radio) during its initial days formulated its community policies in Delhi and got it translated to various languages for broadcasting. However, in this process it never looked into regional variations of the problems, and the necessity of customizing the messages was not felt. Hence, spending so much transmission time on such issues and messages could never give positive result.

Community radio, an important weapon to development has not been enough importance and popularity. Community radio can help in development of local area by upholding their problem or disseminating information locally. Steps have not been taken by the government to popularize this form of radio to support and influence communities to set up these. Rules have not properly been framed to regularize the contents of private channels. Plans should have been drawn in a manner to strictly promote development through radio channels which have not been done.

The state controlled television, Doordarshan, which has a very wide coverage area too has its program designed in the same fashion and hence suffer from the same affliction as that of radio. Here, programs are prepared without keeping the target audience in mind. Development communicator fails to prepare development messages and programmes that can inform as well as entertain its viewers. A good development communicator is one who can pass on

development message without bringing in boredom. But broadcasters in television have often failed in it. Projects like SITE and Kheda though initially successful could not be continued throughout years later. Educational TV or Country Wide Classroom projects are more successful on pen and paper than practically. It failed to meet its targeted TRP points.

Programmes like Gyan-Darshan, though educational and informative in its approach, but lacks efficiency in its presentation. School and college goers who are most used to private satellite channels are rarely even aware of these programmes. Development communicators should try to popularize these programmes. This can be done by being more interesting and attractive in its approach and bring variety in choice of subjects. Use of more colours, picture and info-graphic can make the presentation styles more acceptable. In such a condition it is necessary for a developing country like India, to most urgently rethink their communication policies and research priorities to address the information problems and knowledge gaps in social development. Development communicator should try in applying communication technology for economic and social changes. Problems that lie in the path should be found out and highlighted. This should include both government policies and other different policies that initiate faster social development to match and sustain the momentum of economic progress. Given, the current media scenario, and the needs of the development sector, it is necessary for a development communicator to develop a regulatory framework that shall under the umbrella of public service broadcasting shall include state owned media as well as noncommercial broad casting. This will encourage non-profit institutions such as community organizations, local bodies and NGOs to participate in development communication. Media education and literacy to create demand for better, need based media stories and programmes are necessary. This is important to attract readers and viewers and to pass the development messages among the common mass, for which the programmes are undertaken.

Decentralization and provision of training for communities is necessary for local broadcasting like community radio. Putting communication resources in the hands of community is a way to achieve success in developmental projects with the use of mass-media.

- Community Internet Centers at the Village and remote areas.
- Bio Gas Plants, mini Wind mills, solar power plants for uninterrupted electricity.
- Setting up Technical support Centers at villages.
- Skilled person to the villages for training.
- Sites should be in the regional languages.

Yet, these initiatives deserve to be chronicled as the first steps in the digital era in India, particularly in the process of development. It will be useful to study these and other initiatives to find out how the farmers have actually benefited. Such studies will be useful also to the owners of the web sites.

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