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# UNIT 31      MEDIA

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## 31.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit deals with the role of media in the sphere of culture and tourism. After going through this Unit you will know about:

- various forms of media,
- the role of media with special reference to culture,
- the place of media in promoting cultural tourism, and
- media as an agency to preserve culture.

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## 31.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the earlier eight Blocks of this course on culture we discussed various aspects of Indian culture. In the present Block we are discussing policy issues in culture. This Unit of the Block on policy issues is devoted to media.

We are living in the age where telecommunication is gradually bringing the world together. It is not that distances have been reduced, rather the speed of communication has made it possible to interact with other parts of the world in all possible ways. In this age of telecommunicative revolution, it becomes important to understand the role of media. It is very difficult to assign a fixed role to media as it is seen from different perspectives by different people associated with culture and tourism. Media itself also has its own perception about its role. In the course of our discussion in this Unit we will examine these different perceptions. Tourism, both, as a phenomenon as well as an industry also heavily depends on media. We will examine the role of media in shaping people's attitude towards culture and cultural tourism. Let us start with various types of media.

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## 31.2 MEDIA AND ITS TYPES

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The technology of modern mass media\communication results from the confluence of many types of inventions and discoveries, some of which (the printing press, for instance) actually preceded the main thrust of the Industrial Revolution into western culture. Technological ingenuity of the 19th and 20th centuries has been responsible for the development of the **newer means** of mass communication, particularly broadcasting, without which the present near global diffusion of printed words, pictures, and sounds would have been impossible. The steam printing press, radio, motion pictures, television and various methods of sound recording as well as systems of mass production and distribution gave communication a mass base.

Technology was not, however, the only pre-requisite for the development of mass communication in the West. A large public of literate citizens was necessary before giant publishing and newspaper empire might employ extant communication technology to satisfy widespread desires or needs for popular reading materials. Affluence and interest are

pre-requisites for the maintenance of the radio, television, cinema and recording industries as well as institutions that are presently most highly developed in wealthy industrial nations.

The telecommunication revolution, satellites and computer networks in last 2 - 3 decades have completely changed the nature of mass communication. Now the influence of a particular media is not restricted to a region or nation; it goes beyond the boundaries of nations and opinions can be made and mobilised globally.

Media is a vast area and a number of methods of communication are adopted through the media in the field of culture and tourism. They can broadly be divided into two categories:

- i) The material developed for specific purpose by the government, industry or individuals in relation to culture and tourism, and
- ii) Mass media which in some way or the other represents culture.

We have discussed these in our course TS-1 (Block 6). Here we are more concerned about mass media which includes:

i) Print : newspapers, magazines and journals

ii) Radio

iii) Television and films.

i) **Print:** A large number of daily newspapers in English, Hindi and other languages are published in India. A greater number of periodicals are also brought. Most of these are owned by private companies or individuals. A few are taken out by political parties or government. Its influence is more among literate sections.

ii) **Radio:** Radio in India is a completely government owned mass media and covers more than 90% of population and area.

iii) **Television and films:** Television in India is largely government owned. Now a number of private channels are also operating. In terms of reach, government owned television (**DoorDarshan**), has a very wide reach while private channels have a limited reach. Films are mostly made by private companies or individuals. Sometimes government also sponsors films on some specific issues or aspects. Besides, films made on specific aspects of culture in the mainstream cinema (though mainly devoted to entertainment) also influences culture in a big way (you have already read about it in Block-4)

Media are not entirely free to follow their own whims in serving the masses. As is the case of any market, consumer satisfaction limits the nature and quantity of the material produced and circulated. Media is also restricted in some measure by laws governing libel, slander and other regulations. In almost every modern nation, privileges to use broadcasting frequencies are circumscribed either loosely or rigidly by government regulations. It is because Media is viewed as a machinery which could contribute a lot in determining the public opinion about any issue.

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### 31.3 MEDIA : IMPLICATIONS

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Lively controversy centres on the effects of public communication upon audience not only in matters concerning public opinion on political issues but in matters of the development of personal life styles, tastes and influences upon consumer behaviors. Many sociologists follow the theory that media seems to influence attitudes and behavior only in so far as it confirms the status- quo, i.e., Others believe that Media provided potent sources of information and persuasion for most people. It can be accepted that most people in technological societies form their personal views of the social realities beyond their immediate experience from messages presented to them through public communication. It is in this context that Media becomes an important instrument in determination of public opinion.

The success of Mass media as an instrument of commercial advertising has been constant and noticeable. Present evidence indicates that various instruments of Media produce varying effects upon different segments of the audience. The case of Media in tourism is a

bit different as it is expected by audience that in reporting the development of a nation/region, Media will play a neutral role. It is expected and most people believe that Media will present the free and correct picture of socio- political conditions of a region. It cannot be influenced by the economic/commercial interests. Most reliable surveys show that the majority of the people of the world are usually satisfied with the kind of a mass communication available to them. Lacking alternatives to the communication that they easily and conveniently receive, most people seem to accept what they are given without complaint. It is perhaps that they believe in Media. Usually Media being independent of government, is expected to be impartial in attitude. It is expected of Media to preserve this image. Media is expected to promote the beneficial image of society, not the dark gloomy side.

In the field of culture the role of media is very crucial in a society like India. In a democratic society Media is not a monolith. There are different strands in the society. Similarly different people view it differently and have their own expectations from it. In the field of culture and tourism let us discuss the expectations of the government, the tourism industry, the activists, the tourists and the general public.

The government expects that media will propagate its policies and help in their implementation. The industry expects the media to help in the promotion of tourism as per their perception. The activists want media to help in their fight against the commercialisation of culture which the industry or government is unable to check. They expect media to take positions against formulation of wrong policies and facilitate implementation of sound policies. The conservation of culture is the main agenda of the activists and they expect the media to support them in their cause. The tourists expect the media to provide them a balanced picture of the things which interest them as also the complete information with a proper review. The general public also expects the media to inform, to review and to expose the vested interests either in industry or government policies.

As already indicated the media in India is not of a single type. Different media have their own perception about their roles and responsibilities. They are many times governed by attitudes and interests of their consumers or clients (readers/viewer/listeners). They have to see their commercial interests - circulation, advertising revenue etc. Keeping in the view the interests of media and different expectations from it one can study the role of media which is manifold. Let us now see the role of media in the field of culture and tourism.

**Check Your Progress-1**

- 1) Write a small note on a different types of media discussed in the Unit.

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- 2) What are the expectations of tourist industry and general public from the media?

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## 31.4 ROLE OF MEDIA

One could identify five main functions of Media/Mass communication.

- i) Firstly, it involves collection, shifting, processing information and its dissemination to enable the recipient to form judgement and opinions which is an integral part of the democratic process.
- ii) Secondly, Media serves to interpret data, persuade and motivate people. This function is inseparably related to the process of socio-economic development and the organisation of community activities for the pursuit of common objectives. In this particular context it must be emphasised that information is not merely the raw material or news. It is much more. It provides the material base of knowledge of diverse societies/places. Hence, information, motivation, interpretation and persuasion are the important functions of communication.
- iii) Thirdly, Media is concerned with education and transmission of the social realities in historical perspective.
- iv) The fourth function of Media is socialization. It facilitates the involvement of people - individually and collectively, in public life, decision making and active participation in problem solving activities, as an integral part of the democracy and public life.
- v) Finally, leisure and entertainment are also the functions of communication. This is where its relation to the creative arts comes in. It helps foster culture not only in tune with its diversity, but also with the objectives of making it a condition of a better quality of life for the vast masses of the people.

In case of tourism, Media plays a crucial role as it promotes the dialogue between different cultures and thus leads to better understanding of other cultures. Media also provides a platform for exchange of ideas to general public and various other agencies involved in the sphere of culture in diverse ways.

In the earlier Section we talked about the expectations of different groups from media and in this Section we talked about the role of media. You would notice that many times the expectations are met but at times there is a gap. Let us understand this process. As far as dissemination of information is concerned it is by and large fulfilled by the media. When it comes to review or analysis, a number of subjective elements creep in. Here the constraints of individual perceptions (the ideas of people writing on these issues), the commercial interests of newspapers (publishing advertisements irrespective of their effects) come in. The state owned media has another problem of standing by government policies (even though individuals in societies might have reservations about them). In general media tries to maintain a balance between their commercial interests and societal responsibilities. The activists feel that the commercialisation is gradually gaining an upper hand in media. They have therefore initiated public awareness and public interest campaigns to counter harmful influences on society. Examples of campaigns against pollution and drugs, maintaining environmental balance, need for conserving heritage etc. are significant in this direction. We will discuss more of these issues in the subsequent Sections.

### Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss three important roles of Media.

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2) What are the constraints of Media?

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### 31.5 MEDIA, CULTURE AND TOURISM

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Media plays very crucial role in perpetuation of traditional values and simultaneously it is a vehicle of change also. Similarly, tourism also performs these two functions. Traditional image is portrayed as attractive feature and the intermixing of tourists with it initiates change by mutual respect. As culture is influenced by media and tourism in almost similar fashion it is natural that culture and tourism must be influenced by media policy and vice-versa.

Let us clearly examine how media gives space to culture and tourism. In spite of mass media's over indulgence with politics, personalities and news of diverse types, almost every newspaper and magazines have separate sections on culture and tourism. You would get information about cinema, music, dance, festivals, handicrafts, fashion, cuisine, television and a whole range of cultural aspects. The culture is covered in three ways:

- i) as information about happenings in these areas,
- ii) reviews, analysis and opinions, and
- iii) through advertisements for the promotion as well as campaigns for or against specific issues.

The same is the case with radio and television. Through these people know, understand and form opinions about various regions, customs and other aspects of culture. A large number of periodicals devoted exclusively to fine arts, architecture, literature, etc. are also published. As far as tourism industry is concerned they use media for promoting tourism through:

- i) the means of mass media by placing news items, advertisements, sponsored features and programmers, and
- ii) by developing material in the form of folders, brochures, display material, slides, newsletters, magazines devoted to various aspects of tourism and travel, etc.

For tourism Media is a source of information for tourists. Tourists like to have some knowledge of the existing condition of the place and its culture. If Media exaggerates the impact of any event over the society it creates doubts in the mind of tourist/visitor.

Mass media is an avenue which is expected to be free from commercial compulsions. Hence it becomes the best option to know about any particular place as it's reporting is expected to be impartial.

Media with its extensive network caters to varied interests including minor cultural traditions. It is by writing about them that Media makes them known to the world. Media is also expected to promote and protect those minor cultural traditions which are now becoming extinct whether it is an art form or craft tradition. Tourist agencies are basically concerned with profits. They, therefore, promote only those cultural traditions which have good market value.

Media also provides an option through which a tourist can share his/her experience with wider world which can, in turn, promote more tourists to visit the place. It also provides an avenue by which the tourist can express his/her complaint. Media can, and at times it does, mediate between public authority and visitor. In many cases Film Media has played a major promotional role in destination marketing. For example, movies are filmed at different

locations depicting different aspects of natural beauty, monuments, resorts, hotels, arts and crafts, shopping centres, dresses, jewellery and what not. This, to a large extent, motivates people to visit the destinations and encourages domestic tourism in a big way. For example, the hut at Gulmarg where the **Bobby** film song was filmed became a major tourist attraction. The palaces and **havelis** of Rajasthan, the Vrindaban gardens near Mysore, the train journeys to Darjeeling, Ooty and Shimla, etc. (the list would be too big to mention) can all be cited as examples. The TV serials are playing this role in a big way. Infact, the film city itself is a big tourist attraction and many domestic tourists visit Mumbai to have a glimpse of the stars as well as the studios.

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## 31.6 MEDIA : THE GUARDIAN

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Media being an independent institutions functions as a watchdog. It keeps an eye over the growing process of commercialisation of cultural heritage and society.

Tourism is a foreign exchange earning "industry" for government, hence it is given various concessions. For example, the allotment of big plots of land along the sea coast in Goa and other places is at times at the cost of local people. It also destroys the fragile ecology of the coastal region. Similarly, large tracts of land are allotted for the construction of Golf courses. Media as a watchdog can monitor the proper utilisation of concessions as well as do the social costing.

The policies of the government at times may not be suitable for local population. In such situations the media gives a voice to various affected groups. A case in point is the tourist plan in Bangalore. Here the Nandy Hills project is a \$ 22 million, 250 acre world class resort development plan. It is designed to encourage Intermeditorial Tourism in South Asia. It has displaced a traditional farming community which for generations used this area for cultivation of rice, millet, ragi, and other crops and has also used the area for grazing their cattle.

The developers have displaced the traditional community of farmers along with dairying co-operatives which were the dominant economic activity. The government has not surveyed either the environmental impacts or cared for local public opinion. It is in these contexts that Media is expected to play its role as a watchdog. They have to report the local public opinion and have to cover the whole issue keeping in mind the interests of the poor villagers and to provide a voice to them.

Similarly, in the context of cultural heritage, Media is expected to play the role of a watchdog. The commercialisation and vulgarization of culture by marketing it to tourists may destroy it for the host population. What happened to Goa's carnival is a good example. Media is expected to highlight the side effects of massive commercialization of our cultural heritage. It is expected of Media to analyse problems in context of changing socio-economic conditions.

**Check Your Progress-3**

- 1) Explain the relationship between Media and Culture.

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2) Can media play the role of watchdog of society?

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### 31.7 LET US SUM UP

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In a democratic society media plays a very important role in all spheres of life. It, at times helps in initiating and conducting debates on important issues affecting society. In a country like ours where government has a lot of say in the issues related to culture, media establishes a dialogue between the state and the people.

Various groups and individuals have a lot of expectations from mass media in the area of preserving national heritage and culture. At times mass media is described as the conscience keeper of the nation. The role of media, therefore, becomes crucial. We discussed the role of media and also people's expectations. You must have noticed that media disseminates information and news about various aspects of culture. It, at the same time, helps in putting things in proper perspective and provides a platform to people to discuss their opinions and concerns on vital issues of culture. Both private and government controlled media have their limitations. In spite of the short comings mass media by and large effectively works as watchdog of society. They try to have a balance between their commercial interests and societal interests.

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### 31.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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**Check Your Progress-1**

- 1) See Sec. 31.2
- 2) Sec Sec. 31.3

**Check Your Progress-2**

- 1) See Sec. 31.4
- 2) See Sec. 31.4

**Check Your Progress-3**

- 1) See Sec. 31.5
- 2) See Sec. 31.5