UNIT 15 TELEVISION, FILMS, AND PRINT PUBLISHING

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15.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to three different platforms of mass media: TV, Film, and print publishing. We will discuss their features one by one as ways of mass communication and explore the status of all three industries as existing in India. Owing to their popularity with the masses. We will also discuss their social impact through representations and inclusion of various segments of society based on gender, religion, sexuality, etc., in the narratives on these media. We will later cover gender representation in the advertising industry as well, as no media format today is untouched by advertising. Lastly, we will ponder upon a few of the technical strategies adopted by producers for creating content for representation.

15.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- describe television, films and print publishing as media of mass communication;

- distinguish between their features;
- comment on their existing industries in India;
- discuss issues of representation exclusive to these media;
- observe gender representation in advertising, and
- analyse technical strategies in representation.

15.2 PLATFORMS OF MASS MEDIA

Imagine if you had to communicate to a large section of the population simultaneously; what tools would you use? Announce a sale, inform about a health hazard, or invite people to vote; how would you do it? There are a multitude of mediums available to us, plurally called the media. You may use a telephone to call a friend and an email to write to your boss. Similarly, mass media are the tools for communicating to a large population, not a singular entity. These media are used to spread information, education, and entertainment. Earlier in the times of kings and queens, there used to be a drummer and an announcer who roamed around the streets of the cities, visiting village to village to spread the king's message.

Today's Mass media includes varied platforms suitable to different populations and customisable according to different messages. Print media relies on the written word and uses paper in the form of books, newspapers, magazines, etc., to disseminate information. Electronic media encapsulates Radio and Television, catering to many listeners and viewers, respectively. New media entails the medium of the Internet, accessible through computers, smartphones, tablets and laptops and opening the world of websites and apps.

In this unit, we will discuss the three most popular media of mass communication in India: Film, TV and Print.

15.3 TELEVISIONS AS A MEDIUM OF MASS COMMUNICATION

You might have heard from your parents or grandparents about the early days of television when the streets used to be deserted when Ramayana and Mahabharata aired on *Doordarshan*. You may also recall adjusting your meal times with your family during your childhood based on the schedule of a popular TV show. Even today, the living rooms of most households in India would have a television and more in bedrooms, depending on the economic stature of the family. According to numbers as well, Television has the highest penetration in India. But what is it that makes Television so popular? Is it the enchanting visuals that make it so captivating or the immediacy of the medium that makes it so fascinating? Or is the accompanying audio that transports a viewer to far corners of the world or instantly changes the mood? Let us discuss the features of the medium in detail.

15.3.1 Features of the Medium

1. Television is an audio-visual medium. It caters to two senses simultaneously, auditory and visual senses, thus engaging the audience in more ways than one.

Because of this, consuming television programming is an easy and effortless process for the viewers.

2. Television is a domestic medium. You are not leaving the comfort of your house to watch television like in the case of films, outdoor media and live events. You can enjoy it in the company of your family as well.

3. Television is a live medium. Whether the Olympics or the Republic Day parade, television can instantly transport you to another space with the help of its audio and visuals. People will opine that it is much better to watch a match on TV rather than in the stadium due to the availability of close-ups, replays and live commentary.

4. Television is a dynamic medium. While the newspaper is published once a day and radio news bulletins also run quickly, television news can be updated regularly. You may recall reporters stating that new facts have been gathered and are being added, popularly known as 'Breaking news'.

5. Television is an expensive medium. While earning revenue from advertising primarily, Television production is more expensive than many other mass media formats. It takes cameras, sets, audio equipment and several skilled personnel to create a bit of programming.

15.3.2 Television Industry of India

The Indian Television industry comprises several television channels owned by government organisations and the private sector. From *Doordarshan* as the first Television channel in 1959, with a broadcast schedule that lasted only a few hours a day, to private channels today running 24*7, which only focuses on telemarketing, the Indian TV industry has come a long way. The privatisation of broadcasting in 1991 brought several international players to the Indian market, such as Star and CNN, and slowly exposed the audience to global content.

Today, the country has around 900 television channels spanning multiple languages in various regions. It is one of the largest industries in India, with an estimated turnover of 1083 Billion Rupees in the year 2020-21 (Statista, 2021). But in recent times, the continued expansion of the television broadcast industry has been impeded by the rising popularity of the OTT (Over The Top) platforms since the COVID lockdown period. These platforms are accessible through the Internet, and a large audience moved towards them for easy consumption amidst a disrupted life.

Activity - 1

Search the Internet for the type of television channels in India. Then, list the five most-watched television channels and identify their historical publishing, content, ownership patterns and revenue models.

15.3.3 Issues of Representation on Television

Many of us would relate to the joy of finding a character whose mannerisms, beliefs or actions are personally relatable. We all have been excited to find someone from the same community or city on the hot seat of the popular television show *Kaun Banega Crorepati*. With the latitude of popularity of the medium, it becomes only natural to

emulate and idolise people you see on the screen. In this case, it can be easily concluded that television has been an influential part of life for a large population.

Many research studies in the area have concluded that a person's worldview is also affected by the television programming he or she is exposed to, either directly or indirectly. In this case, misrepresenting and underrepresenting characters from various sections of society can be a worrying matter. Stereotypes are a set of rules imposed upon certain communities or groups of people and thus result in a biased representation or misrepresentation of the community. For example, the daily soaps on TV channels have been showcasing female characters only as housewives. Exposure to the popular *saas-bahu* dramas has shaped the perception of women in the audience. They strive to be or to have women in the family who are as pious, religious, mild-mannered and good-looking as those seen on the screen. Watching these shows, one could also point out the vamp and the heroine with ease due to their stereotyped dressing style.

Underrepresentation would be a lack of certain characters on screen. For example, you could not recall a dark, more than average weighted character on any of the TV shows. Neither would you be able to recall a character who is transgender or homosexual. Even if you can think of an example, they are likely not the story's protagonist. Being an immensely popular medium, television programming underrepresents many communities and makes them feel side-lined.

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. What are the features of Television as a medium of mass communication?

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2. What are two primary issues in representation on Television?

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15.4 FILMS AS A MEDIUM OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Can you recall your favourite film star endorsing some brand in an advertisement? Or a popular song converted into a bhajan, played during religious festivities? Or actors beyond their prime joining politics and campaigning for other politicians? This is the power of cinema; it touches all walks of life in India and affects the masses in ways unimaginable. From fashion to lifestyle to travel destinations, films are responsible for effortlessly shaping the milieu's mindset. But looking closely, films are one art form highly dependent on technology. Ranging from film cameras to shoot, to edit bays to edit and lastly to the projection room to be screened in front of the audience, films are a sum of efforts of multiple technicians to create a piece of art. Derived from many

other media formats, such as script from literature, background score from music, performance from theatre, cinematography from photography or even painting, films not only provide an escape from daily life, they transport the audience into a fantasy world, taking them on a ride for next 3 hours.

15.4.1 Features of the Medium

Following are a few features of the medium:

1. Film is a mass medium. Reaching out to all the people sitting in the theatre at the same time, films cater to the masses. Additionally, they are released on multiple screens across the country or even multiple devices through OTT platforms nowadays.
2. Films are a mechanical art form. They are shot on film strips that are exposed to light to generate chemical reactions using the lens's optics and are cut precisely to match the rhythm of the music.
3. Films are a collaborative medium. Have you ever seen a film's credits at the end of a show? The list consists of hundreds of names, people associated with acting, directing, choreographing dance or action sequences, and even providing lunch to the cast and crew.
4. Films are an impressive medium. They have been pivotal in igniting and supporting many social movements. Think *Rang De Basanti* (2006); you might be able to recall the series of protests and conversations in newsrooms that started across the country.
5. Films are an escapist medium. Sitting in a dark room, cut away from the world, engulfed in sound, pictures and emotion of a make-believe reality, films have always been an escape for the audience, enchanting them for a longer time, even after the screening.
6. Films are an expensive medium. High-selling actors, shooting on foreign locations, and including special effects involve large budgets.

15.4.2 Film Industry of India

From the first feature film *Raja Harishchandra* produced in 1913 to OTT platforms overshadowing the industry today, more than a century later, India's film industry has seen many changes. On average, about 1800 films are produced in India in a year, which is the largest production number in the world. While often mistakenly taken as the Indian film industry, Hindi cinema constitutes a fraction of films produced in India, albeit a major one.

Films are also produced in multiple regional languages, such as Tamil and Bengali Bhojpuri. Apart from the films made in far corners of the country, imports from other countries are also released in India, making it a very important market owing to the population. There have been cases where regional actors have acted in mainstream Hindi cinema, or popular actors from India have also made a leap to foreign films. Since the past decade, major international producers, such as Disney and Fox, have entered the market as producers, thus bringing foreign capital as well.

A still from the movie Raja Harishchandra, 1913 (Picture Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons)

15.4.3 Issues of Representation in Films

Being an expensive and escapist medium, cinema largely has stuck to formulaic storytelling, which relies on select tropes to entertain the audience without risking the invested capital. The formula pertains to an accepted mix of codes that the audience has liked. So, if stories about a rich girl meeting a poor boy and falling in love have proven successful at the box office, filmmakers will add further elements to this and keep making films based on this formula. This will ensure that the audience will turn up in the theatres, and thus, the money spent by the producers will be recovered.

While seeming profitable to the producers, this method has caused a severe lack of deviation and, thus, experimentation in mainstream cinema. Stories would omit any type of deviance from normative sexuality or gender and stick to a certain caste or religion. Female characters would commonly be represented in a sexualised light through item songs or even the characterisation of the role through costumes, roles in the narrative and picturisation as well. The bias is not limited to only gender but extends to religion as well. Muslim and Christian characters would be identifiable from their costumes, and a transgender or a homosexual character would be the butt of jokes in the story. Can you recall a film where the protagonist was a person from the North Eastern region or even a Tamilian?

With the advent of digital filmmaking, film production costs have come down, easing the process and participation in film production. Thus, the amount of experimentation in cinema has increased. You would find characters belonging to all walks of life starting to get meatier roles than just comic sidekicks. Issues about Dalits, religious minorities, and people belonging to any point on the gender spectrum have stories based on them today. The parallel cinema movement has been instrumental in this, and now, OTT platforms also support such narratives.

Activity - 2

Use the Internet to research the success of recent major motion pictures. List five films that are box office successes, locally or internationally. If possible, view the online trailers for these five films. Describe who or what is represented as central to the storyline. Explain why this representation might be appealing to audiences.

Check Your Progress: 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

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

1. What are the different features of films as a medium of mass communication?

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2. What are various issues of representation in films?

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15.5 PRINT PUBLISHING AS A MEDIUM OF MASS COMMUNICATION

This book is one of the many you may have read while completing your education. As a communication process, you read the author's words, thus making sure that the message has been shared. The units in this book were written by different writers, edited by the editorial team and published by the university. It is one of many publications that are printed across the country every year. Thus, it can be summarised that print media uses the printed word to communicate with the audience. It encapsulates all the periodicals, flyers, catalogues, etc., published for communicating with the masses by wide circulation. It is one of the oldest media formats, as early men used to inscribe stone tablets, metal sheets, or palm leaves and circulate them for wider reading even before the paper was invented. It was after the invention of the typing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century that the publication of books began. The same press further evolved into mechanical, electronic and now digital publishing over time, allowing for faster printing and thus leading to printing newspapers, which could be circulated daily.

15.5.1 Features of the Medium

Following are a few features of print media:

1. Print media needs a literate audience. Unlike the audio and visual formats, it depends on the written word and thus needs the audience to be literate to consume it.

2. Print media works according to a deadline, i.e. it needs to be published periodically and thus needs to abide by the timelines strictly. One cannot print a midday edition of a morning newspaper if anything urgent arrives, nor can one stall the printing in wait for a late arrival news.

3. It can be reread and rechecked. Unlike the dynamic media formats, print does not return to its word after printing. TV broadcasts may keep updating the facts, but print needs to recheck and confirm before printing. Similarly, the audience can reread a sentence at its own pace for better understanding. For the same reason, print media is deemed more credible than any other media format.

4. Print media provides more scope and time for analysis. Depending on the audience's interest, one may read the editorial on a burning issue after consuming the story on the main page. TV and radio do not allow you to delve deeper into an issue. You may need to wait for another show for that.

5. Print does not have the aid of audio-visuals; it depends solely on the creative use of language. Not catering to the auditory and visual senses (apart from a few sparse photographs), print relies heavily on the written word to attract the readers' attention. You may recall some headlines relying on wordplay, puns and metaphors, all tools of literary art, to capture the audience's attention.

15.5.2 Publishing Industry of India

The first newspaper was published in India by James Augustus Hickey and named the *Bengal Gazette* in 1780. Leading the way, within a decade, newspapers in many indigenous languages were being printed across the country. These papers also played a pivotal role in motivating and uniting the public against the British Raj, thus paving the way to the freedom struggle.

HICKY's
BENGAL GAZETTE;
OR THE ORIGINAL
Calcutta General Advertiser.

Hickey's Bengal Gazette dated March 10, 1781
(Courtesy: James Augustus Hicky, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

About 1000 dailies are being printed in Hindi, while the second most popular language is English, with a circulation of 250 dailies. *Dainik Jagran* is the most popular daily, with a total readership of over 70 lakh nationwide. While being the most popular medium at the time of independence, the popularity of print is overshadowed today due to the rise of radio, television, and now the Internet as media platforms.

15.5.3 Issues of Representation in Print

Have you ever visited a newspaper office? Publication houses that own and run editorial, printing and circulation of periodicals are huge organisations. A popular newspaper

needs a staff of thousands, spread across the country, to be kept up and running. Thus, it would need much capital to keep the organisation thriving. Therefore, the print media has been owned by large conglomerates which have wielded soft power over the masses. Depending on owners' inclination, the media, and thus the coverage, also leans. So, if the owners are influenced by a particular political party, religious ideology, or gender discourse, the effect would be seen in the content.

There has been a long-standing debate on the covers of magazines airbrushing and editing the images of the stars to fit into and further reinforce the stereotypical standards of beauty. Moreover, the writing and the headlines would associate women necessarily with their partners or the nearest male relative; for example, you would always read "Mother of two dies in a road accident" compared to "Businessman killed in a car crash". See the difference? It is how the writers define the characters in a news story. Moreover, stories about crimes of passion usually find more takers than other stories. Thus, you could see more space given to them in the papers.

Check Your Progress: 3

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

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

1. What are the features of print media?

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2. What is the most popular language for print media in India?

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15.6 GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ADVERTISING

We briefly discussed three media platforms, along with their features and impact. But one thing that is common to all media formats, including these three, is advertising. Advertising can be defined as a targeted communication for marketing a product or service. It employs one or more media platforms to reach the target audience. Advertisers buy Media space, which generates revenue for the platforms, for example, space in a newspaper or airtime on television. After that, advertisers create messages carefully suiting the features of different platforms and inducing the product's sale. These messages are called advertisements.

Advertisements are popular media products crafted and consumed with a specific purpose: sale. Advertisers use various types of narratives to relate to the audience and motivate the audience to become customers. These narratives would be relatable to connect the audience to the product. For example, think of a detergent ad, and you would recall a white sari-clad woman with her hair in a bun. She would invariably be occupied with household chores and tending to her family. This is a use of a stereotype, depicting a woman as a primary caregiver in a family. Compare this with an ad for toothpaste; you could recall a dentist recommending toothpaste to you, mostly male, dressed in clinical lab coats and many times with a stethoscope around their necks!

The attire emphasises the authority and credibility of a doctor to make a suggestion related to health, irrespective of the fact that dentists hardly use stethoscopes. These two examples elaborate on how gender is depicted in advertisements, thus exposing the audience to the stereotyped messages and reinforcing them further.

Activity - 3

Obtain a collection of audio-visual advertisements from the Internet or television in your country. Try to ensure that these advertisements feature both women and men. Write down your observations on how women are represented in the advertisements vis-àvismen. Identify the implications of these representations based on the following question:

- Are certain representations viewed differently by some members of the group? Why do you think so?

15.7 TECHNICAL STRATEGIES IN REPRESENTATION

Representation in media formats is created by three carefully crafted strategies: selection, omission and construction. Selection pertains to the selection of stories, perspectives, and characters to narrate the story, whether fictional or non-fictional. Omission is editing out the stereotypes by acquiring a fresh perspective. Lastly, construction is the creation of new codes or experimentation with the old ones.

One may think that the media merely reports objectively, but bias is induced as soon as a perspective is taken. For example, think of a news report of a sports tournament; if a reporter chooses to interview only the losing side to gather the facts, the report will have a very subdued and even sad undertone. At the same time, interviewing the winning side would give another lopsided version. In such a case, it is the media person's job to select facts from credible sources, omit the bias and construct the story further. The audience sees everything from the narrator's perspective, and the media holds an extremely powerful position in shaping its perspective. Thus, it becomes imperative for the media to be unbiased in representing all population segments.

15.8 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

(Instructions for the course counsellers)

Some of the pedagogical approaches that can be applied to this unit are:

- Learners should identify various versions of the representation of historical events. For example, books published during and about the period, films created in various genres, artworks or pictures, and other visuals such as photos and music videos. Visit a museum or archive (if one exists in this subject area in your region), and based on this, collect material to prepare an essay about your observations.
- A popular feature film formula focuses on the archetypal myth of the 'heroic journey'. Myths represent implicit belief systems that express a culture's fears, desires and aspirations. In these stories, the hero (usually male)- unaware of his destiny- is called upon to take up an important quest. The hero usually passes through several stages as part of the quest, including his 'birth' or

beginning, becoming aware of his 'calling' or destiny, experiencing romance, encountering foes, receiving advice from a wise elder and, finally, returning home. Based on this:

- Develop a list of films that are based on this formula. Account for their appeal. Describe the hero, explaining to what extent the hero represents the desires and values of the individual in society.
- Describe the camera work as well as the use of sound and music. Assess how these technical elements reinforce the representations central to the story (i.e., the impression created of a villain or a romantic hero). Explain how the meaning of particular scenes in the film would change if, for example, the soundtrack were different.

- Visit the websites for mainstream, Indigenous or community media that represent alternatives to blockbusters. Browse the selection of stories being told through these companies or organisations. Compare these stories to those being produced by major film studios. Assess the value of these 'independent' organisations in giving representation or voice to alternative Indigenous stories.
- Discuss the accountability of the film and television industries to their viewers and their relationship to human progress. Why should all viewers be able to see themselves and their stories on the screen? Discuss the implications of mainstream stories and representations for various audiences. Explore how speciality channels, various Internet sites, blogs and new technologies influence storytelling and offer alternative representations to audiences.

15.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we touched upon three different platforms of mass media: TV, film, and print publishing. We then discussed their features one by one as ways of mass communication and explored the status of their industrial setups in India. After this, we observed their social impact in the form of representations and inclusion of gender, religion, sexuality, etc., in the narratives of these media. We also covered the representation of gender in the advertising industry as well, mulling over its importance through other media formats. Lastly, we covered a few of the technical strategies adopted by producers for creating content for representation.

15.10 KEYWORDS

Aspect Ratio : Ratio between width and height of the screen. For standard definition, it is 4:3, while for HD, it is 16:9.

Primary audience : Category of audience specifically targeted by the program producers.

Secondary audience : Category of audience covered indirectly by the programmers, such as mothers watching kids' channels along with the kids.

B-roll : Additional footage shot to support the narrative

Close-up : A shot which provides visual details of an object

Editing : Putting together a combination of shots to create a sequence

Cinematography : Art of shooting moving images on film

Sound design : To create the audio track layered with music, dialogues and sound effects

Advertisement : Content created to increase sales of goods or services. Occupies space in media and generates revenue.

Headline : An explanatory title in a newspaper explaining the gist of the story

15.11 FURTHER READINGS

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3. Monaco, J. (2009). *How to read a film: Movies, media, and beyond*. Oxford University Press.
4. Murray, S. (2020). *Introduction to Contemporary Print Culture: Books as Media*. Routledge.
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15.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. Features of Television as a medium of mass communication:
   a. It is an audio-visual medium.
   b. It is a domestic medium.
   c. It is a live medium.
   d. It is a dynamic medium.
   e. It is an expensive medium.
2. Misrepresentation and underrepresentation of characters on TV are two primary concerns. Misrepresentation is when a community is wrongly portrayed, and underrepresentation is a lack of characters from a particular community.

Check Your Progress: 2

1. The following are a few features of the film as a medium of mass communication:
   a) Films are a mass medium.

b) Films are a mechanical art form.

c) Films are a collaborative medium.

d) Films are an impressive medium.

e) Films are an escapist medium.

f) Films are an expensive medium.

2. Minorities based on gender, religion, region, etc., are underrepresented in cinema. Films, being formulaic, stick to a tried and tested storyline, with minor deviations, thus side-lining the minorities.

Check Your Progress: 3

1. The features of print media are as follows:

   a) Print media needs a literate audience.

   b) Print media works according to a deadline.

   c) Print media is deemed more credible than any other media format.

   d) Print media provides more scope for in-depth analysis.

   e) Print media does not have the aid of audio-visuals; it depends on the creative use of language to capture the audience's attention.

2. about 1000 dailies are being printed in Hindi, while the second most popular is English, with a circulation of 250 dailies. *Dainik Jagran* is the most popular daily, with a total readership of over 70 lakh.

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