

## COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

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**M.R. Dua and T. Manonmani, *Communication and Culture: New Prospective and Applications* (New Delhi: Galgotia Publishing Company, 1997) / ISBN: 81-85989-07-9; Price: Rs. 150**

Culture as an active process of Communication is closely related to the concept of development. Communication and culture constitute a vibrant contest relating to human as well as social development. Few years back Maduri Kamraj University held a national seminar on Communication and Culture. Communication scholars across the country presented papers highlighting on the issues related to Communication Culture and development. M.R. Dua and T. Manonmani took a unique venture for publishing a few selected papers in a book under the title of Communication and Culture-New prospective and Applications. The book contains fifteen papers probing the issue of Communication and Culture with multi dimensional approaches.

The editors mentioned in the preface that the new Communication technology has produced two major concerns. One, the development of mediated communication and two, the opening of doors to new experiences and impressions by the media that inspires people to get alienated from their own culture. The editors have rightly quoted Stephen Yeh, advisor in UNESCO's World Commission on Culture and Development as saying that each country should devise its own particular national development strategy to blend the best from the West and preserve the best of the East. Japan is a sitting example as it goes Western by the day and Japanese by the night. The editors without hesitation made the comment 'The role of media becomes very important in developing cultural hegemony and the emergence of alternative media and culture.'

M.R. Dua has tried to define Culture Communication as saying ‘Culture breathes through mass communication.’ It gives a very limited version as Communication goes beyond the limited periphery of Mass Communication. He is right in assessing the immense impact of Communication Technology involving digitalization and several families of satellites leading to super highways. It brings a new era of mass media flooding on the horizon.

Maalan had conducted a survey in collaboration with the Delhi branch of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics. The result of the survey showed that 78 percent of the family members are influenced by television’s commercial messages. The inference of the survey was that the children were highly influenced by the commercials and they want their parents to buy more things, and most of them are luxury items.

Mass media programming was emphasized in the paper communication and culture theories by G. Natarajan. He observed that programming regularly reflects conditions of the people as well as every stage of their economic development and education. In this respect Natarajan considers the principle of freedom of information becomes crucial for the wellbeing of the national culture but how the freedom of information becomes relevant to the understanding of national culture remains unexplained. P.V. Yaseem is apprehensive of the media critics who think the role of Mass Media, particularly, television, is ‘corrupting the Indian Culture.’ According to him such apprehensions lead us to unmindful fallacies creating a sort of general cynicism among the people.

J.S. Yadava in his article Transnational influences and National Culture, expressed concern about the transnational influences on the culture of developing countries. He states that with the advent of new communication technologies, the communication ‘wind’ is steadily taking the form of storm threatening to uproot the national identities and obliterate cultural diversities. To the counter this onslaught he argued for a cultural policy to be adapted by the developing countries like India.

A. Santha has raised some important points about the “cultural invasion in Health communication.” He states that media inputs coming from mass media like television and radio have largely increased awareness of the rural women about public hygiene. Such awareness is certainly an indicator of development but he keeps us informed of a danger that lies in this development. What is it? All the information going to the rural women is mediated from the allopathic point of view. A. Santha has found after conducting a survey “Mother and child care” that most of the queries of village women remained unanswered. He categorized four recurring themes out of the ten questions put forward to a section of rural women. These are:

- a. Oil bath
- b. Papaya and abortion
- c. Diet restriction for lactating mother

#### d. Ideal treatment for jaundice

Santha's main focus was to highlight the conflict between traditional medical system and modern medical system. There is no doubt that despite lot of usefulness, traditional medical system is getting defeated under the onslaught of modern medical system supported by transnational pharmaceutical companies. Santh's conclusion is thus "A virtual invasion is taking place is taking place in the Health front." The write-up dwells on a very important issue, but more investigation was required.

Another important contribution by S. Arul Selvan deals with "Radio and socialization". Selvan states that 88 % of the children have access to radio and 90.67 % of the children listened to radio everyday as per the survey in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. The most astonishing point revealed in this study was the radio's popularity with children did not end with the increasing popularity of television, and thus, radio plays an important part in the socialization of children. There is no doubt that community radio could have played a very significant role to meet the localized demand of the children and thus could have greatly contributed in their socialization process.

The Editors have certainly enriched the media and Communication studies by their efforts highlighting some very important issues on culture and communication. Culture and communication are supposed to be in perfect harmony with one another having great relevance for a society.