Chapter eight

Summary and Conclusions
SUMMARY

MASS media has been a subject of innumerable research. Role of media in political communication and mass mobilisation has been an outstanding aspect of media society relationship in contemporary times in every part of the modern world system. This study attempted to understand the role played by the press in political mobilisation in colonial and independent India.

MASS media of communications play a significant role in society. So much so that the press has been called the fourth estate, a crucial pillar of democracy. Media exert great influences on our day-to-day live, so powerful that the present day society is increasingly being called an ‘information society’. It is a society where information has became the most crucial ingredient. Be it politics or economy, art or architecture, games or gossip, music or dance, everywhere information play a crucial role. And the channels for the transmission of this information are the mass media_press, television, and radio.

Mass media play an important role of mediation_the mediating role between objective social reality and personal experience. The mass media are intermediate and mediating in several senses: they often lie between us (as receivers) and that part of potential experience which is outside our direct perception or contact; they may stand between ourselves and other institutions with which we have dealings_law, industry, the state etc.; they may provide a link between these different institution; the media are also channels for others to contact us, or us to contact others; they often provide the material for us to form perceptions of other groups, organizations and events.

Mass media are also the agents of social change. The specific kind of social change they are expected to help accomplish is the transition to new customs and practices and in some cases, to different social relationships. Behind such changes in
behavior must necessarily lie substantial changes in attitude, beliefs, skills, and social norms.

Having discussed mass media and its various function we go on to analyse various aspects of communication in the next chapter. Communication always requires at least three elements: the source, the message and the destination. A source may be an individual (speaking, writing, drawing, and gesturing) or a communication organisation (like a newspaper, publishing house, and television studio or motion picture studio). The messages may be in the form of ink on paper, sound waves in the hand, a flag in the air, or any other signal capable of being interpreted meaningfully. The destination may be an individual listening, watching, or reading, or a member of a group, such as a discussion group, a lecture audience, a football crowd, or a mob; or an individual member of the particular audience we call the mass audience, such as the reader of a newspaper or a viewer of the television.

Organizations, much like individuals, use communications, and are affected by them in a variety of ways. The structure of large and complex organizations in particular, and the degree to which they are able to fulfil their purposes, depend in part on the mass media channels available to them for receiving and imparting information. While the principal focus in the studies of communications in organizations is on formal organization such as political parties, business enterprises or labour union, some of the observations apply to social units that are not ordinarily thought of as organization family groups, neighborhoods, or nation states.¹

Communications facilitate the internal functioning of most organizations in at least four ways: they help to ensure coordination of the organization’s various parts; they provide technical information that assist members of the organization in doing a particular job or playing a specified role; they furnish intelligence for decision making; and they foster group morale and a sense of belonging.
There are various conceptions of what communication involves. We’ve categorised them in four broad processes (positions A, B, C & D), analysing two of them in detail.

Position A regards communication simply as the sending and receiving of messages with the efficient and effective transmission of information. Position B holds that communication requires a direct exchange of messages. Its appeal is greatest in developing countries where it underlies the campaign for a New World Information Order (NWIO). Position C has received the least attention to date. It can be found in certain Christians discussion of communication, but does not have to be interpreted within a religious context. In essence, it restricts communication to cases where the receiver comes to know better what the sender is actually thinking or feeling. Position D conceives communication in terms of shared meanings that emerge at both the interpersonal and the social level of message making.

Another important discussion in chapter two pertained to Habermas’ conception of public sphere and communications. The theory of public sphere, as articulated in particular by Habermas, argues that, just as the participatory democracy of the Athenian agora depended upon the material base of slavery, so it was the development of competitive market capitalism that provided the conditions, initially in 18th century Britain, for the development of both the theory and practice of liberal democracy. It did so by making available to a new political class, the bourgeoisie, both the time and material resources to create a network of institutions within civil society, such as newspapers, learned and debating societies, publishing enterprises, libraries, universities and polytechnics and museums, within which a new political power, public opinion, could come into existence. The public sphere, as proposed by Habermas, possessed the following key characteristics. It was protected from the power of both church and state by its access to the sustaining resources of a wide range of private individuals with an alternative source of economic power. It was in principle open to all in the same way that access to the market was open to all, because the cost of entry for each individual was
dramatically lowered by the growth in scale of the market. The public sphere thus took on the universalistic aspects of the Hegelian State, where membership of the public sphere was coterminous with citizenship.

The next chapter was devoted to a discussion of the various studies on different processes involving the media theories. The history of research into mass communication is perhaps as old as the mass media of communications themselves. We can characterize the 50 years or more of interest in media effects in terms of three main stages. The first phase spans from the turn of the century to the late 1930s. The first view attributed the media with considerable power to shape opinion and belief, change habits of life, actively mould behaviour and impose political systems even against resistance. The second phase is strongly influenced by the application of empirical method to specific questions about the effects and effectiveness of mass communication. Perhaps, the most influential in this phase were studies of presidential elections in 1940 and 1948 by Lazarsfeld. Berelson and others, and the programme of research into the use of films for training and indoctrination of American servicemen undertaken by Hovland et al. An earlier tradition of social psychological inquiry into the effects of films and other media of communication on crime, aggression and racial and other attitudes should also be considered. In practice, a limited number of frequently cited studies provided the substance for the general view of media effects and effectiveness which was generally being disseminated in social and political science by the end of the 1960s. The third phase, which still persists, is one where new thinking and new evidence is accumulating on the influence of mass communication, especially television, and the long neglected newspapers press.

Media help to establish an order of priorities in a society about its problem and objectives. They do this, not by initiating or determining, but by publicizing according to an agreed scale of values what is determined elsewhere, usually in the political system. Political scientists have been most alert to the process have given the term ‘agenda-setting’ to describe this process.
Next, we went on to discuss the various theories of media. The contours of the symbolic environment (of information, idea, beliefs etc.) which we inhabit are often known to us by way of the mass media and it’s the media, which may inter-relate and give coherence to its disparate elements. This symbolic environment tends to be held in common; the more we share the same media source. While each individual or group does have a unique world of perception and experience, a precondition of organised social life is a degree of common perception of reality and the mass media contribute to this perhaps more than other institutions on a daily, continuous basis, even if the impact is very gradual and not consciously felt.

There are perhaps as many theories on media as the number of functions performed by them. McQuail says that there are two versions of media theories: media-centered and society-centered. The former, as the name suggests, stresses the means of communication as a force for change either through technology or the typical content carried. The latter, on the other hand, emphasize the dependence of both on other forces in society, especially those of politics and money. From this second point of view, the forms of mass media are an outcome of historical change—a reflection and consequence of political liberalisation and industrialisation and a response to demands for servicing from other social institutions. The media-centred view, which has found its advocates in the works of Toronto School and of subsequent writers and its best example in the printing press, allots an independent causal role to the dominant communication technology of the epoch in question.

Some of the major theories of media that were taken up for discussion include Mass society theory; Marxist theory; Political economic media theory; the Frankfurt school and critical theory; Hegemonic theory of media; The socio-cultural approach; and Structural Functionalist approach.

We also discussed media in colonial and independent India. The press played an important role in building and developing Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement. The national movement, on its political side, was possible because of the facility of political education and propaganda provided by the press. With its
help, the Indian nationalist groups were able to popularise among the people the ideas of representative government, liberty, democratic institutions, Home Rule, Dominion status, and Independence. The establishment and extension of the press in India brought about a closer social and intellectual contact between provincial populations. It also facilitated the daily and extensive discussion of the programmes of inter-provincial and national collaboration in spheres of social, political and cultural matters and the holding of national conferences, social, political, and cultural.

In modern India too the press has played a significant role in various socio-economic and political processes and has helped in the process of nation building. Besides, there has been a remarkable growth of the press in India in both daily and periodical press. The reasons for the rapid growth in English and other language newspaper and periodicals are not far to seek. The rising literacy levels have accounted for an upsurge in the demand for the Indian language papers, Hindi as well as other languages. On the other hand, the addition to the population of university graduates, the rise in the purchasing power of the people, there are said to be anywhere around 250 million people in India who can buy consumer durables and fast moving consumer items advertised day in and day out on the TV, and who are targeted by the multinationals operating in the country as a result of the liberalisation of the economy and last the continuing importance of English in the government and public life are among the factors for the English press continuing to occupy statistically and otherwise a position of vantage.

The growth of the press, in turn, exposed an increasingly large number of people who could access it, thanks to spreading literacy, to political debates and discussions. The growth in the newspapers was especially made possible with the emergency of a large middle class with good disposable incomes. The swelling of middle class purse is attributed mainly to economic growth, which after averaging 3.5 percent annually between 1960 and 1990, started rising steeply after the launching of the economic reforms in 1991, reaching an average of 7 percent in
1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 and placing India among top 10 performers in the world. This propelled the production of consumer durable, and hence the revenue of advertising agencies and television producers and companies. The print media too fell into line with this pattern. From around the middle of the 1980s, when the consumer culture began to spread in the country even the print media started becoming increasingly entertainment oriented and trivialised in its content and preoccupations.

Turning back to one of the crucial issues of our study, we take up political communication and political mobilization in the next chapter. Communication is a powerful factor determining the course, content and effectiveness of political articulation. The ability to communicate has always been a useful skill for the political class. In his study of Rhetoric, Aristotle outlined three ways of achieving persuasion. The first depended on the personal character of the speaker, the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind, and the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of speech itself. Anyone who hoped to persuade successfully, according to Aristotle, needed an ability to reason logically as well as an understanding of human emotions. For the purpose of political articulation is, of course, not just the training of a critical and questioning electorate. "A more basic purpose of political articulation for transitional societies, is that of instilling in people new values and new outlooks. Modernisation calls for the transformation of popular tastes and fashions, the creation of novel devices and demands, and the welding together of new loyalties. These are all tasks for the popular politicians, and it might seem that if the politicians all present a common front in articulating the new values, the process of modernisation may be facilitated more effectively than if there are conflicting and confusion voices."

Political mobilization constitutes an important section of this chapter. Political mobilization is a form of social mobilization, which corresponds to a particular era, and certain special needs. Special emphasis in the discussion was give to political mobilization in developing countries vis-a-vis developed countries. Political
Mobilization is focussed on national perspectives in developing countries. Mobilization is a functional process for the attainment of the goal of national integration; the regained saliency and level of commitment are high. Also developing countries are not dependent on anything like the same degree as the West on historic legitimacy accorded to the result of an election held under formal rules designed, or at least believed, to enforce both a fair and a rational result.¹² Such legitimacy is particularly connected with the interest articulation function. The ideological component is greater here than in the authority legitimation function for which balloting seems in many ways more natural and logical. Developing countries often retain non-electoral means of conferring legitimacy; especially in so far as the question of interest is held to be subsumed under that of authority legitimation. Just as mobilization is overt and manifest, and based on international rather than intra-national cleavages, so must any electoral process be as little manifestly divisive as possible.

National integration is one of the essential forms of Third World mobilization. “Its reference points, symbols and selection of goals, in fact the whole context of modern nationalism, are relevant here only in so far as it is a means of mobilization and/or concern factors of efficiency. Student community in developing countries is among the most sensitive groups in becoming aware of and asserting allegedly deprived rights. They have played an important role both in providing successful support for mobilizing regimes, as well as in opposing and often overthrowing unsuccessful ones.”¹³ They perceive the value system of national development, which is articulated through symbols, as right. Their access to information probably helps them to scan and evaluate performance more accurately than any other single group of society, except perhaps the ruling elite. It has been found that students are less willing to accept information dissonance and they require a greater level of information constraint than that at which the ruling elite are accustomed to operate for the benefit of the peripherally mobilized population. Yet students cannot manipulate symbols and assert goals in a manner capable of producing such
congruence.\textsuperscript{14} This may hold particularly in those cases where the ruling elite is self-consciously operating at low educational levels.

We also discussed various related concepts like political socialization and public opinion; how the latter shapes the former. Political socialization as an aspect of communicating attitudes, norms, knowledge, and above all, behaviour pattern is a basic antecedent of opinion formation. And then lastly, we discussed the three languages of Indian politics_modern, traditional and saintly, in “which political life in India is conducted.”\textsuperscript{15} We have identified Gandhi and JP as falling somewhere on the continuum of traditional and saintly.

The next chapter took up various facets of Gandhi; his journalistic style and how he used the press for political mobilization. Gandhi has been termed as the most influential writer and journalist that India has produced. Gandhi knew the power of the word, spoken and written, inspiring people to action. He resembled a \textit{charismatic arbiter} when airing grievances be it in South Africa or India. His words were sharp and loaded with purpose.

As a journalist, Gandhi wanted to educate the people so that they could understand not only the significance of independence political, economic and social but also participate activity in freeing humanity from the bondage it was in. Gandhi motto as a journalist was service. He said once: “one of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it.”\textsuperscript{16}

The \textit{Indian Opinion} was the first journalistic craft of Gandhi that was unveiled on June 4, 1903 in South Africa. It was a weekly newspaper and was published in English, Gujrati, Tamil and Hindi for the benefit of Indians residing in South Africa. As Gandhi recalled later about the purpose for which the \textit{Indian Opinion} was launched: “we could not have educated the local Indian opinion, nor kept Indians all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa in any other way with the same case and success as through Indian opinion, which was a most useful and potent weapon in our struggle.”\textsuperscript{17} The other journals that played a
significant role during the Indian freedom struggle were *Young India* and *Harijan*. Gandhi had clearly spelt the focus of *Young India*: “Apart from its duty of drawing attention to injustices to individuals, it will devote its attention to constructive satyagraha as also sometimes cleansing Satyagraha.”

Gandhi’s communication was based on various concrete themes. Rapport with the readership, credibility of the writer and good grasp of the basic liking and disliking of readers were some of the themes. Gandhi also made a judicious use of both oral and print media for effecting mobilisation. In addition he used signs and symbols in his communication with the masses. For instance, Gandhi used religious and cultural idiom in his pattern of mass communication. Gandhi had drawn his model from the folk culture and the *Bhagvad Gita* and given it a new meaning in terms of detached social action. Singularly he derived his terms and symbols from Hindu traditions.

Gandhi’s use of symbolic expression ushered in a new style of communicating with the people by using *Sanskritik* traditional idioms. He gave a new meaning to the religious idioms to mobilise people. This point has been made more clearly in our analysis of Civil Disobedience Movement. As has been observed, the idioms used by Gandhi were symbolic and they conveyed a mental cultural concept, which was shared by people belonging to the same culture. Gandhi’s use of reformulation of the traditional idioms comes closest to Philip Wheelwright’s theory of ‘Plurisignation’ which is perhaps the most suitable model in western terminology for explaining Gandhi technique.

Gandhi made elaborate use of the press during the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi used these journals to inform the masses on many aspects during Noncooperation Movement. For instance in an article ‘The Doctrine of the Sword’ in the *Young India*, Gandhi wrote: “Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is law of the brute... I have therefore returned to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance are nothing but new names for the law of suffering.” Gandhi
writings were quite forceful and were written with conviction. They left a deep impression on his readers. Thus he wrote once in context of non-cooperation in Young India: “our non-cooperation in neither with the English nor with the West. Our non-cooperation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-cooperation is refusal to cooperate with the English administrators on their own terms.” He asked the English: “Come and cooperate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world.”

After Gandhi we take up the analysis of JP and try and understand his model of the role of press in political mobilisation. JP was conscious of the power of the press and continuously used this potent medium for communicating his ideas on political, social and international issues. His ability to express political theories and sentiments in comprehensible terms provided a model for anyone involved in mass communication. Like Gandhi, he believed in placing his views before as wide a section of the people as possible, not confine them to ideological journals. JP realised that the politician’s role both as articulator of the collective identity and as champion of specific interests, is invariably conditioned and limited by the media of communications available to him. No leader can rise above the restrictions posed by the specific communications networks to which he has access, and at the same time none can escape the consequences of being surrounded by a communications system. No wonder, he made full use of the print media. He wrote political pamphlets, besides writing for his own journal Everyman’s and Prajaniti, that was being run by a group of professionals appointed by him. JP also used to give interviews to a lot of mainstream newspapers and magazines, besides relying a good deal on speeches.

His communication strategy, like Gandhi’s, included the use of both oral and written media. In an active political career spanning over five decades, JP constantly made use of speeches and writings to put forth his ideas on wide-ranging national and international issues. He relied on this technique from his youthful days
of Quit India Movement when he wrote “three monumental letters known as
“letters to the freedom fighters,” through the days Post and Telegraph trade union
movement when he wrote an article ‘Incentives for goodness,’ to the simmering
seventies when he started his own weekly “with a view to communicating his ideas
regularly and systematically to the educated elite and the students.”

Additionally JP exhorted the masses and especially the youth for actions through
his speeches. “While college and University students have every right to participate
in politics,” said JP, “and political parties may have their student branches or
sections, the latter should not interfere with purely student affairs. Students should
have only one organisation the college or university students union, which alone
should deal with their problems and represent the students where necessary.” JP,
like Gandhi, understood the role media could play in an open society. Like Gandhi,
JP wrote prolifically. And like Gandhi’s Harijan and Young India, Everyman’s too
was banned when the threat it represented to the status quo were sought to be
extinguished by Indira Gandhi’s Emergency.

JP was the leader of one of the most historic movements of independent India. He
led it successfully to overthrow the Congress government headed by Indira Gandhi
and helped in establishing the first-ever non-Congress government at the centre. JP,
like Gandhi, relied on the print medium for propagating his ideas. However, his
journal was not meant for the masses, unlike that of Gandhi’s who brought out his
journals in many languages just to ensure that they were consumed by the masses.
This and other contrasts and similarities between Gandhi and JP were taken up in
greater detail in the next chapter.

And in the end it was imperative that we take up a comparative analysis of the two
leaders, their style and strategies of mobilisation and their effectiveness in using the
press for the same. Gandhi and JP occupied the centre stage in two epoch making
periods of Indian history. While Gandhi moved millions during his struggle against
the might British Empire, JP stirred many souls in his campaign against the
authoritative regime of Indian Gandhi. Gandhi in colonial times and JP in
independent India represent two of the most versatile and powerful mass leaders in Indian tradition. On a superficial view, however, they may represent two different models of leadership as well as ideologies. This was partly due to the contexts in which they separated and partly due to their personal predilections and endowments.

Both Gandhi and JP were communicators who understood the basic processes of the mass media. They both had their own newspapers and seemed to confirm with the classical description of the way the press enables discrete individuals to join together in purposeful groups: “the effect of a newspaper is not only to suggest the same purpose to a great number of persons, but also to furnish means for the execution of the designs which they may singly have conceived.... A newspaper then takes up the notion or the feeling that had occurred simultaneously, but singly, to each of them. All are then immediately guided toward the beacon; and these wandering minds, which had so long sought each other in darkness, at length meet and unite.”

This common action, believed the two, was made possible because of instrumental political participation, which is essentially directed, to the achievement of concrete goals.

Both Gandhi and JP believed in the process of shaping public opinion through the use of the press. Both relied on the technique of conducting dialogue on various issues by creating a public sphere, (as suggested by Habermas), for it. As communicators both JP and Gandhi seem to be subscribing to the media centered view of the communication theories, that stresses the means of communication as a force for change. JP and Gandhi touched upon issues of wider relevance in their journals and other writings. Gandhi wrote on education in his weekly *Harijan* on 8 May 1937 issue: “I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul,
the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I
mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind,
therefore, can take place only when it proceeds pair pass with the education of the
physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole.
According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they
can be developed piecemeal and independently of one another.”

Similarly, JP’s weekly would highlight various social issues, despite being highly
political in tone and tenor. In the thick if JP Movement, the April 12, 1975 issue of
Everyman’s carried an article ‘Crimes against Harijans and Adivasis’ written by
Madhu Limaye.

It is also possible to argue against the contention that both JP and Gandhi used the
press for conducting dialogues on various issues. A Gandhian journalist points out
that the element of dialogue was missing in JP’s approach, while it is more
prominent in that of Gandhi’s. He points out that Gandhi wrote in different
languages because he had different target audiences. Gandhi cared for the
sentiments of a particular section of readership in mind while bringing out various
editions of his newspapers. For instance in the Gujrati edition of the Indian
Opinion of December 21, 1913, the following remarks were made: “The Satyagraha
campaign, as carried on this time and still continuing, has hardly a parallel in
history. The real credit for this goes to the Hindi and Tamil speaking brothers and
sisters living in this country. Their sacrifice has been the highest of all. Some of
them have even lost their lives: killed by the bullets of the white soldiers. As a
tribute to their memory, we have decided to give Hindi and Tamil news in this
paper. Some years ago we used to bring out this paper in these two languages as
well, but we had to discontinue the practice owing to some difficulties. Those
difficulties are not yet over. And yet, we resume publication in these languages for
the duration of the struggle, that being, in our judgement, the least we must do,
even at some inconvenience to ourselves, in honour of communities whose
members have made such sacrifices in a struggle of this kind." So sensitive Gandhi was to the sentiments of his readers!

Another factor on which Gandhi and JP seem to be at par is their dislike for any form of propaganda. They would both make out their cases quite logically, convincingly and with great conviction even when there was scope of propaganda. They would never resort to cheap techniques of writing for mobilising the masses.

It is safe to conclude that both Gandhi and JP despite differences in their style of leadership and their ways of life are likely to be seen more and more belonging essentially to the same genre of leaders, who devoted their whole live is to political activities and brought about major changes in politics without ever aspiring to hold state power in their own hands.  

**CONCLUSIONS**

First and foremost, it should be emphasized that despite being challenging and significant, there are a lot of areas in the mass media of communications where research needs to be undertaken in the earnest. Thus for instance, while we have an entire range of studies showing the impact of mass media on psychological processes like attitudes and perception, it is significantly lacking when it comes to institutions like family, polity, and economy. There have been efforts in these areas too but they are mostly in the form of small research papers or seminar presentation at the most, often necessitated by projects that sprung up at the instance of agencies every now and then, much like a fad. Novel experiments like SITE remained a buried in the bulging files of Government departments with the latter having no time to spare for follow-ups.

It is strange to note that even while we survived with scant research, the media grew in leaps and bound. The media growth was driven more by circumstances, increasing consumerism and literacy, than any conscious design on the part of the Government. In fact, a large part of the onus for the deficiency in media research
lies on the Government, while we in the academia having made no concerted efforts to force the government for a re-thinking. No wonder, a couple of institutions that are devoted exclusively for 'so called' media research are no more than mere training centres of budding bureaucrats and journalists, who pursue in their practice little of what they learn. As long as the coffers are full no one has the time or the inclination to care for the 'feedback', so essential to communications—the founding stone of the mass media!

The first question in this study pertained to the roles and functions that the media performs in a society. We found that there are many. Media is a forum of dialogue, means of giving expression to collective pleasure and displeasure of society, mode of articulation of diverse interests, medium of socialisation, and form of entertainment. It is all pervasive, omnipresent, a crucial ingredients of our day-to-day lives. As an institution, media is engaged in the production, reproduction and distribution of knowledge in the widest sense of sets of symbols that have meaningful reference to experience in the social world. This knowledge enables us to make sense of experience, shapes our perceptions of it, and contributes to the store of knowledge of the past and continuity of current understanding.

Additionally, mass media are often the location of developments in culture, both in the sense of art and symbolic forms, and also in manners, fashions, styles of life, and norms. They are a dominant source of definitions and images of social reality for individuals, groups, and societies. They express values and normative judgments inextricably mixed with news and entertainment. Thus the contours of the symbolic environment of information, ideas and beliefs, which we inhabit, are often known to us by way of the mass media and it is the media which may inter-relate and give coherence to its disparate elements.

This symbolic environment tends to be held more and more in common as we increasingly share the same media sources. This is important for a country like India where the diversity is so immense as to relegate our national identity into chaos, but for the binding thread of oneness created by the media. Media do this by
becoming a channel for information, correlation with the various socio-political processes, entertainment, and mobilization. All this provide change, stability, and integration so crucial to the survival of society.

At another level, the media are a growing and changing industry, providing employment, producing goods and services and feeding related industries. The mass media are a resource of power. They are a means of control, management and innovation in society. They provide a location where, increasingly, the affairs of public life and played out both nationally and internationally.

Our second question concerns communication: how does communication work; what are the various processes that communication facilitate; and what are the functions performed by communication for the group? These questions were essential for us, as they are for any other students of communication; for without grasping the essence of communication we could not have done justice to this study.

Wilbur Schramm helps us understand the processes involved in communication. We have borrowed a large part of his arguments to understand the same in chapter two. At a simple level, communication involves transmission of information from a sender to a receiver through a channel. The sender is also called a source that encodes a message that is decoded by the destination or the receiver.

Messages are made up of signs. A sign is a signal that stands for something in experience. We are constantly decoding signs from our environment, interpreting these signs and encoding something as a result making the communication process as endless. Or as Schramm puts it: We are little switchboard centres handling and rerouting the great endless current of communication.

Feedback is an important element of the communication process as it tells us how our messages are being interpreted. Examples of feedback are the nod of a student in agreement to what a teacher says in a classroom or a letter to the editor in a newspaper. An experienced communicator is attentive to feedback, and constantly
modifies his message in light of what he observes in or hears from his audience. Finally, we send our messages in multiple channels. For instance, our address to someone is accompanied with our gestures, expressions etc.

This multiple channel situation exists even in printed mass communication where the channels are perhaps most restricted. Meaning is conveyed, not only by the words in a news item, but also by the size of the headline, the position of the news on the page and the page in the paper, the association with pictures, the use of boldface and other typographical devices. All these tell us something about the item. Thus we can visualise the typical channel of communication, not as a simple telegraph circuit, in which current does or does not flow, but rather as a sort of coaxial cable in which many signals flow in parallel from source toward the destination.

Communication is especially useful when it comes to organising common ideas. It helps in giving a coherent meaning to disparate ideas, provides a common platform for conducting of dialogue. This is especially useful in political articulation which range from agreement with the policies of a government to expressing discontent on wide ranging issues.

Communication is important for groups and organisation. For instance, there are three primary processes involved in an organisation: an organization must be able to form; act in fulfillment of its purposes; and relate to its external social environment. It is because of communication that these processes are made possible. Small organizations usually find face-to-face or at most point-to-point communication adequate for their needs. But as organizations grow larger and more complex they tend to rely increasingly on mass communication.

This tendency can be seen in innumerable cases: a group is formed on the basis of person-to-person contacts; recruits more members from among the friends and neighbours of those who already belong; and ultimately starts its own journal, sends out press releases, and receive mention in the mass media. Conversely, material in
the mass media may facilitate the formation of primary groups or may assist existing organizations in pursuing their purposes.

The most important finding for us has been the fact that under some circumstances mass communication facilitates the creation of organizations by focusing attention on an issue and altering individuals who share common attitudes about the issue to the desirability of forming some kind of association. The media serve as intentional or unintentional recruiters for small groups that wish to expand their membership.

Tocqueville provides the classical description of the way the press enables discrete individuals to join together in purposeful groups. He finds out that the effect of a newspaper is not only to suggest the same purpose to a great number of persons, but also to furnish means for the execution of the designs, which they may singly have conceived. A newspaper then takes up the notion or the feeling that had occurred simultaneously, but singly, to each of them. All are then immediately guided toward the beacon; and these wandering strays, which had so long sought each other in darkness, at length meet and unite.

We also found that in a broader sense the political process as a whole is influenced by access to the means of communications, and that the mass media are highly diverse in content and in forms of organization and include a very wide range of activities which could have effects on society. Additionally, the mass media perform a somewhat similar function in nation-building processes when they help diverse people to recognise their common interests and the usefulness of working together toward shared goals.

Our attempt to understand political communication and related processes has been quite an exhaustive one. To conclude we can say that political communication, which is the deliberate passing of a political message by a sender to a receiver with the intention of making the receiver behave in a way that he might not otherwise have done, is quite effective in political socialisation and opinion formation. All these have a bearing on political mobilisation, our central focus of concern.
Political communication is distinct from communication in general. While general communication is not specific to any particular issue, the content of political communication is quite focussed, its target audience well defined; it is also intended to influence people at the periphery.

Political communication is an effective instrument of political socialisation that in turn aid in political mobilisation. There are however, hindrances to the effective socialisation through the use of the media that the managers of media must understand.

Political mobilisation is an important aspect any country. It assumes different forms in different set up. A special distinction exists between political mobilisation in the West as compared to the developing countries. The bases of mobilisation in developing countries range from revocation of traditional authority, to charisma to issues like national integration.

Opinion formation is an important aspect in any political system. The existence of governments depends a great deal on public opinion. Similarly mass movements also depend on public opinion. Political socialisation and public opinion go hand in hand.

Messages constitute the raw material of political communication. Without a regular supply of messages any instrument of communication will soon rust up and disintegrate. Before a political message is deliberately constructed for passing to a receiver with the intention of influencing him there is a conscious political decision. In pondering the significance of patterns of communication content for political socialization, the relations between core political content and non-political wrappings, one soon realises that the wrapping alone may make some contribution by itself. 28 There are implicit political lessons within the most innocent subject matter. Even that part of the media package designed merely to entertain the audience, or to sell a product and make money for a producer, may well serve the
latent function of political socialisation. However, due to the problems associated with the learners, this does not happen always.

The non-political content mediates and modifies the response to political communication by acting not merely as filler but also as buffer between the audience and the political world, insulating them from the undesirable effects of an overdose of politics. We also note that the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is quite successful in telling its readers what to think about. Thus the media plays an important role of agenda setting that is important for political socialisation and political opinion formation.

Political mobilisation is the collective and structured expression of commitment and support within society. It is a form of social mobilisation, which corresponds to a particular era, and certain special needs. Mobilisation is a functional process for the attainment of the goal of national integration in developing societies.

Political participation is an important prerequisite for political mobilisation. It is the involvement of groups and individuals at various levels in the political system. Involvement expresses itself in various kinds of overt or manifest political activities. Political participation fosters stability and order by reinforcing the legitimacy of political authority for it is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the ruled. Political participation denotes a series of voluntary activities, which have a bearing on the political process that involves issues like the selection of rulers and the various aspects of the formation of public policy. This is made possible by many factors including the press.

This brings us to the last and most important set of questions that we set for ourselves to explore: how does press help in political mobilisation. Besides aiding political participation, press helps in shaping public opinion. It helps us in the process of initiation and debate and reach a recognisable collective decision on an issue. It helps establish public opinion, which is the collection of people’s opinion
on issues of public interests. We agree with social scientists who say that public opinion has a giant’s strength and we may use it with frightful effects.

We chose two case studies to show this effect. Firstly, we attempted to evaluate role of press in political mobilisation in colonial India. Gandhi served as a reference point in this exercise. It was found that Gandhi was quite aware of the power of the press and used it as an effective instrument in mobilising people. He was constantly engaged with the production of newspapers and journals and wrote with the specific aim of educating the masses on issues concerning India’s freedom. Besides, Gandhi would narrate the course of action to be taken during movements and elucidate on the methods of resistance and opposition to the British regime.

Gandhi was very well aware of the dynamics of media society relationship. Considering the limitation of the use of media largely for the literate class, Gandhi uniquely used signs and symbols, traditional and modern, for communicating his ideas. He made a judicious use of both print and oral media besides resorting to symbols at appropriate times. Gandhi had based his communication on concrete themes that added validity to the content of this communication, besides making it extremely effective.

Gandhi’s system of formulating symbolic expression was rooted in the essential tradition of Indian Philosophy. The channels of communication for the dissemination of his ideas were the traditional communications tools like bhajans (prayer meetings) as well as his speeches and writings. He reformulated the language in such a way that it converted his ideas into a concrete image, which sustained the imaginative perception of the audience; thousand listened to him and responded spontaneously. His words could feed back into the culture new forms of language (words like Swadeshi and Harijan) generating multiple meanings. This was the symbolic expression constituting Gandhi’s mode of mass communication. Thus Gandhi used multiple channels of communication. He also used a multi-pronged mobilisation strategy.
Gandhi was aware of the dynamics of mass participation too. He always believed in a carefully designed plan of action, especially when it was meant for people across the country. The press was a crucial partner in all his mobilisation efforts. Others factors too were important, nonetheless.

Gandhi made elaborate use of the press during the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. The press for him, was a tool for informing, educating and mobilising the masses. He used newspapers to educate masses about public causes for which he led mass movements. Gandhi’s writings combined with his other communication techniques like speeches and padyatras bore fruits. We found that press was an effective tool in political mobilisation in colonial India.

The press was also effective in political mobilisation in independent India, as has been shown in this study, with reference to JP.

JP was an able communicator. A sincere student of political sociology, JP took his time before plunging into activism. He made his impact as one of the most vibrant leaders of independent India. Well aware of press coverage, JP would readily give interviews to the press and advocate his arguments during the famous JP Movement. He followed Gandhi in developing a judicious combination of oral and print media for the purposes of political education and mobilisation of millions of people across rural-urban and illiterate-literate barriers.

However, JP was not a journalist in the true sense of the term. He did use the press to a great extent, had his own journal run by a group of professional journalists, and even wrote occasionally to air his views. However, the intensity with which he used the press was perhaps less, especially when compared to Gandhi. Besides, his journals were not designed truly for mass consumption. It was targeted for a select group of politically sensitive audience who was of great consequence to him at the ideological level.

In a nutshell he did use the press, but it was not in the core of his design of political movements. He relied more on political debates that was reflected in the number of
pamphlets that he wrote. However, being a keen student of political science his understanding of the political processes and especially mass action was tremendous. This is reflected with the success with which he led the JP movement, relying a great deal on the power of the resurgent youth, a power that was recognised in the history of Indian movements after the epoch making JP Movement.

To reiterate it can be said that JP was an equally able communicator. However, perhaps JP did not use the press as effectively as Gandhi did. JP’s style of the use of press differed a good measure with that of Gandhi’s. JP was not editing his journal himself unlike Gandhi and his frequency of writing was far less than that of Gandhi. And the scale and intensity of JP Movement led by JP was far less than that compared with Gandhi. This restricted JP’s use of the press on a massive scale, despite the fact that JP was well aware of the power of the press.

Another factor that restrained JP from using the press for political mobilisation with greater intensity was the fact that the mainstream and regional press, which had registered phenomenal growth since the times of Gandhi, were giving adequate coverage to JP Movement. JP knew he did not require building the movement through the press. JP’s journals, as a result, had become more of an ideological document for the literate and politically sensitive class, than a staple diet of mass consumption as Gandhi had branded his journals, bringing them out in many languages. Gandhi had to for the press was limited in its reach and literacy rates were lower than in independent India. It can be concluded that while the press did act as an important tool in a democratic set-up for political mobilisation, with a good backup from factors like high literacy and political awareness, it was one of the most important tools in the colonial set up.

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21 *Young India*, 28 July 1920.


23 Ibid.


25 Prasad, Bimal (ed.): A Revolutionary’s Quest, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, p. VII


28 Hyman, Herbert: op.cit., p. 129.