CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

India is in the process of transition and has started a number of welfare and developmental programmes for the betterment of its citizens, but the lack of awareness and understanding about these programmes on the part of the people is proving a serious bottle-neck. Since the media of communication are the main channels of disseminating knowledge about these programmes and are the means of creating awareness about regional, national and international events among the people, a proper understanding of the communication process is indispensable to the introducing of a planned change in a democratic society such as ours.

Much of the earlier research and speculation on communication media do indicate that mass media are the key determinants of development and change, but they do not explain the relative roles of different media in accelerating change. Another limitation of such researches lies in the fact that they experiment on mass media without indicating the conditions which make them effective mechanisms of change. Precisely, the point here is not whether the mass media change the attitudes of ruralites or not, but under what conditions they do so. Also, the earlier studies were concentrated on the quantitative analysis without paying much attention to the contents and
intensity of exposure to the media. The main questions which have been raised in this study are: Who are the persons exposed to the media in rural settings? How far do the objective conditions, such as the size of the village and its distance from a city govern the effect of the media? Which media are more effective? What is the relative effectiveness of various media on three major areas of interest, viz. economic, politico-administrative, and cultural? The main concern of the present study was, therefore, to explore these issues in the context of rural society.

The study was undertaken in four villages in Rajasthan. The main considerations in choosing these villages were the size of the village, the presence of technological networks in it, the proximity of the village to urban centres and a common spoken dialect - Dhundhari, since these factors were likely to influence the relative effectiveness of various media. The population of the present study comprised 2,711 heads of the households of the four villages. Using the pro rata technique, a stratified random sample of 259 heads of households was drawn. While selecting the sample, the population was stratified according to the caste and income status of the heads. The sample drawn for the study represents about 10 per cent of the people of each stratum of caste and each stratum of income. The data were collected by using the structured interview schedule which included several indices, pertaining to dependent, independent and intervening variables,
such as the exposure to the city, the participation of the villagers in the *gramsabha*, and in the meetings of cultural and political parties. A code design was prepared and the data were transferred to code cards for the purpose of analysis. Tables of simple frequencies and cross-classification were drafted through tabulation by hand. The tests of association, the analysis of variance and multiple correlations were applied to the data. The computation of the data was done manually.

As regards the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, the age range was 30-62 years, with a mean age of 46 years. In terms of religious affiliation, 89.57 per cent were Hindus, 1.93 per cent Jains and 8.49 per cent Muslims. Regarding the caste composition, 15.05 per cent were from the higher castes, 45.94 per cent from the intermediate castes, 23.33 per cent from the low castes, 2.70 per cent from the Tribes, and 12.35 per cent from other castes. With respect to the educational status, 64.86 per cent were illiterate, 27.42 per cent literate and primary pass, 6.57 per cent matriculates, 0.77 per cent were educated up to the higher-secondary level and 0.38 per cent graduates and postgraduates. As many as 39.77 per cent were from the higher-prestige occupations, 42.47 per cent from the lower-middle-income group and 9.26 per cent from the upper-income group.
The respondents' socio-economic status (SES) has been considered to be very important in this study. The three indicators of SES, i.e. education, income and occupation, were rank-ordered village-wise into five categories and were correlated with one another. The correlation values were: $r = 0.493$ for education and occupation, $r = 0.592$ for income and occupation and $r = 0.594$ for income and education. All these values were significant at .01 level.

By combining the scores of all these three variables, the SES index was prepared for all the four villages separately and then for the total sample. The occupational prestige came out to be a satisfactory index of socio-economic status, because it explained the maximum variance in education and income, the product moment coefficient being highest in the case of occupation. Therefore occupation was used as a measure of socio-economic status. The mean values of education, occupation and income are comparable with one another in all the four villages and with other two variables, i.e. the size of the village and its proximity to a city. The product-moment coefficient of correlation was positive and significant among these variables. Since the caste was not included in the SES, we examined the relationship between the caste and the SES which was found to be significantly positive, the Lambda value being .28. Owing to such a relationship, not the caste but the SES was taken as an independent variable.
All the media of communication under study were classified into six categories, i.e. the mass media, the institutional media, the traditional media, the urban contacts, the posters and the exhibitions, to assess the relative effectiveness of these media on the three areas of interest. The consistency in the intensity of exposure to all the six categories of media was measured through the Guttman scale after preparing the cumulative scores, but the subsequent analysis showed a consistent pattern of cumulative intensity of exposure to the mass media and the traditional media only. The Guttman cumulative pattern was worked out and the coefficient of reproducibility was found to be very high, ranging from 95 to 100 per cent in all the four villages. The Guttman frequency scores were correlated with the SES and it was found that the higher the SES, the higher was the exposure score for both the media.

The study has centred on two things, i.e. the extent of exposure to the media and the reliance placed on media. A distinction between these two concepts has already been discussed in Chapter III. Reliance indicates the opinion of the people about the credibility of various media, whereas exposure refers to the reception of information through the media. A person may be more exposed to a particular medium, but he may not put reliance on it. As such, we examined the extent of exposure to different media and the reliance
placed on them. However, the major emphasis has been laid on the analysis of the former. It was also interesting to note that a larger number of respondents placed reliance on the radio (a unit of the mass media) and the government officials (a unit of the institutional media) in that order, whereas only a smaller number of the respondents placed reliance on the traditional media, newspapers and the exhibitions.

This finding has an important implication with respect to a planned change. Since the mass media and the institutional media were considered to be effective instruments of a planned change, the people's reliance on them was certainly meaningful. The findings on the exposure to different media, however, do not present an encouraging picture.

In general, the respondents were more exposed to the traditional media (35.90 per cent), followed by the mass media (21.62 per cent), the exhibitions (16.21 per cent), the posters (14.67 per cent), the institutional media (8.10 per cent) and urban contacts (3.47 per cent). The village-wise analysis showed that the same pattern held good in all the villages, whether they were small or large and whether near the city or distant from it. Further, it was noticed that the SES of the respondents did affect their relative exposure to different media.
The higher-SES people were more exposed to the mass media, whereas the lower-SES people were more exposed to the traditional media, irrespective of the size and the urban proximity of the village. Our hypothesis that the mass media will be more popular among the higher-SES people, whereas the traditional media will be more popular among the lower-SES people stands confirmed.

Obviously, the institutional media were not popular; they were still less so in the case of the lower-SES people, who needed a greater attention of the development agencies. Those who were exposed to the mass media and the institutional media placed reliance on them, but not many people were exposed to them, thus implying that the government has not been able to popularize these media. Consequently, the traditional media remain the major source of information for the lower-SES people.

An analysis of the relative exposure to the component units of the two important media viz. the mass media and the traditional media, can provide important insights into the field of communication studies. But such an analysis was attempted only in the case of the mass media, because they were considered to be an instrument of planned change. Therefore we analysed a comparative exposure to the component units of the mass media. In general, among the four units of
mass media, the people were more exposed to the radio (48.26 per cent), followed by the movies (39.38 per cent), newspapers and books (6.18 per cent each).

The village-wise analysis further showed that the pattern of the relative exposure to the mass media units was not significantly affected by the size and the urban proximity of the village. The SES of the respondents, however, was found to be an important determinant of the relative exposure to the different components of the mass media. The higher-SES people were more exposed to the radio than the lower-SES people, irrespective of the size and the urban proximity of the village. As far as the exposure to the movies was concerned, the urban proximity and the SES were found to be important factors. The higher-SES people in the villages near the city go to see the movies more frequently than the lower-SES people and those living in distant villages. The lower-SES people were, however, exposed more to documentary films, as and when they were shown in the villages.

Two findings, i.e. the greater exposure of the higher-SES people to the radio and the movies and the greater exposure of the lower-SES people to the documentary films, should draw the attention of the development agencies. The mass media should be made easily accessible to the lower-SES people and the frequency of displaying the documentary films should be increased. In fact, from the development perspective, the
documentary films will be more important than other component units of the mass media, because they give visual effects. Owing to the low level of literacy and the lower-SES, people did not place reliance on, and were not much exposed to, newspapers and books.

Apart from the main six categories of the media, we have considered some additional sources of information available to the villagers. These sources include the visits to the weekly bazaar and the participation in the gramsabha and the meetings of the cultural and political parties. It was found that the exposure to the weekly bazars and the participation in the gramsabha were very limited. However, the higher-SES people had greater access to these sources of information in all the four villages, but such a relationship was not statistically significant. Participation in the meetings of the cultural and political parties was relatively high. Approximately 57 per cent of the respondents participated in such meetings. The higher-SES people participated in such meetings more than the lower-SES people in the large villages near the city.

Having examined the relationship between the exposure index, with the SES, the size of the village and the urban proximity with the exposure to various media, we discussed the relative effectiveness of all the media in terms of their
impact on the three areas of interest, such as economic activities, awareness and acceptability of political policies and administrative measures and the cultural areas of interest together and separately.

A comparative statement of the total impact scores of the respondents on the various types of media showed that out of all the media, the traditional media produced the greatest effect on all the three areas of interest, followed by the mass media, exhibitions, posters, the institutional media and the urban contacts.

This pattern of the relative effectiveness of the media was common in all the four villages, irrespective of the size and the urban proximity. However, the SES of the respondents made a significant difference. Whereas the various areas of interests were influenced by the traditional media, the posters and exhibitions in the case of the lower-SES people, the areas of interests were more influenced by the mass media in the case of the higher-SES people.

The data were further analysed to identify the relative effectiveness of the component units of different media on the three areas of interest separately. The results showed that economic activities were significantly influenced by all the four units of the mass media (the radio, newspapers, books and the movies), by only one of the four units of traditional
media (the members of the family), by two of the four units of urban contacts (the leaders from the city and the kinsman living in the city), and by the posters and exhibitions. The institutional media had no impact on economic activities.

An analysis of the relationship of the three independent variables with the impact of various media on the economic activities showed that the mass media were more effective in the case of the higher-SES people in the large village near the city. The traditional media were more effective among the lower-SES people, irrespective of the size and the urban proximity of the village; the posters and exhibitions were more effective among lower-SES people in the villages near the city, irrespective of the size of the village. Urban contacts were more effective in the case of the higher-SES people in the large village near the city.

Similarly, the results on the awareness and acceptability of political policies and administrative measures showed that this area was significantly influenced by all the units of the mass media, two units of the traditional media (the members of the family and caste-fellows in the village), by one unit of urban contacts (the leaders from the city), by the posters and exhibitions. The institutional media had no impact on this area. Further, it was found that the mass media were more popular among the higher-SES people and the traditional media.
among the lower-SES people. The size and the urban proximity conditioned the effect on this activity. The posters and exhibitions were more effective in the large village near the city and were found to be more popular among the lower-SES people than among the higher-SES people. The urban contacts were found to be more popular in the large village near the city and among the higher-SES people.

The analysis of the data on the cultural areas of interest showed that this area was also significantly influenced by all the units of mass media, by two units of the traditional media (the members of the family and caste-fellows in the village), by one unit of the institutional media (government officials) and by the posters and exhibitions and by one unit of urban contacts (the kinsmen living in the city). The traditional media, the posters and exhibitions were found to be more effective among the lower-SES people, irrespective of size and urban proximity. The mass media were found to be more effective among the higher-SES people in the large village near the city. The institutional media and urban contacts were more effective in the large and small villages near the city and were popular among the higher-SES people only.

The important point which emerged from the above discussion was that whereas the traditional media were found to be most effective on the total scores regarding the influence
on the three areas of interest together, the units of mass media were more effective than the traditional media in influencing economic activities, awareness and acceptability of the political policies and administrative measures, and that, too, among the higher-SES people. All the three areas of interest were partly influenced by some units of the traditional media. The institutional media were effective only in influencing the cultural areas of interest of the higher-SES people in the large village near the city. Precisely, the units of the mass media were more effective, followed by the units of traditional media. This finding has again implications from the perspective of planned development of the rural community. The institutional media need to be strengthened and the mass media need to be made more accessible to the lower-SES people.

Since the focus of the development programmes is on the upliftment of the lower section of the community and since they get all information regarding the schemes of development etc. through the traditional media owing to a limited level of literacy and low socio-economic status, it may be suggested that the planners may also think of the ways and means of mobilizing the traditional media for disseminating knowledge about the administrative and technical measures adopted by the government for their upliftment.
Although in this study we have tried to examine different media in the context of development, we cannot emphatically determine whether the exposure to the media leads to development or the development leads to exposure to the media. In fact, this situation seems to create a kind of vicious circle. But at least this much can be emphasized, depending upon the findings of the present study, that the lower-SES people cannot get benefits from either the formal media or the development schemes. This statement can be substantiated by the fact that the lower-SES people do not have any significant access to such media. It may be suggested, therefore, that in the given circumstances, if the aim of planned development is to ameliorate the condition of the people of the low socio-economic level, then they should take measures to help them to avail themselves of the benefits of such media.

Apart from the above administrative implications, the findings of the present study do have some theoretical and research implications. The researchers may analyse how the media which are popular among lower-SES people, such as the traditional media and documentary films, can be made more useful in disseminating meaningful knowledge among them. Another important area on which the researchers may focus their attention and energies is the identification of the
reasons which can be attributed to the discrepancy between the exposure to different media and the reliance placed on them by the people.

Although we have tried to examine the effect of exposure to the media, such as the movie, participation in the grama sabha, contacts with government officials, etc, it is not possible to determine what kind of information the people receive from these media for their socio-economic development. The researchers may take cognizance of the fact, and design their research to fill this gap. Such studies will also fill the lacuna left by the behaviourist who did not consider the structural and situational variables, such as the SES, the size of the village and the urban proximity.

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