Chapter - IX

OVERVIEW

The present study made an important proposition that print media has a positive role to play in rural development. No attempts had however been made to enquire into the exact process in which the print media contributes to rural development as need for such enquiry does not appear much pressing. It is obvious that the extent of knowledge about environment society and technology contribute to the productivity of human resources through better use of material and inputs under this command. The role of print media in rural development is not difficult to understand. The researcher is of the opinion that the precise contribution of print media to rural development is surely required to be known. Since large number of conditions may be required to be satisfied for print media to contribute positively to rural development, from this point of view of the objective of the present research, it would appear more important to identify conditions which contribute to playing positive role by print media in rural development. In this context the evolution of the finding of the field study becomes very significant.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ROLE OF BIG NEWSPAPERS AND LOCAL NEWSPAPERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Big newspapers have certain limitations in focussing rural issues to important factors which explain their inability are their cliental requirement dominated by urban valuers and cost of collection of rural news may be exorbitantly high in view of the spread of rural ones. What is however possisible for big newspaper is to provide information in international, national and state level policies and issues - environment, health, education, employment, agriculture, cottage industry etc.. The above information would create a second round impact on rural population in terms of increase awareness of the development process in their own areas. Surely local
newspaper can play a vital role in satisfaction of the enhanced awareness by supplying more detail issues in rural development peculiar to an area. This big newspapers and local newspapers interests are not in competition but are complimentary in rural development process. It is possible to the extent of the above arguments to say that much of the public opinion formation are implementation of public programme and can be helped by local newspapers. The need for the creation for positive contribution of print media to rural development has to be understood in this context.

**SUPPORT SYSTEM**

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:**

The price of newsprint is presently controlled by the Central Government. In the present price policy no special consideration has been made to small newspaper. It is believed that the domestic price of imported newsprint is less than the international price. The difference of the subsidy amount is borne by the Government. Although no precise estimate is available regarding subsidies paid by the Government, the major part of the same is enjoyed by the big newspapers in view of their lion share in total newsprint consumed while the policy of subsidising the newsprint cost to big newspapers is objectionable. The fact is that the small newspapers suffer from larger number of constraints and problems than their big counterparts, calls for a serious thingking of pricing policy of small newspapers. The price policy for small newspapers can not surely be similar to these for big newspapers. There is considerable opportunity for offering newsprint at lower price to small newspaper. The consequent increasing subsidy for such policy can be treated as development expenditure for rural development in view of the known potential of local newspapers to work as vehicle of change in rural development. It may be urged that one unit of expenditure as salary and establishment cost of governmental development agencies in rural areas will be far more less productive than if the same amount is spent for subsidising the rural newspaper for the cost of newsprint. It may be urged that a local newspaper may provide as much valuable yeomen service as NGOs do in rural development. Presently government had taken liberal and friendly attitude towards NGOs bypassing government's own development agencies for rural development, by way of granting various financial assistance to them. On the similar annalogy
financial assistance to local newspaper in the form of subsidies newsprint price can be thought of.

2. Infrastructure of support: Present credit policy of commercial banks does not encourage financing of printing press/other infrastructural facilities. Although there are plenty of evidence which indicate that banks are providing very liberal credit facilities to commercial printers while there is well within the legitimate activities of the banks. Total absence of any policy for financing small newspapers indicates more poor understanding about the potential of local newspaper and is less of the problem arising out of financial constraints of the banks. In fact there is a reason to urge that financing of rural newspaper should be treated as part of priority sector in lending.

3. Information flow: Our survey has indicated very clearly that credibility of local newspaper does not rest merely on publishing exclusively local news. The situation explains strong presence of big newspapers even in the remotest part of the country. The major problem of the local newspaper to mix outside news in their publication is lack of information flow and high cost of procurement for such information although the present rental policy provides concessional rate for teleprinter service by news agencies for small newspapers. The same can not do much good as because of the small scale operation readers. This is a very important problem which should require innovative solution. One has to explore the possibilities of providing teleprinter services to group of newspapers in a district or more than one district. One can also envisage a very significant role for specialised voluntary agencies in providing one-umbrella information service to local newspaper. The present set up of district level offices of State Government and Press Information Bureau regional service are functioning as mere public sector information outlets and they lost much of their original credibility.

4. Advertisement potentiality: It is needless to say that advertisement revenue is the blood of any of newspaper. It is more so for small local newspapers in view of its scale and clientele who are poor. The present advertisement policy of the central and state government do not provide any preferential treatment in allocation of funds for small newspaper. Advertisement tariff classifies newspaper in three categories, big, medium and small, based on circulation criteria. These rates are discriminatory to small newspaper and does not recognise their potentiality for positive contribution for social and economic development of the nation. There
appears to be a immediate need for reviewing the advertisement policy based on circulation criteria. Also it may however be difficult to find out any yardstick other than circulation. The basic anomaly in application of criteria of circulation to rural newspapers and urban newspapers is that in the former's case readership far exceeds than the circulation as the village societies are compact and larger in their social affinity than their urban counterparts. This important difference has to be recognised in framing policy for higher advertising rates for rural newspapers. The above argument is also supported by the fact that the urban newspapers have access to big private companies of their advertisements.

The advertisement potential of local newspaper is yet to be totally explored. City based producer of consumer goods are yet to recognise local newspapers as conduits for their sales message. The producer display their products in the form of hoardings. A details study is required to undertake to highlight the potential of local newspaper for creating city produce consumer goods.

**READERSHIP MOVEMENTS**

Little work has been made to understand relevance of readership movements to the health and longevity of local newspapers. Often it is Editor and his committed assistants who run the show without any assistance or cooperation from the society he or they served. In the context of increasing competition of the big newspapers the loneness of the Editor of the local newspapers is becoming increasingly fatal. Apart from outside financial assistance which the local newspaper can legitimately claim for their yeomen contribution they made to the cause for rural development. They require psychological support from the immediate society they serve. In this context the readership movement assumes importance. The important players in creating a strong leadership movement are government agencies, schools, clubs, religious organisations, trade associations and voluntary agencies. This players by virtue of their interaction with the populace in their own area of activities can make significant contribution in creating awareness in favour of local newspaper. The essence of their awareness is integration and inter dependence between local newspaper and the society they serve.