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Television and Social Change in Rural Marathwada, India

Dr. S. K. Rathod, Dept. of Sociology, Vinayakrao Patil College, Vaijapur, Dist. Aurangabad.

Abstract: The article analyzes the role of television in rural life, and its influences on various social processes of village India in recent years. Data from field survey in sixteen remote villages of rural Marathwada are presented in the context of cultural change. The paper is based on Robert Merton's Functional approach. The article concludes TV has changed the leisure time activity of rural people. It has reduced the information gap between rich and poor, and changes in name patterns of baby. Birth day and marriage anniversaries celebrations are taking place in remote villages. TV has become an essential part of dowry system in rural Marathwada. It has motivated Consumerism and increased the unproductive expenditure among rural people. The article furthermore, argues that TV has negative impact on social capital, declining the popularity of religious channels and religious programmes in rural area. It has decreased the popularity of radio in rural areas whereas it has not succeeded in creating the awareness of self-employments in rural people. So it is essential to increase media literacy among rural people.

Keyword: Media, Change, social capital, Behavior, Culture.

Introduction: Mass media refers collectively to all media tools and technologies including the traditional media, print media, electronic media and new media which are used as means of information by farmers. Media play vital roles in our daily life. In the modern context, media has numerous functions and utilities. It informs, entertains, educates the people, sets social agenda, influences the politics, forms public opinion, addresses public demands, criticizes social realities, transmits culture and creates new trends etc. It affects the perception and behavior of members of a society in distinct ways. Through the mass media, information and ideas circulate to the population at large. It can expose large numbers of people to the same information at the same time. According to Kuppaswamy 'social change may be defined as the process in which is discernible significant alternation in the structure and function of a particular social system. When we speak about social change we simply assert that there is some change in social behavior, social structure and social and cultural values.'¹ Here social change means any positive or negative changes (transformation) are happening in rural people's attitudes, behaviour, community relation, health, superstitions, social capital, knowledge and recreation etc. Many factors are responsible to social change, like, geographical factors, population, education, innovation, ideology etc. but in which, media are playing an important role in social change among rural areas. When we discuss about the availability of mass media at countryside area of India, we found that TV is their main media than others. So the paper

tries to investigate the social impact of television on rural Marathwada region of Maharashtra state, India.

The Problem: Many studies on television have been conducted but most of them concentrate on urban settings. Scholars like Saroj Malik (1989), BSS Rao (1992), Raja Pokharapurkar (1993), Kirk Johnson (2005), have done notable work. But their studies were conducted before the arrival of multi-channels. Today number of viewers and TV sets are increasing day by day in rural area. Villagers are interested in TV and TV has been affecting their lives. I observed that many changes are happening in the life of rural people because of TV. I was curious to know, why they watch TV, what they watch, why they like TV, which are their favorite programmes. I was wandering whether TV has caused any cultural changes in our rural society. It is my point of interest. So I have selected this topic. It is an important question to examine how the rural society reacts and responds to the TV programmes in the context of their behavior, knowledge, skill and attitudes. Therefore, a new study focusing on the new realities is the need of the hour. Especially studies dealing with the cultural implication arising out of the recent multi-channel scenario is both knowledge advancing, gap filling and useful. So, we need to ~~examine the how TV has changed the social life of rural~~ Marathwada, which are the effects on health, social capital, recreation, superstitions.

Theoretical Framework: In this research we apply Robert Merton's 'functional approach'. Merton has written a seminal book *Social Theory*

and Social Structure (1968) in which he contends that ‘function means the observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system while ‘dysfunction’ means the observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system.’² In this research both the positive and negative impact of television programme on rural society has been taken into consideration. The term function is used to being the information function of TV.

Objective: To investigate the social change of television in rural Marathwada.

Methodology and Data Source: The present paper is based on (survey method) quantitative approach. A self – administrated questionnaire was developed & used for data collection. The locale of the study is the Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. The region comprises eight districts, viz. Aurangabad, Jalna, Beed, Parbhani, Hingoli, Latur, Osmanabad and Nanded. We were selected two interior villages of highly electrified taluka from each districts. The researcher selected the sixteen villages (two villages from each district) from eight talukas for data collection. 20 (14 male and 6 female) respondents were selected through purposive sampling from each villages. In all we have selected 320 (20x16) respondents from 16 villages of this region. The universe of the study is agricultural families having their own television set. The data collection exercise was spread over later part of May-June in the year 2017.

Variables of the Study: In this study TV programmes constitute independent variable whereas the responses of rural people to TV programmes in respect of rural culture, information, social capital, lifestyle and recreation areas of rural people constitute the dependent variables.

Review of Literature: Kirk Johnson (2000)³ TV has increased the consumerism, urban modeling and linguistic hegemony in rural area of western Maharashtra. Additionally TV has changed their values and traditions, aspirations, attitude and relationship. Westoff and Koffman

(2011)⁴ the soap operas have deeper impact on reproductive behaviour of regular TV viewers, because they are using modern methods of contraception. Saroj Malik (1989)⁵ the rapid growth of TV and the communication network has had impact on traditional rural culture. Now TV sets are commonly presented as the bridal gifts in weddings. Children constantly go on insisting on their parents for TV.

BSS Rao (1992)⁶ TV does not seem to be in a position to establish an effective communication link between Government and the scattered masses in the interior villages. Further he noted that the potentialities of radio is higher appreciably than newspapers. So we can say television’s potentialities is much appreciated as a diffusion agent than as a change agent.

Dharurkar V. L. (2017)⁷ the various forms of mass media have brought about some attitudinal change in the people of Marathwada. It has provides a new progressive ideas, new perspective to look at development and other issue. Hampesh K. S. & Satish Kumar (2012)⁸ the role of television in rural (agriculture, health, education and employment) development is crucial. It acts as like watchdog, about to ensuring transparency of development programmes.

Arvind Singhal and et al. (1988)⁹ has explored TV does not take into account the fundamental and real needs of the poor. It has creates the false expectations and unattainable needs especially in socio-economically vulnerable section. It promotes to consumerism and widens the gap between the rich and the poor.

M. N. Srinivas (1993)¹⁰ TV has increased a demand of TV sets, refrigerators, saving soaps, mouth wash; tooth paste and textiles in rural society in India. P. C. Chatterji (1983)¹¹ the radio and television are significant ‘altering’ devices; and their role in development is secondary as persuasive devices. They are only reinforces to the effects of social change. In order to change, the personal contact, thinking, attitude and behaviour of people are more effective than other channels.

Analysis of Data:

Table No 1: Availability of mass media at respondents home (Source: field survey)

Characteristics	Response	No of House holds	Family Member	TV Seat /Monthly expenditure on TV (in Rupee)	No of Mobile	No of Radio	Newspaper
Male	Total	224	1252	224	452	70	44
	Average	-	5	233	2	-	-
Female	Total	96	534	96	224	15	27
	Average	-	5	-	2	-	-

Table 1 indicates the population is 1786 in 320 respondent families. Among them 1252 are males and 534 female. On an average, there are five members in each family who have at least one television set and two mobile phones. Every

family spends Rs.233 as monthly expenditure on television. Out of 320 respondents 85 have been listening to radio programmes, (70 male and 15 female) and 71 have subscribed newspapers (44 male and 27 female).

Table No. 2. According to Respondents TV and Social Change in Rural Marathwada

Characteristics	Male		Female	
	Respondents	%	Respondents	%
Decrease hurdles/ abate distance acquiring global information	128	65.18	48	73.96
Acquaints with new name pattern of baby like actor / actress	118	52.68	56	58.33
Craze for celebration of birth day	124	55.36	55	57.29
Increase TV sets demand being wedding gifts/presents	114	50.89	54	56.25
Increase in demand of film music / songs	70	31.25	49	51.04
Imitation of urban modeling/ life style	100	44.64	59	61.46
None of above	10	4.46	4	4.17
Total	224	100	96	100

Source: field survey.

57.14 per cent male and the 50.00 per cent female respondents hold that TV has removed the hurdles in acquiring global information and updates. 61.46 per cent female and the 44.64 male respondents termed that TV has spread urban life style in rural areas. 58.33 per cent female and the 52.68 per cent male respondents added that TV prompts the rural parents into naming their babies after popular film stars. 57.29 per cent female and the 55.36 per cent male respondents said that TV

has motivated them to celebrate the birth days. 56.25 per cent female and 50.89 per cent male respondents said TV has increased the demand of TV set in rural areas. The 51.04 per cent women and 31.25 per cent male respondents indicated that TV has increased the demand of film, music/ songs. On the contrary, 4.46 per cent male and 4.17 female respondents said that TV has not brought about any of these changes in rural Marathwada.

Table No. 3. Television and Cultural Change in Rural Marathwada

Characteristics	Response	Percentage
Costume / clothes	144	64.29
Food culture	104	46.43
Festival	74	33.04
Entertainment	158	70.54
Imitation of urban life style	118	52.68
Home treatment	37	38.54
None of above	6	2.68
Total	224	100.00

Source: field survey

The table 3 indicates 70.54 per cent respondents said that the television has changed their entertainment activities. 64.29 per cent respondents termed that TV has changed the clothing patterns of rural people. According to Barbara Mitra (2005) ¹² TV commercials developed a hybrid clothing culture in rural and urban community. The hybridity of clothing reflects the cultural (mixing Indian & western patterns) fusion. 52.68 per cent respondents indicated that television has increased the craze for imitation of urban life style in villages. 46.43 per cent farmers revealed that TV has changed the food culture in rural areas. 38.54 per cent respondents said television has cast a negative impact on the customs, traditions and home treatment system in rural areas. 33.04 per cent

respondents hold that TV has changed the way the rural festivals were celebrated in the past. Only 2.68 per cent respondents said that TV has not changed any of these things.

Summary and Conclusions: Social changes in rural Marathwada are the thrust area of this research, the data shows that on an average, there are five members in each family. There is at least one television set and two mobile phones in each household. Each family spends Rs.233 as monthly on television. The ratio of male and female among sample, the 70 % (224) are male and 30 % (96) are female. Out of 320 respondents, 85 listen to radio programmes and 71 have subscribed newspapers. Due to television several changes are taking places in rural society. TV is a popular means of information and entertainment in rural

Marathwada. It has removed the hurdles in acquiring global information and updates of rural people. TV has changing name patterns of baby like TV / film actor / actress. Because of TV birth day and marriage anniversarie celebrations are taking place in remote villages. It has become an essential part of dowry system in rural Marathwada. TV has changed the leisure time activity of rural people. Before TV, they spent their leisure time on Bhajan kirtan, discussion and neighbor gossip etc. Gossip was another means of passing time and entertainment, and was also a source of information. But now inspite of gossiping, reading, participation in religious activity and sleeping they prefer to watch TV till late night. 66.96% male and the 51.04 % female respondents said that they watch television in leisure time. TV has reduced the information gap between rich and poor people in this region. Earlier, very few Rich people like, local political leaders, land lords had monopoly on information. They were maintain their high status in the society based on information monopoly. But now in rural areas the whole notion of distance has changed. TV provides the same information to rich and poor people at the same time.

TV has decreased in social capital. TV has decreased the popularity of folk theatre (tamasha), storytelling from grandparents, people's participation in public or social programmes, watching TV at neighbour's house, participation in religious activities at village temple and the association with local traditional political leaders. It has declining the popularity of religious channels and religious programmes in rural areas. TV has not succeeded in creating the awareness of self-employments in rural people. The 84.37 per cent respondents said that TV programmes do not motivate them to entrepreneurship and self-employment. TV has decreased the popularity of radio in rural people. It has increased the expenditure on luxurious goods of rural people. The interaction to respondents and data reveals that the rural viewers mostly watch the entertainment programmes while informative programmes are rarely viewed. They tend to take advertisement and entertainment programme as reference group in matters of fashion, scosmetics,

modern clothes, popular festivals etc. On the contrary, they do not optimally utilize TV as a source of information that empowers people. The respondents do not take the reference from the TV programmes giving information about occupational skills and entrepreneurship. Due to acceptance of advertisement and entertainment programme as a reference group, it adds to their non-productive expenditure. It is essential to increase media literacy among rural people. It has been seen that TV is a popular medium of information and entertainment being used in the rural areas. However, there is lack of viewer orientation. By setting up viewers' clubs at village and by including lessons in school and college curriculum this problem can be tackled. So it is essential to increase media literacy among to rural people.

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