MASS – MEDIA, SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM:-A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract
Since the Society is composed of individuals, the Prospect of its stability and viability, or that of its change and transformation seems to be determined, to a great extent, by their behavioural patterns and roles which in turn, tend to be determined by their attitudinal propensities and expectations. The individuals' attitudinal propensities and expectation, under-go changes because life in the society is dynamic. No society is immune from social change; every society experiences social change. However, the nature; pace and degree of social change may vary from one society to the other as social change tends to be determined, by the nature and extent of social-mobilization of people of the concerned society. The role of the mass-media in the context of both social change and political dynamics seem to be significant. They may bring about social mobilization of the people by feeding them with new information and expectations which may pave for, and ultimately culminate in social change.

Keywords: – Social Change, Mass – Communication, Political System, Social – Mobilization, Awareness.

Mass-media are the media for mass-communication such as Radio, Television, Cinema, News-papers, Books and Magazines etc which transmit and disseminate varieties of information to the people at large, and that too rapidly. These media are, thus, concerned with mass-communication as they address themselves and their information to large, heterogeneous and anonymous audiences publicly. The concern for reaching the audience quickly necessitates construction of a formal complex organization equipped with modern technology so that information through the print and audio-visual media may reach the people within a short time. Thus, there seems to be two principal components of mass-communication; these are – (i) mass-media characterized by formal complex organization, modern technology and the concern for public transmission of information, (ii) large, heterogeneous and anonymous audiences.[1]

Mass-communication through the media may involve performance of four major types of activities such as : (i) surveillance of the societal environment, (ii) correlation of the parts of the society in responding to the this environment, (iii) intra-generational and inter-generational transmission of the social-heritage, and (iv) entertainment.[2] Surveillance refers to the collection and dissemination of information relating to varieties of events occurring in the environment, both within the society and outside it. Such information thus collected from the intra-societal and the extra-societal environment would, then, be interpreted, and prescriptions for appropriate conduct or solutions would be provided for maintaining the Unity and integration of the society, and for ensuring its viability and development. This may be termed as the editorial activity. Mass-communication through the media also includes both intra-generational and inter-generational transmission of social norms and values for the viability and survival of the Society. Finally, the media also transmit varieties of information intended for the entertainment of the audiences. These activities as performed by the mass-media in the context of mass-communication may have tremendous consequences and implications for the individual as well as the Society. For the Individual, mass-communication may contribute towards an increase in the level of his awareness, and consequently, there may be change in his perceptions, dispositions and expectations. Such attitudinal propensities would, then, tend to determine the behaviour of the individual and his roles in the society. Since the Society is composed of individuals, the project of its stability and viability, or that of its change and transformation seems to be determined, to a great extent, by their behavioural patterns and roles which, in turn, tend to be determined by their attitudinal propensities and expectations. The individuals' attitudinal propensities and expectations, however, under-go because life on the Society is dynamic, and is susceptible to intra-societal and extra-societal influences. Consequently, when new orientations and expectations of the people, at large bring about changes in their dispositions and behaviour, it may be required that the existing pattern of structure and culture of the Society ought to undergo a change in accordance with the will of the people. Accordingly, when social life is reordered, it may be said that social- change has been accomplished. Thus, social-change which implies "a relatively expensive and enduring re-ordering and/or" redefining of the process of social organization"[3] may become the outcome of changes in the attitudinal propensities, orientations, expectations and dispositions of the people as a consequence of the impact of social-mobilization and socialization. As S.N. Eisenstadt succinctly points out: "... the tendencies to change are inherent in all human societies because they face basic problems to which no over-all continuous solutions exist. These problems include uncertainties of

socialization, perennial scarcity of resources relative to individual aspirations, and different contrasting types of social orientations or principles of social organization."[4] Thus, no society is immune from social change; every society experiences social change. However, the nature; pace and degree of social change may vary from one society to the other as social change tends to be determined, to a great extent, by the nature and extent of social-mobilization of the people of the concerned society. In this process of social-mobilization, in the contemporary societies, the mass-media seem to play significant and crucial roles, and therefore, they tend to work as a major gent of social change.

MASS-MEDIA AND SOCIAL-MOBILIZATION

Social-mobilization is the process through which people of a society become exposed to new orientations and modern style of life, and tend to imbibe them. It means an up-rooting or breaking away from traditional ways of living and thinking, and a moving into new situations where new patterns of behaviour are relevant and needed, and where new commitments and new ways of living and thinking may have to be developed. It is, thus, "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour.[5] Social-mobilization, therefore, initiates, furthers, and fosters the process of change in the attitudes, values, expectations, dispositions, and behaviour of the people from the old or traditional patterns to the new or modern patterns. Such changes in their attitudinal propensities, dispositions, and behaviour, thus, seem to occur because of their mobility-physical, social, and psychic.[6] Physical mobility implies movement and migration of the individuals from one geographical area to the other in search of jobs or occupations. Social mobility implies their movement, upward or downward, in the social ladder in respect of class or social status. Psychic mobility implies acquisition of new orientations and also empathy by which they end to visualize themselves in new positions and roles. These mobilities seem to be the consequences of literary, education, industrialization, urbanization, and increased communication and media-exposure. Among these catalysts of social mobilization, the mass-media seem to play significant and crucial roles by way of transmitting wide varieties of information, orientations, and values. Media-exposure may, consequently, give rise to new aspirations and expectations relating to new standards of life and enjoyment by breaking the cognitive and attitudinal barriers of the traditional culture. The traditional individual, therefore, may become pro-change oriented, and may desire for corresponding social change. However, on the contrary, the ability of the traditional or transitional political-society to satisfy these new aspirations may remain constant or may increase much more slowly than the pace of increase of these wants and aspirations. Consequently, a gap may develop between want-formation and want-satisfaction. This gap may be termed as Relative Deprivation Gap[7] which is, thus, caused by a discrepancy between 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value-satisfaction. The inability of the political-society to plug this relative deprivation gap would, most likely, generate social dissatisfaction and frustration, and would galvanize the individuals and groups into politics. The dissatisfied people would make demands upon the government for realization of their new aspirations, and tend to participate actively in the political process for influencing the government for realization of their demands. The Political System may withstand such demands provided it has attained a high level of political institutionalization[8] characterized by adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures. However, the political back-wardens of the traditional or the transitional polity in terms of a low level of political-institutionalization makes it difficult for the demands upon the government to be expressed through legitimate channels and to be moderated and aggregated without jeopardizing the normative frame-work or the Constitutional Order of the Political System. Hence, a sharp increase in political participation may challenge and undermine the prevalent organizations, procedures and the normative frame-work of the Polity, and thus the consequence may be political instability.[9] Thus, social-mobilization wrought about by the mass-media may generate demands for social change which, if remain unheeded to by the government of the political system, may result in political instability and dis-order.

MASS-MEDIA AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Mass-media, besides being a major agent of social mobilization and social change with tremendous political implications, may also play significant and decisive roles in the process of political socialization of the people, and may influence, to a considerable extent, the dynamics of the political society. Political-socialization is the process of political-learning; it encompasses "all political-learning, formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned, at every stage of the life-cycle, including not only explicitly political learning but also nominally non-political learning of politically relevant personality characteristics.[1o] In this context, the mass media may undertake both manifest and latent political socialization of the individuals by transmitting and disseminating explicitly political information, values, views and orientations as well as non-political information and orientations which may be politically relevant for them subsequently in forming their political dispositions and in determining their political behaviour and roles. The packages of non-political communications transmitted by the mass media may contain implicit political lessons. For instance, stories, and articles published in books and magazines, songs, music and dramatic plays transmitted through the Radios, Television and Cinema shows, and even

advertisements by different companies and firms through the media for the sale of their products may indirectly and inadvertently instil in the audience varieties of non-political values such as cultural identification, patriotism, nationalism, localism, co-operation, conflict, violence, peace, communal harmony, rationalism, and even feelings of self-competence and potency. Such non-political learning by the individuals through media-exposure may be generalised and extended to the political arena, and may accordingly shape and condition their behaviour and roles in the sphere of politics. Thus, the non-political communication packages of the media though designed "merely to entertain the audience or to sell product and make money for a producer may well serve the latent function of political socialisation.[11] Moreover, non-political communications transmitted by the media may also contribute towards the political learning of the individuals in another important way. These may serve as the buffer between the audience and their political-world. If the individuals would be exposed to political information continuously through the media they may get bored, and consequently their receptivity to political information may diminish. Also, continuous exposure to political information may heighten their anxiety level by making them aware of grimmer political realities, and consequently they may avoid such exposure. Therefore, non-political communication packages transmitted by the media may serve as buffer between the individuals and their political-world, an may insulate them from undesirable effects of an over-dose of political information and thus, may produce a responsive audience for political information, news and views.

Apart from undertaking latent political socialisation of the individuals, the mass media may also undertake their manifest political socialisation by transmitting explicitly political information, values, and views. News bulletins and political discussions transmitted by the Radio and the Television, political news, views, articles, essays and the editorial published in the Newspapers, and the Magazines and political discussions and debates transmitted by various media may help increase the level of political knowledge and awareness of the individuals. Also, their political attitudes and orientations may be forma nd shaped as a consequence of their exposure to this explicitly political information as transmitted by the media.

Thus, the mass media, by way of undertaking both manifest and latent political socialisation of the individuals, may contribute significantly towards formation of their political and politically relevant orientations which may be termed as their patterns of political culture. However, these patterns of political culture as formed and shaped in them consequent upon their exposure to the media-communication may have tremendous implications for the working of the Political System s these communications may contribute towards formation of the 'Allegiant Political Culture' or ' The Alienated Political Culture' in the people. The pattern of political culture of the people may be set to be the Allegiant Political culture provided they have acquired and developed favourable and positive orientations towards the Political System whereas s it may be termed as Alienated Political Culture if people tend to view their Political system with disfavour and disaffection.[12] Formation of the Allegiant Political Culture in the people would, most likely, ensure stability and viability of the Political System where as formation of the Alienated Political Culture in them may lead to political change and transformation.[13] because the working of Political System tends to be termed by the people's political behaviour and roles which, in turn, tend to be determined by their patterns of political culture and orientations. Therefore, the working of the Political System and the prospects of its viability or change seem to be determined, to a great extent, by the pattern of political culture, allegiant or alienated, in the formation of which the mass media tend to play crucial role by way of transmission and dissemination of explicitly political communication as well as politically relevant non-political information, views, and values.

MASS-MEDIA AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS

The roles of the mass media in the context of both social change and political dynamics, thus, seem to be significant and crucial. They may bring about social mobilisation of the people by feeding them with new information, views and values, and consequently creating in them new aspirations and expectation which may pay for and ultimately culminate in social change, simultaneously, they may undertake political culture, allegiant or alienated, which may tremendously influence the dynamics of the Political System. However, in view of the health, viability and development Political Society, the roles of the mass media in both the processes in social mobilisation and political socialisation ought not to be anti-theatrical to one another. While generating and fostering a new sense of awareness in the people and mobilising them socially, the mass media ought to undertake their political socialisation in such a way that the viability and stability of the Polity would not be endangered. This goal may be realised provided the mass media become wedded to the national interest, and through their communication, endeavour to create and allegiant and integrated citizenry. People, through media communications, ought to be informed of an educated and educated that the national interest is paramount, and that, therefore, their demands for socio-political change must not jeopardise the national interest and must not undermine the capability of the Political System. The values of national unity and integration, social justice, co-operation, and harmony ought to be inculcated in the people through media communications. However, for performing appropriate roles for realisation of these goals, the mass media ought to enjoy

autonomy and free from in the true sense of the term. They ought to be free from governmental control and censorship, and also from the vested interests so that transmission and dissemination of true and relevant information may become feasible. Of course, enjoyment of autonomy does not mean isolation and transmission of information given at the cost of national interest. Autonomy and freedom must go with responsibility. Therefore, while enjoying autonomy necessary for the performance of roles, the mass media ought to develop work-ethics characterised by commitment to social and national interest so that they may play meaningful roles in the context of both social change and the dynamics of Political System.

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