

COMMUNICATION : NATURE AND ROLE.

INTRODUCTION:-

Society is the largest permanent group in which individuals have common interest and common mode of life. It is the web of social relationships. Society emerged through the great degree of subordination, awareness of social sense and to fulfill basic and fundamental needs of man and social life like nutrition, protection, comfort, education and progress through better opportunities, and exploration and development of human personality. These are the components by which different associating individuals are bound together in social relationship. Society involves co-operation and conflict, likeness and difference, adjustment and struggle. It presents a totality of social feeling with heterogeneity.

In conventional society there is simplicity, uniformity, collectivity and integrity. But industrialization, modernization and scientific developments have changed the form and structure of society. Collectivity is vanished and disintegration, de-centralization and distant behaviour in primary relations is emerging.

In this mass society various types of industries, transportation and high degree of social mobility bring jobs, ideas, attitudes, culture, values, skills, social relations and view points towards life. In each society there is stratification according to wealth, power, religion and skill. High rate of horizontal and vertical mobility create various types of sub-groups and segments in society with different interests.

In this kind of diversified society people come in contact with mass communication process. Communication plays a major part in our lives. So the present age can be termed as a communication era. Some communication theorists say that we spent as much as 60 to 80 percent of our waking hours engaged in some form of communication.¹ Obvious examples include asking for directions, ordering food, and expressing a point of view in a classroom discussion. Other theorists maintain that everything is communication.

Contemporary Indian society has developed various channels of communication. Whether we want the modern media of communication or not they have already entered the Indian society. Among the modern channels of communication we can include newspapers, communication, and so on.

Although communication is a common place experience, it is a complex phenomenon. So it is very essential to understand what is the role of these media in providing information, changing attitudes, helping the process of education-formal and informal, entrepreneurship development and other aspects of the society. In other words a very crucial question to be investigated in general is about the relationship of the various media with society. It is also essential to know whether some of these media are playing positive roles or negative roles in society.

The present study is concerned with the relationship between communication media and under-graduate students of a rural college. The study reported here to a specific issue of motives and gratifications for different communication media, uses and their effects among the college students. The main concern is to find out how media influence and peoples changes tastes, ideas, values, attitudes towards education, social life, dressess, life style and so on with special reference to the college students in a rural setting.

MEANING AND CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION :-

Communication has become one of the interdisciplinary areas of research and has attracted the interest of various social scientists like psychologists, sociologists, social anthropologists, politicians, linguistics and mathematicians.

The term 'Communication' has originated from the Latin word 'Communis' (Common).² Though definitions of communication differ, they all include basic factors like an initiator, a recipient, a message, a channel and an effect.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines communication as, "the imparting or exchange of ideas, information, things, beliefs, knowledge, morals, values or any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society."³

The communication field is largely influenced by Harold D. Lasswell's (1948) classic statement "who says, what, to whom, how, with what effect."⁴ We note that the emphasis in communication studies is mainly on the study of transmission of messages. The disciplinary or subject background of the social scientist has considerably influenced the nature of communication research. Willbur Schramm (1970) says that, four men namely Lazarsfeld a sociologists, Lewin and Hovland- psychologists, and Lasswell- political scientists are usually considered founding fathers of communication research.⁵

Ithiel Sela Pool (1963) defines communication, internalization of messages.⁶

Communication refers to the process of understanding. Besides language communication includes nonverbal things like symbolic communication. In symbolic communication signs, signals, objects, colours etc. help to convey ideas and meanings. Human communication besides language includes facial expressions, postures, gestures and so on.

Human communication refers to the way in which we influence others and in turn get influenced by them. Ideas and messages do not have meaning without reference to its socio-cultural context. Hence the study of the social system is important for the understanding of communication process. There are a number of factors like economic class, social categories, religion, caste, kinship which influence communication. As sociologists we are interested only in the social and cultural factors that influence the communication process. The change in the communication systems may also bring changes in the society e.g. after independence the communication network has expanded and affected the Indian society. We can simply define communication as the act of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another. ⁷

SOME PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION :-

Two contemporary theorists, Thomas Nison and Dean Barnlund have analyzed several definitions of communication into a few basic categories. ⁸

Nilson's Categories of Definition of Communication-

Nilson identifies two categories of definitions by focusing upon the intent of communication.

1) Intentional Category-

In this category behaviour is communication only when it is intended as such. This category consists of statements that define communication as , " these acts where in a sender deliberately

transmits information to obtain a response". In intentional communication behaviour is meant by the individual with same goal in mind. From the sender's point of view, is connected to the meaning. Several forms of communication activity illustrate, communication according to this conception- asking someone to pass the salt at the dinner table, telling your friends you are going to the library to study and so on. According to definitions in Nilson's first category, these aspects of our behaviour that constitute the deliberate transmission of a stimulus to obtain a response quality as communication.

2) Unintentional Category-

In this category only behaviour can be communication, whether intended or not. This category of definitions includes stimulus response concepts according to which the sender need not intend to evoke a response through the transmission of a stimulus. According to definitions in this category, communication does not depend on the presence of meaning from the sender's point of view. These definitions emphasize any meaning a receiver may create as the result of a stimulus.

Dean Barnlund's Approaches to the Definition of Communication-

Barnlund provides three approaches to defining communication as follows- 9

1) Message- Centered Approach-

According to this approach communications consists of the transmission of an effective message. Message construction and delivery are important in this approach. Whenever the paramount concern is the construction of a message for effect, the approach to communication is message centered.

2) Transmission-Centered Approach-

This approach emphasizes the activity of the sender and receiver. According to this approach communication is the activity of transferring messages from one person to another.

3) Meaning -Centered Approach-

In this approach, communication is the process of creating meaning. According to this concept, communication involves meaning-intentional or unintentional.

Thus Nilson and Barnlund analyze the task of defining communication in different ways. Nilson's two categories relate communication to the question of intention and Barnlund's three approaches identify aspects of the communication process upon which definitions may focus.

SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

The 20 th century can be called as the age of communications revolution. There has been an expansion in the audio-visual technology. Even in the developing countries like India the use of radios, tape-records, T.V. sets, newspapers service circulation has increased tremendously. Transport & postal services has also made close contact possible as a result the educational, occupational & social life has been affected new ideas & messages are reaching the people. Peoples wants & aspirations have changed. New life styles have been introduced on account of the influence of the mass media. Therefore the societies & nations are fast undergoing changes. It is therefore important to understand the effects of mass media of communications as the different sections of life of the people. It is also necessary to study the role of different media like newspapers & printed matter, radio, T V, Vedio, postal services, advertisements inter-personal communication or face to face communication etc. in bringing attitudinal & behavioural changes among the people. Hence the scope & importance of sociological studies of mass communication.

The developing countries are implimenting various planned programmes in the field of agriculture, animal husbandry health hygiene, family welfere, education, industrial development & a number of other fields. This has brought about quicker changes in the rural areas of our country. Food production has no doubt increased but all the sections in a particular village have not progressed at the same rate the lowest classes & castes in the Indian villages have still not progressed. Many social

factors like caste, kinship, religion, customs, beliefs, art is a barrier for effective implimentation of the planned development programme. Therefore it is essential & of great significance to understand the barriers & stimalands of change here again sociological & anthropological studies of rural communication systems will be of the great help in planning & implimentation of the programmes. The sociology of mass communication can also be have great help in areas like industrial management & communications marketing management & communication, commercial adverstisements, urban planning & development, effective management & implimentation of radio & T V programmes, planning implimentation & reformation of educational systems, administrative systems occupational systems & so on. It is therefore clear from the above that there a number of areas where a sociological understanding of the human communication process will be of the great value for the peoples own benifits.

A number of universities have opened new departments of mass communication. Even the developing countries have seperate ministries like information & broadcasting & have their own communication policies. All this indicates the growing impertance of the field of sociology of mass communications.

NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MASS MEDIA

For the purpose of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another modern society has built intricate, many faceted machinery for delivering its messages. Mass media can be broadly divided as follows-

1) Visual Media-

Visual communication acquired a special significance as a total form has direct and persuasive characteristics and are flexible. Films, posters, TV, Video etc. are some of the visual media.

2) Audio or Sound media-

Radio, telephone are the audio media. Words, sounds, music is the main content. Illiteracy does not come in the way of audio or visual communications as in the case of newspaper.

3) Print Media-

Print media includes newspapers, periodicals, magazines, journals and books. Printed word is the main content. But illiteracy is the main obstacle for the success of the media.

4) Electronic Media-

Electronic media includes TV, tape recorder, video, radio, computer, camera and so on.

5) Traditional Media-

Traditional media includes folkways, bhajan, bhairud and kirtan like songi-bhajan, lawani, puppet shows, religion, caste, kinship, traditional arts, crafts, music and so on. These traditional media play major communication role in the Indian village community.

This study is mainly concerned with the nature and effects of modern communication media as , newspapers, radio, film, TV and ~~the~~ magazines. So it is essential to understand the nature and characteristics of these communication media.

1) Newspaper

News paper is a conventional and print media. In 1780 a two-sheet newspaper in English with three columns printed on both sides claiming to be a weekly appeared in Calcutta. It was the first issue of the Bengal Gazette, the first newspaper of India and was the ~~outcome~~ outcome of the maiden adventure of James ~~ing~~ Augustus Hickey, a disappointed adventurer who never in his life succeeded in any work he took up. ¹⁰

The Bengal Gazette published "Addresses to the public from Mr. Hickey". 'Poet's Corner' and all local gossip relating to the British community in Calcutta as special features. James Augustus Hickey's name has survived as the pioneer of Indian Press. ¹¹

Printed word is the main content of newspaper and for the majority of the population, newspaper probably still are the basic news medium. They have been out-distanced by television in speed and visual punch, but they still provide greater depth and variety of reporting than television can, and with more lasting impact. Without newspapers the public simply could not be well informed.

As one ~~of~~ of the mass communications media, the contemporary newspaper has three fundamental functions and several secondary ones. The fundamental ones are these following :

- 1) To inform readers objectively about what is happening in the community, country and world,

ii) To comment on the news in order to bring these developments into focus, and

iii) To provide the means whereby persons with goods and services to sell can advertise wares. The newspaper's secondary roles are these -

i) to campaign for desirable civic projects and to help eliminate undesirable conditions;

ii) to give readers a portion of entertainment through such devices as comic strips, cartoons and special features;

iii) to serve readers as a friendly counselor, information bureau, and champion of their rights. When a newspaper performs all or most of these tasks well, it becomes an integral part of community life.

The printed word has a lasting power and precision beyond that of the spoken word or the visual image, although it has less ability to startle and shock. Readers can refer to it again and again. Stories may be clipped and saved by readers for many years. It contributes to the newspaper's position as a stabilizing, continuing force in the community.

To sum up, newspaper plays a significant role in the creation of well informed citizenry by disseminating news and views on diverse matters from different parts of the world. Newspapers are an important means of education and entertainment. They are also a valuable medium of advertisement.

2) Radio:-

In a country like India, where the printed word can not go very far because of widespread illiteracy the radio can be a significant medium of mass communication. In terms of reach and impact it is a more powerful media than the press not only for the purpose of

dissemination of news and information, but also for education, entertainment and advertisement. The radio can carry message to the remotest corner of the country and thus can also help to reduce rural isolation. Broadcasting can also be a useful instrument for raising the cultural level of the people and changing their way of life.¹²

The first news broadcast in the United States is generally credited to Dr. Lee De Forest, who in 1906 invented the vacuum tube that made voice broadcasting possible, the next step beyond Marconi's wireless telegraphy, of the 1890. On Nov. 7, 1916 the New York American ran a wire to De Forest's experimental station at High Bridge, New York.¹³

The first broadcasting station in India, was opened in Bombay by the Indian Broadcasting company in July 1927. But in 1930 the Indian Broadcasting company went into liquidation. However, the same year, the Government of India took over Broadcasting, Service. In June 1936 the name of the Organization was changed to All India Radio (Akashwar)

The radio is an electronic media. It constitutes the major sources of information about what is happening in the world. It provides a continuous stream of news about local, regional, national and international events.

The potential of radio in a particular locality varies of course, according to the ~~populations~~ populations served and the practices of the Stations in that community. However in general both commercial and public radio stations represent excellent resources for the delivery of human service workers public relations public education and prevention messages to a variety of specific audiences, as well as to the general public. Among the characteristics of radio that make it especially valuable to local human service groups and organizations are the follows.

- 1) Radio is the major source of local news for many people, youth, rural
- 2) Individual stations are targeted at specific audiences youth, rural housewives, a particular ethnic group, children, industrial workers, villagers and so on.

- 3) Radio is listened to in all kinds of situations while working, driving, reading and so on.
- 4) Radio can respond more quickly to breaking news than can newspaper.
- 3) Film-

The film is an audio-visual media. The importance of film as communication media, and its utility for social and cultural education has been widely accepted now.

The first film was shown in a hotel in Bombay in 1896¹⁵ Among those who were inspired by this medium was Dadasaheb Phalke, who is accepted as the father of Indian cinema. He produced the first Indian feature film 'Raja Harishchandra' and released it in early 1913.¹⁶

The film depends for its impact both on sight and sound. It is not merely a mass media for education and entertainment but also best artistic production in the field of visual art. Films are of several kind. They include-

- 1) Feature films- These are the normal commercial films shown in cinema houses.

- 2) Children's films-

Usually short feature films containing stories from mythology or on themes of current interest.

- 3) News films-

These films contain an assortment of news about happenings during a particular period.

- 4) Documentary films-

These are films on development art and culture or on activities of public sector undertakings and institutions primarily with a view of informing and educating people.

- 5) Television films-

These are usually individual short films made exclusively for television.

6) Advertising films-

Produced by commercial firms to sell particular products.

7) Instructional Films-

Primarily intended for use for education and instructional purposes.

As a mass communication medium for bringing about the desired economic and social change in the country, the film can exert a far greater influence on the people than perhaps all other media. The film is also a far more effective medium of communication than other media like press and radio.

4) Television-

Among all the available media of mass communication, television is the most powerful. It combines the advantages of both video and audio media and is therefore more effective than radio in providing education as well as entertainment.

Television in India was inaugurated as an Experimental service on 15 th September 1959 in Delhi. The TV studio and transmitter was designed and installed under the guidance and supervision of the late Shri Rajmanikam, the then research Engineer of A.I.R. The experimental TV project was launched with the help of UNESCO for the purpose of disseminating 'Social Education.'¹⁷ The initial growth and function of the television service in India was as a part of All India Radio. On April 1, 1976, Television Broadcasting was delinked from AIR and was designated as Doordarshan.

The primary object of Television, as of any other media in developing country like India is to help in the process of social and economic development of the country and in raising quality of life of the people. This is sought to be done through devising programmes that present the diversity and richness of India's culture and intellectual attainment and to combine entertainment with

information and instruction.

Special programmes to meet the needs and aspirations of special categories of viewers, such as farmers, industrial workers, women, youth and children are also telecasts from different stations of Doordarshan.

Television is one such instrument that can truly propagate to the people living in total ignorance of our cultural values; a clearer picture of our cultural heritage and help them to develop new sets of values founded on the old faith, in order to suit the modern living conditions. Thus television like any other mass media, such as the newspaper, radio etc. is primarily engaged in guarding social morality and the behavioural patterns of the society.

5) Magazine-

The first periodical to term itself a magazine was the 'Gentleman's Magazine', which was founded in 1731 by Dr. Johnson's publisher, Edward Cave, and survived until 1914. It was a totally new kind of publication when it began printing excerpts from weekly journals, summaries of the month's news a register of new books details of births, marriages, and deaths.¹⁸

Now the commonest use of magazine is for a literary storehouse, a treasure store of good reading by various authors, which brings it a long way from Arabia.¹⁹

A minority of youngsters in India today look, live and think in a counter - cultural manner. In an attempt to break away from traditional mores, they have evolved life style that borrow heavily from the life of the occident. Their reaction to Western society is registered in clothes, words and deeds. It is to this strata of youth that most of our magazines are directed.

The regular features that are found in most magazines are letters to the editor, sports, science, personalities, hobbies, film news, movie and book reviews, short stories, fashion, current events,

political activities, beauty column, humorous articles, career guidance and comic strips. Interviews with personalities, profiles of talented young people and features concerning Art and Music are common to all the magazines. Comic strips fashion features, film and music news are also found in a majority of magazines. Most magazines are avowed political ventures.

With the upward fate of literacy, there is a vast readership potential in the country. The role of the magazine as a tool of mass communication is an important one and to be effective, it must be well produced. Apart from being imaginative in its treatment of topics it should reflect a sense of advancement and excitement about life in general, and about events, ideas, issues and values.

Through the printed word, the magazine reaches millions of young minds and influences their thinking. When this influence is wholesome and healthy, then the magazine has rendered a good and essential service to the community.²⁰

ROLE OF MASS MEDIA

All through the ages, man has felt the need to express himself and to share thoughts and ideas with his fellow men. In the process he has developed a variety of forms and channels. These forms are specific to linguistic and cultural groups and are accepted as modes of communications and entertainment.

The advantages of different communication media differ mainly in nature of masses or information which they communicate and also depend on the audience. Each medium of communication serves different objectives and different groups of population. Mass media are disseminating facts and transmitting knowledge of many things. Media do not give the news only, but they provide information on different aspects of life and problems and entertainment too.

Harold Lasswell (1948) has emphasized the three major roles of mass media as follows-

1) Surveillance of the Environment-

With the help of mass media we go to understand the environmental factors, we find out the dangers or threats as well as opportunities available and the position of the community in general.

2) Co-relation of the Components of Society-

Mass media help to co-relate different aspects of the society with each other. In other words, it brings an interaction between different social institutions, values and attitudes.

3) Transmission of Social Inheritance-

The values and norms of society are transferred through the mass media from one generation to another which play an important role for the social stability. Transmission of social inheritance is helpful for their socialization.

Beside these general roles there are many specific roles as follows-

1) Providing Information and knowledge-

In the modern complex society, it is not possible to personally give information to many other people. Mass media does this work very effectively. By use of radio, government gives the required information and message to thousands of people at a time. With the help of TV any politician or leader speaks and communicates with thousands of people. Any important information of the Government is also delivered by newspapers. Mass media plays an informative role in the complex society which is a very important one for social activities and social information.

2) Entertainment-

Many of the mass media play entertainment role. Various films are produced for the purpose of entertainment. Like radio and TV, film media is effective for entertainment. Some magazines also are published for the purpose of entertainment e.g. Raviwar Jatra in Marathi. Radio produces entertainment programmes like social dramas, folk and modern songs etc. There are many commercial films, advertisements, dramas, songs and other entertainment programmes on the TV. Majority of the programmes are basically entertainment oriented though they convey information and messages too.

3) Role of Propoganda-

Propoganda can be defined as a set of symbols which influence opinion, beliefs or attitudes on issues regarded by the community as controversial e.g. political propoganda. However, propoganda in the case of communist countries is more authoritarian. Radio and other mass media can also be used for propogating rational, scientific, educational and other policy matters regarding a particular country or society. There are many instruments for propoganda such as

radio, newspapers, films, TV, pamphlets and so on. They influence the people and their attitudes to a great extent. However propoganda can not always succeed if there is too much distortion of facts.

4) Authoritarianism-

Modern communications was born in 1950. The society always ranks higher than the individual. For controlling the individuals, society uses the mass media. One of the function of the authoritarian state is unity of thought and action among all members.

5) Role of Education-

Mass media also plays educational role. Many educational programmes are transmitted by the mass media. This programme involves transfer of information, knowledge and skills from one point to another. The development of technology of mass media has placed at our disposal the means to transfer knowledge more effectively to larger number of receivers at multiple points. Educational technology implies the full development for education of the new means of educations and would thus embrace all educational technology of dissemination of information and knowledge. In the Indian context attention has been focused on the media best capable of serving the national priorities in education viz. universalization of elementary education and adult education. Mass media overcomes the barriers of social, religious, economic, linguistic and other inequalities in the society.

6) Environmental Role-

'Environment' have become a popular concept with the media and their practitioners. The word 'environment' implies the surroundings people live in or conditions influencing development or growth. The mass media informs and educates people in creating awareness about the need to protect and develop environment. Mass media concentrates on environmental subjects as special areas of their activities.

In this connection Indian media have discussed variety of problems like the Silent Valley, Cleaning of Ganga River, slum problems and so on. Media have focussed their attention on the pollution caused by the smoke, gas, chemicals, coal, fertilizers and nuclear industries, increasing noise created by traffic, trains, aeroplanes and the enormous strain on the economy. Message such as "earth will protect us only if we ourselves will protect the earth", can be very effective in bringing attitudinal changes. The print media can be the most potent vehicle for treatment of environmental problems. Film can be a very effective individual media creating environmental consciousness. Documentaries and features, children's educational and TV films can be ideal for environmental exposure among various age groups of people. TV programmes like 'Zara Sechley' can stimulate thinking.

In various interpersonal or group communication, traditional media can help to harness sanctions to the efforts towards environmental conservation. Mass media messages needs to be ably supported by interpersonal communications.

7) Consumer Awareness-

Commercial advertisements in radio, newspaper, films, TV, magazines, wall posters, highway posters and boards have brought about revolutionary changes in the tastes, habits and likings of the consumers of India. Thereby the market network increase and is responsible for a better growth of consumer products.

8) Formation of Public Opinion-

Books, magazines, films and large portion of radio and TV programmes are vital role in the formations of public opinion.

Social attitudes and political view points can be examined with telling impact through fictional narrative as well as by functional reporting. TV and radio help to publicize the interplay of opinion

through

through news report. Magazines of opinions examine the news critically and express their view on its meaning. In the newspapers there are columns of "Letter to the editor". The reader express their views by this media.

9) New Dimension to Man's Horizon-

By the use of different media people have come to know new ideas, philosophies, approaches and attitudes to life. Different media have brought about a new dimension in man's horizon. They are disseminating facts, transmitting knowledge of many things and providing the speediest and the most effective means. They can also help in imparting various types of education and training to the farmers and small entrepreneurs, teachers and other personals in the rural areas. In the near future there is a possibility of a world 'culture' or 'Global society' or a 'Mass Society' !

10) Attitudinal Changes-

The positive role mass media is removing prejudices and stereotypes accelerating the acceptance of women's new and expanding role in society and bringing a rational attitude in general.

After all, mass media plays an important role for individual, society and nation. Mass media are the need of the present age. But while the role of media is extensive, it has limitations too. It can influence thinking but can hardly change convictions. Media plays positive role of advertising. But it is also negative role. There are advertisements of cigarettes which are harmful to health, always encouraging abuse, gasoline, automobiles, soap and detergents which many a times are misleading. Environment and products used by children, such as toys, breakfast cereals.

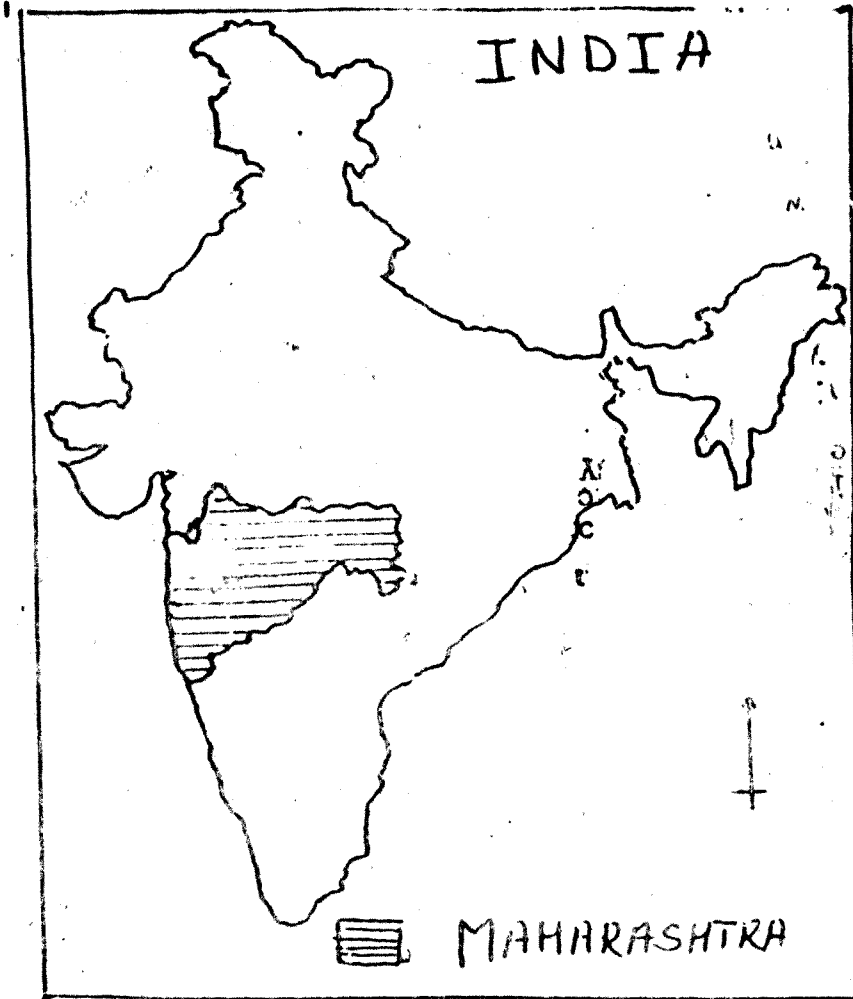
There are bad effects of TV on children's eyes, TV makes children corrupt by showing too much crime, violence and sex and interferes with their study. A article written by Eleanor Maccoby published in a book entitled 'Communication', it has been stated that in America Children's viewing of television rises from an average of two hours to three hours a day. As a effect of TV viewing children's attitudes and ideas can be changed. TV is becoming a part of the environment of the family and if the programmes show too much of sex, crime or violence, children are affected by them. There may be limitations to media for reaching the audience a low rate of income, low rate of literacy, identification of media and so on.

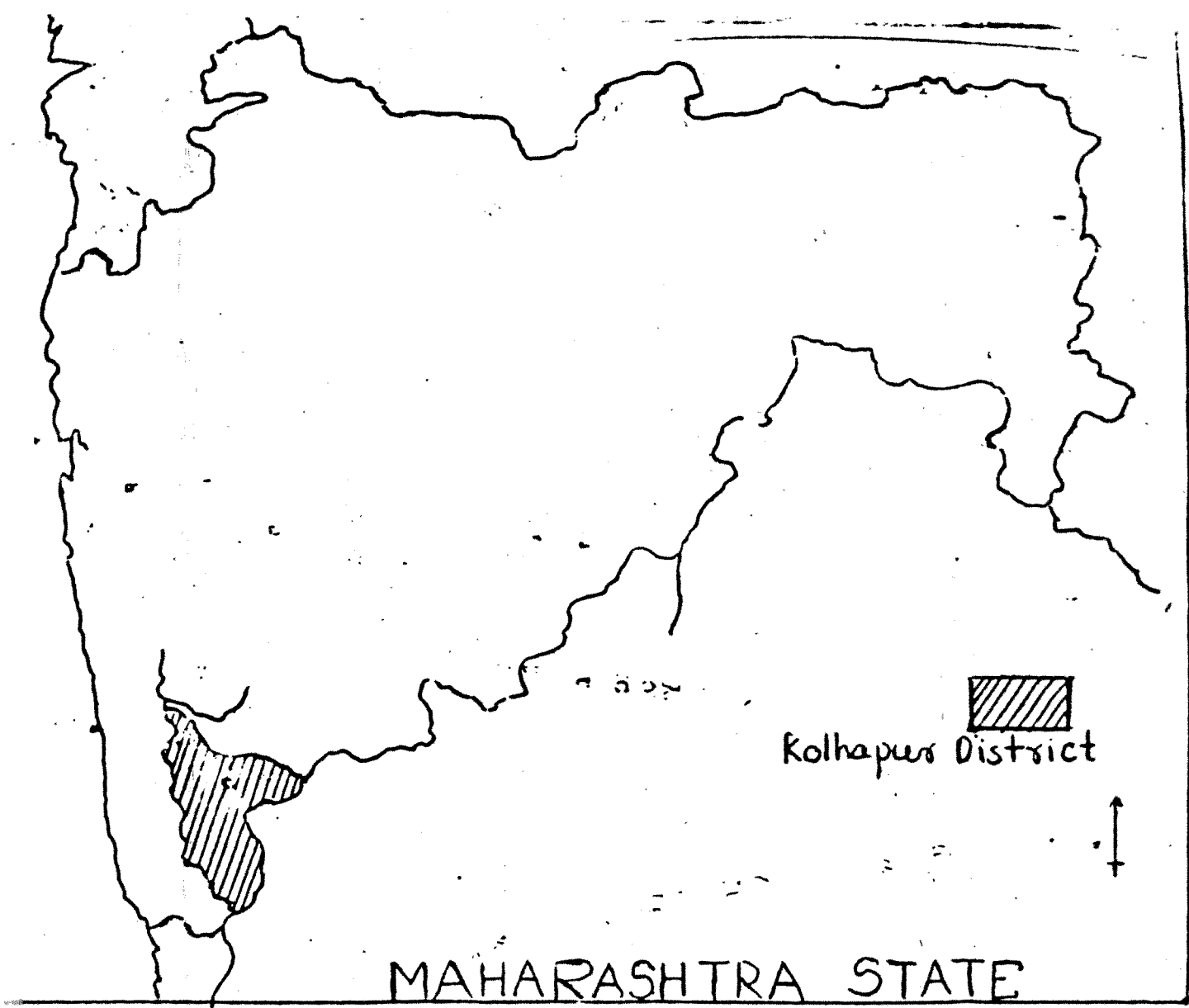
To sum up there are positive and negative roles of mass media. But positive roles are important than negative roles for the existence and development of individual and human society. The mass media have to be properly used for bringing desired changes for the all round development of human society.

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