



MASS MEDIA –A POWERFUL AGENT FOR ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS

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Yajnavalkya Smriti, a historic Indian text on statecraft and jurisprudence, suggested to have been written before 5th century AD, prohibited the cutting of trees and prescribed punishment for such acts. Kautilya's Arthashastra, written in Mauryan period, emphasised the need for forest administration. Ashoka went further, and his Pillar Edicts expressed his view about the welfare of environment and biodiversity.

Despite active passage of laws by the central government of India, the reality of environmental quality mostly worsened between 1947 to 1990. Most of Indian economy was nationalised and owned by India, and regulations were mostly ignored by state run enterprises. Rural poor had no choice, but to sustain life in whatever way possible. The state governments of India often regarded environmental laws enacted by the central government as a mere paperwork formality. Air emissions increased, water pollution worsened, forest cover decreased.

Starting in 1990s, reforms were introduced. Since then, for the first time in Indian history, major air pollutant concentrations have dropped in every 5 year period. Between 1992 to 2010, satellite data confirms India's forest coverage has increased for the first time by over 4 million hectares, a 7% increase.^[4]

Some have cited economic development as the cause regarding the environmental issues. Others believe economic development is key to improving India's environmental management and preventing pollution of the country. It is also suggested that India's growing population is the primary cause of India's environmental degradation. Systematic studies challenge this theory. Empirical evidence from countries such as Japan, England and Singapore, each with population density similar or higher than India, yet each enjoying environmental quality vastly superior than India, suggests population density may not be the only factor affecting India's issues.^[5]

How to over come this issue

One of the most effective way of getting the message across to the largest possible audience in a country as vast and diverse like India is through mass media, including television and the English and vernacular press. Both these media have the potential of being extremely effective tools for environmental communication, but have not been sufficiently exploited for this purpose so far. Most environmental documentaries shown on TV today attract few viewers because of the academic or pedantic manner in which they are presented. Similarly, although many English newspapers are now carrying more and more features on environmental issues, they are usually superficially researched and poorly written. Vernacular papers still carry very little or no environmental news.

RADIO

The radio is a powerful communication tool. It has proved to be the most effective media in promoting agriculture and development in rural areas, particularly as a tool for the delivery of quick information. In rural development, information and knowledge are two significant factors. Local knowledge provides different ideas for agricultural as well as other changes. The information brought to the area contains fresh ideas, and introduces new opportunities. Knowledge obtained from a specific research can motivate thinking and practices. All the five external and one internal catalyst of social change, which were identified by Figueroa et al. (2002) have the stimulus of new information or knowledge at their core. Neither knowledge is being “transferred” to potential users, nor are the outputs of specific research being “taken up” by farmers and other land managers (Garforth and Usher, 1997; Garforth et al., 2003). Among the mass media, informal education, radio and television have a specific value. Due to their vast use, the media are among the best educational and cultural instruments. Based on their educational requirements different countries can take advantage of radio and television in terms of informal education. On the other hand, the lack of specific research in this field as well as the obligation and commitment of Iran to the World Session of Information Society (WSIS, 2005), which aims at applying information and communication technology in all parts and areas including villages and agricultural affairs, makes conducting this study inevitable.

Mobile learning, a relatively new concept, has gathered momentum and attracted the interest of educators, researchers, and companies developing learning systems and instructional materials. A web-based environmental education system has been developed by the authors

on a University's server, called the New Mobile Technologies and Environmental Education System (NMobTec-EnvEdu). The exploratory study investigated the results of integrating mobile technology with e-learning and traditional classroom environments; specifically, the use mobile telephones, data services (i.e., WAP, SMS, MMS, e-mail), and messenger. By gathering information and exchanging pictures using mobile telephones, text messaging and transmitting pictures of local environmental blights, students' attitudes improved toward maintaining a clean environment, and they identified ways to prevent pollution.

Localizing 'Hands on' Programmes in India

As part of the TVE Video Resource Centre activities, CEE is in the process of localizing 50` Hands On' programmes in one or more Indian Languages. These 5-minute capsules showcase technologies and processes helping communities and entrepreneurs around the world to develop more sustainable lifestyles, practices and businesses.

Green Teacher

This one hour video programme looks at various ways to educate about the environment. This video programme comprises of four segments—Environmental Education—What, Why, How, Show and Tell, Acting Green and The World is Your Classroom. The segment 'The World is Our Classroom' won a special citation in the category for teachers, at the 10th UGC-CEC Educational Video Competition Awards 1997.

In collaboration with Educational Media Research Centre, CEE was involved in the production of films for National Telecast as part of the UGC country-wide classroom. The film titles "A Mirage for a future' on the Dhrangadhra Sanctuary, Gujarat was telecasted over Doordarshan in 1999.

It is still to be confirmed that the role of mass media is one of the most important factors underlying the knowledge of environmental problems: This can only be true on the conditions that first, mass media are accessible to large proportions of the population, second, are spending some time on environmental issues and third, people are interested in information on ecological issues provided by the media so that they view or listen to the corresponding programs as well as read newspaper articles or other written publications dealing with environmental issues.