

Mass Communication in the Modern World: It's Impact and Spirituality

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Abstract:- We live in the modern world with all its forces and splendors, achievements and success, developments and growth. Today, the human beings can do anything with the possibilities of their own inventions. Technologically, scientifically and materially speaking, humanity has reached the peak of glory as never before. All of creation is potentially a mediator of divine disclosure, but the Church stands out as the community which possesses the greatest potential for communication about God. This paper clears the clouded doubts about communication and its spirituality, in order to defend faith and help the faithful to grow and learn about communication and its methods. Each member of the Catholic Church, hold the prime duty to reveal God's Love to everyone who are ignorant of his Love and His good news. Today's world is a big challenge to all those who are involved in spreading God's Love, by means of new technology in the advent of communication. It's a right time to take courage and to be firm to voice forth for God. Our efforts in communicating God and His rightful place in our daily lives, should lead us to become a critical voice against everything that is oppressive, everything that enslaves people. At times it may be like a voice in the wilderness, a voice that has been lost amidst the din of many other voices. Nevertheless, it must be a voice that will stir and inspire others to grow in their faith

Keywords:- Communication, Spirituality, Mass Media, Modern World.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are created as social creatures. Hence as special beings, a person cannot exist without a community life. In the contemporary world media has become a powerful cultural factor. Modern media is a big industry. Modern man cannot do without information that is fully consistent, accurate and true. Yes, communication is a fundamental fact of human existence. It is an anthropological reality essential to the human being as well as for human growth and development. This is also a way in which we respond to God. We do connect ourselves with human, God and the creation. In this short article, I would like to deal about the spirituality of communication integrating the Church's teaching on Mass Communication.

➤ *Meaning of Communication*

We all live in a world of communication today. Communication can be defined as a process, which includes the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, knowledge by using symbols, words, gestures and

visuals and so on. In other words, the act of communication which is largely carried out through the mass media is nothing but the transmission and reception of messages.¹

➤ *History of Mass Communication: its Origin and Development*

The Mass Communication media are of recent origin, although printing was invented in 1456. One hundred years after the invention, newspaper was still almost unknown since, most people could not read. Printing news items did not make any sense but it made an unbelievable change in the history. The Twenty first century has often been referred to as the century of science and communication revolution. Science and the innovations in communication are interconnected and it has a rapid development in the society.² Modern communication technologies are a pre-condition for the development of many other new systems that characterize our time and age. History gives us clues on how the Media gradually changed people's perceptions of reality and their way of thinking and of using languages.³

In a mediated culture, due to the emergence of digitalized communication and the commoditization of cultural experiences, it can be difficult for people to discern whose representations to believe and which images matter. Many people are attached to the romantic image of organic communities in which people converse with one another face-to-face and live in a close knit local communication. Most of our communications to other people are carried out through T.V, radio, film, magazines, music, commercial dance, style, fashion, and commercial leisure venues.⁴

➤ *Types of Mass Communication*

Mass media can be categorized according to the physical form, technology involved, and the nature of the communication process etc.

¹ D. M. Quail, *Mass Communication Theory: The Rise of Media of Mass Communication*, New Delhi, SAGE publications, 1987, p. 10.

² M. Mamala, *Spirituality Today*, "Media Spirituality" A. Kolencherry, ed., 2001, p.72.

³ J. Srampickal, *Communication of Media in India Today*, Media House, New Delhi, 1998, P. 13.

⁴ P. Willis, *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p.98.

➤ *Basic Media*

Basic Media is the media that we use by the very nature of our existence. This media is more of personal, intrapersonal and extra personal in relationship with the other. This occurs in terms of basic human relationship knowingly or unknowingly we communicate in this medium and thus these media become the basic ones.

➤ *Oral and Verbal*

The idea that oral media was the very first means of communication need not always be true because, sign language could be considered as the first medium of communication. As a comprehensive tradition of development of human communication, the oral tradition comes as the first used powerful pattern in the world. Meanings and ideas, emotions and interactions are communicated through the media of sounds and words. The words of the mouth in direct conversation is the style of communication.⁵ However we give more importance to oral communication, because, it is the first means of communication that leads us to the other means of human language. The era of verbal communication began with the development of language, which probably came into use about 35,000 B.C.E., in the Cro-Magnon period, enabled the humans to readily communicate with one another.⁶

➤ *Print Media*

Johannes Guttenberg's invention of the moveable metallic type in the fifteenth century, paved a way for the proliferation of the print media. The printing press using movable types introduced the method for mass production of texts. Before the invention of the printing press, the books were the expensive materials affordable only for the aristocrats and royal families. But slowly printing made the cost of books less and made them available to the common people also. This print media includes Newspaper, Magazines, Books, and other textual documents.

➤ *Electronic Media*

Media is a powerful instrument for bringing visible changes in the views, outlook, attitude and interests of people. This media not only provides entertainment, information but also highlights what is actually going on in the society, in the country and around the world. Television, movies and the Internet are having an effect on mankind that would have been unimaginable even a century ago. The media, both print and electronic, shape our lives and our minds in ways that most fail to realize, and with sobering effects. Electronic media plays an indispensable role in the modern world. Television, radio, movies, the Internet and the print, extend their influence upon our culture, our behaviour and our brain.

➤ *Society Transformation through New Media*

The "new media" permit a great more participation of its users who are no longer just passive recipients of information but are active producers of content and information. This is certainly the case with those who use email, are participants in a listserv or chat room, create a website, blog, burn their own CDs, use Web collaboration tools, podcast, offer products via eBay or simply surf the Internet creating their own connections between existing sets of information. New media" is that they are digital, they are linked and cross linked with each other and the information they mediate is very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, linked and perhaps most radical of all easily searched for and accessed.⁷

➤ *Nature of Communication*

Communication maintains and animates life. It is also the motor and expression of social activity and civilization. It leads people from instinct to inspiration; it creates a common pool of ideas, strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages and translates to action.⁸ Mass Communication is in essence, a prolongation and refinement of the human senses. Through the use of media, we can prolong or go beyond the limits of our senses. Communication bridges space and time, and they make the world a global village with the aid of the printing press, the phone, the camera, and the electronic technology. Human being has performed a miracle, in the sense that he has shrunk the earth by means of communication. Today, words travel with electrifying speed.⁹ Information is continually on the move to the entire world and as a result people can learn what they need to learn.

➤ *Disadvantages of the Modern Communication*

With roughly seven billion people in the world today, and with the arrival of modern communication, we have lost sight of the age old tradition of taking time to talk and to listen to another person. The sharing of human experiences is getting lost in translation through the rise of technology and digital communications. Society is quickly becoming anti-social on a human-to-human interaction level, as a result of the development and implementation of social media and other forms of digital communication platforms. In a week, an average person spends at least thirteen hours on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, WhatsApp etc. People are losing touch with the physical world around them at an alarming rate.

⁷ V. J. Naidu, *Jesus in the Media*, Media Centre, Bangalore, 1987, p. 25

⁸ B. Kootanal, "God Oriented in St Francis de Sales a Contribution to the Modern Christian Communication," Master's Dissertation, Faculty of Theology, IIS, SFS, 1998, p. 88.

⁹ V. J. Naidu, *Jesus in the Media*, Media Center, Bangalore, 1987, p.69.

⁵ J. Edappilly, *The Emerging Electronic Church*, Bangalore Asian Trading Corporation, 2003, p.8.

⁶ S.K. Pandey, "Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Communication," Common Wealth Publishers, 2001, vol.1, p. 297.

People in today's society are more concerned with what is currently trending on the Internet than having a real conversation with another human being. Due to the improvement in communication devices and social media interfaces, the world moves at a fast pace these days, and yet these applications are slowly creating a void in the form of actual communication skills between humans. While advanced interfaces and technology devices showcase the genius of man, we ultimately should not forget the unfathomable complexity of what we can never create, namely, the living human.

➤ *Main Function of the Media*

In a society, the media functions in five basic ways as watchman, as forum, as teacher as entertainer and as salesman. These functions envisage various uses. News dissemination, education, advertising, publicity determining are some of the uses of the media.¹⁰ The media opens up new and highly effective avenues of communication of all kinds of information even for ideas and directives. The media have made it possible for a person's to communicate with others at one and the same time and in an easy and effective way.¹¹ Therefore this media serve as a channel of transport for messages.

The technology of modern mass communication results from the building together of many types of inventions and discoveries ranging from the printing press, through the radio, motion picture, television and various methods of sound recording as well as, systems of mass production and destruction.¹² The media provide people with information not only of the social, political, and economic conditions of their own country, but that of other countries as well. The mass media can spread over the whole earth and bring the most remote events not only to our door steps but into our very living rooms. Our planet is described as today as a global village.¹³ As men come closer to fellow beings through the media, there is scope for mutual sharing and development the proper channelling of the media creates a climate of change of attitudes, value perceptions and a leap towards progress. Their influence reaches various strata of human existence and spheres of activity. This ultimately broadens and enhances our social, cultural, moral, economic and political norms and interactions.¹⁴

➤ *Spirituality of Communication*

When we approach God as self-communicating Trinitarian love, then we see the mysteries of creation and revelation, as part of that self-communication dynamic. We cannot remain passive spectators with regard to the

phenomenon of Communications, nor can we simply use the means of communication for our mission, rather we must undergo a transformation on various levels: a transformation of mind- to acquire a new mentality so as to understand communication: a transformation of heart- to become docile to the spirit so as to feel communications: and a transformation of the way- in which we work in the world of communication. So an authentic spirituality is the basis for anybody who wants to make his or her mission with the deep personal experience with God.¹⁵

The modern media of social communication are cultural factors that play a role in this story. As the Second Vatican Council remarks, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, nevertheless such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society. Considering the media of social communication in this light, we see that they contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and to the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God.

➤ *Christian View of Communication*

The Church sees the media as a gift of God, which in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to co-operate with his plan for their salvation.¹⁶ A deeper and more penetrating understanding of social communication and of the contribution which it uses can make to modern society can be derived from a number of documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. These are, notably from the Constitution on Church in the Modern World.¹⁷

➤ *The Christian Communication Model*

Christian communication in general need to have a listening heart in a total openness to God and people. The communicator needs spirituality of total openness. According to St. Augustine, the Christian message is central and the messenger is only a mere instrument in the service of the message. In the ordinary linear communication models with sender- Message-Receiver, the sender stays central and most research is devoted directly or indirectly to him. In the new Christian model, it is God himself with his message who stays central. This means that the more the messenger listens and identifies with the message, the more he reflects and communicates it.

¹⁰ C.R.W David. ed., *Communication in Theological Education A Curriculum*, BTE of senate of Serampore College, Madurai, 1986, p.85.

¹¹ J. Srampickal, "*Communication of Media in India Today*," Media House, New Delhi, 1998, p.13.

¹² Ibid., p.13.

¹³ A. Desmond, *The mass Media and You*, St. Paul's publication, Bombay, 1994, p.18.

¹⁴ M. Mamala, *Media Spirituality*, Spirituality Today, p.73.

¹⁵ D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Social Communication and Christian Communication*, NBCLC, Bangalore, 1984, p. 24.

¹⁶ Pius XII, Encyclical of *Miranda Prorsus*, AAS., XXIV, 1957, p. 765.

¹⁷ Pope St. John Paul II, *Gaudium et spes*, p.1025.

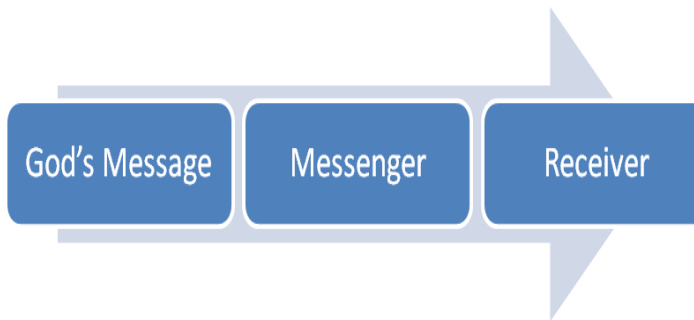


Fig 1:- Christian Communication Model

In the life of Jesus too, we see that the role of the Father was so central. Hence, God's messenger should start with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because it is from where the communication flows. In order to receive God's communication, God's messenger must start with meditation, silence and end finally with prayer.

➤ *God's Communication through Incarnation*

In many ways, God has spoken to us through prophets, through events, human history, personal, familial, and social. In due time, He spoke through Jesus Christ. (Gal, 4:4). He became a visible sign of the invisible God and along with Christ the whole world was made into a universal sacrament. The world has already spoken of God with the incarnation of the Word and it becomes still more aware of God. Every Christian is a communicator. In order to hear God speaking, men and women can confidently yet discerningly listen to the word and announce to the people who are unknown God. Christian communication is Christ in many ways. Not only that God has spoken but he also has spoken in communication. And His apostles began Christian communication in His day and He continues it now, through the community of the Church. Thus every baptized person is a Christian communicator, who awaits the healing action of Christ.¹⁸

➤ *Communication Methods in the Holy Bible*

Christianity reveals a God who uses all sorts of media to get his message across, from pillar of fire to bright stars, from burning bushes to a talking donkey. He delivered the Ten Commandments on chiselled rock, painted rainbows to signal his covenant and came up with a cross to display his Love. In the New Testament we find Jesus engaging in parables and storytelling which reflect the culture of his time. He performs miracles with the mud; he becomes the bread and wine of the real world.¹⁹ So history has shown that God showers down new medium of communication at every specific time.

➤ *Teaching of Vatican II on Media*

All the Christians of the Church are called to join without delay and with the greatest effort in a common walk to make effective use of social communication in

¹⁸ F. J. Eilers, ed., *Church and Social Communication in Asia*, 3rd ed, FABC, vol. 2, Manila, Logos, 2003.

¹⁹ B.P. Mathew, "Digital Media and Christian Mission: Challenges and Opportunities," *Ishvani, Documentation and Mission Digest*, no.1, 2005, p.36.

various apostolic endeavours as circumstances and conditions demand. The God's messengers should hasten therefore, to fulfil their duty in this respect. The laity too, have something to do with the use of these media. They should endeavour to bear witness to Christ by carrying out their individual duties of office expertly with an apostolic spirit and by being a direct help in the pastoral activity of the church to the best of their ability through their technical, economic, cultural and artistic talents.²⁰ Through the effort of the communication media, the good news of Christ can be more and more heard and accepted. Vatican II says that, if anyone really wants to form leaders in a truly Christian spirit, an authentically Catholic press ought to be established and supported.²¹ In other words, anything that enables the people to strengthen their faith has to be taken care. Ample encouragement should be given to Catholic transmissions which invite listeners and viewers to share in the life of the church and which convey religious truths.²²

➤ *The Use of Media in the Church*

The Church sees these Media as a gift of God, which in accordance with God's providential design, unite people together as one family and help them co-operate with His plan for their salvation.²³ The task of the Church at any time or place is to proclaim the word of God by word and deed: "it is the Church's ministry and mission to communicate the Good News of salvation and God's love to His creature. She is to continue the communication within the Holy Trinity, God's communication, revelation and Incarnation into the here and now of daily life throughout the centuries. This is done in the three fold way of proclaiming (*Kerygma*) a living community (*Koinonia*) and caring service (*Diakonia*)."²⁴ Communicating the Gospel is the essential mission of the Church and what constitutes the very source of its existence. Church is created by an act of communication, by revelation; Church is constituted as a community that accepted God's communication with humanity in the person and witness of the life of Jesus. Church exists as a fruit and effect of God's self-communication in Jesus and exists to perpetuate the communication of God in Christ. Therefore we can say that communication is connatural to the Church as an origin, growth and existence is linked to communication.²⁵ While the attitude of the Church regarding the media has evolved over time, the Church has positioned herself differently in relation to the communication world and accordingly she has engaged in different ministries.

²⁰ A. Desmond the Media Impact and You, p. 96.

²¹ Pope Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, Decree on the Means of Communication, p. 269.

²² *Ibid.*, p.269

²³ *Communio et progreeio*, Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, p. 21

²⁴ Eilers, *Communication in Ministry and Mission*, Social Communication Formation in Priestly Ministry, Logos, Manila, 2002, p.11.

²⁵ C. M. Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, Quezon, Claretian Publications, 1996, p. 43.

➤ *Media as a Blessing*

Media is considered a blessing and a free gift of God in the Church. It is aimed at the growth, development and fulfilment of each person in society. Jesus was a simple preacher and He used the best means available at that time. Now the time has changed; it is for the present generation to find out the apt method of proclamation with the help of modern new media. So the individuals and the Church should be able to make use of this media to the maximum.

There are also a number of manipulations by the media which is rather difficult to measure and define. The media are in fact a fantastic development; the highest of human achievements is represented there. There is an imperative requirement that adversely affects the human person, his right and duty to make a responsible choice. His interior freedom against these goods could be explored by his capacity to reflect and decide.²⁶ The media do not exist only for advertising but for informing and forming the whole society. Media is God's gift to all of humanity. Media, when used well, can benefit and uplift the whole society. The media do present more than traditional forms of artistic expression. Now the media cover the whole earth and multiply the opportunity of inter-national cultural co-operation, especially in creative work.²⁷

➤ *Right to Information*

Information is a fundamental fact of human existence. The right to information is inseparable from the freedom of communication. Because man is social by nature, he feels the need to express himself freely and to compare his views with those of other people. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 19 that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. And this right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

“Therefore the active cooperation of Christians who are professionally competent in this field is a major service to social communication. The messengers must maintain contacts and lines of communication in order to keep a relationship with the whole human race. This is done both by giving information and by listening carefully to public opinion inside and outside the Church. Finally, by holding a continuous discussion with the contemporary world the Church tries to help in solving the problems that human face at present time.”²⁸

²⁶ Paul VI, Message for the World Communication Day, 1977, p. 288.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 288.

²⁸ Pius XII, Allocation given on February 17, 1950 to those who were in Rome to participate in the International Congress for Editors of Catholic Periodicals, A A S, XVII, 1950, P. 256.

II. CONCLUSION

Today's media is often oppressive and alienating communication structures. They often interfere with the communication God wishes to have between Himself and man. Where truth is betrayed, language is thwarted. An image reflects man's sinfulness; words are empty or meaningless information. Most of the information's are just misleading the society that, particular systems simply believe those messages and end their life with miserable end. People are losing the spirit of knowing God and the relationship of others.

Today the whole aim of spirituality is nothing but to make oneself available to the people who are in great need of various levels. The Christian communication in today's world must become a witness and a medium for communicating the great teachings of Christ, for the welfare of humanity. In this respect, media plays a vital role. The Church and the messengers should make use of the possibilities as and when the opportunity arises and people should be oriented towards this thrust. As we are in the third millennium, a time for us to be zealous to widen our knowledge, the information about these media to defend God's message in a corrupted world. The Christian communicators are the media of Jesus. Our prime duty is to be an instrument of God to give Him to the people, and develop the whole world.

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