

7.2 Public Opinion

See Anwar (4.2)

7.3 Communication Media

Kumbhar, Sita Ram: Media, Democracy and Development in India. *Social Action* 57, 4 (2007): 349-58.

This article illustrates the importance of the mass media in the proper functioning of democracy and for developmental progress in India. During the Freedom Movement, and later in the newly independent democratic Indian state, the print media occupied a large space for disseminating political, cultural, economic and socio-developmental ideas. The non-print media was under state monopoly till recently, when the successful launch of communication satellites brought about an explosion in both the electronic and print media. While this expansion has raised concerns regarding the potential for the manipulation and distortion of news by private interest groups, it has also increased competition as well as the coverage of weaker and marginalized groups. In the present environment, the media play an important role in building a tolerant society, and help to sustain India's plural cultural heritage. In the author's opinion, the media have gradually become more gender-sensitive, and have assisted the promotion of mass participation in the political process and in decision-making, connecting the government with the governed. Democracy implies the rule of law, and the media play an important role in the defense of the rule of law, exposing people to diverse views and ideas and educating the public on the functioning of the democratic setup and on government policies and programmes.

Nair, Pradeep and Shailendra Kumar: Media Violence: A Socio-Cultural Perspective. *The Eastern Anthropologist* 60, 1 (2007): 109-15.

This brief note is a generic discussion on violence defined as the 'intentional use of physical force on another person, or noxious physical stimuli invoked by one person on another'. Violence may

be legitimate or illegitimate, that is authorized by the state as acceptable or otherwise. The case of disciplining children (also women) through violent measures and its limits and abuses are discussed. The use of violence can also be contextualized as related to a 'sub-culture', meaning a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs concealed in pockets of the population characterized by residential propinquity and a shared commitment to the use of physical aggression as a major mode of interaction. This propinquity is prevalent in peer groups and in gangs among lower socio-economic class groups.

According to the authors, violence in the media and family, and even serious crimes within the family, are a result of the sub-cultural condoning of violence. The replacement of violence with a non-violent culture is possible only by the dispersal and re-socialization of violent groups.

Sharma, Neeru and Jagannath Ambagudia: Reflections on Media and Development: The Case of India. *Social Action* 57, 4 (2007): 359-67.

This paper is concerned with the role of the media in strengthening and deepening democracy and also accelerating the developmental process in the country. The Nehruvian era was marked by an overwhelming faith in the mass media as an instrument of development and nation-building. With economic liberalization from the 1990s, television assumed an entirely new meaning, and the media became an important aspect of the deepening of democracy and involving people in community development programmes and other state-sponsored schemes of development. While the media also face the charge of reflecting bourgeois interests, values and conditions of existence, the authors argue that the media can also perform a positive role in disseminating information about government services, expenditures, laws, the rights and obligations of citizens, etc., at the same time providing essential information for the functioning of a healthy democracy. In some societies, as in India, an antagonistic relationship between media and government represents a vital and healthy element of a fully functioning democracy.

Thingnam, Anjulika: Media under Siege. Media Functioning in an Armed Conflict Situation: A Case Study of Manipur. *Social Action* 57, 4 (2007): 382-96.

This paper examines the state of the media in Manipur, focusing on the pressures exerted on the media from both state and non-state forces during the recent period. Manipur has a long history of both print and non-print media development dating from the mid-1920s. However, the present conflict-ridden situation in the state has put great pressure on the independence and free functioning of the media. The important role of the media in creating public awareness with respect to the political, economic and socio-developmental scenario is constantly obstructed by state and non-state ideological forces. The media are daily pressurized by threats from various proscribed outfits to carry their press releases, while critical newspaper reports on militant operations lead to the harassment and even execution of journalists. Instead of safeguarding the media, the state government, in the name of stamping out insurgency, has sought to curb the freedom of press by seizing publications, imposing fines, arresting journalists, closing down publication houses and sometimes even imprisoning editors for criticizing the functioning of the government.

The imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has also obstructed the work of media-persons who find themselves caught between state and non-state elements, with proscribed outfits insisting on the publication of their reports and the state banning the publication of 'seditious', terrorist-related news stories and 'subversive' literature in the interests of national integrity. In the author's view, this invidious situation is worsened by job insecurity and the precarious working conditions of journalists, which together impact directly on press freedom and the quality of journalism.

See also Assisi (23.1); Banerjee et al. (14.1); Goyal (19.1); Palackal, Anderson, Miller & Shrum (19.2)