

Spiritual Media for Social Change

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Abstract

Indian Media coverage is dealt in materialistic perspective due to various reasons. Content, coverage style, presentation and portrayal all are affected by contemporary 'peg' of pulling audience in to the content. Media ignores humanitarian approach in different walk of media activities. They gather and present information without keeping in mind the ethico-legal and socio-cultural aspects of affected parties. 'Journalistic sense' and 'news value' are examined on the basis of materialistic approach of media management. Requisite of the content is superseded by wow factor of the content. In such an environment spiritual media and professionals with spiritual understanding may provide a solution to the problem. This paper suggests the spiritual media as only alternative.

Keywords: *Media, Spiritual, Ethics, Karma yoga*

Media is not merely a source of information; it also functions to regulate the society in their socio-cultural and behavioural aspects. It helps the society in achieving material growth in terms of awareness related to various economic indicators. From their understanding of daily consumption to social practices, it has affected the human life to a great extent. It has an impact on socio-cultural practices and also on the thinking of the society regarding the same practices. With such an ability to influence society, media is affecting the 'mood' and 'minds' of humans as per their perceptions and reflections. With contemporary interventions in human life, media have played a vital role in the overall development of the human race, but at the same time, it has been

dividing us through opaque boundaries of ethnicity, religion, class etc. This process is not compatible with the basic nature of human being that is being humane.

With such a great power, media should drive through the urge of social innovations that leads societies to social change towards the acceptance of various practices, values and culture. When media professionals fail in doing so, it affects the life of its consumers adversely. Its impact on the human thinking, behaviour and perception has already been established by various researches. Obviously, the young minds are more vulnerable to such irresponsible communication behaviour. Media's impact on young minds is disrupting them, an 11-year-old child of class sixth, committed suicide due to such negligence by advertisers. As promised by the advertiser, the health supplement failed to increase his height as a result of which, the child succumbed to the stress and trauma. After having absolutely no progress, the disappointed child decided to hang himself.

Here arises a question, what kind of social innovations and social change will be brought to us through this materialistic perspective of media? How will it sustain humanity? Do we have any option to reject the materialistic growth model?

According to Sharon Janis, "the spiritual way is to see beyond mere outer appearances and the five senses to an intuitive perception of the causes, behind outer conditions. Someone with a spiritual approach may change and uplift their world by first transforming and improving his or her own vision". Contemporary media is concentrating on 'Report Gathering Process' which is an outcome of the materialistic approach where suitability and acceptability are much more important than the ethical coefficient. In this phenomenon 'impact', 'circumstances', 'requisite' and 'news value' of the content are ignored by content manufacturers. Nowadays, the materialistic coefficient of the news report might be at some height but the spiritual coefficient of news is missing, which leads to insensitive, immoral and biased reporting rather than a holistic presentation of news.

If communication industry encapsulates, envisages and calls for the inculcation of human values which are common and universally exposed in precepts of all beliefs, it can be considered as spiritual communication. Even, different schools of communication admitted norms and values as indicated in

'Gita' long back. Communication Spirituality is broad and universal in its approach, application, and adoption beyond the narrow confines of caste, creed, community, color, language, sect, sex, nationalism, regionalism, race and religion.

It stands firmly on the pillars of 'Duties' & 'Responsibilities'; as recited in KARMYOGA of The Gita. So, promoting spirituality in communication will help us nurturing practical wisdom and universal values among masses. It will empower people and endow them with peace, stability; creativity etc. Media is a teacher, philosopher, guide and mood manager. It affects the process of human development through solidarity and cooperation amidst diversity. The importance of the media in the human life is supported by different researches along with its effect on the socio-cultural & financial environment. It is also visible in different news that society is in a dearth of communication message for their peace and satisfaction. The issue of spiritual coverage gets importance over quick news flow.

In my opinion the first step in spirituality starts with ethics, which does not simply ask how to live well, it asks how we should live well ethically, that is, in goodness and in cordial manner with each other, a task that may require us to forego personal benefits, to carry out duties or to endure persecution. Ethical reasoning is about how people interpret, balance and modify their principles in light of new facts, new technology, and new social conditions (Ward, 2007). Journalism ethics is essentially a practical activity (Black J & Barney, 2004) which leads to Truth, Fairness & Objectivity. The same has been sketched in Gita in form of

**Na Karmanamnarabhyan Naishkarmyah Purushoshrte
Na Cha Sannyasanadev Sidhim Samadhigachhati.**

(Verse 4 Chapter -3)

A person can never achieve freedom from reactions to activities without first performing prescribed Vedic duties; neither can perfection be attained by renouncing them as well.

In his book Utilitarianism and other essays (2004), J S Mill argued that ethical actions are those that generate the 'greatest good for the greatest number of people' on other hand the consequentialist theory holds that the ethical value about bad & good of an action should be judged on its consequences. Action themselves lack inherent value but can be appraised on the basis of their

outcome. In BHAGWAD GITA the God himself describing the fact to Arjuna :

**Yasitvaindriyani Mansaa Niyamyarbhate Arjun
Karmendriyaih Karmyogamsakth Sa Vishishyate**

(Verse 7 Chapter -3)

But anyone who regulates the senses by the mind, begins the science of uniting the individual consciousness with the ultimate consciousness by the action of the working sense organs without desire for results, he is superior.

**Yagyarthatkarmanoanyatr Lokoayam Karmbandhanah
Tadartham Karm Kaunteya Muktsangah Samacharah**

(Verse 9 Chapter -3)

This whole world is bound by action except for actions sacrificed unto the supreme lord; being free from attachment, perfectly engage in action for the purpose of sacrifice.

**Tasmaadasaktah Satatam Kaaryam Karma Samachara
Asakto Hyaacharankarma Paramaapnoti Puurushah**

(Verse 19 Chapter -3)

You must always fulfill all your obligatory duties without attachment. By performing actions without attachment, one attains the Highest.

Undoubtedly, the supreme lord of media professionals is neither the organization nor the market forces, it is the audience. The act or KARMA should be in accordance with the welfare of the masses; surprisingly this coefficient is missing in the coverage of contemporary Indian media. Media, in the past few years, have overstepped the bounds of ethical and responsible behaviour. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Media have misused its power and have compromised with the morals for the sake of sensationalism. One of the cases that must be discussed here, in reference to the above mentioned statement would be of a young woman named 'Gudiya'. She belonged to a poor family in Meerut and was married to a soldier, who had been sent to fight in Kargil after the wedding. For five years, the family had no clue of Arif, Gudiya's husband's whereabouts. It was thus presumed that he would not return and Gudiya got married to someone else. When she was eight months pregnant, Arif returned. The case caught media's attention and after a series of speculations, debates and trials by media, Gudiya was under immense pressure and she decided to remarry her first husband. After her second pregnancy, Gudiya fell ill and died of septicemia. But Gudiya's story was no

more important to the Media because they could not 'sell' it to the audience.

The Aarushi Murder Case would always be the greatest example of gross violations of privacy, dignity and ethics. After the murder of 14-year-old Aarushi Talwar and the family's domestic help Hemraj, the case became the only important coverage for the Indian media. From objectionable allegations to acts of presumption and imagination, media did all that it could to tarnish the image of not only the parents but also the deceased souls. With media going overboard with the coverage of the murder case, the Supreme Court on August 6, 2008 had to step in to criticize media for its actions. Not only then but even in May 2008, during the hearing of a case related to corruption in Judiciary, it talked about the damage that had been done to the Talwar couple after excessive and unnecessary media coverage.

Media has terribly failed in working for social welfare. The same argument of fulfilling the duties along with considering the betterment of society is supported in UTILITARIANISM, where they advocate that an action should have positive consequences for as many people as possible.

In his theories of SARVODAYA, Mahatma Gandhi too supported the cause and its impact on all, not only on the majority. Gita too has stressed on the same track of larger acceptance of its outcomes but it holds that the karma should be more important and fair without any obligation of outcome or perspective.

**Na Me Parthasti Kartavyam Trshu Lokeshu Kinchan
Nanvaptmavptvyavatavyam Vart Ev Cha Karmani**

(Verse 22Chapter -3)

O son of Partha, there is no work prescribed for me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I need to obtain anything--and yet I am engaged in work.

The basic news aesthetics lies in Facts, Balance & Trustworthiness. Sharon Beder (2004) says in news reporting, credibility is everything and it is easy to lose and difficult to get back. Any deviation in Fact & Balance will affect credibility. So it is important for media professionals to be in line with. Trends show that the coverage of media industry is much more inclined towards attention-grabbing formulae. Sports, Entertainment and Crime are major content which affects audiences negatively. In a spiritual way of coverage will be attentive enough about its impact and effects. In Gita, God, himself expressed that larger public will follow the same tact which will be shown by

him. What Media is reflecting is not just information but also the path to be traveled upon. Obviously, exposure of media is playing a vital role in describing the life, society and the system. Media is affecting as much as a teacher, motivator or philosopher in an individual's life. If the media is not ethical and spiritual, the responsibility of media will not be fulfilled. That is why in Gita it has been mentioned that:

**Yadi Hahyam Na Varteyam Jatu Karmanyatandritah
Mam Vatmarnuvtarnte Manushyah Parth Sarvashah**

(Verse 23Chapter -3)

For, if I did not engage in work, O Partha, certainly all humans would follow my path.

**Utsideyurime Lokaa N Kuryan Karm Chedahm
Sangkarasy Cha Karta Syamupahnyamimah Prajah**

(Verse 24Chapter -3)

If I should cease to work, then all these worlds would be put to destruction. I would also be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all sentient beings.

**Na Budhibhedan Janyedgyann Karmsanginamam
Joshyetasarvkarmani Vidwanyuktah Samacharan**

(Verse 26Chapter -3)

Let not the wise disrupt the minds of the ignorant that are attached to furtive action, they should not be encouraged to refrain from work, but to engage in work in the spirit of devotion.

Establishments and regulators of media industry should sense such spiritual vibes in all efforts of media task. Their negligence towards their 'Karmyoga' may affect society at large. Their spiritual efforts will show the path to success, joy and peace.

Kant also feels that 'it is the intention behind an action that rendered it ethical or unethical. Only the positive intention may give a positive output'. He suggests three basic formulae to operate in communication phenomenon

1. Motivation by principles
2. Treat people as an end in themselves &
3. Decisive

Contemporary Media is far behind and depicting stories on the basis of availability of resources & content. In the spiritual pattern of media, all those aspects suggested by Kant can be addressed without any deviation of socio-economic constraints.

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