

**ROLE OF MEDIA IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: A STUDY IN
THE VALLEY DISTRICTS OF MANIPUR**

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ABSTRACT

Mankind across the globe are experiencing erratic climatic conditions and declining environmental quality. Although, natural deterioration do occurs as claimed by researchers, anthropogenic activities further aggravate the situation and accelerated the process at an alarming rate. In this critical juncture, the role of media in promoting environmental values is very crucial. In modern world, media become a need due to changing lifestyle of the people. The subtle impact of media on the mindsets of the people is undeniable. Generally, media serves as a friend, philosopher and guide for the lay men. As critics argued that only legal and technical amendments cannot cope up with situation, but we should inculcate environmental values in the people and change their perception so as to develop environment friendly behaviour. The need for the implementation of informational and educational programmes for the protection of environment has been emphasized through a policy Statement of the government of India (1992). Indian media also support policies, programmes, approaches adopted by government to improve the quality of environment. MedhaPateker, SundarLalBahuguna, Rajendra Singh, Vandana Shiva, F.C. Mehta, SunitaRao, R.K. Pachaur and other individuals, NGO's, trying for environmental protection have supported by the media. Media provide sufficient coverage to environmental news i.e. World Environment Day (June, 5) programmes, plantation, awareness programmes, etc. Newspapers, Magazines and other print media provide regular materials on the issue and give proper coverage. Many

articles, news, features, comments etc. can be identified in these publications. Radio also pay a great attention to the issue. A number of Radio programmes i.e. features, weekly diary, play, discussions, speeches etc. regularly broadcast into air. Environment received a regular space on T.V. screen also. Infotainment channels and news channels also focusing on these issues. Many of our folk dancers, singers, and musicians and other folk performers (artists) accepted it as a major social problem and create scripts, programmes, songs, slogans on environmental issues.

Researchers claimed that awareness is deeply influenced by the mass media, but, the level of perception varies into different social and living conditions i.e. age, sex, location of habitat (Rural or Urban), Economic status etc. Education, Sanitation and health facilities deeply affect the way of thinking and movement/action of people. Therefore, the people of an industrially backward and peripheral state like Manipur have a different perception level. With this idea, the study is conducted with the preset objectives for examining the role of media in environmental awareness in the valley districts of Manipur namely Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur. The study is empirical in nature and adopt normative approach. The researcher employed interview schedule for collecting primary data and also referred secondary sources. The collected data is being analysed with simple percentage method and took the help of tabular

/graphical representations for interpretation. The study comes up with significant findings of environmental issues in a peripheral state like Manipur.

Objectives of the study

The present study is carried out with the following specific objectives:-

1. To identify environmental issues in media.
2. To survey the nature and extent of opinion concerning Environmental Awareness through media with the help of environmental awareness opinionnaire.
3. To identify the variation in opinion of various groups (residents of valleys districts of Manipur) on the basis of the chosen variables.
4. To identify the level of environmental perception through media in the selected area.
5. To compare the accesses of media in the study area.
6. To analyse the impact of media with given criteria.

Organization of the study

The present study has been categorized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Framework Of The Study: The first chapter covers concept and types of environment, pollution, concept and types of media, media and environment, review of literature, methodology of the study , operational definitions and organization of the study.

Chapter 2. Media AndEnvironment: In this chapter, media and environmental coverage has been given focussed. Discussions have been made over the current trend of media coverage of environmental issues both in India and Manipur, nature writing, environmental journalism and environmental education.

Chapter 3. Locale OfThe Study:This chapter entirely discusses about the area of study.It includes general description of Manipur, environmental pollution and media in Manipur.

Chapter 4. Socio-Economic Status And Mass Media User Profile Of The Respondents(common people): The chapter covers the socio-economic status and mass media user profiles of the common people who are residing in the valley districts of Manipur. Besides,the entire chapter is based on the processing of primary data collected through purposefully developed schedule.

Chapter 5. Role Of Media In Environmental Awareness(Journalists): This chapter five is completley based on the processing of primary data being collected from the journalists through the purposefully developed schedule.

Chapter 6.Summary Of The Findings, Conclusions and Suggestions: This last chapter mainly discusses with the summary of the findings, conclusions drawn from those findings and suggestions for the line of actions.

CONCLUSION

Manipur is a multi-ethnic state having officially 33 listed schedule tribes and other major communities like Meitei and Meitei Pangal. But, nearly 70% of the population depends on agriculture and categorised as industrially backward state. About 59% of the total population of Manipur lives in valley areas which is only 10% of the entire geographical areas of the state. Besides, rural population is high enough comparatively with the urban population. Encouragingly, the literacy rate of the state is comparatively high with the rest of India. The media Industry in Manipur is not much developed comparatively with the rest of India.

But, the state has carved out a niche in the media landscape of North Eastern Region. And, the media industry always operates under conflict situation. In such a condition, environmental issues are ignored or kept at the back seat by the media. But, environmental challenges are increasing day by day and Manipur is also getting the brunt of myriad of local specific and global environmental issues. Most of the media houses are confined to Imphal city only as evident with publication of nearly 12 newspapers and locations of DDK, AIR, ISTV network(largest cable network operating mainly in the valley areas) etc.in and around Imphal city. Therefore, media coverage of environmental issues by these main media houses reflects in the perception level of the people. And, print media outnumber the electronic media in the state as evident from the number of representation of journalists in the study. Therefore, print media is supposed to play an active role in creating environmental awareness. But, the finding shows that print media in Manipur hardly covers any environmental issues and except a few publications like Sangai express which cover and take initiative for promotion of environmental issues. The journalist opined that lack of managerial support is the main reason for being aloof from media coverage of environmental issues. Therefore, they strongly felt the need of a separate environmental reporter which requires having subject knowledge over the environmental issues. Regular training for skill development and frequent interaction with the experts in the field are suggested as remedial measure. One of the main finding shows that journalists blame the common people for the

environmental problems in Manipur. Interestingly, very few journalists accepted the truth that raising the awareness level of the people though media can solve the environmental problems to some extent.

Without providing proper information and education, it is hard to face ever increasing environmental challenges. Therefore, radio comes out as the best media relied by common people for any kind of information, education and entertainment needs. But, traditional media like Shumang Leela have taken a lead role as per the finding without raising the environmental awareness level of the people but slowly it began to incorporate environmental themes since last few years. Lots of documentaries are produced in Manipur based on environmental themes but they are confined to limited audience. Either they are broadcasted occasionally or not broadcast at all. Interestingly, some of excellence documentaries brought laurels to the state without reaching to the larger population of the state. Therefore, it does not have any impact on the larger section of the masses. Although , print media outnumber electronic media in Manipur , hardly any kind of environmental based publications comes out from the state except a few publications from the concerned governmental department(like Department of Forest and Environment) and research institute like IBSD that is also confined to limited audience not for larger population. Electronic media like ISTV (Imphal), DDK (Imphal) and AIR (Imphal) have

already broadcasted environmental based programmes. But, the impact of the broadcasted programmes on the larger sections of the population is very low as supported with the finding through their recalling ability of broadcasted environmental based programmes. Most of them are either unable to recall properly or not recall about the broadcasted environmental programmes at all. It clearly shows that the impact of broadcasted programme go without fulfilling its objective set for the targeted population. Outdoor media like hoarding, billboards, wall painting, vehicle panels, poster etc. has certain role regarding raising environmental awareness as supported with the finding that shows most of the common people have seen the environmental messages or pictures being displayed through outdoor media. But, the themes being displayed is confined to few environmental issues only and largely for products and services. Mobile communication and internet has already reached the state. But, mobile communication service provider hardly take up any step for bringing the environmental awareness level of the people as evident from not getting any kind of environmental messages and services through mobile communication by the common people of the state. Besides, the internet users claimed that they are not getting any kind of environmental mails and messages and most of them never visit environmental related websites. But, the internet users are mainly confined to educated people and youth population only. Therefore, the following two main conclusions are drawn from the study:

(1) Both the two main stakeholders (journalists and common people) agree that media coverage of environmental issues in Manipur is very less.

(2) But, the environmental issues which are being covered by media in Manipur have positive impact on the common people.

SUGGESTIONS:

Based on the findings of the study, the following few suggestions are laid down for the better coordination and support of the entire stakeholders to tackle with the ever increasing environmental challenges.

(A)For mobilizing people and support for environmental protection:

1. Proper sensitization about the environmental issue is required for both the common people and journalist. Sensitisation is the only means and ends that could change the mindset of individual and enable him /her to look at closer with the environmental issues in the right perspective. Without proper information, it is not possible to bring changes in the mindsets of individuals and switch them into environment friendly behaviours. Therefore, only sensitization could make the individuals aware of the things happening around them and make them rethink about their actions and behaviour towards environment.
2. To encourage the residents for environmental protection and adopt eco-friendly habits, media need to make due coverage of local specific environmental issues constantly.

3. Promotion through awards and incentive to individuals /organisations/village/city/localities for environmental protection activities will encourage more participation in environmental protection activities.
4. Promotion of people's participation at decision making levels is strongly suggested to gain meaningful action.
5. Voluntary participation in environmental protection activities needs constant encouragement.

(B) For Enhancing Quality of Media Professionals:

1. Regular training of media professionals with constant interaction with experts is highly recommended. Concerned state officials and management of media houses are required to take the responsibility.
2. To have the first hand experience and cover the issues in the right perspective, on the spot visits for the journalists is suggested.
3. The study suggests that every kind of support like financial, creative and physical should be lend to the media professionals so as to enable due coverage of environmental issues.
4. More encouragement of environmental reporter through incentives and other required initiatives by the management as well as the government. Even individuals and Civil Society Organisations could promote environmental reporting.
5. Learn lesson from media houses that could achieved success in creating environmental awareness.

6. Regular interaction programmes like workshops, seminars should be arranged for media professionals and field experts so as to come out with meaningful actions.

(B) For better coordination between various stakeholders:

1. Proportionate representation of all the stakeholders is suggested.
2. Need to provide room for free expression of views and suggestions for each stakeholder.
3. Know the pulse of each stakeholder.
4. Respect and appreciate the contribution of each stakeholder.
5. Proper consultation of the stakeholder before taking any concrete step and decision is strongly recommended.

For Better Use of Media:

1. Inclusion of dedicated column for print media and regular programme for electronic media on environmental issue.
2. Incorporation of environmental themes in traditional media and films.
3. More promotion of environmental themes through outdoor media.
4. Creation of separate environmental reporter.
5. Broadcasting of regular programmes on environmental issue as per the honourable Supreme Court of India's ruling.
6. Projections of experts as well as people's voice in an objective and accurate manner.
7. Look out for suitable media and focus on local specific issues of environment.

8. Establishment of media resource centre to provide data and backgrounder for environmental coverage.
9. Establishment of training and orientation cell for better interaction of experts and media professionals.
10. Proper guidelines for do's and don'ts of environmental reporting is strongly recommended.