

# India

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## Introduction

The role played by the press in the formation of public opinion through providing news and views has been properly analysed in terms of communication theory. It is, however, on the importance of mass communication that emphasis is customarily placed, which means that it is usually the daily newspapers and other periodical publications of topical interest, particularly in respect of news and views, which have been analysed. Yet, such an analysis does not and cannot take cognizance of the social science press which has distinctive characteristics of its own (to be discussed later).

Communication theory is vital from the point of view of analysing the development of public opinion and its educational aspect. Of course, the dimension of social control is equally important. In communication theory, one customarily thinks of the following key variables: *Who* says *what*, to *whom*, *when*, and *how*. Elmo Roper<sup>2</sup> classifies the *who* into (a) the great thinkers, (b) the great disciples, (c) the great disseminators, (d) the lesser disseminators, (e) the participating citizens, and (f) the politically inert. From the point of view of the present paper, neither the people belonging to the first two categories nor those belonging to the last two categories are relevant. Usually the kinds of people who contribute to the daily newspapers and even to the social science press, can be classified as great disseminators and lesser disseminators. It is very unusual to come across either a great thinker or even a great disciple as a contributor even to the social science press. In any case, according to Roper, there are very few persons in the world at large who could be classified as great thinkers, and even the names he has suggested as being great disciples, do not seem to appear as contributors to the social science press. Great disseminators and lesser disseminators, on the other hand, seem to have

1. I want to thank my student, Mr. P. H. Reddy for his assistance in the preparation of this paper.

2. *Personal Influence* by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld with a foreword by Elmo Roper, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1955.

function of which have been called in question for a long time and which, consequently, has not always been entirely adapted to the purposes it is intended to fulfil.

Admittedly, these few remarks may seem to rest upon rather flimsy foundations. The survey on which we have commented chiefly has an indicative value. The other observations we have made are fragmentary. The information available is still very meagre, but at least it allows for the formulation of some hypotheses and opens up avenues of thought that are worth pursuing. This thought should be sustained by other surveys that have yet to be carried out. We mentioned above the usefulness of conducting a survey among the authors who write for journals. It would be equally necessary to conduct another survey among the readers for whom the journals are ultimately intended. This would be the best way of finding out whether the journals do in fact meet real needs and whether they are adapted to the functions their editors wish them to perform.

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contributed a great deal to the scientific press and also to the social science press.

It is also customary to analyse communication from the point of view of its impact or effect on the people to whom it is addressed. A distinction is usually made between the *who* and the *whom*. It is presumed that the *who* provide the 'message' while the *whom* accept it or reject it, as the case may be, the implication being that the *whom* are not in a position to provide the 'message'. A corollary of this hypothesis is the two-step flow theory of communication. It used to be mistakenly assumed that the media of communication have a direct impact on people at large. However, Katz, Lazarsfeld and others have very significantly pointed out that it is largely in terms of personal or group influence that media make their impact. In fact, Katz and Lazarsfeld have propounded the theory that it is opinion leaders who are under the impact of the media and that they transfer this impact through their personal or group influence to people at large. This is the hypothesis known as the two-step flow of communication: it re-emphasizes the importance of primary groups.

The general theory of communication thus summarized may not, however, hold good in a situation where communication takes place within a group, being intended mainly for its members in such a manner that there is hardly any distinction or difference between the *who* and the *whom*. In such a situation, the purpose of communication is not so much to influence group members as to provide them with the necessary information and thereby mutually educate them. Thus, if communication is intra-group, the two-step flow communication theory would not hold good. For example, when communication is confined to an academic group, the two-step flow theory does not have any particular relevance. The idea is to pass on information to members and pose certain problems analytically so as to evoke discussion and promote one's own progress and development, rather than to influence others.

These general observations about a situation where both the distance and difference between the *who* and the *whom* is practically non-existent seem to be particularly applicable to the social science press in India. The social science press is a product of, and its contributors are primarily members of, the academic community.

An analysis of contributors to ten social science journals in India for the year 1964 confirms this, and one may hazard a guess that for other years also, most of the contributors to the social science press would be found primarily to be academics. Of course, the social science press in India is staffed primarily by professionals, that is, persons who have had training in the various social sciences.

### The purpose of the social science press

The purpose of the social science press seems to be largely cognitive. As has been mentioned, contributors are mainly academics and the kinds of

article contributed by them are mainly informative or analytical and only occasionally have any bearing on policy. Intra-group communication within the academic community is primarily designed to promote the acquisition of knowledge and self-education. The nature of the articles published testifies to this. The social science press is an intra-group communication medium. It provides opportunities for communicating new information in most cases and sometimes also new ideas. As will be enlarged upon later, almost 80 per cent of the articles are informative, about 15 per cent are analytical and have theoretical significance, while only 5 per cent have implications for policy.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from its cognitive purpose, the social science press enables members of the academic community to further their own interests in terms of promotion through publication. It is not uncommon for Government as well as universities and research institutes to put a premium on publication in some of these journals by aspirants to higher academic or research positions. It must be added that lively controversy is sometimes carried on through the social science press, though this is mostly confined to the economic journals.

### Lobbying by the social science press

Very little attempt is made through the social science press to influence government decisions and policies. Nor is lobbying practised to any extent through these journals which are mainly devoted to research. Dailies and some weeklies tend to indulge in this a little more. Certain dailies, such as the *Financial Express* tend to emphasize the interests of business circles, though they also publish articles reporting high grade research work. It is a matter of common knowledge that prominent industrialists employ highly trained economists to write their speeches. However, most social science journals are published by universities and research institutions and are relatively neutral as between the different economic interests. They are largely meant to provide statistics and information. Prominent editors associated with them are academics who are not known to belong to any particular political party. Social science journals, then, can be said to exert very little influence on the Government in respect of its policies and decisions.

The social science press in India is therefore a classical case of intra-group communication. Moreover, this communication is largely informative. It is true that there are some articles which are analytical and theoretical. It is also true that a very small percentage of articles have a bearing on policy formulation. The contributors to the social science press are also largely academics, very few bureaucrats and still fewer active social and political workers.

1. See Table 1.

## Nature of the collectivity

It has already been observed that intra-group communication has special features. In connection with the social science press in India, it is useful to describe the nature of this collectivity. Broadly speaking, it is composed of the management, the editors and other staff members and the contributors. Management is primarily in the hands of academic institutions. There are only a few cases where management is by outsiders, such as industrialists or represented vested interests, either economic or political.

TABLE 1. Content analysis of ten journals for the year 1964.

Journal	Policy articles	Analytical articles	Informative articles	Contributors
<i>Artha Vijnana</i>	3	6	14	21 academics 2 bureaucrats
<i>Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics</i>	7	12	10	23 academics 6 bureaucrats
<i>International Studies</i>	1	1	10	12 academics
<i>Sociological Bulletin</i>	—	5	7	12 academics
<i>Indian Economic Review</i>	—	3	20	Mostly academics
<i>Indian Journal of Social work</i>	—	10	24	32 academics 2 bureaucrats
<i>Social welfare</i>	—	—	110	All professionals, except 4 or 5 bureaucrats
<i>Economic weekly</i>	6	11	71	All professionals, except 5 or 6 bureaucrats and 2 social and political workers
<i>Reserve Bank of India Bulletin</i>	1	1	20	
<i>Indian Journal of Economics</i>	—	6	9	All academics
TOTAL	18	55	295	294 + 21

The editors are also usually academics, both in the case of journals published by universities and academic institutions and of those published by other bodies. For staff as well, a premium is placed on academic attainment. Most contributors are also academics together with a sprinkling of bureaucrats and a few social and political workers. As shown in Table 1, out of a total of 315 contributors to ten social science journals in India during 1964, as many as 294 were academics, while nineteen were bureaucrats and only two were social and political workers.

The nature of the collectivity influences the contents of communication. Again for the year 1964, it is found that out of 368 articles published in the same journals, 295 were informative, fifty-five were analytical and theoretical while only eighteen could be described as discussing and proposing certain policies.

Since the contributors to the social science press largely belong to the academic community communication is also primarily academic. The educated elite in India has its special characteristics: it tends to adopt a passive attitude to various social and political issues. Persons belonging to universities and research institutions are not normally expected to participate actively in public affairs. One may be tempted to ascribe this to British rule. Even after independence, however, there has not been a significant change in this respect. This could be explained in terms of the natural apathy of academics towards public affairs and the written and unwritten rules which prevent them from participating in anything that may be construed as a political activity. Moreover, the political elite also zealously safeguards itself and does not want the academic elite to interfere in public affairs. It is true that certain scholars have pleaded for a 'dialogue' between the political and academic elites. All the same, there is no denying that there is not yet much active contact between the academic and the political elites. Hence, the social science press does not attach much importance to discussion of political and social problems, and this is clearly reflected in the kinds of articles published.

It should, however, be added that during the pre-independence period, discussion of economic issues necessarily had a political slant, e.g., the controversy during the 1930's about the over-valuation of the rupee, agricultural policy, etc. This is not to suggest that academics no longer in any way express their concern about social and political problems. But, when they do so, it is usually through the daily newspapers and certain other magazines, such as *The Seminar*,<sup>1</sup> *Quest*, *Modern Review*, *Link*, etc. Likewise, other magazines which espouse certain political causes, such as *New Age*, *Blitz*, *Swaraj*, etc., may contain an occasional article by an academic contributor yet, on the whole, academics prefer to live in an 'ivory tower' and refuse to be bothered by surrounding problems, except those of immediate concern to themselves. For instance, any move by the Government to curtail academic freedom is very strongly resented and this is given expression by the academics. Thus, in connection with the medium of instruction or salary scales, the Madhya Pradesh Governor's ordinance, or the Andhra Pradesh Government's interference in university autonomy, evoked strong academic reaction, mostly, of course, in daily newspapers and in specially convened meetings, etc.

## Organization of the social science press in India

On the basis of questionnaires returned some useful information is available about the organization of the social science press in India. It is mostly owned by the learned societies, universities, faculties, educational institutions, etc. Such ownership is relatively neutral as regards different economic interests.

1. See Table 2.

*Editorial arrangements.*

Amongst the seventeen respondent journals, three have no individual editors, but instead have an editorial board. Eleven journals have one editor, usually their founders—designated as founder editor, executive editor, or managing editor. One journal has three editors designated as editor, American editor and associate editor. Two journals have two editors designated as editor and assistant editor or managing editor.

There is no established pattern in choosing the editor. If a journal is published by an educational institution, its director or the founder of the journal would be the editor. In the case of a journal published by a university, the university syndicate chooses the editor. The editor chooses the assistant or managing editors.

Since there is no established pattern of choosing the editor, his term of office is also indefinite. However, five journals reported definite terms: two of one year, two others of three years, and one of five years.

There is no editorial board for three journals, but one exists for the remaining fourteen. The number of members of the board varied from three to thirty-nine.

The editorial board is invariably chosen either by the editor, board, university, co-operators or directors of various institutions.

In the case of six journals, the editorial board meets as and when necessary. The editorial board of one journal meets once a month, that of another journal once a year, in the case of two, twice a year, and in the case of four other journals four to six times a year. The editorial boards of two journals never have any meetings.

Ten journals reported that there is no panel of readers. Only seven journals have panels of readers. The members of such panels are invariably selected by the editor or editorial board according to their specialized fields.

*Staff*

Since most of the journals are published by universities, faculties, associations, etc., they do not seem to employ staff specially for the journals – not even technical staff. Amongst the seventeen journals, we do not find even an average of one professional full-time, nor part-time paid staff member. The same is true for secretarial and technical staff. The maximum reported by one journal is four full-time professionals, three part-time paid staff members, one full-time paid secretarial help and one full-time paid technical help. However, twelve reported part-time secretarial/technical staff members. Of these, the staff members of ten journals are paid by a university, institute, etc., and only two journals pay their staff members directly.

Members of the department, faculty, institute, etc., render voluntary help, which in reality is obligatory, in bringing out the journal.

*Responsibility for content*

The data from the seventeen questionnaires received reveals that seven journals are the official organs of institutes, two of associations, three of faculties, two of government and one of a bank. One was published on a private basis. The chief editors of twelve journals are officers of the sponsoring body and there is no chief editor as such for two journals. For two journals, the question did not apply and one journal did not answer.

The data further reveals that contributions are accepted on the responsibility of the chief editor in the case of four journals, of the editorial board in the case of five journals, of specialized readers in the case of one journal, of both chief editor and specialized readers in the case of one journal, and of both chief editor and the editorial board in the case of another journal. In the event of disagreement, the final decision is taken by the editor in the case of ten journals, by the editorial board in the case of three journals. However, the question did not arise for three journals because the decision taken by the person or body concerned is final. One journal did not answer on this point.

The editors were further asked whether any effort was made to redirect the manuscripts to other suitable journals. Out of the seventeen, ten reported that no such effort is made, while six reported that only 'sometimes' is such an effort made. However, one journal reported that an effort is 'always' made to redirect manuscripts to more suitable journals.

*Publication and finance*

Of the seventeen journals, nine are directly published by a university, a research institute or learned association. Three are published by a commercial publishing firm, two by central or local Government and one by a bank.

Fourteen journals reported that the costs were not fully covered from sales, advertising revenue or association membership dues. The approximate proportion of deficit on gross costs ranged from 20 to 70 per cent. Only three journals reported that costs are fully covered from sales, advertising, etc.

Of the fourteen journals which cannot cover costs, the deficit of four is covered through funds from university or learned society sources, that of two by private foundations, that of one by commercial firms, that of five by central or local Government, and that of another by its owner. One journal did not answer on this point.

Twelve journals reported that their contributors are not paid, even token fees. This is readily understandable in view of the financial conditions indicated above. In fact, one journal reported that the contributors were charged for blocks and lengthy tables in their articles. Five journals reported that their contributors are paid.

Of the seventeen journals, six reported that there were no special arrangements made for bulk subscriptions to members of a learned society



or other special groups of readers. However, the remainder (i.e., eleven) reported that such arrangements exist, eight of them reporting that reductions are made in subscription rates.

### Content of communication

In connection with the content analysis of ten journals, for the year 1964, it has been mentioned that 80 per cent of the articles were informative, while only 15 per cent were analytical and only 5 per cent had implications for policy formulation (see Table 1).

### *Coverage*

In terms of the seventeen returned questionnaires the following observations can be made. The trend of the journals is to publish all kinds of articles. However, theoretical articles figure in the majority of the journals (fourteen). Then comes retrospective coverage (trend reports, etc.). Third place is occupied by general coverage in a broader, multi-disciplinary area. Next come both original research reports in a single disciplinary area and policy-oriented articles. Contributions around a particular school of thought or ideological approach form the smallest category of contributions.

One journal reported that its policy is always to issue special numbers devoted to a single topical theme. Eleven journals issue special numbers occasionally, while five journals never issue special numbers. Of the seventeen journals, ten solicit contributions occasionally, six always and one never. Fourteen journals accept communications disagreeing with the content of articles; of these two published the communications in the form of letters to the editor, three in the form of articles, five in the form of both, and four in a form such as 'Comment—Rejoinders', 'Communications', 'Notes and Memoranda'. Three journals, however, do not accept such communications. Seven journals seek scholarly articles, two technical articles, one popular articles; seven seek all kinds of articles.

Of the seventeen journals, eleven do not have any other distinctive features of coverage. However, six reported 'research articles', 'social work', 'field research', 'conclusions of surveys undertaken by the Institute' as their distinctive features of coverage.

### *Space allocation*

The total average number of pages per year varied between 200 and 1,280. The journals devoted much of their space to substantive articles. This varied from 45 to 95 per cent. The average space devoted to substantive articles is 72 per cent. Next in line comes space devoted to book reviews. This varies from 3 to 40 per cent; the average being 10 per cent. An average of about 4 per cent is devoted to the proceedings of meetings and more or less the same amount of space to bibliographical notices. About 5 per cent

is devoted to advertising, the rest to individual regular features, such as press cuttings, notices, publications received, institute activities, etc.

### *International scope*

Fifteen journals reported that their articles are published in only one language. Only two journals reported that their articles are published in more than one language—one in three languages (English, Hindi and Gujarathi) and the other in English and all the fourteen major languages of India. The same holds true for résumés.

The proportion of foreign contributors differs widely—from 0 to 85 per cent. However, the average proportion of foreign contributors is 14 per cent. About eight journals reported that books in languages other than that in which the journal is published are occasionally reviewed. Thirteen journals reported that no special arrangements exist to report on relevant developments abroad. However, four journals reported arrangements such as 'co-operation abroad', 'representatives', etc. The chief foreign countries involved are Canada, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, United States of America and such other advanced countries.

### Readership and circulation

Nine journals reported that they are directed at an academic and professional group of readers, one only at an academic group of readers, two only at a professional group of readers, one at an academic and general public and four at all groups of readers. Fourteen journals reported that no regular effort is made to ascertain types of readers. However, three reported some efforts—one through the profession, the second through its subscribers' list, and the third through readership surveys.

Twelve journals reported that no regular channels of communication between readers and editorial staff are sought and maintained. However, five do so, four through letters and one through letters and questionnaires. Thus some attempt is made to provide a feed-back mechanism. The object of three journals which seek and maintain communication is to increase circulation within a defined group, and also to improve coverage and response to the needs of a defined group, and that of the two other journals is to seek circulation beyond an already established readership.

The contents of six journals are not reviewed in any papers. However, eleven reported that their contents are reviewed, five in the general press, five in the specialized press, and one in the weekly press. These reviews have a noticeable effect on readership and circulation in the case of seven journals, no effect in the case of two journals, and two are sceptical about the effect of reviews.

The print order for 1965 issues of the seventeen journals varied between 300 and 5,700 copies and the total circulation of latest issues, both paid

and unpaid, between 250 and 4,950. Of the seventeen journals, the trend of circulation of eleven over the past five years has been upward and that of five constant. One was not definite as it was only started a year and a half ago.

### Concluding observations

It has been suggested that the general theory of communication would not be applicable to the social science press in India, and perhaps for that matter anywhere, since communication is largely within the academic community by the academic community and for the academic community. Communication is thus confined to an educated elite and the purpose of communication is mainly cognitive, educational and designed to promote the development and progress of the academic community. It has also been pointed out that the customary distance and difference between the *who* and the *whom* practically vanishes in the case of such group. On the basis of the data available from the returned questionnaires, and the content analysis of ten journals for the year 1964, this formulation has been borne out.

It is true that there was a response from the editors of only seventeen journals; thirty-four did not respond. It is very likely that the attitude of those who did not respond was largely one of apathy and negligence rather than dictated by difficulties of organization.

No particular pattern in choosing the editor emerged: in some cases, there was not even an individual editor. The relationship of the editor to the contributors may be inferred to be one largely of equality.

Responsibility for content is also corporate rather than individual.

Since the social science press in India is primarily confined to the academic community, there is not much of a problem of staffing because universities, faculties and learned societies look after the work on a more or less voluntary, unpaid basis. The members of departments did their best to bring out the journals. In fact, they look upon it as their intellectual and social responsibility. The auspices under which the journals are published are mainly academic and the journals do not strive even to recover their costs.

It is true that many journals reported that they were very keen on publishing articles of theoretical and analytical importance. However, from the content analysis, it is very clear that the majority of the articles published are informative in character. Certain special issues are brought out by some journals devoted to the discussion of a current problem. Some efforts are also made to promote discussion through journals by encouraging controversies. An attempt is also made to review books so as to promote education and provide up-to-date information for the benefit of the academic community.

Most of the journals are published in English, which facilitates communication with the rest of the English-speaking world. This is further ensured

TABLE 2. Academic contributors to *The Seminar* (1965).

Issue	Problem	Total contributors	Academics	Percentage of academics
January	The bomb	8	1	12.5
February	Parliament	5	2	40
March	Secularism	6	4	66.6
April	Language	7	2	28.6
May	Goa	6	—	0
June	Caste and the future	6	6	100
July	At school	5	3	60
August	The public sector	6	2	33.3
September	Indo-Soviet link	5	1	20
October	Money in politics	6	2	33.3
November	The war and after	7	3	43
December	The politics of language	5	3	60
TOTAL		72	29	40

through collaboration with foreign scholars, particularly in respect of contributions. In some cases, there is even editorial assistance from foreign scholars. Some of the journals aim to discuss problems pertaining to Asia as a whole, and therefore, cater to the wider group of readers in South East Asia in particular. Attempts are made to pinpoint attention on Asian problems, economic, political, social, etc. There is no denying that in India there is a sizeable number of persons trained in the social sciences. On the other hand, in various other regions of South East Asia, trained personnel are in much shorter supply. This suggests that social scientists in India could provide some leadership for the development of social science in other countries of the region, particularly since journals published in English in India are accessible to a wider group of readers in the region.

There are quite a few journals published in local languages in various parts of the country. More often than not discussions in such journals are not strictly confined to the social sciences. There are thus journals in languages such as Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Gujarathi, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, etc., on economic and educational matters, psychology, history, current affairs, labour problems, politics, social welfare and sociology, problems of women and youth, and regional research reports. It is surmised that, although academics contribute to some of these journals, the nature of their contributions sometimes significantly differs from that of social science journals proper. On the whole, the discussion in these local language journals seems to be much more problem-oriented than theoretical. Current issues and problems are discussed. With increasing emphasis on local languages as media of instruction there is likely to be some improvement in the standards of such journals. However, there is a tacit hierarchical arrangement as between such journals and journals pertaining to social sciences proper.

It has been mentioned that academic social scientists in India seem to have adopted an ivory-tower attitude in the sense that they refrain from

discussing matters or problems with policy implications. Nevertheless it should be added that at least some academics do participate in discussions regarding current issues and problems and do not fight shy of policy matters. A mere perusal of some of the reputed Indian magazines proves the point. Table 2 gives the list of issues of *The Seminar* for 1965, the subject discussed in each issue and the percentage of contributors who are academics. Moreover, in daily papers such as *The Times of India* or *The Statesman*, *Hindustan Times*, *Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, etc., there are always lively controversies regarding current issues and problems such as gold control, devaluation, inflation, planning, public sector and private sector, student unrest, etc., in which some of the important academics like Professors B. R. Shenoy, C. N. Vakil, M. L. Dantwala, etc., participate. The daily and weekly newspapers thus provide a forum for the discussion of current social, economic and political problems in which certain academics also participate, though it is not necessarily of an academic nature, but is more policy-oriented and tends sometimes to be even polemical.

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