

## Media and Development in Rural Kashmir

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### Abstract

Rural development is need of the hour for a conflict torn state like Jammu and Kashmir, which is on the threshold of being among the most developed states of India, despite the conflict of more than two decades. The quest for rural development must lead in the direction of empowering those societies who are in the need of being empowered. The rural Kashmir has witnessed blood-shed, rapes, molestation, harassment for decades, but issues remained suppressed due to immature media. No society can think of development, when its people are being killed, harassed and undergo inhuman treatment.

To understand what role media can play in rural development, we have to understand media scenario in Jammu and Kashmir. This paper endeavors to present bit of the media reach and working in Jammu and Kashmir, especially rural areas.

**Keywords:** Rural; Development; Kashmir; Media; Conflict; Jammu.

### Introduction

Kashmir insurgency is one of the longest running conflicts in the world (BBC News, December 8, 2009). Kashmir has been at crossroads in relations between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947. In the past 66 years, the two nuclear-capable countries have fought four wars, three of which have centered on Kashmir. The British left the Indian subcontinent in August 1947, but after its division into two nations - India and Pakistan. The basis of partition was religious - while India was found as a Hindu-majority state, Pakistan was envisioned by its founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, to be the home of the subcontinent's Muslims. The region of Kashmir (or the current Indian state called Jammu and Kashmir) was a Muslim-majority province ruled by a Hindu king who delayed on the decision to join either India or Pakistan [1]. In October 1947, a tribal group in the southwestern part of Kashmir rebelled against the king and was provided support by the Pakistani army in the form of men and materials. When the rebels moved to the outskirts of Srinagar, the capital of the region, the king panicked and approached India for assistance. The Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, agreed to provide military assistance on the condition that the king accede to India and the accession be approved by a popular leader and the people's representative, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

The dispute about whether Kashmir should be a part of India or Pakistan is tied to the respective identities of the two nations. While on the one hand Pakistan contends that Kashmir should legitimately be a part of its territory, because the two-nation theory holds that Muslim-majority regions be a part of Pakistan, India insists that it cannot allow any part of its territory to be separated from it on the basis of religious affiliation because India was founded to be a pluralistic and multi-religious nation [2].

Impromptu recovery from the unceasing disarray was difficult for the pluralistic society of Kashmir, wherein all major sections of the Kashmir society was denigrated. Spanning from economy to social and from political to legal, all sectors suffered a setback. Among them the most critical was the literacy and exposure of the outside world.

Apart from the prolonged conflict between the two countries, the Kashmiri society was also struggling with unidentified armies, who played significant role in discouraging Kashmiri society to mere conservative and orthodox society, especially rural Kashmir. On

the name of religion, people in rural Kashmir were misled and were deprived of basic social interactions and exposure.

However, in the past one decade various steps have been taken to uplift the Kashmiri society and bring development of rural Kashmir at par of urban Kashmir.

Literacy, besides professional outlook, conservative entanglement and inequalities between man and woman and urban and rural, was the major hurdle in the development of rural Kashmir due to its mountainous terrain and less connected areas, moreover the conservative life style of the people, barred them from education. Therefore the spread of education and general awareness was the biggest challenge. But, the media has changed stereotypic thinking of the people and people started sending their children to schools. To promote this change, the government and army also came forward and opened schools, higher secondary's and colleges in almost every village and district of the state [3].

### Research Question

To study the role of Media in ushering change in the lifestyle of rural Kashmir.

To study the significance of media in rural areas.

### Hypotheses

Media brings positive and gradual change in lifestyle of rural Kashmir.

Media plays vital role in rural areas

**Purpose of the study:** This research paper is intended to show how

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media penetrates into rural areas and contributes in the advancement of the rural population. In the context of Kashmir this study becomes significant, because along with orthodox and conservative approach of the people towards change, the people in Kashmir also had suffered in more than two decades of bloody insurgency.

## Methodology

The method employed in this study was the survey.

Surveys are concerned with describing recording, analyzing and interpreting conditions that either exist or existed. The researcher does not manipulate the variables or arrange for event to happen.

Surveys may either be census or sample surveys. They may also be classified as social surveys, economic surveys or public opinion surveys. Whatever be their type, the method of data collection happens to be either observation, or interview or questionnaire or some projective techniques.

In this method a questionnaire was sent to the persons with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire. A questionnaire consisted of number of questions printed in a definite order on a form or a set of forms. The questionnaire is sent to the respondents who are expected to read and write down the reply in the space meant for the purpose in the questionnaire itself. The respondents have to answer the questions on their own. In this survey most of the respondents are literate and had replied by their own. All the required information was produced by respondents of various sections like, youth, women, men, old age, and children of the concerned area.

**Media:** Media are the collective communication outlets or tools that are used to store and deliver information or data. It is either associated with communication media, or the specialized communication businesses such as: print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television), and/or publishing.

In context to present study, media here refers to everything that has been catered through cable television and direct to home facility.

**Media and rural development:** The revolutionary changes in communication and information technologies have made media the most potent means of mass education and mass mobilization. Media is now being increasingly viewed as the most effective means of communication. In fact media now influences all walks and aspects of life -personal, social and professional.

We have to understand scope, reach and impact of media on society as well as the functions it is supposed to perform. We also have to understand how media influences social change in a developing society. But before this, it will be worth to see how information technology has changed the face of media as well as the society which media caters to.

The speed of technological developments in the fields of communication has no doubt changed the face of media and society in the past decade. These developments are so fast that the social scientists are finding it difficult to assess, assimilate understand and interpret their impact on different communities and social groups. The diffusion of new information technologies are making such inroads in to the societies that their multiple applications are giving birth to more and more sarcasm [4].

The unequal pace of technological development between the urban and rural areas of the conflict torn state of Jammu and Kashmir, has witnessed increased inequities between urban centers and rural periphery.

For centuries Kashmiri society has been depending upon the traditional means of communication processes and word of mouth. Human relationships, interpersonal communication processes and word of mouth.

Human relationships in closed and orthodox Kashmiri society initially developed in a natural, healthy and productive social environment. But in the middle nineties the satellite and cable televisions created new type of society mainly in the urban areas.

The new information technology created a pseudo -environment, in which users tend to believe that by acquiring it, they have acquired everything, including wisdom, thought and logic. Most of the receivers fail to understand that what they do get are information packages, consciously or unconsciously designed for creating an atmosphere of artificial intelligence.

Media is now entirely information technology driven. Information technology has a very dynamic relationship with the society and culture. We see the scenario for media in the world dominated by the influence of information technology. No doubt this technology brings revolution in the modes of communication by making it more diverse, intra and interactive and mentally more provocative. But the fear is the diversity would lead to regimentation and segmentation, which may further lead to stagnation, insecurity and isolation.

In the wake of increasing commercialization, media's role in expressing public thoughts is shrinking and more constraints and barriers are developing in the way of free and fair interaction between the media and the public. Media and the information systems in the developing countries are being governed by dominant concepts of the West. The developing countries can meet the challenge only through developing alternative concepts of media programming, which have roots in their own social and cultural settings. This demands a great amount of will to experiment on the part of entire gamut of media industry [5].

**Media in Kashmir:** Media penetration in Kashmir has seen enormous progress in the recent years with advancements in technology and coverage, catering to a wide range of media audience in terms of language, region, religion and content. A robust economic growth, growing literate population and consumer spending power have contributed to an expanding consumer base of various forms of mass media – newspapers, radio and television. The new media such as the internet and mobile phones have also made significant inroads since the early 2000's. However the outreach is not uniformly distributed as this base is more urban based and large swathes of rural and remote segments across the state still have no adequate access to any form of media.

Rural Kashmir which remained untouched of the media technology soon came under its influence. Like urban Kashmir, the rural Kashmir was also expected to give overwhelming response to the media. But, the orthodox and conservative mindsets of the people in rural Kashmir were witnessed in the subtle hesitation of the people in imbibing the media. Rural Kashmir being 95 percent agriculture society was adamant to change, but the media with its content managed to make roots in the rural Kashmir.

It is been observed that due to hilly terrain, the cable network is not successful in the rural areas, however DTH service is widely used in the rural areas. Entertainment and religious programmes takes the front seat with the notion that TV is a chief medium of entertainment [6].

## Conclusion

Alike urban society, the rural Kashmir also embraced media. The media played significant role in the development of the rural areas. In this study it is found that due to the influence of media, literacy rate among rural population is soaring, especially women folk, which earlier used to stay at homes without any education.

It is surprising to see that 70% respondents use media in the rural Kashmir for religious, education and information purposes. Among major sources of information and education, newspapers and television top the tally, with few agriculturists opting radio, due to their busy schedule in fields.

The respondents agreed that after the emergence of media, the literacy rate of the area is on rise, besides literacy the villagers are also attaining global knowledge, which they lack before, even though they started following latest fashions.

They also admit that Media brought change in the life style of the villagers of the area by providing them exposure. The Area looks more civilized and hygienic conscious. Meanwhile, after the invasion of media, villagers started entering into different professions other than the family or traditional occupations.

With the advent of media in rural Kashmir, Urdu became the most spoken language in the area, villagers are coming out of their orthodox mode of living.

This study reveals that the area has improved in all aspects of living be it health, hygiene, education, business etc.

According to villagers, after the acceptance of media by the rural population, the behavior and living habits of the youth is changing. They are more inclined towards the life style of urban areas and now they are much concerned about their future.

The increase in the number of girls in the schools is the indication of the developmental revolution by the media in the area.

Girl respondent admitted that, now they are getting ample space in the school and parents allow them for further studies out of village, which was not possible 10 years back. The media has also changed the life style of women folk of the village; they keep in touch with religious channels all the time.

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