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Political Economy and the Media
Marxist approach to the nature
and effects of media

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POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE MEDIA
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Censorship in 'free societies' is infinitely more sophisticated and thorough than in dictatorships, because unpopular ideas can be silenced and inconvenient facts kept dark, without any need for an official ban"
George Orwell

What are the basic aims, function and role of the media? It is here that a political economy perspective becomes relevant. The idea of 'political economy' is vital to examine a critical perspective of the media. This is also inherent in a 'Marxist' perspective. This paper examines perspectives with regard to the nature and effects of the media.

Towards this, this paper would consist of four sections. The first section would deal with an introductory note on the idea of a Marxist approach of the media. Emanating as it is from the very idea of Marxism and its approaches to the communications sector. The second section would go into various ideas to the 'nature of the media' wherein; there are references to the Propaganda Model as well as views that are derived from the model. The application of the Propaganda Model to the Indian context is also briefly discussed. The third section would deal with the Effects Approach to the media. A Marxist approach to media would incorporate all of the above and also ask the vital question as what drives the media to transmit the messages, news and entertainment that they do? A brief case study of the Chinese Mass Campaigns would attempt to further substantiate the role of the media.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of 'political economy' is vital to examine a critical perspective of the media. This is also inherent in a 'Marxist' perspective. The issues in this perspective are complex, yet the themes can be elaborated upon. The preliminary ideas of a critical perspective came from the initial 'normative theories' of media. Normative theories refer to an alternate set of ideas about how the media ought to relate to society- both to the power structure and to their audiences (Mcquail, 1983). Here, the reference is to how the media ought to function in a particular set up ideologically. Hence it follows that in the Authoritarian media set up, dictatorial governments would sub-ordinate the media to brute state power; Free Press theory would derive its functionality from libertarian theory and western democracies; social responsibility theory and development media theory would stem from the media's role as a responsible appendage to the development agenda of underdeveloped societies.

A recent addition to normative theories is the Democratic Participant theory of media. This theory states that individual citizens and minority groups have rights of access to media and rights to be served by media according to their own determination of needs. Subsequently, the organization and content of media should not be subject to centralized political or state bureaucratize control. In midst of all this, is the Marxist perspective to the media. This theory reflects the inadequacies in the various above perspectives. As per this approach; the media and all other forms of communication should reflect the aspirations of working class, the peasantry, the poor, women, and other marginalized groups. It equivocally states that in the present scenario, the media would only reflect the economically and socially powerful section of society. Marxist approach to media states that nature of any communication (media) system derives its characteristics from the very nature of the political system in which it operates. Hence it can be stated that media systems within the framework of Marxism would be ideological in its structure and practice.

THE IDEA AND RELEVANCE OF MARXISM

The first question that arises here is that is it possible to summarise Marxist thought?[2] Marx wrote at such enormous length, on so many different subjects, that it is not easy to see his ideas as whole (Singer, 1996). Some may point out that Marx's central thought is of humans as natural, social, practical and historical beings, and of history as an ongoing struggle of the classes (Osborne, 2005). However, his ideas are much more than summations. It is complex and diverse. Moreover, there is so much of literature, on so many 'types' and 'areas of Marxism' that it is not possible to bring all the ideas on to this reader. What can be said is that the influence of what Marx wrote has been widespread; so much so that, political positions on 'for or against' emanate from the point of view of this framework. Marx's influence has not been limited to only governments that considered themselves Marxist and claimed-however implausibly- to use Marxist principles to decide how nations should be run (Singer, 1996).

Conservative/ Capitalist governments globally have ushered in social reforms to cut the ground from under revolutionary Marxist opposition movements and even when there was no threat of revolutionary social unrest taking over nations, the existence of

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[2] See also Mathew (2010)

such movements anywhere in the world served to justify governments in increasing arms spending and restricting individual rights in the name of national/internal security (Singer, 1996). On the level of thought rather than practical politics, Marx's contribution is equally significant; for Marx's ideas brought about modern Sociology, transformed the study of history and profoundly affected philosophy, literature and the arts (Singer, 1996). In broad terms, Marx's work is not inhibited by the boundary walls of academic disciplines and it is used in such a manner to form a master view of the structure of society in all its realms; the mechanics of history of that society and the roles of individuals in all their nuances (Mills, 1963:37). Moreover in Marxism the elements of capitalist society form a working model of society. Rightly or wrongly, they are constructed in close and specific interconnections with one another (Mills, 1963). These imputed connections are the specific theories of Marx and, taken together, these theories make up his most general theory: the theory of historical change and the place of revolution within it (Mills, 1963).

As an 'immediate' reaction; some may argue that even though Marxist theory has been greatly influential, Marx is not deemed relevant any more. The dominant paradigm that pervades us is that with the collapse of 'socialism' of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, all manifestations of Marxism are dead. Replacing the promise of Socialism is Capitalism. This 'line' of argument was put forward by Francis Fukoyama and the rest of neo-liberal scholars who held forth on the 'demise of Marxism and the end of history' in the post 1989 situation (See Marcuse, 2000). However, Meiksins Wood (1997 and 1998) states that Marx remains as relevant as any other time, even more today, for it is precisely at this moment that capitalism has become a truly universal system. It's universal not only in the sense that its global, not only in the sense that just about every economic actor in the world today is operating according to the logic of capitalism but even those on the periphery of the economy are subject to that logic (see also Tabb, 1999; Magdoff, 2004 and Eagleton, 2002:8-9).

Marxist theory gets its specific character in the simple fact that it is about the entire capitalist system and about the internal logic of that system and its specific capacity to totalise itself, to permeate every aspect of life, wherever it did implant itself (Meiksins Wood, 1997; Huberman, 1989 ed. and see also Petras, 1999). Later Marxists even though concerned with less mature forms of capitalism, were also concerned with

how to navigate within a largely non-capitalist world (see Magdoff, 1992; and Baran, 1973). For instance, with all the disagreements among the Marxists on imperialism, the basic discourse *there* too was on the premise of expansion of capitalism within large regions of the world that was *not* capitalist, a competition between capitalist states over division and re-division of the world.

This was developed further by Rosa Luxemburg in "The Accumulation of Capital". Her argument was that the capitalist system needs an outlet in non- capitalist formations-which is why capitalism inevitably means militarism and imperialism (also see Magdoff, 1992; Mack, Plant and Doyle, 1979 and Bottomore, 1983). In simple terms what this signifies is that markets (and capitalism) are constantly in need of expansion as the basic principle on which operates is profits. Profits are not possible if the capitalist firm does not constantly expand. This in turn leads to the creation of bigger and bigger monopolies, lesser choices and the domination of a few players over the world.

The other driving force is consumption. In a capitalist system consumption is constantly required and encouraged. Constant consumption leads to constant expansion which (in turn) should lead to constant profits. The end result of all this (and more) is extreme commoditization of *anything* (that can be reduced to a 'commodity'). The need for expansion also leads to imperialism of big powers in search for newer markets as well as resources. The need for a military is paramount in such situations. Marxist ideas raise these issues and question the very capitalist system. They argue that disparate inequality is the result of capitalism. The Market system does lead to harnessing of vast entrepreneurial energies but ends up benefitting only a few. Resources are limited in this world and hence if we have a system only driven by profit and consumption then we would see the vast depletion of natural resources. Hence Marxists argue for equal access and planning in the utilization of natural resources while keeping environmental safeguards in place.

This ideology attributes that human beings and their labour are not supposed to be reduced as commodities to be exploited and that all labour should be given due credit. However; since capitalism thrives on appropriating free (and cheap) labour, the only solution is a radical re-ordering of the way we live our material and philosophical lives. Marxist ideas are applicable to the area of communications. The argument here

is that the media is also subject to capitalist mode of production and ownership. Hence, all the characteristics and politics of capitalism can be applied to the communications sector.

At a basic level, one has to recognise that gross inequalities existing in ownership in society extends to the media. The media may then get reduced as a tool to perpetuate the interests of the ruling class. For instance, let us take the example of caste in Indian media. The Indian media is overwhelmingly dominated by upper-castes. In a study jointly conducted by Yogendra Yadav, at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Anil Chamaria, a freelance journalist, and Jitendra Kumar from the Media Study Group, it was shown that Hindu upper caste men dominate the media[3]. The 2006 survey tracked the social profile of 315 senior journalists in 37 English and Hindi dailies and TV channels. All upper castes are about eight per cent of India's population but among the key decision-makers of the national media, their share is as high as 71%. If other upper castes like Marathas, Jats, and Reddys are added then the total share of the upper caste men in the media would be pegged at a staggering 88%.

The survey reveals that Dalits and Adivasis are conspicuous by their absence among the decision-makers. Not even one of the 315 key decision-makers belongs to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. OBCs consist of about 4 % among key decision makers compared to their population of around 43 per cent in the country. The representation of Muslims is also grossly under-represented in the national media. Muslims, who comprise about 14 per cent of the country's population, have a share of only four per cent in top media posts. What is to be pointed out here is that these few 4% of Muslims who are present among the top decision makers in the media are upper castes. In the national capital itself, there were *no* Muslims at the senior-most levels. This is one such example.

Similarly, if one looks at the ownership issue at the global level, a major part of the Communications industry (globally) is controlled by just nine players namely; Disney, Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi, Bertelsmann, GE,

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[3] The study on caste in media and its findings are being quoted from a UNI report published on rediff.com dated June 5th, 2006. All data being quoted from this study is from this report. The URL for this report as on June 5th, 2006 is http://www.rediff.com//news/2006/jun/05quota1.htm. Details of the CSDS report are available in hard copy too.

AT&T/Liberty Media and none of these companies existed as they do today; 15 years ago. This is because the mass communications sector was the last of the sectors to be privatized for global markets. Hence, one can see that the media sector is also subject to monopoly creation and more and more control of information/news/entertainment by fewer and fewer players. Between the top seven media companies of the world, they own all major film studios, nearly all the TV networks of significance, 85% of all world music, satellite broadcasting, majority of book publishing, nearly all cable TV channels and majority portion of European terrestrial (traditional over the air) TV (Mc Chesney, 2003).

Capitalist characteristics of the world and Indian media have led to enormous commercialization for consumers are being bombarded with too many advertisements as there are so many products. The media also requires this constant rise in advertising revenue for expansion. This has resulted in commercialisation of enormous dimension. For example, radio advertising has climbed to 18/19 minutes per hour well over the limit in 2002. 1982 standard on television was 9.5 minutes of advertising per hour and by 2002 it went up to 14-17 mts per hour! Moreover the shorter 15 sec advertising spot which barely existed in 1980s accounts for 1/3 of commercial TV which means larger number of advertisements resulting in mindboggling commercialization (Mc Chesney and Foster, 2003). Apart from the top nine companies, there are second and third tier companies who are equally powerful and they are based completely in the first world.

As Mc Chesney and Foster (2003), state; the second tier companies are players in their own right. Some examples being: Tribune company; Dow Jones, Gannet; Knight rider; Hearst; (all US); Kirch group, Media set; Prisa; Pearson; Reuters and Reed Elseview. The process of monopoly creation is seen here too. This seems to be inevitable as the rules of capitalism dictate. Small firms are being gobbled up by medium firms and these in turn are being gobbled up by large corporations; an example being the takeover of Fourth Estate by Harper Collins in 2000. Similarly, a wave of M&As of smaller firms has left German TV in the hands of just two players: Bertelsmann and Kirch. In New Zealand, consolidation of the news paper, radio, magazine, pay TV and Radio has happened in the hands of two players; namely, Murdoch and Tony O' Reilly. To be noted is that second tier companies like Mexico's

'Televisa' or Brazil's 'Globo' or Argentina's 'Clarin' are hardly oppositional to big media corporations as they work with larger global corporations by providing local content and programming (Mc Chesney and Foster, 2003). In the long run, they too would be subject to M&As in case they turn out to be oppositional. What one could conclude is that we would have access to only a certain perspective which dominates the global media environment. We might get only a certain kind of news or entertainment. This could descent into propaganda which could be systemic. It is here that the Propaganda model comes in as a framework. Although it is derived from the work of anarchists such as Naom Chomsky, it does fit into what Marxists would reiterate in terms of structural and political influences that could work on the media.

A PROPAGANDA MODEL

All of media is a system for communicating messages to the public. The propaganda model tries to explain how the media serves the ends of the dominant elite. Also, one must keep in mind that the mainstream 'advanced' media's influence and reach is all pervasive and widely influential. This in turn, also serves to sideline and wean away the traditional and time tested contribution and role of traditional media.

The Propaganda Model as spelled out by Chomsky and Herman (1994) focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the messages, marginalise dissent and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public (Chomsky and Herman, 1994: 2).

The essential ingredients of the model, or set of message filters are (1) the size, concentrated ownership/wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms (2) advertising, which serves as a filter as it is the primary income source of the mass media (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and "experts", funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power (4) "flak" as means of suppression and disciplining of the media, and (5) "anti-communism" as a control mechanism (Chomsky and Herman, 1994: 2). All these elements interact, reinforces and fixes the premises of discourse and interpretation and explains the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns around the world (Chomsky and Herman, 1994: 2).

These "filters", in essence explain to present media situation in the world. Capital is essential in starting any media business today and the requirements are enormous, so much so that investments end up coming from large industrial houses. They dominate the general consciousness so much that, thanks to the capital investment, private interests can easily manipulate the media in their hands (Chomsky and Herman, 1994). This also operates at the political level, where interests propel media campaigns resulting in a political consciousness suited to the needs of the big powers. Due to the enormous capital and reach, the western world have been largely successful in having a worldwide "overall consensus" suited to their interests.

The Chomsky and Herman Propaganda Model has been formulated in the context of the United States. However, the ingredients or set of filters constituting the model are applicable to the Indian context too. In India, the dominant mass media is either controlled by the state or business houses. The relative size of these institutions is also enormous and the entire enterprise is profit oriented. Advertising is also the primary source of income for the Indian mass media and the state has the valuable tool of advertising in its hands, as it contributes a large share of advertising. In the Indian context too, there is a heavy reliance on the state as well as business, on information. Also, attempts of suppression of media are common phenomena in India, whether it be through bills like the Anti Defamation Bill, or other laws. As far as the phenomena of "anti communism" as a filter is concerned, it too is applicable in both subtle, as well as direct ways in India. Global trends are being enforced in the Indian context to help the ruling classes further consolidate their hold.

Globally, examples can be enumerated within the preview of the propaganda model. The well publicized abuses of the communist states in the western media, has contributed to elevating opposition to communism as the first principle of western ideology and politics (Chomsky and Herman, 1994: 29-35). This in turn, has helped in fragmenting the left and labour movements. Thus, it serves as a political control mechanism. However, abuses in the first world and these failings are never given any importance in the world media and thus consciousness is manipulatively framed (Chomsky and Herman, 1994). For example, the propaganda campaign against Nicaragua was needed to avert eyes from the massive casualties in El Salvador and to justify the escalating US Investment in counter-revolution in Central America.

Contrary to this is also the situation where in propaganda campaigns will not be mobilised if it does not meet the test of utility (Chomsky and Herman, 1994), the main agenda is not intervention in a sense of victimisation, but that of situation meeting the political and economic needs of the powerful. Thus, while the focus on Cambodia in the Pol Pot era was extremely useful as Cambodia had fallen to the communists, the numerous victims of the US bombing before the communist takeover was scrupulously ignored by the Western elite press. The same was the case of the victims of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. It was imperative for the western media to ignore it primarily because the First World is a major investor in Indonesia and also the US was a quiet supporter of the invasion.

Such examples are many, but the point to be noted is the level of dominance, to the extent that, majority opinion in the world seems to be molded on what emanates from the First World and that, these propaganda campaigns are done hand in glove with the government and private media firms in the First World (Chomsky and Herman, 1994). The media has successfully contributed to the continued cultural, political hegemony of the first world. Similar patterns of dominance of the media could be traced in the third world where the media is in the hands of the state, elite and big corporate houses. They consolidate their political positions and economic interests through propaganda. They consolidate their political positions and economic interests through propaganda. Examples being, the propaganda accompanying the enactment of TADA or on the nationality struggles in Kashmir or the North East.

In most cases, the propaganda succeeds. For instance, this is demonstrated in the public silence and acceptance of a draconian law such as the TADA. TADA in many ways resembles the Rowlatt Act of 1919 (Noorani, 1994). The Rowlatt Act of 1919, however, was not as repressive as TADA (Noorani, 1994). When that act was promulgated, the entire nation bound by the colonialists rose in protests. Moreover, Jallainwala Bagh happened because of this act, and subsequent agitation's against the Rowlett Act, resulted in the firm ascendancy of Gandhi (Noorani, 1994: 18). Today, when a similar, if not more draconian law was promulgated, there was no such protests, or agitation as in 1919. This is because, the Indian populace, middle class et.al., accepted the systematic government campaign that such an act was necessary to prevent the "disintegration of India" in the hands of the terrorists. For this, the entire

democratic polity and principles that the freedom struggle was fought upon was sacrificed (Noorani, 1994). The point here is that the campaign served the purpose of the ruling class to have its way in bringing about a law that leaders of the freedom struggle had resisted and fought.

Class, caste, gender, nationality, sexuality and interests of race determine the character of the media. Given this context, the next section deals with the effects approach wherein, given the actual role of the media today, it will be spelled out as to what effects the media has on society.

THE EFFECTS APPROACH

Ideally, and in situations of inequality and domination, audiences composed of ordinary people 'read' and interrogate messages. They scrutinise the message and contextualise it by analysing, accepting, modifying or rejecting according to what experience has taught them (Gecan, 1995). There is continuous tension between the dominant top-down vertical communication and the tendency among the subordinate groups towards horizontalisation of the flow of information and opinion (Gecan, 1995). For the subordinate groups, communication in its songs, expression, dance, etc. would be the way towards the conception of the world which could be radically different from that put forward by the dominant section of society.

Historically, the more than fifty years of interest in media effects can be divided in three main phases (McQuail, 1983 (a): 72-73). In the first phase, from the turn of the century to the late nineteen thirties, the media was attributed considerable power to shape opinion and belief, change of habits of life and impose political behaviour even against resistance. This was based on empirical observation of the sudden extension of the audience to large majorities and on the great attraction of the various facets of modern media (McQuail, 1983(a)). The second stage extends from the 40's to the 60's and it was strongly shaped by the growth of mass communication research in the United States. Basically, this period affirmed that the earlier assumption that the media was powerful, was not right and affirmed their subservience to other more fundamental components in any potential situation of influence (McQuail, 1983: 73). The third phase which still persists, lies in the case of reopening the question of mass media effects. The basis for this lies on the critique of the methods and models used

which were mainly experiments or surveys designed to measure short term changes occurring in individuals and concentrating on the key concept of attitude (McQuail, 1983(a): 73-74). Despite this 'alternative approach', there is persistence in the effects approach as primarily attitudinal and behavioural, resulting in reinforcement of existing attitudes and opinions. This has been criticised by those who claimed that "it tended to abstract individual members of the audience out of the social system and ignored the more critical issues of the role of the mass media in the maintenance of the socio-political order" (Open University, Unit I, 1997: 44).

In continuation of this argument, there is the widening of the approach and the adoption of a sociological view point, from which mass communication might be regarded as an integral part of the social system. This approach was characterised as follows (Open University, Unit VII: 22).

- The audience must not be atomised, nor the message be isolated from the social process.

- The communicator and recipient are interdependent on each other

- It is not just about a single question producing a single reply. The communication should be regarded as one link in a chain of communications which extends overtime.

- All the individuals involved, no matter how indirectly, in the communication process have a place in the social structure (Open University, Unit VII, 1977).

In a final outlook towards media effects, one may agree that not only does the media select messages but that this selection may affect reality. In another sense, it is possible to argue that the effectiveness of such a selection is only made possible because of various feelings, dispositions and circumstances already present in society, for example, in the instance of race relations, a colonial past etc. (Open University, Unit 15, 1977: 42).

In terms of social conformity and majority power, Noelle Neuman is of the view that, public opinion is essentially a pressure to conform (Price and Scott, 1990). There is an assumed role of fear of isolation as a motivating factor; the contention that individual reading of trends in public opinion, serves as an important source of social
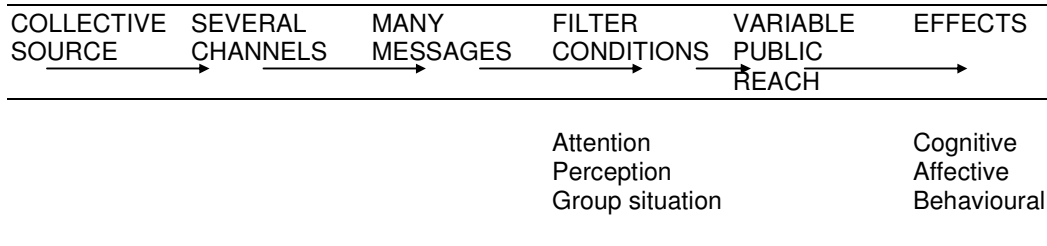
orientation and also the assertion that the mass media are consonant in the portrayal of trends in the climate of opinion (Price and Scott, 1990). These are the underlying assumptions in Noelle Neuman's opinion (Price and Scott, 1990: 371). However, this does not explain how existing norms change, how deviant (in the eyes of society) or rebel groups grow and how current opinion is challenged and many a times overthrown. In this connection, Moscovici states, that uncertainty and ambiguity are fundamentally social in nature and that minorities can disrupt group consensus and can ultimately influence majority opinion, may be change it also (cited in Price and Scott, 1990: 380). In essence, it is possible to describe what might be called the conditions of success in a communication process. As per Schramm, 1972:26-32:

- The message must be so designed and delivered as to gain the attention of the intended destination. Designing of a message could refer to timing, placing and equipping it with cues which will appeal to the receiver's interests (Schramm, 1972: 27).

- The message must employ signs which refer to experience common to source and destination, so as to 'get the meaning across'. It follows that, in designing a message one must be sure that the source speaks at the same level as the receiver and that it is not too directly in conflict with the way he sees and perceives the world (Schramm, 1972: 28).

- The message must across personality needs in the destination and suggest some ways to meet those needs. Here the term 'personality needs' refers to needs of belonging, security, understanding and freedom from anxiety or constraint (Schramm, 1972: 28-29).

- The message must suggest a way to meet those needs which is appropriate to the group situation in which the destination finds himself at the time when he is moved to make the desired response (Schramm, 1972: 26). This is because most of the communication response is in groups and if communication is going to bring about change in behaviour than the first place to look for approval of this new behaviour is to the group (Schramm, 1972).

The above conditions describe as to how the messages ought to be but the point to be kept in mind is that campaigns have to work ultimately through the individuals who receive and respond to messages (See also Schramm, 1964). This whole process can

be summed up in the Model of campaign influence process as shown below (McQuail, 1983(b): 190-191).

Model of campaign influence process (McQuail, 1983(b): 190)

COLLECTIVE SOURCE	SEVERAL CHANNELS	MANY MESSAGES	FILTER CONDITIONS	VARIABLE PUBLIC REACH	EFFECTS
			Attention Perception Group situation		Cognitive Affective Behavioural

The model draws attention to key features of the process. Firstly, it can be seen that the originator of the campaign is almost always a collective source, or a 'representative'. It could be a political party, government, pressure group, a business firm. In a campaign, the known position in society of the source will have a strong affect on the chances of success of a campaign (McQuail, 1983 (b): 191). Secondly, the campaign usually consists of many messages through several media and chances of reach and effect will depend as per the nature of the channels and the message content. Thirdly, a set of filter conditions is mentioned which facilitate or hinder the flow of messages to the whole or chosen public. Attention is mentioned as a filter, as, without it, there can be no effect and this would be depended on the interest and relevance of content. Perception is named as a filter because the success of a message in a campaign depends on it being interpreted the same way as intended by the source (McQuail, 1983(b): 191). The group situation is also an important filter because, as mentioned earlier, most of the communication responses is in groups. The final aspect mentioned in the model is the question of the final effects. This could be explained in terms of the whole process of how effects are finally achieved (McQuail, 1983(b): 199). In the sense that, from the initial available stock of knowledge, values, opinions etc., there is a differential selection and response, which in turn leads to socialisation and 'social control' (McQuail, 1983(b): 199).

A Marxist approach to media would incorporate all of the above and ask the vital question as what drives the media to transmit the messages, news and entertainment that they do? It would also give paramount importance to ownership and the ideology of media organizations whether it is private media or that which is owned by the state.

The question that could be asked would be the utility of the Marxist theory of media. A case study towards that would be that of the Chinese media in the period 1949 to 1977. The Chinese Revolution of 1949 is primarily quoted for the vast upheavals and conflict between the classes. However, it was also punctuated by some of the most progressive policies with regard to women, health, education, land reform and in tackling poverty, industrialization and inequality. Many scholars have documented the advances made in these areas. The advances made under Marxist China helped in the restoration and the growth rates of capitalism since 1977 (under Deng). The Chinese example in Communications and media can be cited as an example where the practical aspect of Marxist application on the media was successfully carried out.

APPLICATION OF MARXIST APPROACH TO MEDIA: THE CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE MASS CAMPAIGNS

No system or government in the recent past has carried out mass campaigns as the People's Republic of China. One estimate is that from 1950 to 1978 there were 74 mass campaigns on the national level (Liu, 1981: 199-223). They belonged to different categories. First, there were campaigns of class struggle in the 1950's, each of these were campaigns designed to launch a new institution in China (such as Land Reform of 1950). Second, there were mass campaigns of denunciation of purged political figures such as Liu Shaogi during the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution (GPCR). Third, there were numerous campaigns especially two decades preceding Mao's death in 1976, of studying political ideology be it Mao's thought or Marxism Leninism. Fourth, there were campaigns of emulation, the objects of such campaigns had been, in various times, model workers, soldiers, students or cadres. Fifth, there were campaigns designed to familiarize the public with a new policy such as the National Constitution of 1954 or Agricultural Cooperatization of 1953. Finally since 1949, there have been campaigns of information about, say, marriage laws, mass Sanitation (1952), birth control (1956-57) and anti-smoking and preservation of forests campaign (Liu, 1981).

The whole rationale of the campaigns was the two step flow theory of leadership; In the sense that the policies of the party have to be through mass mobilisation, information be converted into the thought of the people (Liu, 1981). This is to be done primarily, through mobilisational work in the countryside as well as the urban

areas. The urban factor came much later with the GPCR. The organisational factor of Chinese campaigns had first, the establishment of an ad hoc organisation. This was done to ensure the importance of the campaign (the realisation), to ensure thoroughness in execution, in the sense that establishment of such organisations could circumvent the inertia of regular bureaucracy. The second stage was the training of a number of activists, beginning with the recruitment of the right people with the motivation to go in for mobilisational work. After this is done, an experimental area is chosen and there is a "eky point application". For example, in the campaign against Schistosomiasis or Snail fever in 1955 after preliminary survey and propaganda work done in Shanghai, two out of ten infected countries were selected as focal points for "decisive attack" (Liu, 1981).

Chinese leaders divided the implementation of a campaign into two, the "point phase" and the "plane phase". Once a campaign is accomplished well in 'key points'; then the whole 'plane' would be activated in a sweeping manner. 'Plane' would by definition include the whole country, province or nation. This would depend on the nature and issues generated through a campaign. In the whole campaign, all facets employed are mobilised at a mass level. The positive aspects of the campaigns in the People's Republic of China, is the emphasis on personal participation in persuasion campaigns.

An example would be for local forestry campaigns wherein heavy users of forests likers were persuaded to be volunteer propagandists for forest fire prevention. Thus, the persuaded were transformed into persuaders. The most remarkable aspect of the Chinese campaigns was that, that as soon as a decision was taken by the leadership, officials could quickly mobilise a large number of activists, drawing people from all institutions who after being given a briefing, were dispatched to every corner to disseminate messages. At times, there were failures too. The failure of the birth control programme in Wenzhou was largely due to the lack of credibility of the enforcer, (the party cadres there) (Liu, 1981). Similarly at times, in the use of small groups there was 'routinisation", that is overuse, so much so that people became detached from the whole process (Liu, 1981).

In conclusion, the Marxist approach to media would focus on media being an active instrument to felicitate social transformation; to felicitate people's struggle in tackling

inequality so that a radical change is possible for all and not just a few. For the social processes to be alive for radical change, one must continue to ask that vital question: 'Why do I believe what I believe?' Hence we must go round about to find the roots of our own beliefs (Robinson, 1962). Ideology is indispensable in the world of action in social life and a society cannot exist unless its members have common feelings about what is the way to conduct its affairs; and these common feelings are expressed in ideology (Robinson, 1962:9). At a societal level, the first essential for all of us would be to seriously combat the ideology which states that the values which can be measured in money are the only ones that ought to count (Robinson, 1962: 137).

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Title: **POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE MEDIA** *MARXIST APPROACH TO THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF MEDIA*	

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Abstract:

What are the basic aims, function and role of the media? It is here that a political economy perspective becomes relevant. The idea of 'political economy' is vital to examine a critical perspective of the media. This is also inherent in a 'Marxist' perspective. This paper examines perspectives with regard to the nature and effects of the media.

Towards this, this paper would consist of four sections. The first section would deal with an introductory note on the idea of a Marxist approach of the media. Emanating as it is from the very idea of Marxism and its approaches to the communications sector. The second section would go into various ideas to the 'nature of the media' wherein; there are references to the Propaganda Model as well as views that are derived from the model. The application of the Propaganda Model to the Indian context is also briefly discussed. The third section would deal with the Effects Approach to the media. A Marxist approach to media would incorporate all of the above and also ask the vital question as what drives the media to transmit the messages, news and entertainment that they do? A brief case study of the Chinese Mass Campaigns would attempt to further substantiate the role of the media.

Key Words/Phrases: