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 Research and Scientific Distribution by A.H. Davies and O.W. Palmer)




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## New Trends of Communication

## Dr. Ananda Tissa De Alwis

On this occasion, I wish to offer my grateful thanks to the Chancellor, Vice-chancellor, the Deans of the Faculties, Professors and Lecturers and the learned members of the Council and the Senate for confering on me an Honorary Degree. I do not consider this award as a personal honour to me but as a recognition by the Sri Jayewardhanapura University and the learned fraternity in Sri Lanka to the discipline of Mass Communication.

There are those whose mission is to seek Truth. It is they who civilize man, and in doing so help to build cities, nurture cultures, create religions and attack the dead weight of superstition. They continuously challenge vested beliefs, the meanings of words and thought itself. Some call this process "research" others "meditation". And that rare experience when the splendour of thought flashes like lightning across the consciousness, we call 'insight'.

Thoughts can be explained and analysed in learned papers in magazines and in books. Quite often, however, they need to be presented to wider publics than to intellectual minorities and their impact on human life dwelt upon in the trains and buses and market places. To do so, however, another voice is needed and that is the voice of the Mass Communicator.

The consumer society, created by Science and propelled by discovery, wants communication of what is new in the minds of men. New products are demanded by the very nature of society and the communicator has to look for ever faster means by which he can, go tell the world.

Roosevelt, before Television, and in the early days of Radio, used the Fireside Chat to reach and keep on his side thousands of families in rural America. He did not deliver a speech. Instead he chatted with his audience and families sat around a radio while they were told by a friendly voice in Washington that he knew their problems and would look after them.

Roosevelt did not speak often. He spaced out his talks to one about once in three weeks to a month.

They were, of course, leisurely days. Today an American President is exposed to TV coverage which is viewed by almost the whole world and averages once every week.

President Nasser distributed hundreds of thousands of Transistor Radios free of charge all over the Middle East so that his broadcasts from Cairo could be heard in the Arab world. The results of that single fact are to be seen in the solidarity of Arab opinion that continues as strong as ever.

Ayotullah Khoumeni lived in Paris for many years, but cassettes of his talks to Iranians were smuggled into the country and built a movement within Iran that ended with the overthrow of one of the oldest monarchies in the world.

Broadcasts from one country to another are jammed by the recipient country if it so desires. Communication satellites, however, now enable citizens to choose the broacasts they will hear regardless of the policies of their governments (Rupavahini is preferred to Doordharshan in South India).

The scientist has won for humanity a freedom of choice denied to it despite decades of polemics at International Conferences. Such freedom, however, conflicts with the views of nations which choose to control and direct their economies. They argue that, globally, news is a commodity, and giant network agencies distort, by choice of news and slant what the world will consume through its communication systems.

There is a war of words in assemblies of UNESCO on whether media should or should not be guided by the State to publish material such as would be useful to the wellbeing of society. In other words: should media 'tell all', each as it knows how: or should there be control of the flow of information.

In open societies such as the United States of America, there is a fiercely competitive situation where media fight bitterly for public favour. In such a society there are occasions when state documents dealing with armaments and war strategies are published, to the horror of the Pentagon, the surprise of America's allies and the amusement of its enemies. In guided societies the news or views that get priority coincide with the political or economic objectives of the State.

Placed in fair perspective, total information freedom is a contradiction in a state whose policy it is to develop certain sectors of its economy at the loss of consumer choice.

The proliferation of Media is not only because science and technology have made them so efficient. Media is habitforming. Many of us are tuned to a rhythm of morning tea and morning newspaper; others to tea and radio. It is to the rhythm of the morning radio that nations wake up and get to work. Even at work people have their radios beside them. And, of course, the tele-tube or 'Box' or even Idiot Box' as they call it is so habit-forming that conversation, even with visitors, has ceased to be necessary.

The impact of this incessant barrage is devastating. I do not use this word in the sense of expressing enormous damage: rather in the sense that its capacity to influence nations is greater than the slower process of education and the expensive process of travel.

The growth and rising costs have made media dependent on advertising. Without revenues from advertisements modern mass media would die or need government subsidies. A newspaper which costs 10 units of currency to the reader would cost 100 units of the same currency if advertising revenue did not absorb the costs of production and distribution.

Advertising is today a giant industry and has become a necessary part of mass communication. It is also an indivisible part of Marketing. The great number of goods modern science has made possible and modern man insists he must have: the services and employment levels modern nations must sustain: have made Advertising Communication the art at the summit of the Communication Spectrum. In the developed world the annual expenditure on advertisement is over $£ 31$ billion.

Franklin Roosevelt is on record with the following statement on advertising:
"If I were starting life all over again, I am inclined to think that I would go into the advertising business in preference to any other.

This is because advertising has come to cover the whole range of human needs and also because it combines real imagination with a deep study of human psychology. Because it brings to the greatest number of people actual knowledge concerning useful things, it is essentially a form education... It has risen with ever-growing rapidity to the dignity of an art. It is constantly paving new paths... The general raising of the standards of modern civilization among all groups of people during the past half century would have been impossible without the spreading of the knowledge of higher standards by means of advertising.'

The advertiser is not a philanthropist dedicated to the cause of sustaining media or of raising the standards of civilization. He does both by serving his own interest.

The advertiser buys space in print, in outdoor sites, or time on Radio and Television by measuring the cost. The measure is the 'Miline Rate', which is simply the cost per thousand people reached. If a Television commercial costs $£ 1100$ he wants to know how many people he can reach at that price. If he can reach 1,000 people, then the cost to reach a single person is $£ 1$. There are refinements of this inquiry. Are they the right people, i.e., are they people likely to buy the advertiser's product or service? As the costs rise and the competition gets fiercer by the day more and more questions need to be asked because while there is money to be spent on advertising, there is no money to be wasted, or else the competition will drive the Advertiser off the Market.

Media are intensely researched in order that truthful answers can quickly be given. Research into media take many forms all aimed at answering questions such as:

## Who is the Reader/Listener?

The idea is to etch a profile of the audiences at different times, in different places, and for different media.

Research must reveal the age, the sex, the income, the location, and other facts about the audience. Such information enables the advertiser to choose the right medium for his message and to create the form and content of the message itself.

Advertising cannot stand on its own. It is part of that massive industry called MARKETING.
"Marketing is the scientific distribution of a product from the point of manufacture to the place of consumption with maximum speed and minimum cost". (Market Research \& Scientific Distribution by A H Davies \& OW Palmer)

In the function of Marketing there is the concept of the: "The Marketing Mix" This "Mix" has several ingredients:
(1) The Right Research
(2) The Right Product
(3) The Right Package
(4) The Right Place (Distribution)
(5) The Right Price
(6) The Right Advertising
and research again and again and again without end because the life of a business is continuous and the conditions for it are never the same from one year to another.

The writing of advertisements is the province of the "Copywriter". Headlines and texts are called "Copy"; a term borrowed from journalism where the Reporter's news is a "Story" and the writing is "copy". Short, memorable lines are sometimes used at the foot of advertisements and make good slogans but advertisements have come a long way from being dependent on slogans. Writers with specially creative gifts are needed in Copywriting and the best of them are the heroes of the profession.

Writers like Aldous Huxley and Ernest Hemmingway tried writing advertising "copy". Both of them recalled their attempts with appreciation of the difficulty and the seriousness of the work. Huxley said it was easier to write a sonnet than a good advertisement.

Great advertisements have human warmth and empathy, love of humanity and compassion and a sense of humour. The little things that make living worthwhile; the glory of a child's laugh and the terrible tragedy of its tears; a place for young love's dream and the pathos of despair: all this must find response in the copywriter's heart and mind.

KODAK films showed a photograph of two little children by the side of an old ditch. The boy was trying to fish with a thread tied to a stick and a bent pin. The girl was beside him, intense and still.

Borrowed from a well known song the words in the headline were:

## "MEMORIES ARE MADE OFTHIS"

A British firm manufacturing breakfast cereals showed a child holding a telephone receiver over his plate of 'Kelloggs" while his friend somewhere also listened in on another phone to the sounds of the hot cereal 'Crackle and Pop' as milk was poured over it.

The headline was:

## "LISTEN TO BREAKFAST"

In Western countries advertising with posters is cheap and popular, and hundreds of very large posters are printed every year. The Ford Motor Company of America showed a Baby's pram with the statement:

## "THE ONLY CONVERTIBLE THAT OUTSELLSTHE FORD!"

All advertising campaigns, of course are not on these lines. No one can say at a glance whether an advertisement is "good" or "bad" because only its success in solving a stated marketing problem can attract its approval or rejection. If there is a sale on, for instance, and the need is to announce how much cheaper the product would be, all that is needed is to say: " $10 \%$ off!-Come and get it!" Such an advertisement is good if it draws people to the bargain counter.

Thousands of excellent advertisements are created all over the world. The best of them are primarily the work of quick minds. Sometimes it is the mind, of a writer, but good graphic artists have inspirations that make the world catch its breath in happy surprise! Such inspirations come those to who think they can catch a falling star or see a wink in the eye of a needle.

Generally, branded goods are advertised according to a carefully designed plan. It would take six months to a year to research, rough out, test and complete a campaign. Research and testing are essential because millions in money are needed for a good campaign and if it fails the results can be disastrous. Before an advertisement series is designed researchers must identify the marketing problem to be solved. It may be a simple objective of $20 \%$ higher sales to reach in the following year; or a new use for the product to be made widely known so that more of the product will be sold; or to fight back the thrust of a rival product. If the objective is not reached the money spent on advertising is a waste. What went wrong? Again, the researchers have to find the answer. Once in a while untested campaigns are run and they achieve success. This is a risk although the brilliant thought of an advertising genius may sometimes be worth all the tests of research. They are, however, dangerous regions where only eagles dare.

Advertisements do not change in content and message in different media. What changes is the manner of presentation. The restrictions of a newspaper advertisement where pictures and print stand still do not hamper the skills of a commercial on television. Colour television provides sound, movement, expressions of people and demonstrations of the product in actual use. Smell is a few laboratory decades away. There must surely be a Dor somewhere who is trying to transmit the perfume of a Rose: If there isn't there soon will be!

Many skills of Mass Communication have been developed in the field and working places but a greater part is the contribution of Universities in the Western world. Universities in the United States
lay considerable emphasis on the disciplines of Marketing, Marketing Research. Advertising and Produce Development. Certain Universities enjoy world-wide reputations for courses in Business Management.

A study with University students concluded, for instance, with the theory that there are "selling sounds" or "selling letters" in the English language, e.g. L.M, N.R, CH, S. Sh, Z'. Controlled studies were done with students to discover whether there was favourable response to some sounds in preference to others. Other research was to find out whether there was a way to make reading of English easier and quicker. The proposition emerged that there should be at least 26 affixes to every hundred words.
(It would be better to say especially than specially... better to say Truly than true)

Psychologists worked in Universities to discover what motivated people to action in varied forms - to take to politics, or become a 'Thinker', or to hit the fellow next to him, or to buy gifts for others and so on. This discipline was called MOTIVATIONAL RESEARCH. They consulted Professors in other areas of study including Archaeology. The Archaeological contribution was that fire was a sex symbol to cave man. Because fire was made by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Our ancestors carved the wood in the shape of phallic symbols.

The advertisers were quick to use this finding and turned it over to motivation researches. The makers of a Cigarette Lighter were advised to emphasize the flame in their advertisements. "Sell the flame not the lighter" was the brief to the graphic designers. The sceptics are entitled to chuckle, but the fact is that the particular brand of cigarette lighters sold as many as they could make. Modern man, apparently, has not moved too far from the Cave.

Advertising, packaging and product design went through a torrid phase of domination by similar and sometimes vulgar attempts to exploit one aspect of human motivation. There were other motivations, like the search for status. The investigative writer, Vance Packard, wrote a book: 'The Status Seekers" in which he surveyed the malady as it affected American Society.

He quoted the following advertisement for Real Estate.
"An unbelievable lavish, hand-crafted manorial estate for a very limited number of affluent families of good taste. . \$47,900"
"For a very limited number of affluent families of good taste"... No status seeker with near enough money to buy the estate could resist this appeal.

The big American car and later the two-car family were results of the appeals to status which dominated the advertising campaigns of automobile manufacturers.

The search for status is everywhere. The British have a phrase for it: 'Keeping up with the Jones"! However varied the evidence or expression from country to country may be people every where are afflicted by this frailty of seeking "status".

The Advertising industry may seem a collection of exploiters of human weakness. Those who see the bright and cheerful advertising messages wherever they look will dismiss such a thought. Motivation is not an invention of advertising. People who create advertisements did not plant status seeking or the need for love and appreciation in people's minds. No one can do that. All that has been done and that too, rarely, is consciously to use known needs and desires to motivate people to buy goods and services.
"One day you too will own an Omega" that is a 'Status' advertisement for Omega watches. 'Rolex" presents the same appeal, differently, by showing important people wearing watches. The claim is: "People who make decisions, wear Rolex".

Advertising is essentially a form of education, as Roosevelt said. The health of millions has improved, for instance, by the use of toilet soaps and toothpaste. In the early days of controlled economies a certain country put, hoardings everywhere which commanded:
"Brush your teeth every day"

The planners found that the majority paid no heed to this apeal. They called in experts in Mass Communication who changed the message on the hoardings.
"You smile better when you brush your teeth every day".

And the people responded.

Examples of Mass Communication from all over the world can be discussed with profit but we must get on. Sri Lankan talent is outstanding and when pressed to it, successful campaigns have been created with no outside help. The world's advertising budgets run into astronomical figures and if that scale of spending ceases then media would need someone's subsidies. Subsidised enterprise is not always efficient. It is necessary to state that contrary to belief in some quarters the advertiser has almost no influence on the editorial content of Mass Media. It is true that advertising budgets are huge but they do not dictate policy. In fact there is resentment at the editorial desks of any attempt to browbeat an editor, sub editor or reporter in print media or radio or television. Editorial support has to be won by convincing the editors that a given proposition is true. The fact that the proposition comes from a blue ribband advertiser does not count

Free flow of information is essential not only to the growth of a free society but to its survival as well. When information is concealed from media or matters of public interest, prevented from being published, that society takes the first steps to becoming a guided society which in turn is the first step to a dictatorship. Robbery and cheating of public funds, misuse of power and public money, failures of
public enterprise, sharing of pelf and privilege among the relations of those in power, the use of power to suppress opposition or to harrass it and such other acts of discrimination flourish when the searchlight of media probes is switched off. It is in the very nature of an open society that it shall be free and its media must also be open and free. That is why the British System of Government by convention rather than constitution, created the idea of four estates of the Real - the King, the Lords, the Commons and the Press. The Press came to be known as the Fourth Estate. Today it would be more correct to include in that realm all Mass Media of Communication.

There are differences between Media and Government at the higher and lower levels of development among nations. At the higher levels there is the state of armed confrontation between countries with systems of society totally different one from the other. In one the media are free to publish almost any view. In the other the media and everything else is strictly controlled. The Government in the open societies point out that their media embarrass them. The media say that the difference between the systems is worth keeping and that difference needs freedom to publish.

Media in many developing countries wish to follow the traditional path of the Western democracies. They wish to be creative and complain that pleasing the Governments and giving massive space or time to Governments cramps their style. Governments on the other hand say that the colonial power did not rule by the vote of the people and could therefore ignore numerous demands for housing, employment, health, education, water, roads, food and numerous other services. When the colonial power left there was such a pent up demand that the euphoria of newly-won freedom and the discovery of Fathers of Nation could not last long. The demands were so great and expected to be fulfilled within months. The resources of countries, particularly of industry had been ignored because the foreign rulers used the colonies to dump their home manufactures on them. In these circumstances the forms of open societies like multi-parties and Free Media resulted in untenable pressures which would surely lead to revolution unless strong measures were taken to contain and defuse the explosives. One by one the many countries which became free after the war of 1939-45 (there were fifty in Africa, ten in Asia and Far East) gave up the system of open society. When one leaves Japan and travels westwards one has to arrive in Sri Lanka and India to find free media, free elections and open discussion. In all the countries in between and in Pakistan and Bangladesh there is a one-party state.

We began with the thought of those who seek the truth. Truth is difficult to find in the dark. Seekers of truth are close kin to us who work in Mass Communication. Both present the proposition that their work is for humanity. The inter-relationship between the academics who make primary discoveries and those who use such discovery to widen their reach and efficiency and power is recognized. Together they help to inform, entertain, educate, protect and stimulate the health and mind of man. That is regard enough because, as Cicero said in De Republica:
"The mind of each man is the man himself".
1983.04.29

