

Kiran R.N., Philosophies of Communication and Media Ethics: Theology, Concepts and Empirical Issues, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2000, pp. xxxiv+342, ISBN: 81-7646-098-2. Price 750.

With the sudden onset of the high-profile electronic revolution in India recently, the mass media of communication has become, all on a sudden, a major area of growth, attracting many young professionals into the world of print and electronic media. However, cut-throat competition and unscrupulous business practices can spell disaster in this field, as in any other field. In other words any sound theory and practice of communication must be rooted in a sound philosophy of communication and a contemporarily relevant theory of media ethics. In this context, the laudable work of Dr. Kiran R.N., Assistant Professor of Communication and Journalism at Sri Padmavathi Mahila University, Tirupati, must be seen as a timely contribution and a well-intentioned corrective.

The author has successfully accomplished the twin objectives of her work. First, the philosophical foundations of mass communication, right from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to contemporary philosophers, are presented clearly and effectively, and, second, the value systems of Indian mass communicators are identified and analysed. The latter objective is accomplished through empirical research into the value systems of a sample of 260 media persons, 210 from the print media and 50 from the electronic media (radio and television), who are currently active in the field.

Mass media can not exist and operate in a vacuum. The operation of mass media in a given country will be influenced by the fundamental beliefs and practices, including beliefs in matters concerning ethics and morality, which the people of that country hold from time to time. Communicators will have to address issues as varied as war and peace, religious, cultural, and political tolerance and intolerance, oppression and exploitation of women, minorities, and other weaker sections of society, social and economic justice, greed, corruption, abuse of power,

public and private sexual morality, education, ecology, inequality, suffering, illness and health care, violence between racial, religious and linguistic groups, etc., and a great deal of ethical issues and principles are surely involved in all such issues. While handling such issues, the effective communicator, who has the power to transform society into an ideal democracy or a rotten mess, can not shrug off his responsibility to individuals and society. Hence, a study of the ethical beliefs of the communicators of our country needs to be highly appreciated.

The chapters on feminist perspectives on communication, pacifistic philosophy of communication and the philosophical inquiry of Indian mass communication have special relevance in the Indian context as they add new dimensions to the practising of communication in the background of the culture and ethos of our country.

To most people today, especially to the utilitarian modern professionals, philosophy is a useless relic of the past. These snobs look down upon philosophy as an obsolete, useless discipline that is irrelevant to modern man in meeting the demands of his daily life. But through her admirable work Dr. Kiran has convincingly demonstrated that philosophy is as relevant today as ever and that a bit of philosophy is indispensable even to the modern professionals. In presenting philosophy as one of the pivotal concerns of communication, the author has accomplished two goals with one stroke: philosophy is given its badly-needed life-orientation and communication is given its much-needed sound ideological footing.

At a time when serious questions are being asked about how communication research could be done more meaningfully and effectively, the author has added a new dimension by providing a new way of looking at communication and its problems in the Indian context. In the world of today, where value erosion has affected every realm of life including that of mass communication, research into media ethics is a significant contribution as it will help improve the

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ethical standard in the print and electronic media and thereby the general ethical and cultural standard of the citizenry of the country.

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