

PRIZE WINNING ESSAY AUDREY DASILVA ESSAY COMPETITION

Group 1



THE POWER OF MEDIA TODAY

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The word 'media' refers, in the plural form, to a means of communication. It could be any means of communication and communicates to the public all important events taking place anywhere in the world, right from one's own place of residence to a remote corner of a country, so remote that it cannot be located on a world map. Thus, the media communicates news, views and criticism through either the television or the newspaper or, sometimes, even the radio.

In common parlance, the media refers to the newspapers. Today, there is a wide range of newspapers to choose from, right from the modest Marathi local 'Loksatta' to the vain, boastful English daily, our well-known and beloved, 'The Times of India'. 'Loksatta' tells the Marathi literate section of Maharashtra society all that they need to know about world or national affairs, but a large section of it is devoted to 'Aamchi Mumbai' (Our Mumbai) and the affairs of the state and its state government. 'The Times of India' on the other hand, visits every home in the morning and is almost as heavy as lead. The main newspaper contains pro-government news along with plenty of national, international, business and sports news. But the additional supplements like 'Bombay Times', 'Times Classifieds', 'Education Times', etc have relevant news only on one half of the page and large size advertisements on the other. But, let's not stray from the topic. Media, today, has an iron grip on at least half the power of the government. The right to freedom of speech and expression, a fundamental right backed by the Constitution of independent India, may have certain restrictions but newspapers are certainly permitted to let the truth

be known to their readers, also known as the proletariat of independent India. The pro-government newspapers may choose to simply highlight main news and praise the government in power, but it is the newspapers of the opposition and newspapers that believe in justice, fair play, truth and honesty, which really make the people aware of their birthrights and the unjust policies of the government. The revealing articles are published by such newspapers, the very next day or within a short span of time. The defect is set right by the authorities concerned, in most cases, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the government of Maharashtra or the Mumbai police. They publish just and appropriate criticism and invite their readers to contribute. They help to organize the public opinion and convey it to the concerned authorities. The news reporters are allowed to express public as well as official views accurately. But with the power comes a huge responsibility. The editor of the newspaper must take care that no information and that is inaccurate, obscene, top-secret for security reasons or undermining the national unity and international relations, is published. The newspaper is a necessity and without it, we, ordinary though unique citizens will be left in the dark. It is said that "Where ignorance is bliss, wisdom is a folly" but one must accept that, in the view of the modern times, knowledge and wisdom are bliss and obviously, "Where wisdom is bliss, ignorance is a folly".

The television is, in some ways, a better form of media than the newspapers. Live, animated pictures with news read out are more enlightening than a small picture and a foot long article of black-and-white, printed text underneath. The 24-hour news channels immediately inform the viewer of catastrophes and bad weather along with victories and defeats in an





array of different sports. Reading the news updates at the bottom of the screen immediately enlightens one on the status of things from A to Z.

The radio also provides relevant as well as irrelevant news interspersed between songs.

Media has a great deal of power, especially in an independent and democratic country like India. There may be certain restrictions but these are to discourage absolute power as absolute power corrupts. The media must use the power meted out to them judiciously and in the best interests of all the diverse communities of India.