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Vijaylakshmi (75, grandmother)

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**Colonialism and its Effect on Journalism: An Insider’s Perspective**

When I first asked to talk to my grandmother about her experience with media in India in the 20th century, she instantly perked up and started to go into a long-winded explanation on the state of media in India in the 1950s, just after India gained its independence from the British Empire. I already had prior knowledge about life right after independence due to my mother telling me stories about how India nationalized rapidly and brought newer technologies to her town, but hearing it straight from my grandmother helped to emphasize the impact this technology had on her development and her values as compared to her parents. The objective of this interview was to discover the dominant forms of mass media in my grandmother’s lifetime and how this affected her life and values.

I first interviewed my grandmother about the dominant forms of mass media during her lifetime. Surprisingly, even right after independence in the 50s and 60s, English-language newspapers were still the norm. I was curious about this, so I researched more on the topic and found that Indian characters were much harder to typeset than English characters on a printing press. As a result, most of the country stuck to reading English papers. My grandmother’s experience with this type of media illustrates that a group formerly in control of a region may still accidentally affect the communications of a region even after they are not in power. I did not realize that control of the media could be achieved without a purpose and wondered if India could have discovered another method to create Indian-language newspapers without the influence of the British Raj.

After gathering some basic information about the dominant mass media during my grandmother’s life, I asked her more questions to see how this media affected her. I first asked her about the radio during the 60s. She said that wherever you went, you heard the radio – blaring from a handheld at home and from huge speakers in open-air markets. This continued until the advent of household televisions in the 70s and 80s; much later than Western nations. It was interesting to see how the history of a country affected the progress of its journalism; because the British Raj did not offer India much opportunity to adopt newer technologies, its technology was decades behind other nations. I wonder how my consumption of media would be different had the US been like India, unable to adopt new technologies when they were made.

When I called my grandmother to schedule an interview, she said that it was hard for her to use newer technologies like Facetime since she could only afford a touchscreen phone a few years ago. This conversation helped me think about how privileged I am to live in a country with free speech as well as being the center of some of the newest technologies, in journalism as well as everywhere else. Before this conversation, I had not given much thought to how the progress of a society shapes its journalism and therefore its peoples’ values, but I hope to analyze this question more in the future.