



What Kind of Media Contributes to Human Happiness? -From the News Report on the 311 Nuclear Plant Accidents-

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Abstract: On March 11 of 2001, in Japan, the Great East Japan Earthquake followed by Tsunami hit Fukushima Nuclear Plants. The Earthquake shut down the main electric power supply, and the Tsunami did the supplementary supply. The melt-down and melt-through of the nuclear fuel caused contamination of the air, the land, and the sea. However, the Prime Minister of Japan became a salesman to sell the nuclear plants technology to other countries even after the disaster. Although nuclear plants are apparently hazardous not only to individual human body, heart and soul but also to the community and environment, the Japanese mass media cooperate with the political and economic authorities by concealing the facts necessary to be known to the general public. In order to become aware of these problems and to face the important tasks for the humankind and the earth, it is imperative for us to acquire media literacy at the macro level of the society.

Keywords: disaster, information, media, literacy, public opinion, manipulation, rumor

1. Introduction

The sentences below are a newscaster's, Ichiro Furutachi's, comments on a private TV station (Hodo Station) just before the end of the program on March 11, 2012, which can be retrieved from the websites of Daily Cyzo. (2012) and Miyatake (2012).

"We (Hodo Station) broadcasted a special program which featured an investigation of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accidents on December 28th last year. We investigated the doubt that the nuclear power plant had been already partially broken down because of the earthquake before the tsunami. Regrettably, we were not able to investigate the issue further this time. However, we recognize the existence of a village called 'Nuclear Power Village.'

Unlike Fukushima, Tokyo is full of blinding flashes. In the Fukushima area, it seemed to be difficult for many people to make a living in their major local industry. This is why the nuclear plants might have been invited to build without consensus among Fukushima residents. We have to discuss the root of the problem thoroughly. At least, I strongly believe that we need a thorough discussion, otherwise, we cannot justify ourselves to Fukushima residents who were deprived of their safe living places. We will continue to investigate the issue on the nuclear plant in our program. Even if our program is terminated, I will never regret."

2. Deleted video

The word, 'Nuclear Power Village' refers to the tight-knit community of legislators, regulators, local governments, scholars, and mass media. Furutachi's comments can be watched on two websites. According to Miyatake (2012), Furutachi started his comments by saying "I have something to regret about this program," standing on a platform at Sanriku Station in the Sanriku Railroad South Rias Line. (See the photo below). The video of this broadcasting was uploaded in Miyatake's blog, but was eventually deleted.



"古舘伊知郎 報道ステーション..."
この動画は、TV-Asahi Corp. から著作権侵害の申し立てがあったため削除されました。

("Ichiro Furutachi Hodo Station..." This video was deleted because TV-Asahi Corp. filed copyright infringement.)



3. Background of pressure on broadcasting

Since March 11, 2011, we have shared three shocks: an earthquake, a tsunami, and the leakage of radioactive materials caused by the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident. This accident was caused by a breakdown of the main electronic supply, followed by the loss of the auxiliary power supply, which was a safety net for tsunamis. Although pouring water prevented a huge explosion, radioactive materials spread into the air, land, and sea. As a result, we are threatened by hotspots emitting high microsieverts from place to place and many people, especially parents who care about their children's health, are worried and suffering. Despite this, Japanese Prime Minister market nuclear power plants to other countries. Wars and nuclear power plants seriously undermine human happiness. However, the media hides unfavorable facts from authorities, or is complicit in a cover-up. In order to realize these problems and clarify human agendas, we need a macro-level perspective of media literacy, focusing on social structure.

4. Conflicts within the media

There is a conflict between journalists, who try to give a conscientious report after visiting the field in order to gather information, and senior management who care about advertising rate and relent to political pressure. How can we solve the conflict in a way that both sides agree? It is important that we hear out the management, who are at a disadvantage in terms of justice and claims. However, considering their position, it may be difficult for them to tell their honest opinions. In this case, we should guess their honest views by coming up with our own hypotheses, even if we do not have concrete evidence.

5. Relationship between the advertising industry and the media industry

One clue for deduction is the relationship between the advertising industry and the media industry. For example, Tokyo Electric Power Co., Inc spent 26.9 billion yen solely on advertising expenses (Honma, 2012). Although they are a local industry, their expense ranked 10th in the nation. In addition, Federation of Electric Power Companies jointly spent tens of billions of yen to promote nuclear power plants in 2010. With this money (originally from public electric bills) they hired famous celebrities and artists for PR (Satake, 2011). They also received huge advertising fees from affiliated companies, including the top three companies that support the nuclear power industry: Hitachi Ltd., Toshiba

Corporation, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd.

Becoming an advertising client prevents media, such as newspapers and private TV stations, from broadcasting content that portrays a bad image of nuclear power generation. The advertising rate is paid using the public's electric bills. Most media depend on advertising revenue for their management base, so advertising clients are influential. For instance, the actor Taro Yamamoto was pulled out of a program because he voiced opposition against nuclear power generation (Honma, 2012). Also, Toshiba EMI, whose parent company is Toshiba, a maker of a nuclear power reactor, ceased the release of the CD "Covers" by RC Succession because it included songs such as "Summertime Blues" and "Love Me Tender," which have anti-nuclear lyrics. In addition, the scholar Hiroaki Koide from Kyoto University and the writer Takashi Hirose do not appear in the mass media.

We should improve the structure of mass media, which offers favorable coverage in support of nuclear power generation, in exchange for the advertising rate from electronic power companies and companies related to nuclear power generation.

6. Relationship between academic scholars and the nuclear power industry

The relationship between academic scholars and the nuclear power industry is a problem. Japan Atomic Energy Relations Organization (1991) is an important report about the advertisement to increase support of nuclear power plants: "When we continue to praise an ugly woman, she becomes beautiful. The nuclear power is beautiful, so we should make an effort to highlight its beauty and charm genuinely." A prominent social psychologist is a member of the committee. As another example, a scholar plays an important role in the evaluation of internal exposure of radioactive materials.

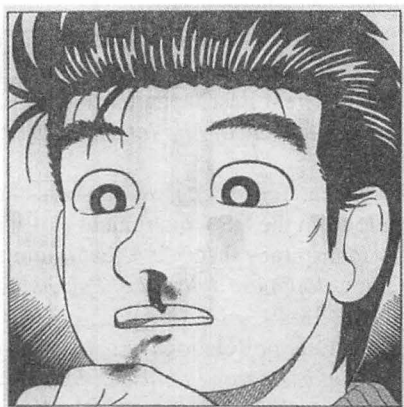
7. Conflicts over the depiction of a nose bleeding in "Oishinbo"

The popular manga series Oishinbo (appearing in *Big Comic Spirits*, a Japanese comic magazine) came under fire after the cartoonist, Tetsu Kariya, drew a picture that deals with the issue of nuclear power accidents, the resurgence of Fukushima Prefecture, and health problems through the image of a man whose nose is bleeding in its May issue in 2014. In this problem, both local government and politicians play an important role. Regarding internal exposure to radio activity, some scholars insist that it causes little harm, while others claim that internal exposure is more harmful than external exposure. We should not stick to one view, but



each of us needs to judge the problem after considering various opinions from those who are in a variety of positions.

In order to judge the problem critically, we should know that the bias described above currently exists in the mass media. With this understanding, the ability to seek for both conflicting facts and opinions is one of the important aspects of media literacy. Media literacy may be regarded as the ability to interpret the given information from the mass media critically. However, true media literacy includes the ability to detect what is not reported.



Testu Kariya 2014 "Oishinbo" The 604th Episode
Truth of Fukushima 22

8. Ways of thinking in media literacy

Suzuki (2004) explains basic concepts of media in terms of the following eight perspectives:

(1) All the media coverage is edited.

All the media coverage, including documentaries, are works edited and created with some intention. While movies and manuscripts do not reveal reality, we need to regard media coverage as works or artifacts made by TV stations, production companies, newspaper publishers, and journalists with a particular motive in mind.

(2) Media constructs reality.

When the public watch the news, the reported events become social reality even if they are false and speculated information. For example, Michael Jackson confessed that he suffered from a change of skin color because of a skin disease called vitiligo vulgaris. Despite this fact, the media broadcasted that Michael bleached his skin because he wanted to be white in a gossip column or a tabloid show. This image became shared knowledge of the public and remained as their shared memory. In another case, when the Imperial General Headquarters broadcasted false news that the country

was winning a war, people were convinced that it was the truth.

(3) Audience interpret media coverage and construct meaning.

Works do not have a straight impact on an audience. Audiences construct interpretation and meaning, including an evaluation of the credibility of the media coverage, on their own. Even if the audience misinterprets facts, the media coverage becomes reality for the audience. While some did not believe the Imperial General Headquarters announcement, they were the minority and were persecuted once they were found. Thus, in this case, "reality," which was shared as a fantasy, did not change easily.

(4) Media has commercial meaning.

Newspaper companies and broadcasting stations are private companies. NHK is regarded as a public broadcasting station. It says, "We do not intend to have commercial gain. We are independent from state control and broadcast for the public welfare." However, they use outside production companies. Animation "Hanakappa," broadcasted in E-television, is produced by a production committee, which includes a private company. It is also supported by a publishing company and a movie company. NHK has a vested interest in the rights regarding the use of animation for movies and picture books as well as copyright fees. NHK claims that they are a public broadcasting station with a conflict of interest with private companies.

(5) Media conveys a point of view (ideology) and a sense of value.

Political and economic authorities tend to force their ideologies and values on the public in order to maintain their system. They have a strong motivation to manipulate public opinion and control information. Once they succeed in doing so, dominant ideology becomes ideology by dominators. The mass media serves as a mediator, and thus they tend to be governed by political power.

(6) Media has social and political meaning.

Mass media plays a role in information control and manipulation of public opinion in order to maintain their system. This is shown by the fact that the results of opinion polls regarding political matters are different depending on the political position of the newspaper companies. On the other hand, the media have played an active role in terms of democratic rights, opposition to war, and protection of human rights in history. Media is influenced by politics but, at the same time, it transforms politics.



(7) Media has its unique pattern, artistic quality, techniques, and rules (conventions).

McLuhan said, "The medium is the message." The ways of conveying messages are different depending on the kinds of media such as newspapers, TVs, radios, and the Internet. In addition, whether the medium focuses on news or entertainment changes the means of expression. Therefore, it is important to know media grammar, which is a problem in a macro-level perspective of media literacy.

(8) Reading the media coverage critically increases creativity and promotes communication in a variety of ways.

News reports and documentary programs do not broadcast reality without editing. TV programmers construct works, public audiences interpret the works, and social phenomena in real society are constructed. Audiences should be concerned that important facts may not be broadcasted, and therefore, take the time to investigate the issue voluntarily.

Ito & Ohtaka (2011) stresses the importance of media literacy at not only micro levels but also at macro levels in this society. It is imperative for us to notice the bias of mass media and try to acquire alternative facts and opinions to judge this world.

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