

# **MASS MEDIA IN PHILIPPINES**

## **Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ**

Philippines in the plural because the country is formed by 7107 big and small, inhabited and uninhabited islands. There are social and economic disparities; cultural and linguistic differences as well as civic and political problems in the country. Still Filipinos and Pinoy identified as Filipinos are considered as the happiest people in the world.

During my week-long stay in Philippines I attended a three-day long World Media Congress (WMC) of the International Christian Organization of Media (ICOM) from Oct. 9 to 12, 2016. ICOM organized WMC in collaboration with New City Press, Manila, Philippines and Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA). My interest here is to try to know the situation of the mass media especially the print media in Philippines. The Philippines media people claim to have the freest mass media in the world. Of course, they have problems of untrained journalists not doing professional job.

Then, the journalists in small towns and interior places face not only threats but even death in bringing to light the truth against the injustice and other human right violations by the wealthy and powerful law breakers.

According to a survey of 2011 there are 42 newspapers in Philippines in English, Tagalog and other languages. Of these only 15 news papers are produced as broadsheets and others as tabloids. A few newspapers are published in Tagalog a mixture of English and Tagalog. I have been reading two daily newspapers at Manila. Among them I have learnt that the Sun Star with 12 editions for as many cities is the biggest newspaper in Philippines. But the Philippines Daily Inquirer in English from Manila is considered the most important newspaper in the country.

But the tabloid size small newspapers in Tagalog and other local, regional languages are most popular with ordinary people; because they are cheap. Metro Manila alone has 19 tabloids. They are published in vernacular languages for the benefit of common people. A few of them are published in Tagalog, a combination of Tagalog and English. Many people in Philippines mix their mother tongue with English in daily conversational language. Both in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers give more than 50% of its coverage for news and articles of news analysis related to politics and governance. City news, regional news, sports and entertainment news follow in that order.

Philippines mass media is considered powerful as they play important role in shaping the public opinion. News casters and talk show hosts have been elected to high political

offices as they have been powerful and influential persons in shaping public opinions. For instance, a popular newscaster Noli de Castro of ABS-CBN was elected Vice President of Philippines in 2004. Similarly a Filipino action star Joseph Ejercito Estrada was elected President in 2008.

Radio has been very popular in Philippines with about 85 percentage of household having a radio set. Radio is said to reach far and wide in all the populated islands of Philippines. All taxis and cars have also radio fitted. Like in India and some other parts of the world journalism is considered dangerous profession as many journalists are targets for attacks and even face death. Journalists in small towns are more vulnerable as their true, probing and critical stories may sting politicians and powerful clans and they have no support groups and legal assistance as their counter parts in cities like Manila.

Contentwise, newspapers in Philippines cover a wide range of news and views and entertainment. But national and regional politics dominate the news and views. The readership seems to be on the decline. Fr. Sigmund Guzman in Jesuit Residence where I stayed in Metro Manila told me, "Fr. Varghese, I do not buy many city newspapers; because not many read all the newspapers."

I visited the fabulous library of Xavier School with more than 5000 students. The large and spacious library displayed a good many newspapers in English, Tagalong and Tagalish. I was pleasantly surprised to see that fabulous library has books in Sanskrit and Hindi and also books on all Indian religions apart from Christianity. Though the school is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. I saw that the library was open on week-end and there were good many students doing personal studies; and some engaged in group discussion or studies.

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