



## **MEDIA SCENARIO IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW**

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### **Preamble**

The Constitution of India has guaranteed the freedom of speech and expression to all citizens including the media professionals. In the post-independence era, the media institutions have grown in a commendable way in India. The press in India played a historical role during the national freedom movement. It also played a responsible role during emergency (1975-77) and post-emergency periods and sustained the democracy and freedom of speech and expression. “There is a close association between modern India’s struggle for political and social emancipation from imperialist thralldom and oppression. There is also a rich historical legacy, cultural diversity and social pluralism in the Indian press. The Indian media tradition also reflects sharp ideological and political differences” writes Ram (2011:169). An attempt is made to provide an overview of media scenario in India which has emerged as a media super power over a period of time.

### **PRINT MEDIA IN INDIA**

Print media have grown well in India as the voice of the people before and after independence. The news publishing business has become one of constant updating, of monitoring, distilling and repacking information, observes Shyam Parekh, editor of DNA, Ahmadabad. The independence of India's press has been bolstered by the liberal government economic policy and the increase of private-sector advertising. The controls on the distribution of newsprint could also be used to reward favored publications and threaten those that fell into disfavor.

The newspaper sale in the country has increased by 15% in 2014 according to Audit Bureau of Circulation. India is also recognized as one of the largest markets in the world of newspapers followed by China and Japan. Manjula Rajagopal, associate editor of Dinamalar observed that print media business boomed in India due to economic liberalization. The commendable growth of language press in the 1990s was termed by Jeffrey (2000:04) as ‘Indian newspaper revolution’.

Aggrawal and Gupta (2001:01) write: “The rapid technological changes, which the print media is adapting to survive, has brought about far – reaching changes in the contemporary media scenario. The leading newspapers are taking to online journalism in a big way. Several leading print media organizations have been developing comprehensive websites of their own, which regularly cover interviews, chat shows, business and economy news, lifestyles and entertainment”.

Ninan (2007:07) observes: “Hindi newspapers, harbingers of nationalism at the turn of the century, had witnessed more material change by the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century. They busted with contour supplement and marketing coupons even as they brought politics, sports and news to rural and urban homes”. The Indian print media grew considerably in the new era because of the entry of local market forces into print media in India. Besides this, India and China are regarded as ‘the world absolute leaders in the newspaper industry according to WPT (2009). The Government of India allowed 26% of Foreign Direct Investment in 2002 in accordance with the policy of



economic liberalization. The National Readership Survey (2006) reported that there were an estimated 204 million readers of daily newspapers and 222 million readers of all publications in India.

The print media are challenged by the TV, online and mobile. Indian media industry is expected to cross US\$ 200 billion by 2015 according to the analysts. The global financial crisis and economic slowdown of the previous decade have adversely affected the print media in India and other parts of the world. The advertising revenue has also gone down subsequently. The print media circulation and readership have also declined in India due to broadcasting media and new media domination. The Indian print business continues heavily to subsidize digital journalism which has put pressure on newspaper circulation, readership and business. The culture of Indian journalism is also changing due to the entry of international companies and competitive media business management. The newspapers and magazines are capable of providing in depth coverage of issues concerning the public interests when compared to television, Internet and commercial media.

S.V. Manjappa (2014:06) states: “But, the logic of capitalism has driven newspaper expansion as a potential readership according to media critics. The Press Council of India has taken serious note of certain unhealthy practices of Indian press such as concentration of ownership, devaluation of editorial functions, hyper-commercialization, price wars, paid news, private treaties with corporate, bribe-taking and downgrading the professional ethics and social obligations. The champions of social responsibility of press have called upon the press to function responsibly in India under the changed circumstances”.

Ram (2000:08) observes: “The idea that information, and specifically the news media, can play a substantive and even a crucial role in the formation of public opinion in society and in shaping public policy on major social, political and economic issues is an appealing one in intellectual and socio-political terms. The discovery that on vital matters such as mass hunger, deprivation, and a sudden collapse of entitlements, timely and relevant information makes a qualitative difference to the way public opinion is shaped and official policy is made to respond is somewhat flattering to the self-image of professional journalism. In a sense, it begs a much larger question. It depends on the kind of independent, or relatively independent, role that newspapers and other news media are allowed to play in society; and this in turn depends on the political system and practice, the constitutional and legal safeguards and the information cultures that prevail in the country in question. Under ideal circumstances, the purpose and tendency of press reporting, criticism, investigation, and even watchdogism may be to improve the government or reform the system”.

### **ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN INDIA**

Radio broadcasting began in India in 1927. The Indian Broadcasting Service was established in 1936. All India Radio has emerged as the largest broadcasting network in the world. The Indian broadcasters have used certain hybrid models which govern the economics of radio. The subscription, exterior business financing, commercial sponsorship and direct advertising models are all market based or consumer dependent models, because the amount of income generated with these models is directly dependent on the quantity and quality of program consumers. Tax funding, license fees, exterior private financing and voluntary listener sponsorship are non-market or non-consumer dependent models, because the amount of income is not directly dependent on the quantity and quality of program consumption. In contrast to television, radio as a mass medium remains a state monopoly in India.

The Indian Media Scenario March (2011) observes that FM radio is poised for an exponential growth in India. There are around 250 FM stations broadcasting now and in the next phase, 1100 more are expected to be licensed, most of them private according to this source. In the urban areas, FM stations are more popular through film and other popular music programmes. Radio City, Radio Mirchi, Big FM, Red FM and other radio channels have attracted the attention of the people in the urban areas.



Public and private radios are catering to the needs of special audience in India. Modern radio takes many forms, including wireless networks and mobile communications of all types, as well as radio broadcasting. Before the advent of television, commercial radio broadcasts included not only news and music, but dramas, comedies, variety shows, and many other forms of entertainment. The community radio stations are generally less expensive to operate programming than commercial and public stations which have the potential reach of the programming from community stations.

The radio and television networks are very well developed in India especially in the post-independence era. All India Radio is the largest radio network in the world. Doordarshan is the second largest television network in the world. All India Radio and Doordarshan are owned, managed and controlled by the Prasar Bharathi Corporation. The private radio and television channels are giving tough competition to the All India Radio and Doordarshan. The public and private radio and television networks and operations are complimented by the application of innovative broadcasting technologies and progressive techniques of broadcasting media management in India in the age of globalization. Doordarshan has emerged as the largest terrestrial television network in the world. There are about 1000 foreign and domestic television channels which are competing with Doordarshan in India. In India, television has emerged as the prominent medium of mass communication.

As of now, there are 413 radio centers in India which cover 92% of geographical areas and 99.19% of the population in the country. The radio programmes are broadcast in about 23 major languages and 146 native languages. There are about 400 F.M radio stations which are operating in the country. The number is likely to cross 1000 in the near future according to Media Scenario March (2014). In India there are about 1000 television channels (both foreign and domestic) which provide prominently infotainment and edutainment programmes which are governed by the economics of broadcasting according to the annual report of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (2014).

The television in India is also targeting the specific segments of the audience, in particular, young adults. The urban, middle to upper class youth, especially, constitute a key target group for private channels. According to the recent statistics, Doordarshan network consists of 64 Doordarshan Kendras/Production Centers, 24 Regional News Units, 126 Doordarshan Maintenance Centers, 202 High Power transmitters, 828 Low Power Transmitters, 351 Very Low Power Transmitters, 18 Transposes, 30 Channels and DTH Services according to the latest statistics. In the age of globalization, there was worldwide surge of commercial television. The emergence of satellite and cable distribution of programming has dramatically increased the number of channels available in India.

The broadcasting system has been reformed over a period of time on the basis of the reports submitted by various committees. The Government of India enacted the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990. The Government of India liberalized the broadcasting policy since it viewed media as one of the many sectors like steel, textile, coal and iron which indicated the influence of globalization and neo-liberalism on media. The Sen Gupta Committee submitted its report in 1996 and suggested that the creation of Radio and Television Authority of India as an independent body outside the purview of Prasar Bharathi Corporation. The committees also suggested the extension of up linking facilities to domestic and foreign satellite channels and bring them under the purview of Indian laws. Subsequently, All India Radio and Doordarshan were brought under the Prasar Bharathi Corporation in 1997 when S. Jaipal Reddy was the Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

The historical Supreme Courts' judgment of 1995 also paved the way for remarkable management of broadcasting services in India. The Supreme Court observed that the airways should not be the monopoly of anybody in a democratic country like India. This judgment led to the creation of an autonomous body for the management of All India Radio and Doordarshan. The satellite television has grown remarkably in India and other parts of the developing world. In 2013, television households in India were about 150 million, with 120 million served by



cable and 30 million by direct-to-home television according to the estimates of TAM. The entry of multi-channel private satellite television without any regulatory framework in place has certainly made a major difference to the media landscape, observes Ram (2011:09).

The invasion of sky by the satellite television also compelled certain major policy changes in the electronic media management in India. The Government of India liberalized the broadcasting and allowed the broadcasters irrespective of their ownership and management to uplink from India with a condition that they must abide by the norms and guidelines of government on advertising and broadcasting services. There was no restriction on foreign equity in production of software, marketing of television rights, airtime and advertisements. In 2005, about 58 companies were enabled to uplink 68 TV channels with varying degree of foreign equity and remaining 41 companies were permitted to uplink 93 TV channels which had 100% Indian equity.

Bhatia (2002:03) writes: “The rapid expansion of the television services has provided more entertainment and advertisement services. In the 1980s, television became a quasi-commercial medium and commercialization of Indian broadcasting increased after globalization. The Nehru – Sarabhai approach of tapping the communication revolution in general and television in particular, as a major tool for the development of the masses had been ignored. The entry of foreign satellite channels eroded whatever little the national electronic media had been doing for socio-economic development in spite of the pressures of commercialization. The marketization has changed the content and role of television from development to entertainment – oriented. Globalization has further pushed the culture of consumerism with television being the main carrier of consumer capitalism around the world”. The global media conglomerates have shown interest in Indian broadcasting market and launched regional television news channels. These developments have brought about an era of competitive broadcasting in India despite certain disadvantages.

## **FILM IN INDIA**

India emerged as a prominent film making country in the world. Statistically speaking, India produces largest number of newsreels, documentaries and feature films in the world. Since beginning, the cinema has been a profit-oriented business enterprise in India. As the film industry gained new dimensions, the producers came in large number and produced commercial films on the basis of box office economics. Vilanilan records: “How the movies contributed to the democratization of communication in society is evident from the fact that all over the world it is the most common and economical entertainment for ordinary people”.

The films are the most effective means of communication which give something for everyone. Lenin, the architect of October Revolution in Russia had immense faith in cinema as a social communication medium. He rightly believed that cinema could play a major role as catalyst in shaping the society. The Eastern European countries were also greatly influenced by the power of cinema and established film institutions to train the people in the art and the craft of film making.

Basu (2005:02) recalls: “With black market and corruption abounding in the country, businessman began to think in terms of easy money and quick returns. The inflationary war boom has been greatest encouragement for all and sundry to enter the various branches of the film industry in India”. The Hollywood also gained a foothold in India with special effects films such as Jurassic Park (1993) and Speed (1994) which were appreciated by the Indian audiences. The Bollywood continued to be formulaic story lines, expertly choreographed fight scenes, spectacular song and dance routines, emotion-charged melodrama, and larger-than-life heroes in the world.

The Government of India established the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in order to promote healthy film culture and production in India. Subsidized financial assistance was given to the producers of new wave cinema in India. A good number of award winning new wave films were produced by the talented and committed Indian film makers. Thoraval (2000:10) states: “India is one of the rare examples of a non-western



country where cinema was not simply confined to metropolis but penetrated to rural areas as well. The Indian public both in the cities and countryside consists of some of the most avid enthusiastic moviegoers to be found in the world". The adventurous and enterprising film makers also explored the foreign market.

Kohli (2006:05) pointed out that Indian films attracted the Indian Diaspora and earned adequate foreign exchange rates than the previous years. The Indian films earned more revenue from overseas than in India in the age of globalization. The Indian film industry witnessed several changes in the age of economic liberalization. It lost its audience to the video clubs and video theatres. The invasion of Indian sky by the satellite television also adversely affected the business prospects of Indian film industry.

Kohli (2006:05) further states: "Till the mid 80s, films had for worse – a captive audience. After the decline of Amitabh Bachchan, there was no other major star on the horizon that could attract both financiers and audiences. Video and cable TV cut the time a film had to recover its most in the theatres-to less than half. The cost of film production became very high under by 1993, this figure had gone up to 30-50 million. As viewers started hooked to soaps, there was no need to spend a lot of money on films. The satellite channels began buying under production rights or libraries. These developments, combined with alterations in policy, finally forced some structural changes in the film industry". The digital technology, multiplex and PRV theatres also sprung up in metros and motivated the audience to see a good number of Bollywood and regional films.

The recent entertainment tax policy of the government has also enabled the multiplexes to make about 70% gross margins. If multiplexes are changing film viewing patterns in the cities, the digital theatres are changing them in smaller towns and rural areas. This has added a pan-Indian flavor to the changes sweeping across film retail in India. The digital technology and digital theatre have added new dimension to film industry in India. The home video market also grew considerably in India since the prices of home video rights range from Rs.0.5 million to Rs.10 million.

## **NEW MEDIA IN INDIA**

The telecommunication, satellite communication and computer communication technological applications constitute the gamut of 'new media' in modern society. India also achieved commendable progress in the field of communication science and technology. The new media have been rightly considered as the instruments of development by the scholars. The Government of India has formulated the new media policy to facilitate expansion, decentralization and democratization of new media in the Indian Republic. The policy makers have realized that active participation of underprivileged, marginalized, underserved and under-represented segments of society, including women and weaker sections is very crucial from the point of view of inclusive development. India is heading in the right direction with the development of new media in modern society. Modern government and non-government organizations have utilized the new media for developmental endeavors in all spheres of human life.

The liberalization of Indian economy in 1991 under the dynamic leadership of P.V.Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh duo brought about remarkable economic growth of over 6% annually during 1993-2002. The economic reforms were driven in part by significant application of new media in India. The National Democratic Alliance Government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee boosted the development of new media in India. The Government formed the Indian National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development in 1996. India achieved series of developments in the fields of telecommunication, satellite communication and computer communication by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The BSNL, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Communications, Vodafone and other organizations became the prominent institutions which played a crucial role in the telecom revolution in India.



S.V. Manjappa (2014:06) states: “The basis of the information revolution in India is the technological revolution in telecommunications, computers and electronic media. There has been a convergence of technologies relating to different areas of communication such as telephone, telegraph, radio, TV, Internet and data networks. The process of globalization has facilitated greater potential benefit of information and communication technologies. India has become an information/ data processing service provider to the world. In India, telecommunication has become a substitute for transport as the information collection role of transport is minimized due to information flows which are efficient and cost effective. The technological advances have made possible the unbundling of telecom services in India”. The market based approach has been accepted and implemented in India which is known for investment de-licensing and free entry, rational pricing of natural resource, regulation of queasy natural monopoly elements and tax and subsidy for social objectives.

The emergence of cable TV and wireless technology has brought about the natural monopoly position which has urban and rural utility. The government has complete authority over all physical channels of communication including television and radio broadcast. The social concerns are met through a cross tax subsidy scheme. There is no economic rationale for any license fees and charges on account of full cost pricing of all telecom services in India. India has become a prominent nation in the world for the development and application of new communication technologies which have become effective instruments of education and development. Eminent communication scholars and scientists have prepared grounds for the conduction of new media experiments in the country.

India is in the forefront in the field of new media management in the world and conducted several experiments in the field of application of new media for various developmental endeavours during the last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the present times, the social media have also become prominent tools of multi-faceted development of the country on the basis of interactive and democratized communication in urban and rural areas. The communication and information specialists have adopted the best strategies for the effective management of new media for various developmental activities in the age of globalization.

### **MEDIA SCENARIO IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

India Has experienced the bright side and dark sides of globalization from economic development and media management points of view. India has also emerged as a prominent media power in the world over a period of time. The culture of Indian media is also changing due to several factors including media imperialism of dominant powers which rule the roost in the media and economic sectors. The media industry has undergone sweeping changes in India in the age of globalization. The sovereignty of the nation and autonomy of the media are affected by the neo-colonial forces which own, control and direct the media which have become the main carrier’s consumer capitalism in India and abroad. The Indian corporate sector has primarily depended on corporate advertising and communication practices to generate income and build reputation in the present times. The reckless liberalization of economy and ruthless media imperialism has created a new consumerist society in India over a period of time. The globalization of media in India poses a wide range of questions which need to be answered by the stakeholders of national development.

### **CONCLUSION**

The media in India have become more and more class self-conscious and displayed the sense of profit maximization which has cost national interest dearly. The power of media as watch dogs of public interest has certainly gone down greatly in India in the age of globalization. The ascendancy of a new kind of globalization of finance has made the process of media management vulnerable. The media institutions have become tools of intellectual hegemony imposed by the market forces which exercise media power in relation to economic issues and compulsions. Under these circumstances, the state should design professionally sound and socially accountable regulatory and governance mechanisms for media management which need to be put in place in the modern times in India.



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