

**AUTONOMY OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN INDIA :
PROBLEMS AND ISSUES**

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "AUTONOMY OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN INDIA : PROBLEMS AND ISSUES" submitted by Ms. ABHA RANJAN in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. To the best of our knowledge, this is a bonafide work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Abha Ranjan .
ABHA RANJAN

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the heart of all social intercourse. The importance of communication is fundamental more so as a result of the tremendous strides taken by science and technology. Mass communication especially electronic media in the satellite era offers all peoples the possibility of simultaneously witnessing the same events, enhancing all information, understanding one another better not withstanding their specific features, and valuing each other while acknowledging their differences.

The information media can contribute to commanding respect in all quarters for human beings as individuals, with all the manifold differences they display, and to winning acceptance of the aspirations common to all people. They can also foster uninterrupted dialogue between communities, cultures and individuals, in a bid to promote equality of opportunities and two way exchanges. This presupposes, first, that information in all fields should go unfettered. But we shall never cease to affirm that such freedom cannot be fully effective until it becomes autonomous.

Janta and National front government in 1977 and 1989 devoted its efforts to bring in about such conditions and directed its energy towards making electronic media autonomous.

It is chiefly over the last three decades, however, that the government have realised the importance of free flow of ideas prompting for a free and autonomous electronic media. The progress is slow and infested with a number of flows and problems.

Concepts as "freedom of information" "free flow of information", "balanced flow of information" and "free access to the media" are the natural outgrowth of the basic principle of freedom of speech and expression and opinion. If that freedom is an individual right, freedom of information has both individual and collective aspects, taking on a broader character by virtue of the diversification and extension of the means of mass communication. The transposition of freedom of expression to the realm of modern communication structures inevitably sets new questions and raises new problems.

Progress towards the universal federation of Human rights which states : "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression ; which includes freedom to hold opinions without any reference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers", has certainly been achieved in the developed countries of the world. Nevertheless, in some countries including India it has been halting and intermittent and sometimes even thwarted by retrogressive

autocratic measures or increasing monopolistic trends. It must be emphasised that if people have more possibilities to receive information, the same is not true for the other main components implied in freedom of information. Two of them - the right "to seek" and "to impart" information - have been widely and frequently neglected over emphasis on the "right to receive information results mainly from the very nature of present day societies, reflected in media structures. This unilateral approach has distorted the issues, and in many instances, reduces the whole problem of free flow to defending the media from official restrictions.

The range of obstacles to the free flow of information to the public is infinite ; their nature and gravity. According to recent reports and analytical assessments these obstacles can be classified into the categories : (i) "evident" obstacles, carbs and pressures; "non evident" obstacles and impediments for example.

Some barriers to freedom of information are easy to recognise. Among these are physical violence and intimidation ; repressive legislation ; censorship ; monopolies established by political action ; bureaucratic obstruction ; judicial obstruction such as closed hearing and contempt of court rules ; parliamentary privileges ; and restrictive professional practices. But the absence of these blatant obstacles does not always mean that full

freedom of information exists. Other obstacles include economic and social constraints and pressures, defacto monopolies (public, private, or transnational); inadequate infrastructure; narrow definitions of what is news, what should be debated; and shortage of professional training and experience.

Major demand for granting autonomy to electronic media arises due to governments exercise of rigid control over media, over the diffusion of news and the licensing of those permitted to exercise profession.

The obstacles to and restriction on the free flow of information are not set up by only public authorities. They also arise in areas where there are private or public monopolies, concentration of media ownership and formation of conglomerates when the public has only a single source of news, or where various sources have the same general orientation, it is the monopolistic who is in position to decide what facts will or will not be presented. What opinions will or not be conveyed. Even if the owner of monopoly does not abuse his power, no single outlet can present the amount and range of news that multiple sources make possible. Concentration of ownership can produce the same obstructions and trends to a standardization of reporting, editing and presentation that is a limiting factor on the type of news that reaches the public.

Some ethnic and linguistic minorities suffer from a restricted flow of information because the established channels do not supply it in a form that meets their needs and take account of their cultural traditions. This may be the result of overcentralization, of domination of the media by majority groups, of neglect and indifference, or of a lack of suitable professional manpower. People living in remote areas are also likely to be under - informed, because of the inadequacy of communication facilities.

Thus free flow of information provides the most important argument for granting autonomy of electronic media. It is imperative to remove the flows of communication for better democracy because "obstacles to freedom and distortions of democracy are dangerous symptoms in every society . It is sometimes argued that such criticism constitutes an interference in the legal or political affairs of nations, or in the natural possess of private enterprise, but such abuses of state power or monopolistic practices are still serious impediments to the free flow of information. Certainly, there is a margin in almost all systems to improve the existing situation and decrease restrictive measures to a minimum. There are ways, means and forces in each society to overcome and eliminate restrictions on the freedom of information. what is basically needed is political will".

Importance of electronic media in the last three decades has increased due to growing awareness of the role they are called to play, particularly in the development of a developing country like India.

If communication is considered in its broadcast sense not only as an exchange of news and messages and free flow of information but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmission and sharing of ideas, facts and data, its main functions in any social system may be identified as the following:

Information : the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, data, pictures, facts and messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decision.

Socialization : the provision of a common fund of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of the society in which they live and which fosters social cohesion and awareness thereby permitting active involvement in public life.

Motivation : The promotion of the immediate and ultimate aims of each society, and the stimulation of personal choices, and aspirations, the fostering of

individual or community activities, geared to the pursuit of agreed aims.

Debate and discussion : the provision and exchange of facts needed to facilitate agreement or to clarify differing viewpoints on public issues, the supply of relevant evidence needed to foster greater popular interest and involvement in all local, national and international matters of common concern.

Education: the transmission of knowledge as to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of skills and capacities at all stages of life.

Cultural promotion : the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past ; the development of culture by widening the individual's horizons, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity.

Entertainment : the diffusion, through signs, symbols, sound and images, of drama, dance, art, literature, music comedy, sports, games, etc. for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment.

Integration : the provision to all persons, groups

and nations to access to the variety of messages which they need in order to know and understand each other and to appreciate others living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations.

Besides these functions which are seen essentially from the individual's standpoint, emphasis should also be laid on a new phenomenon, or at least one whose importance is rapidly increasing : communication has become a vital need for collective entities and communities. Societies as a whole cannot survive today if they are not properly informed about political affairs, international and local events, or weather conditions, etc. Government also need varied information from all corners of their respective countries as well as from every quarter of the earth, concerning trends in population growth, development of the country etc. to plan dynamically for the future. The armed services, political parties, airline companies, universities, research institutes and all kind of other bodies could not function today without daily, efficient information exchanges.

To provide such varied functions the electronic media must be free and autonomous in nature. Information is easily corrupted into the dissemination of half-truths and even falsehoods: persuasion into manipulation and propaganda. The danger of misinformation is increased by institutionalised communication which often serves to

inform, to control, or to manipulate citizens.

There is a close relationship between communication passed through electronic media and politics. It's a two way process which means politics influence communication and communication influence politics. But the degree varies. The crucial relationships are those between communication and power, and between communication and freedom.

The presence or absence of freedom of expression is one of the most reliable indications of freedom in all its aspects in any nation. By keeping electronic media under government's monopolistic control, freedom is trampled upon and violated by bureaucratic or commercial censorship and by enforcement of uniformity. The fact that there is said to be freedom of expression in a country does not guarantee its existence in practice. The simultaneous existence of other freedoms "freedom of associations, freedom of trade unions" are all essential components of man's right to communication any obstacle to these freedoms results in suppression of freedom of expression.

Thus the whole argument for granting autonomy to electronic media is inevitably political," because anxieties, the aims and the arguments have a primarily political character. Nothing is gained by concealing the real nature of problems, nor by failing to recognize the

threats to the status quo "If we are to reach practical and realistic solutions, we must take out electronic media from the control of government and provide free access to media.

Initiative and progress towards this direction in India gained momentum only in the last two decades with chanda committee Report, Joshi working committee report, verghese report and Prasar Bharati Bill.

The very idea of an autonomous electronic media has arrived much later in India as compared to the developed countries of the world for e.g. Britain, America, Ireland, Australia, Finland etc.* A considerable body of literature and research is devoted to the functioning and problems of autonomous electronic media in these countries. However, the works of members of Chanda committee, Verghese committee, Joshi working group provides milestone for the subject. Every new committee was a development on the later committee.

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1. Busby Linda J; Broadcasting Regulatory policy ; the managerial view; Journal of Broadcasting - 1979.
 2. McIntyre ; Pursuit of Excellence in broadcasting - Listener. Dec. 1989.
 3. Wober (J. Mallory) and Gunter (Barrie) Television audience research at Britains Independent Broadcasting authority - 1974 - 84 . Journal of Broadcasting and electronic media - 1986.

It is basically to make Indian electronic media autonomous in nature not necessarily on the British pattern nevertheless on the same model within Indian socio-cultural context.

This dissertation intends to analyse the problems raised by Prasar Bharati Bill with reference to political, financial and administrative questions. It also deals with the importance that should be given to eliminating imbalance and disparities in communication and its structures and particularly in information flows.

To deal with various obstacles in demoncratization process this dissertation has been divided into three chapters. Chapter I of this dissertation unfolds the historical evolution of the concept of autonomy of electronic media in India. A historical methodology has been followed to gather material for evaluation of historical evolution of concept of automonmy in communication in the Indian Prime Minister, Jawharlal Nehru who showed reluctance to make electronic media autonomous on the model of British Broadcasting corporatiion. Nevertheless his speech is a land mark because it contains the seeds for an autonomous electronic media which could be conferred later when the time was ripe. The chapter futher critically analyses the recommendations of Chanda committee report, verghese committee Report, Joshi wroking groups

report.

Chapter II deals with the problems - administrative, financial, language and regional disparities. It also refers to Sarkaria commission report. The Chapter not only deals with various obstacles but also provides solution which have evolved through various workshops, debates and discussion.

Chapter III shifts the attention to a new working culture under internal autonomy. A survey methodology was applied , with the help of interview technique to apprehend the perception of workers, officials of AIR and Doordarshan on the question of "autonomy of electronic media", the problems faced by them in a government controlled media and a whole range of other questions. The survey showed that the workers and officials of AIR and Doordarshan are optimistic about governments intention which will lead to better access to the media, both individual and collective.

Times of India -A national Colloquium for "autonomy of electronic media" - Jan 5th 1990.

WHY AUTONOMY - THE DIVERGENT VIEWS

The ownership and control of electronic media has been a matter of controversy. Since independence several committees were established to look into the issue from time to time, the nature of their recommendations given by these committees will be dealt later in the chapter. In the first part of the chapter, I shall be dealing with the reasons which lead to the emergence of the question of providing autonomy to the electronic media.

As in Britain, in the beginning broadcasting in India was in private hands. When the private enterprise failed the government took it over very reluctantly. But since then broadcasting has remained a government-owned monopoly.

Why is it now that the need for autonomy of the electronic media demanded vociferously? In fact 1989 general election brought this issue in the forefront with all the major parties including this issue in their election manifesto. Congress-I which was the ruling party too supported claim though it came later than the Janata Dal.

One of the important reasons which sparked off the demand by the opposition parties was the "issues of

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1. Chanda Committee Report - 1964
 2. Verghese committee Report - 1977
 3. Joshi Working Group Report - 1982

electronic media" by the ruling party. They (the opposition - Janta Dal, Dravid Muenentra Kazakam, Assam Jana Parishad etc. accused the ruling party -Congress-I of "misusing" the electronic media. In their opinion the media was biased against them and did not broadcast their point of view on the other hand it catered to the ruling party's demands and view.

Any institution or media organisation at once a product and reflection of the society and its times. Perhaps it was the perception of society that led us to opt for keeping radio as a government monopoly and entrust it with task of strengthening the fragile nature of the Indian union, reviving and nurturing our great tradition of development and nation building. Like in other sector, the state assumed a large role in communication sector as well as especially the electronic media.

However, notwithstanding the idealistic design for mass communication, the ground realities are not very satisfactory. Despite the rhetoric otherwise, the media remain largely urban oriented and elitist. Aberrations crept in though informing education and motivating the audiences for their active participation in development and nation building tasks was the main brief, the government owned media has been largely used for the building up the image of the ruling party of the day and its leaders. Also the electronic media became a convenient commercial tool for

private industries and more than anything else a source of entertainment for the urban middle class.

Today, the broadcasting is increasingly seen as an "industry" viewers and listeners are being redefined as "consumers" seeking an expansion of choice ,and programmes as "product" to be aggressively marketed through commercial, sponsorship etc.

Hence the role of electronic media changed drastically. It encompassed a wide range of activities that is from nation building to increase consumerism the present structure needed an overhaul to cater to these changing role.

Another important reason why the question of autonomy came up is growth of regional parties and their share in the formation of the government at the regional level. At the time of independence congress was the only claimant of the power at the centre and the states with exception being kerela and west Bengal. Hence the need for regional autonomy was not sharp. It is only during the course of forty years of independence that regional parties have attained an independence status which is reflected in the demand for autonomy of electronic media.

The political parties consider media as an important vehicle to express their ideas , views and programmes to the masses. Educating, in a country like india

where 48% of the masses are illiterate, is possible only by electronic media. And if this vehicle is also hijacked by the ruling party at the centre then surely the conflict between the state and the center emerges.

To achieve these information, education and motivation objectives, decentralised area specific programmes in the cultural idiom of the community are imperative. Autonomy is the first necessary condition.

Related to the demands of regional parties by regions is the demand proposed by regions for giving importance to their languages.

Thus the need is to provide autonomy to the electronic media so that regional languages could be developed. Many fear that by doing so secessionism will be perpetuated. This is wrong because once the fear of submergence of cultural identity is erased progress toward creating harmony will not be far away.

DIVERGING VIEW ON AUTONOMY OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Radio and television in particular and electronic media in general are much too powerful as instruments of conditioning the people's mind to be given the kind of "autonomy" many starry-eyed idealists seem to be dreaming of.*

* The awesome power of electronic media - Adarsh Kumar Varma

Secondly,"autonomy means different things to different men; and for the more naive ,it seems to be coterminous with "independence". Thus the whole question of providing autonomy to electronic media can be summed up into these two above view.

CONTROL OVER EXTERNAL BROADCASTING :The first view which holds that time is not opportune for providing autonomy to electronic media as it will perpetuate secessionism was held by Jawaharlal Nehru.

The awesome power of electronic media :Adarsh Kumar Verma. India is multilingual and multicultural country. Domination of one language on the electronic media alienates a majority of people . For example dividing the country into 'Hindi speaking north and 'English speaking south 'does not solve the problem .

Growing consciousness among the people and the urge to maintain separate identity,belief in historical superiority of language and endeavour to keep it alive further the need for autonomy of electronic media. The language protagonists view centralisation of electronic media against their interest. This in a sense to some extent is true. The prime time is dominated by centre in propagating its view in the name of national interest in one language either Hindi

* For Detail see chap 2

or english , depriving a large chunk of rural masses who cannot comprehend either language from getting into the 'national stream' as advocated and wished by the center. Which means that electronic media is catering only to the needs of urban middle class who have a grasp of these two languages.

With the opposition parties demanding vociferously for autonomy of electronic media and the public opinion's swing in favour of the congress too changes its rigid stand with a lot of prasar Bharati bill which on the implementation of which is a major step towards providing autonomy.

The congress wants a parliamentary committee with greater powers to scrutinise and monitor the functioning of the corporation. It believes only "Functional Autonomy for doordarshan".and wants three MP'S(two from the Lok sabha and one from Rajya sabha)to be elected by the two houses. to be on the board of the corporation.It also seeks representation for the two Director General of the electronic media on the board and reduction of the part time governor from six to three.

The whole argument of congress is based on the fact that since the electronic media is built from tax payer's money hence it's work should extend beyond 'controversial news and current affairs'.

PRIVATE LICENCE: The congress have asked for inclusion of an enabling clause by which a licence can be given to private individuals or organisation to broadcast in specific field. This, the congress considers important because with the telecommunication revolution taking place the world over, J.L. Nehru who for first time while replying to a debate on external publicity in the constituent assembly on march 15, 1948 said that "my own view of the set up for broadcasting is that we should approximate as far as possible to the British model, the BBC; that is to say, it would be better if we had a semi government corporation under the government, of course with the policy controlled by government, otherwise being not conducted as a government department but as semi autonomous corporation. Now, I do not think that is immediately feasible. I merely mentioned this to the House. I think we should aim at that, even though we may have many difficulties. Infact, in most matters we should aim at the semi autonomous corporation, the policy and other things being distantly controlled by the government, but the government or government department not interfering in day to day activities. But this is not the immediate issue."

Since then though the ruling congress party appointed committee to look in the issue of providing autonomy to the electronic media it has maintained more or less a rigid stand regarding the control of this powerful

communication media especially over external broadcasting which it claims is "sensitive and meant for specific purpose" a few years with the use of a disc or antenna, the consumer can pick up programmes of his choice. Instead of the corporation competing with western broadcasting stations, this licence (under the Indian Telecommunication Act) is expected to generate internal competition for the corporation.

The congress further objects surrendering 2000 crore infrastructure of electronic media to the prasar Bharti corporation.

The above view is endorsed by noted jurist N.A. Palkivala. He is wary of autonomy exceeding limits of responsible liberty. The important thing on which he stresses is not freedom but excellence. "Being free is not necessarily being excellent, he said adding that there was need for self restraint. He advocated judicious use of discretion, especially in dealing with the "unenforceable".

Unchecked freedom might also induce private producer to design programmes with an eye only on securing 'ratings'. Palkivala, said cautioning against productions that might undermine national integration and public morality.

The possessiveness of the electronic media should be seen in the historical perspective and the recent trends

of secessionism experienced in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Assam. The awesome power of electronic media if not harnessed properly may prove disastrous for the unity and integrity of nation. At this point one can agree with the viewpoint of N.A.Phalkivala when he says that the programmes should ideally aim at the uplift of the nation character and any opportunity to air or screen parochial feelings could jeopardise the unity of the nation. "it is better to error on the side of caution and precedence.

Left Parties:Autonomy of electronic media raises another problem that is the fiscal problem.To raise the money electronic media has to commercialise itself which means privatisation of licence and propogating consumerism which is against the socialist policy followed by the country.It is to this commercialisation and consumerism that left parties are agaist. They reject the idea of private licening as it will amount to permitting privatisation.

To curb Consumerism the left parties have demanded that a fixed time upto five percent of total broadcasting time should be reserved for commercials or advertisements.

Like congress the left parties too are not ready to give unbridled power to Prasar Bharti corporation .

They have sought representation on the board for two member of existing staff of the electronic media one to

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represent the general staff and the other artist. Representation of this kind they agree was important to reduce political interference and it is the artist which understand the real nature of programme.

From the above discussion we can see that there is no general consensus on the nature and meaning of autonomy. The meaning of a autonomy has been defined by Prasar Bharti Bill in detail to which the National front government fully agrees and it is for the fulfilment of this meaning that the National Front government is working. But firstly we shall see how the chamber twentieth century dictionary defines autonomy and then i shall proceed with the differnt interperatation of autonomy as explained in Prasar Bharti Bill.

The chamber twentieth century dictionary defines autonomy as "power right of self government.

DEFINING AUTONOMY

The chamber twentieth century dictionary defines autonomy as "power or right of self government ". But autonomy is not as simple as its defination as given above. It is a Multiface term and must be given proper attention in definging it. Verghese commettees report define autonomy in a comperhensive manner. Autonomy is not just a matter of structure or form. It is essentially a matter of

substance. Whatever may be the external form or structure given to any institution, its real character and its relationship towards other will depend on the factors which are beyond the pale of law and reflect real life situation. The degree of autonomy has not been solely dependent upon formal structures but has derived from quite other factors for e.g. Parliament, question and answer, and minister are responsible. The Comptroller and Auditor General has a say. Courts of law make pronouncement and autonomy is consequently circumscribed irrespective of the external form e.g. atomic energy commission.

MONOPOLY EVOKES RESTRAINT

Autonomy is difficult to concede in monopolistic or oligopolistic situations but easier to accord in a competitive situation. It is quite evident that where a monopoly situation exists the responsibilities of the state are enhanced since there is no yardstick for measuring performance. Public authorities have to set goals and evaluate performance. Pricing policies have to be agreed upon and marketing situations have to be controlled. The situation is different in competitive companies. Here decision making lies not with government but in the market place itself. The control which the public authority exercises is very strong.

It is within this parameter of autonomy that

setting up of an autonomous broadcasting corporation has to be seen. Since we have government controlled media the listeners of Akashvani & Dordarhan have no range of choice. Autonomy is "not a gift" that can be conferred, it must be earned. The degree of autonomy or degree of interference is very much conditional by the internal state of affairs in the autonomous body and its own credibility. Hence an autonomous broadcasting corporation can protect its autonomy by satisfying its programmes and the extent to which it is objective and fair in its news & current affair programmes. Its ability to remain autonomous and to prevent constant intervention by outside authorities will largely depend upon itself.

"Autonomy is not merely a two way relationship between one institution and another. the concept involves the management of institution itself." autonomy as understood by the common people means some kind of declaration of independence from an outside body which may seek to intervene. In this case uprooting the government hold from the corporation. But in the course of my study, I have collected enough evidence to show that it is not just autonomy of government verses Broadcasting corporation but also the producer, director and even technicians demanded autonomy in their working condition.

"Autonomy is not an condition absolute concept. It

is inextricably tied to the related concept of accountability. The definition of autonomy leads to a very pertinent question of "Autonomy for whom "and "Autonomy for what " .

In conclusion autonomy is sought from the authority which creates the organization that is the government itself and this is possible when the responsibility or accountability is shouldered by the corporation. Answering the second part , "autonomy is needed for the attainment of predetermined objective which can be evaluated and made subject to a system of accountability.

Absolute autonomy is not conceivable in the context of national planning as accepted in India. Any institution, in spite of claiming itself to be autonomous must conform to the objective and goals as determined in the national planning. This too necessitates a distinction between national development and national goals and party political goals.

Finally autonomy has to be seen in the context of the overall environment that is the broadcasting system would necessarily be influenced by the general ethos, culture and temperament of the people it serves.

Hence autonomy having a multi faced character cannot be realised by analysing just one side of it .It has to be enlarged in the wider perspective so as to sustain its unique character and better working.

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO AUTONOMY OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Tracing the History of the demand of autonomy of electronic media should not lead us beyond independence of our country that is 1947. In the undivided India there were only nine radio stations and the operation left six Akashvani stations under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. However no detailed thought seems to have been given to the structural requirement of a national broadcasting organisation.

It was for the first time while replying to a debate on external publicity in the Constituent Assembly on March 15, 1948 that Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his views on this matter.

HE SAID : "My own view of the set up for broadcasting is that we should approximate as FAR AS POSSIBLE to the British model the BBC; that is to say it would be better if we had a semi autonomous corporation under government of course with policy controlled by the government otherwise being not conducted as a government department but as a semi autonomous corporation. Now, I do not think that is feasible. I have nearly mentioned this to the House. I think we should aim at that even though we may have difficulty. In fact, in most matters we should aim at semi government corporation, the policy and other things being distantly controlled by the government department not interfering in day to day activities. But this

is not immediate issue".

On March 15, 1948 Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru said that he was in favour of boardcasting set up approximately as far as possible to the British model of BBC immediate issue ".

CHANDA COMMITTEE REPORT

When the television , which came to india on a very small scale in 1969 was showing signs of blossoming. It was when Mrs Gandhi became minister for information and boardcasting she appointed a committee on boardcasting and information media with A.K.Chanda a former Auditor General as chairman. Member of this committee were Nath pai, M.S. Gurupadaswamy, Dr. L.M. Singhvi, Smt. Kamla Choudhari, Vidhya Charan Shukla, Hussan Zaheer, Ashok Mitra, M. Chalapatai Rau and Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi. A senior Director of AIR's programme staff Miss Metra Masani was secretary of this committee.

The Chanda Committee opined. "it is not possible in the Indian Context for a creative medium like broadcasting to flourish under a regiment of departmental rules and regulations. It is only by an institutional change that AIR can be liberated from the present rigid financial and administrative procedures of Government "

The Committee recommended that separate public Corporation should be set up for Akashvani and Doordarshan to evolve new methods of recruitment, financial management, and Conditions of service suitable for special requirements of creative media.

The committee clearly pointed out that though, "theoretically it (AIR) has the freedom of a national newspaper to present objectively topics of current interest it has failed to do so mainly for two reasons. First, successive ministers have corrupted the policy making functions of the Director General and started interfering even in matters of programme planning and presentation, and second, the selection of the directing staff was so made as to ensure unquestioning compliance as a result that public image of AIR has become tarnished, its objectivity destroyed, and its initiative gradually whittled away".

These recommendations were considered by the Cabinet Readed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in December 1969, and the Parliament was told in April 1970 that the government did not think that the time was ripe for conversion of AIR into an autonomous corporation. The only change brought about was that from April 1, 1976, AIR and Doordarshan were separated as two government departments.

VERGHESE COMMITTEE AND ITS REPORT

After the March 1977 elections, the new Janta

Government declared that it would make AIR and Doordashan "genuinely autonomous", and Constituted a working group on Autonomy of Akashvani and Doordarshan on August 17, 1977 with B.G. Verghese as chairman. The members were V.S. Rajyadhyaksha, Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Chanchal Sarkar, P.L. Deshpande, Uma Shankar Joshi, A.G. Noorani, J.D. Sethi, P.L. Farnandes, C.R. Subramaniam and Dr. Ishwar Dass (Member Secretary), Mrs. Nayantara Sehgal was appointed member of this group on November 7, 1977. The working group submitted its Report to the government on febraury 24, 1978.

The Principle structure recommendations of this committee which are crystalised in the draft Akash Bharti Bill 1978, which the committee appended to its report, are as follows:

- a) The creations of a national Broadcast Trust named Akash Bharti, under which Akashvani and Doordarshan should grow.
- b) The creation of an autonomous broadcast organization, nationally owned and responsible to parliament.
- c) One corporation for both radio and television.
- d) The creation of a 12 members Board of Trustees, with the status of supreme court judges, with a chairman and three full-time trustees looking after current affairs, extension and culture, which will appoint a Controller

General of Broadcasting as the chief executive.

- e) A constitutional amendment to enable the President to appoint the chairman and trustees of the National Broadcasting Trust from a Panel submitted by a panel consisting of the chief justice of India, the Lok pal and the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission.
- f) An outright grant from the government for the National Broadcasting trust's capital budget.

For the office of the chairman, the nominating panel consisting of chief justice of india, the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission, and the Lok pal would recommend two or at the most three names out of which one would be forwarded by the Prime-Minister to the President.

The Controller General of Broadcasting, the chief Executive of the trust was to be appointed by the board of trustees. The other directors on the central executive board would look after radio (Akashvani, Doordarshan), News and current affairs, engineering, finance, personnel and audience research. The service was to be a four-tier structure-national, zonal, regional and the stations. This decentralization was to facilitate quick decision making and to deal with regional and local sensitivities.

The working group also recommended the auditing of accounts by a duly qualified company of auditors, setting up

of a licensing board for permitting other mainly educational, franchised stations to function under specified terms, and a complaint board consisting of a chairman and two other members appointed by the chief justice of India . The annual report of the trust along with the reports of the auditors, the licensing board and the complaint board was to be laid on the tables of both the Houses of parliament.

The principle legal framework of this committee recommended a draft constitutional amendment in the following term:

- a) All broadcasting shall be organized and conducted exclusively by or under the authority of an autonomous and independent public corporation acting impartially as a trustee in the public interest, referred in this constitution as Akash Bharti, the national broadcast trust.
- b) The statute made in pursuance of the constitutional provisions should expressly declare the corporation to be "a corporate citizen of the country." in the absence of a statutory declaration, the national broadcast trust will not be entitled to exercise those fundamental rights like the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, Ar(19(1) (a), which are available to citizen alone.

The committee also provided for a charter of the national broadcast trust which specified certain objectives for the NBT. These are to:

- a) Uphold the unity of the country and the democratic values enshrined in the constitution.
- b) Uphold the fundamental right guaranteed under Ar. 19(1) (a) of the constitution to freedom of speech and expression.
- c) Safeguard the citizens's right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively on all matters of public interest, national or international.
- d) Uphold the impartiality, integrity and autonomy of broadcasting in the country.
- e) Provide a national broadcasting service predominantly Indian in context and character.
- f) Promote the interest and concerns of the entire nation, being mindful of the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make up the composite culture of india.
- g) Produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awake, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people, with due regard to the fact that the national broadcast audience consists of a whole series of publics,

- h) Serve the rural, illiterate and underprivileged populations, keeping in mind the special needs and interest of the young, social and cultural minorities, the tribal populations and those residing in border regions and backward or remote areas.
- i) Stimulate and inform the national consciousness in regard to the status and problem of women.
- j) Promote social justice and combat exploitation, inequality, and such evils as untouchability and narrow parochial loyalties.
- k) Uphold the secular ideal and promote a spirit of truth and inquiry in the country among all sections of the people.
- l) Present a fair and balanced flow of information of national, regional, local, and international interest, including contrasting views, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.
- m) Help raise educational standard by supporting programmes or formal, nonformal and continuing and open learning systems.
- n) Promote the extension of new knowledge and practices as well as the transfer of technology as an aid to national development and social changes.
- o) Provide entertainment and recreation for all sections of the people and encourage all forms of cultural expression-traditional, classical modern and

international.

- p) Take special steps to protect the interests of children, the blind, the aged and others vulnerable sections of the population.
- q) Promote comprehensions and national integration by broadcasting in a manner that facilitates communication in and among all the languages of india.
- r) Seek to provide comprehensive broadcast coverage through the choice of appropriate technology and the best utilization of the broadcast frequency available, and to ensure high quality reception.

The structure of akash bharti trust is pyramidical in shape, broader at the base and tapering at the top. This has been purposely done for management and coordination of the national broadcast trust. There are four operational tiers; national zonal, regional and the stations to facilitate decision making. The regions are to be seen as tier that would need to be added as the akashvani network grew.

Explaining the structure of akash bharti broadcasting trust structure the verghese committee elaborates:

"Radio and television will operate as separate streams below the zonal apex although, even at the national level there will be two separate functional heads who will provide the specialised skills required for the proper

development of these two different media.

A central executive board consisting of the controller general of broadcasting (CGB) and 12 other directors will be responsible for implementing the policies and directions of the board of trustees. The directors will each be responsible for akashvani, doordarshan, current affairs, engineering, finance, personnel, and audience research respectively. In addition, there will be five zonal directors who would each head a zonal executive board.

The directors of akashvani and doordarshan will be the principal media heads. For other inputs such as engineering, finance, personnel, and audience research they will have to depend on the directors in charge of each of these departments. Extension policy will not be made by the national broadcast organization but editorial control will rest with it.

The director, news and current affairs will guide the central news room headed by a general manager coordinating the work of the editor akashvani, the editor doordarshan, the foreign editor, and the editor monitoring unit.

Technical personnel in akashvani and doordarshan should be interchangeable for the same reason, even on the programme side where the degree of media specialisations

admittedly has to be higher people should be able to move between television and radio so that the careers of versatile and talented broadcasting are not duly inhibited.

"We recommend the inclusion in various selection boards of our eminent outsider from out of a standing panel as an independent external expert who shall take the chair and whose concurrence should be necessary.

Auditioning boards should be set up at the zonal level under the zonal director who should be assisted by producers and eminent artists and art critics in making selections and gradings.

Internal audit should be constituted as an autonomous department under a chief internal auditor reporting to the CGB.

The officer of the director of audience research will service both akashvani and doordarshan, as well as the proposed franchise stations all audience research report should be submitted to the board of trustees for information.

"We recommended the appointments of three general managers each in charge of legal services, planning and informations service."

At each zones we recommend the establishment of a zonal executive board headed by the zonal director.

The regional controller's office should be kept small and perform a supportive and co-ordinating role, especially with regard to local stations.

The local stations should be headed by a station manager who should have no more than essential staff assisted by local and community participation.

The station manager should be responsible for organizing listening or viewing groups within the range of his transmitters.

"There should be functional advertising committee at various levels. each serviced by a small secretariat." The committee would discharge these functions to review the performance of doordarshan, to guard its functional autonomy, and to function as ombudsman in matters concerning news and current affairs. The director general should be a person appointed on contract, with a proven record of excellence in social communication as well as leadership qualities necessary for attracting and utilising creative talent. His status should not be less than the secretary to the government of India.

The group also suggested that each doordarshan kendra should have a programme advisory council comprising

members with expertise in different subjects .

Other structural changes suggested in doordarshan include' cutting the umbilical cord that keeps it tied to television from sound broadcasting in 1976". The group feels that there is no justification any longer for the continuing movement back and forth of programme of engineering staff between AIR and +doordarshan and they should be provided with legitimate prospects of careers advancement within doordarshan.

This report of the working group was discussed in Rajya Sabha on may 18,1978, and the Loksabha on November 30 and December 1,1978.

The government promised that it would bring a bill on the future set up of broadcasting in the next budget session of the parliament.

On may 16,1979,Mr. L.k. Advani , the Janta Minister of information and broadcasting introduced the prasan bharati bill in the parliament, which envisaged that an autonomous corportion 'prasar bharati' would be responsible for radio and television. It proveded for a board of governors of 11 to 15 members with a full time chariman and a full time, director general. The broadcasting wing of the ministry of infermation and the secretary, ministry of finance , were to be ex-officio members of the board of

governors of 'Prasar Bharti.

The bill in fact rejected the concept of trusteship and provision of constitutional safeguards recommended by the working group. Decentralisation and 'franchise stations did not find a place in it. Financial control was to be maintained by the government through the Comptroller and Auditor General of India,. Modification in the procedure for the selection of the chairman of the corporation would mean that it would become a political appointment. Further clauses 23 of the Prasar Bharati Bill empowered the government to issue directives to the corporation from time to time as it considered necessary. A copy to these directives was to be laid before each house of Parliament .

With so many modifications introduced in the verghee working committee report, the nature of the report got nearly changed. Mr. B.G.Verghee and five members of the working group expressed their dissatisfaction with Prasar Bharti Bil in a joint statement issued on May 23, 1979, and said that it offered "something emasculated and confined with executive continuing as the dominant influence". They argued "The reason why the people want an independent corporation is because the executive, abetted by a captive Parliament, Shamelessly misused broadcasting during emergency, that is what has to be prevented for all time.

Democracy is not something based on the pillar of only one institution, such as Parliament or the judiciary, however important it may be. It is a tapestry woven out of many institutions of which a free, responsible and creative broadcasting system is one of the most significant.

In light of the above criticism, as a rejoinder issued on June 2, 1979, the Minister L.K. Advani said that the Verghese working group has conceived of "not just an autonomous corporation but an independent constitution for AIR. The government is unable to accept this independent entity concept, but so far as the concept of autonomy is concerned it has gone far beyond the Chanda Committee's recommendations. "The press in general was against this bill and so were the broadcaster sentiments of those days could be best summed up in a phrase from Kartar Singh Duggal who spent a lifetime with AIR, "Autonomy seems to have given broadcasting the slip".

However, the bill was referred to a joint select committee of the two houses of parliament and was to come up for discussion during the Monsoon-session of Parliament in July 1979. But the Lok-Sabha was dissolved before that and the bill lapsed. Though a non-starter the bill represents the farthest point to which the urge for autonomy has been able to reach in India.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in its annual report for 1979-80 said that the government has decided not to set up an autonomous body of AIR and Doordarshan as recommended by the Verghees group because such an organization was not considered necessary to enable these mass media to discharge their basic objectives of serving the people who were not served by other media .

JOSHI WORKING GROUP

After three decades of successive demands by the people of India for an autonomous electronic media nothing concrete could be developed by successive governments inspite of their outward experimentations with different report and committees. In persuance of the above pursuit that is providing for autonomy pf electronic media , on December 6,1982 the Government appointed a working group on software for Doordarshan with Dr.P.C. Joshi , director of the institute of eletronic growth as its chariman and manzural Aumin,, additional director general, doordarshan as its membersecretary. Members were sai Paranjpe, Alyque padasmee, GNS Raghavan, Ran chabbara, Bionod c. Agrawal, Rin gill, Yogendra singh, Mohan upreti, Bhupen hazarika, K.S.Gill and R.B.L. Srivastva. This working group submitted its report to the government on April 2,1984, which was placed on the table of the lok-sabha on August 12,1985.

EMPHYASIS ON STRUCTURE

In the opinion of Joshi working group the issue of reforms in structure and in management style is much more complex and subtle than is captured by the fashionable cliché government control VS. autonomy. A structure may be fully autonomous from government control and yet still be formidable constraint on the release of creativity. This is confirmed by numerous examples of highly bureaucratized and hierchially organised autonomous structure which sereouslyly thwart, creativity and elude social accountability. One other hand, an institution may continue to be within the government framework and yet be so structure as to provide powerful support to creativity and innovtion as int he case of the atomic energy commission and space research centre.

The present day organisation in broadcasting corporation is highly bureaucratized and heirarchical in nature. It is non-innovative, impersonalised to the extent that if one person is substituted by another everyone knows how the successors would behave and operate under a given set of circumstances. On the other hand there are organiations based on research and development, involving individuals who act on insights and hence, non-confirmists, questioning assumptions, innovation and learning. Weighing pros and cons of both kinds of extremities what Joshi's report opt for is that diversity of tasks to be performed

within the the government framework require individuals who are not only sensitive to the needs of two cultures but can prove a dynamic leadership to the conflicting systems.

According to the Joshi working group, from this angle one can see, how, software planning and production are being hampered by the obsolete heirarchical structure whose principla function is to ensure confirmity to rigidly laid down procedures, and established pattern of norms. What planning and production require at every step is a structure and management style which conciously promotes break from confirmity, from routinization and routinizationand standarization in the direction of creative self expression both to an individual and collectively. But instead of creative freedom for the comunicater within the framework of accountability to social objectives, we have confirmity to directives from above, inhibiting the communications creative response and initiative instead of the interactive type of leadership which promotes creative orientation, we have the heirachial boss-subordinate relationship which inhibits creative thinking.

Structural reforms therefore are indispensable which recognises that the role of administration is to support and facilitate work rather than to exercise outside control.

Functional Freedom

The second important aspect which has been advocated by the working group as functional freedom for two organizations, i.e. Doordarshan and AIR.

It is observed, " From our study of the working of Doordarshan. We are convinced that it does not enjoy functional freedom, is having a detrimental effect on the planning and quality of its programme.... We are of the view that it is possible and desirable even while Indian Television continues to be run by the government as a departmental undertaking, to effect a substantial delegation of powers to Doordarshan and within it from the level to level, and to insulate the organizations, day to day functioning within the parameters of clearly spelt out policy, from non professional pressure and interference".

The Joshi working group suggested that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should be recognised on the lines of the railway boards and like it, should be manned by officers who have grown up in TV and from the IAS. The Ministers should have benefit of advice not only from the proposed Information Board but additionally from a National Doordarshan Council. The Minister would be the Chairman of the Doordarshan council and Director General, the Governor. The chief engineer of

Doordarshan would also be a member. Six or eight other members of the council would be non-officials drawn from various fields, such as education, science and technology, agriculture and rural development, communication research, advertising and sports. The council would meet once a quarter and its life would be three years.

The National Doordarshan council would discharge three functions ; to review the performance of Doordarshan, to guard its professional and functional autonomy, and to function as ombudsman in matters concerning new and current affairs. The Director General should be a person appointed on contract with a proven record of excellence in social communication as well as leadership qualities necessary for attracting and utilising creative talent. His status should not be less than the secretary to the Government of India.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The third important aspect focused by the Joshi working group is provision for an advisory council. The group suggested that each doordarshan kendra should have a programmed advisory council comprising members with expertise in different subjects. Other structural changes suggested in doordarshan include separation of Doordarshan from all India Radio. The group feels that there is no justification any longer for the continuing movement back and forth of programme of engineering staff between of AIR

and Doordarshan and they should be provided with legitimate prospects of career advancement within Doordarshan.

Conclusion

After passing through different stages of evolution, cascading through committees and reports during the past four decades the question of autonomy with whom? Still remains unsolved as the government has not taken any concrete measures except for providing assurances. In the succession of promises followed in the general election of 1989, especially the National front manifesto promised to liberate the electronic media from the governmental stranglehold and convert them into autonomous corporation.

The National front government has not been found wanting in good intentions as promised, it introduced a bill in the very first sitting of the ninth lok sabha seeking to grant autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio through the creation of Prasar Bharati or Broadcasting corporation of India. But the Prasar Bharati Bill is infested with numerous problems and its issue have to be dealt keeping view the meaning of "autonomy", I shall deal with the Prasar Bharati Bill and its problems and issues in following chapters.

CHAPTER - 2

PROBLEMS FACING AUTONOMY OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA : THE FINANCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND LANGUAGE CONTROVERSY.

Having emphasised on the changing perception of mass-media in general and the electronic in particular and the successive stages it has passed through, the focus of our attention invariably turns towards a number of problems encountered in Prasar Bharati Bill - intended or otherwise by the framers. Since the Prasar Bharati Bill reflects the aspiration of the nation for a free and autonomous electronic media a detailed and critical approach to it is much needed. The bill needs a number of amendments and rejoinders of its intention of an autonomous media is to be achieved.

In this chapter the focus of attention are the problems and the solutions that could be provided in the existing situation to meet the requirements for an autonomous electronic media. these problems can be categorised into following groups : financial, administrative, language and regional.

Financial Control :

The question of finance has been considered central to the issue of autonomy. The argument being that an organisation which is dependent on another for finance to

to meet its growth needs, can never really be autonomous of it.

The prasar Bharati Bill unquestionably constitutes a major step towards providing autonomy for the electronic media. But if the efficiency of the Prasar Bharati Bill is tested on the ground of the above hypothesis that autonomy can not be granted short of finances then the whole enactment frustrates the very base. This is mainly because of three shortfalls in the Bill which are rightly pointed out by Dr. Amaresh Bagchi. They are a) it allows the public sector to retain its monopoly on broadcasting, b) it replaces direct government control by indirect control and c) the corporation will be dependent heavily on the government for long.

CONTROL OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN THE HANDS OF PUBLIC SECTOR:-

The first problem is obvious . As long as electronic media remains a monopolistic control of government autonomy is not feasible. To divide the control of electronic media between private and public sector will not solve the problem in fact it will bring about confusion as sharing of power always leads to differences in views and opinions.

There is a difference of opinion about retaining power in the governments control and parting of it to the private hands. The reasons given by both the protagonist are strong enough to be debated.

The reasons given for maintaining the monopolistic control Over the media are political and economic in nature.

Over the years the issue of media autonomy has been discussed largely from political angle. There has been more heat than light. The basic question to be asked is 'Autonomy for whom and for what'. Any media organisation, including the BBC, is at once a product and a reflection of the surrounding society and its times. All india radio and doordarshn are no exception . The BBC model cannot and should not be unthinkingly transplanted to Indian soil. We need our own version of autonomy. The BBC has long established traditions of dialogue tolerance for different

view points. Objectivity and foreplay , the values cherished and to a great extent. practised by the British society in general.

India which given to patting itself on the back for a long history of religious tolerarce is today a land where people are bcoming very touchy about their religious-cultural identities. They are likely to react violently as events of recent years clearly demonstrate.

The founding fathers work aware of the fragile nature of the Indian union and thus recommended the federal political structure and government owned broadcast media to nuture the sense of national unity amedst enoromous diversity. The press was left in private hands to keep vegil over the performance of the government.

Another reasons for keeping broadcasting under voernment control was the cost envolved in building infrastructure as well as operation of the medium. No private entreprise would have come forward for the perpose, certainly not in the early years of independence.

Both political and economic reasons were justified at the time of independence. But after four decades of independence India is social and economic codition underwent a metamerphosis. People became more concious of their rights and priviledges hence they revolted against the hagemonistic

control over the media which provide information as well as is a major medium for self-expression. It is not surprising that people have started differentiating between information and "misinformation" by a class by a class of people an general and rulling political party in particular.

Because of the communication revolution investment in television vidioes and radio have become fruitful for example all the parties in the current general election-1991,June are trying to are video tapes voth audio and visual to propogate there views to the masses.The road was shown by Bharatiya Janta Party in order tp woo the sympatheis of the Hindus by demonstrating the state repression at Ayodhya. Though the ruling government tried to exercise its control by banning the cassette neverthe less its was circulation use of electronic media for arousing the ffeelings of minority or majority leading to tension in the society should be restricted. But if one argues from the utilitarian point of view especially from the J.S. Mill's theroy of freedom of thought and expression then autonomy of electronic media is right. The state should leave to the people to decide what is right and what is wrong. Imposition of states will on the people in the long run will make them docile and inactive."He insisted upon the extension of this freedom to 'cranks'on the ground that, while nine cranks out of ten are harmless idiots , the truth

is of greater value to mankind than all the normal men who seek to suppress him. Such a one is defended by Mill not only not only against state interference and suppression, but also against the persecution of orthodox public opinion".

Coming back to the liberalisation of electronic media in response to commercial revolution it is seen that any attempt to throttle the autonomy of electronic media may lead to a mass revolution.

Further the media has become a commercial tool for private industries and more than anything else a source of entertainment for the urban middle class.

However, the question of financial autonomy related to the question of electronic media autonomy still haunts. It has been repeatedly asked, 'can an institution dependent almost entirely on the government for funds function truly or independently? But then can the corporation be financially self-supporting and do away with budgetary subversion? After going through the budget proposal of the government through the years and the expenditure of the corporation we can see that T.V. as well as radio is heavily dependent on the government.

Radio and Television before asking for autonomy should at first try to become independent in fiscal matter. Till the time electronic media is in grip of and dependent

on government for revenue it cannot attain an autonomous status.

After the separation of Doordarshan from AIR there has been an uneven growth in both the sectors. This is because of the discriminatory allotment of revenues and plan outlays to both the sectors. (Refer to chart 1). Except for the year 1987-88 when AIR's plan outlay was of 160 crores and Doordarshan's 10 crores less than that, it is seen that the plan outlay of Doordarshan is always more than that of AIR.

More important than its gain from plan outlays doordarshan has gained tremendous popularity among the urban middle class. As a result of which the producers, manufacture in order exploit the demands and create artificial demands are ready to invest more and more on commercials leading to increase in Doordarshan's revenue. Though it might not be a healthy trend towards realisation of socialist goals. But is surely a good attempt towards self-sufficiency. The revenues earned from the Commercial and advertisement has not only shown an upward trend but it has also shown its competence of maintaining itself by becoming nearly self sufficient.

The annual plan from 1985 to 1991 shows that out of the plan outlays a major portion of the revenue is earned by Doordarshan. In fact in the year 1985-86 there is a

surplus of 8.20 crores . The deficit in other years is meagre and after looking at the general growth rate of the revenue earned by Doordarshan it can safely be concluded that doordarshan is ready for becoming autonomous.

ALTERNATIVES AND SUGGESTIONS:-

The mass media comprises of both AIR and Doordarshan and hence growth of one at the cost of another or uneven growth of the two sectors cannot be seen separately .To achieve the end that is attainment of autonomy both AIR and Doordarshan should progress well because both have an equal importance. Therefore various suggestios have been made to make AIR and Doordarshan financially independent so that it can act in an independent manner without any hinderances in form of governments dictates.

As seen earlier AIR and Doordarshan are just self sufficient hence the government at the time of transfer of power to the corporation will have to provide finanancial resources to the corporation. In order to provide sufficient financial resources to the proposed Broadcasting corporation of India all properties and assets of Akashvani and Doordarshan,including non-lapsable fund and renewal and replacement funds should be transfered to the new corporation along with all debts, obligations and liabilities of Akashvani and Doordarshan .

The proceeds from the broadcast receiver licences, reduced by the collection charges, should also be given to the corporation. The central government, after due appropriations made by Parliament, can give financial aid to the corporation by way of grant, loan or otherwise. The corporation can draw up its annual budget to be submitted to the central government for approval and its accounts can be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. To sustain the corporation it can be exempted from payment of income-tax, sur-tax or any other tax on income or gains earned by it, this provision is made for in the Prasar Bharati Bill.

Another provision provided in the Prasar Bharati Bill to grant autonomy in the financial field is through 'BLOCK GRANTS' in annual budget grants. The central government, after due appropriation to be made by Parliament, was to give financial aid to the corporation by way of grant, loan or otherwise, the corporation was to submit its annual budget estimate to the central government for approval. The accounts were to be audited by the Controller and Auditor General of India.

Block grant has been interpreted by Dr. Amrish Bagchi as "provision of aid for a given block of years (3 or 5) which would be based on an estimate of the operational expenses including maintenance, renewal and repairs and the

likely flow of income from advertisements sponsored programmes. Even though an assurance is given that the finances of the corporation will be under-written by the government on 'the touch-stem of public service", the underwriting should not be conditional on a government department setting in judgement as to whether the performance of corporation passes the test of public service. Hence the need for block grants subject only to a periodic review by an authority like the press-council . The block grants can be reviewed periodically and BCI should not be answerable for the expenditure except to authorities as in the case in Australia, Britain, Newzealand and Japan.

Besides these two solutions to the financial autonomy other solution can be introduction of licence fees which can be paid by the consumers at the time of buying. This will increase the income of electronic media and secondly, it will save the time of officials from regular collection and harassment of the general people at regular intervals. Every attempt should be made to practice economy in expenditure. In no case should the BCI be exempted to subsidise organisation like the news agencies by requiring the Doordarshan to purchase the output of the agencies at high rate as compared to that held out to newspapers. Doordarshan may also explore the possibility of developing "Pay T.V." as is being attempted by Germany.

There is however, a view that because so much of broadcasting is in the nature of a public service the cost of this should be borne not by the broadcasting organisation but by those who originate the broadcasting or on whose behalf they are being made .At present since Doordarshan and AIR is owned and controlled by the government hence the programmes of 'public service; and the propaganda programmes of different national parties are not paid for . Thus a large chunk of revenue which could be earned by Doordarshan and AIR is done away with.

In addition to the lapse of this revenue the electronic media also has to forgo revenues on Commercials sponsored by government of India. Family and welfare ministry, University grant Commission Programmes also do not pay to the media for broadcasting or telecasting their programmes.

Once the electronic media is brought under an autonomous corporation it will require more revenues as the government's share of revenue will and should decrease. Thus to copeup with its financial demands it needs to raise money from all possible sources. U.G.C.'s share of programme on Doordarshan is large enough and considerable amount of time is devoted for it by the Doordarshan . Doordarshan and AIR has nothing else but only time to sell. Hence the Corporation should not indulge in Philanthropic distribution

of time but on the other hand must exploit it to its utmost.

The most important source of revenue of AIR and Doordarshan is revenue incurred from advertisement and commercials. This source of income will still persist for a long time and will provide a major portion of revenue unless the corporation starts producing video tapes and other programmes.

Broadcasting and Doordarshan can be extremely valuable profit centre at least for the licenses of large market television stations. They can make a significant contribution to the Indian economy.

Receipts from advertisements and sponsored programmes will remain the main source of BCI and has to be nurtured in such a direction so as to provide maximum profit and minimum "class consumerism". This has to be done by fully exploiting the subject so that the quality control too is maintained from social angle.

Though most viable but nonetheless the most objectionable way to incur revenue for the corporation is through advertisement cause superfluous demands which is not in harmony with socialistic pattern of development as envisaged by India. But the recent developments in socialist countries for e.g. China shows that advertisement has acquired an important place as a method of launching and

selling the product in the market. Commercialism no longer remains a method exclusive of Capitalist countries any longer.

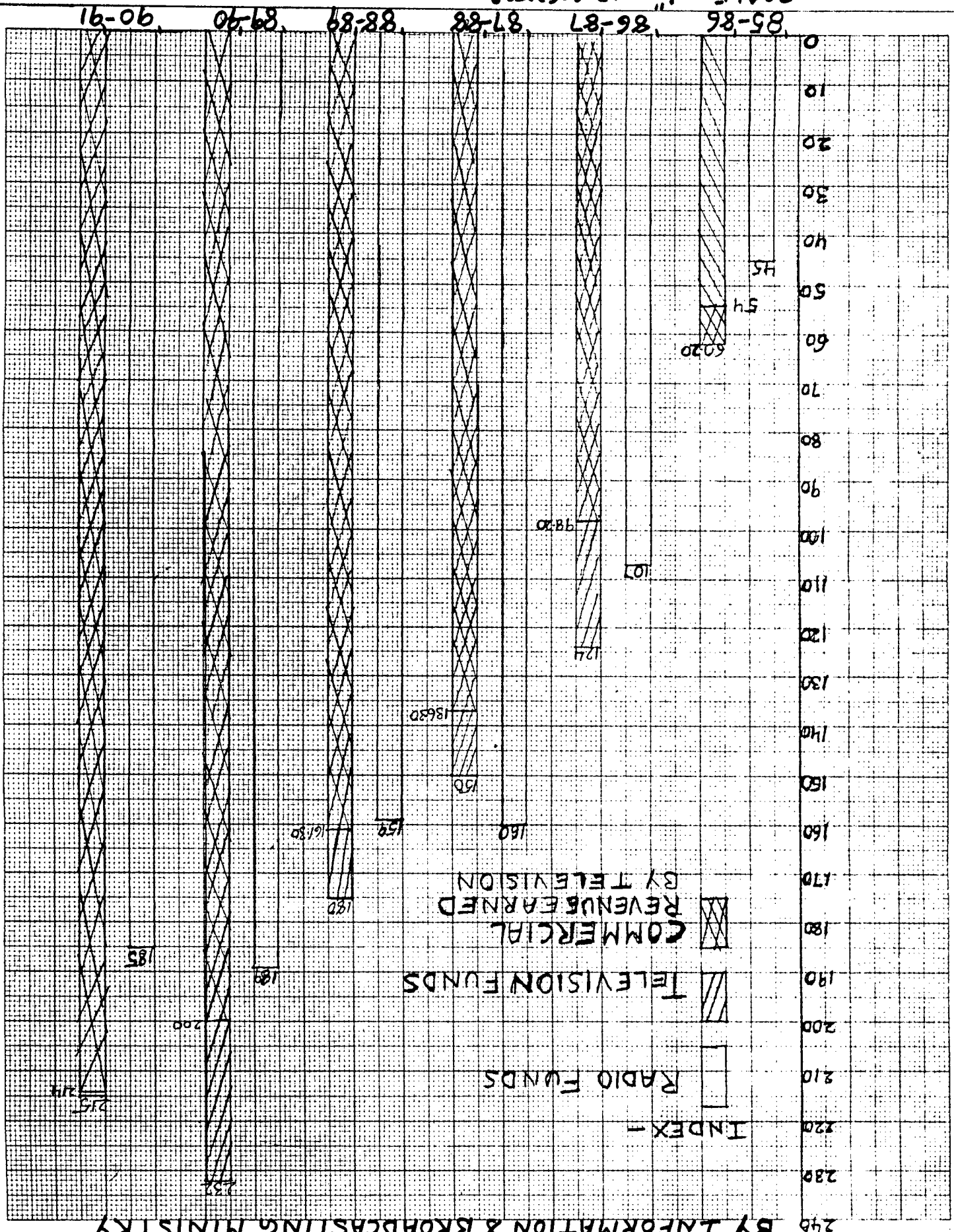
Looking from the social angle one may argue that advertisement makes the masses aware of not only consumers goods but also the progressive idea behind it for e.g. ., advertisement of soap not only makes the masses aware of the 'product' soap but also the idea of hygiene and cleanliness which is lacking in the villages of our country. Consumerism not only helps in the economic progress but also in social development. Nearly seventyfive percentage of the population of india is rual and fifty precentage are illiterate hence they are yet not aware of the new technological development which has taken place in the country and world as they do not have access to information media. The provider of information are T.V.,Radio and Press. The last alternative is unaccessible to 50% of population because of illiteracy hence T.V. and radio are the only next viable media for their information. It is through these media that they can get knowledge of recent and the latest development in all the fields including consumer products. Thus there is nothing wrong if T.V. and Radio become a channel between the producers and the consumers.

Another viable alternative for raising revenues is

production of plays, movies, music cassettes and different programs video tapes etc by the corporation. It should be produced on a large scale and of varied type but of good quality not only for its sale in the country but also foreign countries. This will provide the much needed foreign exchange for the country and also the revenue needed for the corporation.

CHART-I

FUNDS ALLOCATION TO RADIO AND TELEVISION BY INFORMATION & BROADCASTING MINISTRY



INDEX -
 RADIO FUNDS
 TELEVISION FUNDS
 COMMERCIAL REVENUE EARNED BY TELEVISION

SCALE - 1" = 10 CRORES

Neelgagan

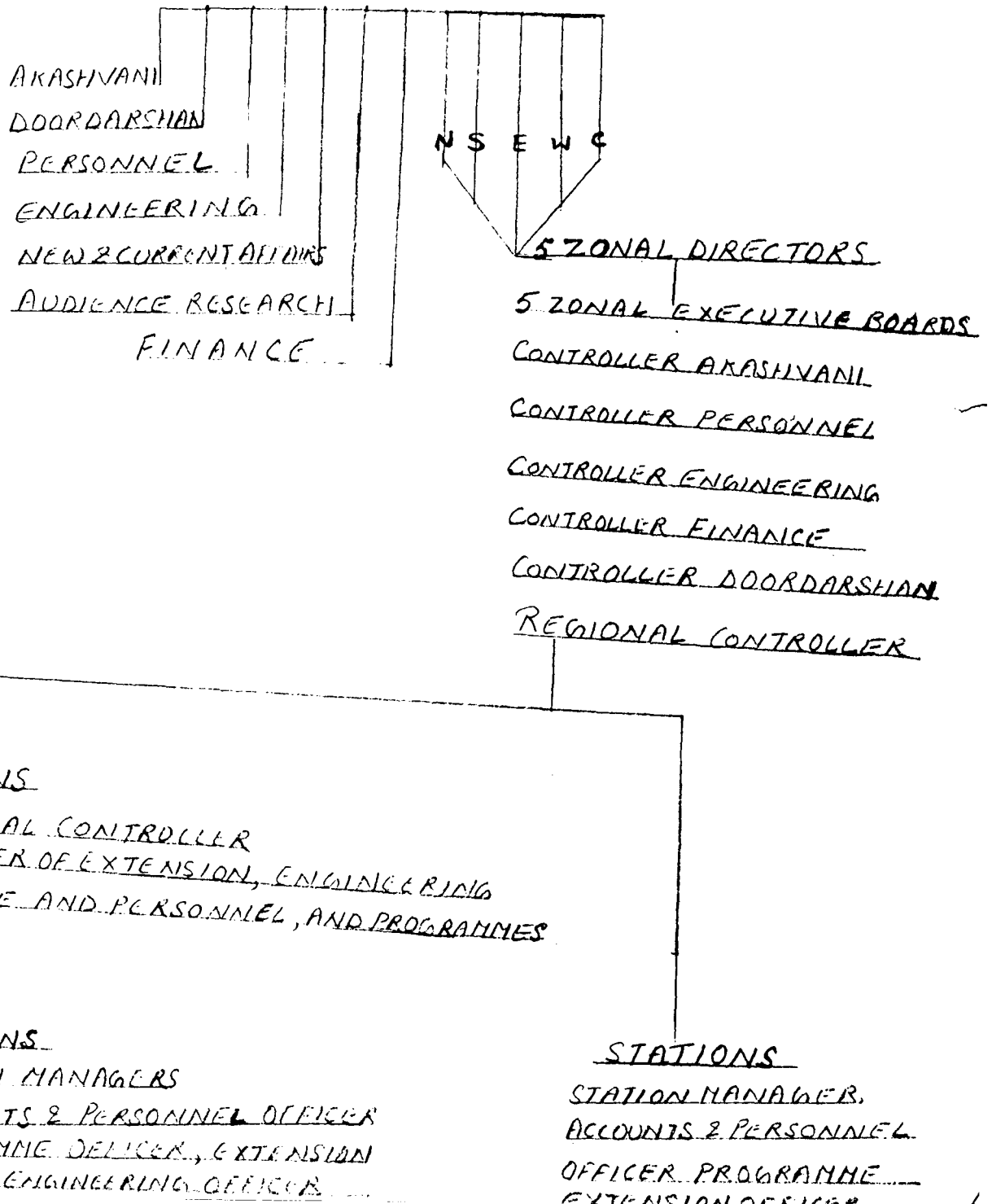
CHART-II

AKASHI BHARATI ORGANIZATION CHART

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 12 MEMBERS

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

CONTROLLER - GENERAL BROADCASTING
AND 12 DIRECTORS



ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM

The independence and quality in performance of monopoly broadcasting organisation will depend upon the quality and culture of the people who run it. Institutional safeguards are necessary though not sufficient to prevent intrusion into autonomy of the media be it in public or private sector which means the administrative structure and the organization of the corporation should be democratic in nature . The Prasar Bharati Bill provides an elaborate system of administrative organization which should be analysed critically as the internal structuring and management system of Radio and T.V. should be such as to ensure professionalism, foster creativity and innovation, and provide motivation for excellence.

In 1978, when Aksh Bharati report proposed autonomy to the national radio and television network, Doordarshan was tiny with just three or four kendras. The network has expanded since then and by the time Prasar Bharati came up there are nearly more than 100 kendra but within the time span of nearly two decades the administrative structure did not change. It is dominated by the bureaucrats who are directly under ministers implying that the administrative structure is everything but least free in its functioning.

During this period there have been a number of Committees instituted to look into the matter. They are

Chanda Committee -1966; Verghese Committee - 1978 and Joshi Committee - 1985 . The experts of these Committess have again and again reiterated for a more democratic set up by which electronic media could function in a free atmosphere, independent of government's control.

Akash Bharati which provides a guideline to the 'Prasar Bharati Bill described the National Broadcasting Trust as 'a corporate citizen of the country' and a non-profit making body, as essential public service licensed to operate under a parliamentary charter and accountable to Parliament . Mr Verghese briefly outlined its objecives which , as its charter states, are "part of the larger processes of planning and development". It intended to maintain a seecular, non-ideological editorial stance, promote educational and developmental programmes, provide a voice for the rural, illiterate, underpriviledged and vulnerable sections of the society and provide classical,modern.traditional and international varieties of entertainment,using optimum technology.

Under Ar. 19.1. A of the Constitution, all citizens enjoy fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression and to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively as possible on all national and international matters of public interest.

'As autonomous bodies, radio and T.V. should be administered by eminent figures having a high credibility and respect by both broadcasters and the public.'

For making the electronic media truly autonomous the administration of the Broadcasting Corporation of India should be restructured. Akash Bharati report came up with an elaborate design-(refer to the chart-2).

The detailed objectives set down for the proposed Prasar Bharati makes a remarkable change none the less it suffers from a few defects which I shall be dealing in this chapter together with a few suggestions which have been expressed to remove those defects. What needs to be examined is whether the structure proposed in the bill is designed to fulfill the objective of providing autonomy to electronic media, or whether the changes enumerated are merely of a cosmetic nature.

The Board of Governors comprising a chairman, one executive governor one governor (personnel), one governor (finance), six part-time governors and one representative of the information and Broadcasting Ministry.

The qualification laid down for the eligibility for the appointment as governors are "special knowledge of administration, journalism etc. and in the case of the executive governor, "special knowledge of practical experience in ... personnel management, for the governor

(personnel," special knowledge or practical experience in financial matters" is required of the governor (finance) and other governors do not need any "special knowledge or practical experience. All that is required is that they be "persons of eminence in public life". This qualification is vague in nature and its vagueness will lead to arbitrary appointment of persons having influence in the government. The vagueness in the definition of qualification will enable the government to appoint arbitrarily its own 'people' in the management.

Given the vagueness about qualification, the method of selection of governors assumes importance. This is to be done by a committee comprising the chairman of the council of states, the chairman of the Press council of India and nominee of the President of India. In other words, according to M.D. Nalapat, "the governor are to be selected by three individuals who in the normal course can be assumed to have been handpicked by the rulers of the day - the very individuals from whom the corporation is expected to get "autonomy from".

"Should these (handpicked) individuals exhibit any symptoms of independence, the Bill provides for the

1. M.D. Nalapat - Times of India - 21/4/80.
"Media - Prasar Bharati Bill: The freedom confirm".

President (i.e. in effect, the the government of the day) to "make such provisions as he thinks fit for curtailing the term of office of some of the part time governors then appointed in order that one-third shall retire in every second year there after.

One of the most objectionable feature of Prasar Bharati Bill in the realm of Administration is that the government has reserved for itself to direct the corporation to do its bidding. The government supports this view of placing electronic media at its disposal "to discharge its official duties". Most of the people should not have objection at this necessity but what is objectionable is the realm of directives, instruction and the like that can be imposed upon the corporation . The government while using electronic media need not impose directives and instructions which restricts the independent functioning of the corporation. Like other customers and consumers the government too can are the electronic media to discharge its official duties.

The Bill envisages that "the central government may, from time to time as and when the occasion arises, issue to the corporation such directions as it may think necessary in the interest of the state or preservation of public order requiring it not to make a broadcast on a matter specified in the direction or to make a broadcast on

any matter a public importance specified in the direction. When this is invoked and a required broadcast is being made the corporation may announce this with the broadcast. A copy of every direction issued will be laid before each house of the Parliament".

The above direction to the corporation is a well thought one provided it is used with restraint and in times when only public order or internal security and integrity of the nation is at stake. But in practise it has been seen that in the name of maintaining public order unnecessary interference is done by the government in day to day functioning. For e.g. in the recent past D.D.'s inability to maintain its independent stand came out clearly when 'when 'khula manch'* programme was abandoned due to governments interference. In the name of 'editioning' the whole programme was changed making a mockery of the idea behind the programme which was dissemination of truth by the public officials to the Public.

This provision that is of issuing directives and instructions to the corporation for maintaining public order can also be compared with Ar. 356 of our constitution which provides that the centre can take over administration of the state if the governor of the state may so decide on the grounds of failure of constitutional machinery. From the past experience it has been seen the centre uses Ar.356 to

whip the states which do not agree to its directives in other words states having governments of different parties**. Thus the above provision in the Bill takes away what it proposes to give.

Further the government of india is to function according to Upendra Baxi "as an umpire as well as a board of selectros.It retains the power to prevent or compel broadcast on matters relating to the 'security of the state' or 'preservation of public order'.These undefined omnibus expressions allow full extinction of autonomy in situation of total or partial emergency.Routinely,too , what the government of the day regards as sensitive will not be broadcast.

The Corporation in order to avoid interference and maintain independence in its functioning should be based on

*'Khula Manch 'programme was started by Doordarshan in which one minister was brought before open House before Doordarshan so that 'public' could be made aware of the functioning and progress of the concerned ministry as well as convey their grievances to the Minister. In the process truth could be brought before the people during the question /Answer session. unfortunately the government of the day found it important to edit the programme in which George Fernandis came before Doordarshan. Ironically this event took place during national front government which prophesised to grant 'autonomy to electronic media'and a time when the 'Prasar Bharati Bill' was under consideration.
**First time Ar. 356 was brought into force against kerala communist ministry by J.L. Nehru when congress party was in power at centre. division of powers. Once the power of selection, preservation of public order, formation of programmes ect are distributed among competent independent bodies the corporation will become autonomous.

The bill shows reluctance of trust in the structure it so comprehensively creates. At the very least, it must limit the power to issue directions in ways which promotes the objective of 'safeguarding citizens right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively on matters of public interest, national and international.' 'public order' and security can be preserved by safeguarding the citizens right to information. Power to control the flow of information create a misinformed society destructive of both these values.

Accountability is to be issued by empowering the council to entertain complaints concerning specific programmes or corporation general functioning. The bill should itself prescribe the procedure since it has been aptly said by Upendra Baxi that "accountability is siamese twin of autonomy". The Bill does not make the council accountable by giving it a license to evolve "such procedure as it thinks fit for the disposal of complaints" nor is accountability accomplished by authorising the board to reject the councils recommendation.

It is worthwhile looking at the British Broadcasting Corporation experience with its license and agreement with the British government, which governs the BBC rights and obligations. Such an examination suggest that it is not the power to intervene itself that is important,

but the nature of the relationship and the working of the corporation which determines how and when it will be used.

Under clause 13(4) of the licence the Home secretary may from time to time by notice in writing require the corporation to refrain at any specified time or all times from sending (Broadcasting) any matters of any class specified in such notice* This clause confer on the government a formally absolute power to determine what the BBC may or may not broadcast and enables the government to prevail where its view of the corporations responsibilities and that the BBC itself are in conflict. But the most surprising thing to be noticed is that this clause has never been invoked to ban any specific progromme, even at times and on subjects (such as suez, the falklands war and Northern ireland) when some of the BBC's editorial decisions have been under sever criticism. In october 1988, however, clause was used to restrict broadcast coverage of statements supporting terrorism in Northern Ireland . This was the first exercise of the government power under clause 13(4) directed at specific subjects or named organization.

Following BBC precedence Prasar Bharati Bill believes in constraints to ensure autonomy for the mass reach national electronic media. It is not necessary that the restrants provided in the bill will always prove a

*Extracts from the 1987-88 annual report of the BBC.

hindrance in the independent functioning of the corporation. This view is supported by N.A. Phalkivala, the noted jurist 'Autonomy for electronic media', said "Prasar Bharati Bill achievements depended on the men who worked it. Being free is not necessarily being excellent he said, adding that there was need for self-restraint. He advocated judicious use of discretion, especially in dealing with 'unenforceable' ".

Apart from other limitations Prasar Bharati Bill reduces the power of corporation by giving President power to remove any governor from office should she or he "in the opinion of the President" be found " Unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of body or mind".No appeal has been provided in the Bill against such a decision.

Not that the part-time governors are likely to have more than a token say in the working of the corporation for the Bill provides that they should meet 'at least' six times a year only, a maximum that is likely to become the norm. It further provides that 'not more than three months should lapse between such meetings', a substantial gap indeed.

The bill provides for recruitment boards to select staff for the corporation. However, it coyly desist from specifying the qualification of those who are to man such

boards mentioning merely that these would be prescribed at a later date.

The bill also provides for the setting up of a Broadcasting council to 'receive and consider complaints' concerning the corporation and to 'advise (it) in the discharge of its functions'. The President of the council and its ten members will be appointed by the President of India "from among persons of eminence in public life " again an omnibus definition that the government of the day judges convenient.

In pointing out all these problems in relation to administration and finances in electronic media we are seeking to make electronic media a much democratized structure.

NATIONAL BROADCASTING TRUST AND SARKARIA REPORT

Sarkaria commission was set up to look into the relationship of centre and the states and to provide suggestion for a harmonious existence of different states with the central government.

Administration in a federal set up becomes more controversial and conflict ridden than a centralised set up with both the centre and the units trying to get control over more and more powers. Centre on the one hand is too possessive over its powers and on the other hand states too do not want any encroachment over its jurisdiction by the centre. The centre tries to act 'protective' towards the state leading to dissatisfaction among the units.

Recognising the importance of mass-media, the nature of its position in the distribution of powers in the federal system of India, the sarkaria commission report not only deals with the grievance of the state but also makes important recommendation to improve the federal relation.

Radio and television, the two important and powerful system of mass communication falls within the scope of the words "wireless, broadcasting and other like forms of communication" in entry 31 of the union list in the seventh schedule of the constitution. As a result the legislative and executive powers with respect to these

subjects therefore, vest exclusively in the union. Both the systems are controlled and owned by the union.

Ever since independence India had a pre-dominant one party system hence most of the state governments were satisfied with the existing system of mass communication . But for the states which are very few in numbers these was little resentment with the part played by electronic media. But with the advent of regional parties in the Indian political scene the states started demanding for of a greater say in the communication arena which could be realised only through an autonomous electronic media.

"It is alleged that the states, particularly those govnrned by parties other than the one ruling at the centre, do not get access to these media on the premises, it is urged that 'broadcasting and television' should be shifted to concurrent list. The states has even gone as far as demanding the subject in the state list".*

Another grievance which Sarkaria commission found among the states was that over centralisation had led to the denial of the states, the legitimate use of these media for putting across their views to the public. For e.g. One state government has said that "central control over such powerful

*Sarkaria commission Report Pg.509 part 1.

and expanding media has endangered political controversy in the past and could conceivably do so in future.

The state goveror a secure access to the media which they think is not possible in the present state of affairs. For this they have suggested that a law be made, or the present law be amended to enable the state governments whenever feasible to set up their broadcasting stations, subject to such condition and restrictions as necessary in the national interest.

Though this suggestion has democratic validity but is not feasible when seen in the practical light. Setting up independent broadcasting stations is not only expensive and will prove beneficial only to the rich states but it will also gurantee -viciparous tendencies which will be against the national unity and integrity of the nation and hence favours "guided Philosophy" which the government things apt to be adopted for the electronic media in the developing countries. Three inter-related concepts that have caught on in most of Asia are the 'guided press', 'development journalism' and 'support communication'. In india though press is free nevertheless it has not been able to do away with development journalism and support communication."

Justification given by the authorities for following the "guided philosophy 'is that because most of

their societies are newly emergent , they need time to develop their institutions. During this initial period of growth, stability and unity must be sought; criticism must be minimized and the public faith in governmental institutions and policies must be encouraged. Media must cooperate, according to the guided press notion, by stressing positive, development inspired news, by ignoring negative societal or oppositionist characteristics and by supporting governmental ideologies and plans.

Actually, under the guided media support concept, two value systems are at odds. In one, the media is the catchdog of government and supervisor of the public good; in the other, it is tool of development deferring to authority and usually propagandizing for officialdom . The media practice strict self restraint, steer away from investigative reporting, flashes government speeches and campaigns, ignore the opposition, de-emphasize foreign news and gives a high ratio of government releases. The media is advised by the authorities to meet the needs of a developing nation, to promote the campaigns of the government in power and to act solely as government mouthpiece.

It is precisely against this "guided philosophy" of the union to which states are revolting . They do not want to be 'guided' by the centre in the area where they can act independently. If the press can be free why not

electronic media. Why should the centre's philosophy be only propogated? These are some of the questions thrown by the states, answers of which will further the cause of providing autonomy to electronic media.

Sarkaria commission is of the opinion that in the prevailing disparities of growth among the states it would not be jusitifiable to shift electronic media to concurrent or state list. Since setting upof a broadcasting corporation, or television centre is a very costly affair the poorer states will be at a disadvantageous position in comparision with their richer counterpart. This will further aggravate disparities among the states leading to dissatisfaction and rivalry.

It cannot be denied that fiscal necessity will prove hindrance in setting up expensive broadcasting and television centres but at the same time the growing role of electronic media can also not be underestimated. The states can always incur money for setting up a Broadcasting trust with the help of taxation, industrialists and businessmen who will willingly pay for it. Investment in corporation will enhance their buisness .Thus experimentation on a temporary basis by shifting electronic media to concurrent list can always be done and if proved successful the centre can always transfer the electronic media from concrurent to state list.

Yet, another state has suggested that in a country with India's size, diversity and complexity of problems, it is important that the state governments are allowed parallel jurisdiction over radio and television and the constitution be amended accordingly. This suggestion is not feasible because overlapping of jurisdiction will further aggravate the conflict.

Another state government has existing system to be placed at the disposal of the states so that the listeners of radio and viewers of television may have a choice and come to their own conclusion.

The above suggestion is most logical and of a different nature than other suggestion in the sense that other suggestions were for re-structuring the existing structural model which is a long process. Providing a separate channel to the states will act as a 'safety valve' through which the states will be able to telecast or broadcast their own views. Not only their own views can be disseminated through electronic media but regional programmes could also be televised. This would widen the horizon of the viewer and listeners.

In spite of getting divergent numerous views and advices of different state the sarkaria commission came to the conclusion that in order to preserve public order and

integrity of the country it was necessary to preserve the monopoly of electronic media into the hands of the union government which will act according to the 'guided philosophy' much to dissatisfaction of the states.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

Looking beyond the structural frame work of the Prasar Bharati bill and the problems it raises it is imperative to see the functional aspect of electronic media as a vehicle for expressing and educating the masses. The government claims that electronic media should be placed at its disposal to carry on its function, the most important being educating the masses but it is surprising that not even a scant attention has been paid on the question of the language through which this function is to be carried. Communication cannot be done through an abstract media. There should be a common language through which the communicator and the communicated could be brought to a level of understanding. In the absence of a common denominator that is, the language, the noble intention of government cannot be achieved .

It is surprising that the whole debate on autonomy of electronic media has not even bothered to pay a scant attention to the problem of language. In Prasar Bharati Bill itself it is difficult to find out any reference of how the autonomous corporation would deal with

language and culture except the following :

(i) (d) - "providing adequate coverage to the diverse cultures and languages of the various regions of the country by broadcasting appropriate programmes".

(ii) (m) "promoting national integration by broadcasting in a manner that facilitates communication in the language is in India ;and facilitating the distribution of regional broadcasting service in every state in the language of that state".

The practical problem faced today by the general viewers and listeners are of two types:- firstly the limited time period of the television of which the 'Prime time' is hijacked by the centre limits the scope of the state to the access to media and secondly, the use of Hindi and English to acheive the objective of mass media i.e.; entertainment, dissemination of news promptly of important national and state happenings, specific programmes aimed at national integration communication of the policies of the union and the state government, allowing political parties an access to put across their political philosophies is difficult to acheive because of india's diversity in languages.

The first problem that has come up due to occupation of 'prime-time' by the centre limits state's access to the electronic media. The 'prime-time' that is

between 8 to 10 p.m. is catered to centre's programme which broadcasts and telecasts its programme in english and hindi which leads to two inter-related reactions. Firstly they shift their programme either before or after prime-time to which viewership is scarce and secondly since shifting of programme does not cater to a large viewers the purpose of the state government is not served hence they are reluctant in making programmes in regional languages. Thus the whole idea of educating the masses through electronic media is jeopardised because education can only be done in a comprehensible language and not in a language imposed by centre. Moreover the regional programmes are not produced in an adequate quantity.

The remedy of the above problem lies in change in centre's viewpoint. The central government should stop imposing its programmes on the states. The Prime-time of the Doordarshan and Radio should be given to the states so that they can telecast and broadcast programmes in regional languages which are apprehensible to the masses. The other proposition could be as stated earlier providing independent access to separate channel to the regional governments which will give a choice to the masses to patronise the programme of their choice.

India's diversity in languages raises the second problem. The policy makers at the centre are misguided by

the assumption that India can be divided broadly into two sects that is Hindi speaking north and English speaking south. This basic assumption is a misnomer as north belt itself comprises of many dialects like Maithili, Bhojpuri, Khariboli, etc which is distinct and different from Devanagari Hindi used by mass-media. As a result use of Devnagari Hindi in these belts will not give the right result. Similarly in south too there are distinct languages like Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, ect which are well developed, enriched and spoken by the masses in localised areas. Intrusion of English by the electronic media into these regions on the assumption that non-hindi speaking will understand english will prove unfruitful. English is understood only by the educated people of south and north. Use of english in these areas alienates a majority of rural people who do not have a proper grasp over any ther language but their own mother tongue.

In their zeal to realise the objective under Ar. 351 of the constitution which gives directive for development of the Hindi language the centre promotes hindi in Devanagari script through electronic media without making a strong base among the masses. To realise the objective under Ar. 351 it is important for the centre to prepare a base for Hindi at the centre as well as at the stae level by making Hindi a compulsory subjects. (provided the states

agree).since nothing concrete has been done in this line hence it would be appropriate for the centre to give regional autonomy to the states in matter of electronic media. The other alternative could be transmission of programmes of national integrity and dissemination of news could be done in regional languages till a common national languages is developed and accepted.

CONCLUSION:

After going through different problems encountered in Prasar Bharati Bill it can be concluded that mere creation of an autonomous organization like Prasar Bharati is not sufficient . Organizational operations are conditioned not so much by its corporate states or fair selection of functionaries,thoughthey too are imporatant, but by the ethos of the functionaries and culture through which they have grown. Since media is a very powerful instrument it has to be guided by a broad national vision where different points of view should have an honourable place without indulging in or allowing itself to be used for Prastisan party interests

A NEW WORKING CULTURE UNDER INTERNAL AUTONOMY

A VIEW FROM AIR & DOORARSHAN

There are a number of varying ideas on the relationship between communication and power. One view is that information is a vital instrument for keeping a check on authority, and even a counter weight to power, in that the mission of the media is to hold up a mirror to

* governments. The contrasting view is that information should be at the service of the state, so that it may contribute to providing new socio - political systems with strength and stability. India has been following the second view. Experience shows that the freedom of media is still a keystone of democratic renewal, but it is important to understand the direction of changes which are in progress. These changes have made the relationship between communication and power a more central issue than ever before. The classical antagonism between the leaders and the led has been complicated by another basic conflict between enterprises which control huge areas of information and individuals whose lives are influenced by decisions over which they have no control. To a great extent, communication has thus become an arsenal of signals and instructions, tending to reinforce the power of large organization -

* Many Voices, One world - UNESCO. Oxford & IBH publishing Co.

public or private, national or transnational. Such an organization has capabilities of advance planning and decision making, and therefore of command for greater than those of disunited groups of citizens who possess only fragments of information. All information that can be used is therefore, a source of power. For this reason, there is a need for changes in the outlook and the behaviour of those who control the source of information and the means of transmission.

There is need not only for reorganisation of electronic media at the structural level but also develop a new working culture under internal autonomy.

Internal autonomy by definition is directed at large group of people, officials, workers, technician , Engineer working in AIR and Doordarshan, their reaction as individuals and as amorphous or organised groups, which determines the impetus, focus content an impact of the established communication policies, programmes and practices. Again, development of internal autonomy is vital for the democratisation of communication and to increased participation in and access to societies myriad communication activities.

Working culture in AIR and Doordarshan is full of strifes and conflicts. This and many more revealing facts were gathered by surveys conducted in AIR and Doordarshan.

Twenty five samples which included officials, technicians, Engineers and other workers were interviewed whose perceptions on different issues will form the major content of the chapter.

Professionals in communications are obviously of key importance, an importance that grows as communication itself becomes more all pervasive and it is not surprising that increasing rules and regulation impedes their work. Satish Katyal an engineer mentioned the difficulty following Information and Broadcasting ministry regulations because they were rigid, particularly concerning ascertainment minority recruitment /employment and general record keeping.

However, a station manager was of the view that Broadcast regulations could serve as guidelines for the broadcasters, thus making their jobs easier, but at the same time regulations make their job complicating making the task of station management tougher.

When station manager were asked about the degree to which regulatory policy affects station programming, he felt that regulatory policy greatly affects station programming especially the local programming.

Thus the professionals were of the view that in the last ten years broadcast regulations have increased which is detrimental to their professionalism. Ideally,

communication is continual exchange between equals or at least between reciprocally responsive partners. In practice, this ideal has never been realized. The flow is vertical instead of horizontal and is mostly in the direction from top downwards. Inevitably, this has an effect on the style of work of communication professionals. They consider their task in terms of effectiveness " getting the message across", translating information into simple terms, winning and holding attention. These skills are certainly necessary ; a professional who fails to interest his audience is no professional. But this concept of communication tends to eclipse the equally important objective of encouraging access and participation for the public.

Highly centralised and tightly controlled information system with top down flows are admirably suited to societies which repress dissent and deviation from official policies.

Hence Bacchu Singh a technician in Doordarshan is of the view that internal autonomy should be provided by localized, inexpensive, flexible and decentralised electronic media to facilitate more autonomy to professionals.

The next three questions concerned public interest

and pressure groups. Satish Katyal & Kundanlal in the course of their interview expressed their opinion that pressure groups did not have much influences on station management. Infact they were not certain regarding the effect of pressure groups on station management. Nevertheless, commercial considerations are seldom absent from decision which affect choice and priorities in communication. " some of the news have become commercial products" at least its presentation is influence by an implicit conception of audience. In internal reporting important developments in the country are pushed aside by unimportant, even trivial news items concerning urban events and the activities of "personalities". Such distortions have a chain-reaction on new flows.

An official of doordarshan when asked to comment on the view that many programmes of low quality, with narrow audience appeal which attract fewer viewer are urban oriented said that the dual influence : of audience and advertising was the main reason behind it.

In the interview however, one broadcaster explained , " in the past few months there has been a growing pressure from the terrorist but it is localized in areas of Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir. to follow their dictates". He also reveleaved the shocking fact that life of officials of AIR and Doordarshan has been threatened more than once. To his

counterpart in Punjab and Kashmir threat to life is more if they do not follow the dictate of the terrorist. On the other hand terrorist believe that their point of view should also be made public through electronic media. Thus any attempt by the media to advocate only government's view maligning the 'freedom fighters as the terrorist proclaim themselves is discriminatory. Hence they claim access to media through illegal means for e.g. threatening the media officials of dire consequences.

Such unhealthy existence of 'pressure group' in Indian political scene exists due to state's repression. Undemocratic processes and absence of proper channels in the political system to express grievances.

One of the major demands of terrorist on the a AIR and Doordarshan officials was to broadcast in Punjabi in Punjab Kashmiri in Kashmir". This is due to "cultural alienation". This is due to "cultural Alienation of there particular community because communication is a part of culture as much as an influence upon it, the development of a national communication system can help to foster a thriving national culture. Mass media must be fully intragrated in the whole communication systems, which is a major cultural issue in any communications policy. given the pre-eminence of language as the primary and most universal expression of culture, any act or set of circumstances that lead to the superiority of one or several other languages over others raises Crucial issues.

Hence unless the languages of country's major population groups, at the very least, are used by the media, a valid and effective nationwide communication system cannot exist, since those whose languages are excluded are deprived of their right to participate in national affairs, culturally, politically and socially**

* Many Voices One World - UNESCO Publication.

** Humprey Tonkin - "Equalizing Language", Journal of Communication; Spring 1979.

One official indicated that paperwork has increased due to governments regulations which has lead to an increase in expenditure on the staff to keep up with the increased record keeping and paperfiling.

Current survey carried the task and goals to determine the determinants which influence the electronic media as perceived by officials in decision making. In pointing out the factors which determine decision making in electronic media an official saw an indirect role of parliament. He says , " it is the braodcasting and information ministry which directly controls the media". Which means there is a "vertical flow" of information and orders. At the present stage Ministry of Information and Braodcasting is the most influential factors particularly because Ministry feels that it is directly responsible to the people and since the responsibility is not shared hence the ministry must maintain a strict discipline through rules and regulations.

Another factor which helps decision - making in electronic in electronic media is as pointed out by a professional of AIR - "impact of general social milieu" by which he means that policies- social poltical and economic are affected by general social environment .

Fear of " cultural Imperialism" that is intrusion of external culture of the developed society creates anxiety among the developing countries. Thus policies and decision are made to resist this potential danger with the application of strict censorship and border control. For example India will be spending nearly 12 crores of Rupees in order to stop signals coming in from foregin countries.

Anxiety over " Cultural Imperialism " lead to "Cultural privacy".* "The concept of cultural privacy " holds that cultures which may be intrinsically rich and satisfying but which are relatively weaken contemporary terms, can neither assimilate inexpensive foreign - produce media content, nor afford to produce material of equally commanding audience impact on their own".**

Finally prejudices of officials play a very insignificant part in a government controlled media . . .
Since electronic media is operated by bureaucracy which

* Many voices, one world - UNESCO

** Under other name, the concept is familiar to Canadians (Instant world, Information Canada, Ottawa, 1971) . This familiarity prompted Canada to introduce guidelines requiring Canadian Television and Radio braodcasters to carry a certain percentage of Canadian originated programme material in their braodcast schedules. Canada restrict cable television operators to importing 3 commercial U.S.T.V. Signals and one U.S. Signal.

is committed to government policies their influence in decision making is influenced by the government policies as one official said " we just follow orders and distribute them.

Thus the main challenge to policy makers and communication practitioners is to find a formula to preserve the relationship between modern and traditional forms of communication leading to integration of the country.

During the interview it was gathered that officials of electronic media were concerned about crucial issues which were at the individual and collective level. According to Satish Katyal there was stagnancy in the government owned media. Promotions were tardy hence officials felt stagnant and frustrated in absence of any incentive. Another engineer complained about the discrimination practice against them in relation to professionals. He demanded status of engineers to be equivalent to professionals and not just remain as technicians.

Such problems are typical to a monopolistic government controlled sector where the officials are subjected to strict rules and regulations with limited autonomy in working conditions, having restricted mobility inside organization due to overstaffing. This

lead to a phenomenon of concentration, which constitutes an extremely serious threat to the existence of a free and pluralistic communication system as well as officials opportunities for employment.

For Bacchu Singh the most perturbing factor was discrimination between press and electronic media. He wants competing channels like competing press.

Since conferring 'autonomy of electronic media' was much in news hence nearly all the interviewees expressed their point of view which was in favour of the problem. They believed that autonomy would increase their bargaining capacity and they would function in a more relaxed and independent atmosphere.

In sum the officials of electronic media feel that regulations have drastically increased in the previous decade and with increase in regulations their jobs have become monotonous and difficult together with an increased expenses with the National front government promise to grant autonomy to electronic media they are optimistic about the future of electronic media.

A feeling of anxiety was felt among the officials in all India Radio (AIR) because of the fear of disintegration in the light of growing importance of

Doordarshan. Threat on radio by television as perceived by officials has been aptly described by P.C. Chatterji*. According to him, "Radio is threatened by television in India today just as 60 years ago the press felt threatened by radio. When the Indian Broadcasting Corporation started broadcasting elementary news bulletin there was a cry a protest from the news papers that if radio's right to broadcast news was not severely limited, it would mean their doom."

Delving further and analysing the question whether this fear is real or not one may start by examining why future of radio should be a matter of some concern and then explore the relevance of this medium in the Indian context. I would like to state here that this concern about radio's threat does not directly form a part of my research topic and is a slight divergence from the main topic nevertheless I tried to relate the two branches and came to a surprising conclusion that autonomy of electronic media will bring in more challenges to Akashvani and if Akashvani overcomes these challenges it would be able to sustain and promote itself like the press sixty years ago as indicated by P.C. Chatterji.*

* "Radio can learn from press", - P.C. Chatterji - Communicator - Vol XXIV No. 1 March 1989.

Obstacle Before AIR:

Challenges faced by AIR is not typical of India : it is almost universal. * The difference lies in the typical Indian socio - economic factor.

Unequal development of radio and television can be attributed to the discriminatory policy followed by government. This view can be easily substantiated by referring to chart 1 , where it can be seen that the plan outlay is heavily bent towards doordarshan with radio lagging far behind.

Another reason for television preponderance over radio is the technological development. It is because of communication technology in recent years which has led television to emerge as a powerful medium and because of its visual potential and appeal it is also the most favoured one today.

Similarly, advent of cable television has also posed challenge to AIR. Urban elite are taking to cable option. Cable television offers several

* N.L. Chowla - Challenge faced by AIR - Communicator March 1989

potentially broadcast medium . Cable television are opted for political propoganda, advertizing etc.** basically due to three reasons:- firstly, cable system telecast within geographically defined areas. This make its possible and easy, to target geographically specific population. Second - the individual networks that are carried on cable attract audiences that are much more homogenous than the relatively hetrogenous collection in the broadcast audience. Third, market research suggests that cable television subscribers are more likely to respond and consume than the general population making it both easier, and more worthwhile, to appeal to these viewers. Last, advertising time on cable television is both readily available and relatively cheap.

Social factor also contributes to television dominance over radio. When we talk of mass communication today, we see in it the medium of mass culture. It means the mass production and dissemination of the symbols and messages. It constitutes a new industrialised revolution in the field culture. Easy communication system is a totality of social interaction through exchange of messages.

* Political science & poltics - Vol XXIV. No. MARCH 1991. Avertising on cable television in the Presidential primaries , something to look for in 1992 Jame M. Hoefler, Dickson college.

Industrialised and mechanised communication system controlled by a few, have demolished the old relationship, and placed it on its head. Today societies are organised around industrialised and mechanized mass media systems. The biggest contradiction, is that with the widest ever reach of the media, they reflect the needs and aspirations of only a minority. Prints, films, radio, televisions educational books, cassettes and computer software, and children's toys have all become the cultural aims of a more oriented decadent capitalist industrialised society from which the new technology has been born. This "cultural Imperialism" propagated by the capitalist countries serves their economic, political and ideological needs.*

This comparative assessment of the two media is not only brief but may also be challenged on some counts. However, what cannot be challenged is the fact that doordarshan is still an urban medium and has the image of medium of entertainment.

In spite of all these challenges one can be optimistic about the future of radio and fact remains

* Political science & politics - Vol XXIV. No. MARCH 1991. Advertising on cable television in the Presidential primaries, something to look for in 1992 Jame M. Hoefler, Dickson college.

that Akashvani still has mass following in the rural areas which constitutes seventy five percentage of the Indian population.

Radio has an edge over television on the cost factor. For example if a television set costs Rs. 5000/- a radio set costs merely Rs. 300/- . Such a disparity in cost gives radio a wide range of consumers. Secondly television programming is available for limited period whereas AIR has much longer periods. Thirdly while doordarshan puts out programmes only in English and regional languages, AIR broadcasts programmes in 23 languages and 146 tribal and other dialects for almost 17 hours daily.

Thus what is needed is to exploit radio's potential fully and build up the listening habit through attractive programmes backed by vigorous and intelligent publicity, because radio like any other performing art is essentially show business.

In sum, officials from All India Radio or Doordarshan, believe that regulations have drastically hindered the process of smooth functioning. They are optimistic about the future of electronic media provided it is given autonomy . Whether or not the opinions of the members of electronic media are

supported by facts, these are their opinions. Their views can be summed up in the following ways. "communication with its immense possibilities for influencing the minds and behaviour of people, can be a powerful means of promoting democratization of society and of widening public participation in the decision - making process. This depends on the structures and practices of the media and their management and to what extent they facilitate broader access and open the communication process to a free exchange ideas, information and experience among equals without dominance or discrimination. "

* Many voices, one world - UNESCO

Conclusion

Move towards democratization of communication, as seen in previous Chapter, is an on going process which till date has not been accomplished and still remains at the mercy of political will and thus an open question. Media ownership and control patterns depend closely on the overall political system of the country, for e.g. every time Janta government came to power - 1977 , 1989 - it showed its willingness for an autonomous electronic media and everytime a new chapter was added to remove obstacles confronting such a move through various committee reports.

Though there is a consensus among various political parties for the autonomy of media however, there is no concensus as to how to make it fact. At the same time effort in the proposed direction is only half hearted.

Prasar Bharati Bill like its earlier counterpart experienced the same ignominous fall when a number of amendments were introduced by congress I party which were not acceptable to the ruling Janta government. Difference of opinion among the two parties lead to lapse of the Bill in Rajya Sabha after being passed in the Lok Sabha. The congress I party wanted threefold amendment to Prasar Bharati Bill -

firstly they wanted only ' functional autonomy' and not an autonomous corporation as envisaged in Prasar Bharati Bill. Secondly they wanted office of 'governors' to be independent from governments control and lastly they wanted a further discussion on the question and asked for a committee to look into the matter. Thus due to difference of opinion among parties democratization of electronic media has been prolonged.

With the coming in power the congress I government has reiterated its position on autonomy question of electronic media. The minister of state for information and broadcasting, Mr. Ajit Panja has favoured a move to free electronic media. He says ", it is time to sever the umbilical cord or the child will die". *

The new government has proposed privatisation of electronic media ** This would involve networks possessing the necessary technical expertise and financial resources to operate this news based

* Time of India -July 9, 1991 - It's time to open up ; Panja.

** Times of India : July 8 , 1991 . "7 offer to compete with D.D."

and light entertainment programmes on independent channels with minimal governments interference. Thus ending Doordarshan's monopoly over the airwaves. Such a move by the new government is welcoming in order to dispel the apprehensions by supporting greater professionalism with in the state owned agency. This however, could not be achieved by the arbitrary transfer of doordarshan officials or by controversial appointments which only serves to undermine the confidence of the staff. In a competitive media world, doordarshan urgent social issues, cannot be ignored.

The new governments proposal is diferent from Prasar Bharati Bill on a few grounds: firstly the new proposal gives importance to financial independence of the public corporation absence of which was the greatest handicap of the Prasar Bharati corporation which was to be funded by the government. Mr. Panja said that Ministry was even willing to consider proposal for setting up of public corporation by NRIs. Secondly, the new proposal envisages competition among various organization preparing news and feature programmes with Doordarshan or Prasar Bharati corporatin. The Prasar Bharati Bill envisages only one autonomous corporation known as Prasar Bharati corporation. Thus the new proposed is a radical departure from the present system. Thirdly, the congress

manifesto has promised a private second channel that will offer competition for Doordarshan. There was no such provision in Prasar Bharati Bill.

Electronic media presents a complex pattern of ownership. Early in the development it was widely recognised that the persuasive power of the electronic media should rest with the state for these reasons, governments were more concerned with broadcasting operations than with other media and thus electronic media became subject to state involvement. With the development of technology such a system is not favoured any more.

Hence the government are becoming receptive to competitive independent electronic media as seen in the 1st chapter on the historical evolution of the concept of autonomy of electronic media in the Indian context. A critical analysis of Chanda committee report and other successive reports shows that through belated in nature the government has developed a consensus on providing autonomy of electronic media however, differing in methods of implementation.

There are many obstacles leading to democratization of electronic media which have been summarised in IIInd chapter in conclusion it can be said that obstacles are not of a nature which cannot be

solved or does not have a solution. What is needed is political will to avoid abuses and distortion by improving autonomy of the media on one hand and social accountability on the other. How far government applies political will which is the main impediment for democratization of communication is to be seen in the coming time.

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