

Indian Media – Breaking India or Making India

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Abstract:

There are innumerable media generated stimuli that are floating around in the environment of the human sensory system, bombarding it with an electrifying intensity and velocity. The common man has become both a beneficiary and a victim of the proliferation of media channels. The human need for entertainment is as old as the human species is. The cable and satellite television channel industry has been going all out to woo the viewers in catering to this fundamental need of theirs. The genre of news channels is a key player in the whole spectrum of media. Today amid the overall degradation of the value system in the society, role of media has become all the more important. Media education can play vital role by forging socially responsible, enlightened and committed professionals and academicians to a great extent. How can media forge such professionals, who can play their role in nation building, is a vital question that needs to be pondered and answered? The present paper is a humble effort at working out the answer in the light of observations, case study and survey. The present state of Indian Media, its persisting problems and potential challenges shall be discussed and also the way out, shall be highlighted.

Keywords: Indian Media, Nation building, Potential Problems, Journalism

Introduction:

With about 450 Channels, 400 FM channels, 1000 newspapers, 1000 magazines, and ever-growing new media – Media is the fastest growing sector in India. As such there is fast growing need of educated and skilled workers in different media sectors. To cater to this ever growing demand, a number of media schools, colleges and universities have come into existence and many are mushrooming now and then. No doubt media education is today one of the most growing disciplines in the academic scenario in India. (Bagchi & Rath, 2009)

Though media is today a big industry and run by many corporate houses as a business, but the origin of journalism has a different background matching the standard definition of its role as a “Watch dog of society” or the “4th Pillar of Democracy”. During the whole phase of freedom struggle, the story of Indian journalism is that of missionary zeal, relentless struggle and fight for the cause of common masses and the national freedom. The spirited journalism of Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Makhnalal, Gandhi Ji etc. cannot be forgotten. Unquestionably journalism had the central role in national awakening and the freedom struggle. After independence this spirit gradually fades away. Present media is in the grip of instant profit gain and the concern for the developmental issues, common masses and traditional values are utterly lacking there.

Before 1990s, Doordarshan had monopolized newscast on Indian television and also turned the news programs into a dull exercise. Now the private channels made the news an essential commodity, a basic necessity of life like food, cloth and shelter. The strong point of all today’s news bulletins is their topicality, objectivity, glossy editing and high-quality visuals. The emerging media powerhouse provided prime time television content to almost all leading satellite channels in India including BBC, Star Plus, Zee. Indian viewers had very limited options (like public service broadcaster Doordarshan, BBC and CNN) for watching the television news. NDTV (New Delhi Television Company) to provide news content for this news channel. After the huge success of news programme `AajTak`, TV Today group launched a 24hour Hindi news channel with the same name `Aaj Tak`, in December 2000, which covers India with insight, courage and plenty of local flavour. Within 11 months of its launch, Aaj Tak emerged as India’s number one news channel and was awarded Best News. Channel award from Indian Television Academy awards. With the expiry, NDTV forayed into broadcasting business by

simultaneously launching two 24-hour news channels; NDTV 24X7 – English news channel and NDTV India – Hindi news channel, which targets the Indian Diaspora across the world.

Review of Literature:

Review of literature provides guidelines in research work. For this research paper various studies are concerned. Some of them are below: In Britain, Bob Franklin noted that news media have increasingly become part of the entertainment industry instead of providing a forum for informed debate of key issue of public concern. Entertainment has superseded the provision of information; human interest has supplanted the public interest; measured judgment has succumbed to sensationalism, the trivial has triumphed over the weighty; the intimate relationships of celebrities, from soap operas, the world of sport or the royal families are judged more "newsworthy" than the reporting of significant issues and events of international consequences. Traditional news values have been undermined new values; infotainment is rampant (Franklin, 1997:4) It seemed to many that television news was taking on the worst aspects of the tabloid newspapers, which had always understood their entertainment remit. For Colin Sparks, the tabloidization of news showed in it giving relatively little attention to politics, economics and society and relatively much diversion like sports, scandals and popular entertainment, and relatively much attention to the personal and private lives of people, both celebrities and ordinary people and relatively little to political processes, economic development, and social changes (Sparks, 2000:10) The proliferation of all-new channels and the fragmentation of their audiences was being accompanied, according to Tracey, by a linguistic poverty and therefore a mental and moral poverty, daytime soaps, tabloid television, the trivialization of public discourse, an evangelism of the ephemeral, the celebration of insignificant, and the marginalization of the important" (Tracey, 1998:264). Currently TV news is a study in the poverty that comes with plenty. More channels means more frenzied competition, and the less sense the viewer gets of the reality behind the political spokesman's bluster, or the anchors chummy wrapping up of some nondiscussion. (Ninan, 2006). Similarly Andrew Marr has commented: "The idea of news has altered. It stopped being essentially information and became something designed to produce-at all costs, always -an emotional reaction, and the more extreme the better. (2004:381).

There is a concern that too much news is creating an information overload, contributing to a structural erosion of the public sphere, where the viewer, bombarded with visuals, is unable to differentiate between public information and corporate propaganda. However, news should be a stimulus to new thinking as Jean Seaton reminds us, 'not an anaesthetizing escape from it. (Hobsbawm, 1968:321). The economic and entertainment power enhanced their political position and their capacity to control the masses (Berridge, 1978). The 'new' journalism demonstrated a shift away from parliamentary and political news to sport, gossip, crime and sex' (Wiener, 1988) Valaskakis (1983) in his study examined television viewing tastes and habits among the Indians of the Eastern and Central Arctic. The findings revealed that the amount of different types of programming was significantly different among the Indians. Accordingly, the underlying assumption is that, the males who are heavily engaged in television's sports fare, would underestimate the mean world of television. Lowery and DeFleur (1988) showed in their research that children tend to watch more television than do adults prefer to watch adult programs, and usually watch as late into the night as do adults. Despite their emergence from the more limited world of childhood and their increased reliance on peers, adolescents continue to spend a great deal of their time watching television. Sinichi Shimizu (1993) in her study found that MTV programmes are changing the entire music scene in Asia. Multinational rock music or world music is becoming the mainstream popular music among the youth in Asia, while the traditional style is becoming obscure and obsolete. Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996) found in their study that about 48% upper class and 62% middle-class Indians watch Television for more than two hours per every day. Fatima (2000) suggests through research that TV has a long-term effect on people's thinking. Therefore, instead of glamorization, portrayal of crime and commercialization, positive trends need to be introduced on the TV channels in order to save our values. Bukhari (2002) concludes that the youth is getting liberated ideas regarding the placement and position of women in the

society. Giacomo Corneo (2002) found out in his research that in OECD countries watching television is by far the most time consuming form of leisure. Surprisingly, television viewing is positively correlated with work hours across countries. Workers and capitalists are shown to exhibit opposite preference orderings over equilibria. The relative ability of those two groups in capturing a country's government may explain which equilibrium is selected. Verma and Larson (2002) in their study found that adolescents watch television for 12 hour per week on an average. The study further indicates that Television viewing is seen as a major source of stress relieving activity. It was concluded in the study that 29% of viewers watch television for purpose of learning/education. Ahluwalia and Singh (2011) found in their study that on an average, children watch two hours or less of TV daily and most of them indulged in bedtime TV Viewing. They watched TV primarily for entertainment and for learning.

The potential problems & challenges with Indian Media by and large are-

1. Lack of proper Infrastructure – Many institutes are running media courses without proper lab, necessary equipments, systems and updated software.
2. Lack of experienced faculties – There is lack of experienced teachers in this field. Most have no media exposure of any kind. There is utter lack of skills to be imparted to the aspiring students.
3. Lack of quality students – Students opting for media is also a question to ponder. Most of the students are coming in media school influenced by the glamour of media. Passion to do something for the society, nation or humanity is by and large a missing element.

4. Poor Indigenous foundation– Indian Media education is totally based on western theories & models. There is hardly much that we can claim to be based on our rich traditional cultural & spiritual heritage. There is lack of original thinking & research suited to regional & national socio-cultural needs & aspirations of the public.

Challenge of Profit driven media – In the rat race of TRP and monetary gains, negativity & sensationalism are the guiding principles of media. Media institutions are also following the same track. Most of them are extracting a big amount of money from the students. What great can one expect from the products of such institutions?

6. Lack of social concern – Lack of proper understanding of current issues, socio-cultural fabric of the Nation is a big challenge. Vision for integral development of nation is mostly out of site. Without lack of social concern they are producing arm chair professionals and academicians.

7. Lack of positive environment & motivation– In departments or universities lack of academic and positive environment is a big challenge. Faculties and authorities fighting for petty goals and incentives is a matter of concern. There is a great dearth of faculties, who can withstand the adverse flow of consumeristic culture and stand as a light house to the aspiring students.

MEDIA FOR NATION BUILDING AND THE WAY OUT

“Main challenge in Journalism and media education today is not to multiply the existing training and education facilities but to strengthen them through collective efforts by the media academics, professionals, media industry, media universities and professional media bodies. Minimum benchmark in media education will be evolved through collective wisdom of all stake holders. The setting up of the core group is the first step in that direction, which can work out with three sub-groups- Curriculum & faculty, Infrastructure & training facilities and Affiliation/ accreditation.” (Tandon, 2009)

After examining the current state of Journalism education in India based on an opinion survey of media educators and professionals, CS Murthy suggests that there is need to revise the curriculum to remain relevant to the media sector. There is need of a common core curriculum and forge effective journalists in the diverse cultural and regional settings of India. (Murthy, 2011)

“The western style and model of communication still being followed should be discouraged. The media teachers, social thinkers and communication planners should prepare guidelines for journalism/ communication education rooted in Indian culture. The UGC should support these efforts by preparing a syllabi common for all university journalism departments. The syllabi must give due attention to the regional and local journalism practices and communication methods.” (Pattnaik & Naqvi, 2013)

“India is in great need of honest media personnel who could communicate, who could send their views, which could really bring the national problems before the country and hypothesize a solution to them. Ultimately, ‘If we want to be the world’s best democracy, then we also need to have the world’s best media ...so ultimately we need the world’s best media educational institutes.’”(Singh P., 2013) “Proper mass communication and journalism education and training are very essential in order to develop media systems, professionals and activities vigorously, so that we can uphold and maintain the standard of media studies in India that can nurture the Indian students to match the international standards.” (Parihar, 2012) .Based on these observations and personal experience, media education to be effective tool for nation building, there is need to review media education on the following track -

1. Ideal curriculum, with proper blend of theory and practical; beside media it should carry subject on general awareness (Social, Political, economic, cultural etc.), language and technical skills.
2. Basic Infrastructure, like Media lab, studios with necessary equipments, where students can apply theory into practice, Produce in-house newspaper, documentaries, ad, TV & radio programs.
3. Proper field training, where besides lab practice during semester breaks students get first hand exposure of media industry. This will help the students to get necessary professional skills to work with choice of media house. During student life they should get the experience of ground zero reporting.
4. Quality research work, Indian Media education is in its infancy stage in this regards. There is need to develop scientific vigour, intellectual honesty and concern for the society & masses. Research should not be mere intellectual gymnastic but reach the last person of the society and benefit public at large.
5. Workshops, Seminars, special lectures, Educational tours etc. should be integral part of media education so that the students get necessary academic & professional grooming with their active participation amid the classes and masses.
6. Faculty recharging & training, Faculties are the carriers of media education. There is need of proper training and exposure to the best of media practices at national & international level. Above all they should have integrity of character & lead the students by example.
7. Value inputs, in the era of value degradation and moral dilemma clear standards of values are the need of the hour. How to infuse the values in young minds is a million dollar question. Here teachers have decisive role to play. It is the collective responsibility of the faculties to share their best in this regards.
8. Infusing spirit of social responsibility & service—There should be provision during students life to give them minimum level of exposure to the ground reality of poor, backward, socially deprived and marginalized communities of the society and sensitize them about the basic issues of the society & nation.
9. Global outlook, in this era of globalization, national development cannot be isolated from the global reality. They should be updated with the international issues. National commitment with global outlook should be promoted.

CONCLUSION

In this way, need of the hour is quality media , grooming young talents into professionals fit to join media industry, along with forging them into noble, enlightened and socially responsible human beings, that can as future journalists, academicians and professionals contribute for the national development. There is need to create positive and academic environment in the media institutions where this vision can thrive. No doubt “The whole approach to the teaching of media education in India needs a new radical rethinking. There is need of meeting the challenges of globalization. There is imperative need to go beyond Media education, to mobilize forces to build up a media users’ movement at the local, national and international levels to re-appropriate the media so that they serve the public interest. Media activism has thus to become an integral part of media education.” (Kumar J., 2006) How we materialize this vision into reality is the collective responsibility of all media educators concerned with the burning issue of National Building and positive change in the society & world at large.

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