NEW MEDIA ORDER FOR A SAFE SOUTH ASIA

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ABSTRACT

In developing countries like India, paradigms of development have hitherto addressed the primary problems of hunger, illiteracy, poverty, transportation and communication. However, the programs and practices of the current media, which have become sleek, savvy, aggressive and all pervasive, need a serious look in order to come out with a new paradigm of development altogether. In the quest of cohesive progress in and among the South Asian countries, a comprehensive and complementary cooperation among various mass media of these nations is indispensable.

The study undertaken recognizes that the problems faced by these nations are similar. Ethnic mixing among these nations adds to the emotions of the media practitioners in their functioning. Cooperation is based on emotions. Common cultural base help trigger common emotions. Entertainment is the crux here and the Indian media has it in abundance. Media entertainment will generate good revenue for the region. The presence of media in the region brings lot of comforts in terms of economy, labour and turnover.

Freedom of press is high in India. The paper explores that though the growth of media in India has been ominously commercial; content wise it is comfortable and can contribute a lot to South Asia. There is a huge demand for Indian soaps in SAARC nations.

The paper critically examines as to how the hurdles to the flow of information from international scene have resulted in Third world developing its own objective, indigenous information mechanisms, which are invariably successful.

It is found that media cooperation could remove the myths of politically motivated hatred between these countries. It can nurture tourism exchange, and foster unity. It can act as a deterrent against terrorism, help during natural calamities, contribute in generating awareness on pro environment practices, address social problems, and foster cultural and sports exchange and contribute in providing quality media education.

The study affirms that with the support of technology from among its neighboring countries, Indian media as a front-end tool could play a crucial role in making a difference and holding reigns of progress in the region, and immerse in yet another successful institution building exercise.

Keywords: Media Order, Interdependency, Technology, Cooperation, Development.

INTRODUCTION

South Asia is the hub of human activities in the world chiefly owing to abundant availability of human resource coupled with diverse natural resources and cultural diversity also. The nations in South Asia have some of the oldest civilizations, history, upheavals and learning through the ages. India is one of the prominent nations of South Asia, largest among them,

not just by size but also by population. Human capital and social capital alike have taken independent India to new heights in competition with other nations of the world.

Progress of the nations is dependent on various factors like its people, polity, natural resources, climate, initiations, participation and leadership. A nation's development is the index of not just its survival but of its acceptance by the world. Many nations have lost their identity just because of their non-concentration on consistent progress and development. Competencies of individual nations are frequently questioned by the world community as it affects many other nations of their progress to quite an extent. Dependency or parasitic nature of any nation on economy or resources of any of the other nation or nations are by very instinct not tolerated. Though LPG have set its foot big time in the world, it has to stand the test of the time and nations have to learn and promulgate laws or norms for balanced sharing and caring of their global counterparts. Hence, development is an inevitable concept for any nation to concentrate upon.

Independent India after 1947 along with its constitution of 1950 foresaw a balanced, safe and secure, progressive and pragmatically developing India. Perhaps the Gandhian Meta-model for development, proposed by Mahatma Gandhiji was the only indigenous model that worked out for a developing India. His model is the idea for today's Panchayat Raj system, the best known grass-root level administration till date and for the strength of local self governance as of today. Mid way through the 1960s, though there were efforts from some development scientists like Daniel learner who studied Indian developmental scene and proposed the Urbanization model, they proved to be skewed development for India. In the mean time, the five-year plans architected by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru though carved a niche for themselves in the development process, was falling short of ideas to address the onslaught of problems bombarding one after the other on India through the decades. Also, economists like Prof. Gunner Myrdal and others came out with some of the economic models viable for India however, the fast changing global economic scene and the on-surge of LPG soon defocused the objectives aimed by the development scientists and stakeholders for India.

Some ray of hope arose when Dr.Swaminathan and Dr.Verghese Kurian developed indigenous ideas on agriculture and on dairy respectively. Not to forget the contribution of All India Radio, the official media of Govt. of India, in campaigning for the success of green revolution and operation flood which were solely responsible for the eradication of hunger and poverty to some extent. These trends brought India on the list of major food and milk producing nations in the world. Alarming rise of population was disproportionate to the growing economy and thus poverty alleviation and literacy rates got stunted or stagnated throughout the decades of development in India. The Golden Quadrilateral and Gram-Sadak Yojana were a considerable success to address tolerable transportation system.

It was communication revolution backed by the technologies both from within the nation and as a consequence of LPG that saw immense success in India. Dr.Sam Pitroda, supported by Mr.Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, made the difference in satellite, IT and related communication sectors. The relaxed *Exim* policy during 1985 by the central government helped excel in electronic media access and utility by the masses. This also acted as a morale booster and created a hope that the media can be trusted to bring about the needed change in socio-cultural, educational and economic sectors of India. Because of this optimism, India also welcomed the trade and commerce from abroad through LPG and got a path through steady relaxation in FDI for the influx of economy and sustainability of development practices. Because of skilled human resource on one side and the brains of the information technology on the other, India today is in a good position to forge a cordial relationship among the South Asian countries.

The organisation SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) consists of culturally rich countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, coupled with the supportive vibrant countries like Maldives (for tourism), Pakistan (food grains), Bangladesh (commercial crops), Myanmar and Afghanistan. Owing to sheer size and population as human resource backed up by a strong ancient civilization, it is India which has an edge over the comparatively small countries, except perhaps Pakistan. This does not mean any lop-sided role of India in the South Asian progress but more to mean a cohesive, complementary, and mutually cooperative role among these nations that will augur well for each one of them, in the days to come.

To this end, observations point to the fact the ruling governments take care of political, social and economic developments of these nations, it is the media that has to hold the reigns of monitoring, conserving, preserving and perpetuating the nearly common cultural ethos of South Asian nations. It is true that culture and its diversity in these nations being a unique factor unlike the western and many developed nations, it would be logical to hold on to the ramifications of that culture to entwine it into the development of these nations. Also, since cultural standings have deeper longevity, development paradigms stitched and hitched onto cultural practices among these nations will ensure sustainability of the progress of these nations. Thus, media practices compatible to the cultural fabric of these nations could enhance and fructify their cooperative efforts. Such media functioning also would act as a deterrent against the vested interests of the advanced nations in misusing or exploiting the South Asian nations.

From Proclivity to Pragmatism

The problems faced by these nations are more or less similar. For instance- poverty, erratic population, illiteracy, unemployment, excessive internal strife, political instability, economic fluctuation, religious intolerance and terrorism, seen as in today. Some of the common features of the social malaise also include the spread of HIV and other communicable diseases, child labour, bonded labour, wage disparities and trafficking of women. Access to fundamental needs like food, shelter, drinking water, medicine, protection from natural calamities and infrastructure are below par. At the outset, even the cultural diversity among these nations has become a curse. For instance, the attitude of virility exhibited by people of one nation as against the diplomatic, sombre and urbane attitudes of the other go as opposites. Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism are mistaken concepts in different directions among the nations. Such cultural outlook will only build islands and not bridges. Conventional and traditional practices of these nations are slowly getting victimised among the masses under the onslaught of aggressive radiation of western lifestyles mainly transferred by many of the corporate irradiators who themselves are a prey to the highly incompatible habits of the west. These proclivities cut across the religions, nationality and languages. Junk food is the staple diet, jeans is the best wear, English language is the emancipator, behaviour according to whims and fancies that is mistaken for freedom and independence- are only some of the displaced routine practices among the South Asian people.

Post LPG saw some dramatic and unfortunate developments where the media joined the bandwagon in encroaching upon the indigenous culture of these lands. However, the same media is in a huge transition of constantly learning to understand the actual mindsets of its target audience and is waiting for the right signals from them to indulge in the indigenous socio-economic participation for greater unity and interdependence among the South Asian nations. A cricket match between India and Pakistan is not taken in spirit of sportsmanship. Neither the spectators nor the players of either of the nations view it so. This hatred is much

owed to the contribution of media which banks on the sentiments only for increased TRP ratings.

Misusing the mistrust among these nations, the developed nations lure the smaller nations for MoUs with them to build naval or air base for defence purposes which is another unfortunate development. Sri Lanka having the US as well as Chinese Naval Base on its island is a case in point. Pakistan having US airbase, China funding in PoK associated with dam projects, etc. With the concept of 'enemy's enemy is my friend,' the smaller nations themselves are getting affected in the sub-continent.

From an analysis in a book by Vanitha Kohli (2010), it is revealed that the growth of media in various nations is different because of the types of governments existing through the times in them. The book takes the case study of China versus India. This is also a good clue to answer the question "*Why is South Asian media different*?" If there is difference in media functioning it is prominently because of the different kinds of governments through the decades in these nations. Sri Lanka, with a presidential slant in governance has seen faster growth of media. It invited the international media barons to support them for the successful functioning of media technically. However because of terrorism and fractured foreign policies, it did not achieve much in the international market. It only resulted in sales of FMCG and severely affected their indigenous products.

Pakistan, because of successive, long term dictatorship and of-late, because of Taliban control is groping to become steady. It has severely affected not just media functioning but also independence of it, resulting in the harassment of media professionals. Repeated military regime not only ruined the Pakistan media activity, the entire nation is mostly in jeopardy. "Politically unfree citizens are freedom-deficient even if they enjoy a high income," said Prof. Amartya Sen, the great economist, in the year 2003.

Nepal, after beginning well with the media activities soon lost focus due to the infiltrating, and Maoist activities. Here the communist theory of journalism is in tangle with the libertarian theory of media functioning. With repeated coup, the king is often in danger and with no healthy environment for media thriving, hence the diminished growth. Whereas in case of Maldives, since it is a bit of a tourism hub, some positive media inclinations are observed.

Bhutan and Myanmar– one monarchy, another of anarchy also have unusual tendencies in functioning of media. 'In Bhutan, phone [new media after cell phones] is already the first resort. Bhutan tends to be led by technology, though not prepared for it. In spite of govt. failure to provide adequate tele-services, private service providers give aggressive marketing by messaging news headlines. Data mining by G-mail in South Asia has given it a very large market.' (Asian Media Barometer - India, 2009)

Afghanistan's heavy relying on the polarized power like the USA for its revival of democracy is a story in distress. Instead, if that nation merely looks towards India and the Indian ethos of foreign policy, the story would be entirely different. It could dream of a hastened pathway to progress.

Smaller nations can always fall prey to the idea of destabilising their neighbours like India, imagining it to be a big brother. Nepal, doesn't govern its borders. Production of fake passports, drug trafficking and fake currencies in guise of strengthening their economy, encouraging the international mafia to enter big nations through their borders- has all made Nepal forget that such instances may affect its own sovereignty. The situation is misused by the vested interests. The divide and rule policy of developed nations whose interests in these

nations are for long term profits also cannot be ruled out. Otherwise, media is by and large similar in South Asian region.

Progress in relations between India and Pakistan has historically come about when both India and Pakistan have had democratic governments. Governments that have a mandate from the people are concerned about achieving targets that can deliver welfare to the people..... While militaries may instil short term counter terror, they cannot win the hearts and minds of the people. In democracy, the government is part of the people who have elected it. It is the people who shape the policies, own the policies and ensure the success of the policies.

Press played a very significant role in Indian freedom struggle. The very entry of media into India was completely unexpected and sudden, amidst so many sociological complexities. In spite of absence of specific communication policy, the grant of Right of Expression by Indian Constitution however with reasonable restrictions augured well for India. Even in a democratic set up except newspapers, the film, radio and TV were under the control of the government.

Only newspapers were free to function that too to some extent under this set up. Government of India was very firm that autonomy for electronic media in India will never be granted and official mouth piece of the government, Akashavani and Doordarshan were under its clutches. The film industry was controlled by the then Censor Board. However after rapid expansions of Television and the impact of globalization, Indian media got liberated on its own. Thanks to the technological development which happened in the media scenario. The metamorphosis of Indian media occurred when the print, radio and other media were forced to compete with TV and started redefining the content, quality of production, marketing, etc., thus leading the way for granting the status of a media industry. Never before India had seen such a phenomena and Indian media for the first time became a profit making industry, ending with a total turnover per annum of more than 700 billion rupees through entertainment as the front end.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Pragmatically, India with its consistent learning of the new democratic order, has gained non-interference for most media over the years. Though indirect controls like ownership, society and a few of the government controls, because of the acceptance of technology by people, Indian media has emerged as a force. The other South Asian media are today dependent on the entertainment programmes of Indian media, a major crux of the economic interdependency.

Entertainment through Indian media is available in abundance and with variety. Cultural anecdotes are common place in programs of entertainment here.

Statistics and surveys reveal that the E&M projections by the year 2013 will overtake the USA in turnover and size. Media entertainment will generate good revenue for the region. Though profit is for India, the presence of media in the region brings lot of comforts in terms of economy, labour & turnover.

Indian entertainment industry is inevitable for the South Asian nations to even the extent of their survival. Indian media has an excellent history as to how Hindi film actors are admired by these nations. Some military regimes got so scared and even went to the extent of banning the TV channels of Indian origin.

The Projections of the activities of Entertainment & Media [E&M] Industry in India amidst other mass media is as under:

World Media Segments

Segment	2008 ($ billions)	2013 ($ billions)	Per cent CAGR
Television	4.81	9.45	14.5
Print	3.45	5.32	9.0
Film	2.18	3.37	9.1
Animation	0.35	0.79	17.8
OOH	0.32	0.59	12.8
Gaming	0.13	0.55	33.3
Internet	0.12	0.43	27.9
Radio	0.16	0.33	14.2
Music	0.14	0.21	8

Source: KPMG-FICCI Report

Indian Media and Entertainment Industry

Year	Size ($ billion)	Per cent Growth
2005	7.72	-
2006	8.9	15.28
2007	10.4	16.85
2008	11.68	12.31
2009	12.56	7.53
2010	13.94	10.89
2011	15.82	13.49
2012	18.22	15.17
2013	21.04	15.45

CAGR for 2009-13: 12.5% *(Source: KPMG-FICCI Report)*

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Media Cooperation at the outset seems like an oxymoron. But the impending need for urgent solutions for the groping problems common among the South Asian nations, several media should jump into interdependent activities thereby unite together for the common cause.

The potentials of the media are hugely untapped. Cliché had ridden practices of using media as mere entertainment tool has blinded the policy makers as well as practitioners, not realising the mighty strength of the mega media scene of India. Some templates for innovative practices among different media with cooperation of their fraternity among other South Asian nations are explored here for better interdependency towards unity.

OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

A general objective of the study is to explore the latent dynamics of media functioning in India. Some specific objectives include possibilities of leadership from media sector to establish cooperation among media in South Asian nations and to develop activities that make those media interdependent. This is an exploratory study. It attempts to examine the incidents, practices, prospects and programmes of media. The study also tries to inspect

changes undergone by the media and the way it adapted to the suiting needs of the sub-continent.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Due to amalgamation of religions and similar thinking, South Asian nations have a strong base cut out for media playing the pivotal role. However, 'trust' is the major missing element. Some of these nations have morbid fear on India. This is in spite of the Indian foreign policy which is very clear, especially, since NAM declared that it respects the sovereignty of any nation. The factor of occupying, etc., never arises here. In 1972, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, most respected leader in the world and the then Prime Minister of India, after the Indo-Pak war, through Indian government declared the region of East Pakistan as a separate sovereign nation of Bangladesh. The then Indian Prime Minister felt that Bengali Muslims were being harassed in East Pakistan. India had won that battle and at any point of time, Indian union had every opportunity to merge that region with the Indian union. It did not happen so. But today, just nearly after four decades, the South Asian nations have fear and doubts of India scheming to become super power by foul means. Even India has lost patience and missed the opportunities on some occasions, especially on Pakistan on the common issue of Jammu & Kashmir. Such reactions should be mitigated and responded aptly keeping the future in consideration.

Thus, the lack of coordination and understanding in the bilateral relations is prevailing now. Entry of terrorists, illegal arms and ammunitions has become easy. Frequent mutual exchange on cultural, academic, scientific, defence and environmental platforms among these nations, much more so through the mass media networks of print, electronic, movies, new media or of any other kind among the respective nations will alone ensure cooperative progress.

If India has strong faith in Democracy, a mass media system that is subscribing and adhering to such democracy should and can do the difference even within the accepted leadership styles of Bhutan and Burma, putting aside profitable motives.

The FDI is to be converted into a right platform by providing opportunities for professional media practitioners from across the borders of any of the South Asian nations to play their part. Ethnic mixing among professionals adds to the emotions of the media practitioners in their functioning. Cooperation is based on emotions. Common cultural base help trigger common emotions.

The only solution can be the media, its role, functioning, treatment and projection of South Asian countries in Indian media and vice-versa, attaching cultural affinity, exchange of academicians, students, cultural teams, scientists and farmers. Journalists should be allowed for free movements in the country to enhance mutual relationship among the fraternity.

Entertainment is the crux of emotions and in a similar cultural context of South Asian nations the Indian media has an edge to provide entertainment in abundance. Programmes based on entertainment involve lot of labour, both skilled and unskilled, which leads to lot of employment opportunities as well as creativity. This brings in strong movement of currency paving way for profits. At a glance, though profit appears to be all for India**,** the presence of media in the region brings lot of comforts in terms of economy, labour & turnover.

"Our diversities are a source of strength, not weakness, for national unity. The more we develop the culture of taking every section of society on the path of cooperative development, greater will be our internal strength and international stature. India has never been and will never be a threat to any nation. At the same time, India cannot be threatened by any nation" (Narasimhan, 1973).

Also, in 1982, *"We don't want to be a big power. We have no desire to be rich either",* said Mrs. Indira Gandhi, former Indian Prime Minister.

The Indian Media Panacea

Chhote Ustaad the renowned talent hunt show on Star TV is only a speck of an example for unifying people of two nations India and Pakistan, through children whose thinking is not tainted with malice or prejudices.

Members of the Pakistan press must work diligently to have their voices heard in the government's attempt to create a Press Council and new press laws. The decreasing trend in advertising created an increased dependence on the government for funds. The government is also a major shareholder in the private station, Shalimar Recording and TV station, upon which it also vests censor controls through PTV. The Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), for example, is a nonprofit media research, documentation and training center committed to promoting freedom of the press in Pakistan and internationally. The foundation produces *PPF NewsFlash*, a service designed to highlight threats to press freedom in Pakistan. As on today, the FDI limit for Print media is twenty five per cent. Problems facing the Pakistan press are not new, nor are there any quick fixes to them. Pakistan's largest and most influential newspaper, *Jung* was once raided as it was too critical of the government. It is nice to see the *PPF* actively involved in training of journalists, especially the rural journalists. However, programs of constant interactions with Indian press counterparts will prove immensely mutually beneficial and ease political stiffness.

In Bhutan, by 2002, the introduction of cable television is alleged to be responsible for the spurt in crime. It is surprising to note that in Bhutanese movies, no professional actors are used. While for Journalism, many aspirants from Bhutan resort to training in India, it is enigmatic that they have not sought any training needs from the 'mecca of movie making', India.

Censorship characterizes Myanmar media. The government owned *Myanmar Times* had for a very long time, a foreign journalist from Australia as its editor acting as bridge between the junta and Aun San Syu Ki with the main aim to convince the international community to accept the junta. India should question the Australian sovereignty being put in shame as one of its citizens is being used to satisfy another nation's vested interests.

In Afghanistan, post Taliban, Freedom of Expression and the press is promoted in the 2004 constitution, though defaming individuals or producing material contrary to the principles of Islam is prohibited. If Afghanistan seeks absolute sovereignty, then on priority, it should discourage its exiles who have set up the *Afghan Islamic Press*, based in Pakistan! Most of the electronic news media are government-owned. Here, they can take a leaf out of India's practice of allowing many private news channels.

In Sri Lanka, because of the limited circulation for the daily and weekly newspapers, they are heavily dependent on advertising. As a result of this it is very rare to see Sri Lankan newspapers engage in investigative journalism or daring exposes of big business. According to the *Reporters without borders index,* during the President Rajapakshe administration, press freedom in Sri Lanka became the "worst in any democratic country". During 2008, many newspapers were set fire. The main private TV network *Sirasa* was repeatedly threatened by a minister, attacked by a petrol bomb during 2009 and raided by gunmen, who set on fire the main control room. Lasantha Wikramatunga, the chief editor of the English Weekly *Sunday Leader*, was assassinated in 2008. Many journalists have been harassed and threatened continuously during the preceding three years. According to *Reporters without Borders*, the Rajapaksa administration blocks investigations into the murder of journalists. Media in Sri

Lanka seems to be in yet another transition and needs strong leads from Indian media for future.

The Nepalese government rigidly controls the press. Ninety per cent of Nepalese newspapers do not sell advertisements and rely on sponsors, usually politically related. Television is limited because only fifteen per cent of homes have electricity. Much broadcast media consists of entertainment rather than news. Internet access is Nepal is limited by lack of equipment and related expenses. Journalists do not regularly use the Internet to research.

In India, students of South Asian nations and budding journalists could be trained; empathy is easier due to cultural proximities and proclivities. Problems of inequality can be addressed. Publications activity is another good platform.

Freedom of press is high in India. Though the growth of media in India has been ominously commercial, content wise it is comfortable and can contribute a lot to South Asia. Particularly, Public Service Media can play important role. Indian soaps have huge demand in SAARC nations.

The mighty electronic media Doordarshan of India and the All India Radio should broaden their base and agenda to include SAARC nations in all their programs and activities. Not to seek directions in the form of stated orders from MIB ministry. Now that autonomy is for real, these PSBs should venture out with bottom up approach to provide access to the SAARC nations and they have the potential to do so.

In the past, the PSBs have already shown their success. During Green Revolution the AIR succeeded in conveying development messages for agriculture success. Later even during Operation Flood, Akashavani was a huge success. AIR campaign during early 1980's, Ramakrishna Hegde, Chief Minister of Karnataka, an India's state, gave a call to preserve all the lakes and save environment in Bangalore city called '*Bring Back Beauty to Bangalore'*. A similar campaign carried by the AIR on Environment also had equal impact.

Doordarshan during its 1980-90s is called the *golden period of terrestrial empire*. Its programmes on agriculture, science, education, public service message [PSM], culture, performing arts, folk arts, news, current affairs, mytho-social messages and developmental stories at the grass roots level success stories in the society. By 1990s India had achieved food production, one of the largest in the world; unfortunately, the grown grain was not saved well; GOI through DD started a campaign *'Save grain'* where farmers were taught to preserve grains scientifically. Many such stories are there which could be shared with their counterparts of South Asian nations.

INFERENCE AND CONCLUSION

India has proved to be a key player in the sub-continent reiterating the dictum of many voices, one world. The solution to the Third world lies heavily in the cooperative parlances of the different mass media of these nations. It could be recalled that the hurdles to inflow of information from international scene have forced the Third world to evolve indigenous information mechanisms which are objective and fruitful.

The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was an outcome of many fears, both political and social. It signified a transition between the world orders. Though it had minimal effects on mass media functioning, it was to address the questions of the earlier world. The perspectives by the respective III-world nations about the reportage of media, particularly the news agencies of the developed world on events and issues were found to be distorted, biased or missed on empathy of the masses. The interpretations in the news stories on any issues lacked the understanding in depth and in being nearer to the local ethos. These

news flow imbalances led to the forceful designing of their own indigenous news agencies and independent press organizations by the third world nations. Their efforts resulted in Arab World of News Agency (AWNA), Non Aligned Pool of News Agencies [NAPNA], Middle East News Agencies (MENA) and so on. It was obvious that the developed nations were ambitious of their continued profits. Once again, efforts on the same lines could be thought of in South Asia media context.

Communication Satellites among South Asian nations should be formed into a syndicate compatible to standardize ITU standards. The New Media technologies could be another area usable for development.

Formulation of a comprehensive communication policy is yet another serious look out for South Asian Region. The discussion on Communication policies, code of conduct, regulations and guidelines has always reached a dead end without much progress or objective realizations. There is an impending need for less developed nations to continue cooperation that helps demystifying the commitment to change which is not seen so far. The dire need of the hour is to accept and move forward in the direction of a composite agreement on the drafts towards global media mechanisms. Hence, every nation should have framed communication policy. It was reiterated by the McBride Commission report. Unscientific growth of media, with the absence of communication policy will have drastic effects on status of the media. In any developing situation, the triangle of entertainment, information and education is a must. Policy makers should realise the importance of the 'communication policy.' *Regulation, not control* should be the mantra here. The serious area of digital divide and the knowledge gap should be addressed among the South Asian nations.

Media cooperation could remove the myths of politically motivated hatred between these nations, nurture Tourism exchange, Crops & foster unity; Act as a deterrent against terrorism, help during natural calamities, preserve Environment, address social problems, cultural exchange, sports & media education. Tolerance and amicability need to be imbibed and practiced by citizenry of these nations.

1. It can be recalled that during Tsunami, more than India helping its own people in distress, it stretched its human and many other resources for the troubled people of the neighbouring nations, most of them belonging to SAARC.

2. At least one success story at grassroots level, drawn from every sector mentioned above

Media should keep a strong watch and constantly alert on groping inter-nation issues: PoK issue, Maoists menace, LTTE hangover in Tamil Nadu, infiltration through Bangladesh and Nepal [here, VISA relaxation is also there]

Indian media as front end tool will play a crucial role in making a difference and holding reigns of progression in the region, it would be a sure story of another successful institution building exercise for India soon.

"One argument given in favour of the big private [media] players is that they have the resources, the means, the experience and the expertise and that is why they will be able to do a better job and will efficiently run new newspapers and television channels. There is also the argument given that since they are strong and powerful they will be able to resist govt. pressure. But that is not happening, they may not be able to accept every dictate of the govt. but in the long run they can be easily pressured, this is going to be an ongoing issue and we cannot resolve it easily. But I think we have to raise our voice and we have to resist these monopolies because monopolies in any field are bad, be it of power by the military or by

ethnic groups. And the media if it is diversified sufficiently will be better equipped to look after the interests of the people" (Derne, 2008).

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Media as an institution of nation building is long accepted not only in India but also in many nations of South Asia. Because of the current model of *Convergence*, where technology, management and communications are concurrent and closely knit epochs, only combinational and synergetic models of energies will result in comprehensive, long term development plan by nations. With the mighty Information Technology as a back end tool, India is a model to lead other South Asian countries to develop infrastructure in their land, which could range from Cyber Laws and regulations to rightful exploitations. For instance, Machinery Technology from Sri Lanka could blend with the IT of India. The Indian prowess in the line also includes telecom, pharmaceuticals and automobiles which have become world class. Also, entrepreneurial energy simply surges in India. India has huge HR / man power, skilled and brainy. The combination would be strong indeed.

Media tools should be brought under one umbrella for strong force of South Asian Nations. The physical tools as in printing technology, receiver sets and publications coupled with conceptual tools like photojournalism, code of ethics, agenda setting, production aspects and advocacy can do wonders in the line. Joint Campaigns to christen one- '*Save South Asia*' can become a crusade for a period. Specific movie genres, advertising and corporate communications can act as converted tools of media propaganda in South Asia. Later the output should be marketed well in the international commerce and industry.

Concept of Media festivals [on the lines of film festivals] through a common platform should pave way for healthy exchange of concept and content. Like exhibition of human resources, technology and competitive content, should be encouraged and adopted. It should happen in different parts of South Asia through the years. Care should be taken that developed economies outside Asia do not tamper with these exercises. Informal conferences and seminars should increase multi-fold. Journalists, generally known for their individual ego, should keep aside personal prestige and come together to redefine the path of media functioning.

On the common problems like deforestation, pollution, conservation of environment, saving wild life, preserving water, global warming, etc., the South Asian nations can resort to and rely upon Public Service Communication. Apart from thinking on entertainment and revenue, Public Service Advertisements and the messages can act as a comprehensive positive communication for the common cause and concerns. For eg:- Distribution of river waters between Pakistan and India or Bangladesh and India could be addressed through such activity.

Also on spending, defence expenditure can be drastically cut due to constitution of a body on the lines of South Asian Association for Public Service Communication. Such an association should consist of media professionals, academicians, social scientists. Meeting frequently, problems of south Asia could be discussed, policy formulation, production of programs on PSMs, and which can be utilized on print, electronic and new media. On problems of arms, ammunitions and defence treaties, media has to function commonly.

Some of the recommendations at the Goa conference-November 2008 on South Asia Media, are to be inevitably reiterated here. As a concerned academician and a media educationist, it is my sincere appeal that these recommendations made two years ago has not seen any declared initiation on record from any of the agencies, private or public. This also signals for

stronger leadership to undertake such initiatives in bold and aggressive manner if we have to realise the objectives of this conference.

The reiterated recommendations that need a heeding with a renewed outlook include –

1. Encourage local cultural studies on impact of Bollywood or Hollywood or MTV or entertainment media on the Indian sub-continent and South Asia.

2. Promote diversity- of gender, ethnic and religious, in the workforce of the newsrooms to enable them to better understand issues.

3. Promote journalistic exchange programmes within South Asia to ensure cultural sensitisation.

4. Find ways to promote socially relevant content on media platforms, especially television.

5. Promote media literacy among all media users.

6. Globalization is not harmful to public or private broadcasting. It is commercialisation which is having lots of adverse effects. Therefore, some methodology is to be evolved to safeguard language, indigenous industries of individual countries and societies. To achieve this objective professional autonomy and professional accountability is necessary for both public as well as private broadcasters.

7. Government owned broadcasting should focus more on public service content in its programming.

8. Journalists should evolve strategies to consider the blocking of information by the state.

9. Journalist organisations in South Asia should unite and make every effort to set up or support watchdog bodies comprising of respected public personalities to ensure that public interest is protected and promoted in the media which may otherwise suffer due to the vested interests of government or private media owners and commercial interests.

10. The existing laws in countries of South Asia on media cross-ownership should be debated and retained in case these laws are in the public interest and then strictly implemented.

11. The state should liberalise ownership of the media and permit a level playing field and provide equal opportunity to the private media. The issue of public community radio licenses should be released from government control and the needs of local communities served and with utmost urgency. In both instances the overriding factor will be public interest.

End Notes

Akashavani & Doordarshan – the two mega media networks of Prasar Bharati, an Autonomous Broadcasting Corporation under Government of India

CAGR – Cumulative Average Growth Rate

E&M   – Entertainment and Media Industry

FMCG – Fast Moving Consumer Goods

FDI   – Foreign Direct Investment

GOI   – Government of India

GSY   – Gram Sadak Yojana, a rural road laying project of Govt. of India

HIV   – Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

IT   – Information Technology

ITU   – International Telecommunication Union

LPG   – Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization

LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam

MIB   – Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

MoU   – Memorandum of Understanding

MTV   – Music Television

NAM – Non Aligned Movement, organisation of Less Developed Nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America

PoK   – Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the India's region forcefully occupied by Pakistan inspite of opposition from India as well as international community

PPF   – Pakistan Press Foundation

PSB   – Public Service Broadcasting

PSM   – Public Service Messages

PTV   – Pakistan Television

SAARC – South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation

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