



**Metamorphosis in Doordarshan's journey in Indian television sector in the post-globalization era with special reference to Mumbai Doordarshan.**

**Dr.Keshav Sathaye**

Professor, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

**Dr.Geetali Tilak**

Professor & Dean, Institute's name-Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

**doi: 10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.1218**

---

**Abstract**

The Indian media industry is marching speedily towards new heights and glories. Metamorphosis is a term usually used in biology which talks of change from caterpillar to a butterfly. We have borrowed this term to track the journey of the media industry from a small enterprise of a few media branches to a 2 lack crore rupees mega global empire. Metamorphosis has a scientific notion and change in one form from another is well paced and calculated. But here changes are happening as per the changing global media diaspora. There are 4 major changes –change in technology-that are from film to video and from analog sound to digital sound. Change in style of content creation that is formats used to create programmes. Previously documentaries, interviews and serials were popular amongst the audience. Now it has been surpassed by reality shows. In revenue earning method it has changed to commercial time booking to merchandising and sponsorship. The most significant change is in the perception of the audience. The definition of entertainment has shifted from strong storyline to jazzy presentation. This paper will examine and diagnose the journey of Doordarshan's programmes and try to offer a solution to regain its past glory.

**Keywords:** Doordarshan-Broadcasting- Prasar Bharati –Private channels

---

**Introduction**

2nd October 1972 is the day of the birth of Mumbai Doordarshan. This year the center entered its silver jubilee year. The medium that began on an experimental basis on 15th September 1959 in New Delhi has recently completed its 63rd year. Doordarshan began telecasting regular programmes on 15th August 1967 at its Delhi center. But the real galloping of Doordarshan began only after the establishment of Mumbai Doordarshan Center. That was obvious, because, for the first time, along with Marathi, the center started telecasting programmes in Hindi, English, Gujarati and Sindhi languages. News department started offering a bulletin in Hindi & English along with Marathi. Mumbai is a multilingual city, the capital of Bollywood as well as

the financial capital of India. I would like to share some of my experiences and events while I was working with Doordarshan. I remember working on 16MM reversal film stock for coverage of the Pune international Marathon in the year 1983, we took the exposed stock to Mumbai and processed it. The natural sound captured on Nagra recorder was transferred on the sepomag (separate magnetic tape) did editing and could put the Marathon event for telecast at 8 PM. on the same day. Now this process has become very easy. There are many channels available so slot is not an issue and with the advent of digital technology even using a small cell phone and connectivity with transmitting gadgets can put us live without much hurdle. Breaking news was a rare species then, but now at every hour breaking news pours in on our TV sets breaking everything except news. This changing face of Television is a focal point of this paper.

### **Review of the literature**

The research undertaken for this subject has many tentacles including the entry of television in India and its journey of 75 years. Since this medium was new for the Indian citizens the use of it was not precisely known and programmers used to make programmes as per their perception and some past knowledge gained in Audio media All India Radio. This resulted into having some inborn defects in programme policy. **(Bahadur2022)**

Doordarshan in early days was glittering like gold. In 70s and 80s it was at its peak telecasting variety of programmes in multiple languages. Mumbai Doordarshan was at the helm of affairs, making film based programmes like Chhayageet and film personality's interviews **(Sinha,2004.)**

Television Researchers guide brought out by BBC TV training center discusses required research inputs for producing the programmes. The importance of research in deciding the format and the treatment. Measuring media audience goes into the meaning of media audiences. **(Kant,1994)**

The book discusses the role of the audience in shaping media organization's policies and future plans. The intimacy of Television with society is a very important factor in gauging its popularity. The concept of Television as a text and viewers as readers reflects the vivid relationship of the medium and its consumers. **(Silverstone, 1994)** it is very important to understand global television and know the challenges and opportunities in the media sector. This gives impetus to media business and practices. **(Aborhchine,1996)**

Television being a major mass medium having audiovisual capabilities was a new experience altogether for the Indian audience. **(Chatterji1987)** The experiment of SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) opened new vistas in instructional television sector **(Aggarwal 1981)**. The monopoly of television on Indian soil till globalization brought tremendous popularity to Doordarshan. **(Ghosh Bhaskar,2005)** It resulted into inculcating happy go lucky temperament amongst Doordarshan's staff and officials.

The 1992 globalization era proved a game changer for this government controlled medium. Satellite Television started beaming programmes on Indian soil with superior stories and themes. **(Terhi,2005)** Doordarshan, instead of keeping their style of working intact started coping the foreign made programmes but due to financial restraints and lack of resources they could not compete with a new Avatar of modern television viewing. **(DevVrat,2012)**

Since Doordarshan had complete monopoly the audience research and feedback was not taken seriously at that juncture. But eventually authority realized that audience research and their evaluation of the programmes could be a guiding document for the future programming. In the SITE experiment the audience profiles and needs were of paramount importance for the project (Chander, Karnik, 1976). Policy research was another important aspect which affects the journey of media practices. In TV communication needs of the audience and the effect of the message given through programming helps policy makers to decide the further journey of the institution. (Morley David, 1992) Doordarshan programmes could not sustain their flavour not just because of their orthodoxy but due to the challenges that came after globalization. (Pachori 1994).

### **Objectives of the studies**

- 1) To understand Journey of Doordarshan for 6 decades
- 2) To identify the lacuna in programme making process
- 3) To suggest remedial solutions for making Doordarshan relevant to the present societal ambience.

### **History of the arrival of Doordarshan in India**

The arrival of Doordarshan in India was a pure coincidence, because neither the rulers nor the government officers were in the mood of doing anything like that. It was their preconceived mindset that, though prestigious, it was a highly expensive medium for the country to afford. Their top priority was industry, business and education. There was no thought of making any financial provision for TV. But an UNESCO meeting gave impetus to start this medium.

During the UNESCO meeting hosted by India in 1956, the UNESCO offered \$20,000 as help to start a pilot project which was to be used for educational purposes. This created an encouraging and favorable atmosphere for the use of the medium in India. In 1958 the ingenious engineers of Delhi Radio Station started an experiment of sending audio-visual signals and that was the beginning of Indian Television. With the help of 2 or 3 technicians, 25 TV sets and one transmitter, Indian TV started taking shape. On 26th January 1959, the chosen people of Delhi saw the parade on the small screen. However, one more incident gave the signal that the journey was on a turning point. In 1959, the American government offered the equipment necessary to establish a television studio, as a gift. Later America and UNESCO gave us many such types of equipment. The telecast of Indian Television began on 15th September 1959 with a very scenic function in which the dance performance of Vajrayantimala and a couple of social documentaries were telecast. P.L. Deshpande, the then producer shouldered the responsibility of producing the programme. To state in a nutshell, the arrival of television in India was a result of a combination of the financial and technical assistance of the foreign countries like America and the 'Well, let's try it' mindset of the Indians. The clever English term 'serendipity', that means accidental and unplanned benefit, properly describes it.

## **Theoretical framework**

This paper could be logically connected to the uses and gratification theory. Doordarshan's programmes are dominated by film based contents. Feature films, interviews of film artists and film songs are aired on prime viewing time catching most of the eyeballs. The TRP rating of these programmes are high considering other programmes.

Uses and gratification theory encompasses 4 major attributes. It helps the audience to divert from their day to day problems. It facilitates emotional relief to the viewers. It also assists in creating a bond between the users and the medium. The TV set becomes a member of the house and works as a helpful social entity. Viewers could identify themselves in a new role after watching the characters and programmes on the TV set.

## **Basic structure of Doordarshan**

Since there was no proper planning of setting the TV (Popularly known as Doordarshan) medium into motion, there was no clarity about the selection of the staff, their qualification, their training, the framework of the programmes, the scope of topic and the viewers. It also lacked clarity in detailed management at the high level management. Thus, the initiation of Doordarshan was in a way groping and fumbling in darkness. One positive thing that took place was that the newly recruited production and technical staff was given immediate training for the production of TV programmes. The BBC officers along with the Indian resource persons trained newly recruited personnel. They started from the A B C D of the production of the television programme. The training included shooting with the help of three or four cameras that are multi-camera set up, the precaution to be taken while doing outdoor shooting, the process followed while shooting and such basic things. Later, in 1974 the Film Institute at Pune and a little later the Space Application Centre of Ahmadabad began regular courses of training for the production TV programmes.

## **Overview: Global television and Indian television**

Indian TV started telecasting educational programmes, but it lacked any specific principle behind building these programmes. One cannot say that Doordarshan displayed any clarity about how to use television for enlightenment. At the same time, we note that the global television media has come up with diverse theories regarding how to use the medium effectively. In Europe and Russia the medium remained associated with their culture and civilization. These programmes were directly linked to their folklore, customs and the life of the common people. British, Dutch and Italian television focused more on community based programmes. American television, however, was operating on a fully commercial basis.

In India the TV medium took roots without any such principles, system or theory. This resulted in the confused state of mind of the ministry in determining proper direction of working. The medium of TV being new in India, much of the staff that joined the system came from its elder brother All India Radio [AIR]. The obvious result was that the format of the TV remained focused on discursive programmes. Classical, semi-classical or light music is a thing to be enjoyed with ears. That's why it suits better in radio programmes and does not prove so effective in a TV telecast. Doordarshan was expected to keep this in mind while producing its programmes, but that did not show up. One positive thing, however, was noticed. As these

personnel from the radio field knew a lot about producing and broadcasting programmes and news, there surely was a system in the work even at the Doordarshan. A large number of people belonging to the fields like drama, literature, arts and fine arts, film division and NSD got the opportunity of working in this medium. People from various branches of art, thus, became the members of the Mumbai Doordarshan family. Doordarshan was a new medium not only to the viewers but also to the staff appointed there. Obviously, there was a tremendous amount of curiosity among them regarding the programmes. The staff was learning through experience and experimentation and the people of Mumbai and the surrounding area were enjoying it.

A new transmitter was installed at Sinhadagadh in Pune in October 1973 to expand the reach of this medium. But the fact remained that it was mostly available to the urban population. Only a limited number of people were able to see television programmes. As a result, the programmes remained urban oriented. So it was believed that Doordarshan is meant for the people of particular urban culture. Even today the situation has not changed much, in spite of the introduction of programmes like 'Aamchi Mati Aamchi Manase', 'KamgarVishwa', 'Lok Sangeet', 'Dnyandeep' that provided a stage to common man and rural people. These programmes did help in making Doordarshan all pervading, but the overall ruling remained in the hands of the elite.

### **Phases of Doordarshan**

1972 to 1982- **first phases** was a period of black and white telecasting. This does not only mean that it was not colored, but it also represents the experimental stage of Mumbai Doordarshan. There was excitement; there was enthusiasm; and there was hope. The audience response was tremendous. The medium progressed through a two way journey – the attraction and craze for the extremely popular programmes like Hindi films on one side and the programmes like 'Chhayageet', 'Pratibha and Pratima', 'Plays', 'Gajara' which found approval among the educated middle class people. Another significant development happened in this phase was a project called Satellite Instructional Television Experiment came up. This one year project showed that TV can be used for the purpose of devolvement communication and educational purposes.

During the **second phase** (1982-1992) Doordarshan was at the peak of its popularity and this was indicated by the fast rising number of TV sets in the state and the increase in the viewership. With the new format called 'serials' hitting the screen, the Doordarshan scaled new heights of popularity and the small screen became the darling of every household. On technological aspects, many transmitters were installed in the nook and corner of the country giving way to garner the more audience and viewership for the programmes.

The **third phase**, (1992-2002) however, proved to be challenging. The Narsinha Rao Government adopted the policy of liberalization to face the global challenges, as, by then, the foreign channels were taking root in the Indian soil. The news channels like CNN and the Star, with their programmes like "The Bold and The Beautiful" greatly increased the expectations of the people from the programmes presented on Doordarshan. As the controllers were not used to facing and accepting such new challenges and competition, Doordarshan was rattled. To add to it, the long awaited autonomy also came into reality in 1997. Doordarshan had to take shelter under the wings of the lackluster and pallid PrasarBharati. While the huge tempest of

competition raged, Doordarshan was shuddering under the virtual umbrella of PrasarBharati. The very personality of Mumbai Doordarshan was overshadowed by the alarm of cost-cutting and the constant demand for increasing the income.

### **Prasar Bharati era**

The PrasarBharati era started on 23 rd. November, 1997 to give functional autonomy to All India Radio & Doordarshan. But it didn't function that way. Now also the TV screen of Doordarshan is busy gathering visuals of the government in power and showcasing their achievements.. PrasarBharati concentrated more on revenue earning and technological development Instead of providing liberty and freedom to the programme makers. Programme makers are forced to bring revenue that resulted in hampering the creative side of the producers. Even on administrative side new recruitment never happened since 2010. A few recruited for marketing purpose, but programme making remained most ignored area. Even the post of chairman of Prasar Bharati has been vacant for the last years. The PrasarBharati experiment has miserably failed.

The **fourth phase** (2010-2020) began from 2010. Many employees, programme officers retired but no new recruitment was made to replace them. The reins were handed over to the inexperienced staff appointed on contract basis. The lack of new recruitment during the last ten to twelve years badly affected the production of programmes. Leaving aside the area in which they were powerful. They preferred to be drenched in the programmes of dance, music and chatting. Copying private channels and losing our own identity and unique selling proposition Doordarshan became mere a small channel in a clutter of other hundreds of them.

Yes they did revive some programmes like 'Pratibha and Pratima' but as there was no consistency in determining who is really the talented, the intellectual aspect of the programme was pushed aside and it became just a programme of pleasant interviews. Doordarshan chose to remain happy in playing the role of a postman by offering most of its interesting time to the sponsors. In spite of this, they failed in their proposed scheme of increasing their income. The recent figures would indicate it clearly. In 2017-18 the income of Doordarshan was "₹" 607 crore. In 2018-19 it slumped to "₹" 553 crore and it somehow managed to reach the figure of Rs 348 crore in 2019-20. Doordarshan's failure in recognizing its own strengths took it to the last bench in its competition with the private channels. In a nutshell Doordarshan is slowly diminishing in the hearts of audience and spectators because of changing approach in programme policy and production techniques.

Of course, this does not mean that we should forget the huge contribution of Mumbai Doordarshan. It has provided us with a number of unforgettable programmes. They have produced wonderful works in the field of literature, culture, fine arts and music, but it is rather painful to live on these memories alone. 'How wonderful were the programmes on Doordarshan!' We often hear such statements from the people and that suggests that they are not wonderful anymore and this is something that is disturbing. While entering its Golden Jubilee year, Mumbai Doordarshan should not remain satisfied with the capital of the glory that it once was. It must provide a continuous flow of more and more meaningful programmes full of knowledge and entertainment.

## **Diagnosis of the issue**

### **Lack of Developmental communication approach**

Media for development angle is lacking in the entire programming approach. Entertainment oriented programmes are prominent in Doordarshan's policy. Using media for downtrodden people and concentration on education and social issues have been missed in this long journey. An attempt was made with the help of SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) project to use this far reaching media for educational purpose. In spite of its successful results, the ministry never given serious consideration to use this medium for developmental communication nationwide.

### **Programme were made without much in depth research**

The main reason for this is that most of the programs produced here were produced according to the preferences of that producer. Very little consideration was given to the liking and expectation of the urban as well as the rural viewers and their diverse cultural background. The result was that Doordarshan, through its programmes, rarely reflected the aspirations of the audience. The concerned senior management failed to give the expected supervision on the code, purpose and scope of the programme. The result was that the apparently popular programmes did not properly represent the people and their culture. Producer needs freedom of production, but this freedom should suit the main aim, purpose and objectives of the medium. It was expected that a detailed discussion was held on the content & the expression, the presentation and the structure of the programme before it is approved. But that did not happen. As a result the programmes did not reflect the likes and dislikes of the majority of viewers. They remained the programmes for the personal joy and happiness of the producers. The five decade old Mumbai Doordarshan displays four prominent aspects/features of its progress.

### **Weakness in Research and evaluation**

A separate wing called Audience Research was active at the center, but it existed just as a formality. Doordarshan never undertook the in depth research of the spectators covering the complete state. Today we notice Doordarshan making surveys of the viewership of various programmes but they never try to find out why a particular programme is preferred by the viewers and what their specific cultural and educational needs are. Their research is limited only to counting the heads. If proper planning is absent, certain deficiencies, certain errors in the concept are bound to popup. And these deficiencies and errors do not remain limited only to the process of creation. They also creep the principles and theories on which it stands. And then the pain and the loss keep piling up. This not only applies to the production of goods, but also to the institutes, laboratories and huge nationwide projects. Even Doordarshan had to suffer from this deficiency in production and in recognizing the needs of the viewers. Unfortunately, to the controllers of Doordarshan, entertainment was just merriment, amusement and cheap humor. The once highly cultured medium seemed to be testing the taste of the viewers.

### **Competition and emergence of private channels**

The very grammar of this audio-visual medium has undergone sea-change because of the private channels. The prosperousness of intelligence, the understanding, the reading and the observation, the butter of entertainment, has become nothing but a cheap drink. In the last ten to fifteen years the concept of one family one TV set has undergone a change. The picture of the family sitting on the sofa- sets in the living room and watching the programmes together is getting foggy. (is fading) This sweet picture is on the way to disappearing, thanks to the computer revolution. Today, the powerful platforms like Netflix, Prime, Hot Star, Zee 5 are coming forward with audience-oriented programmes. The small screen had become even smaller. The new mobile culture has transcended the old technological framework. Millions of options are available with the people for entertainment and acquiring knowledge. They are presenting new challenges to the traditional medium named television.

### **Absence of cultural policy**

Another significant point is that India lacks any cultural policy as such. As a result, our definition of culture and civilization does not go beyond celebrating the birth anniversaries and releasing postage stamps. Culture has never been amalgamated as an all pervading aspect in our education and is never a thing that has encouraged enlightenment. This has led to a bit of loss for both the media and the audience.

### **Suggestions and recommendations**

- 1) Doordarshan should frame its programmes, taking into consideration that the most important factor, the spectators, preferring to enrich them with education, information and entertainment.
- 2) A cultural policy of the country must be framed and diverse views should be a part of the document .
- 3) The recruitment of the human resource must find a top priority in the agenda of Doordarshan future plans.
- 4) PrasarBharati should be scrapped and Doordarshan and all India radio should be a part of I& B ministry of Govt of India.
- 5) The media should be freed from the compulsion of generating more and more income. It should have the aim of making its viewers educationally and culturally rich. If this happens the present identity of Doordarshan as 'a chewing gum to be chewed with eyes' will be wiped off and it will rise again as a powerful, artistic medium of profound enlightenment.
- 6) The revenue for Doordarshan and AIR may be generated through commercials and sponsored programmers of various departments of central & State ministry and provision for the advertisement funds of them may be diverted to DD & AIR.



## **References**

- 1).ChatarjeeP.C,1991,Broadcasting in India, Sage publications
- 2) Kohali Vanita, 2003.The Indian media business- - response book
- 3) Terhi Rantanen, 2005, the media globalization- sage Publication -
- 4) Ghosh Bhaskar, 2005, Doordarshandays, Viking Publication
- 5) Sinhasujit Kumar, 2004, Dooordarshan vividh aayaam -- Raj Publication-
- 6) Bahadur Manna, 2022 Doordarshandays,–Readomania Publishers
- 7)PachoriSudhish,1994, India-Doordarshan dasha aur disha- -Publication Division, Ministry of information & Broadcasting-
- 8) Chander Romesh, Karnik Kiran, 1976, Planning for Satellite Broadcasting: The Indian Instructional TV experiment-UNESCO Publication
- 9) Morley David, 1992, Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies-Routledge
- 10) DevVrat Singh, 2012, IndianTelevision-- Haranand Publications
- 11) Nicholas abercrombie,1996, Television &Society, Polity Press
- 12)Kant Reymond,1994,Measuring Media Audience,Routledge
- 13) Silverstone Roger, 1994, Television& Everyday life, Routledge