This comparative study of Public Broadcasting Systems in Britain and India covers a span of about the first half a century of their existence – from 1923 to 1978. This time frame has been chosen for the analysis mainly because the period appeared adequate to bring out various similarities and dissimilarities between the two broadcasting systems in a comparative framework. While the formative years that shaped the structure and philosophy of the systems are in themselves important as they largely stayed in place despite the vicissitudes of economic and technological transformations, 1977 and 1978 saw the publication, in Britain and India, respectively of two significant reports on broadcasting – the Annan Committee Report and the Verghese Committee Report in India. The study has been undertaken with a view to understanding the various factors and actors that played a part in the origins, growth and development of the two systems. While chronology is one of the organising principles of the study, it also contains detailed analyses of the various actors from the political and economic realms, and their impact on the formulation of broadcasting policies in Britain and India. As both systems operate in parliamentary democracies, and profess to be guided by the principles of public service broadcasting, a comparative study of them assumes considerable significance. The major aspects of the two broadcasting systems which have been analysed in this study are: the relation between general social, political and economic forces and the establishment and development of broadcasting systems, the actors and interests that have been crucial in determining and shaping the broadcasting structure, the original characteristics of the public broadcasters, and how these characteristics have developed and changed during the first half a century of their existence.

I began this study with the intention of devoting equal space to the analysis of the broadcasting system in both countries. But I soon discovered the difficulty in following that approach since I noticed considerable imbalance in the accessibility to the source material on the broadcasting systems in Britain and India. While for the system in Britain, a plethora of primary and secondary sources were available, ranging from government documents, committee reports and memoirs of people who had been connected with broadcasting in one capacity or the other, in addition to official histories of broadcasting, there was virtually a drought of such sources, as far as broadcasting in India was concerned. Whatever studies had been done on Indian
broadcasting were in American universities, and concentrated on the models prevalent in those universities, such as content analysis. Similarly, access to primary sources was limited, especially with regard to the years after Independence, given the government's penchant for secrecy.

Nevertheless, in the absence of a comprehensive study on the subject, the way forward was also to examine Indian broadcasting in depth to the extent possible and compare and contrast it with those aspects of the British experience.

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This thesis has been written with the help of material which I have collected from various libraries and archives in Britain and India. Extensive use was made of the Written Archives Centre of the BBC at Reading, the British Film Institute Library, the India and Oriental Records Office situated in the British Library, and the Public Records Office, London and I wish to thank the staff of these institutions who assisted me in my research, particularly James Codd and Jacqueline Kavanagh of the Written Archives Centre. I also thank Mr. Anthony Smith, Mr Ian McIntyre, Mr. Leonard Miall and Dr. Ralph Negrine for guiding me through the intricacies of the history of broadcasting in Britain and pointing out the various nuances of the relationship between the broadcaster and the other sections of society.

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The thesis was begun as a labour of love, arising out of my personal interest in broadcasting, and it is only this interest, coupled with the belief that one should finish a task one has started before moving on to the next one, that has enabled me to stay the course all these years. I sincerely hope I have done justice to the subject at hand.

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