CHAPTER 3

EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION

With the end of the Second World War, which also coincided with the end of British rule in India, broadcasting in Britain and India could not remain unaffected by these cataclysmic events. While in the case of Britain, the immediate effect was caused by the social changes brought about by the war, which led to demands that broadcasting also reflect these changes, Indian broadcasting not only had to deal with partitioning of its stations, hardware and manpower, echoing the larger partitioning of the sub-continent, but it also had to re-evaluate its aims and goals in line with the new realities.

In Britain

The years immediately after the end of the Second World War were years of penury for the British government, and it had to urgently deal with matters more pressing than broadcasting. The Ministry of Information that had come up at the onset of the war was disbanded on 31 March 1946.1 Since the Licence was due for renewal, the government of the time disposed of that problem by publishing a White Paper which doubled the Licence Fee from 10 shillings to £ 1 and renewed the Licence for a further five years (as against 10 years which had hitherto been the norm). Despite these constraints, a number of developments took place in broadcasting in the first decade after the war which had culminated in the break-up of the BBC's long-

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standing monopoly over broadcasting. The most significant development was in the expansion of television.

**The Expansion of Television**

If in 1947/48, the BBC spent £6,556,293 on radio as opposed to £716,666 on television, nearly nine times as much, the fact that television licences more than doubled from 45,564 in 1948 to 126,567 in 1949 was an indicator of television's destined place in the scheme of things. Whereas in 1949, the signal was available to just 26,000 odd inhabitants who lived within the 40 mile radius of the lone transmitting station at London's Alexandra Place, by 1950, television was available to between 33 and 50 percent of the population, and the hours of programming had risen to over thirty a week.

This astounding expansion was made possible by the decision of a technical committee under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey to allow British television to continue with the system which had been in operation prior to the war rather than switch over to a new more sophisticated system which would have taken time to put into operation. It was also despite the manifest disinterest of William Haley, the then Director-General, in the new medium of television. Haley's main concern was radio and he carried out a major re-organisation of radio which led to its being

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2 It was only in 1953 that the BBC was allowed to decide and spend on its priorities sufficiently large monies to carry on its expansion work. Briggs points out that this was also the time when the attacks on the BBC's monopoly grew sharper.


trifurcated into 3 streams, Home, Light and Third. As the BBC, in its evidence to the Beveridge Committee, put it, the Home Service was the main service, being the “real home programme of the people of the United Kingdom, carefully balanced, appealing to all classes, paying attention to culture at a level at which the ordinary listener can appreciate it, giving talks that will inform the whole democracy rather than an already informed section, and generally so designed that it will steadily but imperceptibly raise the standard of taste, entertainment, outlook and citizenship.”

The Light programme was a continuation of the Forces programme service that had been introduced during the War to entertain the troops. It was “designed to appeal not so much to a certain class of listener – but to all listeners when they are in certain moods.” The Third Programme, a pet project of Director General Haley, was intended to serve minority audiences interested in high culture, such as operas and classical music. In an address to the British Institute of Adult Education on “Broadcasting and British Life”, William Haley spelt out his vision for the new arrangements. “These three programme services of the BBC will form part of a single co-ordinated whole and will to the best of our ability be devoted to the

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8 In the words of the Annan Committee, it was directed towards a minority “whose tastes, education and mental habits enable them to take pleasure in close and responsive listening to broadcasts of artistic and intellectual distinction.” UK, HMSO, *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, Cmd 6753 (Annan Report) (London: HMSO, 1978), p.12
enlightenment, entertainment and informing of the whole community and the slow but rewarding process of raising public taste.\textsuperscript{9}

With the Licence up for renewal in 1951, the government constituted a Committee in 1949 under the chairmanship of Lord Beveridge to review broadcasting policy. The Beveridge Committee spent close to two years on its task and met 62 times. Its final report was in two volumes, coming to well over 900 pages.\textsuperscript{10} According to Briggs, the report went into greater detail about almost anything to do with the BBC than had previous reports; however, the only issue it didn’t touch was that of television\textsuperscript{11} though it did take a good look at the issue of monopoly.

The Fifties

The Fifties began with a change of guard at the BBC with Lieutenant General Ian Jacob taking over from William Haley who had been appointed Editor of \textit{The Times}. After relinquishing his position as Military Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, Ian Jacob had been appointed Director of the Overseas Services of the BBC prior to his appointment as Director General. Unlike Haley, Jacob had an open mind about television and he set in motion plans to expand the television infrastructure. According to Briggs, it was Jacob who “presided over the great transformation of the BBC from an institution primarily dealing in sound to one dealing predominantly in television.”\textsuperscript{12} This expansion coincided with the event that really brought television into the limelight; the Queen’s Coronation in June 1953. According to Briggs, the

\textsuperscript{9} Quoted in Briggs, n.1, p.77
\textsuperscript{10} Beveridge Report, n.6
\textsuperscript{11} Asa Briggs, \textit{Governing the BBC} (London: Hamilton, 1984), p.92
\textsuperscript{12} Briggs, n.3, p.277
impact of the Coronation on television was similar to the impact of the General Strike on radio. Over 20 million people or 56 percent of the population viewed the Coronation on television.

The Break-up of the Monopoly
The debate over the BBC's monopoly had been re-opened by The Economist in a series of articles in 1944 wherein a number of reasons were put forth on why Britain should have more than one broadcasting organization. F.W. Ogilvie, former Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors, weighed in to the debate in 1946 when in a letter to The Times, he complained that "monopoly of broadcasting was the negation of freedom" and in tolerating it, "we are alone among the democratic countries of the world." Since no alternatives had been spelt out in the debate so far, the BBC was yet not in any real danger of being broken up, but it nonetheless went into great detail in its evidence to the Beveridge Committee on why it should be left intact. According to Briggs, its arguments were beginning to shift away from the technical imperatives to one of the "the record speaks for itself." The nub of BBC's argument was that:

So long as broadcasting is continued as a public service, conducted by one independent, impartial, single instrument, that organisation will be free without any over-riding obligation, to discharge all the responsibilities to the community that broadcasting involves. They are many and varied. They include the responsibility for impartiality, for the greatest possible freedom at the microphone, for the preservation of standards and the re-establishing on a broader basis of a regard for values, for the use of broadcasting as an educational medium and a means to raise the public taste, for the discharge of

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13 Briggs, n.1, p.9
14 The Times(London), 26 June 1946
broadcasting's duty to the arts, for the encouragement of all artistic
endeavour whether of creation or performance, for the use of
broadcasting to develop true citizenship and the leading of a full
life.\textsuperscript{15}

Though it was expected that Lord Beveridge's Committee would take an anti-
monopoly line, given the Chairman's own personal perceived "distaste" for
monopoly, borne out of his liberal outlook. But, when the Report was finally
published in 1951 it rejected the idea of breaking up the monopoly or subjecting it to
competition, and paid more attention to democratising the existing set-up through
such measures as devolution and strengthening the position of the Board of
Governors to "prevent broadcasting from falling into the hands of a bureaucracy
which is not controlled" as it put it.\textsuperscript{16} The Committee suggested that Governors
should no longer be asked to sign the Whitley Document of 1932. It also made a
provision that three of the Governors should be specialists on Scotland, Wales and
Northern Ireland. The most controversial suggestion of the Committee was for the
setting up of "National Commissions" in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each
with its own wavelengths, grants and services, the argument being that "federal
harmony" would replace "centralising unity in London."\textsuperscript{17} Another recommendation
was for the creation of a "Hyde Park of the Air", giving "an opportunity to all
minorities which have messages, religious or other, on some occasion to put their
messages over, not regularly or at length, but at some time...."\textsuperscript{18} These are just two

\textsuperscript{15} See Briggs, n.3, p.260
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.261
\textsuperscript{17} Beveridge Report, n.6, para 587, p.176
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., para 257, p.66
out of the 100 recommendations made by the Beveridge Committee. The report was not unanimous, however; the Conservative Member of Parliament, Brigadier Selwyn Lloyd attached a minority report of his own, calling for the establishment of commercial television and radio to exist alongside the BBC. Lloyd warned that the dangers of monopoly were both "insidious and insufficiently appreciated by the public" and went on to say, "the evil lies in the system, the control by monopoly of this great medium of expression ... at a time when every other tendency is towards the concentration of power at the centre and a uniform society, this issue in broadcasting is of outstanding importance for the country."19 The Labour government brought out a White Paper seven months later supporting the continuation of the BBC monopoly and accepting some of the Beveridge Committee's proposals, though somewhat modified.20 However, before any action could be taken, the General Elections of 1951 resulted in the Labour government being replaced by a Conservative government led by Winston Churchill. The new government brought out a new White Paper in May 1952 which, on the whole, was supportive of the BBC, calling it "an important part of the structure of our national life."21 However, the same White Paper contained what later came to be called the "Trojan Horse" clause; this clause simply stated that "in the expanding field of television provision should be made to permit some element of competition when

19 Minority Report in Ibid., para 76, p.210
the calls on capital resources at present needed for purposes of greater national importance make this feasible.”

That came about sooner rather than later, when the government bowed to pressures exerted by various groups through public fora and Parliament and came out with a Second White Paper within a year. This White Paper set out the bare outlines for a proposed “Second Authority”, which, unlike the BBC, would not be in the business of programme making, but would facilitate commercial broadcasting by establishing and operating transmitting stations and renting out those facilities to commercial companies. The companies could recoup their investments by selling advertising time but had to adhere to certain programming norms to ensure high programming standards and a balanced output. According to Seymour-Ure, the origin of ITV can be explained in many ways: “as a classic case of high pressure political lobbying; as Churchill’s revenge on the BBC for its disdainful treatment of him during the 1926 General Strike and in his wilderness years in the 1930s when he was largely kept off the air; or as part of the Conservative move to ‘set the people free from the bureaucracy and greyness allegedly intrinsic to Labour planning and the construction of the welfare state.’”

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22 Briggs, n.3, p.279
24 Seymour-Ure, n.4, p.90
The Independent Television Authority

The Television Act received royal assent on 30 July 1954. Under the Act, an Independent Television Authority (ITA), responsible to Parliament was constituted, which would own and operate television transmitters, appoint programme companies provided they fulfil certain criteria, and supervise programme planning and control the advertising which funded the channel. In many respects, the Independent Television Authority (ITA), when it was set up, was similar to the Board of Governors of the BBC, with ultimate responsibility for programmes devolving on the members of the Authority. In fact, the ITA was asked not just to regulate the commercial channel, but also to work out the modalities of having one based on the public service objectives of “education, information and entertainment” within the framework of the Television Act as passed by Parliament. In the words of its first Chairman, the Authority was thus, “the architect, the planning board and the day-to-day governing board of the system.” The Act authorised the Authority to allocate franchises to different programme companies who had bid for them on a regional basis with the same companies providing programmes for the national network provided they met certain standards set down by the ITA. The main franchises were also allowed to link up for a specified number of peak hours every week and show common programmes. However, the Act did not specify any “procedures that had to be followed for the award of these highly lucrative contracts.”

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27 Seymour-Ure, n.4, p.91
station went on air on 22 September 1955, over a year after the franchises were given out. It took seven years for the entire geographical area of the United Kingdom to be covered by the new channel.

The franchises were to be for a period of ten years after which they would be put up for re-bidding.\(^29\) There were many teething problems, not the least of them being that when ITA initially came on air, only 3 per cent of TV sets were equipped to receive it.\(^30\) However, the variety of programmes ITV offered, with their emphasis on entertainment saw the increasing popularity of these programmes offering stiff competition to the BBC with the result that, from a ratio of 54:46 within the first three months of competition, the BBC audience had dropped to 38:62 a year later, before reaching rock bottom in 1958 (when 80 per cent of the population could receive ITV), the BBC's share of the audience dropped to 28 per cent.\(^31\) This drop in the share of the audience was to have many implications for the BBC especially with regard to the many debates that were to take place on the continued funding of the BBC through the mechanism of the licence fee.\(^32\)

While the BBC was busy trying to come to terms with the loss of its monopoly, the Suez crisis sprang on it unawares and proved to be the biggest test of its independence yet. The government, in turn, cajoled and then threatened the External

\(^{29}\) These franchises came up for re-bidding in 1964 when they were renewed for a further three years, and then again in 1967, when most of the franchises were renewed for ten years. Some franchises were dropped on quality grounds, a pattern that was to be repeated again in 1980. Seymour-Ure, n.4, pp.104-6

\(^{30}\) Ibid., n. 4, p. 90


\(^{32}\) See Chapter 5.
Services of the BBC with financial cuts if it continued with its policy of broadcasting to the world at large and particularly to the area of conflict. The government went to the extent of setting up a parallel Voice of Britain station in Cyprus when the BBC refused to fall in line. Fortunately, according to Asa Briggs, the crisis was too short-lived for the government to actually put all its threats, including that of using its reserve powers to take over the BBC, into action. 33 A subsequent inquiry by the Board of Governors into the crisis and the accusations levelled against the BBC by the government and members of Parliament came to the conclusion that they had no basis in fact. As Hugh Carleton Greene, who was appointed Director-General in 1960, put it, “if the BBC had given way to the government during the crisis, the confidence felt in the BBC at home and abroad – which is a national asset – would have gone for ever.” 34

With the BBC’s Licence coming up for renewal in 1960, the government set up an independent committee chaired by Harry Pilkington, to investigate, among other things, the finances, constitution and structure of both the BBC as well as the Independent Television Authority (ITA.) The Pilkington Committee came down heavily on the ITA finding its programme output “shoddy and trivial” with a general absence of balance in programming as required by the Television Act. 35 The committee called for a drastic overhaul of the ITA. 36 It recommended that the Authority should plan all programming, sell advertising time, and buy programmes

33 Briggs, n.3, p.317
34 Ibid., p.320
from the contracting companies, thus insulating the companies from the handling of advertising money. Though this wasn't done, the generally negative report saw legislation being laid down to increase the ITA's control over the output of the programme companies with stringent advertising and programming requirements. The enormous profits generated by the programme companies was sought to be reduced by the introduction of a variable levy rising to 45 percent imposed on their advertising revenue, distinct from their profits. The upshot of this criticism was that the new channel that became available following the further opening up of the frequency spectrum was allocated to the BBC by the government. This new channel, known as BBC 2 came on air on 20 April 1964. However, for the first two years, it was only available in London and its suburbs, and viewers had to fit a new antenna if they wanted to receive its signal. Whether viewers would work up that much energy was doubtful since it broadcast for only four hours a day. It was only after BBC 2 began the first regular colour television service on 1 July 1967 that it began to gain in popularity.

The allocation of the second channel to the BBC was a huge disappointment for the Authority. According to Bernard Sendall, Section 5(2) of the Act enjoined the Authority to do all it could "to secure that there is adequate competition to supply

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36 See Chapter 4.
37 Pilkington Committee, n.35, para 580-588, pp.170-71. Copies of the report were burned at a party hosted by one of the ITV franchisees. Also see Broadcast (London), 16 September 1976, p.34
38 Seymour-Ure, n.4, p.102
40 It was also the first channel to start broadcasting in colour in 1967 with BBC 1, and ITV following suit in 1969.
41 Seymour-Ure, n.4, p.103
programmes between a number of programme contractors.” The Authority envisioned that taking place only through at least two private channels operating in each area. According to the first Annual Report of the ITA, competition to supply programmes “can be obtained fully only when viewers have at all times a choice of two or more programmes, or in other words when there are at least two stations covering each area. This the Authority hopes ultimately to bring about.”43 This was further elaborated on by Robert Fraser, the first Director General of the ITA, when he said: “What is appearing among us is the beginning of a system of free television. When I use the word free in this sentence, I mean what everyone means when they speak of a free press…”44

The Pilkington Committee’s criticism of the ITA notwithstanding, all the existing franchises got their contracts renewed in 1964 when they expired, but only for a period of three years. However, when the contracts again expired in 1967, two of the major franchisees did not have their contracts renewed on grounds of inadequate performance. Seymour-Ure brings out the difficulties of the process when he says that on the one hand, the ITA had to disprove the Pilkington Committees judgement that to all intents, “the appointment of a programme contractor is irrevocable.”45 On the other hand, there were a number of problems with disenfranchisement. “It would mean upheavals for the staff, start-up costs and teething troubles for the new

44 Ibid.
45 White Paper, n.39, p.165
contractor, and a danger that the service would turn out to be demonstrably less popular than the old contractors or different from what was promised.\textsuperscript{46}

The Sixties saw a fundamental change in British Society and culture and it coincided with the appointment of Hugh Greene as the new Director-General of the BBC. He spoke of his vision of the BBC as a mirror to be held up to society: "I don't care whether what is reflected in the mirror is bigotry, injustice and intolerance or accomplishment and inspiring achievement. I only want the mirror to be honest, without any curves, and held with as steady a hand as may be."\textsuperscript{47} The political arena had also become more fractured and as the television age came of age, broadcasting became an important tool of political communication. Consequently, pressures on broadcasters increased, but Greene refused to compromise on the independence of the BBC. As he put it, "we think it is an important part of our duty to enquire, to question authority rather than to accept it, to ask in fact, whether the Emperor has any clothes."\textsuperscript{48} Such controversial programmes as \textit{That Was The Week That Was} and \textit{Yesterday's Men} came out during his tenure.

1964 was also the year in which the new phenomenon of pirate pop hit the airwaves with Radio Caroline being the first and possibly the most famous of them all. Pirate radio was basically broadcast from ships at anchor just off the territorial waters of the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{49} Their output consisted of entertainment programmes complete with commercials. The government's response was to ban pirate radio in

\textsuperscript{46} Seymour-Ure, n.4, p.105
\textsuperscript{47} Briggs, n.3, p.331
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

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1967 and the BBC responded to the pent-up demand for youth-oriented programmes by doing away with the old Home, Light and Third Channels on radio replacing them with new channels named Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4. Radio 1 was the BBC’s answer to pirate radio with many of its disc jockey’s (DJ’s) having worked previously for pirate radio. Radio 2 offered light entertainment, sport and news, Radio 3 had classical music, drama, talks and poetry, while Radio 4 was a mixed channel with an emphasis on current affairs.

In television, after the initial adjustment problems, both the BBC and the ITA shifted enough to give each other sufficient space, so much so that this new era in broadcasting became known as the age of the “comfortable duopoly.” Prime Minister Harold Wilson put it in so many words when, at the opening of Yorkshire Television in 1967, he described the present system as “a national television service based on two diametrically opposed philosophies. . . . The two television systems are in fact complementary parts of a single public service. . . . Each of the two television services has drawn many of the best qualities of the other to itself and each acts as a guardian against abuse or excess by the other. . . .” When, in 1967, the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Lord Normanbrook died in harness and the Chairman of the ITA, Lord Hill of Luton, was made Chairman of the BBC’s Board of Governors,

49 Paulu, n.26, p.22
50 The Marine, &c., Broadcasting Offences Act (A Bill to suppress Broadcasting from Ships, Aircraft and Certain Marine Structures) enacted on 14 July 1967 made it illegal for British subjects to own, operate, supply or advertise on pirate stations, or to induce anyone else to do so.
51 Cain, n.31, p. 94
only the BBC seemed to find it a trifle unpalatable. The BBC had more problems not just coming to terms with the new interloper, but also had to watch helplessly as a large number of its employees walked over to the competitor, drawn by high salaries and better job prospects. The new companies also made enormous profits and consequently had more to spend on programming which the BBC found hard put to match, considering it was not just operating two television services but also four national radio services on its budget. Nonetheless, by 1969, the BBC had regained much lost ground with the national viewing audience dividing its time in the ratio of 51 per cent in favour of the BBC and 49 per cent in favour of ITV. The BBC could be said to have been helped in this regard to an extent by the government weighing on its side in a number of instances. The ITV perceived a partiality for the BBC in the Government’s utilisation of Section 9 of the Television Act which reserved the right to the PMG of the power to fix the hours of television broadcasting to curtail sharply the number of hours that ITV could broadcast per week. The government had set this at “a weekly maximum of fifty hours of broadcasting per week plus religious programmes and certain outside broadcasts.” According to Sendall, the government believed that there were good social and economic reasons for keeping the amount of television available to the public within prescribed limits. Furthermore, the BBC did not want ITV to be allowed to

53 The Director General Hugh Greene contemplated [resignation] resigning, believing the appointment to be a deliberate snub aimed at him by the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. Though he did not do so, he was unable to get along with Lord Hill, and resigned in 1969, after which he was made a member of the Board of Governors, the first Director General to become one. Cain, n.31, p. 94

54 Cain, n. 31, p. 101

55 Broadcast, n.37, p. 32
broadcast for longer hours than they saw fit, or felt they could afford to broadcast themselves.\textsuperscript{56} “Over the ensuing years the Authority together with the companies, unaided and usually opposed by the BBC (though the restrictions applied to them as well) struggled for freedom from these controls, but succeeded only in nibbling away at them until 1972, 17 years later, they were removed.”\textsuperscript{57}

The decade of the seventies was a time of expansion, consolidation and change for broadcasting in Britain, among the notable changes were the abolition of the “radio only” licence in 1971, the establishment of Independent Local Radio (ILR) under the supervision of the ITA which was now renamed the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the ending of Post Office control over broadcasting hours in 1972, and departmental responsibility for broadcasting passing from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to the Home Office, seen by many as an indication of the increased importance attached to broadcasting.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Independent Local Radio}

Thought the Pilkington committee had recommended the continuation of the BBC monopoly in radio, the Conservative Party had other ideas. Local commercial radio had been promised in the election manifesto of the Conservative Party and soon after it came to power in 1970, it issued a White Paper on the subject.\textsuperscript{59} Based on that White Paper, the Sound Broadcasting Act 1972 was introduced in Parliament and passed on 12 June 1972. The IBA was authorised to licence upto 60 local stations in

\textsuperscript{56} Sendall, n.43, p.95
\textsuperscript{57} Broadcast, n.37, p.95
\textsuperscript{58} Cain, n.31, p. 101
various places across the United Kingdom, typically in big cities, thus reaching up to 90 percent of the population.

With the BBC’s Licence Fee due for renewal in 1976, the government set up a committee on the Future of Broadcasting, to be headed by Lord Annan. After over two years of deliberations and receiving submissions, the Committee published its report on 24 March 1977.60 Its notable recommendation was that the fourth channel should go to an “Open Broadcasting Authority” thus seeming to dash the hopes of IBA which had expected this channel to be allotted to it. In the event it was, but in an oblique manner; a company wholly owned by the IBA, with directors serving a fixed term, would run the new channel. Its function would be to commission and buy programmes from independents and the franchise companies, not to make them itself. Finance was to be provided by the ITV companies as a “subscription” and the companies could recover that by selling the advertising time on Channel 4 in their own regions. The aim of this channel was to meet the points raised in the Annan Committee’s Report to the effect that the “duopoly” was structurally and financially biased towards the common denominators of society and culture, thus depriving social and cultural minorities of programmes relevant to them.61 Channel 4 went on air in 1982 and after initially suffering from a lack of viewership, soon became a popular channel.

60 Annan Report, n.8
61 Seymour-Ure, n.4, p. 108
In India

Independence and After

On 2 September 1946, an interim government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru assumed office in India. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was given the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting which he held with his bigger and more taxing post as Home Member. Radio played an important part in the historical events leading up to Independence and beyond. Once the “Menon” Plan, which envisaged the transfer of power from the colonial government to the central governments of India and Pakistan, was accepted by the major parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, on 2 June 1947, the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, turned to All India Radio to make that known to an India that was on the boil. Through this, his intention was to get the leaders to make a public commitment in a way that could not be matched by other media such as the press. According to the minutes of the meeting:

His Excellency the Viceroy said he intended to make a broadcast over All India Radio the following evening. He said he would be most grateful if Pandit Nehru and Mr. Jinnah would follow him after the announcement. They might give their personal assurances of support for the Plan and say that they would use their best endeavour to exercise a peaceful acceptance of it by the respective parties.

Mountbatten was aware of the pitfalls of this step and said he proposed to let the leaders know what he was going to say in his broadcast the following day, hoping they in their turn would reciprocate his gesture so that there would be no room for mischief. Sardar Patel, who was the Home Member for Broadcasting at the time also

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“pointed out, with a smile on his face, that the general rule was for the scripts of broadcast speeches to be submitted to the Hon. Member for Information and Broadcasting before they were used.” However, the individual to whom all these comments were intended, refused to bite the bait; “Mr Jinnah said that he would say in his broadcast what came from his heart.”64 In his speech over the radio the next day, Mohammed Ali Jinnah began by alluding to this first for radio in India;

I am glad that I am afforded the opportunity to speak to you directly through this radio from Delhi. It is the first time, I believe, that a non-official has been afforded an opportunity to address, the people through the medium of this powerful instrument, direct to the people on political matters.65

He then made out a powerful case for why this had not been done so far by deviating from the subject and appealing to the Muslims of the North West Frontier Province to vote to join Pakistan in the proposed referendum. This brought about a strong riposte from Sardar Patel to Lord Mountbatten:

I am deeply distressed at the abuse of Mr. Jinnah of the hospitality extended to him by All India radio and his breach of the rules of broadcast which as you are aware are almost as inviolable as the laws of Nature. I had not seen the script before broadcast but I noticed later that not only did he depart from the script but he also committed sacrilege by making a political, partisan and propagandist broadcast. Had I known it in time, I would certainly have prevented him from turning AIR in a Muslim League platform which has resulted in so much bloodshed and destruction of property but also by appealing to Frontier voters to vote according to League persuasion.66

64 Ibid.
65 Text of broadcast by Mohammed Ali Jinnah on 3 June 1947 in Ibid.
66 Ibid., p.51
Division of Assets

The transfer of power saw the division of assets of All India Radio between the two newly formed nations, India and Pakistan. Out of the nine stations operated by AIR in undivided India, three, - Lahore, Dacca and Peshawar, - fell in Pakistan, leaving Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Lucknow, and Trichnapoly with India. Members of staff, irrespective of religious affiliation were asked to choose between the two countries; however, most of them chose on communal lines, barring a few exceptions. There was much bickering over who should get what and much of it was carried out within the Partition Council which was set up to oversee the division of assets and personnel between the two countries. Because of the specialised nature of the job, the Council instituted expert committees to work out the ways and means of doing so. The Expert committees, in their turn, set up departmental sub-committees to assist them in their work. In the case of All India Radio, that committee consisted of the outgoing Director General, A.S. Bokhari, the incoming Director General, P.C. Chaudhari, AIR Chief Engineer, B.V. Baliga and Riaz Ahmed. The members were chosen so that there was equal representation from the two nations. The balance sheet for broadcasting added up as follows:

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67 The Council consisted of Liaquat and Abdur Rab Nishtar for the Muslim League and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad for the Congress. According to French, as the importance of the task became apparent, Jinnah himself took over from Nishtar. Patrick French, Liberty or Death, India’s Journey to Independence and Division (London: HarperCollins, 1997), p.314


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Predictably, the Committee was split down the middle on how the assets should be divided and gave separate conflicting reports. These reports are tremendously educative as to the state of radio broadcasting in the country on the eve of Independence. All India Radio’s output was broadcast through medium wave and short wave transmitters. The medium wave transmitters provided a “first-grade regional service of high quality”. However, their range was limited to about 65 miles during the daytime though it could go upto 800 miles at night. The “zonal” service on shortwave was only a second grade service with a range of about 500 miles. There were nine stations altogether in undivided India, and their output consisted of music, talks and plays, with each station “originating its own programmes, designed to suit local requirements and conditions.” However, the news service was centralised “in such a way that the same identical news bulletin(s) can be simultaneously broadcast by any or all of the nine stations.” There was also an External Service broadcast on shortwave transmitters (separate from those of the

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69 Note by P.C. Chaudhari and B.V. Baliga, in India, GOI, Partition Secretariat, Appendix 2 to Volume 2 of Partition Proceedings (New Delhi, Partition Secretariat, 1948), p.3
70 Note by A.S. Bokhari and Riaz Ahmed in ibid., p.7
Zonal Service) and the targets for such transmissions varied from time to time according to policy requirements. Bokhari explained the Pakistani perspective on the division of assets as follows:

All these three (Regional, News and External Services) are important functions, and as important for one state as for the other. It is therefore necessary that, if division, which enables both States to perform all three functions is possible, such a division should be made. To divide in such a way that one or the other state can perform none or only one or two, but not all three of these functions would be inequitable.

The Pakistanis wanted equitable distribution of the transmitters even if it meant that these transmitters would have to dismantled and transferred across the border. The view of the Indian side was that “apart from the inherent difficulties of moving such fixed assets, time and technical effort will have been unnecessarily spent in dismantling equipment and re-installing it in Pakistan on one hand, and in replacing the same in Delhi on the other.” The Pakistanis then suggested that they should be allowed to operate their “share” of the transmitters from Indian soil for a maximum period of two years till they were able to procure their own. This suggestion was vehemently rejected by the Indian side on the grounds that “a sovereign state cannot allow another state to carry on independent broadcasts from its territory.”

This was recognised even during the war when India was not a sovereign state. In the case of Far Eastern broadcasts, inaugurated in co-operation with HMG during the war, it was accepted that it was

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Note by P.C. Chaudhari and B.V. Baliga, in ibid., p.5
75 Ibid., p. 34

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undesirable, on both constitutional and practical grounds that the broadcasts should be controlled by an organisation not responsible to the government of India and these programmes were eventually given as part of A.I.R.'s programmes. It is inescapable that the constitutional responsibility for broadcasts from India must rest with the Government of India. Apart from the constitutional aspect, there are obvious difficulties from the practical point of view. We cannot imagine that any government would be willing to accept a situation in which they would have no control over the use of any transmitters situated in their own territory by another government. It may be mentioned that one of the reasons against permitting the French to erect a broadcasting transmitter even in Pondicherry was the danger of embarrassment to the Government of India. We are definitely of the opinion that there should be no departure from the accepted policy that rival broadcasting should not be allowed.  

The compromise finally arrived at was that there would be no shifting of transmitters and the like, but Pakistan would be given sufficient funds to procure its own transmitters. The figure arrived at by Pakistan was "Rs. 25,43,000 in free sterling" along with 600 tons of steel for construction purposes. Pakistan was also apportioned one-third of the office equipment that was available in the Directorate General of All India Radio at Delhi.

Partition

Radio provided the eyes and ears to the many millions of Indians, who could not be present on the momentous occasion of the transfer of power, by broadcasting live from the Central Hall of Parliament. In the period immediately following Independence, radio was used as a tool in providing a lifeline to the many families

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76 Ibid.

77 "Letter dated 19 November 1947 from Mahamad Ali, Prime Minister's Office, Lahore to S. Jaganathan, Deputy Secretary, Partition Secretariat" in ibid.

which were dislocated and separated from each other while relocating from Pakistan to India. The importance of radio during this period was underscored by a cable from Jawaharlal Nehru to his counterpart, Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan. The cable said:

Situation in Delhi has been serious for the last three days.... In order to avoid delay we are arranging to give government bulletins and directives to provinces at fixed times through AIR. This may be considered official intimation so that action may be taken immediately, wherever necessary. Suggest your making arrangements for listening in so that your government might be kept informed of action being taken by the Indian government.79

Consequently and subsequently, a large number of new stations were set up, particularly in those parts of the country which were caught in the throes of partition. There was enormous pressure from a number of states, particularly from Madhya Pradesh and Bihar for transmitting stations to be set up in their territories. M. Mahtab, Prime Minister of Orissa, wrote a letter to Sardar Patel on 6 September 1946 saying: “We have been agitating for a broadcasting station for Orissa for a number of years ... even before the Interim Government came in, I used to impress upon the Government of India that they show special consideration to our province because of her backwardness and poverty, for which her people are not responsible....”80 Scarcely three days later, a similar missive arrived from D.P. Mishra, the Development Minister of Madhya Pradesh, relating to the need of the state to have a broadcasting station of its own. “Repeated requests have been

79 S. Gopal, (ed.), Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 2nd Series (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987), Vol.4, p.59
made but to no purpose. As the department is under you, we hope our need will now receive attention. Besides its educative value, in times of stress, it can be of great help to us in maintaining peace in the province.”  

Sardar Patel responded to these letters, saying these questions would be “examined along with the whole question of the extension of broadcasting in India.”  

The appeals grew more strident as the months went by. The Governor of Bihar, Jairamdas Doulatram, wrote a letter to Sardar Patel on 26 October 1947 saying

I am writing this letter in connection with an official matter relating to Bihar. The province has been feeling very badly the need of a radio transmitting station to guide public opinion more effectively on several controversial public questions. We have to depend now entirely on the Press. It is not properly under our control or influence, and the administration feels badly handicapped for want of its own radio station.

Bihar was to receive a radio station in 1941, but the North West Frontier Province was able to exert influence and so Peshawar was given the radio station originally expected to be given to Bihar. Peshawar radio station is now lost to us. I understand there are several provinces with two radio stations and there are some others without any, and these are claiming to have a radio station. I do hope Bihar will not be overstepped this time also. I have had a talk with the Prime Minister and he is equally keen in the matter.

D.P. Mishra had sent yet another letter on 19 June 1947, saying that according to information available with him, “eight powerful wireless transmitters are available in the IAF transmitting station at Nagpur, which are no longer required by the Defence Department and which that department proposes to transfer to the Civil

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81 Ibid., p.161  
82 Ibid., p.149  
83 Ibid., vol.5, p.127
Avaition Directorate for safe custody”.\textsuperscript{84} He proposed that the provincial government could utilise two of those transmitters for its purposes; the only problem lay in the legality of the situation:

If the Defence Department agrees to transfer the transmitters we have asked for, there will be some legal difficulties in operating the station; but I believe the Information and Broadcasting Department can advise the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, who is the competent authority, to permit us to work a station as a temporary [emergency] measure. I am advised that the legal position is that the Government of India can permit the operation of non-commercial stations for some definite object of “scientific value, research, experiment or instruction” with the concurrence of the Government of the province.

In view of the great necessity for us to contact the rural areas in this province instantly and frequently in the present critical communal and political period, I hope you will be able to help us in this matter early.\textsuperscript{85}

To this Sardar Patel replied advising D.P. Mishra to take up the question of transmitters and broadcasting station in Nagpur after some time. “If you raise it now, it is possible that the news regarding the presence of surplus transmitters might spread and others may lay claim to them.”\textsuperscript{86}

The Eight Year Plan

According to V. Shankar, Patel became convinced of the need for rapid expansion of broadcasting but the competing claims and limited finances available came in the way of such a step. The recommendation of the Director General was that the

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., vol.5, p.165. Enclosure to letter written to Sardar Patel: letter dated 20 June 1947 to the Secretary to the Government of India from P.S. Rau, ICS, Chief Secretary to the Government, Central Provinces.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., vol.5, p.163.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., vol.5, p.166. Letter from Sardar Patel dated 22 June 1947
surplus equipment made available after the war be utilised, even though most of them were 1kw sets. On 15 March 1947, a Press Note issued by the Press information Bureau laying out the contours of broadcasting that was envisioned for Independent India. A gist of it was contained in a Telegram sent to the India Office and stated as follows:

An eight year plan which should form the first stage of the development of broadcasting in India has been approved by the Development Board.... The main features of the plan are the installation of eight high powered, medium wave transmitters for urban programs, two each at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi; the installation of 3 kW Medium Wave transmitters for rural programmes, one each at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; the installation of 2 high-power transmitters and one 20 kW medium wave transmitter at Allahabad; the installation of 20 kW medium wave transmitters, one each at Karachi, Nagpur, Bezwada (Madras Province), Ahmedabad (Bombay Presidency), Cuttack (Orissa Province), Dharwar (Bombay Presidency), Gauhati or Shillong (Assam Province) and Calicut (Madras Province); and the construction of studio buildings at Madras and Calcutta as well as the provision of additional office accommodation and studio facilities and existing broadcast centres.

To facilitate planning and for the purpose of administrative economy and convenience, five zones have been considered, taking into account linguistic, musical and similar cultural affinities. Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Allahabad, for which high powered transmitters have been provided, will be treated as a Zonal Centers. The Zonal Centres, as well as new centers at Nagpur, Cuttack, Shillong (or Gauhati) and Ahmedabad will be completed or opened during the first five years of the Plan. The new transmitters will be installed as and when necessary equipment and staff becomes available.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Member for Information and Broadcasting stated at a press conference that the cost of the scheme will be Rs. 35,700,000 non-recurring and Rs. 8,600,000 annually. At present All
India Radio, on which Rs.10,000,000 has been spent as non-recurring expenditure, costs the government of India Rs. 10,000,000.87

The other things of note that Patel said in his Press conference were with regard to commercial broadcasting, television, and broadcasting autonomy:

Sardar Patel said commercial advertising would not be permitted over All India Radio, and there was no project for television. Private companies would not be allowed to set up broadcasting stations. The government did not intend to turn All-India into a public corporation, as had been done in the case of the BBC.... The new Plan had been drawn up on an all India basis without reference to any future constitutional changes.88

The first station that Patel inaugurated under the new scheme was the Patna station on 26 January 1948. An official press release on 15 August 1948 made the new scheme official: “The original development plan drawn up on the basis of undivided India was modified to suit the changed conditions in the country. Under the revised scheme, new stations are being opened providing broadcasting facilities to a number of provincial centres where none existed before and covering linguistic areas which did not already have a service of their own.”89 The release added that these stations were being set up by the government, “alive to the immediate need for rapid expansion of broadcasting” as an interim scheme. Under this scheme, the stations set up were to be “pilot stations” providing a satisfactory service in the cities and adjoining rural areas. High powered transmitters, to be installed subsequently, would

88 Ibid.
89 BBC, Written Archives Centre (From now on WAC), E1/877/2, “Extension of Broadcasting Services in India”, in All India Radio 1946-49, 15 August 1948.
later extend the service to the whole of the region. The pilot stations were to serve as “the nucleus of the extended service to come and in the meantime cultivate potential talent in the area so that by the time the high power stations are ready, there will be an adequate flow of programme material.”

Between 1947 and 1949, new stations sprang up in Jullunder, Jammu, Patna, Cuttack, Srinagar, Guwahati, Nagpur, Vijayawada and Baroda.

The process of consolidation continued over the next few years though at a slower pace, with four new stations coming up in 1949-50. On 1 April 1950, stations belonging to the former princely states were finally integrated in to the AIR network, bringing the total number of stations to 21. That there was still a long way to go was apparent from the fact that in 1950, its medium wave service still serviced only 21 per cent of the population and covered a mere 12 per cent of its area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population Covered (%)</th>
<th>Area Covered (%)</th>
<th>No.of stations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Allahabad on 1 February 1949, Ahmedabad on 16 April 1949, Dharwar on 8 January 1950, Kozhikode on 14 May 1950.
93 Hyderabad, Aurungabad, Mysore and Trivandrum.
The "Re-orientation" of Broadcasting

It is not very easy to pinpoint the reasons for Sardar Patel's antipathy towards the Director-General A.S. Bokhari. One pointer can be found in V. Shankar's account of his years with Sardar Patel as his private secretary. According to him, Patel found "the problems of All India Radio, particularly with Bozman as Secretary, and A.S. Bokhari as Director General, particularly taxing.... Bokhari's sympathies were unmistakable and the direction of the language policy of the AIR was already a subject of controversy, almost as sharp and bitter as the political ones."96

According to Luthra, the language problem was almost as old and as vexatious as the problem of broadcasting. It arose out of the fact that both Hindi and Urdu were in common usage and proponents of both languages wanted their language to be the dominant one on radio. This controversy permeated every aspect of broadcasting, ranging from recruitment, with allegations that more Urdu speakers were being recruited than Hindi speakers, to even the content of the programmes broadcast. The controversy at times assumed political and communal overtones in tune with the changing characteristics of the Independence struggle. In a letter to K. Rama Rao of the National Herald on 23 August 1940, Jawaharlal Nehru was constrained to object to the "long letters protesting against the use of Urdu words in AIR broadcasts. He said "I find that a demand has arisen that there should be two broadcasts, one each in Hindi and Urdu. This is not only absurd but harmful. I should like you to speak to...

94 Luthra, n.78, p.198
95 Shankar, n.62
96 Ibid., p.23
97 For a detailed account of the language problem, see Luthra, n.78, pp.255-76

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members of the editorial staff on this subject so that a proper balance may be preserved and the *Herald* should not be accused of participating in an agitation which has a communal tinge...."98 Another indication of the amount of heat generated by this question can be seen in the extract from the official report of the Legislative Assembly Debates of 28 March 1944. The question was put by G.V. Deshmukh and was about the "imbalance of Hindu-Muslim artistes on AIR."

Table 3.3 – Percentage of Muslim vs. Hindu Artistes on AIR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim</th>
<th>Percentage of Hindu artists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/1/44</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/1/44</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/1/44</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/1/44</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/1/44</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/1/44</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: British Library, India Office Records

The following questions were posed based on the above table. "Is it a fact that Hindu artistes were overlooked in the programme of the Delhi Radio station in the following ratio on the under mentioned dates? F) Is it a fact that more ghazals are being sung at AIR than geets? If so, why? G) Is it a fact that all the ghazals being sung are by Muslim composers?"99

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99 British Library, India Office Records, Information Department, File IOR/L/1/936, "Extract from Official Report of the Legislative Assembly Debates 28 March 1944", in *AIR and FEB Broadcasting 1944-46*
Bokhari had tried to resolve the issue by concentrating his efforts on creating a lexicon for Hindustani, the common man's tongue which combined the more popular words from the two languages. But this raised the hackles of purists on either side of the language divide and resulted in a sustained personalised attack on the "Bokhari regime" and calls to the government to remove him. As the Al-Aman reported on 13 March 1943, "Recently in the Assembly a member stated that Hindi is the common language of India. The authorities of AIR are trying to ruin this language by using words and phrases which are acceptable neither to Muslims nor to Hindus...."\(^{100}\) The Hurriyat of 2 March 1943 wrote that the "Bokhari regime" meant that "Delhi Radio is full of undesirable people who broadcast in a language which is uncultured and uncivilised...." It further accused Bokhari of bringing radio into disrepute: "A radio station which can find time to broadcast stupid and silly programmes, a station which can broadcast replies to women's letters in most undesirable terms containing very suggestive remarks, a station which broadcasts 'smutty' songs and cheap music ... and a station which broadcasts instructions on how to make love, is run on a policy which we can no longer tolerate...."\(^{101}\) As Brander noted in a memo on the issue, "...things have to be very bad before Muslim turns on Muslim...this is the first press campaign against AIR since the present Director took over..."\(^{102}\) V.Shankar explains the controversy from Sardar Patel's perspective.

\(^{100}\) BBC, WAC, E1/911, "Internal memo on Press Campaign against AIR from L.Brander", in Press A-Z 1936-52, 19 April 1943, p.2

\(^{101}\) Ibid., p.1

\(^{102}\) Ibid.
One of the most controversial issues in the administration of the Information & Broadcasting portfolio was the question of the language of All India Radio. At the time Sardar assumed office, Bokhari’s ideas on the subject were holding the field. His scheme was based on a system of rationing time between English, Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani. The protagonists of Hindi contended that in this scheme Hindi had a raw deal. The staffing pattern of All India Radio also strengthened the case of the Hindi protagonists for its reform in the direction of their own way of thinking. The League members made a political issue out of it ... they were all ranged against any interference in the status quo. Lord Wavell, who displayed a personal interest in the controversy because he knew it had potentialities of a crisis, threw his weight into the solution that Sardar had evolved.

Sardar Patel’s solution was to lay down a fixed ratio in which the three languages were to be broadcast. These were 40:40:20 for Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani respectively. According to Luthra, in practice, this led to “much splitting of hair, needless calculations, controversies and word-counts.” Nonetheless, the language controversy does not seem a sufficient reason for Patel’s strenuous efforts to have Bokhari removed.

An internal BBC memo from the Controller (Overseas Services) dated 29 November 1946 had the following analysis: “AIR has been under the Department of

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103 Shankar, n.62, p.25. The detailed correspondence on the “All India Radio language question” can be found in Sardar Patel’s correspondence, Vol.4, pp.60-89. Wavell’s description of the situation is somewhat different. In a letter to Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, he noted “I have had to ask Patel to discuss with me the Hindi-Urdu language controversy in which All India Radio has been involved for a long time. He was on the verge of issuing a press note announcing his decision without consulting me or his colleagues. UK, HMSO, “Letter from Wavell to Pethick Lawrence, dated 14 January 1947” in, UK, HMSO, Nicholas Mansergh, (ed.), The Transfer of Power 1942-47 vol ix, p.504

104 Luthra, n.78, p.268. Mullick also makes the same point: “Now talks and feature were to be planned not in terms of the best talent available for a given subject, or the actual expectations of the audience, but a series of Hindi talks had to be counterbalanced by a series of Urdu talks etc. The point as to who was the most competent person to speak on a certain topic or which writer was best qualified to handle which theme was considered unimportant. The prescribed
Information.... The Member for Information, until recently a Moslem, is now a Hindu and it is more than likely that the change in Director-Generalship reflects this possible change...."\textsuperscript{105} Patel's dislike of Muslims in sensitive positions has been recorded elsewhere. According to Patrick French's account of the Partition period: "Patel told Mountbatten that 'Muslim officials in the Government of India should be got rid of as soon as possible,' and in early August he ordered the Transport Minister to ban (those who chose Pakistan) from working on the railways, supposedly for fear of sabotage."\textsuperscript{106} No doubt, in addition to all these factors, Sardar Patel also found Bokhari too independent-minded for his liking and therefore decided he must go. This seems to be borne out by V. Shankar's comment on the change: "With Bokhari's departure, the greatest stumbling block in the reformation of All India Radio to the new way of thinking was removed...."\textsuperscript{107} Bokhari resigned in October 1946 and was immediately replaced by P.C. Chaudhari of the I.C.S.\textsuperscript{108}

The other notable thing Sardar Patel did was to ban access to the medium to those musicians whose "private lives were a public scandal." According to Luthra, this has been regarded by some as a measure directed against Muslim women musicians proportions had to be maintained at all costs." K.S. Mullick, \textit{Tangled Tapes} (Delhi: Sterling, 1974), p.116

\textsuperscript{105}BBC, WAC, File E1/877/2, "Internal Memo from Controller (Overseas Services) on new AIR Director General", in \textit{All India Radio 1946-49}, 29 November 1946. The previous Member was Akbar Hydari, ICS. Available records indicate that he was a Civil Service professional and not in any way connected with the Muslim League. It seems the BBC was examining this situation in stark Hindu-Muslim terms.

\textsuperscript{106}French, n.67, p 315.

\textsuperscript{107}Shankar, n.62, p.25

\textsuperscript{108}BBC, WAC, File E1/877/2, Cable from BBC representative in India, Hughes, "Bokhari Resigning AIR DGship, Taking up Educational Post", in \textit{All India Radio 1946-49}, 12 October 1946. According to K.S. Duggal, even Gandhiji's intervention on Bokhari's behalf could not save him once Patel had made up his mind. Author's interview with K.S. Duggal, 15 September 2002.
who, to circumvent this prohibition, simply changed their names and were soon back on AIR. According to V. Shankar, once his objectives had been attained, Patel gradually let go of the reins of this ministry and his association with broadcasting came to an end in late 1948, with the appointment of R.R. Diwakar as Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Ministers of Broadcasting

R.R. Diwakar, Sardar Patel's deputy, took over charge of the Information and Broadcasting ministry following Patel's death in 1950. However, he remained a Minister of State, though he held independent charge of the ministry. His tenure was largely unremarkable for any notable improvement or development; which was not surprising since, according to K.N. Mullick, he was a man of placid temperament who believed in exercising a kind of distant benign influence over those placed in his charge and not interfering in the normal work. In 1952, B. V. Keskar was appointed Minister and he was to remain at the helm of the ministry for 10 years, the longest any single person has been in charge since Independence.

This achieves significance in that after Independence, it was the Ministry and the Minister who called the shots as far as broadcast planning and even day-to-day

109 Luthra, n.78, p.163, also p.305
110 Mullick sums up these aims thus: "His very first act after assuming charge has already been mentioned doing away with that class of musicians whose way of life did not fit into the normal pattern of social behavior.... His second act was to change the linguistic structure of AIR's broadcasting by laying down fixed proportions as between Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani. The third major step he took was to bring in a few persons of his choice to occupy senior positions like Director General, Deputy Director, Director of Programmes and Station Director." Mullick, n.104, p.116
111 V. Shankar, n.62, p.192
112 Mullick, n.104, p. 121
113 Luthra, n.78, p.498

134
administration and decision-making were concerned. G.C. Awasthy, referring to the National Programme of Music, which was a pet project of the Minister, says: "For this programme, choice of artistes could not be finalised without approval of the Minister. Even a minor change in date on which a particular artiste was to appear had to be referred to him." K.S. Duggal, referring to another pet project of the Minister – the creation of a separate programmes cadre, says he was transferred to five places within the span of a year, because he refused to join this cadre, and ultimately he had to quit the service. According to K.N. Mullick, this represented a significant change from the earlier ten year period when the concerned Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council remained, to all intents and purposes, the figurehead giving the Controller virtually a free hand in conducting the professional side of AIR.

B.V. Keskar concentrated a large part of his energies on the subject closest to his heart – Hindustani classical music. According to Mullick, even before he became the Minister, Keskar had a perception that those entrusted with AIR's music programs were either totally unfit for their jobs or were using their talents in the wrong direction. This was partly borne out of his personal assessment of the quality of the broadcast which he listened to regularly, and partly from the impressions and experiences conveyed to him by some of the performing artists he knew intimately. So among the first tasks he undertook upon joining the ministry was to reform and

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115 Author's interview with Mr. K.S. Duggal at his residence in Delhi on 15 September 2002.
116 Mullick, n.104, p. 116
restructure the music department. This he did by creating a new cadre of “programme staff” who were appointed on fixed term renewable contracts. However, their functions overlapped with that of the existing staff and led to enormous confusion within AIR. To further worsen matters, when the AIR budget was unable to meet the higher remuneration of those who were brought in on contract, Keskar’s solution was to let go of some of the permanent employees.

Mullick gives the outcome of these *ad hoc* decisions:

The new arrivals were different calibre, types and temperament. Nor was it thought necessary to put the new comers through a systematic and intensive process of training. The fact that a person had written a few stage plays or had been performing music was considered enough to qualify him for a position of authority in this respect to branch of programming.

This kind of climate could only breed frustration, suspicion and jealousy. The new comers complained that they were treated as aliens by the old staff and were denied the cooperation and facilities essential for their successful functioning.... Since several of the new comers had been chosen by the Minister himself a whispering campaign was set afloat by disgruntled staff charging him with favouritism and provincialism.

Dr. Keskar, instead of facing this development realistically, vented his wrath on the authorities in and what he called their inability to control the situation....

It was Keskar who also made the decision in 1960 to merge the News Services Division of AIR into the newly formed Central Information Services (CIS) which was constituted by pooling together the permanent personnel serving in the

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119 Mullick, n.104, p.123
119 Ibid., p.124
Ministry's many diverse departments – the Public Information Bureau (PIB), the Publications Division, the Song and Drama Division, the Department of Audio-Visual Publicity (DAVP), and the Directorate of Field Publicity. This was detrimental to professional broadcasting because people with no interest or experience in broadcasting were brought in and, once there, they did not take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the particular needs of broadcasting since, within a few years, they would be transferred to other jobs that were not even remotely concerned with broadcasting. The Chanda Committee, that was set up to look into Broadcasting and Information Media in 1964, felt that though the CIS was set up with the “laudable object of widening the avenues of promotion of personnel employed in the different media units ... the more important consideration that each unit needed specialisation was overlooked.” Ultimately the outcome of this move was akin to “putting a square peg in a round hole.”

Among Keskar’s achievements were the inauguration of a National Programme of Music which was to be relayed by AIR’s transmitters simultaneously all over the country. Pandit Ravi Shankar, then a music artiste with All India Radio was the

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120 As the Chanda Committee put it: “There is little similarity between the functions of the Press Information Bureau which provides publicity officers to the various departments of government, the Publications Division which edits and publishes certain Government journals and books, the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity, which handles government advertisements... the Research and Reference Division which is responsible for research and the Field Publicity Division which undertakes publicity for the Five-Year Plans....” India, GOI, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (From now on MIB), Report of the Committee on Broadcasting and Information Media (New Delhi: MIB, 1966), p.101

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 On 7 July 1952.
first artiste to be featured on the National Programme of Music on 20 July 1952.\textsuperscript{124}

Subsequently, a National Programme of Talks and Discussions in English was introduced on 29 April 1953, a National Programme of Operas on 14 July 1956, a National Programme of Plays on 26 July 1956, and a National Programme of Features on 15 August 1956.\textsuperscript{125}

Derek Holroyde, BBC Representative in Delhi prefaced his summary of the credits and debits of the Minister's tenure as follows:

...the personality of the present Minister, and of successive Secretaries to the Ministry, has coloured the whole nature of broadcasting and unconsciously encouraged it to be narrow-minded and authoritarian. Many of the senior staff, who knew the real purpose and possibilities of broadcasting, as we understand them, have been replaced by people untrained in the profession but sympathetic to the nationalistic and propagandist ideas emanating from the top. In this connection, it is worth noting the odd fact that Mr. Nehru, whose long arm has had to reach into the affairs of so many ministries, has taken very little personal interest in the development of Information and Broadcasting. This is a little surprising in view of his realisation of the need to build up in the public mind a growing awareness of national unity and of the benefits of freedom and economic planning.\textsuperscript{126}

While noting Dr. Keskar's contributions to music and the expansion of the service from 8 stations in 1948 to 28 in 1957, on the debit side, Holroyde put the following points: "1) Neglect of programmes which encourage the growth of democracy No political broadcasting, no hard discussions of current or controversial issues; 2) The


\textsuperscript{125} Its Hindi counterpart was begun only in 1968.

\textsuperscript{126} BBC, WAC, E1/2064/1 "Report from Derek Holroyde to C.O.S", in \textit{India (4) 1955-57 New Delhi Office}, 15 November 1957, p.2
subordination of programme staff to outside experts, e.g. musicians, writers, poets and others who have been brought into broadcasting to improve quality but who do not know anything about the medium and who have proved too senior to be taught;

4) the loss of a large proportion of potential listeners to Radio Ceylon....”127

Keskar left the ministry only after he lost the election in 1962. Those who headed the Information and Broadcasting Ministry after Keskar included B. Gopala Reddy, Raj Bahadur, Satya Narain Sinha, Indira Gandhi, K.K. Shah, and I.K. Gujral. None of them had sufficient stature or were senior enough for broadcasting to be given sufficient importance in the overall scheme of things.128 Indira Gandhi was the sole exception in that even though this was her first ministerial appointment, she was “ranked number four in the Cabinet immediately after Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister, G.L. Nanda, the Home Minister, and T.T. Krishnamachari, the Finance Minister.”129 The decision to take up this portfolio was actually a strategic move by Indira Gandhi who, given a choice, would have preferred the External Affairs portfolio. Inder Malhotra, one of her biographers, writes that she told him that “she did not consider herself merely the Minister of Information and Broadcasting but one of the ‘leaders of the country.’”130 According to another biographer, “Although she wasn’t really interested in Information and Broadcasting

127 Ibid.
129 Ibid., p.312

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— she wanted External Affairs — she was keen to make something of it.”  

She wanted the press, radio and television to be used not merely for propaganda but for promoting a “richer and fuller life” for the people and she emphasized the desirability of the personal approach …which could guide modern media of mass communication to reach the masses. She emphasized three other things: that broadcasting should have “original thinking” behind it and include “more controversy and discussion,” that the television network should spread out more, and that there should be coordination of the media. “Now people tend to work separately,” she said. “In films and radio, for instance, we should work more closely with the Education Ministry with regard to school programmes.”

That she was determined to leave her mark on her portfolio was evident from a series of actions she took soon after assuming office. The most important among them was the setting up of the Chanda Committee to look into the working of the medium. “This had long been needed but both the government and the Congress Party in Parliament had resisted the idea, the ministers because they feared criticism of their policies, and the party because it was interested in retaining its hold over the medium for propaganda purposes…” The Chanda Committee’s task was to “determine and define the role of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in

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terms of government’s responsibility and functioning in mass communications, to examine and evaluate the operations, policies, programmes and production of the various media units of the ministry … to recommend appropriate changes, where necessary, to be made in the various media units.”134 By the time the Committee’s report came out, Indira Gandhi had been elevated to the post of Prime Minister, and its recommendations were implemented only piecemeal.

Another notable event in the annals of broadcasting during Indira Gandhi’s tenure was the appointment of Narayana Menon as the Director General of All India Radio. The majority of Director Generals in the post-Independence period had been bureaucrats “with artistic inclinations” drawn from the Indian Civil Service (ICS). Mrs. Gandhi sought to change that, saying that her search for a new Director General was guided by the criterion that “he should be a man who has a reputation to lose.”135 Her nominee for the post was Narayana Menon, who was not only a broadcaster, but had also achieved eminence as a musicologist and litterateur. “In her appointment of Dr. Menon … she succeeded in overcoming strong resistance from the Civil Services and the Union Public Service Commission.”136 These two bodies had traditionally decided on who would occupy that post. That there was much manoeuvring going on behind the scenes is evident from a series of reports sent by Peter Albany, the BBC’s Representative in Delhi, to his superior W.P. Halliday, Acting Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations in London, during this period. On

133 Ibid., p.316
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., p.317
136 Masani, n.131, p.132

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22 March 1965, Albany reported that 22 changes had been made in AIR’s senior personnel. His analysis of these changes was that they had “really nothing to do with the Chanda Committee but are a purely internal move which AIR, as government department is likely to make from time to time ... they are, if anything, the result of a new Minister taking new Secretaries in the ministry.... I’m sorry I cannot be more categorical but I’m afraid politics enters into so much here that even staff appointments get mixed up in it and it is difficult to forecast what exactly will happen....”\textsuperscript{137} In a further communication on 22 April 1965, he said of Narayana Menon’s appointment: “Menon’s ... not really strong enough to stand up to the political pressure he may meet ... [however] it’s no bad appointment and much better than it might be. Being a South Indian he’ll be protected somewhat from Delhi factions....”\textsuperscript{138} Once Mrs. Gandhi had moved on to the Prime Ministership on 24 January 1966, efforts were made to rake up the issue all over again. In a report on 26 April 1966, the \textit{Times of India} under the headline, “Lok Sabha Furore over AIR Chief’s Appointment”, reported:

The Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Raj Bahadur faced a hostile House in the Lok Sabha on Monday over the issue of appointment of the Director General of All India Radio.

At least two Congress members, Mr. Bhagwat Jha Azad and Mr. D.C. Sharma, made implied charges of ‘political influence’ and ‘sheer nepotism’ against the Government for the continuance of the present

\textsuperscript{137} BBC, WAC, E1/2054/1, “Letter from Peter Albany, BBC representative in Delhi to W.P. Halliday, Acting Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations (AHOFR )”, in \textit{All India Radio 1955-66}, 14 April 1965.

\textsuperscript{138} BBC, WAC, E1/2054/1, “Letter from Peter Albany, BBC representative in Delhi to W.P. Halliday, Acting Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations (AHOFR )”, in \textit{All India Radio 1955-66}, 22 April 1965.
incumbent, Mr. Narayana Menon, whom the Union Public Service Commission had ‘rejected’. 139

Peter Albany further reported on 16 May 1966: “I had a talk with the new Secretary in the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, Mr. Ashok Mitra... he is a great admirer of the present DG and makes no secret of his support for Menon in the current manoeuvres to unseat him....” 140 Those manoeuvres were elaborated upon: “Two weeks ago, the UPSC boarded 5 candidates. Among them was N. Menon, the present Director General whose appointment has not yet been confirmed by that body. A further candidate, Kushwant Singh has been invited to attend the Board.... There are highly conflicting reports of who the remaining four candidates are. It seems fairly certain that none of them comes from AIR.” 141 In the event, Narayana Menon’s appointment was ratified by the Union Public Service Commission. But, Peter Albany’s appraisal turned out to be true; after just three years at the helm, Menon applied for early retirement and left All India Radio. 142

_Vividh Bharati_

Keskar’s passion for Indian classical music was matched by an equally vehement dislike for Hindi film music which he banned from the airwaves, decreeing that film songs were to form no more than 10 percent of the output from any station, to be achieved within a period of 6 months, and the total elimination of this abomination

139 "Lok Sabha Furore over AIR Chief’s appointment", _Times of India_ (New Delhi), 26 April 1966.
140 BBC, WAC, E1/2054/1, "Letter from Peter Albany, BBC representative in Delhi to the Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations", in _All India Radio 1955-66_, 16 May 1965.
141 Ibid. Kushwant Singh says that even though his name was suggested for the post, it was “promptly shot down by Mrs. G as I was regarded as being pro-Israeli.” He also says that he was never invited to any Board interview. Letter from Kushwant Singh dated 13 September 2002 and subsequent interview with the author on 8 November 2002.
was to be done within 18 months.\textsuperscript{143} This move backfired badly since Radio Ceylon filled up the vacuum thus created by broadcasting film music in the direction of India while at the same time garnering substantial profits in the process by selling advertising space on its programmes. All India Radio was sufficiently stirred by this move to write to the BBC to enquire about possible actions it could take to counteract this new threat.\textsuperscript{144}

When it became clear that AIR had exhausted all available options and was losing listeners in large numbers, it started the \textit{Vividh Bharati} or All India Variety Programme Channel in October 1957. This Channel’s avowed purpose was to wean back those listeners who were now tuned to Radio Ceylon, and its programme format was thus entirely consisted of film songs and film based programmes, as opposed to a balance of education, information and entertainment as was the case on the other channels operated by AIR in keeping with its public service motive.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Planned Development}

The emphasis through the fifties and sixties was on building up the infrastructure by opening new stations and increasing the power of the existing transmitters. In the First Plan, the objective was to provide at least one transmitting station for each language. By the end of the First Plan (1956), radio covered 50 percent of the

\textsuperscript{142} P.C. Chatterji, \textit{The Adventure Of Indian Broadcasting} (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1998), p.72

\textsuperscript{143} Luthra n.78, p. 309

\textsuperscript{144} BBC, WAC, E1/882, "Internal BBC Memo", in \textit{Broadcasting in India A-Z 1934-50}, 5 January 1950

\textsuperscript{145} This was further diluted in 1967 when the \textit{Vividh Bharati} channel was commercialised in keeping with the Chanda Committee’s recommendations.
population and 30 percent of the land area with a medium wave service. The Second Plan aimed to "extend services available for all languages to as wide an area as it is possible to reach." The objective of the Third Plan was to expand Medium wave coverage and to strengthen arrangements for pre-recording of programmes. Country-wide coverage became the main objective of each succeeding plan.

The Chanda Committee
A Committee on Broadcasting and Information Media was set up by Indira Gandhi, the then Information and Broadcasting Minister, in December 1964 to review the functioning of the broadcasting medium and to see what restructuring was required. The ten-member Committee, headed by A.K. Chanda, a former Auditor-General of India, presented its final Report in April 1967. Its three major recommendations were: i) that All India Radio be converted into a corporation run by a Board of Governors roughly like the BBC; ii) that television and radio be separated into two public service corporations; and iii) that radio should have a commercial channel whose profits could be ploughed back into radio for utilization.

146 Luthra, n.78, p. 201
147 Awasthy, n.114, p16
148 Ibid, p.19. The objective of the Medium Wave Plan, as explained by Keskar was to "encourage the production and use of low-cost radio sets, a single-band medium wave set being cheaper to produce than an all-wave set." However, according to Duggal, Keskar told him the major reason for shifting to medium wave was so that India could lay claim to the frequencies allotted to it. K.S. Duggal, What Ails Indian Broadcasting, (Delhi: Marwah Pub., 1980), p.8
149 Ibid, p.24. According to Awasthy, the decision that live programming should be replace largely by recorded programming was yet "another folly of Keskar's" and was the result of a visit to the USSR where he saw this concept in operation. P.C. Chatterji elaborates: Auxiliary Centres were something which had caught the fancy of Dr. Keskar who had been on a visit to the Soviet Union. They were rebroadcast centres. It was one of the most costly mistakes. There was no room for topical programmes nor for regional differences. P.C. Chatterji, n.142, p.161
150 Chatterji, n.142, p 165
The Report went further and identified the many problems faced by broadcasting through being a government department, "...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 the government...."\textsuperscript{151} To overcome this, the Committee recommended that the separate corporations so set up should have the freedom to evolve its own pay conditions, and methods of manpower recruitment. Another criticism it made was that:

Theoretically, it (AIR) has the freedom of a national newspaper to present objectively topics of current interest but in practice it has failed to do so mainly for two reasons. First, successive Ministers have usurped 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, the public image of AIR has become tarnished, its objectivity destroyed and its initiative gradually whittled away....\textsuperscript{152}

The Report, after being tabled in Parliament, was considered by the Government, and its recommendations were acted upon, though in some cases, such as the separation of radio and television, it took as long as ten years for taking the decision.\textsuperscript{153} Other recommendations were implemented piecemeal; the Vividh Bharati Channel was commercialised in 1967, but it took another ten years before the corollary to the Committee’s recommendation, that the profits accruing from the

\textsuperscript{151}Luthra, n.78, p. 226
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Radio and television were made separate entities on 1 April 1976.

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commercial channel be ploughed back into radio, was implemented. The recommendation that these organisations should be made into autonomous corporations was rejected outright on the grounds that the time was not ripe for such a momentous step.

The Birth of Television

The major impetus for the birth of television in India came when the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation decided to make a grant of $20,000 to India for the purpose of setting up a pilot project to study the use of television as a medium of education, rural upliftment and community development. That amount did not go a long way in television and further assistance was provided by the U.S. Government in the form of more equipment, and by the electronics company Philips which sold the T.V. transmitter it had brought for an industrial fair in 1955 to the government at a nominal cost. A makeshift studio was set up in Akashvani Bhavan and the first transmission went out on 15 September 1959. The aim of the UNESCO sponsored programmes was, according to its report, “to add to the information of viewers on various topics, to influence, if possible, their attitudes towards aspects of issues and to encourage follow-up group action and behaviour.” A one hour service was broadcast twice a week with a programme mix of social and educative programmes along with film based entertainment programmes. The absence of T.V. sets in general, and with the target group in particular, was overcome by installing 21 T.V. sets in community centres and setting up “teleclubs”

154 Chatterji, n.142, p. 166
155 The transmitter was of 500-watt strength which gave it a range of 20-25 kilometres.
to encourage the viewing habit. Each teleclub was to record its reactions and suggestions on the programmes viewed and to send them back to the T.V. Centre.

A second phase in the development of Indian television began when the Ford Foundation decided to sponsor an education project centred around television in October 1961. Planning for this was initiated by a team of educational television specialists from the Ford Foundation who came to India. This was followed by a visit to the United States by the Director General of All India Radio. Later, a team from India also went to the United States, London, Paris, and Rome to “study in detail working of educational television (ETV) in those places.” When the transmissions started in 1961, it consisted of five lessons in a week, broadcast to 145 schools with a total strength of 12,000 students. By 1968, television sets had been installed in 290 schools with a strength of 50,000 students, with 16 hours of television lessons telecast in a week.

In addition to educational programmes, other programmes also began to be telecast after a permanent television studio was set up in Delhi utilizing equipment donated by the West German government. Broadcasting of agricultural programmes on an experimental basis was begun in 1967 to 80 villages around Delhi. In the next few years, the hours of programming gradually increased and by 1972, over 37 hours of programming was being broadcast every week, including educational programmes.

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156 Chatterji, n.142, p. 51
157 UNESCO later chipped in with another forty-five sets.
159 Ibid., p.1
But even this was seen as a very small ripple in the pond with an editorial in the *Hindustan Times* in 1968 noting that India was "practically the last country on the map without the medium."\(^{161}\) Television spread its wings to Bombay in 1972 with the first programme being broadcast on 2 October 1972.

This fell far short of the government's target in the Fourth Plan which budgeted for Rs. 5 crores to be spent to establish centres in major metropolitan areas such as Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Kanpur.\(^{162}\) This was to have been the first leg in the government's ambitious master plan for the introduction of television and its development over a period of 25 years, with an estimated investment of Rs. 100 crores to be budgeted for in various Five Year Plans. The Chanda Committee had in fact wanted this roll-out to be completed in an even shorter time span of just ten years, with the aim of providing television services to 113 towns with a population of over 100,000 within a period of seven years, ie, 47 percent of the whole country.\(^{163}\) This was also the ostensible purpose behind the commercialisation of broadcasting in 1967, the reasoning being that "within 15 years, commercial advertising would have yielded well over Rs. 100 crores to the Ministry and its


\(^{161}\) *Hindustan Times* (Delhi), Editorial, 21 January 1968.

\(^{162}\) BBC, WAC, E1/2056/1, *Report of the Commission on Broadcasting and Information Media on Television for India*, p. 12. However, financial sanction for that had not been given upto 14 November 1967. Also see Mark Tully's report on AIR Director General Narayana Menon's Press Conference in BBC, WAC, E1/2054/2, "Developments in AIR" *All India Radio 1955-66*, 14 November 1967.

\(^{163}\) BBC, WAC, E1/2056/1, "Memo from G.T.M de M. Morgan, Head, Eastern Service, on 'Report of the Commission on Broadcasting and Information Media on Television for India'", in *Committee on Broadcasting and Information Media*, 7 April 1966.
expansion plans would not be too much of a burden to the State Exchequer." To overcome criticism that a vehicle for development purposes was being commercialised, a stringent commercial code was also promulgated. This "Code for Commercial broadcasting" specified, *inter alia*, that no advertisement should be permitted: i) which derides any race, caste, colour, creed or nationality except for the *specific purpose of effective dramatisation in combating prejudice*; ii) which is against any of the objectives, principles or provisions of the Constitution; iii) which tends to incite people to crime or to promote disorder, violence, or breach of law; iv) which presents criminality as desirable or furnishes details of crime or initiation thereof; v) which may adversely affect friendly relations with foreign states; vi) which exploits national emblems, the Constitution, or the person or personality of national leaders or State dignitaries; vii) on cigarettes and tobacco products; and viii) on gold and jewellery other than artificial jewellery. To reinforce its social objectives, concessions were also given on advertisement rates to *bonafide* small-scale industries. K.K. Shah, the Information Minister, rubbished claims by the newspapers that television advertising would mean curtains for them, saying it was "wrong to say that commercial broadcasts would reduce revenue of newspapers...since the maximum time allotted to an advertiser was one minute."

In the event it was not the Plan document but Pakistan television which dictated where new television centres were to come up. The fact that it could be received in

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164 *The Statesman* (Delhi), 19 January 1967, p.1
166 "Shah defends commercial broadcasting in AIR", *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 22 January 1968.
the border areas led to new centres being set up in Srinagar and Amritsar in quick succession.\textsuperscript{167} Community sets were provided to hundreds of villages in Kashmir to counter Pakistani propaganda. The next impetus to the expansion of television was with the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975. New centres were opened in Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow in rapid succession, no mean feat considering that the second centre in Bombay had come up 13 years after the first one was set up in Delhi.

**Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE)**

There were a number of inherent difficulties with bringing television to India, beginning with its vastness. Added to that was the fact that it had more pressing priorities than television, which was vastly more capital intensive than radio, both with regards to transmitting and receiving equipment. The solution to this seemed to lie in the new-fangled satellite technologies that were just being developed. As early as 1972, an Indian academic, B.D Dhawan had published his Ph.D. thesis on the "Economics of Satellite Television for India", in which he listed a number of articles that had come out on the subject in the preceding decade. They included: "On Costs and Benefits of a National Television System for India", by Lawrence C. Rosenberg in the *Indian Economic Journal*; "Satellite Television Relay for India's Development and Education(STRIDE)", prepared by the College of Engineering, Stanford University, in May 1967, "Communications Satellites for Education and Development – The Case of India", prepared by Wilbur Schramm and Lyle Nelson for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1968; and a

\textsuperscript{167}Luthra, n.78, p. 412. 26 January 1973 and 29 September 1973, respectively.

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report published by UNESCO from Paris based on a pilot project in the use of satellite communication for National Developmental Purposes in India, jointly conducted by a "UNESCO expert mission in co-operation with a national counterpart team appointed by the government of India."\textsuperscript{168}

The SITE Project, conducted between 1 August 1975 and 31 July 1976, was conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), following the signing of an agreement between the American National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) and the Government of India, under the terms of which, the Application Technology Satellite (ATS-6) could be used, amongst other things, to beam TV signals to direct reception TV receivers.\textsuperscript{169}

A report brought out by the ISRO gave the objectives of the project as follows: to gain experience in the development, testing and management of a satellite based instructional system particularly in rural areas, and to determine optimal system parameters; to demonstrate the potential value of satellite technology in the rapid development of effective mass communication in developing countries; to demonstrate the potential value of satellite broadcast television in the practical instruction of village inhabitants; to stimulate national development in India, with important managerial, economic, technological and social implications; contribute to family planning objectives; improve agriculture production; contribute to National Integration; contribute to general school and adult education; contribute to teacher training; improve other occupational skills; and, improve health and hygiene. The

\textsuperscript{168} B.D. Dhawan, \textit{Economics of Television for India} (Delhi: S.Chand & Co, 1974), p.2

\textsuperscript{169} P.C. Chatterji, \textit{Two Voices} (Delhi: Hem Publishers, 1979), p.13
American objectives were given simply as “testing the design and functioning of an efficient medium-power, wide-band space-born FM transmitter operating in the 800-900 MHz band, and gain experience in the utility of this space application.”

Vikram Sarabhai, the Director of ISRO, and “chief sponsor and champion of SITE” put the objectives of the project in perspective: “If India wants to reduce the overwhelming attraction of immigration to cities, enrich rural life, integrate the country by exposing one part to the cultures of the other parts, involve people in the programme of rural, economic and social development, then the best thing is to have TV via satellite.”

This pilot project covered 2400 villages in the states of Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. All India Radio was given the responsibility of making schools, agriculture and social education programmes for daily telecast. Three television studios were built for this purpose in Cuttack, Delhi and Hyderabad while ISRO also constructed two ground stations at Ahmedabad and Delhi. The school broadcasts, while not tied to any syllabus, were designed for primary and pre-primary students in the age group 5 to 12 years with the idea of attracting children and reducing the drop-out rate in village schools. The objectives of the agricultural programmes were to provide information about improved farm methods, pest control, market trends and weather forecasts. In keeping with Vikram Sarabhai’s vision, along with programmes on health and child

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171 Quoted in K. Nageshwar, “Three Decades of Indian Television”, Combroad (London), no.84, March 1989, p.18

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welfare, there were entertainment programmes exhibiting folk and rural art-forms designed to widen the horizons of the villagers and strengthen national integration. To cut costs, the same visuals were beamed to adjacent regions with just the audio track changed according to linguistic differences.

The satellite driven part of the project ended after one year since the satellite had been loaned for only one year by NASA. However, terrestrial transmitters were set up in many places to continue the service to about 40 percent of the villages originally covered by SITE. Being a pilot project, the SITE experiment was subjected to intense review and analysis during and after completion of the project. These reviews were mixed, to say the least. While some called it successful, others were not so positive about its impact. "The official assessment and the general impression was that [SITE] made a good impact and achieved wide popularity." P.C Chatterji, Director General of All India Radio during this period, describes it as "undoubtedly, the most important step taken by the government to harness broadcasting for development." But he points to the various impediments that came in the way of effective implementation of the project. It was political considerations, for instance, which dictated which villages would get television sets. Another "inherent" weakness with the project was that economic considerations resulted in programmes irrelevant to certain areas being telecast there since they had been prepared in the local language. For instance, cotton farming

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172 Luthra, n.78, p.417  
173 Chatterji, n.169, p.14  
174 Luthra, n.78, p.418  
175 Chatterji, n.169, p.126
might be done in one part of a certain state, but it would be telecast to all viewers speaking the language of that state for the reason that it had been made in that language. Thus, overall, according to Chatterji, the results did not bear out the money and effort put into the project. He blames this on insufficient thought and planning having gone into the project as a whole. K.iran Karnik, who was closely associated with the project had this to say about his experiences.

Responsibility for programme production did not lie only with Doordarshan, as is the case elsewhere in the country, but also with the Space Applications Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation. Thus, the programmes bore the stamp of a different work culture.... One wonders to what extent more bureaucratic and politically controlled structures would be free to stop "popular" programs, even when it is recognised that these are not only meaningless but often contrary to state media policies. We, also, were subjected to continuous pressure from the urban-rich of Ahmedabad (where the Pij programmes are received and seen) to broadcast "Chaya Geet" and the typical Bombay feature film. We have been able to resist this pressure only because we ... seem to be less amenable to political pressure than highly centralised, hierarchical organisations with a "Delhi-political" working culture.

The major actors involved in the project came out with their own assessments of the project. The Indian Space Research Organisation’s report was comprehensive and factual, based on its extensive field research. Chatterji describes it as the “best public document we have of the impact of broadcasting on the people.” Among its findings were that the school drop-out rate did not drop significantly, thus pointing to other reasons for this, such as economic conditions. Also, these programmes had

176 Ibid.
177 Chatterji, n.169, p.132

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little or no impact on the areas of agriculture, health and family planning. The Planning Commission's assessment, however was that SITE was "a failure as total as can be."\(^{180}\)

Efforts were made to obtain the services of a Russian satellite to continue the SITE experiment, with the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, V.C. Shukla, going to Moscow in 1977 to negotiate with the Russians. However, the Russians refused even to take up discussion on this and Shukla had to return empty-handed.\(^{181}\)

**Major Developments in Broadcasting**

The tumultuous events of the seventies had their direct or indirect impact on broadcasting as well. The declaration of the *Emergency* by Indira Gandhi saw censorship being imposed on the media. P.C. Chatterji says of the impact of the Emergency: "... while it had been one of the recognised functions of AIR to publicise the government's activities, a line had always been drawn between the government and the party in power and was carefully observed. This distinction was now obliterated and there was a determined move to propagate the personality cult...."\(^{182}\) A major decision taken during the *Emergency* period was to bifurcate television and radio in April 1976.\(^{183}\) The new television service, known as Doordarshan, had its own Director-General in the person of P.V. Krishnamoorthy, who had earlier been in charge of the experimental television service when it was set

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179 Ibid., p.128
180 Quoted in *Vidura* (Delhi), vol.16, no.3, June 1979, p.193
181 Chatterji, n.169, p.261
182 Ibid., p.106
183 June 1975-March 1977

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up in 1959. While the engineering and programming staff continued to be shared with AIR, otherwise, the two organisations were now separate entities with their own separate budgets.\(^{184}\) Other far-reaching decisions taken at the time included allowing Doordarshan to earn revenues by selling commercial time. In 1977-78, Doordarshan earned Rs. 219 lakhs from advertising.\(^{185}\) The decision to reduce excise duties on cheaper sets led to an increase in the number of television manufacturers, with forty companies having an installed production capacity of over 250,000 sets a year.\(^{186}\)

Among the first decisions taken by the Janata government that came to power in 1977 was to try and undo what it perceived to be the body blows to the credibility of the broadcasting media through the excesses of the Emergency period. To this end, the government presented to Parliament a White Paper on the Misuse of the Mass Media which detailed the adverse impact of the Emergency on Broadcasting. The government also set up a Working Group under the chairmanship of George Verghese, a well known journalist and Editor, to work out proposals to give full autonomy to the broadcasting organisations. The Working Group submitted its report in February 1978 containing sixty-five recommendations on the form and structure, finance and staffing of the proposed autonomous organisations. The government, after considering the report, introduced a Bill in Parliament which sought to give autonomy to AIR and Doordarshan. However, the Bill ignored many of the more crucial recommendations of the Working Group, seeking to retain

\(^{184}\) Luthra, n.78, p 416  
\(^{185}\) Chatterji, n.169, p. 420
control over the broadcasting organisations through Parliament, and control over the proposed Board of Governors and financial aspects.\textsuperscript{187} It was, consequently, more or less disowned by the Working Group in a joint press statement issued in May 1979. In any case, the exercise could not be taken to its logical conclusion since the government collapsed before the Bill could be passed. The Congress government under Indira Gandhi did not back the Bill after it came back to power, saying that an autonomous corporation envisaged by the Bill "is not considered necessary to enable those mass media to discharge their basic objective of serving people who are not served by other media."\textsuperscript{188}

**Conclusion**

How dynamic broadcasting policy making was depended on the environment in which it operated in – an environment that was shaped by political, economic, technological and social forces. The contrast between Britain and India was that while in Britain, even if the politicians were able to set the broadcasting agenda to a great extent, they, perforce, had to respond to new situations and circumstances thrown up as a result of economic development and technological advancement. In India, economic and social forces were much weaker and too fragmented to have an impact on broadcast policy making which was therefore dominated by the state.

\textsuperscript{186} Prem Kumar, quoted in Page and Crawley, n.140, p.56

\textsuperscript{187} See Chapter 4.

Since the churn that such opposing forces created was lacking, broadcasting also languished, in a small corner of the vast universe that was the Indian government.

The inferences that can be drawn from a comparative study of the development of broadcasting in the two countries in the period under study in this chapter are many even if such factors as economic disparities and historical discontinuities are factored in. Such mitigating factors are not sufficient to explain why broadcasting in India could not realise its potential. If one were to look for reasons, no doubt, the colonial construct of broadcasting, which continued and was 'improved' upon in the post-colonial period, was a major factor in deciding the structure of broadcasting in India. Once the state found no opposition to its tightening grip around broadcasting, the question of loosening that grip could only be posed by the state.

The situation could well have been the same in Britain but for the institutionalisation of autonomy in broadcasting through the structure of the Charter and the Licence Fee, coupled with the establishment of a process for broadcast policy making through an enquiry committee. The day-to-day running of the public service broadcaster was left in the hands of the Board of Management of the BBC which gave them sufficient flexibility to respond to changing norms of society and to enable the BBC to be both a facilitator and mirror to society. The success of the public service ideal prompted the government to incorporate it into the commercial system as well – if this had not been done, the BBC might not have been able to survive the break-up of its monopoly.

But that does not mean that this structure was not without its drawbacks. The BBC
played the part of the monopoly provider to the hilt in collusion with the government; it tried to steamroll any competitor, however insignificant it happened to be. The BBC's saving grace was that it provided good service. Though the general perception of the Board of Governors was that of being largely ineffectual and rather slow to move with the times, at times of crises, such as the Suez Canal crisis, they fulfilled their position as a buffer between the BBC and the government admirably, and ensured that the edifice of public service broadcasting did not suffer any damage of a permanent nature.

Despite the hiatus in planning and expansion caused by the Second World War, and the low priority accorded to the BBC in the overall scheme of things in the years immediately following the War, the BBC had acquired an unstoppable momentum of its own and, through the resources acquired from the Licence Fee, was able to continue with its expansion both in radio and television. At the same time, its autonomous nature enabled it to respond to the changing needs of society, and to both lead and reflect those changes. The three forces which played their appointed roles in leading the BBC forward were the Broadcasting Committees, the Board of Governors and the Board of Management, lead by the Director General. Whatever changes were wrought was the culmination of much thought and planning.

The only unforeseen change was the introduction of commercial television by the government, but, by then, the BBC was on such a sound footing that it could respond to the competition appropriately. Even when commercial television was introduced, it was done, in a sense, on terms set by the BBC in that utmost care was taken to ensure that the BBC was not sidelined or made irrelevant. This was despite
frequent run-ins with the government during the Suez Crisis and other events which were reflective of the increasingly fractious nature of British polity and society.

The BBC had to decide on its place in the British broadcasting universe with the arrival of commercial television; Rather than relegating itself to being a niche broadcaster and just cover those segments in programming that were not covered by the commercial broadcasters, the BBC strove to retain viewership to the maximum extent possible while, at the same time, establishing bench-marks for quality of programmes. Since the commercial broadcasters also had to follow the general guidelines of public service broadcasting, competition remained one for excellence in programming and audiences, since advertising, in any case, was allowed only on the one channel run by the Independent Television Authority, and was subject to stringent regulation. British Broadcasting’s biggest success was to successfully harness advertising also onto the public service bandwagon and ensure that programming standards remained high despite the inherent nature of advertising to search for the “lowest common denominator” as far as audiences were concerned and to pander to that. The Government, the broadcasting committees and the broadcasters each played a vital role in the success of this policy.

India’s “developing country” status meant that broadcasting was always seen as a superfluous exercise when compared to more pressing problems; that explains why India was one of the last major countries in the world to take up television. Though efforts were made to systemise broadcast policy making, they failed because of a lack of will on the part of politicians and the government to follow through on the recommendations made by the enquiry committees. The broadcasting institutions
had come so firmly under the thumb of the government that even an event such as the Emergency, which had such a major impact on the Press in India, hardly affected the broadcaster since it was already subjected to voluntary and involuntary censorship.

Where the British stayed focused on the expansion of broadcasting even during and immediately after periods of cataclysmic chaos such as the Second World War, broadcast policy making in India was dictated more by external events such as the wars with neighbouring Pakistan and China, or commercial broadcasts from Sri Lanka. Even then, the response was knee-jerk and short-term in nature. When a similar situation occurred in Britain, their response is found to have been always more structured, e.g., pirate radio led to Radio 1. Since, in Britain, there were other competing interests, acts like the breakup of the monopoly could take place, whereas, in India, the domineering nature of the state in India prevented any such development here.

The partition of India was a cataclysmic event not just for the country but also for All India Radio, with half its assets and many of its personnel going over to Pakistan. The immediate objective was to expand the coverage of broadcasting to cover as much of the country as possible. A “Basic Plan” was constituted which attempted to do just this with the help of war surplus stores and the like. However, extraneous factors ultimately ensured that such coverage wasn’t uniform; while initially, new stations were set up in those areas that were going through the throes of partition, subsequent stations were put up in the border areas with Pakistan, following the incursions from that country. Even then, expansion was slow since
broadcasting was not given much importance in the overall scheme of things and there were other much more pressing needs for the newly independent and relatively impoverished nation to spend its scarce financial resources on.

The combined effect of the Second World War and Partition also drove the broadcaster closer to the government, so much so that its status as a Department of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was not seriously questioned. It was felt that broadcasting had a role to play in the dissemination of the developmental activities of the government and that role could best be fulfilled if the broadcaster was an arm of the government. It was only over a period of time that the negative aspects of such a relationship became obvious; the loss of credibility for both the broadcaster and the government, as well as the diminishing of the creative spark in broadcasters, given the stultifying bureaucratic environment that pervaded any activity of the government. All the other ills that afflicted the bureaucracy and the government, including, intrigue politicking and sycophancy, also found their way into the broadcasting organization, and pretty soon, merit was hardly a factor in dictating the rise of a person in the organization. The structure of broadcasting was also tampered with, resulting in top personnel being drawn from the general Civil Service. Since their tenure was of a limited nature, no matter, how well meaning their intentions or initiatives, they foundered with every change in these personnel. Since the same was the case with their political masters, there was scarcely any continuity or scope for initiative in broadcast policy making, even of a short-term nature. Thus began the decline in broadcasting.

The few notable events in the annals of Indian broadcasting, such as the introduction
of the *Vividh Bharati* Service or the expansion of television services, were not part of a well-thought out Plan or an orchestrated expansion of the medium; while the former was in response to commercial broadcasts from Radio Ceylon, the latter was a response to Pakistan television beaming images across the border. Other initiatives such as the Radio Rural Forums or the SITE experiment remained what they were, experiments intended to demonstrate the potentialities of broadcasting for a developing country like India. These simply could not be sustained under the existing structure of broadcasting in the country, given all its problems as mentioned above.

A number of committees did come up with prescriptions for remedying the ills of broadcasting, but since that involved the radical surgery of distancing the state from broadcasting, they did not go anywhere.

In retrospect, the story of Indian broadcasting seems to be one of immense potentialities, but missed opportunities. There is without doubt much that the country could have achieved in and through broadcasting. However, in comparison with Britain, there were many impediments, including scarcity of resources, the bewildering diversity of the country; its many dialects and languages, its federal nature, that made the establishment of even the simplest broadcasting policy a most fearsome and arduous task. Under the circumstances, the government seemed to have adopted the strategy that the best policy as far as broadcasting was concerned was a piecemeal policy with the sum never adding up to the whole.