CHAPTER 1
PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

1.1 Public Service Broadcasting- A conceptual Framework

Public service broadcasting should aim at contributing at a new social environment, reaching out people enriching their lives and seeking communication that provides the warmth of human contact. Public service broadcasting has a number of functions-. It aims at the welfare of the public, development of culture and prosperity of industry and commerce. It also wants to contribute towards the realization of a peaceful society. Public service broadcasting is aiming at the improvement of respect for social, political, cultural and traditional values (Pati: 2004).

In a country like India in which democracy has a major role PSB should abide by the spirit of democracy, maintain respect towards human rights and public sentiments. it also has to defend freedom of speech and expression and also respect the law and order. PSB should pay attention to the services for women, children and elders and improve regional broadcasting services by giving specific attention to them. PSB should also have a responsibility to provide accurate news to its listeners. It should respect its listeners and should plan its programmes with professional packaging and experienced journalists and editors should be employed.

In countries like India in which majority of the people are living in villages PSB has to undertake specific programmes for the development of the rural community. It should take up campaigns dealing with rural development, consumer protection, energy conservation, adult education and empowerment of women and youth. PSB has a responsibility to use mass media technologies with socially desirable and relevant objectives. It is part of the national responsibility of PSB. In a
country like India majority of the people are either socially disadvantaged or poor or illiterate. So the PSB has to address the issue of alleviation of poverty, social improvement of disadvantaged people and the spread of literacy with the aim of development. Promotion of a healthy community and a healthy environment is an important objective of PSB. For this the PSB should undertake a number of campaigns which could easily communicate with the rural masses and common people.

A strong PSB can play an important role in today’s competitive and complex broadcasting market. In a world of many channels, it is found that a PSB is at its most effective when it only broadcasts a distinctive schedule, but also exerts a pressure on its commercial competitors to do the same. While government regulation of commercial broadcasters can achieve some of these aims, the PSB model is the preferable approach, it combines creative and market pressures on broadcasters to achieve society’s aims for its broadcasting market. (Sahay:2006)

A division is clearly growing between the channels whose primary purpose is public service, and those which are obviously business seeking to maximize profits. For the former the ambition is to succeed in innovation, in refreshing the pool of home grown programmes, in accurately reflecting and stimulating the public mood and taste....perhaps the best medicine is to make sure that the public service broadcasters, those who put the public interest first, those who are committed to sustaining a creative and non-derivative production base, are properly supported, properly sustained and properly funded.

---- Michael Grade, CEO, Channel 4 Television, UK, 1996

PSB is a means for the community to express, discuss and shift through the issues and matters that are important and meaningful for it. To perform this function, it must achieve and retain a significant share of voice and meaningful presence in the social, public and cultural debate and communication. PSB is also a means for community to
invest in the production and meditation of pluralistic programming, without regard to its market value.

*PSB must be force to enable the effective working of a pluralist democracy and serve as the watchdog of the authorities. It must also include media content, which preserves and develops cultural diversity, identity and culture— not just “high culture”, but culture generally. It has an important educational role to play.*

--- *report on PSB by committee on culture, science and education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the council of Europe, January 2004*

Main principles of the PSB are as follows—

- Universally accessibility (geographically)
- Universal appeal (general tastes and interests)
- Paying particular attention to minorities
- Contributing to a sense of national identity and community
- Keeping a distance from vested interests
- Direct funding and universality of payment
- Competition for good programming rather than in numbers
- Guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers

*(Raboy, 1999:8)*

The term “public service broadcasting” (PSB) describes very aptly its role and function. PSB is a forum for and an advocate of public service. Therefore, PSB has a primary stake in social responsibility and should be held accountable to it unlike the commercial media. PSB, public journalism and other public service media outlets should be committed to facilitating and invigorating public discourse. It facilitates public discourse and service by giving a voice to the genuine public. PSB’s tasks include a proactive role in identifying and honing matters of public interests and concern and facilitate interaction with and between members of public on such issues. Thus the PSB serves as an effective and free market place of ideas and information on
matters of public interest and thus empower members of the public to connect with important issues concerning public life in their societies.

PSB provides an informed critique of the dangers and risks involved and educating citizens on the social, political, cultural and moral implications of the changes taking place. PSB is a leader in facilitating public policy decisions towards the strengthening of the benefits offered by the commercial media systems and reducing or eliminating the negative consequences.

**DEFINITION OF PSB channels**

Council of Europe’s independent television commission (2004) has described the definition of a PSB channel as which brings together most or all of the following elements:

1. Wide range of programmes catering for a variety of tastes and interests, taking scheduling into account.
2. High quality in terms of technical and production standards, with evidence of being well resourced and of innovation and distinctiveness, making full use of new media to support television’s educational role.
3. Catering for minorities (cultural, linguistic and social) and other special needs and interests, particularly education including schools programmes and provisions for disabled people.
4. Catering for regional interests and communities of interest and reflecting the regions to each other
5. Reflecting a national identity, being a “voice of the nation”, the place where people go on national occasions.
6. Containing a large amount of original productions made especially for first showing
7. Demonstrating a willingness to take creative risks, challenging viewers, complementing other PSB channels and those, which is purely market driven.
8. Strong sense of independence and impartiality, authoritative news, a forum for public debate, ensuring a plurality of opinions and informed electorate,

9. Universal coverage

10. Limited amount of advertising

11. Affordability: either free at the point of delivery or at a cost which makes it accessible to the vast majority of the people

1. **Universality**: PSB is accessible to every citizen throughout the country. This is deeply egalitarian and democratic goal to the extent that it puts all citizens on the same footing, whatever their social status or income. It forces the PSB to address the entire population and to seek to be used by the largest possible number. This does not mean that the public broadcasting should try to optimize its ratings all the times, as commercial broadcasting does, but rather it should endeavor to make the whole of its programming accessible to the whole population. This does not merely involve technical accessibility, but ensuring that everyone can understand and follow its programming. As well as democratic, public broadcasting programming must be “popular”, not in the pejorative sense, but in the sense that the public forum it provides should not be restricted to a minority. Thus, PSB, while it should promote culture, should not become ghetto constantly frequented by the same group of initiates.

2. **Diversity**: the service offered by PSB is diversified, in at least 3 ways- in terms of the genres of the programmes offered, the audiences targeted, and the subjects discussed. Public broadcasting reflects the diversity of public interests by offering different types of programs, from newscasts to light programs. Diversity and universality are complementary in that producing programs intended sometimes for youth, sometimes for older people and sometimes for other groups ultimately means that public broadcasting appeals to all.

3. **Independence**: PSB is a forum where ideas are expressed freely, where information, opinions and criticism circulate. This is possible only if the
independence—therefore, the freedom of PSB is maintained against commercial pressure or political influence.

4. **DISTINCTIVENESS**: distinctiveness requires that the service offered by public broadcasting distinguish itself from that of other broadcasting services. In public service programming— in the quality and particular character of its programs— the public must be able to identify what distinguishes this service form other services. It is not merely a matter of producing the type of programs other services are not interested in, aiming at audiences neglected by others, or dealing with subjects ignored by others. It is a matter of doing things differently, without excluding any genre. This principle must lead public broadcasters to innovate, create new slots, new genres, set the pace in the audio visual world and pull other broadcasting networks in their wake.

PSB finds itself in the uneasy perch between state broadcasting (where there is a direct dominance) and commercial broadcasting, the seemingly inexorable consequences of widely lauded “market forces”. There are direct interest, direct lobbies, and direct instrumental consequences for each of these poles. Public service broadcasting is more of an ideal, more of a consummation of citizen desires and an element of a perfected democracy.

PSB works as a tool of pluralism and diversity, as an instrument of education, unification, and building a constructive national identity. PSB sustain languages and cultures and help develop national talents in production and creativity. It acts as an aid to reconciliation.

For public broadcasting, information is not restricted to newscast and public affair programmes, it extends to all programs enabling citizens to find out about different subjects of interest to them and to all those programs simply called “service programs” or “general interest programs”, which often deal with matters of current or practical interest to people. These programs, which address consumer or legal issues,
give practical advice, discuss health issues, and publicize community services etc. make public broadcasting itself a service offered to the public. It is through such programs that the public broadcaster gets closer to people’s specific needs. In a certain way, with greater means and on a greater scale, public broadcasting must, according to needs, offer the kind of useful information in many developing countries.

In the speech to the world electronic media forum workshop on PSB in Geneva (2003), Dr. Abdul waheed khan, UNESCO’s assistant Director General for communication and information stated that The editorial purpose of PSB is to become the voice in the society, guaranteeing equal access for wide range of opinions by bringing together common conversation that shape the public will, and in particular should become a trendsetter in taking vital socio-political issues for discussions.

He said that “only in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge can we achieve international peace, understanding and sustainable development”. He argued that in today’s world, in the interplay of major technological, commercial, political and cultural factors, when commercial interests and political interference fiercely challenge the field of broadcasting, PSB makes a landmark. According to him, first and foremost the basic role of PSB is to provide an inclusive platform for a public sphere in which representative pluralism is reflected and nourished.

PSB serves as a channel where one can gain access to education and culture, developing knowledge and fostering interaction among citizens. PSB is most suited to meet the challenges of development faced by the developing countries: to address the problems of the rapid population growth, to fight illiteracy, the health issues as well as working for poverty eradication.

Public service broadcasting is defined as a meeting place where all citizens are welcome and considered equals. It is an information and education tool, accessible to all and meant for all, whatever their social or economic statues. Its mandate is not
restricted to information and cultural development- Public service broadcasting must also appeal to the imagination & entertain.

The idea of Public service broadcasting is rooted in the enlighten notion of the public and of a public space in which social and political life democratically unfolds, as well as in the tradition of independent, publically organized broadcasting institutions created to deliver radio programmes to audiences in the period between two world wars. In some cases, Public service broadcasting refers to one or more institutions, while in others, it is an ideal.

Thus in some countries, Public service broadcasting refers to a particular organization or sector of broadcasting is seen as a developmental goal to be achieved. While in many cases Public service broadcasting may indeed be in “crisis”, the ideal that it represents is certainly very much alive.

Both the institutions and ideal originated in the experience of the BBC and its founder Sir John Reith. The BBC still stands as the quintessential model of Public service broadcasting worldwide, particularly in the view of the national goals, seeking to establish or to revitalize their broadcasting systems. It is indeed often impossible to separate the idea from the practical example of the institution, but do that we must. While the BBC is probably still the most successful example of a national service broadcaster and the UK among the most successful at anticipating and adapting to the new content of the 21st century, it is not necessarily an appropriator easily transportable model for many situations. The ideal, on the other hand, is a universal one- to the extent that democratic values can be said to be universal.

There is no easy answer to the question “what is Public service broadcasting”, but a reasonably thorough attempt was made some years ago by the UK’s now defunct broadcasting Research unit, in a pamphlet first published in 1985(BRU). The BRU document presented those elements of Public service broadcasting which “should be retained whatever systems are devised to provide broadcasting as new
communication technologies come into use. It is therefore a defense of existing Public service (broadcasting) institutions as they may become, it is concerned with the whole landscape…”

The BRU approach supported the view that broadcasting should be seen as a comprehensive environment. Its main principles can be summarized as follows—

1. Universal accessibility (geographic)
2. Universal appeal (general tastes and interests)
3. Particular attention to minorities
4. Contribution to sense of national identity and community
5. Distance from vested interests
6. Direct funding & universality of payment
7. Competition in good programming rather than for numbers
8. Guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers.

**IMPORTANCE**

The aim and object of broadcasting since its inception has been to facilitate the functioning of society and to meet the requirements and need of the people by putting across useful, relevant and appropriate messages by which listeners can derive benefits.

Public service broadcasting has the responsibility of providing a programme since which covers the whole spectrum of interests to its listeners. It is a part of contract to be at all the big events: it is also aware of its duty to more limited audiences, considering of people with all sorts of minority interests including minority sport.

The aim is to arrive at a programme mix- a top quality service, both technically and editorially. We have to create an audience and keep it for a
programme service that is intended for everybody, although perhaps not all of the people, all of the time.

The concept of Public service broadcasting has been gaining popularity among the listeners throughout the world. In the event of natural calamities like flood, cyclones and earthquakes all other media fail to operate effectively except broadcasting and the recent history bears testimony to the face that in such disastrous conditions, it is only the electronic media while come to the rescue of the people and as such the readers are required to know the growing importance of the Public service broadcasting and the real potential which it possesses for the betterment of the listeners in all countries of the world.

1.2 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

PSB systems originated in European democracies in the second quarter of the 20th century. At the core of which was a commitment to operated broadcasting services—radio and later television—for the public good. The principle model was adopted was the establishment of a state-owned broadcasting service either functioning as a monopoly or at least as the dominating broadcasting system.

PSB is nearly 88 years old—if one were to date its birth from the founding of the BBC in 1926. The general principles which guide it have evolved somewhat with time, but remain essentially the same. The conditions in which public broadcasting operates and the challenges it faces are forever shifting, however. Public broadcasting is particularly sensitive to changes in the political, sociocultural, economic and technological environments in which it operates.

- The development of PSB in Europe had three waves beginning with the establishment of the BBC in 1927.
• The second wave was in the 1960s and 1970s when sweeping political change in the Western Europe, such as in France and in Italy, began to transform government service broadcasters into PSBs.

• The third is the political change in the central and eastern Europe since 1989, where media system changes are a part of the overall political transition to democracy after an authoritarian system was dismantled.

**BBC model**

The roots of the Public service broadcasting are generally traced to documents prepared in support of the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) by Royal Charter on 1st January 1927. This corporation grew out of recommendations of the Crawford committee appointed by the British postmaster general in August 1925, included in those recommendations was the creation of a public corporation which would serve as a trustee, the corporation would emphasize serious, educational and cultural programming that would elevate the level of intellectual and aesthetic tastes of the audience.

The concept of the BBC was that it would be insulated from both political and commercial influence. Therefore, the corporation was the creation of the crown rather than the parliament, and funding to support the venture was determined to be derived from license fees on radio later television receivers rather than advertising. This made the BBC financially independent of the government of the day and on the advertising revenue.

Under the skilful leadership of the BBC’s first director general, John Reith, this institution of PSB embarked on an ethical mission of high moral responsibility to utilize the electromagnetic spectrum - a scarce public resource - to enhance the quality of life of all British citizens. He developed the strong ideas about the educational and cultural public service responsibilities of a national broadcaster, which operated on a non-commercial basis, offered national coverage with centralized control and
developed high quality standards of programming. These ideas were subsequently pursued by many broadcasting systems around the world.

The BBC operated under both Royal Charter and Licensing Agreement. These public service mandates include providing radio and television broadcasting programmes with educational, informational and entertainment value.

SECOND WAVE

After the concept of PSB was born in Britain prior to world war II with the establishment of the BBC, this model became dominant in countries of western Europe until the 1980s. Though there were a number of variations, such as PSBs coming under direct government control in France, Italy and Greece compared to more autonomy in Britain, the essential form of PSB however was a national broadcaster operating as a regulated monopoly that broadcast for, and represented the views and culture of the population of the country in question.

Mcquail (1994) has identified six major characteristics of this PSB model: a) A strong notion of public service which sought to provide cultural, informative and educational programming catering for everyone in the community, b) public accountability of public funds spent, c) monopoly broadcasters licensed by the government, d) politically linked to the state with varying degrees of politicization, e) national in scope, and f) non commercial in nature with programming freed from the need to make profits.
1.3 INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Research shows that people learn a great deal from TV. It can be used to teach almost every kind of subject: agriculture, sewing, language, science, health awareness and so forth.

It is believed that what TV had done elsewhere could be repeated here and predicted that if only TV could be used extensively and efficiently most if not all, our problems of development, economic growth, social changes and population control would be solved.

When a transmitter was offered for sale to the government of India by Philips at a reduced price, after demonstrated its use at an exhibition in New Delhi, it was decided to use it for an experimental service partly to train personnel and partly to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education.

The service began on 15 September 1959. Its range was about 40 km around the capital. At the start the accent was on education. Programmes were broadcast twice a week for 20 minutes at a time for about 180 teleclubs which were organized for viewing the programmes and discussing their contents.

UNESCO provided the funds for the TV sets around which these teleclubs were organized. UNESCO also sponsored a study in 1961 which indicated that the teleclub programmes had made some impact.

Social education for farmers and educational programmes for children were the initial objectives of the experimental TV in India. While the number of community viewing sets went up in Delhi’s rural areas and in schools and AIR’s television transmission were slowly extended, some 13 years were to pass before AIR’s second TV centre was established at Bombay in 1972. This hesitation in
promoting TV needs to be explained since the doubts then raised continue to dog the development of TV in India.

Thus the accepted reason for the introduction and expansion of TV in India has been to provide a medium for the education of the socially deprived.

The second TV centre was inaugurated in Bombay on 2nd October 1972 and centers were opened in Srinagar and Amritsar, the following year. The setting up of these centers was the direct result of developments across the border of Pakistan, which has stations in Lahore and Islamabad, whose programmes were being seen by growing number of viewers in India.

A most important year of development of TV in India was 1975. Centers were opened in Calcutta on 9th August and in Madras on 14th August and in November a TV centre was established in Lucknow.

In April 1976, DD, AIR’s television service continued as a separate dept. with its own director-general by Indira Gandhi government during the period of emergency.

1.4 Role of public service broadcasting in development

1. **Educational Broadcasts**

- Curriculum linked educational broadcasts for the going children, university students
- Curriculum based broadcasts during early morning or late evening as support to students
Lessons as support to those registered for correspondence courses, in addition to broadcasts, scripts are also provided on requests.

- Teachers training broadcasts through lessons, broadcasts with a pre-fixed frequency.
- Non-formal educational programmes with fixed periodicity
- All the educational broadcasts are planned and prepared by involving the education authorities and teachers.

2. **Agriculture and Farm & Home programmes**

- Short duration morning programmes giving hardcore agricultural hints.
- Long duration composite programmes, using stock characters, on health, agriculture, better housekeeping, folk music etc usually put out in the evenings.

3. **Schools on the air programmes**

AIR’s experiment in putting out a series of school on the air for selected topics has proved very successful. A series of lessons is broadcast and listeners are invited to get registered for it. Periodical tests are conducted among those who register for it and attractive prizes are given to those who secure merit rankings. Such programmes generally have 10,000-15000 registered listeners. So far all the state govt. has shown keen interest in promoting school on the air programme and there is persistent demand to start school on the air by different dept.

Presently AIR, Delhi is putting out a school on the air programme on “planned parenthood and responsible citizenship”

PSB as a policy matter treats family planning as an integral part of health. Regular programmes are put out either as part of the special audiences broadcasts or in programmes for general audiences.

36 stations of AIR under PSB have special family welfare units to prepare programmes on health & family welfare, nutrition, immunization, maternal and child care etc.

Usual formats of such programmes are talks by specialists, discussions, interviews, field based recordings etc.

5. Programmes on popular sciences

PSB regularly put out pro- programmes on popular sciences both in the general as well as special audience programme chunks. The aim is to disseminate accurate information about recent inventions and discoveries, popularize science and generally speaking to create a scientific temper. For this science cells have been created at a number of AIR stations to plan and produce science programmes.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Since independence, a platform has been provided by PSB for social causes as a result of 2 factors. Under government aegis, a large number of days and weeks are observed in the course of the year such as Anti-leprosy day, AIDS day etc. more recently, under UNESCO’s auspices, AIR and DD have been devoting a whole year to such matters on family planning and women and children. On such occasions, government is anxious to give publicity to these themes and positive directions are issued by government to the media.
In 1995 AIR started Radio Forums with such forums rural programmes would have a greater impact. The forums were modeled on the farm radio forums of Canada. After the broadcast, the farmers are expected to discuss the information and suggestions contained in the programme and to decide on a plan of action.

A group of social scientists under Dr. Paul Neurath of UNESCO conducted the evaluation. The report was fulsome in its praise.

…. A success beyond expectations. Increase in knowledge in the forum villages…was spectacular, where as in the non-forum vilillages it was negligible. Forums developed rapidly into decision making bodies capable of speeding up common pursuits in the village faster than the elected panchayat. Frequently they took on functions half way between those of a panchayat and a town meetings. The forums thus became an important instrument of village democracy… (Chatterji:1991)