The Socio-Cultural Impacts of South Asian Media in the age of Globalisation

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Abstract

This paper mainly focuses on South Asian Media, and studies on the impact of it in the present global scenario in South Asian culture and society. South Asian Media Studies primarily focuses on a research related to a burgeoning media industry in South Asia. Moreover, South Asia remains unique because of cultural, religious, political, linguistic and ethnic diversities and the rapid growth of media in this region demands a greater scope of research and study. Here made an analysis of the media industry in South Asia, especially in India during globalization, which significantly contributed to knowledge, culture and literature of the region. Naturally media should be virtual ambassadors, but in South Asia we find media is used to provoke minorities of this region as it is controlled by the State. The negative aspects of these tendencies are that the South Asian media does not address the plights of minorities and minimize the fear of war in the region. Media should stand for global outlook and international understanding, but here it is clearly violated through censorship of media and hiding human rights issues**.** Thus this paper mainly concentrated on South Asian Media Study, media expansion, its impact on culture and society in an era of globalization with a special focus on Indian context.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation (LPG), New Media, Social Networking Sites (SNS), South Asian Media & Studies

Introduction:

South Asia or Southern Asia is a term used to represent the southern region of the Asian continent, which comprises the current territories of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an economic cooperation organization in the region which was established in 1985. Today, South Asia attracts the rest of the world, both for its history and culture, but also for the significance of contemporary cultural, political, and economic developments. At the same time, South Asian media has remained an under-researched area in academic inquiry. This paper is an empirical attempt to highlight the role of media in the age of globalization in South Asia / India.

The Impact of Globalisation on South Asian Media

Globalisation is the current buzzword for the 'shrinking' of our planet. The term 'globalisation' is also used to denote 'global economic integration' and then, is a slow and relatively consistent process, which requires permanent structural change. The most widely recognised symbol of the globalisation system is the World Wide Web and the Internet, which are widely attributed as the primary agents in making this world a "Global Village" and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) being the main reasons for popularizing the trend of "Globalisation". The phenomenon of globalisation brings up many opportunities to learn from each other, and to benefit from a wider range of choices, but it also seems very threatening (HU 484 Term Paper 16).Media represents the modern era; it accepts and broadcasts the positive and negative events that are happening around us. Rudolph (1992) opined that media is the most prominent and strong mode of expression in this age of globalization. The focus of South Asian Media Studies is to promote research in burgeoning media industry in South Asia.

The South Asian media setting can be viewed differently by looking at its performance and operations. The United States has played an important role in learning, creating, and sharing cultural norms in Media. Appadurai (1990) has described the overlapping of Asian

consumer culture with the United States, whereas, Djankov et al. have (2003) found that government control of the media is greater in countries with autocratic political establishments in South Asia. In the recent years, Asian media outlets have tried to overcome and challenge their western opponents who control the world media market. In addition, Chan J, Suen (2008) has remarked that one seventh of the world's population is from Asia and they control two thirds of the total information flow and thus, Asia has tried to be fairer, objective and provide more comprehensive coverage than western media.

South Asia remains a zone of war and conflicts throughout its history. Roundtable Reports[1] (2011) suggested that there are three ways of viewing the conflicts in South Asia. (i) Firstly, there are conflicts that arise from challenges posed to the state but within the framework of the existing constitutional and politico-legal structure; (ii) Secondly, somewhat in contrast are conflicts that arise because of a rejection of the existing constitutional and politico-legal framework; and (iii) Lastly, there are conflicts arising from challenges to the idea of dominant nationhood underlying concepts of the modern state in South Asia:

In the context of liberalisation, privatisation and globalization (LPG), traditional print and electronic media in South Asia have the role in the construction of ideas of national interest within public discourse. A research report on the role of the media in national security produced by the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute is instructive in so far as it underlines the media's role as "force multiplier" arguing that "today decisions are no longer based on events but on how the events are presented." The discussions at the Roundtable brought to the fore two primary considerations: (i) Firstly, the importance of foregrounding the unequal nature of the public sphere within which the media is situated; (ii) Secondly, that in understanding issues of representation, it is also necessary to historically locate the ways in which the relationship of the media with the state and the market have changed over a period of time. Moreover, it is difficult to make any general statement about how the news and current affairs media in South Asia, whether print, broadcast or online, tend to represent conflict, given the diversity of channels, newspapers, and new media sources (Roundtable Reports 1-3).

Key Tendencies in Representation of Conflicts and Human Rights in South Asia

Again Round Table conference highlights ten key points regarding conflicts and human rights:

1. *An episodic treatment of conflict and human rights issues*: The focus on immediate events and outcomes rather than processes and histories about the conflicts in Baluchisthan or in Kashmir.

2. *An instrumentalisation of human rights concerns and their subordination:* so-called larger concerns such as "national interest", "law and order" and "state security" or partisan politics.

3. *A fragmenting of issues and a focus on the spectacular*: The broadcast Medias constantly produce 'breaking news' results in a construction of events as spectacle.

4. *Media tendency to stick to simplistic categorisations based on 'common sense' and a black and white interpretation of events:* The representation of conflict in Kashmir, the North East, the Maoist-dominant areas in India, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka or in Pakistan)

5. *Media is demonstrated by its often uncritical framing of events by use of terms and labels*: The use of the term 'stone pelters' to characterise youth engaged in the outbreak in Kashmir.

6. *The ideological biases based on class and other power relations that determine what constitute 'news'* and how the actors in events are represented.

7. *A systematic silences and exclusions that relate to the situations and voices of marginalised groups in militarised zones of conflict*: if they are important political figures, tendency to whitewash them.

8. *Instances of the media narratives challenging democratic values from time to time*: In Pakistan the media has often tended to reflect an elite consensus against democracy.

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9. *In media representations, linguistic hegemonies, biases and associated class interests play a key role*: In India, the English press tends to be for elite readership while the vernacular press has a class base. In Sri Lanka, there is a clear polarisation, between the Sinhala and Tamil press.

10. *Finally, major news media moving from a role of reporting events towards becoming interested players*: The media visibility or proactive involvement through campaigns, polls, help-lines (Box of Round Table Reports, 4).

Human Right Violations and Censorship in South Asian Media

The relationship between media and civil society especially human rights advocates in South Asia is a very complicated one. At one level, it seems to be fairly strongly influenced by the relationship between civil society and state-especially in less democratic contexts wherein the state tends to dictate all relationships. In each of the countries of the subcontinent, the state exercises different levels of control over various media, ranging from direct pre-censorship (as is the case for cinema in India) to banning and blocking access (as has happened with some internet sites) to licensing control (e.g. radio) to subtle and indirect ways of control (advertising revenue). The institutional structure of the media and its dynamics in the region are shaped by four significant dimensions:

1. *Ownership and control dimensions*: whether it is state run or commercial, and the institutional practices that these give rise to;

2. *Representational dimensions*: This means understanding that has a right to speak; how and when the media employ experts and opinion makers to stand in for citizens;

3. *General social structural dimensions*: which alludes to the multiple public spheres that exist in everyday life, within which the media is located; and

4. *Regulatory framework dimensions*: This relates to the legal and policy frameworks within which the media operates.

Emerging Spaces of New Media and Challenges in Socio-Economic Cultures of South Asia

South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India are adopting the new and innovative technologies but at a slower rate than other Asian Countries .The underlying factors behind this slower uptake are recession, inflation, and poverty. Media is helping these societies to rise as nations, adopt innovation, and experience colorful lives (Global Forum on Media Development 2007).

In different corners of South Asia, the Internet is emerging as a source of alternate views that attempts to escape the censorship of the state and also as a platform for advocacy and mobilization. Blogs, e-groups, social networking sites, e-campaigns and other modes of mobilisation on the Internet have been in some cases. The developments in information and communications technology (ICT) have led to the expansion of modes of communication in ways that would not have been imaginable even a decade ago. On the flip side, there are attempts to muzzle voices of dissent on the internet; for instance, in India, the Information Technology Act of 2000 and the Information Technology Amendment Act, 2008 have provisions which permit the state to block, censor, prosecute and in various ways seek to control free speech on the internet.

The Challenges of South Asian media

Challenges in South Asian media are related to cultural politics in that region. Rudolph (1992) presents some kinds of challenges such as:

(i)The first challenge is the competition to produce culture, and arguments over its meaning;

(ii)The second challenge is that media's key interest is to generate the public's culture at the same time as encouraging socio-economic gain.

(iii)The realism, symbolism, idealism, classism, and romanticism of society can be allegorically or non-allegorically reported and addressed by the media in this particular zone.

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(iv)South Asian media's other challenge is to act in the interest of the minorities of the continent, because it is worthwhile and an opportunity.

Ambirajan (2000) has pointed out that cultural diversity in media can maintain positive international relationships to understand different beliefs and values. Dragon (2001) says in Asia, most of the countries have advanced media infrastructures and platforms, and have undergone a digital switch over to raise their economy. Locksley (2008) suggests, mobile networks are an important part of media infrastructure and are very popular with the audience in this region as it have allowed communication between the media and public (10). Dr. Dharmakeerthi Sri Ranjan in his article 'Transnational media and its influence on rural social integration of rural masses in South Asia' (a case study in Sri Lanka) said the patterns of the traditional media have been greatly changed with the influence of the transnational media in the rural social context of Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

The major impacts of South Asian Media Study are the following:

 (i) South Asian media in this time of globalization significantly contribute to cultural expansions and significantly aid multilateral dialogues;

(ii) The South Asian Media as a whole are not working for the interests of minorities in this region;

(iii) The South Asian media provoke disagreements in the region instead mitigating them;

(iv) The Indian media contribute significantly and positively to expanding culture, facilitating multilateral dialogues, and generate income, but, they do not look after the interest of minorities.   South Asian Countries have initiated collaborations with media to foster an extremely strong media industry in the near future and the following suggestions assume critical importance:

(i)Truly independent and autonomous public broadcasters;

(ii)Legislative frameworks that protect and enhance freedom of expression and information as well as the rights of journalists and their associations;

(iii)Media regulatory authorities that conform to constitutional and internationally recognised standards that guarantees freedom of expression;

 (iv) Codes and standards of professional conduct commensurate with the best national and international practice developed and owned by associations of media persons; and

 (v) Enforcing transparency and accountability in corporate governance of media institutions (Round Table).

To conclude, it is now evident that the South Asian media expanded very quickly and Commercialization of media has made it more powerful, public, and profitable. In this race, it is very important to decide whether media content has a positive outcome. Media is the only platform and channel to unite people from different castes, creeds, and races .The policy makers, stakeholders, and new entrants into this domain should recognize the basic purpose of the media, which is to explore, visualize, and share information that may improve the world.

Notes

Round Table Reports[1]: The Kathmandu Roundtable on Conflict, the Media and Human Rights in South Asia (jointly organised by the International Council on Human Rights Policy, the Centre for Media and Cultural Studies of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Panos South Asia) brought together senior media professionals, social scientists, peace and human rights advocates in South Asia. The Roundtable was held in Kathmandu on 20 and 21 November 2010.

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