

## **Inequalities in the public sphere: emergence of community television in India**

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Economic restructuring in the 1980s opened the doors to the previously state-dominated television sector in developing countries. In India, unexpectedly, the resulting competitive setting produced multiple channels targeting various local ethnicities from below along with national-level expansion involving transnational corporations from above in a process now known as *localization*. While the plurality of channels translates into growth of the public sphere, this paper examines the reasons behind the uneven growth of community media, which cannot be explained by the community's size or economic resources. Some community channels extend their reach into the national arena while others lag in media development implying unequal political participation in the communicative system. What are the institutional reasons behind such variations in a multiethnic setting? The paper also examines whether the development of ethnic media reflects the redistribution of power taking place in the political arena or is it an independent development with implications of its own.

**Keywords:** ethnic media; public sphere; political participation; community television; India

The transformation of the media sector following the deregulation in the 1980s produced a sense of apprehension regarding the expansion of transnational media and its impact on to national political communication systems. As predicted by scholars and business analysts, the 1990s saw an unprecedented media expansion of transnational television into developed as well as underdeveloped parts of the world. At the center of this expansion lies the question of will the new setting produce new sources of information or will it marginalize communities with lesser resources who represent local perspectives? After two decades of rapid changes, mergers and alliances, it appears that the transformation produced varied consequences at multiple levels. One of the most surprising developments is the growth of community media along with the expansion of transnational corporations into spaces previously dominated by the state. Local players from subnational communities presented by new investment and technological innovations compete or associate with the transnational media in markets at different levels, including extranational ones. In fact, the unexpected expansion of these local enterprises prompted transnational media to produce localized programming, which constitutes a crucial element of the

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postindustrial processes. The focus of this study then, is upon the relatively neglected subject of successful emergence of decentralized community-based television in a previously centralized state-dominated sector and the consequential reshaping of the communicative sphere. It addresses the question of what prevents some community enterprises from participating successfully in the global and privatized communication space while others succeed causing access inequalities in the communicative process. The unequal expansion then allows the transnational and other national media to come into play in the community space.

A comparative study of community enterprises in the reorganized television industry in India is at the center of this analysis. The term community here applies to language-based ethnic groups. Census of India 2001 shows the existence of 122 languages in the country.<sup>1</sup> Language-based political mobilization prompted reorganization of political boundaries in the early postcolonial era.<sup>2</sup> Continued demands for political authority over language community continue to shape political reorganization in the country. Not surprisingly, the growth of community television in India is also primarily occurring along such ethnic markets. However, this growth is accompanied by a variation, as some community media enterprises are successful while others falter. Why do some communities have extensive media presence while others do not despite the presence of a sizeable community? How did some poorer communities overcome the shortage of resources whereas others with relatively richer or larger audience base faced significant difficulties? What community resources does a local enterprise mobilize in a liberalized setting to establish competitive media institutions at the local levels, which then contribute to the political dialog in the public realm as well as advance community perspective into the national realm? Community media's struggle to establish themselves illustrates that the answer does not so much depend on examining the economic wealth of a community as in the relationship among community institutions that permit local media enterprises to advance into the national as well as global setting. In addition, a study of variations in growth among community media institutions contributes to the subject of where the resources for political expression and communication come from in a less developed context.

Previous research on the subject of resources in the public realm mainly focuses on commercial and state television in more developed systems. In commercial systems prominent in USA and Australia, the resources were mostly from the private sector. Not surprisingly, this dominance was subject to critical analysis, which examined elite roles in shaping media messages and setting of the agenda.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, prior to 1991, majority of television systems around the world were dominated, if not outright controlled, by the state. The resource issues then were clear; the resource came from the state, which then used the medium for its own national purposes. Community media development in this setting heavily remained external to the television sector, developing in areas such as film, newspapers, and in the 1980s, the video market which revolutionized how people consumed media products and provided access to those who were left out of the media markets. Yet due to the state's control of the national television space, the local media in India

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2001/Census\\_Data\\_Online/Language/Statement1.htm](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement1.htm) (accessed on 31 May 2011).

<sup>2</sup>See Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India*.

<sup>3</sup>See Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Also Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible*.

remained localized at the ethnic levels, to be occasionally promoted by the center state as part of national integration projects. Rarely did local enterprises access national or international audiences, because the central authorities controlled such channels. National communication spaces were limited and unevenly available based on priorities of central authorities. Therefore, a gap existed in understanding where would the resources for private media development come from in a developing economy context.

The broad acceptance of free market theory in the 1980s not only ideologically but also technologically challenged the developing state's exclusive control of its audience as increasing amount of content came in from the skies. The competition was in the form of multinational corporations as well as local enterprises. The shift highlighted the lack of media analysis in the developing context where resource channels were not so apparent. While the sources for multinationals are apparent, where did the resources for community enterprises in this new setting come from? This paper explores the development of community media enterprises in a less-resourceful context in which the state remains one of the competing actors. Global corporations with significant resources are also present along with newly emerging local players. The resource inequality reinforces concerns about the privatized global media sphere consisting of multilevel enterprises. How do the smaller players overcome their resource constraints in order to participate in the restructured communicative space? What do local communities rely on for developing successful media systems providing them with a voice in the national public sphere? In reverse, why are some community media players comparatively not able to compete in the globalizing setting even though they appear to contain the resources required to advance as illustrated by the case of Punjab and West Bengal media here?

I suggest here that specific form of a cross-institutional relationship at the local level not only provides material resources for the local media but also helps shape consumption patterns and audience preferences at the community level. The success of a competitive community media is linked to the strategic use of interinstitutional linkages at the community level as shown by the two successful cases of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Meanwhile, the lack of such relationships undermines attempts by community enterprises to gain resources and form an audience base. Inequalities in the public sphere then are shaped by community enterprise that has access to it through their success as well as a vacuum created by those who are unable to contribute in this space.

### **Media and the public sphere**

Theoretical perspectives addressing the relationship between media and politics are predominantly rooted in developed media systems. Yet, they provide some normative objectives for media institutions in the developing context. For instance, an example of a norm indicated in the well-acknowledged functions of media in a democratic setting refers to media's role as a communicative channel in the public sphere.<sup>4</sup> Important public sphere scholars argue that in a deliberative democracy, various communication channels are essential elements that feed into the public sphere necessary for setting agenda for institutions that address or resolve public issues. The media plays an important role by transferring issues from private space

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<sup>4</sup>For example, see Blumer and Gurevitch, *The Crisis of Public Communication*.

into the public sphere as abstractions, an important prerequisite before civil and political institutions can address them.<sup>5</sup> Habermas, for example, describes the public sphere as a social space that emerges when communicative action takes place among members of a society.<sup>6</sup> This social space serves as a basic link between the citizenry and institutions seeking to address social and political issues. Several established democratic constitutions that promote freedom for media institutions rely on such normative objectives.

Meanwhile, the critical focus on commercial systems is also rooted in well-developed media systems providing a framework for critical analysis of transnational media corporations in the developing world. According to prominent critics such as Herman and Chomsky, unregulated commercial media undermine an important communicative structure necessary for facilitating dialog among mass publics.<sup>7</sup> Some groups and individuals gain more access to media due to previously acquired political influence, which attracts media attention.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, commercial media's responsiveness to the market demand includes focus on entertainment as well as an attempt at cost reduction. The media enterprise, for instance, may not pursue information critical for long-term political or social development; information that may have higher cost of attainment, therefore undermining media's role as surveyors of sociopolitical environment. Habermas also acknowledges that commercial aspects of media may create representational inequalities in the public sphere by giving commercially viable news more importance. Transnational commercial media enhance this problem by removing the communicative structure from its local moorings and context, transnationalizing or undermining political aspects of the communicative structures that the local publics rely on for deliberation. The extensive replacement of the state-dominated media by the commercial model during the transformation in the 1990s brings such arguments to the forefront of discussion on media and politics.

However, in developing countries, liberalizing of the media sector presents a dimension not addressed by theories rooted in advanced systems. While the homogenizing aspects of the commercial model are adequately presented, the fundamental question of where are the resources for establishing enterprises is not addressed. In a globalized setting, the implications are that transnational media have a distinct advantage since they have more resources. The rise of community media in India highlights smaller community enterprises may compete successfully in a globalized setting; reaching out of their own ethnic markets to national and global audiences. Meanwhile, an identification of the form of resources required allows us to understand how some communities participate in the public sphere whereas others remain at the margins despite the apparent resources available to them. For instance, some community enterprises in the more resourceful communities in India, such as Punjab, struggle to establish themselves. What then determines this inequality of participation in the public space?

Historically, because of the nature of state-controlled media, the television sector remained largely underdeveloped. The first opportunity for development of private television sector rose in the post-1991 era due to liberalizing policies adopted by the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 365–366; 374–375.

<sup>6</sup>See Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 360–363.

<sup>7</sup>Chomsky and Herman. *Manufacturing Consent, The Political Economy of the Mass Media*.

<sup>8</sup>Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 375–376.

state. While large language communities such as Hindi speakers, which consist of over 500 million, attracted global and national resources due to sheer numerical size of audience, some community systems with smaller populations also fared well due to local investment and consumption. The argument presented here is based on a comparison between four community television enterprises in India; two present successful and rapid cases of expansion into the region and nationally, whereas the other two struggled seeking resources as well as audience throughout the first decade of media revolution in the country. The difficulties faced by some community channels to gather resources tended to exclude them from the restructuring of the communicative networks initiated by privatizing policies. The public sphere, as a result, indicates some imbalance as some communities remained underrepresented.

A major issue here is what facilitates or retards the mobilization and development of resources in the public sphere in a multiethnic setting. The research presented here indicates that institutions at the local level designed to promote community enterprises also substantially encouraged community-oriented consumption of ethnicity. While an examination of the community institutions offers an aspect of understanding the development of local media, so is an understanding of consumption, which as Veblen and others have pointed out, is socially determined.<sup>9</sup> Cultural products often become closely associated with a particular identity as part of a larger political effort to distinguish oneself from others. To use Bourdieu's term, consumer choices are selected to draw a 'distinction'. It can be applied in understanding the consumption of media products as well, since choice of programming also frequently reflects assertion of identity in order to belong to a group or to separate oneself from one.<sup>10</sup>

In India, language commonly serves as an identifying symbol, which forms ethnic communities and guides various forms of consumption. Extensive literature traces its persistent use in political mobilization in many regions during anticolonial and national movements. After independence, such language movements became institutionalized and promoters of cultural consumption along language line as identity markers. However, some regions did not witness comparable intensity or extension of language movements. Particularly, regions reflecting a high intensity of religious rivalry in politics often divided language communities, as in Bengal and Punjab that adversely affected the community's propensity to consume and invest in cultural products. The divided audience present a smaller market than the actual size that the language community implies.

During the early phase of media development in India, political movements based on language loyalty frequently encouraged local media and cultural consumption as part of conspicuous local identity assertion. After 1947, gradual institutionalization of such symbols of solidarity determined by relative strength or weakness of competing movements produced community-oriented consumers, organized investment as well as state support for the local enterprise during the liberalization phase. The presence of more committed audience in these solidarity regions further helped gain support and funding for smaller enterprises, which were then able to expand and participate in local and national public spaces which opened up as the liberalization phase gained momentum.

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<sup>9</sup>Veblen, *The Theory of Leisure Class*.

<sup>10</sup>Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste*, Translated by R. Nice.

Conversely, the lack of cohesive community-centered consumers may translate into relative failure for some channels as they are unable to gather audience resources from within or without their community. Recent interjection of finances from global players also has to work around these preferences as several cases of relative weaker community media in India illustrate. This study deals with these issues and reasons for relative success or failure of media in regional communities of differential extension, intensity, as well as political activation of cultural solidarity. I hope to demonstrate how new voices have appeared in previously limited television sector making prudent use of supportive resources and why some have lagged behind. This will also aid an understanding of the community's capacity to contribute to the efficacy of the public sphere and democracy. However, as Iris Marion Young's work reminds us, democracy is not an all or nothing affair, but a matter of degrees. Not surprisingly, the level of contribution of a communicative channel to the public sphere in different regions may vary, yet the relative pace is subject to change.<sup>11</sup>

### **Media transformation from below: development of community media in the age of transnationals**

Media transformation in the 1990s illustrates several broad trends hinting at the possibility of regional homogenization as various local and transnational corporations adopt similar formats in programming and strategies to tap into local audience. Yet, utilization of local themes, languages, and behavioral preferences, force production at the local level preventing full-scale secondary market dumping and programming exchange. Such important trends towards localization in programming as well as operational conduct hint at a presence of domestic institutions and conditions that shape entry of transnational media. As a consequence, the state and local enterprise display a complex relationship with the transnational companies. For instance, transnational operations in Asia divulge various degrees of responsiveness to the state as illustrated by STAR TV's voluntary adoption of rules that guided Indian state television. In addition, both the MNCs, STAR and Sony, operate in India using local production sources. An identification of the various domestic institutions that shape these localization decisions is essential for understanding the political and social consequences of this transformation.

A few important research works delve into post-1991 media transformation. The most relevant one is Shanti Kumar's *Gandhi Meets Primetime* in which he argues that media transformation in India challenges the state's nation state-building objectives. What forms the Indian community, he asks, when many new enterprises are offering their versions of national symbols? The importance of this work lies in his identification of multiple community voices along with the new transnational ones at different levels in the country. He argues that this multiplicity of sources at different levels now challenge the state's previous monopoly over defining what an Indian is.<sup>12</sup> The state, he suggests, utilized the medium to offer national symbols that were centrally defined.

However, a careful examination of the state's domination over television prior to liberalization moves leads to a different conclusion. From 1959 to 1991, the central

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<sup>11</sup>Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 5.

<sup>12</sup>Kumar, *Gandhi Meets Primetime*, 1–3.

government's hegemony over the medium was without doubt complete. Yet, the state did not make its offerings of symbols of Indianess through the medium of television. Several factors undermined its communicative abilities. For instance, lack of programming combined with the limited technology meant that only few urban areas received state's messages. Although the state, the sole provider of television, planned its channel, Doordarshan, as an instrument of social change and development for the first decade and a half, television remained accessible solely to residents of Delhi and surrounding regions. In 1975, it was extended to other urban areas such as Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta, although the majority of population lived in rural India. Ironically, the state's focus on educational potential of television meant that several of its programs were rural-oriented when majority of the viewers were city dwellers.

Furthermore, the incremental growth of viewership in the 1980s due to gradual spread of transmitters and lack of reception technology challenges the notion that the state utilized this medium effectively as a communicative vehicle for political purposes prior to 1991. Until 1982, Doordarshan transmissions reached 26% of the population. Yet, only 17 million people out of total population of approximately 600 million were television viewers. The restructuring plan launched in 1982 due to the Asian Games took almost a decade to manifest itself. In 1984, when national integrative programs such as *Buniyaad* and *Hum Log* were launched, only 8% of the nation could view them because of lack of television sets. In 1987 and 1988, when mythology serials *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* were transmitted, Doordarshan's transmission had reached 75% of the country. Yet, the viewership was estimated to be only 74 million out of 650 million population.<sup>13</sup>

If the state's desire was to primarily target urban consumers, one may argue that it was successful, yet, the focus on producing predominantly Hindi and English programming furthered reception limitations by the fact that only 42% of Indians are Hindi speakers and even fewer are fluent in English. The rest identify themselves as primary speakers of other languages.<sup>14</sup> Television programming for non-Hindi communities remained limited, despite the complaints lodged by local leadership. The center's restructuring of television along language lines only occurred when the challenge of competition from the local and transnational enterprises appeared in 1991. Meanwhile, state's domination of the medium prevented it from developing into a constructive communicative channel for civil society use.

Interestingly, the underdevelopment of television pre-1991 did not prevent the formation of community media in the country. Although television remained limited, the press, which appeared in the preindependence phase, provided for community expression and communication that contribute to the civil life. Currently, over 5500 newspapers published in the country illustrate the extensive development of the press sector making it the primary form of communication at the local levels.<sup>15</sup> Several of them are historically connected to local institutions and elite, which meant that the competition between the center, the states and various

<sup>13</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Audience Research Unit, *Doordarshan 1999*, 2.

<sup>14</sup>India, Ministry of Human Affairs, Census 1991, state profiles.

<sup>15</sup>National Readership Survey 2005, <<http://www.allindiannewspapers.com/india-newspaper.html>> (accessed 13 August 2007).

communities often played out in the vernaculars.<sup>16</sup> The current figures from National Readership Survey (NRS) indicate a continued significance of vernaculars as the five of the 10 circulating newspapers in the country are regional papers.<sup>17</sup> While, the language diversity of the press points to the community as an important location for resources for media development in the country, inequalities in the press sector also raise the same concerns about communicative networks.

The multivocality of the Indian communities is historically visible in the cinema sector as well. While the state provided stringent guidelines for production, private community cinema thrived in India providing a communicative space for the regional communities. For instance, while Bollywood is famous for producing a large number of Hindi films, an average of 150 per year, comparable figures are present in Telugu and Tamil film sector, averaging about 160 films a year. Comparatively, Bengali and the Punjabi film sector produce fewer films, with an average of 30 and 15 films, respectively, again pointing to the variations in development.<sup>18</sup> In the 1980s, the video revolution brought this important communicative space into people's home bypassing the controls set up by the central government, and in some parts of rural India bypassing the lack of televisions. For instance, video vans took cinema and other productions into areas where there were limited movie theaters and TV homes.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the 1980s also saw an increase in the number of ethnic political parties targeting local communities. Video technology allowed the political leadership that sought to increase its community support by reaching the rural masses to support them.<sup>20</sup> While a full analysis of the impact of the video vans and political developments is beyond the scope of this paper, previously existing variations in the community media development benefited communities with a thriving film sector as they were able to expand into their local communicative space, whereas those that lagged behind were not. For instance, the community film sectors that were thriving were able to access audience into rural areas because of the already existing media products and markets. In the current context, private television development also benefits by the presence of these resources and institutional connections. Initial programming for community television has come from the preexisting film sectors.

Television viewership is on a rapid increase in India making it an important communication channel. Approximately, 43% of the country lives in television owning household, a figure that is growing by about 4% a year. The increase in audience numbers, however, does not reflect the uneven representation in television development across communities, which is important for understanding access to the local and national public sphere. A following comparison of television development

<sup>16</sup>Jeffrey, 'Malayalam, Day-to-Day Social Life of the People', *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, nos. 1 and 2 (4–11 January 1997), 18–21. Also 'Telugu Press: Ingredients of Success and Failure', *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 5 (1–7 Feb 1997), 192–195 and 'Punjabi Press: Subliminal Change', *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, nos. 9 and 10 (1–7/8–14 March 1997), 443–445.

<sup>17</sup>National Readership Survey 2005, <<http://www.allindiannewspapers.com/India-newspaper/NRS-Top-10-dailies-U+R.html> (accessed 13 August 2007).

<sup>18</sup>Rajadhyaksha and Willemsen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 33.

<sup>19</sup>Ninan, *Through the Magic Window: Television Change in India*, 145–146.

<sup>20</sup>Rudolph, 'The Media and Cultural Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 (11 July 1992), 1490. Also see M. S. S. Pandian, *The Image Trap; M G Ramachandran*.



in four language communities illustrates the institutional relationships that promote or undermine the emergence of community television in the liberalizing phase.

### **Community associations and the expansion of local media: Kerala and Andhra Pradesh**

Significant qualitative and quantitative expansion of television in India started to occur in 1993. The introduction of three private language channels, Asianet (Malayalam), Sun TV (Tamil) in the south and Zee (Hindi) in the north, initiated the transformative decade. The lowered cost of satellite-based transmitting technologies at the global level combined with regional expertise and social and political associations provided domestic enterprises with unexpected resources and advantages with which they were able to launch community channels. Although national resources such as satellite uplinking capacity were yet to be made available to the private sector, new access to global technology and capital permitted transmissions into previously restricted areas through foreign satellites. Within a decade of the deregulatory moves, the Indian television sector consisted of 40–50 new players affiliated with diversity of channels. Upon liberalizing, the challenge to the state's monopoly of television was expected from more resourceful external players. Instead, the more significant challenge came from local enterprises that compelled the state and transnational players to localize their strategies in order to gain audience.<sup>21</sup>

The emergence of Malayalam television in Kerala provides an example of such rapid development of community channels aided by previously established linkages between the community elite and the local government. In 1993, Sashi Kumar, a former executive officer of the Press Trust of India, launched Asianet using a Russian satellite, with initial funding from a Moscow-based Indian. Meanwhile, the government of Kerala provided the initial infrastructure. In 1993, Kerala had yet to develop a cable infrastructure unlike some other Indian states consisting of larger urban areas. Asianet founders won the state government contract to establish the cable system network utilizing preexisting telephone poles. By 1995, Asianet claimed viewership of 14% of the state's TV audiences, which translated into all of Kerala's cable and satellite homes establishing a competitive setting for the Malayali audience. The relationship between the local entrepreneurs and the state produced a community-oriented television rapidly shaping the market structure. Newer Malayalam channels, such as Kairali TV, also illustrate the institutionalized relationship between the state of Kerala and the media. When Mamooti, an actor, established Kairali TV in 2002, the Communist Party members provided the initial funding illustrating institutional nexus between media institutions and the political elite in the state.<sup>22</sup> Following the example set by the Communist Party, the Kerala Congress party announced its decision to launch a Malayalam channel.<sup>23</sup>

The mutually beneficial nexus between political institutions, the media and the elite found in Kerala was established historically in the early parts of the twentieth century. It emerged as a consequence of widespread social movements that appeared in reaction to the British claim of superiority. These movements, in different forms, some as caste movements and others as religious, adopted distinct languages as

<sup>21</sup>Chatterjee, 'Globalization and Television Development'.

<sup>22</sup>Kairali TV to set up Rs.300 mn headquarters', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 25 September 2006.

<sup>23</sup>'Inspired By Left, Cong to Launch 24-Hr News Channel', *Indian Express*, 20 June 2007.

differentiating symbols and transformed them into icons for collective mobilization against the prevailing socio-political order. Their association with regional political movements produced objectives that impressed upon its media institutions. For instance, in Kerala, several of the cinema's prominent personalities' involvement in the regional movements formed a link between the film sector and political associations. This relationship was later institutionalized as the new state formed in 1956 utilized its resources to encourage the Malayalam cinema sector. It ranks as the fourth largest film industry in the country despite the fact that it is not a high-income state. Meanwhile, the Malayalam press and cinema developed into a critical communicative channel helping the formation of subnational public community sphere. Similarly, movements in Madras state, later Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, led to an association between the state and the media elite. Currently, Tamil and Telugu film industry are the second and third largest in the country. The Hindi film industry in Mumbai provides the other corresponding figure.<sup>24</sup>

Such institutional relationships also worked to promote consumption of cultural products along community lines, which is reflected in Malayali audience's preference for Malayalam channels. Early during the national formation phase, the manner in which Hindi was promoted to replace English in postcolonial India raised concerns of discriminative policies among several language communities producing widespread opposition.<sup>25</sup> As language affinities remained resolute in confronting the center's attempt to unify a modern nation-state through homogenizing policies, the community media institutions participated by supporting the community elite as well as becoming cultural symbols whose consumption was critical for community cohesion. The lack of interest in Hindi and English channels in the state affirms such consumption preferences. Table 1 at the end of this article illustrates Malayali audiences overwhelming preferences for Malayalam channels over Hindi or English channels.

Television development in the post-1991 phase in the Telugu community presents a similar case of institutional support for community media at the local level. In Andhra Pradesh, *Eenadu* newspaper group, owned by Ramaji Rao, a Telugu media mogul, launched Eenadu TV (ETV) using external sources for transmitting into the state in 1994. The proliberalization local political party, Telugu Desam Party (TDP), supported his television venture. The relationship between *Eenadu* and the political party was established at the time of the founding of the party in 1983 when an actor, N. T. Rama Rao, (NTR) established the TDP to compete with Indira Gandhi's Congress Party in the state, *Eenadu's* editors candidly endorsed his party. Although NTR's initial popularity derived from his acting career in Telugu films, *Eenadu* dailies played a significant role in promoting his political career.<sup>26</sup> They provided the crucial space for discussing the role of national party versus a local party. The diffusion of the video technology at this time also benefited the film and political personality nexus in the southern parts of the country.

The relationship between the media enterprise and political party continued through the 1990s. The state institutions controlled by TDP supported *Eenadu* by providing it with advertising revenues or presenting awards and loans. When *Eenadu* launched its television venture, ETV, the distinct pattern of media involvement in the

<sup>24</sup>Rajadhyaksha and Willems, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 33.

<sup>25</sup>Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development*, Chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup>Pandian, *The Image Trap: M G Ramachandran in Films and Politics*.

Table 1. Audience share in Kerala (15+ age group).

Channels in Kerala	(% of cable and satellite – 21% of households)*
Number of total households: 6,595,206*	
Asianet (Malayalam)*	35%
Surya TV, KTV, Kiran TV (Malayalam)	27%
English channels (STAR sports, Discovery, Cartoon Network, Disney, BBC, NDTV, etc.)	10%
Cable regional (Malayalam)	6%
Private Hindi channels (STAR, Sony, Zee group of channels)**	5%
Non-Malayalam community channels including DD Regional (mainly Tamil)**	4%
Kairali TV (Malayalam)	3.5%
Amrita TV (Malayalam)	2.5%
Malayalam Manorama (News)	2%
Other Malayalam channels**	1.5%
Doordarshan National (DD1, DD2, DD3, DD4)	1.5%
Doordarshan (Malayalam)	1%
Total	100%

Note: Data supplied by TAM Media Research, Mumbai, 2009. Figures are rounded off to the closest 0.5. \*Denotes cable and satellite households in the state. Source: Census of India, 2001. Doordarshan figures do not include terrestrial reception since there are no rating systems for terrestrial reception. \*\*Combined figure for channels that attract less than 1% individually. \*\*\*The Others category is used by TAM Media Research.

Table 2. Audience share in Andhra Pradesh (15+ age group).

Channels in Andhra Pradesh	(% of cable and satellite – 21% of households)*
Number of households: 16,849,857*	
Gemini (Telugu)	20%
Maa (Telugu)	10.5%
Eenadu (Telugu)	10%
Teja TV (Telugu)	9.5%
Cable Regional (Telugu)	9.5%
Private Hindi/Urdu channels (STAR, Sony, Zee group of channels)**	9%
Zee Telugu	8.5%
English channels (STAR sports, Discovery, Cartoon Network, Disney, BBC.)	8%
TV5 and TV9	6%
Other private Telugu channel**	3%
Non-Telugu community channels including other DD Regional channels**	3%
Doordarshan (Telugu)**	1%
Doordarshan National (DD1, DD2, DD3, DD4)	1%
Others***	1%
Total	100%

Note: Data supplied by TAM Media Research, Mumbai, 2009. Figures are rounded off to the closest 0.5. \*Denotes cable and satellite households in the state. Source: Census of India, 2001. Doordarshan figures do not include terrestrial reception since there are no rating systems for terrestrial reception. \*\*Combined figure for channels that attract less than 1% individually. \*\*\*The Others category is used by TAM.

region's socio-political activities was apparent. While the national administration debated the extent of liberalization measures to take, the new TDP leader, Chandrababu Naidu invited global capital to form partnerships with regional businesses. The state's openness allowed *Eenadu* executives to take advantage of the availability of global resources and amenability of the state's ruling party to new technologies and capital. By 1994, several private community channels, operated by an alliance between Indian businesses and external players, supported by provincial governments, were transmitting into India targeting specific language communities. In reverse, this allowed the language communities to access a restructured and expanding public sphere. Such channels formed the first layer of competition for the center's Doordarshan and the transnational media companies.

In order to access the audience in India's various ethnic communities, Doordarshan initiated its regional language program in 1993. Although the decision-making remained centralized, currently under Prasar Bharati, an independent board, the production moved to the regional level initiating the decentralization processes. Its increased reliance on commercial funding compelled it to consider audience preferences at regional levels. In Kerala, Asianet was launched in 1993; Doordarshan Malayalam followed in the same year. In Andhra Pradesh, two private Telugu channels, ETV (Eenadu) and Gemini TV were launched in 1995. Doordarshan launched its Telugu channel also in 1995, successfully capturing some of the audience at the regional level.

Doordarshan's regional channels currently form the secondary layer of competition. It is distributed terrestrially across the state as well as through the cable and satellite systems, whereas the local private channels are mainly accessible through satellite or cable systems. Private channels target consumer classes mainly accessible through the cable or satellite systems in order to get advertising revenues. However, Doordarshan regional channels do not necessarily provide national symbols as the programming is produced locally in the regional Kendras. Currently, Doordarshan claims 11 regional *Kendras* (production centers) that develop programs in local language(s), out of which four are in the south.

Following Doordarshan's regional response, the transnational media acted accordingly, further enhancing the competition for ethnic audience at the local level. STAR expanded into regions when it launched Television Aimed for Regional Audience (TARA) into regions that had yet to develop local community enterprises. However, STAR reduced its investment in TARA when the audience ratings remained low. TARA Punjabi and TARA Marathi both closed their operations in 2005. TARA's failure was not due to the lack of resources but rather in the lack of institutional linkages at the local level, which promote community media and cultural consumption in the south. In attempting to reach audience in untapped ethnic markets, STAR TV opted to stay out of the developed southern markets. Interestingly, shortage of audience at the local levels in untapped areas is due to the lack of institutional linkages that promoted ethnic consumption.

In contrast to the success of Southern channels, local enterprises in Bengal and Punjab illustrate a much slower pace of development. For instance, in both the states, established language channels are either state-funded or are channels that were funded by noncommunity players illustrating a lack of investment at the local levels. In addition, success is defined by lower audience figures than seen in the south (see Tables 3 and 4). A comparative study reveals the presence of different

Table 3. Audience share in West Bengal (15+ age group).

Channels in West Bengal Number of total households: 15,715,915*	(% of cable and satellite – 12% of households)*
Zee TV Bangla, 24 Ghanta News	17%
STAR Ananda, STAR Jalsha	11%
Cable Regional (Bengali)	11%
ETV Bengali*	10%
STAR (Hindi channels)	9%
Zee TV (Hindi channels)*	8%
Colors (Hindi)*	4%
Other Hindi channels**	4%
Aakaash Bangla	3.5%
MAX (Hindi)*	3.5%
Other English channels (HBO, Discovery, Cartoon Network, Disney, BBC)**	2.5%
Channel Eight Talkies (Bengali)	2%
Other Non-Bengali/Hindi community channels (Indian)**	2%
NDTV*	1.5%
Sony Entertainment (Hindi)*	1.5%
9X (Hindi)	1.5%
Doordarshan (Bengali)	1.5%
Other Bengali Channels**	1.5%
Sangeet Bangla	1%
Sahara One	1%
Doordarshan National (DD1, DD2, DD3, DD4)	1%
Kolkata TV	1%
Others***	1%
Total	100%

Note: Data supplied by TAM Media Research, Mumbai, 2009. Figures are rounded off to the closest 0.5.

\*Denotes cable and satellite households in the state. Source: Census of India, 2001. Doordarshan figures here do not include terrestrial reception since there are no rating systems for terrestrial reception.

\*\*Combined figure for channels that attract less than 1% individually. \*\*\*The Others category is used by TAM.

institutional relationship between the local media and the political and the social institutions than the one found in the southern states. Such an association appears to crucially shape how a community participates in a new communicative space, as Bengali and Punjabi community television ventures struggle to survive.

### Divided community, divided media

Development of Bengali and Punjabi television provides a contrasting example to the southern channels that emerged to take advantage of resources provided by the sector opening in 1991. Their unimpressive growth illustrates the importance of promotion of language as a cultural symbol by the political movements that were institutionalized. In West Bengal and Punjab, local television enterprises did not appear until 1998 and upon appearing often faltered due to lack of funding and audience. In 2008, the pace of development and audience response was still lesser developed than seen in the southern states. In West Bengal, the slower response by the audience and the lack of investment from local players to initiate Bengali television enterprise illustrates the importance of the nature of early linkage that

Table 4. Audience share in Punjab (15+ age group).

Channels in Punjab	(% of cable and satellite – 23% of households)*
Number of total households: 4,265,156*	
STAR channels (Hindi)	17%
Zee TV channels (Hindi)	17%
Cable Regional (Hindi)	12%
Colors (Hindi)	8.5%
Other Hindi channels**	6%
PTC Punjabi, PTC News, PTC Chakde	5%
MAX (Hindi)	4%
Other English channels (HBO, Discovery, Cartoon Network, Disney, BBC)**	4%
NDTV	3%
Doordarshan National (DD1, DD2, DD3, DD4)	3%
Sahara One	2.5%
Sony Entertainment (Hindi)	2.5%
9X (Hindi)	2%
Channel Siti (Hindi)	2%
India TV (Hindi)	2%
Aaj Tak (Hindi 24 Hour News)	1.5%
ETC Punjabi	1%
Zee Punjabi	1%
Doordarshan (Punjabi)	1%
STAR (English)	1%
Other Punjabi channels**	1%
Other Non-Punjabi/Hindi community channels (Indian)**	1%
Others***	2%
Total	100%

Note: Data supplied by TAM Media Research, Mumbai, 2009. Figures are rounded off to the closest 0.5.

\*Denotes cable and satellite households in the state. Source: Census of India, 2001. Doordarshan figures here do not include terrestrial reception since there are no rating systems for terrestrial reception.

\*\*Combined figure for channels that attract less than 1% individually. \*\*\*The Others category is used by TAM.

occurred between the language promoting movements, media and other community institutions. Similarly, in case of Punjab, the institutional relationship between the elite and media was undermined by the two partitions that split the community politically and, therefore, culturally. This narrowed community-oriented consumption for Punjabi and financial investment for language-associated commercial ventures. These two cases challenge the notion that a market can be defined by wealth and audience numbers making the study of emergence of inequality in the public sphere more complex.

### ***Bengali media: institutional development through elite consumption***

The Bengali community presents a unique market structure that shapes its media ventures. Although the subregion contains the initial requirements for the development of the media sector, the consumption and production patterns, which provide the foundation for media enterprises are distinctive from the ones found in the southern cases. Bengali speakers present a large number of audience; over 90 million Indians are Bengalis; the neighboring Bangladesh also provides an additional

135 million making Bengali community a significant market for any media enterprise. In addition, Bengali film sector's historically important participation in the country's media also claims a foundation for the expansion of the television sector. Some of the earliest developments of film production houses in India were in Bengal and Bengali participation in Mumbai film sector is well-known.

Yet, Bengali channels did not appear until 1999. Also interesting was the involvement of local enterprises backed by the state in the case of the southern channels while the first Bengali channel, TARA, was a subsidiary of STAR TV. The Bengali language channel came as a broader attempt by STAR to launch local language channels after five years of targeting English speaking audience in India. In 1991, STAR also launched a Hindi channel, STAR Plus, which has since seen a high success rate. Meanwhile, TARA Bengali faltered despite coordination between the multinational corporation and high level of local expertise. For instance, TARA's management was led by highly experienced Rathikant Basu. Before joining STAR, he held the position of director general at Doordarshan. In 2005, STAR made another attempt at the Bengali market with the launching STAR Ananda, a joint venture with Ananda Bazar Patrika, a historically important newspaper in Calcutta. In 2008, STAR launched STAR Jalsha, an entertainment Bengali channel. STAR Jalsha and STAR Ananda, at the time of the writing, held a three-month average rating of 9% and 2%, respectively, of the cable and satellite audience (See Table 3). The most popular channels were of the Zee group, Zee Bangla and 24 Ghanta News with the average ratings of 12%. The Zee Entertainment group is a north Indian media house. While these channels are hailed as successes, the lackluster audience response illustrates a deeper issue. What is behind this slow growth of Bengali channels?

Bengali television's record cannot be easily explained by lack of experience or lack of resources. Several trends stand out. First, a shortage of previously existing entertainment-oriented film programming undermines the development of community television; new channels producing new content require more funds. Historically, the Bengali film production numbers are lower than the southern and Hindi channels that rely on their film industries for material. This is surprising since the history of film in the subcontinent has strong roots in Bengal. In the 1930s, Bengal took the lead in film development in the country. However, the numbers began to decline after the 1950s. More recently, in the 1980s and 1990s Bengali film sector produced an average of 35 films per year; comparatively, Telugu sector produced an average of 165 films; the Malayalam industry produced approximately an average of 80 films and Bollywood produced an average of 170.<sup>27</sup>

While West Bengal maintains a well-recognized film sector, the nature of the films also tells a unique story. Bengali film sector's target audiences appear to be the educated middle class. The themes tend to discount commercialism and mass sentiment. While Bengali film industry boasts the presence of arts-oriented directors such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen who refused to make films with a commercial appeal, others such as Tapan Sinha or Rituparno Ghosh's films also target audience from the educated classes.<sup>28</sup> While other regions also claim directors who discount commercialism; what stands out is the shortage of mass-appeal films in the community. Historically, themes based on social and political issues are central to many films. Unlike films in Bollywood and southern film industry that sought out

<sup>27</sup>Rajadhyaksha and Willemsen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 33.

<sup>28</sup>Cunha, (ed.), *The New Generation, 1960-1980*, 156-157.

mass audience by focusing on subject such as religious mythology and entertaining action-related themes, in Bengal the themes remained mainly addressed to urban middle-class sensibilities.

The neglect of what the masses may be seeking is a symptom of the nature of the nexus that appeared between the community's media and political groups early on during the formation of region's political institutions. The institutional connection, which is apparent in the south where the language and media institutions became part of the mass political mobilization against the central hegemony, is not apparent in Bengal. In the two earlier cases, the political elite mobilized language identity in order to secure their positions, which was later institutionalized and gradually became part of the cultural promotion by the state. The use of language to mobilize masses by the ruling elite produced politically conscious consumers at a large scale. To consume language elite products such as the community media in the south was part of identifying expression. Recent protests surrounding the buy-out overtures by *Times of India* towards *Matrabhumi* and those concerning STAR's bid to buy Asianet is an example of ongoing use of the local media as identifying expression. The two media groups are seen as community institutions.

In contrast, in Bengal, while the language was important for identity, it did not become part of mass political mobilization. Historically, the progressive groups that took a stance against the center relied upon the symbol of social and economic issues rather than language to mobilize the public. In addition, those who did not take a stance against the center, part of the regional unit of the Indian National Congress, relied upon nationalism and critique of radical ideology rather than community symbols to mobilize the population. The Bengali language remained a part of the elite cultural circles influencing the norms of production and promotion of language-oriented media products in the region. The intended audiences for the new cultural products were not the lower class consumers but urban-based elite ruling class which inherited the legacy of Bengali renaissance. For instance, according to Jeffrey, Bengali language newspapers developed rapidly at the turn of the century, however they remained tied to the audience in Calcutta and this remained the case after independence as well as more than half of their readers were situated in Calcutta whereas over 85% of the Bengalis live in rural areas.<sup>29</sup> The Bengali media institutionally did not develop into a communicative space for the masses, limiting its consumption in the community.

The media in Bengal was also affected by the lack of investment. Sinha argued that the prominent presence of the left is not the primary cause for lack of capital in West Bengal; instead their dominance illustrates the presence of recipient population. According to her, such policy comes from the nature of this dominant class, which focuses on investments such as land. Partha Chatterjee points to the emergence of this class in the nineteenth century that had no capital ventures to invest in due to the decapitalization process that was a result of the British rule. The new ruling class, which emerged as a byproduct of colonization, placed their money into land, lived off the revenues and were centered mainly around Calcutta.<sup>30</sup> This

<sup>29</sup>Jeffrey, 'Bengali Professional, Somewhat Conservative and Calcuttan'.

<sup>30</sup>Sinha, *The Regional Roots of Development Politics in India*, 184–186. Also see Chatterjee, 'Bengal: the Rise and Growth of Nationality', 67–82.



class became the target audience for the state's political and media institutions shaping its development.

Meanwhile, Kohli argues that one of the problems with the shortage of investment in Bengal is the post-1947 phase is that the moneyed classes in Bengal were nonethnic. The rise of left politics caused them to flee West Bengal.<sup>31</sup> While this helps explain the shortage of initial investment available from within the community for cultural ventures, the funding of TARA by STAR in 1999 and Eenadu in ETV Bangla illustrates that investment need not be ethnic. Yet, the lack of local capital for such ventures historically does contribute to lower rates of mass media development affecting the development of the commercial television that heavily relies on previously existing sector and relies on mass consumption.

### ***Punjabi media: institutional underdevelopment in a divided community***

Media development in India's Punjabi community also presents a difficult market structure for ventures seeking community audience. Although the state of Punjab in India consists of only 2% of the Indian population, the Punjabi Diaspora spread across North India and a significantly more 70 million Punjabis in the neighboring Pakistan, augment the language market.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Punjab is the second wealthiest state in the country.<sup>33</sup> In comparison, Andhra Pradesh is a midlevel economy and Kerala is considered a low-ranking economy. Yet, despite the apparent benefit of such a market, a significant Punjabi channel has not emerged in the liberalized media setting. Doordarshan did not launch a Punjabi language *Kendra* until 1998. The center felt no compulsion in launching a Punjabi channel earlier as the competition for the audience was low. In 1999, Punjabi TV, the first local enterprise entered the foray but closed its doors within a year. In 2000, TARA Punjabi, ETC Punjabi and Alpha Punjabi (a Zee TV division) also launched their operations into Punjab. However, TARA Punjabi failed to capture any significant audience share due to slow development in programming forcing the closure of the channel by 2004. Meanwhile, Alpha Punjabi and ETC Punjabi both owned partially by Zee, sustain themselves. However, their funding sources are external to the community. The audience share for these channels remains low (See Table 4), which is essential for a participatory communicative channel.

Slower progression of Punjabi language television does not necessarily reflect Punjabi audiences' lack of interest in Punjabi or the media. For instance, 1991 census illustrates that 92% of Punjab residents consider themselves to be Punjabi speakers. Doordarshan Punjabi claimed attention of 18% of Punjabi audiences in 2004. Nor is it a reflection of the state's economy. The cable penetration rate of 35% is the highest

<sup>31</sup> Kohli, 'From Elite Activism to Democratic Consolidation: The Rise of Reform Communism in West Bengal'.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *The New York Times Almanac*, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Punjab ranked third highest in the country per capita net state domestic product at Rs.23,040 for the year 2005–2006; a figure which does not include Chandigarh (the shared capital) which has one of the highest rates in the country. Punjab has maintained a high ranking in the previous two decades. India, Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey*, 2006–2007, Table 1.8, A–13.

in the northern parts of the country and television homes at 82% is the highest in the nation.<sup>34</sup>

The answer to this puzzle lies in the development of media institutions and audience preferences in the community. In the two successful cases, the presence of community political and social institutions that encouraged production of cultural goods and advocated consumption along community lines provided a critical supportive role for the local media. In return, these institutions gained a communication channel, which augmented their community sense of unity and autonomy. Whereas, such an alignment did not replicate itself in the Punjabi community it led to a faltered pace of media development. For instance, Punjab's underdeveloped film sector, which produces drastically fewer films than the southern states, is not able to provide the supporting role for television development. Meanwhile, Punjabis in India read their news in three different languages including English, and Pakistani Punjabis appear to prefer Urdu and English undercutting the cohesive communicative channels essential for a community public sphere.

Historically, the presence of three language movements in colonial Punjab, each associated with the politico-religious movement, produced a divided media institutions that did not encourage collaboration between the Punjabi community's religiously diverse social and political elite. This undermined the development of consumers of Punjabi products, and also the underdevelopment of Punjabi cultural industry which required elite investors. As part of the historical democratization and social reform processes, Punjabi Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs sought to differentiate themselves through the use of religious symbols. Primary language associated with those religions became secondary symbols for the community. For instance, Urdu became a political symbol for Punjabi Muslims as they associated themselves with the elite culture of precolonial Mughal administration. Meanwhile, the Hindu reform movements seeking cultural symbols chose Hindi in order to differentiate themselves. Consequently, large segments of Punjabi speaking Hindus and Muslims turned away from their mother tongue in order to rally behind Hindi and Urdu, leaving few resources for the promotion of Punjabi or its cultural industries.

In the postindependence phase, this linkage between the region's political and religious organizations continued. The Punjabi religious communities developed their exclusive media after the partition reflecting their political language preferences and, thus, dividing up resources and audiences in the process. The history of Punjabi press reveals the consequences of a social and political competition between the three religious communities.<sup>35</sup> Urdu's previous status meant that many Muslim, Hindu and Sikh elite were educated in the language. Punjabi, on the other hand, was the language of home for these communities, marketplace and for Sikh religious activities. As a result, Punjab's press was predominantly Urdu or English avoiding the major vernacular. Promotion of Punjabi was the limited domain of some scholars and the Sikh religious community.

The status of Punjabi changed in 1966 after the region was restructured along language lines. The new state instituted an educational system promoting Punjabi and encouraging literary societies and programs that were also assisted by central policy of

<sup>34</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Audience Research Unit, *Doordarshan 1999*.

<sup>35</sup>Jeffrey, 'Punjabi Press: Subliminal Change'.

supporting regional languages. Consequently, Punjabi press did not emerge till the 1960s. In the newly structured state, *Ajit*, initially established as an Urdu newspaper in the preindependence Punjab, transformed into a Punjabi paper. Its founder expected an increase in Punjabi readership due to the change in the educational system. His motivations were also political. The paper supported the Sikh community politically and socially. After Operation Blue Star in 1984 in which Indira Gandhi sent troops into the Golden Temple to drive out Sikh extremists, *Ajit* spoke out bitterly against the central government's actions. Throughout the 1980s and in the early part of 1990s, the paper remained sympathetic towards Sikh separatism.<sup>36</sup> After 1999, the paper adopted a more moderate stance. However, the vernacular's history since 1960s gives it an exclusive Sikh community stance keeping away Punjabi Hindu readers and investors.

In addition, the continued presence of Hindi advocates after the redivision of Punjab is also reflected in Punjab's media development. Despite the restructuring of Punjab into primarily a Punjabi-speaking area, the state continues to accommodate one of the largest circulating Hindi vernaculars in the country. The *Punjab Kesari*, launched by the Hind Samachar group, boasts of the third largest circulation among the vernacular newspapers in the country with a circulation of over 700,000 daily. In Punjab, this paper is associated with the Hindu business community. In 1980s, *Punjab Kesari* openly opposed Sikh extremism. Consequently, the paper's editor-owners paid a heavy price. Its founder and his son were both assassinated by Sikh extremists. Such direct nexus between media organizations and the tense politics of Punjab affects the investment in media and divides its audience around sectarian lines. In contrast, the Malayalam language movement in Kerala, a state also consisting of a religiously diverse population, was able to provide a unifying symbol, whereas the Punjabi language became a secondary symbol for majority of Punjabi speakers due to political competition among the three religious communities.

The Punjabi film industry illustrates the consequence of a divided Punjabi community. After the partition, several prominent actors and directors migrated from a thriving Punjabi film industry to Mumbai to the rapidly developing Hindi film industry. The result was the transfer of capital and expertise from Punjab. This created a vacuum in the Punjabi cinema, adversely influencing media development for many years thereafter. Not surprisingly, Punjabi media lags behind their southern counterparts despite the high consumer propensity in the region. Comparatively, it produces less than sixth of the films produced in Kerala.<sup>37</sup>

In modern day Punjab, religious and language politics continue to rear their heads influencing the region's social and political institutions as well as cultural consumption. Initial media enterprises such as Punjabi TV struggled to survive due to shortage of investment capital. The two successful Punjabi channels in the state, ETC Punjabi and Zee Punjabi survive through investment from external sources. Neither of the primary investors in the two channels is from the state. Hindi television also forms considerable competition for Punjabi channels. Many Punjabis continue to be educated in Hindi along with Punjabi. Channels such as Zee TV, Sony and STAR Plus operate successfully in the region, whereas in the southern states, their presence is negligible. Members of the older generation that were educated in Urdu are also fluent in Hindi, as the two languages are verbally similar. Close proximity to

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Rajadhyaksha and Willemsen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 33.

the Pakistani border delivers Pakistani TV (in Urdu) to many Punjabi homes. Although, the census illustrates an increase in the number of people identifying themselves as Punjabi speakers in the state, the religious divisions and historical experiences keep alive Hindi and Urdu as secondary languages in the region. The presence of multiple competing, divided public spheres continue to impede the development of local Punjabi channel by influencing investors and consumer choices.

### **Representing the community: shaping national communication from below**

Two important conclusions regarding the television sector and the public sphere emerge from studying these variations in the development of community television. First, where the media and community associations were historically aligned, the new media setting provided opportunities for the rapid development of new channels of communication for the community. Thus the pattern of media development is more complicated than the expected hegemony by more resourceful global corporations. In addition, the community enterprises also challenged the central government's domination over television from below. The lineage of a cooperative relationship between the media and community associations provided the resources and the audience the local media enterprises needed to expand. The development of community television, as noted, can be utilized for further strengthening of community associations. Public sector television's decentralizing moves following the pattern established by the private television sector also enhanced this factor. Local media enterprises from below provide a new platform for expression and a new route into the discourse of the public sphere. However, inequalities remain at the local level as marginalized members within a community may not have the opportunity to participate in the new channel. The implication of the changed communication structure for the nonelite groups is a subject for further study.

The new setting does allow smaller communities to have access to other communities and national communicative spaces. The expansion of successful local channels is not limited solely to their communities or their Diaspora but more significantly, it also includes noncommunity national audience. Local associations at the regional origin translate into country-wide expansion of political messages as well as an opportunity for cross-regional associations. Telugu ETV's national extension illustrates this point well. Eenadu, in addition, to local Telugu channel also operates Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu channels. These channels tap into national audience through the community route. The channel's political associations have national implications. For instance, ETV promoted TDM participated in the previous central administration as a member of a coalition led by BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party). A channel promoting the party in the community may also extend its promotion of the coalition to other regions where it operates. The development of such a network that permits new voices into the national sphere through the community route has national implications.

In the slower cases of growth, lack of participation in this new communication space may also produce new form of marginalization. Punjabi community's religious divisions may continue to undermine the new media enterprises in the state preventing their expansion at the national level and their participation in the new communication space. For instance, a successful Punjabi channel may focus on entertainment rather than social or political issues that are divisive. Such an enterprise would be unable to participate constructively in a deliberative democratic

setting. Similarly, Bengali television's lackluster audience response may translate into the community's inability to participate in the expanding public sphere.

The development of the new television system then implies activation of new voices from below that reach national communicative spaces and at the same time marginalization of others. The new voices offer valuable resources for the development of the expanding public spaces in the regional communities and their national extension. The cooperative responses from the private and public sources, as noted before, offer channels of connection between popular groups and centers of power in regions and the nation in ways that advance the range and the depth of the public spheres. They also reveal the distance that the discourse has to cover in order to deepen the range of popular inclusion by incorporating issues, interests, objectives and cultural orientations of disadvantaged groups and areas. Media reorganization in India, seen in context of the relative success in institutional collaboration in politics and business, may perform a crucial facilitating role in promoting inclusionary communication and democratic development. Multiple levels of public sphere and interregional participation make for an interesting addition to theories of democratic development in multicultural contexts. The rigid idea of a single generalized public sphere may not agree with a culturally heterogeneous democracy either.<sup>38</sup> For a country like India, the idea of collaborative cross-regional public spheres may agree more with the logic of difference-based democracy.

#### Notes on contributor

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