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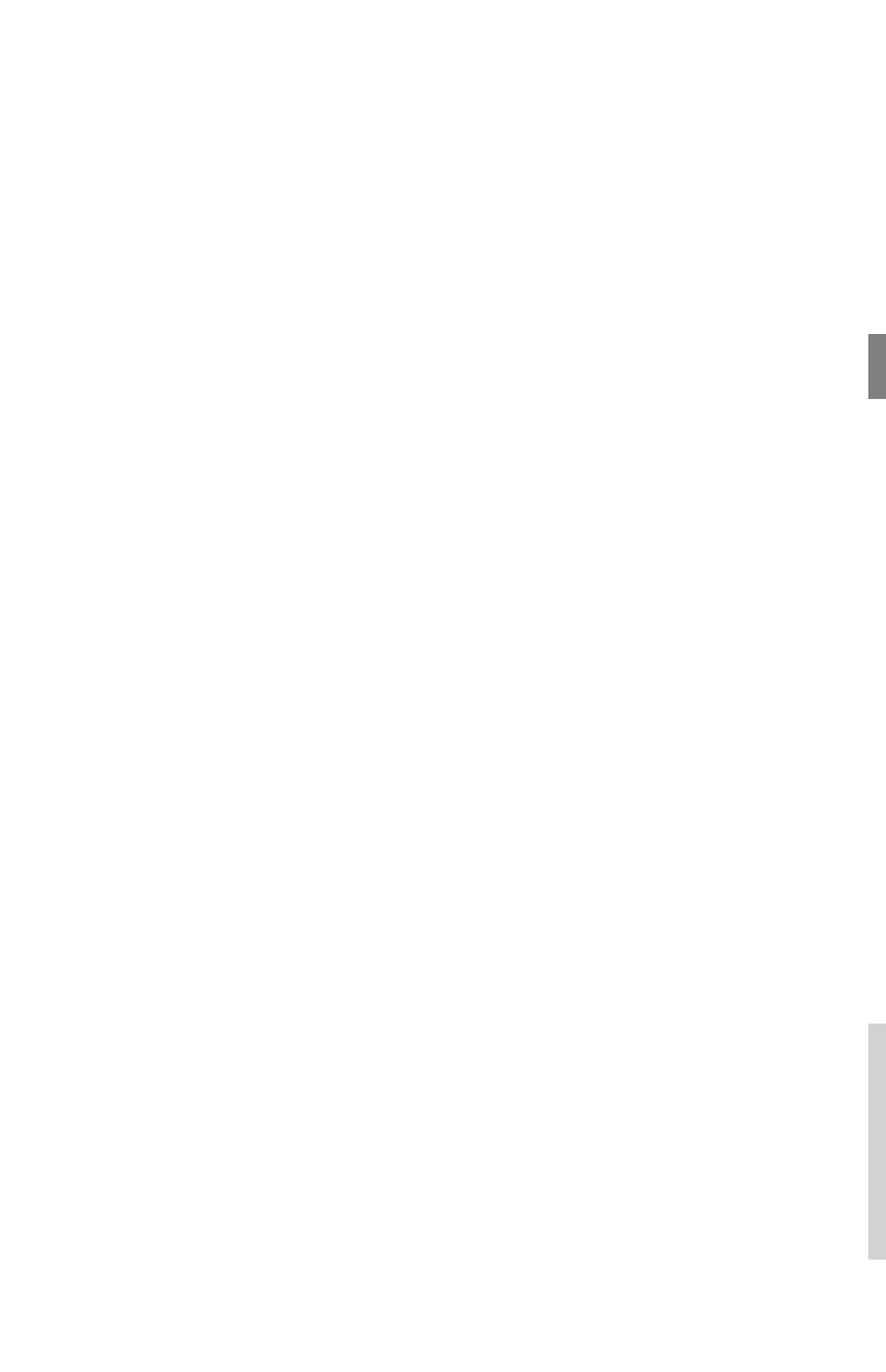


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Nepal Television Journal



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FOREWORD

Mahendra Bista¹, Ph.D.

Nepal Television was established in 1985 with the slogan of ‘Communication for Development’. It was very relevant at that time as the nation was using a new medium to speed up the country’s development, though there were counter arguments against the establishment of Nepal Television. At present, the nation has adopted the slogan of ‘Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali’. The slogan of Nepal Television is still relevant as the nation is attempting to achieve a high-paced development and the national broadcaster is playing a vital role in achieving the goal.

The fundamental functions of media are to inform, educate, entertain and build opinion providing fair, impartial and accurate information to the public or the audiences. These are the basic premises worldwide. However, there is a vital question: are media playing these roles? Or just sensitizing the issues to fulfil their vested interest? It is clearly established that no media is free from social responsibility. Are they realizing this fact?

No media can earn anticipated public trust and, consequently, desired impact on the audience without being free from commerce and politics. Nepal Television is the one which has always been attempting to earn the public trust since its inception. As a result, independent researchers have identified that Nepal Television is the most trusted media in Nepal.

Press freedom, editorial independence, participatory and inclusive newsroom are the worldwide principles in democracy. The Constitution of Nepal, in its preamble, has also guaranteed full press freedom. These principles create foundation for

1 Executive Chairman, Nepal Television

people's access to information, good governance, transparency, better service delivery and ultimately support development process. In practice, these principles may vary from country to country. It depends on the time, context, pluralism, diversity and so forth. In Nepal's case, the practice is different. Unlike the war journalism practice in developed countries, developing countries' media like Nepal Television engage in citizen-centric journalism which focuses on enhancing the quality of life of the common people. Today's media, being more specific, public service media has been more rural centric than urban centric and championing issues of the marginalized rather than the elite and the aristocrats. Furthermore, it has been focusing on vulnerable communities/ social groups such as women, children, senior citizens and persons with disability.

Existence and enlargement of many media does not necessarily signify meaningful choices. **P Kharel** extensively discusses on *voice of quality choice* and exclusively puts his views on public trust on media. He adds, 'Were the public service idea being envisaged for NTV to materialize both in principle and practice—appropriately backed by the required infrastructure, trained human resources and the democratic autonomy expected in a full-fledged democracy—the pioneer television could realistically hope to achieve much in the crowd of numerous channels to choose from.'

No one can be untouched by the strong wave of globalization. Nepal Television is also adopting new state of the art technologies. **R. K. Regmee** sheds lights on how convergence technologies have compelled the broadcast discourse and practice to witness sea-change in creation of cultural output of television, distribution mechanism and audience reach. He also focuses on NTV's strengths and suggests key points to be taken in the days to come.

Kundan Aryal discusses historic event of the advent of television in Nepal and its subsequent growth in the country which is ranked as a low economy. He links technology and

society and discusses more theoretically and explains Nepal television's evolution.

Two articles in this journal discuss on inclusion of marginalized communities/social groups. **Aarti Chataut** explores how NTV, as public media, has worked on to encourage gender equality and better media portrayal of women through its contents or cultural outputs. Similarly, **Tanka Upreti** and **Deepak Jung Hamal** thoroughly review and evaluate the law, policies and provisions related to the media, ethnicity and inclusion in Nepal. They also explore how Nepal Television significantly incorporated the policies into its policy instruments of ensuring inclusion in all respects.

Trilochan Pokharel and **Shital Moktan Tamang** analyse the perceived honesty of media, government communication and public communication environment and find that Nepali people have largely appraised the role of media in informing them on public affairs. Radio and television are most preferred forms of media which actively support in protecting citizen's right to information. Being the first television with the widest coverage, the role of Nepal Television is largely recognized.

In the same vein as **Regmee**, **Chinta Mani Baral** analyses in details how Nepal Television has evolved technologically. Baral has shed light on the technical strength of Nepal's state broadcaster and the latest technologies in the global broadcasting market.

Nepal Television is presenting programmes in new globally popular formats. At the same time it has been providing local contents with their original and typical tastes to the audience. These *glocalized* programmes are popular and Nepal Television's TRP is highest in the industry. It fits educational and health related content packed with infotainment capsules in professional and meaningful way. **Om Prakash Ghimire** documents Nepal Television's objectives and links them with its contents from the development communication perspective.

Ghimire concludes that NTV has made a significant contribution towards the development of the nation.

This journal sketches the landscape of media in Nepal and figures out the contributions made by Nepal Television in particular and media at large. Nepal Television always welcomes critical evaluation of independent researchers on its policy, structure, contents and coverage. This journal does not confine within the narrow boundaries of Nepal Television but also runs discourse on how media can better contribute to enhance the social wellbeing of common citizens and nation building process.

This journal, we believe, will be a useful document for media and mass communication enthusiasts in Nepal. With the subjects ranging from the internal nitty-gritty of the state broadcaster to the latest global trends in broadcast market, this dossier will serve to the taste of varying readers. We thank all the authors for their rigorous research and the editorial team for their contribution. Feedback on the articles included in this journal will be highly appreciated.

Academics aside, keeping up with the global trend is the need of the hour for every broadcaster to survive in this competitive world. Following successful conversion from Standard Definition SD to High Definition HD, Nepal Television now is aiming to transform itself as Public Service Media. Transition from local media consumption to global is another ambitious plan for the state broadcaster. NTV World, a 24-hour English Channel is in the pipeline as the next priority project of the national broadcaster. This will definitely present the much needed, Nepal's very own perspective to the global audience.

Voice for Quality Choice

P. Kharel

Abstract

Presence and expansion of many news channels do not necessarily denote meaningful choices. It could be merely many of the same content in the absence of any drive for a matching variety by way of the media range, topics and information sources that contribute to wholesome choices rather than a drab collection of channels embroiled in cacophony. Quality of the rhythm is what the news media should strive for.

Keywords: Pluralism, media diversity, public trust, public service broadcasting.

When the principles of pluralism are put into practice, diversity springs into life. In the world of mass media today, notably news outlets, the range of channel capacity has the potential to expand at breathtaking pace. Ever since the United States' Chief Justice C.J. Oliver Wendell Holmes mentioned the significance of the market place of ideas in a free society, it has gained ground in terms of endorsement in principle. But some organised media stakeholders, including those affiliated with political parties, put into practice "free market of proprietors and ideologues". This gives ground to those who respond with an "I-told-you-so" argument that freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one. In this regard, Paul Sathe, a German conservative publicist, reiterated (Kunczik, 1995, p.9), "Press freedom is the freedom of 200 rich people to spread their opinions."

Enlightenment, to Kant, is to emerge from our "self-imposed immaturity". Independent ideas and debates elicit awakening

of creativity. Monopoly stifles, and deep monopoly invites “media capture”, which risks blatant propaganda. Channel overload calls for quality content carrying capacity of mass media outlets. In a positive absence of monopoly, competition and crass commercialism jostle for attention and profit.

Governments engaged in self-grading themselves as the most liberal democracies arrogate the right to exclusive sensitivity to get off the free speech track that they otherwise prescribe as universal truth. In Sweden, the citizens’ right to know is well established and guaranteed by the constitution since the beginning of the 19th Century. Constitutional safeguards for media freedom in that country date back to the Freedom of the Press Act of 1766, regularly revised to keep pace with the times and changing tastes of contemporary society. The existing Act, revised in 1978, forbids all types of prior censorship of printed material, i.e., it allows censorship of visual media.

Ash (2016) retraces the decades when the British Board of Film Censors prohibited materialisation of Jesus Christ. In the 1925 silent version of Ben-Hur, viewers were allowed to see only the disembodied forearm of Jesus. Even in the 1959 version, barely a glimpse of the face of Jesus was allowed to be seen. Yet the taboo on portraying Muhammad is sometimes treated as uniquely archaic (pp. 272-73).

Several European states, including Germany and Austria, criminalise Holocaust denial. Switzerland prevents anyone from refuting that Armenians were ever preys to Turkish genocide. There are others who champion the right to deny any issue as long as coercion and violence are not used. This school asserts that the market of free ideas will eventually filter out the truth.

Press Power

Ash (2016) regrets the dashing of the hope that the European Court of Human Rights would bring more consistency into 47

European countries' national courts, which sporadically apply vague and archaic laws. The Strasbourg court held that the Austrian authorities were not violating the right to freedom of expression of the European Convention when they prevented the showing in a private cinema club of a film which portrayed Christ as an idiot and mocked the Virgin Mary. The court also upheld the British Board of Film Classification's refusal to allow the showing of a video called *Visions of Ecstasy*, on similar grounds (pp. 268-69).

Professionalism constitutes the prime basis of any news media bent on upholding the principles of public trust. In Nepal, barring self-censorship, state censorship in news media is virtually absent. The *New York Times* might claim carrying "All the news that's fit to print," but Mark Twain found reasons to complain: "If you don't read the newspaper you are uninformed, if you do read the newspaper you are misinformed."

When the press is fraught with activists who treat party precincts as their professional and spiritual source of inspiration and imagination, disorder and decay become the order of the day. Biases seep as a consequence.

A purist like Rousseau (1951) recalled, "When the illustrious Montesquieu broke with Father de Tournemine, he said to everybody, 'Do not listen either to Father de Tournemine or myself, when one speaks of the other, for we are no longer friends (p. 142)'"

Ash (2016) assesses that most newspapers in Scandinavia are historically linked to political parties. In the 1970s, party dailies represented 92 per cent in Denmark and 87 per cent in Norway. In the US, MSNBC favours Democrats and Fox News tilts toward Republicans. Little wonder then that Oxford University's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2013 found two-thirds of the people in a number of developed countries to prefer news that has "no point of view". Cardiff University in 2006 carried a study that indicated 54 per cent

British news articles contained some form of public relations bias in them. In India, paid news is a chronic problem, with political parties and their leaders shelling out money for favourable coverage to them (p.196).

Registered in December 1922, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was created under the Royal Charter in January 1927. Sarkar (2015, p.48) comments, “BBC’s broadcasting of the film India’s Daughters despite Indian Government’s objections smacks of hypocrisy. This is the organisation that spent tens of thousands of pounds of taxpayers’ money making a Princess Diana documentary and then pulled it for fear of upsetting the royal family.”

Dunham (2017, pp.24-25) cites a Gallop Poll research that found Americans’ trust in the mass media falling to an all-time low of 32 per cent. That might be the reason for their President Donald Trump’s hostile attitude toward the media, as 87 per cent of Republicans approve of his job performance and 75 per cent of Trump supporters view him as more credible than his media adversaries.

According to quote C.P. Scott, editor of the British newspaper Manchester Guardian for 57 years, “Comment is free but facts are sacred.” This seems to have been alarmingly ignored, leading to disappointment: “Comment is free but facts are expensive.”

Critics (AFP, 2018, p.4) are right in insisting on journalists not taking liberties with truth. According to a poll by YouGov for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the average level of trust in the news across 37 countries in 2018 remained relatively stable at 44 per cent.

Reporters Sans Frontiers, in 2019, placed Nepal six rungs below its previous position in the press freedom index, which means the third position among South Asian countries, behind Bhutan (80th) and the Maldives (98th). Afghanistan is ranked

121st, Sri Lanka 126th, India 140th and Pakistan 142nd.

Media with Borders

Bollinger and Sauvart (2016, p.6) draw attention to the Al Jazeera TV office having been bombed, Egypt jailing the channel's journalists without trial. In early 2016, Al Jazeera's office in Egypt was closed, its transmission and broadcast jammed, its licence cancelled, and its journalists subjected to harassment, arrest and detention for political reasons. All this, notwithstanding the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recognise the right to freedom of expression and information 'regardless of frontiers'.

Julian Assange, of the Wikileaks, is wanted in Sweden for questioning over allegations made against him by two women. In 2012, he sought shelter in Ecuador's embassy in London, where he was holed up until he was forced out of the embassy in 2019 for the British authorities to detain and prosecute him. Whistleblowers are encouraged elsewhere as long as the powerful ones find the tables turn on them and catch cold feet.

With the European Court of Justice ruling that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents themselves had shackled, beaten and sodomised a German citizen, Khaled al-Masri, the continued forced asylum of Julian Assange (the founder of WikiLeaks, which played a central role in bringing those terrible business of extraordinary renditions to public attention) in the Ecuadorian embassy in London began to look like a theatre of the absurd. The sex offence case against Assange pales into a blip before the charge of torture of an innocent man proven against the CIA in the European court. (Kumar, 2013, p. 96)

The Reuters news agency (2013, p.5) reported that about 82 per cent of the respondents to the Kyodo poll, conducted in December 2013, wanted the secrets act, which some critics have

linked to Japan's harsh authoritarian regime before and during World War II, to be revised and abolished. The law provides for public servants and others with access to state secrets to be jailed for up to 10 years for leaking them. Journalists convicted of encouraging such leaks could get up to five years for using "grossly inappropriate" means to solicit the information.

Hence terminologies like *semiosphere* and *mediasphere* are in circulation. Semiosphere has a direct relationship with mediasphere, the latter being a part of the former. Hartley (2004) elaborates, "The semiosphere is the whole cultural universe of a given culture, including all its speech, communication and textual systems such as literature and myth. The mediasphere is a smaller *sphere* within the semiosphere and includes all the output of the mass media, both fictional and factual (142)."

Brants, Hermes, and Zoonen (1998) refer to accessibility for everyone, regardless of time and space. It can also mean concern to everyone and pertaining to a common good or interest, as in the Habermassian notion of the public sphere as a space between society and the state in which people can freely discuss and evaluate matters of public concern. Public radio and television are supported through taxes, through corporate and foundation support, and by viewer and listener contributions solicited primarily by what some people in the business call "beg-a-thons" (p.1).

Access to platforms without any uncalled for hindrance for airing opinions draws big support from the proponents of free speech. Hence the "electronic mall without walls" is a long way off India and the rest of South Asia, except Nepal. The media can set the agenda for public discussion. Some critics are against what they call "tabloidisation" of broadcast media and "screaming headlines" of air. In South Asia, Nepal sets a vibrant example of more than 1,000 licences having been distributed to private companies to operate FM radio stations. Hundreds of these stations broadcast full-fledged news bulletins—something conspicuously not allowed in any other country in the world's

most populous region of South Asia with 1.75 billion people. This has had a positive impact on the operation of the several scores of TV channels in Nepal.

While allocating and supervising broadcasting licences, US Federal Communications Commission originally called for broadcasters to serve the “public interest” by providing locally relevant information. In Britain, a government-appointed committee defined “public service idea” as involving eight principles:

- ◆ Geographical universality of provision and reception;
- ◆ The aim of providing for all tastes and interests;
- ◆ Caring for minorities; having a concern for national identity and community;
- ◆ Having a concern for national identity and community;
- ◆ Keeping broadcasting independent from government and vested interests;
- ◆ Having some element of direct funding by the public (thus not only from advertisers);
- ◆ Encouraging competition in programmes and not just for audiences; and
- ◆ Encouraging the freedom of broadcasters.

Public service broadcasting caters to the core interests of the various units of society, and thus serves people in informing them and echoing public views. Of vital importance are independence from commercial influences in the editorial room, and ensuring that timely and topical issues of public interest are brought into public discussion. Decline in public interest in the existing media is attributed to the many news outlets ferretting out similar contents without looking for new issues in depth and with representative views.

Public Service Broadcasting

To a large degree, the political system in a state determines the functioning of the mass media. Most countries have both private and government media, although only a few democracies have state-run print media. In some countries, broadcast media are monopolised by the State media. Public perception tends to automatically label the State media “public” whereas the status of a “public” medium rests in the manner in which it operates and serves the multifarious concerns of society.

Stephens (2007) recalls the evolution of public—or civic—journalism as an influential and controversial movement in the late 20th century. First put forward by Jay Rosen of New York University, the idea is that journalists have a responsibility extending beyond simply serving as “watchdogs” on the government—always cynical, constantly alert for evidence of malfeasance. The journalist’s responsibility is to improve the dialogue on civic issues, to help create a public capable of serving as a positive force in the process of governing (p. 88).

Toynbee (2007, June 26, p. 6) warns against indiscriminate aping of other channels, “The newspaper agenda, slavishly followed by the BBC, reflects a profoundly dystrophic image of a society where nothing works, everything gets worse, public officials are inept, public services fail, tax is wasted, lethal dangers proliferate and everyone conspires to lie about it.”

Public service broadcasting (PSB) is expected to become innovative, creative and no less active than the existing mainstream media. Without quality content, it is doomed to be sound drab. If allowed to function independently and professionally, PSB in Nepal can emerge as an effective alternative media, given that existing mainstream media not being able to achieve an all-embracing approach to serving audiences.

Kharel (2013) notes that scholars and media critics recognise public broadcasting as a “public good” that cannot be

appropriated privately, and hence no member of the public should be excluded from its service. It is on the basis of this principle that such public good must be produced and supplied by institutions other than a market economy (pp. 65-66).

In the US, the state funded Voice of America has virtually no presence, as it is broadcast only on shortwave in a country where more than 95 per cent of the population owns radio sets receiving MW/FM broadcasts. Supporters justify the existence of government media to counter propaganda tools applied by foreign forces. The grammar of propaganda is to create an image visualised by the initiator for acceptance by the intended recipients. Governments promise autonomy to the media they own but are reluctant to part with the control exercised through various means.

If the British government were to show its unhappiness with BBC's programmes, it could turn a deaf ear to the latter's proposal for revision of the fee structure that all TV set owners in Britain are obliged to pay. Regarding BBC World Service, the foreign office has the power to slash its budget, demand staff cut down and stunt its expansion, as the broadcasting service depends entirely on the government for meeting all its expenses.

Even the big and the recognised media houses can be caught cheating. The BBC was fined £400,000 in July 2008 after its major television and radio shows faked winners of their competitions. The producers of some shows faked the results. BBC's management apologised over the "extremely serious" case. If a broadcasting service of BBC's reputation can be a tool of farce, could its political reporting be automatically treated as completely and always unbiased fair?

Media pluralism does not mean merely multiple channels of communication but also diversity in issues and opinions, and an inclusive nature of organisational structure for creating a sense of participatory ownership. The move towards

developing credible public service broadcasting is consistent with the principle of meeting such requirements. Given that an abundance of privately owned media is taken as one of the cornerstones of press media and media pluralism, private media companies in many societies have begun giving added attention to making their organisations inclusive.

Style and Substance

Dateline diversity and topical density are among the indicators of content-depth and expanse in actual substance when put to the acid test of professionalism. The power of a professional pen's persistence pays in terms of public recognition. If the press were to bed with political parties, its professional credibility would record a sharp fall. Polarised along ideological lines of political groups, the press becomes a pathetic victim of petty party politics. Journalists should not become cheerleaders for anyone but stand as critical professionals rendering a transparently impartial service with no ambiguity or hidden agenda.

Ex-editor of *Nepal Samacharpatra*, Pushkarlal Shrestha (2014, p.1) rued bitterly, "In a country where the majority of people do not remain impartial and are prepared to become activists of different parties, those people cannot directly raise their fingers at the defaulting party or leader. This applies to the communication media and communicators who do business in the name of mission journalism and journalism."

Another noted scribe Kishore Nepal (2016, p.6) sounds no less in despair, "Today an individual's highest quality is not determined by education, conscience and character. For that he must become associated with a political party. His credentials are determined by the endorsement of party leaders, only after which the seal of guarantee of his future is made."

Misinformation carries false information, fanned to keep

people off the track but with hardly any damage done to them. Disinformation, on the other hand, aims at circulating outright lies to mislead and influence the actions of the target audience. Fusing facts with fiction is grey information which might mislead people but the degree of damage is considerably less than the effects of disinformation. The sum total of relationship among the markets emerges as the master of the media. Market-centric approach overpowers everything else.

In order to build public trust, news media should strive for rigorous investigation from root to branch when probing an issue for vital and viable information that might be laced with relevant aspects of detail and depth, action and caution. Substance should be the strength of a channel's sight, sound and read, catering to the constituency of all citizens and cutting across all ideologies, creeds, castes and the like to keep pace with social obligation on a fair footing. The economics of a news channel has a direct bearing on the dynamics of its contents.

Ex-news editor at Nepal Television, Rajendra Dev Acharya (2002) suggested special emphasis on any broadcasting house to adequately address public voice and plurality of views. He regretted the absence of individual flavor in Nepali TV channels that had a tendency to lift content directly from the print media (pp. 127-45). Indeed, the problem persists nearly two decades later, too.

With only five per cent of Americans in the age group of 18 to 29 reading newspapers, the challenge ahead is enormous, with an aging population whose readership is 48 among those aged over 65 years. Specialised news beats and services will shrink the reach of general news media trying to give their audiences something of everything. Multiplicity of mass media should produce fragmentation of audiences and narrowcasting of contents to suit particular tastes and address smaller but specific audiences for concentrated attention.

In the race for audience attention, tabloid journalism furiously feeds the fires of scandals, and prizes puff and bluff news, in which celebrities, socialites and prominent public personalities are engaged in or fall trap to. Sensationalism in journalism sums up and exploits the excitement of the moment in lurid detail—and to the point of audience exhaustion.

Sashi Tharoor (2018, p.4) stands sarcastic about the state of news media, “Welcome to India’s extraordinary media environment, in which the Fourth Estate serves as witness, prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. With far too many channels competing 24/7 for the same sets of eyeballs and target rating points (TRPs), television news has long since abandoned any pretence of providing a public service, and instead blatantly privileges sensation over substance.”

Nepal’s former Chief Justice, and currently National Human Rights Commission Chairman Anoop Raj Sharma (2018, p.7) reminds of the need for sensitivity when disseminating news. He wants the court to be allowed to give its verdict first while the media stuck to reporting instead of issuing their own verdict.

Insight into Interests

In news media, narrowcasting denotes focus on specific audience connected by common bonds pertaining to demographics, political affiliations, occupations, hobbies and such other characteristics. Hence, media outlets need to identify their target audience in taste, preference and context for attraction, loyalty and sustenance. News and related contents are basically for audiences not for the broadcasters themselves. In a broad sense, the media can be grouped as:

- ◆ Popular media
- ◆ Mission media
- ◆ Critical media

Popular media go for the lowest denominator when gate-keeping for selecting stories and adopting presentation style,

with top priority placed on drawing the largest number of eyeballs and eardrums. The numbers are essentially the top priority for the popular press, whether of the print or broadcast variety.

Mission journalism is a euphemism for politically partisan journalism, driven by a force of passion to obtain certain political objective, with professional principles and practices playing a secondary or even worse role. In this, journalism is only a means to serve a predetermined narrow objective that severely risks compromising professionalism in journalism.

Critical media uphold the basic tenets of journalism such as free and fair approach to issues, individuals and institutions in a consistently professional manner. Keeping readers, viewers and listeners abreast of issues and processes, events and developments without fear or favour are the ideals of journalism for a consistently critical outlook of all things and everybody with a potential for news story, and analysis of events and developments.

Abiding curiosity of an organised interviewer results in good delivery. The task: Tell the detail in proper perspective that might also lead to an event or follow-ups of an event. Voltaire, in the 18th century, advised, “Judge a man by his questions rather than answers.”

Newsmedia interviews, in various formats, provide opportunities for giving access to various sources of information. Decision-makers, those affected by their decisions and experts are the general constituents of the universe of interviewing. Maximum interest can be drawn if interviews follow an all-embracing approach in terms of interviewees invited, issues discussed and their relevance. Interviews should reveal; offer new insight; and present facts worth watching, reading or listening to. An informed questioner is a great asset to an organisation. Interview means asking something new and expecting something that others did not carry but it is not a public trial or “vampiric”

exercise oblivious of any code of conduct and deference to privacy.

Brady (1976) defined interviewing as a “modest, immediate science of gaining trust” in the exercise in gaining information. Media are extremely reluctant to engage a critical debate on their operations and performance, and thus disenfranchise the larger mass of people in a given society. Watchdog groups need to check efforts at colonising the mass mind by blunting critical senses and emphasising on a particular approach or idea (p. 68).

Casual comment cannot compete with investigative information in creating impact. Triviality and sensational stories make scandal sheets and screaming screens. Yellow journalism is invented journalism, as practised by its founding fathers in the 19th century US. Sex, scandal and sensationalism are ingredients of tabloid journalism that hanker after surefire success stories with little or no care for sensitivities nursed in a society.

Crime and rumours constitute another combination for cashing in on contemporary culture of love for gossip and lurid details offered by a journalism that pries into the privacy of the privileged and panders to the baser instincts of some of their intended audiences. They produce puff pieces to boost sales and rake in fat revenues, provoking some critics call the practice gutter journalism, produced by dirt diggers bent on boosting sales and attracting large audiences.

Today, 24-hour news channels of the radio or TV variety are numerous in number and in ceaseless motion. To many people, these channels are constant company for comfort and consolation, especially when there is a phone-in programme with many participants joining to create a community all their own. The bonding between the host and the listener/viewer is unique in terms of informing and being informed.

For those who think night is dead and drab, the tone and tune of an all-night radio or television offer them constant company. Night time radio is not an unwanted child, neglected and dumped backyard. The masters of its mike know which fare to dish out. The question is what to give when and how. TV channels allocate space for “less interesting” content to safe harbours, i.e., the long nightly hours when only a few are awake and keen to turn on the radio or TV. In day time, too, semi-safe harbours offer space to such programmes.

Republic of Public Trust

Competitive news is relevant and meaningful not just fast, first and factual. A celebrity breathes publicity and wallows in visibility. A measure of mainstream media in Nepal acts like perfunctorily transplanted foreign media that blindly ape the latter’s news agenda. In the process, they turn up becoming poor copies in exchange of their own individual identity.

Politics is the first language of the Nepali press since 1951. When the press is fraught with activists who treat party precincts as their professional and spiritual sources of inspiration and imagination, their professional integrity begins to sink. Sensationalism sums up and exploits the excitement of the moment in minute detail to the point of audience exhaustion. Hence PSB should be to democratise journalism not merely legitimise what media owners want. Media people do the bidding of their paymasters if editorial sovereignty is absent or compromised. Media power is in the intensity of interest it generates.

News media are expected to provide space to diverse groups and empower people bearing in mind that honesty is the hallmark of history. A professional serf, when bound to his paymaster or political patron, missteps many an ideal of journalism. There should be no putting of the curtains on critics who dare to differ with the powerful or the popular in contemporary scheme of things. Walter Lippmann, a century ago, emphasised that there could be no higher law in journalism than to tell the

truth and shame the devil.

Media should promote public discourse on largely current and competing issues by retaining proactive professional integrity. Kharel (2012) suggests inclusion of different ideas and participation of stakeholders representing a wide spectrum of society for producing relevant and credible content. Relying only on the majority segment can sideline or suppress minority views (p. 86).

The Pew Center for the People and the Press, in a 2002 survey, found many people nursing serious reservations about the news media and the job they were doing. Its findings indicated 59% to be politically biased; 67 % tried to cover up mistakes; 49% were highly professional; 39 % were moral; 30 % cared about the people they reported on; and 31% helped society to solve its problems.

Stovall (2011) recommends for a news outlet the posting an ombudsman—a Scandinavian term referring originally to a government official who investigates citizen complaints about the government. The job involves monitoring the media daily and writing critiques for the benefit of editors and reporters; dealing with complaints from readers; and writing a regular column about the working of the post and the news business generally (p. 38).

The world media scene is witnessing a turning point in history, and the Nepali landscape, too, is recording the travails of a fast growing sector. As the digital revolution advances, new tools of communication with unbound possibilities land in the hands of the consumer. The state, the market and the consumer are all discovering new opportunities to serve their interests and the challenges they have to confront.

Stovall (2011) describes television as the news medium of impact and immediacy, “When news of importance occurs, we are most likely to watch it on television first, and our impressions

are formed by the pictures we see and the sounds we hear” (p. 100).

Today, some media preachers are found curbing the freedoms of their own masses and persecuting those that expose the misdeeds of authorities and big companies. With the passage of time, yet new technological advancement and more Assanges are expected to contribute to defining the landscape of the 21st century news media. Uniformity, continuity, consistency, professional integrity and credibility, nurtured by impartiality and accuracy, are among the answers for an effectively vibrant and relevant Fourth Estate.

Media should not fail the public trust test. Their fount of public trust dries up if their communicators are found recalcitrant in their duty. Celebrity culture, fanned and fuelled by the media, can have toxic effects on the public because of access to excess space to trivial and inane issues. To be noted also is that the chorus of 1000 crooks will not necessarily corroborate its claim. As far as the presence of media is concerned, more the merrier would be welcome but not necessarily if they were basically more of the same in terms of range, contents and sources.

Niche for NTV

The power of the press is in the credibility earned from audience appreciation. Since fragmentation of audiences, triggered by a vast array of available outlets, is what the near future holds for all media, specialised genre should stand in good stead for a service aiming to developing itself as a news outlet of public trust. Given that catering to specific interest groups is the trend ahead, Nepal Television, the country’s first telecast service, and with the largest footprint, needs to pursue relentless professionalism, with public service as its prime undertaking. Rapid advance in technology has knocked down viewers a barrier—something that also adds to competition with scores of other private channels originating in Nepal in addition to the vast number of foreign channels so readily fetched by cable operators.

Were the public service idea being envisaged for NTV to materialise both in principle and practice—appropriately backed by the required infrastructure, trained human resources and the democratic autonomy expected in a full-fledged democracy—the pioneer television could realistically hope to achieve much in the crowd of numerous channels to choose from.

In view of even big mainstream media in countries with far longer history of democratic governance facing a daunting task in generating greater public trust in their collective performance, the existing conditions in Nepal can be gauged. The situation is aggravated by an acute shortage of quality and credible service in informing and educating target audiences, and provides an attractive space for NTV to tap and achieve nationwide appreciation. Mere claim cannot add to public trust. Hence, full autonomy, supported by an efficient management and adequate funds, should steer NTV to create an essential and creditable niche for itself amidst the numerous channels crowding the airwaves for audience attention. Its relevance will be in non-partisan contents as well as a determined drive for the latest and the best but free of the trivial and the superficial as far NTV fare is concerned.

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NTV in the 2020s: The Drive Towards Users' Aspiration

R. K. Regmee

Abstract

The write-up – ‘NTV in the 2020s: the drive towards users’ aspiration – is just a media-observer’s reflections on the way the country’s pioneer audio-visual channel should try to evolve as the new decade unfolds in tune with the changing broadcast-ecology. It is neither a presentation on broadcast technology, nor is it a paper on broadcast marketing strategy. It sheds light on how convergence technologies have compelled the broadcast-discourse and practice to witness a sea-change in content creation, broadcast delivery mechanisms and audience-reach and attention. The article points out the need for NTV to take all of them into consideration from the perspective of information-flow. While doing so, the paper reminds NTV of its backdrop-presence and behavior in Nepali media-scape and its non-stop contribution to it for over 34 years. Following a qualitative method of study, it picks up a few challenges NTV will have to address in the decade, explains some guidelines for TV in the light of latest broadcast-literature, peeps into NTV-audience, treks through its landmarks, notes critics’ views, and proposes modestly an alternative for a way forward.

Keywords: NTV, Internet Broadcast, TV Broadcasting, TV 2020s, Audience-rapport, News Linkage, High Definition NTV

Nepal Television enters the 2020s with a sense of enthusiasm, optimism and determination to make a difference in TV journalism over the fresh decade. Mature and established as the most experienced visual media institution of the country, it appears confident to face the challenges of all dynamics which force, in different ways, redefining, reshaping and restructuring of TV broadcasting.

NTV's varying coverage of events, approaching audiences and skills of messaging spanning over 34 years could be dubbed as the enabler to make it competent to cope up with the changing media-scape of the country and the world. Because of the same, the national broadcaster has emerged today as a brand. Viewers and listeners refer to it while communicators do not fail to follow its move in the overall information-flow. The way NTV covers, behaves and approaches issues has, at times, acquired the status of broadcast-benchmark for a number of audio-visual media and others in the communication-pitch. It has displayed competitive dexterity in the multi-media-multi-TV arena which features modern Nepal's communication-sphere besides remaining conscious and also alert over the latest unpredictable trend of news-leaks and *virals* (positive or negative) through social media.

Fresh Challenges

NTV will have to address a number of issues related to media products, audiences, and functional strategies over the decade. The generation of fixed TV sets with audience focused on or glued to their screens is slowly giving way to new generation of viewers. Receivers of the NTV signals are changing their viewing habits: they may be no more available for viewing live or scheduled TV programmes. They could watch NTV in the time convenient to them and in the platform that is palatable to them. Like in advanced countries, technology has handed over to the audience finger tips the power to command communication services as per their need, taste and time.

Phrases not common in TV-broadcast conversation in recent past as Internet- Protocol- broadcasting, one-to-one cast (Unicast), multi-cast delivery, binge watching, Augmented or Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data or bigger compute cycle, subscriber management system of broadcasters, superfast broadband intervention in broadcasting indicate the trends of transformation which all broadcast-stakeholders should understand to make their products meaningful and user friendly. TV journalists cannot afford to ignore the wave triggered by what the vocabulary suggests.

NTV, as supplier of TV media products, will have to modify way of production and transmission to cater to the personalized on-demand services. Presenters and producers will have to consider the aspirations and attention span of audiences while conceptualizing, scripting, filming and airing programmes; they have to introduce a sea-change in their traditional approach – particularly the style, mode and duration. This requires a number of changes in newsrooms, workforces, broadcast-work-culture and production processes of TV studios.

Media scholars refer to the changing scenario as diversion of TV broadcasting to Internet and specifically personalized demand of audiences for media products. They analyze the trends as direct consequences of expansion of smart phones and citizen journalism. Various dimensions of Frontier Technologies such as the increasing use of voice-enablers, podcasts, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Internet are contributing, in their own ways, to the way TV broadcasting is produced, done, received, marketed and used in recent times. The trends, although highly visible and directly influential in developed countries, are creating indirect impact in developing and least developed countries (LDCs) like Nepal. They are affecting not only the information-flow through TVs but also impacting, in varying degrees, the process of creating glamour, building image, collecting and checking fact, producing impression, facilitating opinion-formation and serving the cause of informed citizenry.

Is it time for NTV to ponder over impact of latest high-sounding Frontier Technologies? The question crops up from time to time in Nepal. Some argue that Nepal has not yet reached the stage as mentioned above and TVs could move forward in the manner they did in the decade just gone-by. But scholars, analyzing the digital media, make them cautious about trends and advise journalists to prepare themselves for the changing nature of TV broadcasting. NTV could draw a lesson from this and prepare for all the game changing factors in future. NTV should also update itself with those technologies in media sector to survive, and protect itself, safeguard its trust level and insulate its sphere of meaningful content from the pollution which may be caused by one or the other campaign of misinformation, manipulation of facts (intended to insult privacy or to capture information-market-power).

Guidelines

While there is no pre-set formula to follow, a few professional tools could be handy for NTV to refer to while charting its course in the decade of the 2020s. The International Declaration on Information and Democracy: principles for the global information and communication space could be one. A great guide for what press, including TV, should do while going ahead in modern times, and it could be termed as the fresh reminder of the values. The Declaration, adopted in Paris in November, 2018, is considered as the robust guarantor for the global information and communication space which it defines as “common good of humankind.” The management of the space, the Declaration clarifies, “is the responsibility of humankind in its entirety, through democratic institutions.” The document points out the “need for democratic guarantees for the freedom, independence, pluralism, and the reliability of the information at a time when the public space has been globalized, digitalized, and de-established.” There is much in it to lift for those who serve under the umbrella of TV journalism.

Under social function of journalism the Declaration mentions:

“journalism’s social function is that of a trusted third party for societies and individuals. It allows for the establishment of checks and balances and empowers people to fully participate in society. It aims to give account of reality, to reveal it in the broadest, deepest and most relevant manner possible, allowing for the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion.” It adds: “journalism’s task is not just to portray events but also to explain complex situation and changes, being comprehensive and inclusive, allowing the public to distinguish the important from the trivial. It should reflect both positive and negative aspects of human activities and expose potential constructive solutions to important challenges.” What a comprehensive way to seek solutions for media- persons-on-air!

Journalism, Media and Technology Trends and Predictions 2019, a contribution of University of Oxford and Reuters Institute, could also facilitate NTV in its attempt to better approach the new decade. Its professional analysis depicts well changing trends and enables media institutions to look for appropriate adjustment- strategy to face the situation. The Report of 2019 posted by Nic Newman, Senior Research Associate, Reuters Institute, for example, refers to a survey of 200 editors, CEOs, and digital leaders and summarizes:”With many publishers launching new daily news podcasts, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority (75%) think that audio will become a more important part of their content and commercial strategies. A similar proportion (78%) thinks that emerging voice-activated technologies, like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant will have a significant impact on how audiences access content over the next few years.”

Stefan Ottlitz, Der Spiegel, expressed, in the same presentation: “surprise” about the potential of audio and voice for journalism. Users will consume news by speaking and listening, less often by reading – and we have to prepare early on for shifts in user expectations (Newman, 2019).

The fresh phrase Next-Level-Journalism that World Editors

Forum coined and the conclusion they reached in their deliberations around June 2016 could also direct NTV and facilitate enriching of its news productions in days to come, particularly in addressing aspirations of users. Responding to the challenges brought about by online revolution in news dissemination, the Board of WEF, at its meeting – in the context of the World News Congress in Cartagena– scripted five principles to help rebuild trust in professional journalism. The WEF observed: “A requirement of next-level journalism is that it goes beyond basic facts and enables and encourages analysis, contextual and investigative reporting, and informed expression of opinion, moving from the provision of news to knowledge that empowers. Next -Level Journalism should be driven by trust and the guiding principles of social relevance, legitimate interest and truthfulness,” it noted reiterating “In a world of hyper-information, credibility, independence, accuracy, professional ethics, transparency and pluralism are the values that will confirm a relationship of trust with the public.”

Two other principles that WEF forwarded are also noteworthy and equally relevant to any discourse on TV journalism in contemporary times:

- ◆ Next Level Journalism is distinguished from other content by the vigilant and diligent questioning and verification of material circulating on social media. It acknowledges social media as a source of information for further fact-checking and as a platform for leveraging professional content.
- ◆ The mission of journalism at this next level is to positively serve society by providing high-quality verified information and to establish news brands as a trusted certificate of origin for content.

Direction in Current Times

The direction NTV is pursuing these years indicates that it will be able to prepare itself for all the challenges in the decade.

The flexibility, buoyancy and the continuity the institution has displayed so far assures that its products will be able to cope up with the demand of the decade. The mindset of public media that it has nurtured could be dubbed as its great asset. Cultivating audience-rapport (Hyde, 1998) is another talent that has rendered NTV special and earned it goodwill in media market. Its commitment to address audience's desire to be TV-informed is noteworthy and its emphasis on getting prepared for the same technically, and from viewpoints of broadcasting and management deserves appreciation.

The care NTV takes in expanding reach, ensuring a national screen for conversation, expression, and participation and information-updates is remarkable. Similarly NTV's producers and presenters evince distinctly a sense of guaranteeing pluralism with emphasis on diversity and social cohesion in whatever they create or transmit (Bista, 2076 BS). Its vigilance to keep off manipulations from various interests – commercial, political, geo-political, and others – and focusing on being Nepal Television in the real sense of the term could also be termed encouraging. In them could be traced spirit of values which ultimately would determine its visual journalistic sustainability and justification for financial technical investment in it for long-term.

Viewers actually felt the continuity of those values in 2019-NTV- coverage in a noticeable manner (FG 2019). They, as for example, refer, in this regard, to several programmes broadcast by NTV in the context of events such as the State Visit of President of China (October), Nepal Investment Summit (March), Tornado in Bara, Parsa (March), rainfall-disaster (July), bus-accidents, air crashes, summer session of parliament, various season-festivals and a number of provincial events. NTV signal receivers also find it not deviating from the standard track over the past years when it passed by several eras of technologies, camera-works, broadcasting, politics, story-telling and scripting for visual media. The point got proved

once again as Nepalis watched in their living rooms the 13th South Asian Games which NTV aired brilliantly for 10 days in December, 2019. The experience compelled many to revisit past-much talked audience- impressions: Mt. Sagarmatha (Everest) -base –camp-Nepal- government -Cabinet -meeting, live- covered by NTV on December 4, 2009, NTV live-coverage of second SAARC Summit in Bangalore, India way back around November 11-18, 1986.

Coverage of economy, market, society, parliament, provinces and districts in first eight months of 2076 B.S. improved remarkably in terms of coverage of the same period of 2075 B.S. Newscasts also depicted departure from protocol-guided, minister-centric and press-release-determined presentations. Presenters sharpened skills of buoyancy, fluency, humanistic spontaneity as they appeared on air.

To feel the pulse of viewers on NTV, a media-researcher forwarded three questions specifically over different months in 2019 to 25 people in five places of Nepal (Dhangadhi, Tamghas, Rasuwa, Bhaktapur and Lahan). The questions were: What does NTV mean to you? How do you describe NTV? What is your impression of NTV broadcast-service? The sum-up of the answers is given below (Questionnaire –response)

To them NTV meant:

- ◆ A reliable gateway to information
- ◆ A way to relate to events and people
- ◆ A way to relax
- ◆ A reference point

They described NTV as

- ◆ Updating communicator
- ◆ Extended version of schooling
- ◆ Eye-opener for services and goods
- ◆ Visual narrator

As for service received, they observed:

- ◆ Got helpful information for life
- ◆ Relaxed by music and other programmes
- ◆ Learnt more about insight of Nepal and world
- ◆ Got acquainted with how others live and work

Although the answer could not be sufficient for generalizing Nepali viewers' impressions of NTV, they could be taken as some indicator in qualitative mode. Much, however, needs to be done for generalization. But the question-answer initiative could shed light on how people feel about NTV and its services (Media discussion).

External measures also aid NTV in moving forward. The Government is clear in the policy for making Nepal TV the standard voice and visual of the state and not the government (Banskota, 2019). The ongoing Digital Nepal Framework 2076 B.S. (2019), a five year scheme, aiming at digitalizing 8 development sectors of Nepal (digital foundation, agriculture, health, education, energy, tourism, finance, and urban infrastructure) through 80 initiatives could further facilitate NTV to respond to the demand of the decade. The activities - extending 5G network, establishing paper-less governance, setting up National Cyber Security Centre and provincial data hubs – to be undertaken under the Framework would further facilitate NTV to be accessible, more reliably and to more areas and demographics. NTV could utilize opportunities opened by DNF in enhancing quality production and coverage of issues and events and thereby contribute to Nepal's economic target - to graduate to developing country from the current status of Least Developed Country (LDC) by 2022 A.D. and middle income country by 2030.

Actually a number of national agendas await continuous quality coverage from NTV for making Nepalis well-informed about them and enabling them to participate meaningfully in all of them and ultimately own them. Most important among them

are: the drive to make Nepal Prosperous and Nepalis Happy, practice federalism for enlightening all in seven provinces (77 districts and 753 local bodies), implement the 15th five year Plan and boost campaign for making Visit Nepal Year 2020 a real success. NTV cannot sideline effective coverage of 2021-National Census. Neither can it ignore the 17 goals which are to be achieved “with focus on leaving none behind” by 2030 under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Contributing to facilitate Nepalis understand and enjoy all the fundamental rights plus duties mentioned in the Constitution is another assignment NTV cannot afford to deny.

Viewing Public

Viewing public in Nepal! And that too on a regular basis and at home! The phrases were virtually unknown until NTV went on air. They are actually the creations of NTV. Structuring a text - portrait of the audience of the image-centric media - Nepal Television -in a write-up like this could be neither easy nor satisfactorily comprehensive. Yet an attempt has been made in it to provide with a sense of NTV audience against the backdrop of its growth. This write-up is confined to a simple qualitative general assessment of the audience, the “to whom” (Lasswell, 1948), the receivers who search, watch, and get glued up to NTV for hours together.

During the time NTV heralded a new age – television era - in the country, the expression - viewing public - was something just like the one found in cinema or drama or documentary shows or in playground. NTV redefined the viewing public – the audience- in the real sense of the term. It was a clear addition to what had emerged as reading public after the 1958 B.S.-publication of the Gorakhapatra and listening public following the inception of 2007 B.S. Radio Nepal. The country, it might be recalled, has a history of beginning media in a supplier driven way and sustaining the same in a consumer driven way. NTV knows it well right from the beginning when the then King Birendra first felt its necessity while visiting foreign countries; got it into the process by inclusion in the

country's Sixth Plan and made a legislative proposition in the then legislature (Rastriya Panchayat) in 2038 B.S. (Regmee, 2066 B.S.).

What were the benefits viewers got from Nepal Television over the years? Why are they watching it non-stop for nearly 34 years? The statistical answers to the questions require in-depth quantitative research. Responding to them in a qualitative research manner based on data and structured impressions collected in course of interviews, interaction, focus - group discussion would also serve the purpose in its own way.

Reference to NTV viewers would be appropriate at this point. No other TV channels in Nepal could claim such legacy of generational connectivity and continuity.

Four categories of active viewers constitute the audience structure of NTV. All of them have some sort of para-social relation with it. They have been influenced by the persona of NTV signals in varied ways. Sometimes it gets reflected in their language, habits, mannerism, and schedule. Most often it remains hidden in the psyche of the people and guides their decision in life, their way of relaxation and participation in society. NTV has, indeed, contributed to the cause of informed citizenry. Viewers know well how NTV has entered the privacy of their living room, motivated change in their schedule-personal, professional, and also social. NTV has created a rather familiar spot, a distinct location in the space of homes and also minds of the people.

Nepali kids who grew up watching Nepal TV screen, first involuntarily as plaything and later voluntarily as comfortable talking toy, are in mid-thirties at present when they have not dropped it from their preference despite availability of a number of options, exceeding 100 channels in number (MoICT, 2020). They learnt many things about their country and the world through the window of NTV. To them it was a tutor for many things in life. It opened both life and the world for them. The virtual reality version that it dished out for them became a great learning and engaging experiment which has rendered them

more trained, and confident to cope up with the realities of life.

Their parents, who did the whole baby-sitting against the backdrop of Nepali sounds and scenes telecast, are on the other side of '60s, today, and still watching NTV, rediscovering in it additional angle, fresh relevance and convincing reason. To them NTV served as another consultant-companion in life and family as they charted new life with responsibilities for children. They know how NTV extended not only the territory of their home but also the premises of their thoughts. They realized how NTV gave another interpretation for the knowledge they acquired in schools and colleges. The goodwill created by their first time exposure to NTV has compelled this generation to continue viewing it as part of their daily life. The new comers in the TV arena – all private sector channels - appear attractive to them but they feel NTV warmer, somewhat more palatable and often congenial.

Nepalis who had their first encounter with NTV in rather advanced age have been enjoying its signals these days as grand dads and grannies. NTV has given them a way to forget the sores of life and make post-retirement period filled with meaning and comfort. Some feel rewarded while viewing NTV and exploring things, events and people they had simply dreamt in their prime youths. Others regard NTV-viewing as cozy and term it as helpful hobby in just passing happily the fade -out phase of their life.

Tourist viewers! The touch -and -go- seekers of information that NTV hosts is another category of viewers. The phrase may sound rather uncomfortable! Yet they happen to be a significant category NTV cannot deny. Their features: not regular, not predictable, yet willingly active to grasp the latest updates by scanning NTV sometimes comparing to other channel's screens, while at other time just exploring how things are playing out – language-wise, visual-wise, presentation-wise, context-wise, meaning-wise, scoop-wise - in Nepal-screens in the context of contemporary events or issues or controversies or spectacles.

Critics' Observation

Critics tend to take NTV pre-supposing basically that it is run by government. As they read or view it and form opinion about it they appear to be guided by the notion that “it is only government that speaks through it.” They appear unwilling to accept the role of professional broadcast-journalism in the build-up of NTV into the national broadcaster. The reluctance could have developed because of confusion that prevails in Nepal about connotation of the words such as state, public and the government. Or it could be the outcome of prejudice against anything done through government finance and initiative.

The tendency to categorize its products as handiworks of those in government is old and continues. The reality is: it broadcasts for the public and also the government seeking to be a bridge between people and decision makers. Private sector journalists, some of them highly renowned, who used to consider NTV as simply another government organ, have been found to have experienced a different journalistic smell in NTV as soon as they started leading it. Their public expressions indicate optimism and great role for NTV in contemporary times.

Some in broadcast-media cannot appreciate at all NTV's creation of viewing public in Nepal. They do not see any point in the three-generational- four- category- audience- construct of NTV as explained above. They are more interested in labeling it as ministerial propaganda machine besides being determined to dismiss it as yet another outdated wing of the state. Complaining against NTV's failure to question the king, and his government in the party-less era under Panchayat they go on raising issues with it on suppressing the opposition views and the dissenting voice even in times of democracy after People's Movement I in 1990. The same trend continued seventeen years later when Republican era dawned following the success of People's Movement II, they grumble. Rejecting NTV's contribution to information flow critics conclude rather harshly “NTV has done nothing except reporting those with power, wealth, post and urban face.”

Observers who cannot look at NTV with friendly lens ignore the way NTV has introduced varieties of programmes over time to meet the needs of the people of different ages, places, interest, and pursuits in the vast arena of information, education, and entertainment. Besides snubbing the forum provided by NTV for public dialogue on myriad national issues, they fail to acknowledge its efforts to go inclusive, be accommodative and participatory. To them, the NTV- journey from just two hours' programme to 24-hour is not that meaningful; the varying plural, diverse and inclusive contents in them in High Definition (through four channels- Nepal Television, NTV Plus, NTV News, and NTV Kohalpur) do not have any appeal to them.

What the skeptics miss out in their explanation of NTV is: the audience angle, particularly the cumulative strength of confidence people develop through exposure to NTV. They could not have any estimate of impact of people's interaction with NTV and its capacity to empower people. They even question the well structured hypotheses such as these: it is because of the exposure that people could expedite the process of fall of Panchayat polity in 1990. Others believe the same exposure could enable people to have a comfortable transition from active monarchy to constitutional monarchy. People found the same exposure handy for them to tolerate the impact of conflict that continued for a decade. The exposure directly helped the people to have power of adjustment with the Republican era later on. These are, of course, the fodders for mass communication research which journalists would take up properly in future.

Critics also fail to note the way NTV could adjust during 2046 B.S.-change in country's politics and the 2058 B.S. change caused by the end of its monopoly in broadcasting. The broad sense of NTV expanding around 2060 B.S. through NTV Metro and High Definition initiative accompanied by innovations in news cast of 2019 also get snubbed in critics' observation.

Actually the sense and power that NTV has developed over years to face changes and challenges is unique and cannot be ignored, particularly by those who seek to move towards institutionalization of broadcasting services.

Way Ahead

Charting the way forward for NTV is an exercise which could be done well and with experienced and informed hands. Prescription for the same by some or other experts – national or international - will not be that effective. Some sort of method focusing on spontaneous build-up on the basis of current strength, past legacy and future challenges and opportunities in broadcast-sphere could be initiated. The practice of promoting news linkage –the journalistic task of fanning out or multiplying or spreading extension for further enrichment in content, context, and meaning might prove a great catalyst in this regard. Adding edge to skills of TV-way of telling stories as per the complex of demands in internet-centered era could also be helpful. It could be accomplished through capacity-building schemes for NTV-person -power -base including content creators, producers, camerapersons, presenters, anchors and others attached to various dimensions of broadcasting.

Capitalizing on the unparalleled institutional memory and the good will, efforts should also be made for developing NTV as the national podium of broadcast-mentor, accessible to all for updating knowledge and practice in TV journalism, continuing as a reliable reference point of broadcast, fine-tuning voice-presentation, quality-scripting and a number of professional innovations. The task could be accomplished if NTV takes pledge today to make each year of the new decade more different, more innovative, more dynamic and more creative in content creation and presentation. And that is an alternative for getting users' aspirations fulfilled under the umbrella of NTV.

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Birth of NTV: A quest for being modern vs social need

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Abstract

The essay is based on a historic event of the advent of a television channel and its subsequent growth in a country which is ranked as a low economy. Unlike, western world Nepal was not involved in the research and development of technology, rather it adopted it amid the debate on the backdrop of the poor socio-economic condition. In this context, the essay has made an attempt to analyse the early days of television broadcasting in Nepal with the lens of the two propositions on the relationship between technology and society as presented by Raymond Williams. First, technological determinism, which believes that research and development as a self-generating process. The new technologies are invented as they were in an independent sphere, and then create new societies or new human conditions. The second proposition, the symptomatic technology, similarly, assumes that research and development are self-generating but in a more marginal way.

Keywords: Television, cultural product, technological determinism, Symptomatic technology

The initial sentence of *Television: Technology and cultural form* (1975), a seminal work by Raymond Williams, reads that television has altered our world. In his words, it has altered the society in the same way by this or that new technology:

the steam engine, the automobile, the atomic bomb (Williams, 2003, p.1). Over the past thirty-and-five years, television has contributed to the pace of change in the Nepali society as well.

Television was started in Nepal in the special interest of King Birendra (Sharma, BS 2073, p.103). As per the record of CBS, at the moment the country's total population was 16,858,310. As recorded by CEIC GDP per capita was measured below 200 US\$ that year (ceicdata.com). The record shows that the total literacy of Nepal in 1981 was below 23.3 per cent. Thus, as Sharma (BS 2065) recalls, a section of the population was against the initiation towards establishing NTV. They viewed since it was based on expensive technology, TV broadcasting is not appropriate for a nation like ours. They vowed the logic that it will further widen the gulf between the rich and poor (p.51). The juxtaposition to this view, King Birendra, as Sharma (BS 2073) describes, was fond of television. He, who has been watching television whenever he goes outside the country, was planning to initiate television in Nepal (p.103).

The proliferation of television broadcasting in any part of the world is based on more than one factor. Islam (2002) states that tradition or culture may also affect how people perceive different media: some cultures may be less television bound than others or less print bound than others at similar levels of GDP per capita. The state of infrastructure may also account for the difference (p.17). When NTV project came up on the 30th of January 1985, the infrastructure to develop television software and expand transmission network policy-wise simply did not exist (IIDS, 1996, p.51). The prevailing opinion of the moment was that the Nepali society was neither economically nor culturally and infrastructure wise conducive for TV broadcasting. Nepal was not an exception, in any part of the world, as Shanahan and Morgan (1999) state there is no better example of a love-hate relationship than that between television and contemporary society (p.1). Over the years the bond between the Nepali society and television has been getting

stronger. Nevertheless, the component of love is not yet alone in the relationship and obviously it will remain to some extent.

As described in *the Mahabharat*, the epic which was composed thousands of years ago and one of the noblest heritages of eastern civilization, Rajagopalachari (1999) mentions that Sanjaya, the narrator who tells blind Dhritarashtra the progress of the war from day to day (p.473). Sanjay sat aside by the king Dhritarashtra in the palace presents commentary of every moment from the war field. It is an instance which proved that technology of seeing from a long distance was foreseen thousands of years ago in our part of the world. However, after long the technology form of television existed in the western world. Thus Williams (2003) observes, the invention of the television was no single event or series of events (p.7).

However, over time the pioneer TV of Nepal, Nepal Television gained the audience as the result of general tendency to become a modern human being in a modern global condition. NTV has continued its effort to cultivate the perceptions within the minds of the audience about the real world in a way that reflect the most common and recurrent messages. It has contributed to the television landscape of the country by exploring the market for advertising, the major source for survival. Prior to 1990, it was alone on the runway. Over the last 17 years, it harnessed the market and the interest of the audience in the country. Like other parts of the world, as Shanahan and Morgan (1999) state, in our society too, parents, teachers, academics, politicians, moral guardians, social critics, those who work in the medium, and those who simply watch without thinking much about it, have all offered a vast array of charges, counter-charges, complaints, defences, interpretations and opinions about just what this device is and what it may be doing to us and our children (p.1). All these are happening also because of the television.

A surprisingly large amount of television, as Williams (2003) states, though more in the United States than in Britain consists of programmed versions of earlier forms of game and pastime. Several parlour games which had in the past disappeared have been restructured as television shows, and use has been made of every kind of quiz and guessing game (p.68). In post-1985 period, television has been continuously providing the pastime in the Nepali society.

Television as Cultural Form

Raymond Henry Williams (1921–1988), a leading cultural historian in England from the 1950s to the 1980s, has made an attempt to explore and describe some of the relationships between television as a technology and television as a cultural form. His work is the basis for the contemporary school of criticism known as Cultural Materialism. In the course of driving the contemporary debate about the general relations between technology, social institutions and culture he has made iconoclastic and humane observations of television's first half-century.

The forms of reporting, interrogation, visualisation and dramatization which television manifested, as Silverstone (2003) observes, provided a very different public culture than any that had gone before. Of course, many of these forms were borrowed from other media. News, drama, talk, educational programming, variety, all had their precursors. But Williams is at pains to point out the distinctiveness and the novelty of television, above all, perhaps, in its directness and its closeness to the ordinariness of everyday life. In his view, television offers a technologically and institutionally discrete form of cultural framing and expression (p.ix-x).

Two propositions of the Same Conclusion

Describing Williams's idea, Silverstone (2003) considers television as a distinct cultural product (p.ix). Williams opposes

the view that believes technology shapes society. He (Williams 2003, p.5), further classifies the propositions concerning the well-known statement that the television has altered the world in two categories. He problematizes the statement presents nine interpretations. Then he classifies them into two main categories: the technological determinism and the symptomatic technology. Both classes of the opinions draw a common conclusion. But they have differences in the process.

The technological determinists view that the invention of technology has created a consequence in our lives and society. They believe that there are results from the creation and presence of the technology itself. For instance, if television had not been invented we would not have a convenient pastime aid. Technological determinists suggest that it was the invention of the television that caused this socio-cultural change. The second category of the opinion refers to the symptomatic technology. It believes that media are used by an order of society to manipulate others to further its own agenda. It states that if a specific technology such as television did not exist, another way would be founded to influence or control the masses.

In technological determinism, as Williams (2003, p.6) states, research and development have been assumed as self-generating. The new technologies are invented as it were in an independent sphere, and then create new societies or new human conditions. The second proposition, as Williams (2003, p.6) observes, the view of symptomatic technology, similarly, assumes that research and development are self-generating but in a more marginal way. What is discovered in the margin is then taken up and used.

Technological Determinism

The first category of above-mentioned opinion is technological determinism. It believes that technologies have a life of their own and they emerge from a process of research and development beyond social expectations or political and economic interests.

In general, as McQuail (2000) states, technological determinism refers to the effect on society of changing communications media (p.74). He observes that determinist thinking links the dominant communication technology of age and key features of society such as power, integration and change (p.85). Williams (2003, p.5) presents the views of technological determinists as follows: New technologies are discovered, by an essentially internal process of research and development, which then sets the conditions for social change and progress. Progress, in particular, is the history of these inventions, which created the modern world.

Technological determinism, as Williams (2003) states, views that its power as a medium of social communication was then so great that it altered many of our institutions and forms of social relationships. Its inherent properties as an electronic medium altered our basic perceptions of reality, and thence our relations with each other and with the world. As a powerful medium of communication and entertainment it took its place with other factors—such as greatly increased physical mobility, itself the result of other newly invented technologies—in altering the scale and form of our societies (p3). Thus, in view of the technological determinism television was developed as a medium of entertainment and news. It then had unforeseen consequences, not only on other entertainment and news media, which it reduced in viability and importance but on some of the central processes of family, cultural and social life (Williams, 2003,p.3).

Hence, as Williams (2003.p.4-5) explains, technological determinism views that the technology is in effect accidental. Beyond the strictly internal development of the technology there is no reason why any particular invention should have come about. Similarly, it then has consequences which are also in the true sense accidental, since they follow directly from the technology itself. Williams (2003, p.5) put it this way: if television had not been invented, this argument

would run, certain definite social and cultural events would not have occurred.

Technological determinism, as Williams (2003) points out, the effects of the technologies, whether direct or indirect, foreseen or unforeseen, are as it were the rest of history. He interprets the technological determinism as it considers that along with other scientific inventions television has made modern man and the modern condition (p.5).

In the context of Nepal, King Birendra might have been eager to initiate television under the influence of this view. It might be because of an attraction towards the creation of the modern society as by the use of the modern technology. Sharma (2073) states that during the preparatory period for the establishment of television in Nepal a view that it would be a white elephant for the country was prevailed. He recalls that one major argument concerning the view was that in the western world, television was considered as one of the indicators of economic affluence, but here in Nepal economic standards are very low (p.110-111).

During the early days, Nepal Television enjoyed all privileges as the elites and the high-level officials considered it as an agency of modernity and showcase of enhanced social status. That is why its camera exposures were so demanding among the high-level government officials. A retired General Manager of NTV writes in his memoir that a communication minister before 1990 even choreographed an event of first day impression ceremony of postage ticket at his office. He ordered to bring all the necessary stuffs and created a scene resembling to the ceremony which was missed by NTV the other day. Then he even made a speech in order to develop the earlier day's reporting of that event (Sharma, BS 2073, p.197).

When NTV started its transmission people in the city of Kathmandu knowing or unknowingly began to allocate the time to watch the television shows. The political leaders as well as government and private sector employees and the general

public gradually started to define an event as per the television coverage. Sharma (BS 2073) recalls that prior to 1990 even the ministers used to wait for the NTV camera at formal ceremonies and events. They used to start the programme after the arrival of the camera (p.198). An event would not be an event if it would not air through television. Sharma (2003) recalls that during the early days of NTV in many instances the ministers had waited for camera at the airport even beyond the flight time. They delayed the flight because of their willingness to be covered in television (p.2). These kinds of stories still exist in public memory. If Williams would have been alive, he would name these phenomena as the manifestation of technological determinism.

Unlike in India, where television was started in 1959 with black and white transmission and later in 1982 upgraded to colour transmission, Nepal started colour transmission from day one (Parajuli, 2008, p.3). We, the Nepalis, were unaware of entire the process of scientific and technological research and development concerning the television. It seems we adopted the readymade technology in the second but last decade of 20th century in the quest of being modern. Prior to the new millennium, a set of television in a visible place inside a drawing-room in a household of the urban area, especially in Kathmandu, has become a status symbol or sign of modernity.

Symptomatic Technology

Williams (2003) presents the second class of opinion concerning the view on the effect of television appears less determinist. It views that television, like any other technology becomes available as an element or a medium in a process of change that is in any case occurring or about to occur (p.5-6).

Williams (2003) explain the symptomatic technology as follows: television, discovered as a possibility by scientific and technical research, was selected for investment and development to meet the needs of a new kind of society, especially in the provision

of centralised entertainment and in the centralised formation of opinions and styles of behaviour. This view believes that television was selected for investment and promotion as a new and profitable phase of a domestic consumer economy; it is then one of the characteristic machines for the home (p.4). Williams (2003) suggests that in its character and uses television exploited and emphasised elements of passivity, a cultural and psychological inadequacy, which had always been latent in people, but which television now organised and came to represent. He argues that television, in its character and uses both served and exploited the needs of a new kind of large-scale and complex but atomised society (p.4).

Thus, as Williams (2003) argues, television is in effect, as technological accident, but its significance lies in its uses, which are held to be symptomatic of some order of society or some qualities of human nature which are otherwise determined. Here, Williams (2003) makes a hypothesis, if television had not been invented, this argument runs, we would still be manipulated or mindlessly entertained, but in some other way and perhaps less powerfully (p.5).

It, as Williams (2003) views, considers particular technologies, or a complex of technologies, as symptoms of change of some other kind. Any particular technology is then as it were a by-product of a social process that is otherwise determined. Williams (2003) states that it only acquires effective status when it is used for purposes which are already contained in this known social process (p.6). The view of symptomatic technology, as Williams (2003) states, assumes that research and development are self-generating but in a more marginal way. What is discovered in the margin is then taken up and used (p.6).

Television was invented and developed in the west and in course of exposure to the outer world, people even from the underdeveloped country Nepal, got an opportunity to encounter it. A renowned editor Ramraj Paudyal describes his

experiences of 1965 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Paudyal (BS 2027) states that he was at the departure lounge of the airport. He, suddenly, heard someone's voice. He assumed it to be a loudspeaker. Surprisingly, he saw an approximately 1.5 feet tall and 3 feet wide box from which a beautiful lady was speaking in English. He was amazed by the pronunciation, flow, the correctness of language and beauty of the lady (p.93).

It could be assumed on the basis of general observation that the Nepali society had started to demonstrate symptoms of excitement to use television for entertainment or pastime activities as far as from the late 1980s. Aryal (2019) writes that by the year 1983, the possibility of television transmission in Nepal was in public discourse. By the time, in the urban areas especially bordering India, people had begun to watch foreign television channels. On October 31, 1984, the then Indian Prime Minister Ms Indira Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi. Subsequently, for 2-3 conjugative days Doordarshan, the Indian channel, gained a tremendous number of Nepali audience. The channel was going for live transmission on the day of her funeral on the 3rd of November. People were assembled in the neighbouring households who owned television sets to watch that event (p.). Since it was a Saturday, weekend in Nepal, naturally people were indulged into watching a live telecast, a new phenomenon in the country. Parajuli (2008) also mentions that Liechty (2008) has stated in his work entitled *Suitably Modern: Making middle-class culture in Kathmandu* that people residing in the major cities had already started to watch Doordarshan, the government-owned Indian channel. He states that export of television sets to Nepal started from the late seventies. The sets were used for watching movie by using VHS tapes during that time (p.2). It shows that people knowingly or unknowingly became used to television at least in the urban centres.

An instance could be cited in line with the notion of symptomatic technology in the Nepali context. On Williams's idea of

television as a response to a set of newly emergent and radical social, political and economic needs, we can find answer to the questions of relevancy of it in the Nepali society back in the 1980s. Subsequently, based on the idea of television as the consequence of the needs of social communication, we can find a Nepali example from the early phase of NTV.

In April 1986, a worst nuclear disaster happened in the city of Chernobyl of the then USSR. After a couple of months, words-of-the-mouth communication spread over throughout Nepal that the government-owned Dairy Development Corporation has imported the radiated powder milk from there in a bid to abuse the state treasury. Consequently, students came to the street and people were angered. Amid such a turbulent situation, as Sharma (2073) describes, the senior government officials came up with an idea to control the flow of public communication with the help of television. Government run NTV was asked to make news of the event. The Dairy Development Corporation's General Manager was filmed drinking a bottle of milk in public. The planned reporting was broadcasted in the prime time news bulletin that evening. However, the next day, the effort proved to be futile. The reporting was challenged from other channels of communication such as intrapersonal and group communication settings and from the private-owned newspapers (p.221). As IIDS (1996) concludes, combined with the fact that it is completely government-owned, such a situation contributes neither to its credibility nor its overall image (p.51). It shows that even NTV was not that much capable to control the flow of information. IIDS (1996) study reveals that even after a decade, when NTV was a single player in the domestic television sky, it was spread over 35 districts of mid, south and south-east regions and total number of television sets in the country were 200 thousands (p.49).

Williams Against Determinism

Williams rejects any form of technological determinism. He rejects those arguments which insist that technologies have a

life of their own, that they emerge from a process of research and development untarnished by social expectations or political and economic interests (Silverstone, p. viii). He (19X) states that television emerged as a technologically synthetic response to a set of newly emergent and radical social, political and economic needs. Television emerged, as the telegraph, the telephone and radio had before it, as a technologically synthetic response to a set of newly emergent and radical social, political and economic needs (viii).

Williams (2003, p.7), on one hand differs from technological determinism, on the other he insists to restore intention to the process of research and development. According to him technology would be developed with certain purposes and practices already in mind. He puts his difference over the interpretation of symptomatic technology. He insists that the purposes and practices would be seen as direct: as known social needs, purposes and practices to which the technology is not marginal but central. Williams (2003) argues that, during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, increased awareness of mobility and change, not just as abstractions but as lived experiences, led to a major redefinition, in practice and then in theory, of the function and process of social communication (p.15).

If the medium really is the message, Williams asks, what is left for us to do or say (Silverston, 2003 xi)? On the one hand Williams stresses the importance of technology in shaping the cultural form of television, on the other he resists determinism. To understand Williams's point of view it needs to be acquainted that technologies may constrain, but they do not determine (Silverstone2003, p.xi). Industrialisation and modernisation had created new demands and new challenges. He thinks that one of the challenges is not other than communication (viii). He rejects just as forcefully the arguments that technologies, by themselves, can determine a social response, that they have determining effects and consequences which are just as equally

resistant to the complications and uncertainties of society and history. In other words he rejects the characterisation of television as technology, as such. Williams (2003) analyses television as a particular cultural technology, and to look at its development, its institutions, its forms and its effects, in this critical dimension. He is indulged in versions of cause and effect in technology and society; the social history of television as a technology; and the social history of the uses of television technology (p3).

We Went According to Both the Propositions

The television was started in west as the result of continuous effort to develop an audio-visual technology as per the need of the developed society. For many long years, television was just a reference of development and modernity. Then a very few people in the urban centres came to know about its viability in their areas too and started to watch Indian channels. Later, Nepal started its own channel under government control. Subsequently, in the course of maturation of liberal democracy the country witnessed the proliferation of the channels from the private sector.

Thus, it seems, the Nepali society has undergone both the propositions put forth by Williams. There are phenomena that indicate the characteristics of technological determinism. However, the phenomena that demonstrate the symptomatic technology cannot be ignored. The reality today is the television sky of the country has widened and it has become a cultural product in the day to day life of the Nepali society.

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Women Representation in Media and Contribution of Nepal Television

Aarti Chataut

Abstract

Portrayal of women in media continues to be stereotyped in traditional roles – roles which were assigned to women in the patriarchal social order of Nepal. The present research article is an attempt to study the various facets of stereotyping of women portrayal in Nepali media. The article delves into reasons for stereotyping; progresses achieved by women in various fields; and discusses marginal improvements noticed in media portrayal of women in recent years. The research article also discusses the focus of Nepal Television (NTV) on ‘inclusiveness’ of marginalized communities. It talks, in details; how the public broadcaster NTV has worked on to encourage gender equality and better media portrayal of women through all such programmes on inclusiveness.

Keywords: Women stereotyping, media portrayal improvements in women’s position, Nepal Television, inclusiveness.

Introduction

Journey of women’s emancipation is a work in progress. Last few decades have witnessed a growth in the presence and influence of women in media – be it television, online or traditional print version. Number of women reporters, writers, authors, artists and models has increased over the years. Some women have managed to reach even top positions in some media organizations. Despite these strides, women stereotypes have continued to thrive in all forms of media. This research paper attempts to identify the trends on stereotyping women

in media content and attempts made by Nepal Television to overcome this phenomenon. Content analysis and document analysis method is applied to analyse the real situation of women in media.

What are the women stereotypes? Before entering into this, it will be appropriate to discuss what stereotype really is. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a 'stereotype' as a "widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing". Likewise, Adorno et al. (1950) stresses that stereotypes are fundamentally incorrect and derogatory generalizations of group traits, reflective of the stereotyping individual's underlying prejudices and other internal motivations (cit. in Bordalo et al, 2015). Stereotypes have hardly seen much metamorphosis at the core, even though outer layering may appear to have changed. So, while stereotypes still continue in the form of femme fatale, supermom, or sex kitten, they have also started getting portrayed as nasty corporate climbers and conspiring entrepreneurs. Women stereotypes appear on television, in films and popular magazines mostly as stylish, beautiful and excessively thin persons, often influencing adolescents to believe this as normal.

Women Portrayal in Media

Depiction of women on television – both soaps and advertisements - is quite shoddy, and, at times, even vulgar. Making fun of women and their body parts in Nepali Comedy Television programmes like *Jire Khursani*, *Dui Jibre*, *Harke Hawldaar*, *Bhadragol*, *Hangama*, *Mundre Ko Comedy Club* and *Golmal* is quite regular on television. Similar trends can be seen on "The Kapil Sharma Show", a popular Hindi comedy show (quite popular in Nepal as well) broadcast on an Indian private television channel. In all these shows, in the name of comedy, women are always shown as less intelligent and often invite vulgar and sexually double meaning comments. The story of advertisements, as far as women portrayal is concerned, is no

different. Women are almost always shown in traditional roles of washing clothes, maintaining household, helping husbands and listening to in-laws obediently.

Reams of books and articles encouraging egalitarianism have appeared in print and online. But they have failed to make any penetrative impact on images shown over media, particularly television. And, it is a fact that images shown over media are much more powerful than books written to promote feminism. This was emphasized by Rajagopal and Gales (2002) in their research on women portrayal in media. They said that the media images also have stronger impact in shaping gender images than books on feminism.

Media seldom portray women who manage to make big despite all odds against them. Very rarely we come across women characters which are independent and assertive. Even when media show women as successful and assertive, attempts to sensationalize issues are quite common.

Examining how women are depicted in different platforms of media, Sharma (2012) in her essay, “Portrayal of Women in Mass Media”, observes that women are seen more in negative light than in positive light in media. She adds that the treatment of women continually reinforces stereotyped gender roles and assumptions that women’s functions are that of a wife, mother and servant of men. She further stresses that advertisements have seldom been representative of women’s diversity. Home or beauty and sex-oriented roles are what women have been restricted to most of the times.

Previous studies done by different scholars at various times have revealed how advertisements in media encourage girls to take thin looking women as normal. More than three-quarters of women playing young characters on television are underweight. Overweight characters in television soaps receive negative comments from male characters while the reverse is just never true.

Moon Jana (2016) in her study “Changing Role of Indian Women in Television Soap-Operas: A Case Study” says that women in serials must have fair complexion with broad eyes, sharp noses, and rosy lips. Women have to look beautiful all the time, even when she is going to bed. Women characters on television, especially in soaps, cannot look messy even once. They cannot wear specs and in no case have small eyes and blunt nose. Aaliya Ahmed (2012) says that in TV soaps the ‘dream-girl’ stereotype is gentle, demure, sensitive, submissive, non-competitive, sweet-natured and dependent. A ‘bad’ woman is presented as rebellious, independent and selfish. The male hero, on the other hand, tends to be physically strong, aggressive, and assertive; takes initiatives, and is always independent, competitive and ambitious.

All programmes advertised, Moon Jana (2016) says, as meant for women, seldom portray working women. Soaps are mostly centred on marriages. Focus is on showing marriage rituals, on relationship of newly-wed women with their in-laws and how their married life goes on facing all hurdles posed by ‘*vampish*’ women from their families. There are hardly any women in soaps who can be seen working. And, if by sheer chance they are portrayed as working women, there is all the probability of being portrayed as ignoring their families, their kids or they are shown excessively traditional; listening to biased taunts of their mother-in-laws and yet working (more time in families than their offices) without complaints, sacrificing all their comforts and happiness. In 2010, the then Information and Broadcasting Minister of India, Ms. Ambika Soni, expressed her unhappiness for stereotyping women characters seen on television soaps. Ms. Soni, as Moon Jana quotes, affirmed, “Some serials are meaningless and take us back in time.”

More or less similar views were echoed by famous Hindi film personality Ms. Sharmila Tagore. “Content on TV is stereotypical. Their shows still revolve around son preference and kitchen dynamics. No women go to work. There is a

complete absence of working women. Today every woman is doing a job and managing her family too. Women should be portrayed intelligently in today's time" (Jana, 2016).

Shoma Munshi (2012), Division Head of Social Sciences and Professor of Anthropology at the American University of Kuwait, also observed similar trends. She mentions in her book "Prime Time Soap Operas on Indian Television" that television soaps have popularised festivals like *Karva Chauth* to an extent that it is now celebrated all over India. Signs of married women like *managal sutra* are now used by women even in those areas where it was never a tradition.

No one can deny the importance of media in highlighting women's issues. But it has also been a party to perpetrating violence against women. This is manifested through pornography and by portraying women's female body as a commodity which can be merchandized like other commodities. In her work "Portrayal of Women in India", Mishra (2015), mentions that media uphold and propagate those very notions which actually create hurdles in socio-cultural uplifting of women. She says television contents fail to endorse the various career options that are now available to women. These media contents remain entrenched in certain deep-rooted notions that are hard to be erased away.

The discussions here reiterate that the traditional media forms are still promoting the stereotypes about women as if they might have been existing some four or five decades ago. Forms and expressions of women portrayal in media may seem to have changed but the realities of women's progress in Nepali and other similar societies do not get reflected on television.

Reality of Women's Position in Nepal:

Women have lagged behind men on almost all development parameters but they have made big leap over the years. In Nepal, as in most countries in South Asia, women have progressed

on almost all visible development parameters – health, literacy and education, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and political participation. Women are now visible in almost all fields – excelling even in fields once commonly seen as male preserve in a patriarchal social order.

In tertiary education, the ratio of women to men in Nepal was 0.71 in 2013. This is quite low, but when compared to 0.32 as it stood in 1990 this seems a big improvement. Similarly, the ratio of literate women, aged 15-24 years, to literate men of the same age group has improved from 0.48 in 1990 to 0.85 in 2013. Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6%. There is quite a disparity between males and females, with male and female literacy rate standing at 71.6% and 44.5%. This showed a Gender Parity Index (GPI) at 0.62, with women lagging behind men by whopping 27% (Devkota & Bagale, n.d.). But this seems a huge improvement over 1971, when women literacy rate stood at mere 6%.

Nepali women are resilient and despite problem areas in terms of maternal mortality rate, less than desired health level services and so many traditionally biased customs to deal with, they have better life expectancy than men counterparts. Life expectancy of women in Nepal stood at 71.6 years, according to WHO data released in 2018. This is better than Nepali men whose corresponding figure stood at 68.8 years. This figure for women stood at 62.39 years in 2000 and even lower at 40.54 years in 1970.

According to Government records, there were 87,753 civil employees across Nepal in 2017-18. Of these, 20,334 women held various government-office positions in [Nepal](#), making it 23 percent of civil service jobs held by women (Shrestha, 2018). The number was limited to just eight percent of total force in 2008. Increase in number of women undertaking Public Service Commission examinations in Nepal can be attributed to an amendment brought in 2007 to the Civil Service Act 1993, ensuring 45% seats reserved for women, Dalits, differently-able

and people from backward areas. Young Nepali women started feeling inspired by this legislation to apply for civil service and as a result the number of women applying for exams has started outnumbering men.

Women participation in Nepali army is also increasing since 1961 when Nepal Army started recruiting women in technical service (Nepal Army, 2020). Nursing jobs were first to be opened for women, but in 1965 they started getting recruited as Para Folders. In 1969 Nepal Army started recruiting women as doctors and doors for women legal experts in the Army were opened in 1998. Women engineers started getting recruited in the Army in 2004 and aviation wing was thrown open to them in 2011. In 2004 when the country was fighting against insurgency, the Army opened its door to women soldiers in general service which comprised of combat related duties. A number of other services have opened up for women soldiers since then. They are Military Police, Office Staffs, Army Band, Military Drivers, Military Clerks, and Aircraft Technicians in Combat, Combat Support and Combat Service Support Arms. A woman division has been established under the Military Secretary branch in 2010.

Women's Political participation

The picture of political participation of women has gradually changed after the People's Revolution I and promulgation of Democratic Constitution in 1990. It had a mandatory provision that required at least five percent women's candidature in the election for House of Representatives. This increased the number of women candidates in the three parliamentary elections held in 1991, 1994 and 1999. In 1991 the number of woman candidates was 81 (party candidates 73 and 8 independent), in 1994 it was 86 (party candidates 74 and 12 independent) and in 1999 this number was 143 (party candidates 117 and 26 independent). However, in 1991 only 6 (2.9%), in 1994 only 7 (3.4%), and in 1999 only 12 (5.8%) women were elected (only the party candidates) (Acharya, 2017).

Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 and, later on, the Constitution of Nepal have reserved 33% of seats in the Parliament for women.

Legislative measures, introduced in 2007, have also ensured gender quota of 40 percent female representation at ward membership level. These have also ensured at least a woman's candidacy for either mayor/chief or deputy mayor/chief position at municipality/rural municipality level. Dalit women's representation is the highest ever in Nepal at 47 percent. This has brought a sort of revolution in the Nepali socio-political environment.

Positive Changes in Media Portrayal of Women

Past incidences have proved time and again how assertive and independent women characters on television leave quite positive imprints on the whole society and not just women viewers. Some studies have established how television soap named "*Udaan*" influenced women and men viewers of India in the 1980s in a positive way. It encouraged quite a number of women to aspire to become police officers, and it also encouraged many men to start treating women equally and respecting their roles in family and society. Similarly, Shoma Munshi (2012), mentions of research done in University of Mexico and Ohio University over Hindi radio soap *Tinka Tinka Shukh* in the 1990s. The radio soap, researchers found out, had encouraged listeners to give fair treatment to women. The show, researchers found, also helped increase attendance of children in village schools.

But such examples used to be rare. In terms of media portrayal of women, the situation seems to have started changing for good. Some advertisements have started appearing treating women as equal partner to men. They are being portrayed working as pilots, doctors, police officers, film directors, or as

entrepreneurs.

It will be captivating to closely analyse why despite women being stereotyped several soaps and advertisements are quite popular among women themselves.

Kaul and Sahni (2010), studying the portrayal of women in TV serials in Jammu, found that women used television serials to find ways to handle domestic issues properly. Rajgopal (2002) in his study found that women centric roles help women become aware of their physical appearances. Aaliya Ahmed (2012), however, cautions that TV soaps, despite depicting stereotypes, should not be perceived only as mindless genre. According to her, viewers develop a unique relationship with characters on the television. Television characters become important parts of daily lives of women and they often use experiences gained through watching these characters in positive ways in their daily lives.

From the discussion above we can see media, even in modern times, is not refraining from promoting traditional stereotypes of women. However, some attempts are being made on regular basis now to portray women in more contemporary and realistic ways also. Scale of such portrayals is still far from being desirable, but there seems no stopping to such efforts now.

Contribution of Nepal Television

Nepal Television (NTV) has always tried to remain sensitive when it comes to women portrayal. It has treated gender as a special subject for over two decades. NTV stands out for producing and broadcasting programmes on women empowerment. It has tried to imbibe the very spirit of inclusion as enshrined in the Nepali Constitution. This is getting reflected in two ways – first in the way staff is being recruited, trained and promoted; and secondly, by encouraging inclusiveness through the programmes broadcast over different channels under NTV umbrella. According to a 2003 report “Analysis of

Radio Nepal, Print Media and Nepal Television” prepared by *Sancharika Samuha*, the percentage of women staff in Nepal Television stood at 16%. This has increased considerably since then and now there are women at decision making management positions as well.

NTV has three kinds of contents which are broadcast over its bouquet of channels. First, the programmes made by NTV itself; Second, the programmes which are sponsored; and third, the programmes procured through ‘Time Sale’. The programmes produced by NTV are always focused on enhancing inclusiveness, including programmes focused on women empowerment.

Time Sale programmes are mainly the primetime programmes which are produced and procured from independent producers. But NTV monitors even the time sale programmes which are produced by external producers. These producers are also encouraged to keep inclusiveness and follow journalistic code of ethics as essential element of contents. These days, NTV has started broadcasting Nepali movies as well.

For the last two years, NTV has focused on producing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) which are broadcast on special occasions like Republic Day, Constitution Day, and Women’s Day. These vital PSAs are generally related to health, education, agricultural growth, law, and environment. Whatever may be the area concerned, NTV has ensured inclusiveness, including positive women portrayal, in these, in terms of language used, script written, dialogues delivered and issues raised on the screen. Even the documentaries broadcast over NTV bouquet of channels adhere to these principles.

Nepal Television, unlike other commercial TVs, cannot afford to serve its audience with the contents that only have commercial values. Being a state-owned institution, it has an obligation of social responsibility to fulfil. Thus, Nepal Television has been producing and broadcasting contents that create awareness,

and educate people for change. Here is a list of popular NTV programmes which are focused on inclusiveness and tackling stereotypes in general. In all these programmes promoting inclusiveness of different classes, there is a clear focus on keeping women's interest at the forefront.

1. ***Sangharsha***: - This programme is mainly focused on women's issues. It raises the voice of women, discusses gender based issues with stakeholders and encourages women empowerment. Stereotyping of women, wherever possible, is discouraged through this programme.
2. ***Rojgar Hamro Sarokar***: - This is the programme which focuses on labour issues. The programme informs the workers about laws concerned to them and helps them go for foreign employment in easy way. The programme also prominently keeps interests of women in consideration while discussing the various aspects of employment.
3. ***Sambad Ma Krishi***: - This programme raises the voice of farmers and let policy makers know about the issues of the farmers. The programme discusses problems related to farming and informs best techniques of farming to farmers. Here also, interests of women are given due consideration. Lots of women are engaged in agricultural activities in Nepal.
4. ***Ujyalotira***: - This programme raises the voice of needy people with different ability and seeks help for them from the viewers. Gender neutral views are taken into consideration here as well.
5. ***Samabeshi Aawaj***: - This programme is mainly focused on talking with stakeholders and intellectual bodies about the circumstances of inclusivity, including women from the suppressed communities.

The needs of inclusive community and difficulties to fulfil those requirements are discussed in the show.

6. ***Mahila Adhikar:*** - This programme is focused on the issues of women. Women's rights; and the ways and process of getting those rights are main topics discussed in this programme.
7. ***Children's Club:*** - This is the programme where anchor and children discuss on various issues from children's life. This includes their daily life style, school life, maintaining discipline etc.
8. ***Dalit Sawal:*** - Dalit, who are discriminated just by their race, is the main topic of this programme. In this programme, main theme of discussion is about the Dalit rights. Rights of Dalit women are emphasized specifically.
9. ***Sambridhha Nepal:*** - In this programme, overall development story of the nation is discussed. It is analyzed as how progresses over the years have impacted various communities, including women, in Nepal. It has been observed that development of infrastructure has led to an inclusive development of all communities in Nepal.
10. ***Sushasan Sawal:*** - This programme discusses about the current situation of good governance in Nepal. Gender neutral policies have to be adopted but positive discrimination is pushed for wherever required.
11. ***Surakchhit Nepal:*** - This programme talks about pre planning, information and rehabilitation of people in the areas affected by natural and human made disasters. Special focus is on women affected adversely during these disasters.
12. ***Destination Nepal:*** - This programme mainly focuses

on different places of Nepal, culture of the people and their life which help bring fruitful changes in the tourism sector. Focus is on conveying how women can get gainful employment in tourism sector.

13. ***Kanun Ka Kura:*** - This programme talks about rule of law, Constitution and other laws of Nepal. Special provisions on women and their inclusion in decision making are also discussed in this programme.
14. ***Janswasthya Bahas:*** - This programme is based on health issues. It focuses on health aspects affecting people, including women, at large and advocates necessary precautions to prevent diseases.
15. ***Aaja Ko Charcha:*** - In this programme current issues are discussed with the stakeholders, and women are important stakeholders,
16. ***Swasthya Sarokar:*** - This programme is a talk show where health issues are discussed. Women and children health are also discussed in this programme.
17. ***Suchana Mero Hak:*** - This programme is based on the right to information.
18. ***Sikchhya Ko Chautari:*** - This programme gives information about educational sector and the policies related to education. Special focus is on women's education and policies related to that.

These are the contents that show the initiative of Nepal Television regarding socio-cultural inclusion and mitigating the women stereotype prevalent in Nepali society. Apart from these contents, Nepal Television has consciously adopted policy instruments in order to ensure inclusion in the news as well as in other genres. Nepal Television, as the leading TV institution in Nepal, has an obligation to play a greater role than this.

Conclusion

It is indeed a truth that women's progress on various development parameters is less in comparison to men in Nepal. But no one can deny the fact that women also have made some definite progress over the years. Looking around in Nepal, one can now see women working in almost all fields – even in the fields earmarked as males preserve. There are women pilots, women police officers, army officials, entrepreneurs, fashion designers, singers, dancers, sportspersons, engineers, doctors, management professionals and also politicians. Nepal has seen even a woman as President and many women as Ministers. More than 33% seats in the Nepali Parliament are reserved for women – a recognition of their vital importance in decision making and law making.

But media, instead of being more forthcoming in portraying this reality in positive manner, has continued to portray women more in traditional gender specified roles – roles which have been assigned to women in a patriarchal society. Many of such media portrayals have also been well received by the larger section of the society – both men and women. These people, brought up in typical patriarchal society, enjoy watching regressive and traditional portrayal of women in media. And, this forms the economic reason for the producers of media content to keep producing content with portrayal of women in traditional way.

Things have already changed quite a bit and continue to change – steadily but surely. Film and online media sources have proved a little more modern in thoughts compared to television in recent times. Contents portraying women in quite contemporary roles, made in recent years, have been well received by the audience. Mainstream entertainment media should take a cue from this reality and adopt progressive thought-provoking content instead of giving canvas to traditional stereotype women portrayal. Encouraging positive media coverage can leave long lasting impact on psyche of both men and women.

Negatively sensitising women's issues belittle the very fight for emancipation of women.

Only those content are made which are supposed to earn profits. There is no stoppage to this thought process even if it means continuous support to traditional stereotyping of women characters. NTV is an exception to this. NTV stands out from the crowd. It is the obligation of NTV, being a public broadcaster, to produce and encourage programmes which support inclusiveness and women empowerment. NTV shines over other organizations in Nepal in its duty to not just entertain, but also to inform and educate people. NTV encourages idea formulation among viewers of its multiple channels.

NTV has also demonstrated how a media organization can churn out money spinners; busting the prevalent myth that programmes with portrayal of women in progressive characters lose money. In a way, NTV, as always, is treading a visionary path for all other media organizations and independent content producers to follow.

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Citizen's Perception on Public Communication and Role of Media in Nepal

Trilochan Pokharel and Shital Moktan Tamang

Abstract

The citizens of Nepal have the right to demand and receive information from different sources as stated in the Constitution of Nepal. In a democratic regime, right to information forms the basis of empowering citizen and holding government accountable. Media, as the fourth pillar of the state, act like a major component of 'infrastructure of governance'. In a country with effective media, entitlements of citizens are less undermined. With the advancement of technology, people have increased access to several means of public communication. Radio, television, social media, print newspapers, online newspapers are some of the active sources of information for the public. This article mainly draws findings related to public communication and role of media from Nepal National Governance Survey 2017/18 and supplements with evidence from other sources where relevant. The analysis highlights people's choice of media for keeping them updated about public affairs. It summarizes the perceived honesty of media, government communication and public communication environment. Nepali people have largely appraised the role of media in informing them on public affairs. However, they have identified gaps in performance of media and urged media to improve its shortcomings and play instrumental role in public communication. Radio and Television are the most preferred forms of media which actively support in protecting the citizen's right to

information. Being the first national television of Nepal in this important quest of informing the citizens effectively since 1985, the role of Nepal Television is largely recognized.

Keywords: Right to information, media, communication, perception.

Introduction

Access to information is fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal. The Article 27 of the Constitution assures that the citizens will have right to demand and receive information on matter of individual and public interests. In addition, the Constitution ensures ‘freedom of opinion and expression’ as fundamental right of citizens. The Right to Information Act 2007 underscores the value of access to information to uphold the state accountable and prepare responsible citizens by providing reliable and quality information on timely manner. In a democratic regime, communicating to citizen on state affairs and listening citizens’ voices in a systematic approach is *prima facie*. It is, therefore, apparent to discuss on the role of media as a vehicle for establishing a two-ways communication between state and citizen.

Despite of having strengths of media in communicating citizens, there are some prevailing gaps like equal access, quality of information, maintaining professional ethics among others. This article highlights some of the key findings from Nepal National Governance Survey (NNGS) 2017/18 and compares with other relevant sources. The NNGS is nationally representative with a sample of 12,872 and covers several aspects of state of governance. The NNGS considers media as ‘infrastructure of governance’, recognizing the role media to uphold public accountability and bridging the gap

between the state and the citizens by establishing a two-way communication. While doing so we will also highlight the role of Nepal Television, a national public broadcasting service that has played instrumental role in protecting citizen's right to information. The article also draws evidence from other relevant sources that highlight status of public communication and role of television.

Media in Communicating Citizens

With the development in communication technologies and modes, people have demands of quality information. Media are instrumental for socialization, maintaining social cohesion and culturing social and political systems. It enables the citizens' creating opportunities for learning and thinking about different social, political, economic and culture aspects. The role of media in Nepal is transforming towards educating and informing the citizens for their overall social development, not only disseminating information and entertainment in a narrow sense. Media act like the bridge between citizen and state. They create impact in making opinion of the citizens by shaping perception on various issues prevalent in the society. Media echo the voice of the voiceless, the weaker side of the public and promote the active citizenry. They hold public officials accountable to the law and society.

Among various media, the television draws attention due to its unique audio and visual characteristics (Thapa, 2015). According to WARC (2008) in spite of technological developments allowing for more channels, television remains a mass medium that can be used most effectively as part of an integrated media campaign. TV's impact is largely on the emotional, subconscious mind. There is far more going on when people are exposed to TV ad than they are able to articulate (Brennan, 2011).

Evolution of Media in Nepal and Current Status

Alike the world's history, newspapers have the longest history in Nepal, followed by radio stations and television channels. The radio broadcasting became popular in the revolution against the then Rana Regime through 'Prajatantra Radio' in around 1951. The radio later was established as a state broadcasting institution named as 'Radio Nepal' in the same year. During that period, possessing a radio was an issue of social prestige. The government had introduced 'license fee' to own a radio, which is now waived. The radio remained the only means of communication until 1985.

The Nepal Television

In the year 1985, Nepal Television (NTV) was established. With the transmission of television, Nepali society entered into a new era of public broadcasting. An initiative that was started 35 years ago amidst limited technology, resources and knowhow, is now the biggest state owned television broadcasting running five different channels- Nepal Television HD in 1985, NTV Plus HD in 2003, NTV News HD in 2014 and NTV Kohalpur HD in 2016. As of now, Nepal Television claims to serve over 72 percent of the population with terrestrial reach over 50 percent of landmass in Nepal. It has 19 transmitting relay stations across the country and can be easily watched by using simple antennas free of cost (Nepal Television, 2019). NTV HD, NTV Plus HD and NTV News HD are broadcast from Kathmandu, while NTV Kohalpur HD is broadcast from Kohalpur, Banke and NTV Itahari HD has come into operation recently from Itahari, Sunsari, covering the eastern part of the country. These channels can also be watched across the world through satellite and online.

Now, over 50 TV channels are operating in Nepal through private sector. This has allowed citizens more choices on content and quality of information. In addition, innumerable radio stations, print media and online media are providing

communication services to citizens.

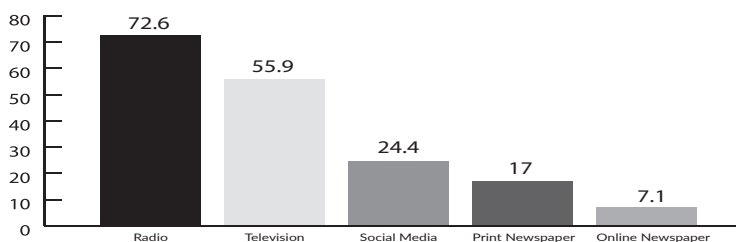
Citizen's Perception on Media

This section of the article presents key aspects of citizen's perception on media from Nepal National Governance Survey 2017/18, conducted by Nepal Administrative Staff College¹ with supplementary information from other relevant sources. We have summarized public perception on use of media, quality of services and performance of media.

Sources of information

The radio remains the main source of information on public affairs among Nepalis due to its coverage and convenience, while television is the most trusted medium (European Journalism Centre [EJC], 2020). Over 70 percent people use radio to get information on political and current affairs. The TV stands second with over half of the population using it for being updated on current affairs. Social media has emerged as a strong viewers hold with around a quarter following it. Print newspapers (17%) and online newspapers (7.1%) are other sources of information (Figure 1). In addition, people also depend on individuals to receive information on public affairs.

Figure 1: Sources of information on political and current affairs, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)



Note: People were allowed multiple choices. Other sources not related to media are suppressed. Radio includes all types of radio stations – national and local.

1 The Nepal National Governance Survey 2017/18 was conducted by Nepal Administrative Staff College to record citizen's perception on state of governance and published in 2018. Data cited in this article are from the NNGS 2017/18 unless stated otherwise.

Provincial differences are observed in behaviour of people in use of media. The tendency of watching television is increasing across the country with some exceptions. Higher percentage of people from Province 3² (70%) prefers to watch television compared to other forms of media, leading with a small margin over radio. In other provinces, the citizens prefer to listen to the radio most which is followed by viewing television. Province 1 and Gandaki Province have similar percentage of consumers preferring to view the television, 69 percent each. More than half from Province 5 view the television as source of information followed by 40 percent from Province 2 and 38 percent from Sudurpashchim Province. Karnali Province falls behind with only 13 percent reporting to watch television for getting updates on public affairs. Social media appears as emerging source of information on public affairs through the country with Gandaki Province leading with (29.2%) and Karnali Province at the bottom with (15%) (Table 1). The print and online newspapers are alternative sources of information but at varying proportion among the Provinces.

Table 1

Source of information on political and current affairs by Province, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)

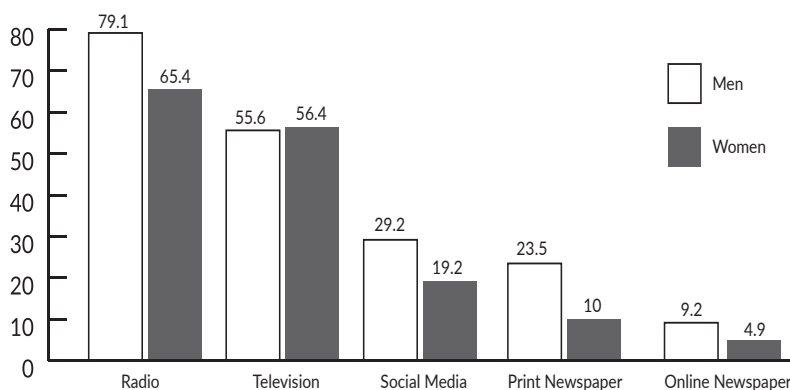
Province	Radio	Television	Social media	Print newspaper	Online newspaper
Province 1	70	68.8	27.1	19.6	6.1
Province 2	68.3	40.8	16	15.1	4.3
Province 3	68.5	69.8	29	25.3	13.5
Gandaki	79.6	68.6	29.2	15.6	11.1
Province 5	73.7	51.1	23.6	12.7	4.6
Karnali	87.1	13.2	15	4.4	3
Sudurpashchim	75.7	37.9	22.8	12	1.8

Note: People were allowed multiple choices. Other sources not related to media are suppressed. Radio includes all types of radio stations – national and local

² The Provincial Assembly has named the Province 3 as Bagmati Province on January 12, 2020.

A recent survey on landscape of media affirms that television is leading source of information in national and international news. The survey shows viewers of television (38%), is about 2 percent higher than that of listeners of radio for news while television leads by 13 percent on daily access against radio (30%). It is also important to note that nearly fourth-tenth people never watch television. Television leads across all provinces except for Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces. Viewers of television are highest in Gandaki Province (60%) and the least in Karnali Province (27%) (Sharecast Initiative Nepal, 2019). Such differentials are mainly related to television infrastructures. In order to make television accessible to the ‘never watching’ population, the service providers have to work hard.

Figure 2: Gender differentials on source of information on political and current affairs, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)



Note: People were allowed multiple choices. Other sources not related to media are suppressed. Radio includes all types of radio stations – national and local

There are some differences in use of media by gender, age-group, ecological zones and education status of the people. Slightly higher proportion of women prefers to watch television more than men. Younger generation (aged 18-24 years) are more likely to entertain all types of media compared to other age group population. Radio and television are equally popular among all groups of people while there is marked

lead of youths (18-24 years) in social media, print newspaper and online newspaper. Television is the second best source of information after radio for people residing in all ecological zones. It is relatively more popular in urban area while radio leads in rural areas. Among the caste/ethnic groups, Hill Brahmin, Sanyasi and Newar prefer television more than any other forms of media. The lowest viewers of television are from the Dalit community. The highest number of viewers resides in the Tarai, which is followed by Hills and then the Mountains. People with higher level of education tend to lead all types of media except in radio. The viewing pattern increases with the rise in the education level. People from all economic backgrounds prefer television as the source of information after radio. These differences are mainly because of the accessibility of media, which then influence on the choices. Social media, print newspaper and online newspapers are least preferred by all groups when compared to radio and television (Nepal Administrative Staff College [NASC], 2018).

Table 2

Sources of information on politics and current affairs according to level of education, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)

Education	Radio	Television	Social media	Online newspaper	Print newspaper
No education	61.8	33.7	0.6	0.8	1.3
No formal education	74.1	49.2	4.1	0.8	5.5
Basic education	79.2	61.5	24.7	5.2	16.5
Secondary education	76.2	74.8	55.3	16.1	36.5
Higher education	74	78.3	69.7	28.7	47.1

Note: People were allowed multiple choices. Other sources not related to media are suppressed. Radio includes all types of radio stations – national and local

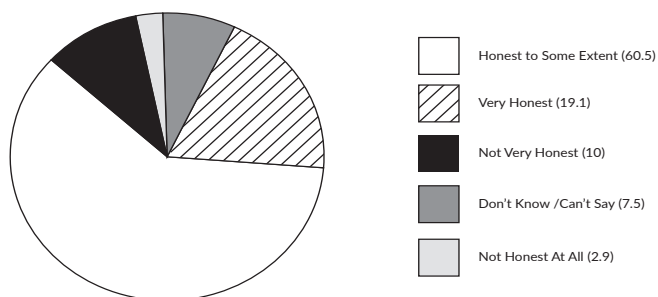
Level of education has noticeable influence in use of media, particularly on the television. A steady increase in use of

television with the increase in level of education is noticed. For example, the proportion watching television among illiterate people is 34 percent. The proportion improves by 44 percent with the people having higher education. This holds true for a recent survey carried out on media landscape (Sharecast Initiative Nepal, 2019). This tendency is noteworthy for analyzing the future prospects of television media. As the level of education among Nepali people is improving, we can assume higher demands of television in the future.

Perceived Honesty of Media

Honesty is a conduct of any institution or individual that is demonstrated in its behaviour and work. For media to stand alive and win support of public, being honest is a basic requirement. The NNGS 2017/18 affirms that around 20 percent Nepalis believe media as very honest while around a 60 percent consider media as honest to some extent. Around 10 percent Nepalis perceive media as not very honest (Figure 3).

Figure 3: *Percentage of people on perceived honesty of media, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)*



The share of people expressing ‘full trust’ on media is reported to be around 30 percent, albeit higher than NNGS 2017/18, by Survey of Nepal People 2017 (The Asia Foundation, 2017). These figures are comparable to the trust on news media in

South Korea, France, Greece, Hungary and Taiwan, while far below than countries like Finland, Portugal, Denmark, Netherlands and Canada (Statista, 2019).

More than 80 percent citizens of Province 1, Karnali Province, Province 5 and Gandaki Province think that the media as ‘very honest or honest to some extent’ while the proportion for Province 2 and 3 is between 70-80 percent. People from Sudurpashchim have relatively lower faith on the honesty of media compared to other provinces. Younger generation (18-24 years) have more positive views on honesty of media compared to elder age groups. The proportion of people considering media as ‘very honest or honest to some extent’ declines steadily from 85 percent in 18-24 years to 72 percent in 60 years and above population.

Table 3

Percentage distribution of people on perceived honesty of media by Province 2017/18 (N=12872)

Province	Very honest	Honest to some extent	Not very honest	Not honest at all	DK/CS
Province 1	16.7	70.2	7.8	1.2	4
Province 2	17.5	52.5	10.9	3.3	15.8
Province 3	19.8	58.9	10.4	6	5
Gandaki	22.9	61.5	8.7	1.3	5.7
Province 5	19	65.6	8.8	0.5	6.1
Karnali	33.8	54.4	5.5	0.8	5.5
Sudurpashchim	13.4	52.2	18	6.6	9.8

On specific type of media, as reported by Sharecase Initiative Nepal (2019), television (35%) is most reliable source of news, five percent points higher than that of radio. People below 45 years consider television most reliable, the proportion declines steadily for post 45 years. Women, people with higher education, resident of Gandaki Province are more likely to

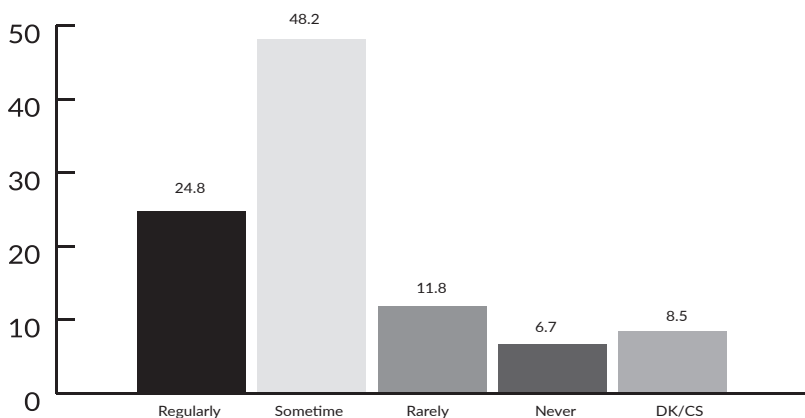
consider television as the most reliable source of news than their counterparts.

Perception on Government Communication

Citizens are entitled for information on the government decisions and activities. The government has to continuously communicate to citizens on public affairs. Government must have a robust communication system on issues of public concerns. Public communication is inalienable function of the government to keep public informed about government activities and civic education (Liu, Horsley, & Yang, 2012). More the government communicates; strong will be the state and citizen relationship.

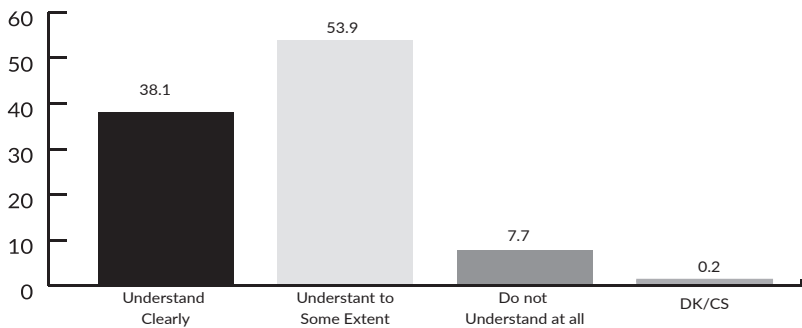
The NNGS 2017/18 shows that a quarter of the citizen apprise that government communicates frequently, around half report ‘sometimes’ and around one-fifth report ‘rare’ or ‘never’ receiving government communication (Figure 4). Although a large proportion has some exposure to government communication, it does not ensure that government communicates on all aspects of public affairs.

Figure 4: Percentage distribution of people by experiences on government communication, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)



Every communication has a message to audience and it is supposed to be clearly communicated to them. In many cases, there remains a communication gap because of language, expression and content. Among those who have experienced ‘frequent’ or ‘sometimes’ government communication, slightly less than four-tenth people claim to understand the information clearly and slightly over half understand the communication to some extent, while nearly one-tenth do not understand at all (Figure 5). This indicates that government has to improve its communication design in terms of language, expression and content in the way that citizens understand clearly. Government should engage in more efficient way to communicate of public affairs for improving citizen trust and maintain political legitimacy (Liu, Horsley, & Yang, 2012), towards the government and state processes.

Figure 5: Percentage distribution of people by level of understanding of government communication, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=10919)



There are Provincial differences in pattern of understanding government communication. Highest percentage of people from Province 3 (47.5%) understands the government communication whereas Province 2 (32.7%) stays at the bottom. More males (47.4%) claimed to understand clearly against 29 percent women. While younger people are more likely to understand government communication clearly, the proportion decreases with the increase in age.

Highest proportion, (35%) of people from Hill Brahmin/Sanyasi group feels to receive regular communication from the government. Of them, 40 percent claim to have clear understanding of the communication. While less than 20 percent Muslim and Dalit feel to have received regular communication from the government, of them less than a quarter claim to have clear understanding. Only 32 percent people with higher education claim that government makes a regular communication on public affairs. Of them, about seventh-tenth claim to have clear understanding of such communication (Nepal Administrative Staff College [NASC], 2018).

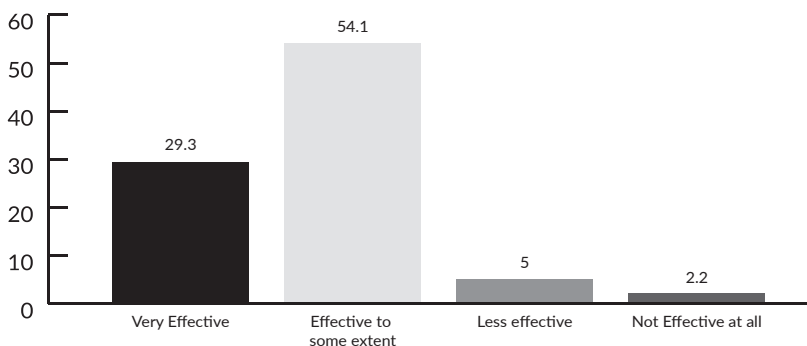
Government uses different means to communicate to citizens. As it has higher impact on the society, television media can be a good ally of the government in communicating citizens. Because of unprecedented technology development, people are attracted towards multipurpose devices that serve for all media. Despite these opportunities, evidence shows television ownership is ever increasing as it has become basic household assets. At present, over 50 Nepali television channels are operating in the country and a similar number of other channels have received operation license (European Journalism Centre [EJC], 2020). Among the various channels in operation, NTV and Kantipur TV have higher viewership followed by Avenues Television, Image Channel, Sagarmatha Television, TV Filmy and News 24 (Solutions, 2016). NTV, being state broadcaster, has unique advantage in public communication. NTV has longer history among others and a brand name already established among viewers.

Media Effectiveness

Majority of the people rely on media for getting information on public affairs. Media are considered as effective means for getting updates, empowering citizens and holding government accountable. Effective communication ensures that message is conveyed with quality and on time and also ensures that audiences have understood it. The NNGS 2017/18 finds

some important reaction of people on media communication. Overall, around three-tenth people only feel that media are ‘very effective’ in informing people about government activities, while over majority feel it is effective to some extent and the rest feel either ‘less effective’ or ‘not effective at all’. It is however necessary that Nepali media have to aim for being ‘very effective’ means of public communication to citizens. Higher proportion of people consider television as the most reliable source of news (Sharecast Initiative Nepal, 2019), implicitly encouraging television to be responsible to improve effectiveness of public communication.

Figure 7: Percentage distribution of people by how effectively they feel the media inform people about government activities, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)



By Province, people from Gandaki Province (44%) and Karnali Province (41%) report media are ‘very effective’ in communicating government activities while the proportion is lower in Province 5 (24%), Province 1 (25%), Province 2 (27%) and Province 3 (28%). Notably, a large proportion of population from all Provinces appraise media as ‘effective to some extent’ in communicating government activities (Table 4). The noticed discrepancy in citizen’s perception may be because of access to communication, expectation of audience and quality of information among others.

Table 4

Percentage distribution of people reporting effectiveness of media in informing people about government activities by Province, Nepal, 2017/18, (N=12872)

Province	Very effective	Effective to some extent	Less effective	Not effective at all	DK/CS
Province 1	24.6	62.7	3.9	3.2	5.5
Province 2	26.7	46.6	6.5	2.8	17.4
Province 3	27.5	56.3	5.2	2.2	8.8
Gandaki	43.6	47.8	2.9	0.7	5
Province 5	23.8	60.1	5.5	2.6	8
Karnali	41.4	45.9	5.7	0.7	6.3
Sudurpashchim	35.1	46.1	5.4	0.9	12.5

Gender, age, level of education and caste/ethnicity has some noticeable bearing in public perceptions. Men, younger age group, higher education group and Hill Brahmin, Sanyasi ethnicity consider media as effective to inform public about government activities, than otherwise else (Nepal Administrative Staff College [NASC], 2018). Studies also suggest that government preference of media and appropriateness of content (what message from which media) and level of investment on public communication has impact on effectiveness (Rice, 1992; Farrelly, Hussin, & Bauer, 2007).

Public Perception on Role of Media

The NNGS 2017/18 collects public perception on different aspects of media and public communication environment. People have evaluated the performance of media and communication environment cautiously. They have appraised the positive role that media played for communicating people. At the same time, they have also raised questions on quality of media. For example, the proportion of people strongly

agreeing that media provide true information is about a quarter only and about a half agree to some extent. Those who do not fully agree, have some doubts on the truthfulness of media. Proportion of people agreeing and/or disagreeing that media highlight only the weakness of the government, is almost equal. This indicates that media could improve themselves to provide balanced information by both highlighting weakness and positive aspects of the government. This will allow the society to form a balanced opinion.

People also believe that media tend to provide bias information against some individuals or organizations. Slightly higher than one-tenth people strongly agree and slightly higher than four-tenth agree to some extent that media provide bias information. People further perceive that media do not provide equal information about all political parties and leaders. The proportion strongly agreeing to this is 20 percent and agreeing to some extent is 45 percent.

Table 5

Proportion of population on the role of media and public communication environment, Nepal, 2017/18 (N=12872)

Statements on media and public communication environment	Strongly agree	Agree to some extent	Disagree to some extent	Strongly disagree	DK/CS
Media provide true information	24.2	50.9	14.7	3.3	6.8
Media highlight only the weaknesses of government	7	36.4	34.5	10.9	11.2
Media provide bias information against some individuals or organizations	12.5	44.2	20.1	11.2	12
Media disseminate equal information about different political parties and leaders	19.5	44.9	19	5.9	10.6
Media have been working effectively to promote good governance	22.3	55.6	7.9	2.2	12
People in your locality have equal access to information from the media	26.4	40.2	18.1	10.4	4.9

Despite having questions, people have positive evaluation on the performance of media in promoting good governance. Slightly over one-fifth people strongly agree that media are catalyst in promoting good governance while over a half of

people agree it to some extent. On equal access of media, people are largely positive. However, around 35 percent people do not agree that there is equal access.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Constitution of Nepal has recognized access to information as a fundamental right of people. Access to information and freedom of expression are considered as incontestable values of democratic governance. These rights empower citizens and uphold government accountable for their commitments. At the 'age of information', Nepali society is also witnessing some remarkable progress in public communication. In a history of seven decades of public communication, there has been a media boom in the post 1990s (Onta, 2001) and growth has reached to the highest in new millennia. This has given people plenty of choices on selection of content, quality and product. With the growth in media, the government has choices of means to communicate people in an efficient and effective ways. Demand for information is also increasing with the increase in public awareness, access to technology and diversification of modes of communication. With the increase in access to media, people are now in better situation of evaluating quality, express their preference, provide feedback and accept media as the watchdog of their rights by holding public accountability and connecting state-citizens.

Nepali people have keen interests on public affairs. People like to be updated on issues of politics, government activities, economic affairs and society. With the growth of electronic media- radio, television, social media, online media, the radio was the popular source of information for people, as it is a convenient and easy to handle (Parajulee, 2007). However, in the last few years with the expansion of television infrastructures like electricity, urbanization, income (Acharya & Chapagain, 2019) and people's demand on visual contents, television is appearing to be the more popular source of public communication. However, there are some differential pattern

of audience of television and radio. For example, television is popular among people with higher education while radio is equally popular across all groups. For people of Province 3 and Gandaki Province, television is the major source of information while for Karnali, radio ranks first. For younger generation, social media and online sources are the emerging source of information.

People trust on media is relatively better than other public institutions. However, media have to work more to gain higher and sustained level of trust from the public. Only a small proportion of people have strong perception on honesty of media. Generally, people value correct, updated and clear information (American Press Institute & AP-NORC, 2016). Controversial, superficial and poorly researched information deteriorate public perception towards media. Therefore, the media have to maintain their level of integrity and create positive vibes in the society. This is particularly important in Nepal as integrity of public institutions is largely questioned. It applies for media persons and organizations.

People have mixed responses on performance of media. Largely, people support role of media on improving quality of governance by enlightening public and holding the government accountable. However, people are not fully convinced that media provides neutral, truthful and balanced information to public. This is important feedback to media. In order to uphold the role of catalyst and opinion maker in the public, media have to improve their way of working. There is large proportion of people who still believe that media lean towards specific person and organization.

The Government of Nepal is making efforts to improve public communication through structural arrangements like public disclosure, provision of information officer, regular press conference and civic education. A noticeable gap is observed in communication system of the government. People receiving regular communication from the government on public affairs

is about a quarter only. Further, among those who experience government communication, majority do not understand such messages fully. This provides rooms for the government and media to improve quality of communication, in a language that people understand. Such language may be different than the technical language and jargons used by the public officials and the media.

In sum, for making public communication effective and ensuring citizen's entitlement to information, Nepali media have to improve their quality, content and coverage of public communication. Media's role in nation-building by political socialization to transform people into citizen and connect them to national political culture is crucial (Dahal, 2014). Nepal Television, being leading public broadcaster, can take and has been taking lead in setting examples of public communication and serve to protect communication and information rights of citizen.

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Media and Inclusion: The Legal Provisions in Promoting Pluralism and Multiculturalism to Ensure Inclusive Democracy

Tanka Upreti, Ph.D. and Deepak Jung Hamal

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the laws, policies and provisions related to media, ethnicity and inclusion in Nepal. The study will explore how Nepal Television has incorporated the policies into its policy instruments to ensure inclusion in workforce and content. This study employs policy analysis method to evaluate the existing legal structure including constitutions and other related laws and policies. After promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in 2015, laws and policies that have come into effect in line with it has ample provisions for inclusion and the state apparatus like Nepal Television has well adopted the provisions in their policies.

Keywords: Media, Nepal Television, Constitution, law, inclusion.

Introduction

Issues of minority social groups and their representation in mass media have received extensive consideration in recent decades. Part of this concern stems from the increasing recognition of the pivotal role played by the mass media in the production and reproduction of social knowledge. The concept of representation embodies the theme that the media construct meanings about the world they represent, and in doing so, help audience to make sense of it in particular ways.

The history of mass communication in Nepal can be traced back to more than a century ago. Publication of *Sudha Sagar* monthly in July 1898 is considered to be the maiden venture in mass communication in Nepal. It was the first periodical printed in Nepali language. Three years later, in May 1901, *Gorkhapatra*, a weekly, was published as the country's first newspaper, by the government with a view of raising the civic consciousness of the population. The first Nepali daily *Aawaaj* was launched on 19 February; 1951 a day after King Tribhuvan proclaimed democracy in Nepal (Devkota, 1967, p.1). Two months after the publication of *Aawaaj*, Nepal stepped into the age of broadcasting with the setting up of a radio station in Kathmandu. Radio Nepal was established as a government-funded department in 1951. Television made its entry almost three and a half decades later as an important initiative. Nepal Television (NTV) was established in 1985 as a public corporation with the motto of 'communication for development'. The National Communication Policy in 1992, theoretically, ended its broadcast monopoly by allowing the operation of Frequency Modulation (FM) radio in the private sector. The cable networks and FM broadcasts are a recent phenomenon of the 1990s. After 1990, the government finally decided to open the television to the private sector too. Channel Nepal began satellite broadcast in June 2001, just a day before NTV itself went satellite. Now, more than three-dozen commercial channels are in operation (Upreti, 2013; Onta, 2002; Acharya, 2002). Despite having a long history and variety of mass media, notable reflection of the social diversity, physically in the newsroom and in their contents, is yet to be achieved (Bista, 2017, p. 169).

This study has employed theoretical framework of multiculturalism, pluralism and inclusive democracy. Nepali society is pluralistic. The proposition of pluralism in this society creates an expectation that there should be plurality in human resource structure within media organizations and a reflection of ethnic diversity in media output. Political

pluralism is essential in the interest of democracy to represent the wide range of opinions and viewpoints. Cultural pluralism is an essential part of culture, reflecting that diversity and social cohesion may be threatened unless the culture and values of all communities within a society are represented in the media (Koenig & Guchteneire, 2007; Kharel, 2010; Kharel, 2012).

Multiculturalism can broadly be understood as the recognition of co-existence of a plurality of cultures within a nation (Husband 1998; International IDEA and FoF, 2009). The necessity of pluralism, multiculturalism and diversity is associated with the fundamental right to freedom of expression as set out in the constitution.

An inclusive democracy appreciates the need to promote civil society organizations, open media, rights oriented economic policy and separation of power. It thus creates a mechanism for the accountability of the majority to the minorities.

This study employs policy analysis method to evaluate the existing legal structure including constitutions and other related laws and policies (Upreti, 2010).

This article evaluates the laws, and policies, provisions related to the media, ethnicity and inclusion in Nepal. This is also an attempt to scan the legislative instruments that Nepal Television, a state-owned entity has adopted for inclusion in its workforce and content in line with state legislations and policies. It not only produces research of academic interest but also represents groundwork for the establishment of a policy agenda for realising a governmental vision of Nepal as a unified multi-ethnic nation.

Nepali legal system is evolving on the basis of its history with the pace of time, comprising significant political changes and reception, concept and content, from elsewhere. The first recorded legal code, containing all the elements of a complete legal code, was enacted by King Jayasthiti Malla in 1380 in

Nepal. It comprised all aspects of law (KBC, 2008). But the application of this code was discontinued and later, the first consolidated national legal code Muluki Ain was promulgated in 1854. Historical evolution of Nepali legal system can be categorised as Un-codified Law Period and Codified Law Period. The date of promulgation of first Muluki Ain, 1854 signifies the starting moment of codified law period. In 5 January, 1854 the first National code, Muluki Ain-1910, was codified (Vaidya and Manandhar, 1985, p. 191). It was the first enacted law of the Nepali legal system and it was based on racial discrimination and it established rule according to law in Nepal for the first time.

Pradhanaga (2003, pp. 74-76) explains the importance of the Muluki Ain in the legal history of Nepal. Firstly, it was the first exhaustive, comprehensive and consolidated written Code in Nepali legal history, though King Jayasthiti Malla and King Ram Shah made some short codes for their respective kingdoms of Kathmandu and Gorkha. Thus, this code aimed at bringing uniformity among laws practiced in the different parts of the country. Next, it was a thorough and comprehensive document intended to regulate almost all aspect of contemporary socio-economic, religious, administrative and cultural life of the society. Finally, this code was based on the promise that it was every one's responsibility to maintain law and order

The creation of the modern Nepali State can be categorised into three phases: the Shah and Rana period; the Panchayat period and multi-party democracy period (Upadhyaya, 2008 pp. 136-449).

Before the formation of the present Nepali State, Aadhibasi/Janajati or the indigenous/nationalities had control over their respective states and traditional territories. Many of these states were governed by local kings, chiefs and leaders. These independent states and territories later became parts of a unified Nepal, under the headship of the king Prithivi Narayan Shah, who came from Gorkha.

Prithivi Narayan Shah in his book, *Divya Upadesh*, called Nepal the true and pure land of Hindus. Accordingly, the policies and laws of the new State were firmly based on the Hindu religion. Hindus were offered the uppermost status in society and the premier posts of the State were the exclusive preserve of the Tharghar (which included the groups Pande, Panta, Bohora, Aryal, Khanal and Rana). This custom remained intact until the Rana period, when Prithvi Narayan Shah suggested his successors to follow the policy of giving the premier state positions to the Hindu castes (Bahun, Kshetri and Thakuri) and posts in the foreign and defence departments to the Pandes and Basnyats.

In Hofer's (1979) evaluation, the National Legal Code confirmed to the principle of ethnic purity which had its basis in the Hindu Manusmriti, a deeply hierarchal and patriarchal Hindu book of conduct. The Code in effect gave legal sanction to the 'Hindu-isation' of indigenous nationalities, despite their more egalitarian traditional social structures and brought them under the ambit of Hindu laws and customs, including concepts of ritual purity etc. In other words, the Muluki Ain of 1854, based as it was on Hindu jurisprudence, incorporated diverse caste and ethnic groups of Nepal in holistic frameworks of national caste hierarchy. The Shah (1768-1846) and Rana (1846-1951) period was imperialist in nature and adopted a policy of aggressive Hindu-isation and centralization of state power.

The Panchayat (1960-1990) period continued a policy of homogenisation, which aimed at moulding the diverse communities into Hindu-Khas-Nepali speaking castes who followed the culture of hill high castes. In contrast, the Multi-party Democracy (1990 onwards) period has been a period where cultural plurality and ethnic diversity has come to be accepted to a greater extent than before (Limbu, 2005, p.42).

To review and evaluate the existing legal provisions including communication policies, whether they promote pluralism and

multiculturalism to ensure inclusive democracy, it is imperative to observe current legal structure of Nepal and the policies adopted in this area with its special constitutional history.

Historical perspective

Seven constitutions have been drafted and six came into force in Nepal's constitutional history. The Government of Nepal Act, 1948 was promulgated by the Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer JBR with a view to continue Rana regime, addressing the desire of change of the people of that time, as mentioned in the preamble. Though the date of enforcement was mentioned as 13 April 1948 in the preamble, the constitution never came into effect.

The Article 4 of the constitution mentions that, subject to the principles of public order and good practices, the constitution guarantees the fundamental rights such as freedom of personal liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly and organization, freedom of religion. However, this document did not mention any provision in relation to pluralism, multiculturalism and inclusive democracy. The concept of pluralism, multiculturalism and inclusive democracy were not the issues of contemporary society of that time.

This was a failed attempt to silence the voices that were gradually rising against the totalitarian Rana regime.

The democratic revolution of 1951 gave rise to the Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1951, putting an end to the 104 years of Rana regime. It came into force from April 11, 1951. This Constitution was framed pursuant to the proclamation of King Tribhuvan on February 18, 1951, where he expressed his desire and resolve that his people should thenceforth be governed according to the provisions of a Democratic Constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly. This Constitution did not mention about the fundamental rights of the people but the rights of people like equality before law, non-discrimination

on grounds of religion, race, cast, sex, etc. were incorporated.

Although the Constitution, for the first time, guaranteed the necessary protection for actual enjoyment of the right to the freedom of speech and expression among other basic rights, the media issues remained crucial to the application of the Press Act of 1952. The issue of bureaucratic high handedness in repressing the media by whimsical misuse of power, and the demand for security deposits and the threat of seizure and closure of newspapers bedevilled the press. There was no state vision and state-of-the-art policy for the press as an institution.

At that time, political rights overshadowed the cultural rights, thus, leaders were more focused on achieving more political rights. Even ethnic inclusion was not an issue of the then Nepali society.

Though promulgated by King Mahendra, the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal, 1959 was, to a greater extent, a democratic constitution and was promulgated to consolidate the political changes of the 1951 revolution.

Progress and the personal development of the people to full potential, political, social and economic justice to the people; and the unity of the nation by bringing about political stability through the establishment of an efficient and responsive monarchical form of governance was the main purpose of this Constitution as spelled out in its preamble. This constitution came into force on February 12, 1959.

This constitution made the provisions of fundamental rights such as right to personal liberty, equality, religion, personal property and political liberties. But there was no provision included relating to addressing the multiculturalism and inclusiveness pursuant to the basic character of existing Nepali society. Basic attention was given to the personal liberty and political rights of the people in this Constitution.

After the dissolution of democratically elected government, king Mahendra promulgated yet another constitution on December 16, 1962 in the name of the Constitution of Nepal, 1962, putting an end to multiparty democracy and introducing the party-less Panchayat system.

Part 3 of the constitution provided for fundamental duties and rights. Right to equality, right to freedom, right against exile, right to religion, and right to property were recognized under this part but restrictions on these rights could be imposed based on article 17 of the constitution. Article 11(2A) reads that no political party or any other organisation, union or association motivated by party politics shall be formed or caused to be formed or run. This provision restricted the ethnic people from being organized to gain their cultural and political rights.

In accordance with the 1962 Constitution, a series of Press Acts and Regulations were enforced from 1962 to 1983 which raised a variety of media issues. The most controversial issue which these Acts raised was the provision for automatic cancellation of the bond and licence granted to the printing press and publisher of a newspaper which published the restricted matters. As television was not established in Nepal at that time, there was obviously no provision in this regard.

This Constitution did not mention pluralism, multiculturalism and inclusive democracy since it was guided by the idea of monopolistic political thought rather than accepting pluralism in the political system. Therefore, there was no room for pluralism.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 came into existence as the result of People's Movement I. Attention was given to the civil and political freedom and human rights since it was restricted by the previous political system. This constitution was promulgated to secure the social, political and economic justice to the Nepali people for long into the future. The preamble of the constitution mentioned that it was made

with the widest possible participation of the Nepali people, to guarantee basic human rights to every citizen of Nepal; and also to consolidate the adult franchise, the parliamentary system of government, constitutional monarchy and the system of multi-party democracy.

This constitution formally recognised multi-ethnicity in the country. Article 2 defined the nation as having common aspiration and united by a bond of allegiance to national independence and integrity of Nepal. The Nepali people, irrespective of religion, race, caste or creed, collectively constitute the nation. Part three of the constitution provided for fundamental rights such as equality, rights to freedom of press and publication, right to information, cultural and educational rights and right to religion. Article 11(3) of the constitution made a special provision of positive discrimination in law for the protection and advancement of the interest of certain group like those who belong to a class which is economically, socially or educationally backward.

Article 25(3) of the constitution, under the directive principles, mentioned that the social objective of the State shall be to establish and develop, on the foundation of justice and morality, a healthy social life, by eliminating all types of economic and social inequalities and by establishing harmony amongst the various castes, tribes, religions, languages, races and communities. Article 26(2) of the constitution, under the state policies, mentioned that the state shall, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.

Though this constitution recognised pluralism and multiculturalism in the country, the focus was on ensuring multiparty form of government and democracy. The concept

of inclusive democracy was not the guiding principle while forming this constitution. Even though, this constitution did not mention about inclusive democracy, it provided enough room to adopt the state policy to strengthen pluralism and multiculturalism to ensure inclusive democracy.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 was in effect until the current constitution was promulgated and enforced by the Constituent Assembly. This constitution was framed through a political consensus after the Peoples' Movement II of 2006. For the first time in the constitutional history, this constitution adopted inclusive democracy. Its preamble pledges to accomplish the progressive restructuring of the state in order to solve the problems existing in the country relating to class, ethnicity, region and gender.

Article 3 of the interim constitution defines nation as having multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious and multicultural characteristics and Article 4(1) further states that Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and federal, democratic republican state.

Part Three of the constitution incorporates the provisions of fundamental rights of the people. The constitution has accepted inclusion as the fundamental rights of the people. Article 13(3) mentions that the State shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these, provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of women, Dalits, indigenous nationalities (*Adibasi, Janajati*), Madhesi or farmers, workers, economically, socially or culturally backward classes or children, the aged and the disabled or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated. The provision of this article permits to admit the positive discrimination for the advancement of the weaker sections of the society and strengthen their participation in the mainstream of the country.

Likewise, the constitution provides opportunity for all communities residing in Nepal to promote and protect their language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritages (Article 17.3); Inclusion in all the state structures on principle of proportional inclusion (Article 21). The constitution puts on obligation on the State to make an inclusive, democratic and progressive restructuring of state, putting an end to all kinds of discrimination, economic inequalities and existing centralised and unitary structure of state (Article 33.d & 34.5). The constitution also pledges to pursue policy of strengthening the national unity by maintaining the cultural diversity to the count by developing healthy and cordial social relations amongst the diverse elements of Nepali society (Article 35.3). For the first time in history, in order to include the marginalised and minority section of the society in the political mainstream, the constitution provides the provision of proportional representation in the Constituent Assembly (Article 63.4).

This constitution has, for the first time, recognised the concept of inclusion in the democratic system through provisions as mentioned above. This is the milestone legal document that laid foundation for empowering and safeguarding deprived, marginalised, oppressed and ethnic minorities to date and for promulgating more progressive constitution from the Constituent Assembly.

Prevailing legal structure

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) is a governing constitution and other communication related special laws and policies are relevant to make a legal foundation in relation to promotion of pluralism and multiculturalism to ensure inclusive democracy. These legal structures are as follows:

The Constitution of Nepal (2015)

This is the prevailing constitution of the country promulgated through eight years' effort of the Constituent Assembly. It is the result of the Peoples' Movement II of 2006, which brought

about a massive change in the political system of the country, including the abolition of monarchy and introducing a federal system. This constitution has adopted inclusive democracy by enhancing the concept adopted by the Interim Constitution of 2007.

The preamble of the Constitution has embraced multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and diverse geographical specificities, by ending discriminations relating to class, caste, region, language, religion and gender discrimination including all forms of racial *un-touchability*, in order to protect and promote unity in diversity, social and cultural solidarity, tolerance and harmonious attitudes. It also expresses its determination to create an egalitarian society on the basis of the principles of proportional inclusion and participation, to ensure equitable economy, prosperity and social justice.

Article 3 of the constitution has defined the nation as having multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural characteristics with common aspirations of people living in diverse geographical regions, and being committed to and united by a bond of allegiance to national independence, territorial integrity, national interest and prosperity of Nepal, all the Nepali people collectively constitute the nation. Similarly, article 4(1) mentions Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state.

In relation to language, Article 7(2) states that in addition to Nepali language, the State may, by a State law, determine one or more than one languages of the nation spoken by a majority of people within the State as its official language(s).

Article 18 has provided for the right to equality under the fundamental rights and its sub-article (3) ensures the right to equality stating that the State shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, economic condition, language or geographical region, ideology

and other such matters. But it has made a provision that provides a room for positive discrimination mentioning that nothing shall be deemed to bar the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of the backward communities, minorities, marginalized groups. Similarly, Article 19 ensures that there shall be no prior censorship of publications and broadcasting, or information dissemination, or printing of any news item, editorial, article, feature, or other reading material, or the use of audio-visual material by any medium, including electronic publication, broadcasting and printing. The constitution also provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of laws to impose reasonable restriction on any act which may undermine the nationality, sovereignty, and indivisibility of Nepal, or the good relations between federal units, or jeopardizes the harmonious relations subsisting among different caste groups and tribes, or communities, or an act of treason, or defamation of social dignity of individuals through the publication and dissemination of false material, or contempt of court, or material that incites criminal offence, or an act that is contrary to decent public behaviour and morality, or disrespects labour, or incites *un-touchability* or gender discriminations. No radio, television, online publication or any kind of digital or electronic equipment, or press, or other kind of media outlet, shall be closed, seized, or their registration cancelled for publishing, or transmitting, or broadcasting, or dissemination of news, article, editorial, feature, or other material through the medium of electronic equipment or the use of visuals or audio-visuals. Article 19 has made some important provisions to ensure the press freedom, right to information, individual liberty and right to expression. Although there are some reasonable restrictions to prohibit the exercise of rights of press freedom, it alerts journalists for the responsibility towards the wider society.

Similarly, Article 42 has made the provision of right to social justice and Sub-article (1) mentions that socially backward and marginalised communities, including *Adibasi/Janajati*, shall

have the right to employment in state structures on the basis of the principle of inclusion.

This constitution has made some significant provisions to promote pluralism and multiculturalism to ensure inclusive democracy under part 4, Directive Principles, Policies and Responsibilities of the State. The article 51(c)(6) mentions that to protect and develop languages, scripts, culture, literature, arts, motion pictures and heritages of various castes, tribes, and communities on the basis of equality and co-existence, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, and article 51(c)(7) mentions that to pursue the multi-language policy.

Under the policies regarding social justice and inclusion, the article 51(j)(8) states that making special arrangements to ensure the rights of *Adivasi/Janajatis* (indigenous nationalities) to lead a dignified life with their respective identities, and making them participate in decision making processes that concern them, and preserving and maintaining the traditional knowledge, skill, experience, culture and social practices of *Adivasi/Janajatis* (indigenous nationalities) and local communities.

Articles 84, 86 and 176 of the Constitution ensure proportional representation of all communities, including ethnic minorities, in the House of Representatives, National Assembly, Provincial bodies and local bodies. It indicates that the forth coming communication laws and policies would be more inclusive and able to promote social diversity.

Articles 258, 267, 269 and 283 ensure to establish National Inclusion Commission, make the Nepal Army an inclusive organization, make political parties inclusive and form the constitutional bodies inclusive in Nepal.

This constitution has arranged the various provisions relating to inclusion in the different articles. It is the first constitution in the history of Nepal that recognises and materialises the concept of inclusion in massive scale.

The National Broadcasting Act, 1993

This Act was enforced on 9 June, 1993 as a special law in the area of broadcasting in Nepal. It has the objective of protecting and promoting the freedom of expression and the right to be informed guaranteed to the people, and to raise public awareness also through national language by creating an environment of equality, mutual good faith, and harmony amongst all the tribes, languages, classes, regions and religious denominations by imparting economic, social and cultural activities of the country to the people through the broadcasting system as stated in the preamble.

Section 11 of the Act mentions that while producing and broadcasting any programme, a broadcasting institution has to give priority to certain matters. Clause (b) of this section reads that such programmes should enhance equality, mutual good faith and harmony amongst all the tribes, languages, classes, areas and religious denominations. Clause (c) mentions programmes that contribute to the uplifting of various languages and cultures of Nepal and Clause (i) mentions programmes promoting folk songs and folk cultures.

Section 12 has permitted the private sector in the areas of production and broadcasting of programmes. This section mentions that, in addition to the public sector, the private sector may also be involved so as to make any programmes fair, simple, efficient and effective. For the implementation of the provisions of the Broadcasting Act, National Broadcasting Rules 1995 has been introduced in line with the National Broadcasting Act 1993.

This Act was introduced under the constitution of 1990 that ensured the civil and political rights to the people, materialising the concept of inclusion and no substantial amendment made after the commencement of the interim constitution which has internalised the concept of inclusive democracy.

Communication Policies

A long-term Policy of Information and Communication Sector was issued in 2003 pursuant with the concepts adopted by the Ninth plan. This policy was framed based on the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990. The policy was very general and inadequate to incorporate the ethnic and social diversity issues in a wider context. This policy was less vocal, even in terms of press freedom.

A new Mass Communication Policy came into force in 2016. The preamble of the Mass Communication Policy 2016 envisages values and norms enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal 2015. It is mentioned that the Policy has been formulated in order to develop fair, dignified, responsible and accountable mass communication sector, thereby stressing on a vision of the accountable and responsible mass communication media towards an independent and fair society in order to create an equitable society based on proportional inclusion and participation. Due to use of ambiguous words such as “creation of equitable society”, “equitable development of all kinds of mass communication media”, the Policy reads more like a complex political report rather than a clear national mass communication policy capable to address the need of marginalised communities.

Goals of the Policy have emphasised on institutionalising political changes, creation of democratic society, and creation of equitable society based on epistemology of proportionality, inclusion, and participation. Furthermore, it has included goals such as improving access of all class, region, caste, language, gender and community to mass media as per the national policy of inclusion and encouraging to be active thereby increasing representation of women, Dalit, indigenous nationalities, people with disability, *Madhesi*, marginalized community and backward region, class and community in mass communication sector. However, considering lexical choice, enhancing access to mass media has been clearly included in the Policy but in

case of representation, the policy reads “encouraging being active thereby increasing representation” instead of “making active thereby increasing representation.” The fundamental policy therein gives that arrangement and body relating to State run mass media shall be developed proportional inclusive as envisaged by the basic right of the Constitution but in the objectives, it is restricted to meagre acts of encouraging.

The Civil Service Act, 1993

This is the special law governing the civil service of the government of Nepal. It is enacted to make provisions of the constitution, operation and conditions of service of the civil service in order to make the bureaucracy more competent, vigorous, service-oriented and responsible as spelled out in the preamble. After the inception of Interim Constitution in 2007, this law was amended to make congruence with the constitution in the viewpoint of inclusiveness in the civil service.

Section 7.1 of the Act relates to the recruitment in civil service in ensuring inclusion. It states that:

.... in order to make the civil service inclusive, forty-five percent posts of the posts to be fulfilled by open competition shall be set aside and be filled up by having separate competition between the following candidates only, by considering the percentage into cent percent:

- (a) Women-Thirty Three Percent
- (b) Adiwasi/Janjati-Twenty Seven Percent
- (c) Madhesi-Twenty Two Percent
- (d) Dalit – Nine Percent
- (e) Disabled (differently able)- Five Percent
- (f) Backward Area – Four Percent

Nepal Television has been practising these provisions since the enforcement of the Act.

Nepal Television's Policy Instruments for Inclusion

Nepal Television, being a state entity, has an obligation to function according to the legislations provided by the state. Thus, after any political and legal changes NTV is quick in adopting the state policies. In this section, some of the instruments that NTV has formulated and adopted to ensure inclusion in its workforce and contents will be discussed.

Nepal Television Corporation Employees' Terms of Service Bylaw (NTV Bylaw)

Nepal Television's guiding statute is the NTV Bylaw. It provides the organizational structure, recruitment procedures and other terms and conditions regarding the employees of the corporation. The procedure of staffing and recruitment of the corporation is done based on the provisions of the Bylaw in line with the Civil Service Act.

The NTV Bylaw, amended immediately after the promulgation of Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, had incorporated the principles of inclusion in the recruitment process (NTV Bylaw, 2066). The section 7 of the Bylaw states that, in order to make the NTV service inclusive, out of total vacancies to be fulfilled by open competition, 45 percent positions will be reserved for inclusion. The allocation scheme is exactly that of Civil Service Act. Likewise, in section 58.2, it has been provisioned that the minimum service period to be qualified for promotion for women candidates was one year lesser than their male colleagues.

The recent seventh amendment of the Bylaw, after the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal 2015, has even incorporated the inclusive provision more comprehensively in line with the constitution and the Civil Service Act. For the open competition, the previous provision of inclusion has been kept intact and for the purpose of promotion and internal competition, the minimum service period for qualification of inclusive group has been allocated one year lesser than that of

others in section 58.3 of the Bylaw (NTV Bylaw, 2076BS).

This shows that Nepal Television has paid special attention in order to make its staff inclusive and representative of the national diversity. It helps to incorporate diversity in workforce and consequently in the contents. The workforce that has entered Nepal Television service, after the adoption of this policy, definitely comprises the mandatory composition.

The Nepal Television News Guidelines

In line with the constitution of Nepal, the different organs of the state formulate policies to ensure the rendered rights and duties provided. NTV has come up with a detailed and comprehensive Nepal Television News Guidelines (Nepal Television Samachar Nirdesika-2075 BS), Style Book 2075 BS, and Dress Code 2075 BS. Among the three policy documents, the News Guideline is the primary document that seeks to ensure the application of provisions of constitution, the provisions of national and international instruments of press freedom, professionalism and ethical code of conduct to ensure professionalism and inclusion in its contents. The News Guideline seeks to institutionalize the achievement of recent political changes and to contribute for the prosperity of the nation based on the democratic norms and values of the Constitution of Nepal 2015. The document seeks to fulfil its goal through protection of constitutionally guaranteed rights to opinion and expression, right to communication, right to information, right to privacy and labour rights. Likewise, total compliance with ethical code of conduct issued by Press Council Nepal, exercise of National Broadcasting Act-1993, Right to Information Act-2007 and Article 19 of UDHR.

Apart from the general provisions of professional practice, it is important to explore in what way the policy has taken up steps to ensure the inclusion of the diversity into its content. Since, the document has mentioned that the exercise of the Constitutional provision as its objective, one can assume that the institution is aware about the constitutional provisions

regarding inclusion and its implementation. Looking into it in greater details, under the Section of Policy, it states that, 11 (1) to support in implementation of state polices; and under, 11(6) To ensure proportional and inclusive presence in news without discrimination and bias for the people regardless of their class, community, gender, ethnicity, religion, sect, culture, and geographic area. Similarly, it has been provided under section 11.11 that while producing news, attention should be paid to the principles of gender equality, social justice and inclusion. Likewise, under the chapter of Editorial policy (12.16), it has been provided that the News that undermines freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity, independence and dignity of the nation should not be broadcast. Under section 14.3 of News Gathering Policy, it has been stated that- News related to all castes, languages and religions should be presented appropriately in order to promote social harmony and strengthen national unity. The following provision in 14.4 states that; News that could disturb the existing religious, social, cultural harmony and the news of religious and social conflict should be presented in a way to promote the harmony. Likewise, while writing the news, terminologies, sentences and proverbs that could discriminate or dominate any class, gender, ethnicity and disability should be avoided. While covering provincial and regional news (20.3) and the news about rural places, the deprived and the marginalised section should be prioritised. Under section 25.11, it has been mentioned that- the festivals that promote national unity, harmony and brotherhood and participation should be broadcast live.

In the Nepal Television Dress Code 2075 BS, section 9, it has been stated that the announcers, presenters and reporters can wear the costumes representing their ethnicity, community, linguistic group and culture while presenting their programmes. Likewise, more attention should be paid in this regard on the occasion of respective festivals and festivities.

The News Guidelines not only provides the policies for the inclusion, rather it has also the provision of Supervision and Evaluation to check any deviation from the guidelines and has

the provision of punishment according to its guiding statute. Though, NTV was trying its best to represent the diversity of the country in the past too, the policy document has more vocally advocated and ensured the practice. For the measurement of the results of these policies, a separate study needs to be conducted.

Concluding Remarks

Political democracy appears to prosper when a country has social and cultural democracy. No matter how democratic the constitutional arrangements are, conditions of economic inequality or cultural domination raise political hegemony.

All other remaining legal structures, including the policies adopted, should be made congruent with the core value of the Constitution as it is the fundamental law of the land. In the viewpoint of pluralism, multiculturalism and inclusive democracy, all the constitutions prior to 1990, were oppressive or inadequate. The Constitution of 1990 centralised towards the civil rights and political freedom rather than promoting the ethnicity and multiculturalism. Although this constitution left some room to pay attention through the other legal structures in this area, no law and policy were framed to promote it duly. The Interim Constitution of 2007 was the consequence of the desire of the people to restructure the nation with regard to the multi-ethnicity and diversity of the people domiciled within the territory of the country. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) is also based on the previous Interim Constitution, made by the people themselves through the Constituent Assembly. Considering the process and content, it is highly inclusive constitution till date. In the provisions of fundamental rights, formation of legislative bodies at different levels of governance, appointment of state chief, appointment in the constitutional bodies, provisions relating to political parties and so on, the concept of inclusion has been taken into account. Therefore, this constitution has accepted the concept of inclusive democracy at the basic level. The prevailing legal structures governing the communication and broadcasting sectors were enacted during the period of the 1990 Constitution and no substantial amendment was made to build it compatible with current Constitution. The Civil Service

Act, 1993 has comprised the spirit of the Constitution in relation to the recognition of the ethnicity and diversity feature of nation but the media law still needs to be amended in line with the Constitution.

Though the recent constitutions appeared more progressive in terms of recognising and addressing the ethnic minorities' rights and identity, the data found in the recent study (Upreti, 2017) reflect that Khas community dominates the television workforce and the news contents. It is particularly in terms of news items, presentation, and identified interviewees. Out of 59 ethnic communities, 44 in television workforce and 50 in news contents are omitted. Furthermore, Newar dominates not only within ethnic minority communities but also shares disproportionately a very high presence in both the workforce and news contents. The data shows that the majority of ethnic minorities do not have opportunity to be employed and be incorporated in the news contents at all. The primetime television news is not able to reflect the social diversity of diverse Nepali society from the both quantitative and qualitative perspective.

The constitution is inclusive to a larger extent but the state mechanisms still has a long way to go to ensure full enforcement of the constitutional provisions in reality. Many new laws are necessary to execute the constitutional provisions better. The same is true in respect to information and communication sector. Therefore, it is essential to amend the existing laws or enact new laws to govern the information and communication sector having sufficient legal provisions that must be compatible with the constitutional spirit. It is positive to mention that organisations like Nepal Television have come up with new policies in line with the constitution and other state legislations that will definitely contribute to all around social inclusion in its system and functions.

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Technology Trend of Nepal Television

Chinta Mani Baral

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to trace the technological history of Nepal Television. It analyses how Nepal Television has evolved technologically over the years. Document analysis method has been applied for this study. The study shows that Nepal Television has been efficient in adopting the latest broadcast technologies as they appear in the global market. Nepal Television with its modern and state of art production and broadcasting technology has the potential to command the Television landscape of Nepal.

Keywords: Nepal Television, Television technology, evolution, analog, digital.

Introduction

Television today has become a part of our everyday life. Television in Nepal has completed its three decades. But the Television sets, production and transmission technology that we take as granted today were not always this way. If there is anything that has evolved so rapidly in recent years then it is the media technology. Today, adoption of ever-changing technology has become a key for survival of any media form. This article attempts to map the technological evolution of Nepal Television. Document analysis method has been applied for this study. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material (Bowen, 2009). The writings of different national and international scholars on evolution of television technology

and Nepal Television itself are the references for this write-up. This piece of writing can be taken as an empirical account of the author as the author has been directly involved in the technology transformation of Nepal Television over the years.

Early Stage of Nepal Television

Nepal Television, established in 1985 as a small project, is the leading television broadcasting station of the country. Since inception it was colour transmission in PAL standard with VHS video format. An analog terrestrial transmitter was used in Phulchowki to transmit the television signal around the area in Line of Sight (LOS) distance. It is based on the principle of propagation of VHF and UHF Signal in LOS (Haslett, 2008). The transmitter was connected with the microwave system to receive the signal from Kathmandu based Television Station and the transmitter used carrier frequency in VHF Band. In the beginning, NTV had only one transmission station in Phulchowki and the coverage area was limited around Phulchowki including Kathmandu valley.

The lone station was not enough to disseminate the coverage of the signal across the country. Therefore, Nepal Television gradually added new transmission stations. Currently, Nepal Television has 19 relay transmission stations and three more stations namely in Rukum, Dadeldhura and Parbat are in the pipeline. It is expected to be completed by the next fiscal year. Thereafter, the number of relay transmission stations will be 22. The main aim of the relay transmission stations is to access NTV signal to the household of those people who are deprived of CATV, DTH (Direct to Home) Television Service and online television facilities. Nepal Television, being the state owned television station of the country; shoulders responsibility to provide television signal to the people free of cost. So, NTV should facilitate the terrestrial television service to the common people of the country who are underprivileged in terms of financial position and geographical location.

Since its establishment, Nepal Television has successfully adopted the broadcasting technology available in the world-market at all times.

From Analog to Digital

Magnetic Recording traces the development of the watershed products and the technical breakthroughs in magnetic recording that took place during the century from Paulsen's experiment to today's ubiquitous audio, video, and data recording technologies including tape recorders, video cassette recorders, and computer hard drives (Daniel, Denis, and Clark, 1998). After VHS, NTV adopted U-MATIC video format which used the tape of one-inch width with a better video quality in comparison to VHS format used in the beginning. Subsequently, NTV used BetaCam SP and then BetaCam SX video formats. With the advent of digital technology, the television technology was transformed from analog to digital video called DV format. In the beginning, digital tapes were available to store digital video; however digital video was stored in Digital Storage Devices like Hard Disk Drive (HDD), Digital Versatile Disk (DVD) and memory cards later on. The major advantages of digital contents are its compressive nature which can be compressed in different formats and can be stored in secondary storage devices of the computer. Also, it can be sent via internet beyond geographical boundaries. Another very important quality of the digital video is we can easily make copies of the video content. Digital videos can be easily duplicated which saves both time and money. So, the operation of the digital content has become far more comfortable and efficient. Nepal Television has taken full advantage of digital content in its broadcasting.

Another advantage of the digital content in television broadcasting is in editing of the broadcasting content. Following advancement in the computer technology in early 2000, Nepal Television started using NLE (Non-Linear Editing System) for video content editing. The advantage of nonlinear editing is that you can see the audio clips and can link sound to vision

more easily and more logically than on linear (Evans, 2005). GUI (Graphics User Interface) based computer OS (Operating System) like Windows was used with video editing application software named Adobe Premier. Windows XP was the first Windows based Operating System used for Non-Linear Editing System in Nepal Television with today's old version of Adobe Premiere. It was in fact a revolution in the history of video editing system used for broadcasting. However, it got a little tedious for Nepal Television because it was still using tape players for play out system. So, the video editors had to capture the analog video into digital using video card mounted on the computer, then it was edited using NLE system and again it had to be exported back on the tapes for the use in broadcasting playout system.

As mentioned before, Nepal Television used different video formats starting from VHS (Video Tape System), the devices used for recording and playout also were changed accordingly. After VHS recorders and players, Super VHS decks were used. Then U-matic, BetaCam SP and BetaCam SX were used for BetaCam Video Formats. Subsequently, Digital Tapes were used for Digital Video (DV) recording and playout system. DV Decks were used and for the recording and playout of the video content and also direct digital video interface was available to send video in computer using IEEE1394 digital interface. It was one step forward development in the history of the digital video capture without using video card in the computer. In the same way, different video cameras were also used as the video recording and playout technology transformed from one stage to the other.

Nepal Television used different Professional video cameras along with the development of video format technology. It used VHS, U-Matic, BetaCam SP, BetaCam SX and DV Cameras as the video technology transformed in broadcasting. Nepal Television has never lagged behind in adopting the latest technology in its broadcasting history.

The Satellite Age of NTV

Yet another history was created when Nepal Television started using satellite transmission system in 2001 (Sharma, 2008). Before that, NTV was using just terrestrial transmission system which had limited coverage in its LOS (Line of Sight) distance. The world was going towards satellite transmission for Television Broadcasting and NTV was trying to adopt Satellite System. Actually, Broadcasting Satellites in Geo-Synchronous Orbits were used for Television broadcasting in late 1980s in European and American Countries (Robert, 2013). Following this trend, Nepal Television used Satellite Broadcasting System in late 2001.

While planning Satellite Television Broadcasting, Nepal Television used the option of using the Satellite used by the then NTC (Nepal Telecommunication Corporation) called Intel Sat 704. The Earth Station was located in Balambu (on the way to Thankot) which is around fourteen kilometers from Singhadurbar. To send the signal from Singhadurbar to Balambu, Nepal Television used optical fiber link. Intel Sat was using analog transmission system and it required 9 MHz Bandwidth which was quite expensive too. Therefore, NTV started planning to establish its Earth Station in its own premises and shifting to satellite having digital technology. It was in 2007 that Nepal Television started its Satellite transmission using ThaiCom-5 with 5 MHz BW.

The use of Satellite Broadcasting was proved a boon for the Nepal Television. Before Satellite transmission, NTV had adopted signal relay system to send the signal from Singhadurbar to the distant transmission stations. This incurred loss in signal quality. People living areas far from Kathmandu received very poor signal. To overcome this fallacy of signal quality, Satellite broadcasting was the only way out back in those days. After the use of Satellite Broadcasting System, all the transmission stations across the country started receiving the same quality of signal. This was a revolution in the broadcasting history of

Nepal Television. TVRO (Television Receive Only) device was used in transmission stations across the country to receive the Satellite Signal transmitted from Singhadurbar. Then LPT (Low Power Transmitter) was used to transmit the received signal in the local area. The transmitted signal from LPT was easy to receive by the people using a dipole or room antenna in the Television Receiver. This terrestrial transmission was very beneficial for the people who could not access CATV and DTH signal at home. It was also a high quality signal, free of cost.

The Digital Transmission

After the declaration of ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union for Telecommunication), Nepal Government decided to digitize the analog terrestrial transmission. Nepal Television also planned to switch its analog terrestrial transmission into digital. The Television started replacing the analog terrestrial transmitters by digital ones in two phases because of limited budget and installation difficulties. Also, the ministry of Communication and Information Technology allowed replacing the existing VHF frequencies used for analog transmission by UHF frequencies in digital transmitters. Under this policy, NTV has already replaced the existing analog terrestrial transmitters by digital transmitters (Dual Cast and Dual Drive) in UHF Band in 8 different transmitting stations with 10 digital transmitters. The transmitting stations already having digital transmitters are Singhadurbar, Phulchowki, Kakani, Namjay, Sarangkot, Chamere, Jumla and Tehrathum. Nepal Television is replacing remaining eleven transmitting stations from analog transmitters into Digital Transmitters (Single Cast and Dual Drive).. The transmission stations ready to install digital transmitters are Hetauda, Jaleswor, Ilam, Gorkha, Gulmi, Daunne, Dang, Rolpa, Budhitola, Doti and Palpa. The remaining three transmitting stations (Rukum, Dadeldhura and Parbat) will be established with digital transmitters once the building and other basic infrastructure will be readied. Nepal Television has adopted terrestrial digital transmission with the standard of

DVB-T2. DVB-T2 is the Digital Video Broadcasting European standard of Second Generation Terrestrial Transmission (Dziadul, 2009).

Nepal Television will replace all its transmitting stations with digital transmitters in the near future. However, there is one complexity on receiving side of the digital terrestrial transmission. People having traditional television sets need to have a receiving device (Set-Up Box) for each TV in order to receive NTV Channels by using UHF Antenna so that common people will receive NTV Channels for free without any monthly subscription. However, people are not getting Set-top Boxes in the local market. NTV has requested Nepal Government to make Set-top Box available in the market at a subsidized cost. If the people get the Set-top Box in the market, they have to spend some amount to buy the Set-Top Box to receive digital terrestrial NTV Channels which is a onetime cost and they do not to pay any monthly subscription to receive all NTV Channels. Nepal Government is working in this issue to make available the required Set-Top Boxes in the market at a subsidized price. The most beautiful thing of the digital terrestrial transmission is to transmit multiple channels by a single transmitter using Single Frequency Network (SFN) and Multiple Frequency Network (MFN) (Fiore, 2010). Nepal Television is using Multiple Frequency Network (MFN) for its digital terrestrial transmission in DVB-T2 standard.

From SD to HD

The most important breakthrough of Nepal Television was the up gradation from existing SD (Standard Definition) system to the HD (High Definition) System of transmission with cutting-edge technology. Nepal Television had long been planning to upgrade from SD to HD format as per the World Broadcasting technology trend however; the implementation was delayed. In late 2075 BS, NTV successfully transformed its technology from traditional SD to the modern HD system. The most interesting aspect is NTV migrating all its four

channels from SD to HD simultaneously and was formally inaugurated on 17th Magh, 2075. Nepal Television replaced all Studio Equipments and Earth Station Equipments in course of the switch over. Nevertheless, NTV just upgraded the software license to upgrade its automation system for ingest, storage and playout to adopt HD content. It is really a very important moment of the history for Nepal Television. Nepal Television upgraded six of its studios and Earth Station with completely new equipments of cutting-edge technology. The complete installation was accomplished by the NTV Engineers and Technicians within 27 days. Currently, NTV is broadcasting in full HD format (XDCAM HD 1920X1080 resolution, 422 50 Mbps) and the NTV Screen is unprecedentedly beautiful.

The Expansion of NTV

Another aspect of Nepal Television is the expansion of new channels with modern broadcasting technology. Nepal Television was established with just one channel and with few hours' of transmission for several years. The Television added a new channel called Metro Channel in 2060 BS as its second Channel under the assistance of the People's Republic of China. The Metro Channel transmission was carried out in the Metro Building of Nepal Television which was also built with the assistance of People's Republic of China. Nepal Television used BetaCam SX video format in the metro Channel which was the advent of new video format in the television broadcasting technology. The Chinese government built the metro building for Nepal Television including all the equipment Electronics, Electrical and all the other equipment required for the Channel. Few years later, NTV Metro also started transmitting via Satellite along with NTV National Channel for 24 hours. At present, three Channels namely NTV National, NTV News and NTV Plus (the then Metro Channel) are transmitted from the Metro Building.

NTV News is among the youngest channels of Nepal Television, started in 2071 BS. Along with NTV News, Nepal Television

is transmitting three channels via Satellite for 24 hours. Nepal Television ran a terrestrial channel in western part of Nepal located in Kohalpur. Initially established in 2053 B.S., NTV Kohalpur was terminated after few years. In 2073 BS, NTV Kohalpur was resumed as a satellite television.

After the implementation of the constitution of Nepal 2072, Nepal was restructured into seven provinces and 77 districts. Right after this, Nepal Television started conceptualizing the establishment and formation of its Regional Channels. By then NTV already had its Channel in the western region, Kohalpur. Establishment of a channel in Itahari – the eastern region was already there but for some reasons got postponed. In early 2076 B.S. the construction work in Itahari was resumed. After the completion of construction works and installation of broadcasting equipments this Eastern Regional Channel named NTV Itahari has recently come into operation. Possibility of establishing other regional channels in the near future is high.

NTV Itahari is using cutting-edge technology of the Television Broadcasting. NTV has purchased full HD (High Definition) Equipments for high quality television broadcasting. It has latest technical equipments for studio production and transmission with automation system for content ingests, storage, editing, playout and archiving. Also, NTV has purchased sophisticated Earth Station Equipments with 6.4m Satellite uplink disk antenna. Also, the NTV Itahari has magnificent building with adequate infrastructure for the broadcasting. It is the matter of pride for the people of the eastern region of Nepal to have such a television station in their hometown.

International Coverage

Nepal Television has been using Satellite Broadcasting Technology almost for two decades now. The satellite Broadcasting System has availed access of NTV Signal all

around the South Asian Region along with Middle East, some parts of Europe and Africa. Since, Nepal Television is using Satellite Global beam for broadcasting, it covers almost half the demographical region of the World. The Television coverage area has been widened due to use of Information Technology that has robust networking to connect around the world with IPTV, Mobile Apps and Web Streaming Technology (Park, Jeong and Hwang; 2008). Taking advantage of the Internet Technology, Nepal Television is distributing its signal to the people using mobile application so that all the channels of NTV are accessible across the world via Internet. Also, NTV is planning VoD (Video on Demand) service to the people so that people may watch the important visuals of Nepal Television available in NTV video archive.

Live Broadcast

Nepal Television has been the pioneer Television Station in Nepal to use the latest technology not only on regular broadcasting system but also during occasional Live Programmes from different locations. NTV makes both indoor and outdoor Live Broadcasting quite often covering important political, social, economic, technological and other entertainment and mega programmes. NTV has two Outdoor Broadcasting (OB) Vans installed with cutting-edge technology equipment for the outdoor broadcasting and programme production. Also, NTV uses DSNG (Digital Satellite News Gathering) Equipment to uplink the Live Programmes to the Satellite from any corner of the country. Likewise, NTV is using 3G/4G Network, DMNG (Digital Mobile News Gathering) and Optical Fiber Link for the Live Programmes Broadcasting which are less expensive and have good quality networks to carry video signal to the central office from different locations of the country.

Future Prospects

In the trend of NTV technology, we must not forget about the future plan of Nepal Television for the enhancement of the technology and the television content.

NTV has a rich collection of contents of historical importance. They are stored in video tapes safely housed in its video archive. Converting these valuable content currently in analog format into digital, is a herculean task yet inevitable. Since, the visual contents are in video tapes of VHS, U-matic, BetaCam SP, BetaCamSx and DV formats, video tape players are required to play-out and capture these contents in the digital format in real time. These old video tape players like VHS and U-matic decks are very difficult to find in the market. The content available in those old video tapes has huge archive value. Therefore, converting these valuable pieces of history into digital format is of utmost importance. It is necessary that the work be carried forth with urgency as consistent wear and tear of these stored contents may result into difficulty in conversion. Inability to save these valuable records is a loss not only to NTV but to the nation as well.

Another technological aspect that Nepal Television should adopt is the use of DTH (Direct to Home) Service of its channels, free of cost. The Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) cannot access the 100 percent coverage of the hilly country like Nepal. The Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) has the limitation of the access in LOS (Line of Sight) distance only. In a mountainous county like Nepal, it is almost impossible to reach 100 percent terrain of the country. So, the common people living in the hilly region will always be deprived of access to NTV Channels. The only way to provide them NTV Channels free of cost is by the use of DTH (Direct to Home) Television Technology so that they can access the signal using a small antenna and a Set-Top Box which is only a onetime cost for them. The

DTH System will have the coverage of 100 percent in terms of geographical and demographical aspect within its footprint area of the satellite transmitting in KU Band (Eluvangal, 2007). So, NTV needs an immediate plan to use DTH technology for its transmission for the full-fledged coverage of its channels.

As an evident global trend, Nepal Television should pay attention to serve the audience through the digital platforms. NTV has recently come up with a mobile application. The effective use of this app will promote Nepal Television among the audience as well as can contribute to the revenue generation. Likewise, as Nepal has moved into the federal structure, the decentralization of its services is another vital step that Nepal Television should take up. In this line it has set up regional channels in Kohalpur of Province 5 and Itahari of Province 1, and bureaus in different parts of the country. Nepal Television should think about strengthening these centers through technical equipment and human resources in order to include all parts of the country equally in its mainstream. Expansion of the regional channels and bureaus to all provinces of the country will be equally important.

Conclusion

It is imperative for any media house to adopt the latest technologies in order to maintain the audience loyalty and be competitive in the vibrant and diverse media ecology both national and international. The audience desire good content with good technical quality. The better quality of the content can be maintained by using ever evolving technology. Each day a new innovation is coming into the media market or something new is being developed in the laboratories. It is in the benefit of a media house to keep an eye on those technologies and adopt them as soon as they appear in the market in order to compete with the vigilant rivals ever ready to overpower one another

for the sake of attracting the audience. Nepal Television, the pioneer in its genre in Nepal, has been efficient in adopting the latest and state of the art broadcast technologies available in the global market as of now. Its existing technological infrastructure provides a strong base for its bright future.

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Nepal Television from the Lens of “*Communication for Development*”

Om Prakash Ghimire

Abstract

The overall objective of this study is to analyse Nepal Television’s broadcasting performance from communication for development perspective. Qualitative research design has been used to carry out this study under which secondary information analysis and interviews have been done.

NTV has extensively given good coverage on thematic issues of national development priority, however, the concern still remains on enhancement of quality that can give more result and impact for the society. Contribution to produce TV professionals working on development issues through the practice of external producer and expanding the efforts to address the diversity and inclusion issues have become some of the remarkable identities of NTV from communication for development perspective.

Keywords: Nepal Television, communication, development, programme.

Introduction

As a first TV broadcasting service provider, Nepal Television (NTV) was established by the government under the sixth national five years plan in January 1985 as pioneer state broadcaster. Starting with few hours broadcasting in the initial phase, coverage of NTV was limited to Kathmandu valley only. According to T. Shukla (personal communication, December

28, 2019) at that time there were around 250 TV sets in Nepal, which means NTV was started by providing broadcasting service for very limited audience. NTV was established under the Communication Corporation Act 2028. It is the first and the only TV channel that provides terrestrial television broadcasting across the country.

Up to 2058 B.S., NTV was only one TV broadcaster in the country. But in 2058 B.S. Channel Nepal started the broadcasting service as first private TV channel. The differences about the legal ground between NTV and private TV channel are that all the private TV channels (115 have got license) are governed under National Broadcasting act 2049. However, NTV is governed under the Communication Corporation act 2028.

NTV has both terrestrial and satellite broadcasting systems covering 72 per cent population and 50 per cent area (NTV: 2019). In addition to NTV national channel, NTV has two specialized channels viz. NTV Plus and NTV News and one regional channel viz. NTV Kohalpur. Communication for Development is its brand slogan from the early stage of establishment. During Panchayat era, communication for development was popular terminology especially in policy level as indicated by different literatures. The terminology was officially used in 2028 first time in Communication Service Plan 2028 which was the foundation of some communication related legal documents like Communication Corporation Act 2028. As mentioned in (Hamal, 2016, pp.126 -127) there were three objectives behind the establishment of NTV:

- a. To translate the role of communication in development by transferring the speed of development to the people through ultra modern communication medium
- b. To create the positive perception of people to the monarchy, nationality and ruling regime
- c. To expand the TV programmes throughout the country by prioritizing the social, economic, religious and cultural issues

The objectives of NTV at that time indicate that the concept and scope of development was not addressing the cultural and linguistic diversity. The success and effectiveness of NTV at that time might be measured based on the set objectives, but now NTV is not limited within the previous three objectives rather it has diversified and expanded the scope of development and designed its programmes accordingly.

Development Mandate for Broadcasters

As stated in the preamble of Communication Corporation Act 2028, the act was formulated based on the national *communication service plan 2028* which was regarded as important document of national unity and economic development. The act envisioned to upgrade the economic status of the citizen by ensuring the expanded accessible and reliable communication services through relevant institution. NTV is guided by the spirit of this act and communication service plan to use this slogan at that time which is still continuing.

The National Broadcasting Act 2049, which is concerned with private broadcasters, has mandatory provisions to prioritize development issues for the broadcasters more than the Communication Corporation Act -2028. The act states that the broadcasters should prioritize the national development issues viz. agriculture, education, industry, commerce, science and technology, health, family planning, forest and environment protection. It also mentions that the broadcasters are encouraged to produce content in different local languages and promote equality and harmony (National Broadcasting Act 2049). This act has accepted development from diversity perspective whereas the Communication Corporation Act is silent on diversity. It means diversity was not regarded as a parameter of development at that time whereas it is like one for the pre-requisites of development now.

Theoretical Ground of Communication for Development

Wilbur Schramm (1964), an antecedent media scholar, is one

of the pioneer researchers who explored the close relationship between mass media access and national development in 1950s. Based on his research finding, Schramm proposed that a country should have access of 100 daily newspapers, 50 radio sets and 20 TV sets /cinema seats in every 1000 population to ensure the minimum development level.

After Schramm's study many other scholars followed him and proved that mass media have correlation to the economic and social development. Kunczik in his book *Communication and Social Change* (1993) claims that there is close relationship among urbanization, literacy and mass media growth (p.118). In this reference he asserts the following findings:

Only after a country reaches 10% of urbanization its literacy rate begins to rise significantly. Thereafter, urbanization and literacy increase together in a direct relationship until they reach 25%. Once societies are about 25% urbanized, the highest correlation of media consumption is with literacy. (Kunczik, 1993)

Kunczik presents this finding in 1950s which is still relevant, but this research fails to explain in which condition the quality of media content correlation happens. However, this is not a time like the decade of 1950s when there were limited newspapers, radio and TV and development was perceived as modernization. Now, there is a choice of using different print media as well as non print media like radio, television and new media.

Daniel Lerner, a senior media researcher wrote a book *The Passing of the Traditional Society: Modernizing Middle East* in 1958. His studies (1958) in different countries of Middle East also proved that the mass media are important agent of modernization and hence he called them magic multiplier (p.10). According to Lerner, there are three phases of modernization; increasing urbanization tends to media exposure and media exposure accompanies wider economic and political

participation (Murthy: 2007). Media not only inform the people but also pull them out from unknowing situation to knowing situation. Rather it creates the public pressure and retains the foundation improvement.

These initial discourses of communication only addressed the role of mass media to modernize the society. They could not widen the potential role of media and communication in development process. However, they contributed to coin the new terminology “Development Communication” as a result the terminology was discussed intensively in 1960s.

When UNESCO declared 1960s as a decade of communication, many discussions had been conducted to examine the importance of media for development in third world countries. Philippine Professor Nora Cruz Quebral fulfilled the gap of commonly acceptable definition of development communication in 1971 which is still relevant. According to Nora (2012):

Development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equity and the larger fulfilment of the human potential. (p.4)

She has made modification on her first definition later. Development communication is now described as the science of human communication linked to the transitioning of communities from poverty in all its forms to a dynamic, overall growth that fosters equity and the unfolding of individual potential (Ibid: p.4).

Her definition of development communication is not limited in infrastructure development and modernization approach; rather it covers the social equity and fulfilment of human potential which is more highlighted in her modified definition as well. This definition is taken as Magna Carta in development communication by most of the multi lateral development

agencies as well.

After Nora's definition, another important achievement of development communication in 1970s was the concept of participatory communication initiated by famous educationist Paulo Freire. He strongly defends the need of participatory communication which requires the dialogue among all stakeholders to transform the society. Lent John A. (1978) reflected that the finding of participatory communication of Freire is still regarded as important inputs for development communication. His notion is that every individual needs to construct his own ideas and above all transforms them through praxis and horizontal communication.

McQuail, a famous theorist of mass communication, regards mass media as constructive tool in national development which may integrate all the people and development components. McQuil (2010) states that "media need to focus on national development goals, where government should also allocate some resources to enhance the role of media in promotion of development (p.176)."

Development Communication and Development Agencies

These theoretical and academic debates made development communication as mainstream discourse of media and communication. As a result, bilateral development agencies also started to adapt development communication as one of the inevitable components of development. After the inception of human development paradigm in 1990s the role of media to enhance overall development was more discussed.

After 1990 UNDP also recognized the importance of information, communication and media as one of the essential components of development process. Now, all UN agencies have accorded priority in regarding communication as a development fuel. In this context Bolognesi et al. (2007) on communication in support of development sectors writes; "the

UN charts out the role of communication in motivating people to adopt better and safer practices in areas such as health, natural resource management, agriculture, livelihoods, gender, and education (p.42).”

World Congress on Communication for Development (2006) also urged the development communication to achieve the national goal of development. It featured Communication for Development or development communication as dialogue, participation and the sharing of knowledge and information. The international literature and debate of development communication clearly indicate that communication for development is common issue and area of development of the world. In this case the use of word as slogan in Nepal was one of the long-term visions to regard communication as a development component. However, there is need of properly defining and interpreting the concept of *communication for development* in the context of Nepal used by NTV ever since its establishment.

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study is to analyze Nepal Television’s broadcasting performance from communication for development perspective. Following are the specific objectives:

1. To analyze the theoretical ground of communication for development and its relevance to Nepal Television’s slogan *communication for development*.
2. To analyze the context and reason of using communication for development by Nepal Television from early stage of its establishment.
3. To study the compliance of developmental content of NTV with its slogan *communication for development*

Research Methodology

Qualitative research design has been employed to gather necessary information and data for this study. Secondary information of different publications and authentic record document of NTV has been analyzed. Some open-ended interviews with expert and stakeholders have also been carried out and systematically analyzed. The study focuses on collecting the information or data based on the understanding, interpretation, experience and meanings engendered by the research.

Information gathering and synchronizing, decoding, processing, categorization is sincerely followed in this study. Collected information has been analyzed in a systematic way in relation to the study area. This study has followed eight process activities to collect information, analyze and finalize it. Planning for data collection, collection of required information, compilation of collected information, categorization of information, verification of information, theme making and interpretation and finalization are the stepwise processes followed to complete this study. This study is limited to analyze the programme theme/content of NTV not news content.

Analysis of Communication for Development

After using the communication for development as the slogan of national communication service plan for the first time, the government endorsed a new law *Communication Corporation Act 2028*. The act, in its preamble, mentions that the act has been endorsed based on the national communication service plan which is regarded as the base for national unity and economic development. It also states that the act envisions upgrading the economic status of the citizens by ensuring the expanded accessible and reliable communication services through relevant institution (Nepal Law Commission: 2019).

According to Tapanath Shukla (personal communication, December 28, 2019), the former General Manager of Nepal

Television and one of the pioneer staffs of NTV, the slogan of NTV *Communication for Development* was coined from the spirit of national Communication Corporation Act 2028.

As mentioned in various literatures, in Panchayat period, the sovereignty was inherent in monarchy; Hinduism and Nepali language were used to see the overall development. So, the Panchayat wanted to mobilize all the media to promote these three things as overall indicators of development stated in (Maharjan, 2009, p.114). However, the need of communication in development was realized in the first periodic plan of Nepal in 2013 BS. The first five-year plan of Nepal (2013 BS) had mentioned that there is a need of media for publicity of development initiatives. The second periodic plan has also mentioned that poster, pamphlets, films and radios are the best ways to raise awareness and sensitize people about national development (Maharjan, 2009, p.19).

Nepal Television and *Communication for Development*

In initial time of establishment of NTV, the news priority of NTV was already fixed as per the person and institution. For instance, first priority was accorded to royal palace, second priority was fixed for prime minister, and third priority was for ministers. The news room could make its independent decision to prioritize the news content only after the set priorities (T. Shukla personal communication, December 28, 2019). According to Shukla, though the slogan was perceived in development flavour, there was no concrete policy and strategic initiative to promote development through NTV. However, he further emphasizes that the team was sincere to explore the development issues through tele-films and documentaries regarding issues of public concern.

In the first definition of development communication Prof. Nora Quebral emphasized the art of communication which means there is a need of creative and interpretive approaches to interesting, informative and educational content in development.

By analyzing the global concepts, approaches and practices of development communication, Manyozo has outlined mainly three approaches of development communication in the world which are; (i) media development or communication development,(ii) media / communication for development and (iii) participatory communication (Manyozo;2012,p.16) .

The slogan of Nepal Television seems to be influenced by the second approach of development communication. The theoretical concept of media for development approach encompasses centralized process of communication development, in which mass media formulate the central strategy for public communication, campaign and advocacy about development. Media for development sees the media as the fundamental strategies that drive the process of communication development, largely, based on the thinking emerging from development journalism, social psychology or behavioural change communication (ibid, 2012, p.17) . The functional objectives of this approach are mobilizing media to promote and sell positive attitudes and behaviours. However, it doesn't mean that serving positive attitude is being servile. If we review the practical aspect of initial stage of NTV, it is difficult to find the efforts for real development of the country and people rather it was mostly used as publicity tool of high level state authorities.

Partnership for Development Content

After the Panchayat era NTV changed its approach to perceive development from homogeneity to heterogeneity and started addressing the diversity of our society. It expanded the working modality and started to work with external producers by hiring external professionals and selling the time to private agencies. This working model, on one hand explored the innovations on content development from outside NTV and, on the other, hand helped to produce television human resource. The history of NTV shows that it has changed its role to address and explore the development issues as per the context.

It is true that media can be fair and effective development agent if it is mobilized independently and professionally. By its slogan, anyone can expect NTV as development dedicated national broadcaster and look ahead to similar service. Now, NTV has three national channels viz. NTV, NTV Plus and NTV News and one local channel viz. NTV Kohalpur having 24 hours broadcasting service through terrestrial, satellite and online streaming. Its programme schedule shows its priority in development issues. Its history shows that it has tried to address the development issues through news and programmes. But there is a gap to measure the effectiveness and impact of these programmes among the audiences. However, some publications like television journal of Nepal, viewership survey and some occasional documents have featured the status.

Even now, NTV has practice of producing developmental content internally and externally. An analysis of NTV based on the content of early 2072 BS shows that out of total programmes (Except News), 58% are externally produced and 42% are internally produced (Hamal, 2016 , p.132) . In comparison to earlier time, NTV has increased its internal production which automatically contributes to decrease the external production. For example, the ratio of internal and external production of programmes in 2064 was 29% and 71% respectively (ibid, p. 133). Nepal Television's archive is perpetually increasing. The record of June 2019 (Asar, 2076) shows that NTV has 51.89 per cent internal production per se except news. Here to be noted that internally produced news bulletins contribute two-third of its broadcast time. Out of 55 programmes produced by NTV in June 2019, 27 are directly related to the development sectors such as agriculture, education, science and technology, infrastructure and six are related to cultural development in different mother tongues spoken in Nepal. Since external producers are important part of NTV even now, they are also actors to create the institutional impression of NTV among the audience. So, NTV has some kind of responsibility to facilitate external producer to give the positive impression of NTV

through its quality content. NTV seems sincere in this regard and has been addressing these issues gradually. However, there is a space to increase the public impression of NTV through quality content by addressing this issue more intensively.

In this regard, one of external producers Sunil Koirala (personal communication, December 31, 2019) who runs disaster risk reduction related weekly programme on NTV has mixed experiences. He says that the programme team of NTV is encouraging, cooperative and enthusiastic to explore new angles and ideas of developmental issues. However, he opines that it would be better if NTV could transfer their technical and content related knowledge to external producer which would help to create synergy to increase the quality and impact of the programmes within these existing resources. His opinion on capacity building is that, through NTV many of the private production houses have got opportunity to know about broadcasting technology and process which he has taken as significant contribution of NTV in television broadcasting sector.

Binod Raj Khanal (personal communication, December 31, 2019), Watchdog Media Services Pvt.Ltd., who worked as external producer for NTV for a decade, also shared his mixed experiences. His experience working with NTV is that NTV has given priority for social and development issues more than earlier. This has encouraged external producers to work on the issues. He further opines that through NTV, one can reach to the larger mass with his/her content through the terrestrial, satellite and online broadcast service even of rural and remote areas which is not possible through other TVs. External producer, especially, those who are buying time for social and developmental programmes want to cover the issues of these rural areas which require high cost. If NTV and external producers make different kind of partnership to address such issues, more can be done to improve the content and improve the quality of developmental programmes. He suggests that

as a state broadcaster, if NTV provides subsidized rate for broadcasting fee on prioritized development issues for external producers, it could promote more effective partnership approach to explore the development issues.

The experiences of external producers indicates that the efforts and initiative that NTV has been making to enhance the partnership with private agencies seems good, however, NTV can think for different approach of partnership with private production house to make this collective effort more effective and result oriented in this changing context of broadcasting model .

According to acting deputy general manager of NTV Arati Chataut (personal communication, December 31, 2019), NTV has two kinds of partnership models with external producers; One model is selling time through bid process to production houses abiding by the institutional policies and the decision of the board under which the bidders propose the broadcasting rate themselves and the competitive and eligible one wins the time and work accordingly. She further says that NTV asks the selected time buyer to submit dummy programme and NTV gives them some basic guidance before going to regular broadcasting. It happens even during the time of partnership and as and when required. The other model of partnership is directly working with government or any development agencies under which the agencies concerned provide the financial resources whatever they have and NTV produces and broadcasts the programme within the available resources. In such case, NTV itself hires the external producers who are oriented, trained and capable to produce the quality and impactful TV programme. NTV provides all equipments and technical support to them as per the need.

The second model of NTV has become instrumental to explore the issues of minorities, inclusion and address the diversities and new areas of development issues. It has extended the partnership with different development agencies to address the

dynamics of development. The first model is also important and necessary to link the private producer and NTV which helps to exchange and interact with their knowledge, expertise and experiences to address development issues collectively. However, there is space to mobilize the private agencies that buy time of NTV and produce development programmes for better and effective result. In this case DGM Chataut (personal communication, December 31, 2019) says; “NTV is making its effort in this regard and intends to enlarge to address more development issues in future to create synergy.”

Sincerity of Diversity and Development Rights

This is the age of right based development where development is the right of the citizen not a gift of the state. Thus, the understanding and presentation of development issues by any media needs to be analyzed accordingly. The right based development requires applying rights of legality, universality and indivisibility of human rights. Likewise, participation and access to the decision-making process are also necessary. Accountability and access to the rule of law, transparency and access to information is also necessary in right based development.

If we observe the programme and content of Nepal Television through this lens, the programme schedule covers most of the indicative issues. Therefore, one can conclude that NTV is sincere on right based development and trying to expand the horizon of content considering that it is a citizen centric public service media. However; in development communication, only the coverage of topics is not sufficient. It requires the art of presentation as urged by Nora Qubral and in-depth examination of the issues that can help to change the behaviour of the people and society. The further step of NTV may be harnessing these diverse developmental programmes to make impactful.

Some initiatives of NTV like presenting programmes and news in different languages like sign language, Awadhi, Tamang,

Maithali, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Limbu and Newari languages apart from English and Nepali are good initiatives to address the diversities. NTV has also started to cover the diversity in localized approach from early 2050s BS. Kohalpur local broadcasting is its example which targeted far west and mid west geography and culture and news and non-news contents were produced and broadcast accordingly. NTV has also taken the initiative for localized channel like Kohalpur in Sunsari too. Authorities of NTV also claim that they are trying their best to follow the motto of communication for development in practice.

Tapanath Shukla (personal communication, December 28, 2019), with due respect to the present efforts of NTV, suggests that NTV should be trend setter as a national broadcaster. He further says that, universality, diversity and distinctiveness should be sincerely considered by NTV as national broadcaster in future.

Now days it can be observed that the developmental programmes like Vikas Bahas (weekly) and Samriddha Nepal Weekly covering broader development areas are produced internally. From diversity perspective NTV has programmes specialized in different social and ethnic groups like Bhojpuri, Tharu, Awadhi, Tamang and Limbu. However, it is not sufficient in the country having more than 120 languages.

It has also programmes addressing the rights of particular sector like women rights, information rights, environment rights, education rights and so on. The Constitution of Nepal 2072 has given us abundant civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights as fundamental rights. NTV has tried to address most of the fundamental rights related issues which generally affect lives of the people. This initiative of NTV has created the space for diverse voices and diverse communities. So, it has become the voice of diverse social groups of our society.

Public Impression and Gap

Nepal Television has carried out viewership survey to map out the popularity of its contents. Some viewership survey showed that people liked comedy programmes of NTV and they believed on the credibility of NTV news. People have good impression about the credibility of its contents but the shadow part is that the development related programmes like agriculture; health, environment, and disaster are less popular than news and entertainment programmes. Some of the earlier viewership surveys of NTV show that NTV is popular for comedy/entertainment programmes and news. But development centric programmes are not listed in popular category as per the judgment of the audience. For instance, Nepal Television viewer survey 2003 indicated that 38.4% viewers preferred tele-films/serials and 14.4% viewers preferred music and entertainment programmes of NTV where as programmes related to science and technology, health, sanitation and environment, economic and business, was preferred by 0.4 %, 0.5% and 6.4% respectively (CEDA: 2003,p.16). However, the pattern of viewership has changed now. As a state broadcaster, it is the responsibility of NTV to make the social and development programmes attractive and effective to draw the attentions of many audiences and disseminate the development message among the larger mass. This is the challenge and opportunity for NTV working on development issues in future.

It means there is still space left to make the contents more interesting and attractive. To translate the slogan communication for development, NTV needs to attract the audiences on developmental programmes by producing and presenting the issues interestingly.

Most of the externally produced programmes seem dedicated on social and development issues. NTV's programme record of Asar (2076) shows that 42 programmes on issues of health, agriculture, business, youth, science and technologies are produced by external producers as regularly. Most of them

are broadcast on weekly basis; some are broadcast fortnightly and daily. It indicates that the external producers are also realizing that NTV is an appropriate platform to disseminate developmental issues which is additional strength for NTV to establish its motto *communication for development*. However, the existing practice is not long term solution to address the development issues for which NTV needs to increase its internal production. The external producers might discontinue carrying these developmental issues for NTV due to the rapidly changing dynamics of broadcasting.

In comparison to past, NTV is increasing the ratio of internally produced programmes which indicates that the trend will be continued in future. But still there is a significant presence of external programme producers who are using NTV as broadcasting platform. This practice of NTV has contributed to partner on developmental issues and produce television human resources as well. However, there is room for NTV to make its effort to increase the quality of developmental programmes.

Conclusion

Nepal Television is the pioneer media entity that followed the development communication concept in Nepal through its slogan communication for development. It helped establish the concept of development communication in practice. From the content diversity, coverage and priority, NTV has addressed the national agendas of development like rights based issues, issues of inclusion, and issues of national development priority. There is good coverage on thematic issues of development. However, the concern still remains on enhancement of quality and presenting the developmental issues in-depth. There is a possibility to upgrade the existing quality of development issues. If NTV initiates more effective partnership approach with external producers on its prioritized issues, there is a possibility to enhance the existing quality without additional financial burden to the institution.

Once can appreciate the initiative of NTV to give the thematic coverage for developmental issues as successful effort to translate its motto of communication for development. In this regard NTV needs more investment in human resource development to produce impactful developmental programmes.

If NTV sets the priority of any development issue and broadcasts in subsidized rate with private agencies for better impactful programme, more stakeholders and agencies concerned may join hand to develop quality and meaningful content that can contribute to significant change.

The developmental programmes demand that the design and production should be based on research which can help to translate the motto of NTV in practice for better result.

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