

A Historical Study of the Evolution of Electronic Media in Kashmir (1948-2019)

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ABSTRACT

This research article offers a all-inclusive investigation of the evolution of electronic media in Kashmir from 1948 to 2019, encapsulating a period of profound socio-political and technological transformations. The narrative begins in July 1948, a landmark year when Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, established its first radio station, heralding a new era of communication and cultural dissemination. This political shift triggered a complete internet blackout, thereby intensifying the region's dependency on television as a primary source of information and entertainment. A critical focus is placed on the government's persistent advocacy for television broadcasting facilities and the subsequent proliferation of television as a cornerstone of electronic media in the valley. The article culminates with an in-depth analysis of the myriad challenges faced by electronic media in Kashmir, including issues of accessibility, censorship, and operational constraints amid a volatile political landscape. By intertwining historical milestones with contemporary developments, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the evolution and resilience of electronic media in Kashmir.

1. Introduction

The evolution of electronic media in Kashmir from 1948 to 2019 embodies a compelling narrative of technological innovation interwoven with cultural transformation and socio-political turbulence in one of India's most geopolitically sensitive regions. This historical study traces the developmental trajectory of electronic media in Kashmir, beginning with the establishment of its first radio station in Srinagar in July 1948—a landmark event that symbolized the dawn of modern communication in the valley. Spanning over seven decades, this analysis extends to the transformative events of 2019, a essential year when Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a dramatic political reorganization, fundamentally reshaping its governance and communication landscape. The advent of electronic media in Kashmir transcended its technological essence to become a dynamic cultural and social force, reshaping public discourse and bridging the region with the broader Indian subcontinent. Radio, the earliest form of electronic media, served as a lifeline of information and entertainment during the post-independence period. In addition to these developments, the study delves into the nuanced history of cinema in Kashmir—its emergence as a vibrant medium of cultural expression and it's unfortunate decline amid prolonged conflict.

The research further investigates the governmental push for expanded television infrastructure, juxtaposed with the persistent challenges faced by electronic media, including issues of accessibility, censorship, and operational constraints in a conflict-ridden environment. By unraveling the historical evolution of electronic media in Kashmir, this study provides a nuanced exploration of its profound impact on the valley's cultural identity, social dynamics, and political discourse. It positions electronic media as both a mirror and a mediator of Kashmir's resilience and transformation, offering fresh insights into its role in navigating a complex and often turbulent landscape. Electronic media encompasses all forms of communication that leverage electronic technology to disseminate information, including radio, television, and the internet. Over the past three decades, electronic media in India has emerged as a transformative force, exerting a profound influence on the nation's social, cultural, and political fabric. Unlike any other medium of mass communication, it has served as a powerful catalyst for shaping public opinion, fostering awareness, and driving dialogue on critical societal, cultural, and political issues. Beyond its informational role, electronic media has been instrumental in the process of nation-building, serving as a conduit for promoting unity amidst India's vast diversity. It has bridged regional, linguistic, and cultural divides, fostering a sense of collective identity while celebrating pluralism. By informing, educating, and engaging the masses, electronic media continues to play a essential role in shaping India's narrative on the global stage. As persuade, and inspire people; familiarize them with the material and social changes that planned development brings; and foster local initiative in decision-making, the most efficient means of communication,

electronic media's main goals are to: inform . Electronic media refers to Radio and Television. There are the equipments for the communication operated by the electronic process which is scientific from the process involving flow of electrons

Objectives of the Study

To trace the historical evolution of electronic media in Kashmir, shedding light on its milestones and transformative phases.

To analyze the inception and growth of radio in Kashmir, exploring its role as a foundational medium of communication and cultural influence.

To delve into the advent of cinema in Kashmir, examining its emergence as a cultural phenomenon and the factors leading to its eventual prohibition.

To investigate the introduction of television in Kashmir and evaluate its profound social, cultural, and political impact on the region's society.

Evolution of Electronic Media in Kashmir

Before delving into the evolution of electronic media in Kashmir, it is essential to first shed light on the origins of electronic media in India. The establishment of the first radio stations in the early 20th century heralded the dawn of electronic media in the country. In 1923, the Radio Club of Bombay launched India's first radio station, paving the way for future developments. In 1927, the Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) was founded, and by 1930 and 1936, it began airing regular broadcasts. Following nationalization, the IBC rebranded as All India Radio (AIR). All India Radio (AIR) became a cornerstone of India's struggle for independence, serving as a vital medium for disseminating Mahatma Gandhi's speeches and messages to the masses. This outreach galvanized the national movement, uniting diverse communities under the common cause of liberation.

In the post-independence era, AIR evolved into a key instrument of nation-building, effectively bridging the gap between the government and the public by spreading awareness about policies, development initiatives, and cultural programs. In Kashmir, the evolution of media—from its early days in print to the advent of electronic platforms like radio and television—parallels the region's socio-political and economic changes. These media platforms have not only chronicled the region's transitions but have also actively influenced public discourse, especially during moments of upheaval and transformation. While print media laid the foundation for journalism in the valley, the arrival of radio and, later, television, introduced a dynamic new dimension to communication. Together, radio and television have formed the backbone of electronic media in Kashmir, playing a pivotal role in shaping the region's media landscape.

Radio in Kashmir

The Kashmir Valley, owing to its strategic and geopolitical significance, became a pioneer in India's post-independence communication landscape. Just months after gaining independence, Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, witnessed the establishment of a radio station under the banner Radio Kashmir on July 1, 1948. Notably, this station emerged as a unique entity within India's broadcasting framework, retaining its original name to this day—a rare continuity in the ever-evolving landscape of All India Radio stations. While operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Radio Kashmir enjoys a distinctive identity. This singularity was historically underscored by constitutional provisions linked to Article 370, reflecting the special status once afforded to Jammu and Kashmir. This legacy cements Radio Kashmir as a symbol of cultural resonance and national integration amidst a region of profound importance.

The designation 'Radio Kashmir' gave the Kashmiri population a sense of identity and cultural connection to the station. Since its inception, Radio Kashmir has played a significant role in presenting and preserving the cultural heritage of Kashmir through local programming that includes literature, language, poetry, and music, in addition to regular entertainment, informative, and educational programs . With the advent of education and heightened awareness among the local populace, radio swiftly ascended as the dominant medium that captured the collective imagination of Kashmiris. Elders often reminisce about the times when they would gather at the homes of those fortunate enough to own a radio, eagerly absorbing news and updates from across the globe.

In its early days, radio became a widely embraced mass medium in Kashmir, with its broadcasts predominantly centered around news, alongside music, dramas, and devotional programs. This programming focus was a deliberate response to the cross-border propaganda, particularly in the wake of the tribal raid, which is widely

regarded as the first Indo-Pak conflict. During this tumultuous period, radio played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing the sentiment of the masses. Radio Kashmir has successfully established a connection with all Kashmiri households, transcending social class or group distinctions, through its diverse range of popular programs such as social serials (ZOON-EDAB), drama serials (Machame, a social satire; Sindhbaad, a science fiction; Vaital Pacheseesee; and Alif Laila), along with cultural offerings like Zafraan Zaar and literary initiatives like Pragmaash. Zoon-e-Dab has emerged as a prominent feature of Radio Kashmir, focusing on social issues and the everyday challenges the average Kashmiri faces across various aspects of life. This program gained significant popularity, establishing a direct connection between the public and the government. The government had reached a point where it mandated that its ministers and officers listen to Zoone-e-Dab, ensuring they stayed informed and attuned to public sentiment. This program has resulted in Radio Kashmir receiving four Padmashrees. The news from Radio Kashmir at 7.30 p.m. and 9:20 am is a must for most Kashmiris.

In 1989, the turmoil in Kashmir significantly impacted Radio Kashmir. People perceived the station and its personnel as representatives of the state, which led to threats against them. Mr. Lassa Koal, a prominent station director, tragically lost his life, along with several other talented professionals. This atmosphere of insecurity affected the morale of remaining staff. Consequently, the programming structure experienced notable alterations, particularly within the News Section. Due to various challenges, the Radio News Unit relocated to Delhi on March 6, 1990, where news was produced and broadcast, while the Srinagar Station merely transmitted the content. Over time, increasing pressure from various factions led to the Radio News Unit's return to Srinagar; however, local personnel were no longer involved in news production, with only casual news readers delivering the reports. Radio Kashmir functions through three distinct channels: the General Services, which serves as the primary channel; the Yuva Vani Service, catering to the youth; and a revenue-generating service known as the Commercial Broadcasting Service, or Vividh Bharati. The General Service operates for approximately 16 hours each day, incorporating a 90-minute transmission hiatus in the morning and a more extended interruption in the evening following 11:05 pm. The Primary Channel of Radio Kashmir primarily transmits programs in Urdu and Kashmiri, which are categorized into General Audience Programmes (such as news, music, dramas, discussions, etc.) and Specific or Special Audience Programmes (targeting rural communities, women, children, or youth). Additionally, there exist initiatives tailored for various ethnic and linguistic communities such as Gujjars, Pashtus, Pahadis, and Punjabis, among others.

The Yuva Vani Channel can be accessed in the evenings. This channel daily broadcasts programmes for four hours catering to the age group of 16 years to 35 years. It covers nearly all the interests of the youth ranging from news to information to entertainment, career guidance, counseling, etc. In 2015, the government granted licenses for the establishment of 15 new FM channels in Jammu and Kashmir. Among the 15 channels approved, three will be allocated to each of the following locations: Kathua, Baderwah, Kargil, Leh, and Poonch ("Government Approves 18 New FM Channels for Northeast, 15 for Jammu and Kashmir," 2015). Big 92.7 FM, Red 93.5 FM, Radio Tadka, and Radio Mirchi, among others, have commenced their services in Srinagar and Jammu. In addition, there exists a community radio station within the Islamic University of Science and Technology, located in Awantipor.

Cinema in Kashmir

The narrative of filmmaking in Kashmir commences in 1952 with the release of the documentary Pamposh (Lotus). Ezra Mir presented Pamposh at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. The inaugural feature film from Kashmir, titled Mehanzraat, made its debut in 1964. Jagiram Pal presented Mehanzraat at the cinema hall in the principal city of Kashmir, eliciting an impressive response from the audience. It received the president's award as recognition. The Kashmir Valley has long been a witness to a thriving cinema-going culture. Previously, the Srinagar Club showcased the field on a weekly basis for the amusement of attendees. The Central Jail in Srinagar also hosted films, marking a significant milestone in Kashmir's historical narrative. The films were being presented biweekly. The Field Publicity Organization of the J&K State Information Department initiated 'Film Week' in the valley on March 24, 1956. The valley presented a selection of films showcasing historical, cultural, and educational significance this week. In 1963, the state boasted over 17 film theatres, comprising three in Srinagar, one in Sopore, one in Anantnag, one in Baramulla, four in Jammu, one in Udhampur, one in Baderwah, two in Kathua, one in Samba, one in Ranbirsinghpura, and one in Leh.

The era's widespread adoption of video cassette recorders (VCRs) had an effect on Kashmir as well. A new industry of video rental stores sprung up all over the valley as a result of the widespread use of video cassette

recorders and illegally copied video CDs. People would pay a particular amount to rent video cassette recorders (VCRs) and video discs (VCDs), and then they could view films at home with their friends and family whenever they wanted. Having a video cassette recorder (VCR) was considered a sign of success and affluence in the 1980s. Part of the reason for this was the invention of the video cassette recorder (VCR), which eliminated the need to visit a movie theatre or wait for a TV broadcast to watch a movie. The 1980s and 1990s were the heyday of video cassette recorders (VCRs), the dominant technology for home video entertainment. Asking friends and family members making the pilgrimage to Mecca to buy video cassette recorders from Saudi Arabia was a common request. By the end of the 1980s, the closure of theatres in Kashmir marked the conclusion of a significant period for cinema and entertainment in the region. It is important to note that while theatres faced closures, the cinema industry remained operational. Salman Khan's long, greasy locks in *Tere Naam* (2003) left a significant impression, influencing a wide range of individuals, from autowallahs to college students, all eager to emulate their favorite superstar by adopting this particular hairstyle.

The green and white lehenga worn by Madhuri in *Hum Aapkey hain Kaun* (1993) remains a significant reference point for wedding attire, demonstrating enduring appeal and influence. This reflects the sustained appeal of Bollywood and its capacity to engage audiences, even when faced with difficulties. Movie theatres were among the first casualties of the growing militancy in the Valley. Through local periodicals, the now-defunct and lesser-known militant organization Allah Tigers, led by Air Marshal Noor Khan, declared in August 1989 that theaters and bars were prohibited in the area. Using the phrase from the 1979 Iranian revolution, "La Sharakeya Wala Garabeya, Islamia" (neither West nor East; only Islam is the best), fanatics who advocated for an Islamic revolution labelled films as "unIslamic." Initially, the villagers followed the directive, but terrorist threats continued, leading to the burning of some of the theaters. All movie theatres in Kashmir had closed by December 31, 1989. Farooq Abdullah served as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on three occasions: from 1982 to 1984, from 1986 to 1990, and from 1996 to 2002. In 1999, he aimed to revitalize the cinematic experience by permitting the screening of films at Regal, Neelam, and Broadway theatres. However, during the inaugural performance at Regal, a militant assault occurred, resulting in one fatality and twelve injuries. Consequently, the enterprises ceased operations once more. Decades later, in 2017, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition government advocated for the reopening of theatres in Kashmir after Saudi Arabia lifted a decade-long ban on film halls. "Because extremists have banned cinema halls, today's youth in Srinagar are unaware of the joys of watching films. "I feel like Jammu and Kashmir students are missing out on something so joyful," remarked then-chief minister Mehbooba Mufti. However, separatists in the region resisted the proposal.

Television in Kashmir

Kashmir was the third place in India, where Television Station was setup on January 26, 1973. Though it was not a smooth process, as there were several correspondences made Government of Jammu and Kashmir to the Union Government of India since 1965, when that time Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Shrimati Indra Gandhi, announced in Parliament a plan of expansion of T.V. facilities in the country. The document dated April 26, 1965, is a significant historical artifact that sheds light on the early aspirations for introducing television in the picturesque region of Kashmir. It highlights the growing recognition of television's potential as a powerful medium for education, entertainment and cultural exchange.

The document records a discussion regarding the expansion of television facilities in India. It mentions Shrimati Indra Gandhi had announced plans to establish television units in major cities possibly in Kanpur. However, the document suggests a compelling alternative: Srinagar. It argues that the unique geographical and cultural context of Kashmir makes it an ideal location for television unit. The document emphasizes the potential of television to serve a variety of purposes in the valley, including education, entertainment and cultural promotion. After this document, another letter dated June 8, 1965, written by G.M.Sadiq, the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, to Indra Gandhi, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, further strengthens the state's resolve to bring television to Kashmir. Sadiq acknowledges the criticism faced by the introduction of television but dismisses it as coming from the reactionary minds with outdated perspective. He highlights the importance of television as a medium of information, education and entertainment, capable of bridging the gap between Kashmir and the rest of India. Regarding the technical challenges posed by the Kashmiri's topography, Sadiq expresses confidence that these can be overcome citing examples of other countries with similar geographical conditions that have successfully implemented television services.

The letter emphasizes the significance of television in promoting national integration and fostering a sense of

belonging among the people of Kashmir. It highlights the potential of television to showcase the region's rich cultural heritage and connect it with the diverse cultures of India. In nutshell, these above letters underscores the unwavering commitment of the Jammu and Kashmir government to bring television to the state. It reflects the belief that television would not only transform the lives of Kashmiris but also contribute to the overall development and prosperity of the region. After concerted efforts by the Jammu and Kashmir State government, the region achieved a significant milestone in its media landscape. On January 26, 1973, Kashmir became the third place in India to have a television station, marking a new era of visual communication and entertainment. The true inception occurred with the commencement of local news transmission on July 13, 1973, marking the advent of television in Kashmir. The duration of the telecast expanded to two and a half hours, and after a period of six months, the transmission time was further extended to four hours, featuring a film on Sundays. This continued until 1982 when the National Transmission commenced from Delhi. The INSAT series of satellites facilitated the interconnection of all Doordarshan stations with Delhi for news and various national programs, marking a significant moment in history. It is essential to highlight certain facets of life in Kashmir, against which the emergence, growth, and popularization of television occurred .

Impact of Television on Kashmiri Culture

Kashmiris typically function within a clan-like framework, coexisting in a state of close harmony with one another. Given the severity of the winter conditions, one might anticipate a significant reduction in outdoor activities and entertainment for approximately six months. This unusual limitation on mobility and prolonged confinement within the domestic sphere throughout much of the year led to the emergence of a thriving cottage industry. Narrative construction was a cherished activity, as was the performance of vibrant traditional music. Individuals would convene in a singular location to engage with the performances presented . With the advent of Radio, it found itself perfectly aligned with the prevailing circumstances. Written forms of traditional communication were virtually nonexistent. The oral tradition conveyed through spoken language across successive generations.

The narrative traditions encapsulated in timeless love tales such as Yusuf-Zulekha, Wamiq-Azra, Saiful Malook – Gulrez, and Aknandun, which illustrates the traditional unity between a Kashmiri Hindu and a Muslim family, alongside the profound mystic poetry of Shamas Faqir, Lalleshwari, and Nund Rishi, resonate deeply with themes of the ephemeral nature of existence and the pursuit of enduring joy and societal harmony, captivating the hearts of the populace. Even now, these remain a significant facet of Kashmiri culture, having been conveyed through oral tradition for centuries. The radio has effectively harnessed the practice of engaging with diverse cultural and folk expressions by promoting and fostering cultural artifacts through folk storytelling formats (known as Daastaan Goe), theatrical performances, and musical presentations . From the outset, radio resonated deeply with the people of Kashmir by connecting with elements that are integral to their daily existence. The advent of transistors enabled individuals to address the persistent issue of power scarcity that has long plagued Kashmir. The access to radio was both unimpeded and continuous. The realm of electronics has, over the years, made significant advancements. The advent of television permeated domestic spaces, captivating an eager audience. It unveiled a realm of entertainment that had previously remained obscure while simultaneously discovering abundant opportunities for growth. Two discernible factors contribute to its widespread appeal. Its innovative nature initially attracted people, followed by the absence of other entertainment options beyond the traditional ones .

The development of the fixed point chart, a term in television terminology that refers to 'the program plan and infrastructure,' followed the advent of television and the enthusiastic response it garnered. We conducted the planning, deeply considering the cultural ethos of Kashmir and the needs of its populace. The goal was to create a television channel exclusively featuring Kashmiri content. Before the advent of television, conventional forms of entertainment dominated rural settings, while individuals residing in urban and suburban locales remained largely unacquainted with folk traditions and formats. The advent of television transitioned the hero from the realm of rural performance and artistry, establishing a new form of open theatre within the confines of the studio. The objective was to establish a connection through a live performance. The predominant audience comprised individuals from the agriculture or rural sector, which informed the concurrent strategy to cultivate an urban viewership . The rural initiative Due to its rural content, context, presentation, style, tone, and program environment, Butraat, which translates to "the good earth," was a huge success. The program appeared to be an extension of any rural household, to that extent. The show continues to be popular even after 30 years.

The Portrayal of Historical Figures and Legends

They dramatized stories of traditional heroes and local historical figures, such as Rasool Mir, Arinmaal, the country girl who became Habba Khatoon (the famous poetess queen), and others. The impact was thrilling. The Kashmiri identity, or Kashmiryat, was flipped by such attempts, and the locals freely and visibly showed this sentiment. By portraying historical figures and events, the Kashmiris were able to experience the past. In the majority of the formats, the overtones served to raise awareness and strengthen Kashmiri identity. Historical figures such as Abhinav Gupta, the originator of Trikha Shastra, and Kalhana, the author of Raj Tarangini, a world-class masterwork that chronicles Kashmiri history over several centuries and is the oldest history written in Sanskrit, are examples of historians. The general Kashmiri public learned about the introduction of Islam into the region, among many other topics, through television. Kashmiri television's rich cultural, historical, and traditional elements, along with its entertaining component, made it extremely popular.

The Rise of Folk Music and Songs on Television

The interpretation of Kashmir's cultural history has undergone significant transformation, particularly with the rise of television as a medium of expression. Television played a crucial role in reviving and promoting various traditional Kashmiri musical genres, many of which had long been an integral part of the region's heritage. Through the medium of television, regional music, such as Chhakri—a form of group singing accompanied by instrumental music—became more accessible to a broader audience. Similarly, traditional female forms of song and dance, like Rouff and Wanvun, which had been largely confined to local communities, gained wider visibility and recognition. These forms, alongside Hikkat, another traditional folk performance, thrived under the new media landscape. Television also contributed to the continued relevance of Sufiana Kalaam, or Mystic Music, a genre with deep historical roots in Kashmir's spiritual and cultural fabric. Sufiana Kalaam, which blends poetic verses with instrumental accompaniment, carries the legacy of mystic poets like Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani, and has been preserved by local musicians for centuries. Thanks to television, legendary figures like Tibet Baqaal and Qaaleenbaaf became household names, bringing mystic music into the homes of average Kashmiris. These artists, who were among the pioneers in the revival of this tradition, allowed viewers to experience the depth and beauty of Kashmir's mystical heritage, creating an emotional and cultural bridge between generations. As such, television has been instrumental not just in preserving these cultural practices, but in making them an enduring part of the modern Kashmiri identity. This dynamic shift underscores the pivotal role of mass media in cultural preservation and adaptation, illustrating how traditional forms of expression can evolve and resonate in a contemporary world. Television's contribution to Kashmiri music and culture, particularly in showcasing these historic art forms, has reinforced the region's cultural continuity while promoting an enriched understanding of its diverse artistic expressions.

The impact of Informative Programs on Kashmir Society

The experts in the field of television perceived that the Kashmiri audience possessed, to varying extents, a disjointed understanding of various topics. Experts perceived television as having the ability to provide a structured understanding of a wide range of subjects, such as health, diet, environment, social issues, and education. This renders it both plausible and compelling through the application of the visual medium. The foundation of television programming was what viewers would find acceptable in the future. It was deliberate to make sure the form and content fit the society in which they were displayed. Television gained so much popularity that it started to play a significant role in bridal gifts.

Social Serials

The radio broadcasted Zoon Dab, an award-winning program that focused on local issues and difficulties, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Sod Bod, a weekly comedy series with 100 installments, was an attempt by TV to capitalize on the popularity of radio shows by focusing on a simpleton named Sod Bod who must deal with the whims of life. This was Srinagar Doordarshan's first series. Alaav, a social drama based on corruption and red-tapism, and with all the local flavour, Bye Daddy Cool, a spoof of western philosophy and style, and Aab Seemaab, which focused on the generational divide, came shortly after.

Classical Novels

Regional writers like Akhter Mohidin, Bansi Nirdosh, Som Zutshi, and others authored the 100 stories in Kamleshwari. Like the previously mentioned programs, Veth Rooz Pakaan (and the Rivers Flow) was a famous program that recorded the writings of another well-known author, Ali Mohammad Lone. Literature contained

classics, but television brought them to the public's attention and enabled them to watch these shows at home. "We had to feed the monster of TV, so we tried in every direction for the best content," say television veterans .

Interactive Programmes

We designed numerous initiatives to actively engage with the audience. Aap Aur Ham (You and We), a program that focused on location shooting and interviews, tackled a diverse range of social problems and issues. Srinagar Doordarshan achieved a commendable second place in production quality during the 1970s, following closely behind the Bombay station. Every program maintained a connection with the public. Certain regions, such as Traal and Phalgam, experienced limitations in television reception, resulting in shadow zones where access was unavailable. We addressed the challenge by implementing lower power transmitters (LPTs) in all relevant areas . Srinagar Doordarshan has established its inaugural live phone-in telecast. The current affairs program Hafta-Rafta garnered significant viewership, as did Hazaar Dastaan, a government satire program that aired for a duration of one and a half years. The Chief Minister's directive in the 1980s forced its closure after 300 episodes. The public continues to express a desire for its reinstatement .

Tele Films

Kashmir's television history began in the late 1980s, coinciding with the rise of Doordarshan (DD), the national broadcaster in India. Kashmir had its own regional Doordarshan station, which started broadcasting in 1992. Initially, the region's programming was limited, with some content in Kashmiri language aimed at preserving the local culture, traditions, and language. In the 1990s, as the media environment evolved, the growth of telefilms in Kashmir mirrored the wider boom in television content in India. Telefilms—made-for-TV movies or short films—became a significant part of regional programming, often produced in the Kashmiri language or showcasing the region's rich cultural and social issues. These telefilms became platforms for addressing issues like family dynamics, tradition vs. modernity, and Kashmir's troubled political scenario during the time of militancy. Cultural and Social Issues: Many telefilms explored the delicate balance between traditional Kashmiri values and the influence of modernity, portraying rural-urban tensions and family struggles. Due to the ongoing political unrest and insurgency in the region, some telefilms tackled the impact of violence, displacement, and trauma. They often depicted the lives of Kashmiri Muslims, the challenges faced by them, and the emotional scars of conflict. As the region grappled with the loss of its language and cultural identity, telefilms became an important medium to revive and sustain Kashmiri.

The films were instrumental in preserving Kashmiri folklore, customs, and idiomatic expressions. A significant feature of the Kashmir telefilm industry was its reliance on local writers, directors, and producers, many of whom came from humble backgrounds with a deep understanding of the region's socio-political environment. These local creators brought authenticity to their storytelling, and their work resonated with viewers. The industry faced several challenges, including limited resources, economic instability, and the region's political volatility. Despite these obstacles, the regional telefilm industry persevered, with many talented individuals producing high-quality content under difficult circumstances. However, the conflict and political instability also led to the migration of some of the more talented filmmakers, further hindering the growth of the industry. It is important to note that Srinagar Doordarshan has demonstrated both creativity and innovation. Farooq Nazki at Srinagar Doordarshan introduced the soap opera to India. This is where the concept of television in India originated. During the Prague Festival in 1975, Srinagar Doordarshan received an accolade for the film Babul Badgam—Rasool Mir. A notable telefilm, Habba Khatoon, draws inspiration from the storied life of the legendary Kashmiri queen .

Problems and Challenges Encountered to Electronic Media in Kashmir

After the arrival of Cable TV, the viewership of local channels dwindled due to the telecast of programmes of a broader spectrum in variety as well as a high quality. Srinagar Doordarshan did not do much in terms of efforts to compete, which to some extent would have been difficult also, due to the state of art technology, know-how and lot of capital from all sources on hand, which characterized the Satellite channels. But definitely there was as serious shortcoming. The quality of programmes was getting so bad that the traditional audience base was also very unhappy and was seeking alternatives . One of the contributing factors to this situation is the disarray that has characterized Doordarshan Srinagar. The varying methodologies employed by individuals in leadership roles across diverse periods and circumstances have engendered a sense of confusion, making it challenging for television to establish a distinct identity in Kashmir. Some advocated for the inclusion of individuals from beyond Kashmir in the production of programs, while others strongly supported

the notion of entirely in-house productions.

In the presented situation, the government initiated a novel policy of commissioning programs, through which it solicited proposals for programs from external sources beyond DD. The private producers from Kashmir, along with those from outside the state, secured a considerable number of programs. On occasion, there were reports that this happened without a thorough examination of the media experience and qualifications of the individuals involved. This resulted in the involvement of both semi-professionals and non-professionals in productions. Individuals from the media, who requested anonymity, conveyed this information. This has resulted in significant demoralization among the technical and creative personnel at Srinagar Doordarshan. One of the factors contributing to the subpar quality of programs is the lack of adequate attention to creativity and professionalism. Certain media commentators have observed that the burgeoning television landscape appears to prioritize quantity over the quality of its content. Several esteemed professionals experienced threats, pressures, or a sense of insecurity for a multitude of reasons. Even the esteemed participants of the well-regarded program may occasionally abstain from involvement. When the newsroom relocated to Delhi, news readers faced significant threats, and numerous staff members experienced harassment or lived in fear for their safety. Numerous occurrences transpired, including the tragic demise of Mr. Lassa Koul, the station director of Radio Kashmir, along with the untimely deaths of Altaf Fattoo, a newsreader, Anees Hamdani, a promising producer, and Shameem, a drama artist. They made numerous attempts to launch rockets at television and radio broadcasting facilities. In a particular incident, the engineer met his demise within the confines of his dual-purpose office and residence. In 1995, various cameras suffered damage during the creation of a documentary in Kishtwar, and the entire crew responsible for filming and producing the documentary faced assault. In addition to these incidents, there were a few instances of kidnapping. These circumstances made experts reluctant to take chances, leading to a sacrifice in manufacturing quality. The situation deteriorated to such an extent in the 1990s that officials formulated a strategy to either halt DD Srinagar's telecast or relocate it to Jammu or Delhi. The media entities that developed alongside television in Kashmir were resolute in their efforts to ensure that Srinagar Doordarshan continued to operate effectively. Despite facing a shortage of manpower and facilities, as well as challenges from hartals, curfews, and crackdowns, their unwavering determination allowed them to persevere. People recall the Srinagar TV station as a ghostly entity. For the past fifteen years, the military leadership and the information department have been the primary sources of all news on Kashmiri television, posing a significant issue. The government uses its dominance over the media to its advantage. Both television and radio lost all credibility as news and information sources in the process. People may now readily receive news from numerous sources thanks to the introduction of multiple channels. This led to an appropriate evaluation of local news, enabling individuals to access multiple interpretations of the truth. Now, significant efforts are underway to enhance the quality and regain the trust of the Kashmiri people, with both radio and television striving to reclaim the credibility of the past.

2. Conclusion

Electronic Media in Kashmir Since its beginning in Kashmir, it has seen many ups and downs. Inaugurated in Srinagar in July 1948, the first electronic media device in Kashmir quickly spread to all parts of the region. In 1965, as the Television Station prepared to expand to other regions of the country, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir penned numerous letters to the Union Government of India, requesting the establishment of a television station in Kashmir. As a result, Kashmir emerged as the third state, inaugurating the Television Station on 26 January 1965. Television quickly gained importance among Kashmir's urban population. With television emerged, Srinagar Doordarshan showcased Kashmir's historical and social narratives. Programs related to the history and society of Kashmir became very popular, especially in urban areas of Kashmir where the reach of television was maximum. Apart from television, some areas in Kashmir already had cinema theatres for entertainment. However, the emergence of militancy in the 1990s led to the closure of all these cinema theatres. Despite numerous unsuccessful attempts to reopen them, a few multiplex cinema halls finally opened in Kashmir in 2022. With the advent and spread of social media after 2010, there was a shift from electronic media to digital media, like social media. But despite the periodic internet ban in Kashmir, electronic media, particularly television, continues to hold a significant share in mass media. The abrogation of Article 370 resulted in Jammu and Kashmir losing its special status and becoming a Union Territory. People began to rely more on electronic media, particularly radio and television, for news and entertainment as a result of the internet's nearly 100-day ban. But from time to time both local Television channel and radio station are blamed for acting as mouth piece of Government hence the peoples choose other private television channels and radio stations of national level. The evolving political climate, particularly post-1990, played a critical role in molding the mass communication

landscape, with radio and television emerging as key tools for political discourse and public engagement. All India Radio (AIR), as the primary medium of communication in the early years of independence, became an essential platform for government messages, news, and cultural content despite infrastructural limitations and access challenges in Kashmir. During this period, AIR not only served as a unifying force for a newly independent India but also acted as a vital channel for disseminating critical political and cultural messages across the region. Kashmir's socio-economic conditions, marked by regional divisions and the insurgency of the 1990s, deeply influenced the role of radio and television as mechanisms for political messaging and shaping public opinion. During the years of unrest, electronic media became a critical tool for shaping narratives, often providing a counterpoint to mainstream national news, thus influencing both local perceptions and international views on the Kashmir conflict. Infrastructure challenges, censorship, and government control over broadcasting were major hurdles for the development of electronic media in Kashmir. Despite these constraints, the introduction of satellite television and cable networks in the 1990s fundamentally shifted the media landscape, offering a broader spectrum of information and narratives. These platforms, though still under some governmental oversight, introduced alternative viewpoints, especially regarding the Kashmir conflict. The proliferation of private television channels and local radio stations further diversified the media environment, providing Kashmiris with access to international perspectives and contributing to a more pluralistic media ecosystem. In terms of cultural integration, radio and television served as critical tools for fostering a shared sense of identity and social cohesion amidst Kashmir's diverse communities. However, these platforms were often critiqued for their political biases, reflecting the complex interplay between media and state politics. The arrival of digital platforms in the 21st century revolutionized the media landscape, increasing accessibility and encouraging younger generations to engage more deeply with both local and global narratives about Kashmir. This technological evolution allowed Kashmiris to use digital media not only for entertainment but also as a tool for political mobilization and social discourse. Government policies and political pressures have continued to shape media programming, often aligning content with state interests and limiting critical or dissenting voices. Despite these challenges, electronic media in Kashmir has evolved into a significant force for political mobilization, serving as an essential platform for dialogue during periods of unrest and contributing to the ongoing socio-political discourse in the region.

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