

# Literature and the Electronic Media of India: An Overview of the Significance of Radio and Television

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## Abstract

In India, electronic media plays a significant role in the broadcast and presentation of literary works. The article analyses several literary works that were broadcasted through various forms of Indian electronic media as a case study and focuses on several significant aspects. The article highlights the ability of electronic media, especially radio and television and shows how it disseminates literary works among mass millions, how it is helping to gain popularity within a short span of time, how literary works presented through electronic media reflect society and how electronic media becoming a global platform for literature or the literary works. Along with this, the article also focuses on the pattern of radio and television broadcasting. Radio broadcasts in an acoustic way whereas television broadcasts in an audio-visual mode which easily attracts and penetrates deep into the heart of the audience.

*Keywords:* Electronic media, attractiveness, literature, radio, social reflection, television

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## Introduction

The term *Literature* is derived from the Latin word ‘Literatura’ or ‘Litteratura’ which means writing formed with letters. Dr. Abhishek Upadhyay in the study book *Master of Art in English* of Centre for Distance and Online Education, Utkal University also highlighted the derivation of the term literature as “Etymologically the term derives from Latin Litaritura/litteratura, “writing formed with letters”” (Upadhyay, 2024, p. 3). The definition of literature is dynamic and it has a wide variety from various scholars. Literature is a decorated piece of art that is presented mainly in written format. It tries to remove the dull monotony or the melancholic mood of the readers by providing mesmerising literary art or the words of magic. It is an art that provides mental peace and satisfaction and can take the readers artistically to the world of fantasy as well as to the world of hard reality. Most of the literary works are written pieces but in recent days with the advent of technology, various literary works are presented through various forms of electronic media. Electronic media is the media that is mainly operated through electronic devices. In India, from the very beginning of its arrival, several directors and producers have used it to present various forms of literary works. However electronic media such as radio and television play a significant role in broadcasting several forms of literature. Radio has been used to propagate literary works acoustically whereas television gives audio-visual effects to broadcast it. Literature has a special value in the world of Indian electronic media and electronic media also plays several significant roles in broadcasting literary works.

Literature and Electronic media are two essential subjects in today's world. One is purely arts that provide aesthetic pleasure and the other is a part of social science. In India, several literary works are presented through electronic media, especially by using radio and television. It raises several questions in the mind of the literary men, readers, viewers, scholars, etc, therefore it is necessary to research to find the answer to several questions related to literature and the electronic media of India. The article entitled ‘Literature and the Electronic Media of India: An Overview of the Significance of Radio and Television’ tries to find out the answers to the following research questions:

- ❖ Is electronic media especially radio and television making literary works more attractive?
- ❖ Are literary works presented through electronic media, especially radio and television a reflection of society?
- ❖ Is electronic media especially radio and television putting the literary works in global platforms?

## Literature Review

The article entitled ‘*Literature and the Electronic Media of India: An Overview of the Significance of Radio and Television*’ mainly focused on the electronic media of India especially radio and television and how they disseminate various literary works and amuse the Indian audience. For constructing the background concept and composing the article a wide variety of literary works were used. Among them, several contents and articles from various news portals and websites were used along with a few books such as ‘*Mass Communication in India*’ by Keval. J. Kumar (2007), ‘*What is Literature? And Other Essays*’ by Jean-Paul Sartre (1988), ‘*English Literature: Its History and its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World*’

by W.J. Long (1945), *'The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model'* by G. J. Webster and F. P. Patricia (2009), *'LITERATURE, PRINT CULTURE, AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES, 1880 -1900'* by Richard Menke (2019).

The book *Mass Communication in India* written by Kumar (2007) is an excellent piece which depicts various forms of mass media and how they arrived in India, the significance of the arrival of radio and television, various programmes they broadcast over time and their contributions in the development of society. The book "What is Literature?" And Other Essays' written by the French philosopher and literary men Jean-Paul Sartre (1988) is a masterpiece that narrates various elements of literature. The book is a significant critical text of French literature since World War II. The book offers a definitive statement about the phenomenology of reading and goes on to provide a dashing example of how to write literature or a history of literature that takes ideology and institutions into account. The book 'English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World' by W.J. Long (1945) is a valuable book that narrates English literature from the Anglo-Saxon age to the modern age. It interprets literature from both literary and historical points of view and presents in front of the readers a new panorama of English Literature. The book 'The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model' by James Webster and Patricia F. Phalen (2009) depicts the concept of a mass audience and how it is relevant to electronic media. *'LITERATURE, PRINT CULTURE, AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES, 1880 -1900'* written by Richard Menke (2019) deeply analyse the new technologies, emerging trends of media and the position of printed or written pieces or literary works in the nineteenth century. The book gives detailed descriptions and the relationship between literary works, print culture and media technologies.

## Methodology

The article entitled 'Literature and the Electronic Media of India: An Overview of the Significance of Radio and Television' is based on a thorough analysis of various contents and documents related to literature and the electronic media of India. It analyses several articles and chapters published in journals and books, along with several statements and contents published and projected on various websites and web portals. The article also widely reflects several case studies that reflect literary works that were presented or broadcasted through electronic media, especially radio and television.

## Analysis

### *Literature and the Electronic Media of India*

Literature is an artistic work that reflects aesthetic and social values and amuses the readers from various dimensions. It not only encompasses personal feelings, emotion, satire or tragedy rather it has opened a vast window that reflects love, romance, beauty, nature, philosophy, history, geography, social system, culture, tradition, global system, etc. The limits of literature are vast and unbound and can take the readers into the world of fantasy as well as into the world of hard reality but in all cases an artistic presentation plays a significant role. The definition of the term literature and its significance varies from scholar to scholar. William. J. Long a writer and an English scholar in the opening chapter of his book 'English Literature: Its History and its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World' opines about the

significance and artistic qualities of literature as “The first significant thing is the essentially artistic quality of all literature. All art is the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty; or rather, it is the reflection of some truth and beauty which are in the world, but which remain unnoticed until brought to our attention by some sensitive human soul, just as delicate curves of the shell reflect sounds and harmonies too faint to be otherwise noticed” (Long, 1945, p 2). Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher and a realistic literary man who focused on literature from a realistic point of view. In the Introduction part of his book “‘What is Literature?’ and Other Essays’ he mentioned “the following pages are intended to trace the evolving concept of literature engage in the aftermath of World War II. Chronology provides a context and a first order of specificity. Whenever possible, it serves to ground the issues of theory that Sartre’s post-war writings on writing engage directly or by implication. The secondary literature on Sartre is overwhelming and I make no claims to do more than address selected issues” (Sartre, 1988, p. 4).

Literature comes in various forms like fictional and non-fictional prose, poetry, drama, novels, etc and from the early days most of them are in written or printed format. However with the arrival of modernity and technological innovation now readers or the audience can get the literature in electronic format. In India, electronic media like radio and television present numerous literary works and amuse the audience by realistically giving a taste of literature. Radio from the very early days of its arrival presents numerous plays, dramas and novels in an acoustic or audio mode whereas television presents various works of literature in an audio-visual mode. The presentations of literary works through electronic media are highly attractive and provide full satisfaction to the audience. The radio presents literary works with various ambient sound effects whereas television presents literature with all its dramatic and audio-visual effects. The effects make the characters and the environment more realistic and easily penetrate the hearts of the audiences. They can recognise the appearance and feel of the characters and realise the environmental ambience realistically.

## **Literature and the Radio of India**

In India, radio is a vital medium that plays a significant role in the dissemination of literary works and the promotion of cultural values from the days of the pre-independence era. Radio Broadcasting started in India in the early 1920s. The first programme was broadcast in 1923 by the Radio Club of Bombay. This was followed by setting up Broadcasting Services in 1927 with two privately owned transmitters at Bombay and Calcutta. The Government took over the transmitters in 1930 and started operating them under the name of Indian Broadcasting Service. It was changed to All India Radio (AIR) in 1936 and it came to be known as Akashvani in 1956. The National Programme of Plays (NPP) is an important programme of Indian Radio. The first National Programme of Play was “PRAFULLA” a Bengali stage play by Girish Chandra Ghosh was broadcast in July 1956. Since then, the NPP broadcast on every 4th Thursday of every month at 9:30 P.M from all stations of AIR. They broadcast mainly in Hindi and later translated into all regional languages on the same day, date and time. Through this National Programme of Play (NPP), the national integrity, harmony and colours of unity in diversity are presented to listeners. Sahitya Bharati is another tool of Indian radio through which literature and social values were promoted. It is a radio literary magazine programme covering 23 Indian languages and includes literature’s modern trends, and contemporary issues

along with their creative writings and criticism too. VividhBharati service broadcasts a radio programme called HawaMahal which delineates various short stories of various authors and writers. The private FM radio channels are not lagging in the promotion of literary works. Frequency Modulation channels like '98.3 FM Radio Mirchi' broadcast programmes like 'Sunday Suspense' in Kolkata, where they present various Bengali horror, detective and suspense dramas and novels of eminent authors in a very attractive way.

## Literature and the Television of India

Doordarshan (DD) also shows its interest in Literature from the early days of its arrival, it has opened up a fantastic window to the world of literature. Along with the Indian epic tale Ramayana and Mahabharata, several serial shows like Malgudi Days, Katha Sagar, Shrikant, Bharat EkKhoj, etc, are based on literary works which were broadcast in the early days of Doordarshan.

Malgudi Days is an Indian television series based on R.K. Narayan's short stories that were broadcast in 1986. The series became highly popular within a very short period and turned into a programme of attraction among the viewers of Doordarshan. Malgudi Days depicts the early days of a small town called Malgudi and also highlights India of those days. Times of India in one of his articles entitled 'The Evolution of Doordarshan: Iconic Shows that Defined an Era' mentioned "Based on the stories from RK Narayan's novel, Malgudi Days feature stories about people who lived in the small town of Malgudi. If one wants to know what life is like in India, then one must watch Malgudi Days."- (TOI, 2023)

Doordarshan's one of the most favourite storytellers of all time is ShyamBenegal who presented a rich treasure trove of short stories from India and around the world in Katha Sagar, Bharat EkKhoj, and Darpan in the mid-1980s. Katha Sagar is an Indian television series that aired on DD National in 1986. The series was directed by ShyamBenegal. The series presents a collection of short stories by writers such as Guy De Maupassant, Rabindranath Tagore, Leo Tolstoy, O. Henry, and Anton Chekov. The series had different stories in each episode and most of the stories in the series were mostly one-episode long. KavitaAwaasthi in her article entitled 'A touch of class: ShyamBenegal remembers the stories of Katha Sagar' mentioned "Katha Sagar, which started airing in 1986 featured stories by popular authors. The show received instant success, as it brought together classic literature from all over the world, and also starred some of the most popular faces from Indian television and film"- (Awaasthi, 2016)

'Shrikant' (1987) is a TV show based on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's novel 'Srikanta'. The show aired on Doordarshan from 1987 and it was directed by PravinNischol, and cast by Farooque Sheikh, Sujata Mehta, Irrfan Khan, MrinalKulkarni, SukanyaKulkarni, TikuTalsania, Asha Sharma with many others. The article 'Irrfan Khan's 80s TV show to make a comeback' highlighted the adoption of literary works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya in television and mentions "An adaptation of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel Srikanta, the TV series telecast in the mid-1980s, starred Farooque Sheikh, MrinalKulkarni, Sujata Mehata and Irrfan" (Lalwani, 2013).

'Bharat EkKhoj' (1988) is another masterpiece of ShyamBenegal. It consists of fifty-three serial episodes, based on the book 'The Discovery of India' by Jawaharlal Nehru which covered around 5000 years of Indian history from the very beginning till the independence of India from the British Raj in 1947. Madhu Jain in her article entitled 'Bharat EkKhoj: the

making of most extravagant serial ever' mentioned "India unofficial cinema laureate has boarded the epic shuttle express to make his marathon 52- episode television serial which is based on Jawaharlal Nehru's masterful Discovery of India due to go on the air this November to coincide with the birth centenary of Nehru. Bharat EkKhoj, as Doordarshan's most ambitious project ever is titled, is likely to cost the exchequer well over the budgeted Rs 4 crore" - (Jain, 2013).

'ByomkeshBakshi' (1993) is a Hindi television series directed by Basu Chatterjee based on the Byomkesh Bakshi character created and taken from the literary work of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay. The series was played by Rajit Kapur and K.K. Raina as Byomkesh Bakshi and Ajit Kumar Banerji respectively. The series is being telecast on Doordarshan. KavitaAwaasthi in her article entitled 'Off the beaten track: TV show ByomkeshBakshi is popular even now' mentioned and highlighted the author and the character ByomkeshBakshi as "Based on stories created by SharadinduBandyopadhyay and directed by Basu Chatterjee, the show aired on Doordarshan for two seasons, one in 1993 and the another in 1997. Set in Kolkata, the protagonist of the show, Byomkesh, was the desi version of Sherlock Holmes. He was a soft-spoken astute investigator" – (Awaasthi, 2016).

The private television channel also shows huge interest in various other literary works. 'Saraswatichandra' is an Indian soap opera and romantic drama, initially produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and written by ShrutiVaidya, Saba Mumtaz, UtkarshNaithani, Ved Raj and Abhijit Sinha. The show was initially based on GovardhanramTripathi's novel of the same name. It aired on private channel Star Plus from 25 February 2013 to 20 September 2014. It was also dubbed into Malayalam as Swayamvaram.

### **Significances of Indian Electronic Media in Presenting Literary Works**

The roles of electronic media such as radio and television in the broadcast and presentation of literary works are significant. Electronic media presents the literature in its own way and amuse the audiences in wide dimensions. The signification of Indian electronic media is not only restricted to a single periphery of amusement rather it shows several other significances. It can send literary works to a massive number of audiences and gain popularity within a short period. The electronic media also shows the ability to make literature more attractive and lively with the help of its audio and visual effects and remain successful in reflecting society in its own artistic cum realistic way. Along with all the significance electronic media also helps literary works to reach in global platform. The significance of electronic media while presenting literary works is enormous and excellent.

- **Electronic media helps literary works to gain popularity and reach massive audiences.**

Electronic media such as radio and television can create a huge impact in comparison to other mass media. It can easily disseminate information or any form of message among a large number of audiences within a short period. In the opening chapter of the book 'The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model' James. G. Webster and Patricia F. Phalen mentioned broadcasting and its audience as "It opened the door to a vast national audience" – (Webster & Patricia, 2009, p 4). Radio and television have no match in comparison to any other form of media in reaching mass audiences. It was mentioned in the eGyanKosh "Today's they are the supreme media of mass communication, leaving the other media far behind. No other



medium can reach hundreds of thousands of people with such speed as the broadcast media of radio and TV can”- (IGNOU, e GyanKosh, 2021, p. 30).

Literary works in the forms of short stories, plays, drama, novels, etc disseminated or presented through electronic media such as radio and television also have a similar effect. It can reach a large number of audiences within a very short time and create impacts on audiences from various dimensions. The Indian epic tales Ramayana and Mahabharata were broadcasted in the Indian television channel Doordarshan in a serial presentation and reached a massive number of audiences across the nation and had a wide impact upon the audiences. Television series like *MalgudiDays*, *Katha Sagar*, *Shrikant*, and *Bharat EkKhoj* also became successful and showed a massive audience. The successful television series based on literary works and their huge amount of audience justified the statement that electronic media can reach a massive audience and gain popularity within a short period.

➤ **Electronic media helps to raise the attractiveness of literary works**

The presentation of electronics especially radio and television is always much more attractive than any other form of mass media. The projection of literary works through radio and television makes literary art more alluring and fascinating. Radio presents the literary works with various enchanting voices along with various music and ambient sound effects which makes the literary works more pleasant and interesting. However, in comparison to radio, the presentation of literary works through television is completely different and more fascinating. Unlike radio television provides both audio and visual effects. The visuals wonderfully depict the story in a lively manner where it visualises the characters, their moods and appearances, the situation or circumstance of the scene, along the background ambience in which the scene took place. In television, to make the scene more attractive and fascinating several directors and producers also use Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) or VFX as a visual effect. Television gives the literary work a new dimension. However, the presentation of literary works through electronic media like radio and television makes the literary or creative piece of art more attractive and interesting.

➤ **Literature presented through electronic media is the reflection of society:**

Literature and society are two different aspects but they are deeply engaged with each other from various dimensions. Literature narrates various social affairs in a decorated artistic way and can be expressed as the reflection or the mirror image of society. In most of the literary works, literary men reflect the various images of society aesthetically. They penned what they feel, experience and visualise around them. Along with love, romance and emotion literature also boldly portrays society from a realistic point of view. However, when literature or literary works are presented through electronic media like radio and television they create an immense impact upon society. Richard Menke in the book *Literature, Print Culture And Media Technologies, 1880 -1900* mentioned “Perhaps in some sense, different media have existed as long as human communication itself, thanks to our bodies’ modalities of voice, face and gesture. But the late nineteenth century’s literary and media cultures suggest the kinds of thinking that society could do with multiple old and new media technologies” (Menke, 2019, p.14).

The broadcast of literary works with the help of audio and visual presentation delineates several aspects of society more realistically. It enriches the mind of the audience

with numerous social values, traditions, culture, customs, social systems, etc and creates a dramatic impact on the audience as well as upon the society at large.

➤ **Electronic media act as a global platform for Literature**

Electronic media is now acting as a global platform. It can disseminate easily any information or message among the global audience and can create a massive impact on society. Several literary men, directors and producers are now using electronic media as a global platform to broadcast various literary works. It is the easiest medium through which one can reach global audiences. Literature or literary works are mostly written pieces and are mainly encircled within restricted readerships but electronic media bring revolution and opened a wide window in front of literature. It can expose literary works in front of a global audience and can raise the number of audiences within a very short period. Katha Sagara collection of short stories written by literary men like Guy De Maupassant, Rabindranath Tagore, Leo Tolstoy, O. Henry, Anton Chekov, etc which was aired by Doordarshan is a wonderful case study that shows how literary works use electronic media and reach global audiences.

## **Conclusion**

In India, electronic media plays a significant role in presenting numerous literary works. Electronic media such as radio and television broadcast several literary works in various languages and amuse the audience from various dimensions. The use of electronic media helps literary works to reach a massive number of audiences and to gain popularity within a short time. Electronic media such as radio and television also play a pivotal role in making literature more attractive through its audio and visual effects. It makes the literary work of art livelier and glamorous which attracts the audience and makes them feel to watch it. Electronic media has also the ability to reflect society and put literary works on a global platform. The broadcasting of literary works through electronic media is like an electronic literature review which is experienced by a massive audience not only from various parts of the nation but also across the globe. The contribution of electronic media in the presentation of literary works is enormous and wonderful.

## **About the Author**

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## **Declaration of AI Refined**

This document has benefited from the application of AI-driven tools, including Grammarly and Scholar AI Chat, to refine its linguistic aspects. These tools were utilized to correct grammar and spelling and improve the overall writing style. It is acknowledged that the use of these technologies may introduce certain AI-generated linguistic patterns. However, the core intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented remain the sole work of the authors.

## **Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.



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