

VIVIDH BHARATI'S ROLE IN 'UNIFYING' THE INDIAN NATION

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I. FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT:

1. When we look back at the last six or seven decades, we see with amazement how India has emerged from a country that was tormented by internal convulsions and external threats to be now ranked among the top countries of the world. The entire picture has changed so dramatically, especially in the last two decades since we opened up our economy that India is now growing rapidly enough to be noticed. Though it has finally been afflicted by the world-wide economic contagion and is passing through a rather low, the world takes note: which it did not, earlier. The 21st century belongs to Asia and it is beyond doubt that China and India would be playing a major role, notwithstanding temporary hiccups along the way.
2. The question is how did this India, that is now proud of her high seat in the assembly of nations of the world, emerge as a cohesive nation that is finally solidly bonded. Let us take ourselves back to the stroke of the midnight hour, on the night of 14th/15th August 1947, when this nation was born: a memorable period that happens but once in a nation's life-time. It was the most challenging of times, as not only was it a bleeding baby that had been severed from its sibling, but it was in the midst of violence, confusion and rioting. One was reminded of Churchill's scathing remarks that "*in a few years, no trace will remain*" for "*anarchy will lead to internecine warfare*".
3. The challenge was even greater because any attempt to bind together 565 princely states and 14 British provinces, with their multiplicity of cultural identities, languages and outlook was bound to flounder. The idea called India as a common concept was not shared by all, as local loyalties, especially to the

rajas and one's own provincial culture, were much stronger than the draw of 'nationhood'. Nearly 70 years before this, John Strachey had boldly held forth that "*there is not and never was an India...no Indian nation, no people of India.*" In the same vein, Seeley (1883:255) commented: "*India is.....only a geographical expression, like Europe or Africa. It does not make the territory of a nation and a language, but the territory of many nations and languages.*" In 1947 the concept of India was still more of a geo-political entity and we were all first of all Bengalis, Madrasis, Punjabis, Mussalman, Sikhs, etc. However sixty-six years and more since that day, 'this idea of united India' has succeeded and thrived. 'Unity in diversity' may very well describe the situation, but it does not explain how this unity came about. What are the factors that have played the 'centripetal role' in forging the Idea of India?

4. This paper attempts to take a closer look at one of those factors, namely Akashvani's Vividh Bharati Service, and the role it has played in unifying India. In the following pages, we will make an effort to understand how a pan-Indian radio service, with its strong reliance on Hindi film music, came to be one of the factors that played a critical role in the unification of the real soul of India. Unfortunately, this factor has hardly received the attention that it deserves, though volumes have been written on how the British military and political systems got us together: how the railway and post & telegraph networks got us closer; how its English language and education system created a 'national middle-class'; and how the archaeological discoveries reminded all Indians of their past glory. We are attempting now to recapitulate how radio waves and their content, that was woven around catchy melodies, lyrical imagery and sentimental memories, helped develop a unique homogenisation across the length and breadth of India. Akashvani's contribution to the forging of a common Indian identity of 'one nation, one memory' is our focus, though we realise that a large part of it was rather inadvertent. AIR succeeded in doing

more for the popularisation of colloquial Hindi, than what the protagonists of Sanskritised Hindi could ever dream of. It could achieve this, without triggering the 'latent anxieties' that arise among cultural groups, when the nation-state attempts to steam-roll a 'homogenising' operation.

II HINDI FILMS & POPULAR SONGS

5. The birth of Vividh Bharati, and its significant role in unifying India, was ironically, triggered by a development in a 'foreign land' which, in turn, led to a chain reaction and a reluctant policy decision was taken in India. It had far-reaching consequences that most official policies are incapable of visioning, especially when their 'orders' are couched in obfuscating bureaucratic jargon. It was in 1952, well before Vividh Bharati was born, that Radio Ceylon set the standards for popular radio broadcasting, and captured the imagination of an entire generation of Indians. Ameen Sayani and *Binaca Geetmala*, followed by *Sangeet Ke Sitaron Ki Mehfil* and *Geetmala Ki Chhaon Mein*, were household names, even before Vividh Bharati was conceived or could really grow to compete. And these programmes acquired legendary status, because of a 'vacuum' in the dissemination of popular music in India. The domestic airwaves of Akashvani were constricted by a decision of the then Information and Broadcasting Minister, the learned Dr B.V. Keskar.

6. Keskar regarded Hindi film songs as "*cheap and vulgar*", and virtually banned them from AIR's menu, deeming that the public broadcaster should limit itself to classical and good folk music, broadly classified as *Sugam Sangeet*. Little did he realise that personal inclinations of cultured people could hardly stand up to the tsunami of popular choice, and because of one man, the people of India looked southwards at Radio Ceylon between 1952 and 1957 and even thereafter, until Vividh Bharati could really drive out competition. Radio

Ceylon established an agency called Radio Advertising Services in the Colaba area of south Bombay, in order to attract advertising revenue and recruit professional broadcasters. Besides, as the life of the legendary Anil Biswas would prove, the same person could compose and produce outstanding songs for popular Hindi cinema and at the same time, he could also double up as the Anchor for Akashvani's *Sugam Sangeet*.

7. Let us dwell for a few minutes on what these popular Hindi films were all about and why did most people (even those who hardly understood Hindi or refined Urdu words), fall for its charms. In the 101st year of Indian Cinema, let us be honest to ourselves and not just celebrate Dadasaheb Phalke, but also try to understand how mainstream Indian cinema, led by Bollywood and its clones in the regional languages, could capture the imagination of a country so diverse. As an industry, its revenue is rated to be over Rs.12,500 crore per year and it is set to cross Rs.20,000 crore in the next 2-3 years. It is the world's largest producer of films: we have now more than 3500 per annum, even during this period of recession. Popular Hindi cinema, and its regional copies stand out not only for 'action', visual effects, big stars and other forms of excitement: it also produces a very vibrant music industry. Few countries of the world have so much music in their movies: Hollywood practically shuns songs, unless it is a completely 'musical' movie. The first silent film in India, Phalke's *Raja Harischandra*, was screened on the 3rd of May 1913, but the 'sound barrier' was crossed only on the 14th of March 1931, with Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara*. And it was then that Hindi film songs would burst out, with their lyrics and melody, to captivate a nation so large.

8. When 'sound' made its entry into Indian films, there was almost a cloudburst. The first film, *Alam Ara* of 1931 had 6 songs; the next, *Shaheed*, had 40 songs and *Indra Sabha* followed with 78. It also brought with it several challenges for Indian filmmakers who came from different regions, and the

language veered to a *filmi* 'Hindi' that was more Hindustani: it had a lot of common Urdu words and less of Sanskrit. At the dawn of Independence, Gandhiji was also in favour of Hindustani rather than Hindi, though the Congress ultimately resolved to make Hindi the official language in the new Constitution. This was probably because, as a Census category, Hindi was spoken or understood by most Indians across the entire sub-continent. Incidentally, the 1931 Census showed that Bengali was a close second, but it was still the language of just one populous region. In the early days of cinema in India, there was definitely a contest between Calcutta and Bombay, but soon it became clear that while Calcutta was snobbish regarding cinema being made just a form of popular entertainment, Bombay had no such issues regarding 'high culture' and 'low culture'. Consequentially, Hindi cinema consciously strived to seek the common denominator positioning for entertaining the masses, and films were seen as a god-send opportunity.

9. A question often arises as to why Indian cinema (starting with Hindi cinema) has such an obsession with music and songs. In a 2006 article, Chandan Mitra refers to the roaming minstrels and balladeers that have captivated audiences for many centuries, travelling from village to village and narrating their stories through verse, lyrics and music. Dry, structured prose is a very recent development in India. The preachers of all major religions used music to hold audience attention: more could be said through lyrics than through any other medium. In fact, the Sama Veda could be said to be the originator of setting verse to rhyme and music. Although early Indian talkies were packed with songs, it was the RK Films banner that actually heralded the musical revolution in 1948. "*Shankar- Jaikishen, and songwriters Hasrat Jaipuri and Shailendra...Raj Kapoor decided to hire them for his film company*" (Mitra, 2006). With *Barsaat* and *Awara*, Hindi film music was revolutionised and RK Films changed the grammar of film music, decisively and for ever.

10. It is my earnest submission that we accept the phenomenon of Hindi films as the one that created a common public imagination in India, without getting into intellectual arguments as to whether it is good or bad, aesthetic or crude. The main movers of Hindi cinema: filmmakers, actors, singers, and music composers, brought their own cultural influences and injected these into the product that they created. The diverse culture of the nation was thus better reflected in the films of Bombay and their music, even as there emerged a single colloquial language of delivery that revelled in flaunting lyrical Urdu words and phrases. This, more than anything else, immensely helped Hindustani Hindi develop as the lingua franca, and gain larger acceptance, even as it was mixed with a few *Bambaiyya* terms. The golden period of Indian film music was in the 1950s and 1960s, with composers like Anil Biswas, C. Ramchandra, SD Burman, Naushad at their creative best. This is also when the dream merchants of Bombay brought out classics like *Shaheed*, *Samadhi*, *Andolan*, *Jhansi Ki Rani*, and *Mother India*: films that reached not only the eyes and ears, but also the hearts of all Indians. This helped overcome whatever reserve the non-Hindi speaking masses may have had against the language.
11. Another major reason for the success of Hindi film songs was that they appropriated folk genres and expressions of every possible source. Gregory Booth (1990) talks of how these films took the music of Indian brass bands, while Scott Marcus spoke of the influence of *Biraha* lyrics (1992-93). Qureshi (1986) studied the influence of *Qawwali* and Hansen (1992) examined how *Nautanki* impacted Hindi film music. Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti in their book *Global Bollywood: The Transnational Travels of Hindi Song and Dance (2008)* also described how this music copied the best of tunes and melodies from across the globe. Manuel made an intensive study of the impact and the interaction between folk music of South-Asia or those of the Hindi film

industry. Pradeep Kumar Dixit (BHU:1978) describes the use of sources like Indian classical music and even Western music in Hindi film songs styles, and in the works of music directors like Shankar-Jaikishan. Arnold (1991) in her *Hindi Filmi Git* concentrated on how playback songs absorbed influences from all over, while Chatterjee (1987) and Mala Sinha (1991) discussed the combination of music, narrative, religion and extra-narrative gossip in the meaning of several Hindi film *bhajans*. It is this eclectic approach of the Hindi film songs, especially in the production of songs, with which the Mumbai industry scored over all others: in collating, imagining and inventing a new India, especially for generations who had no memories of the earlier colonial domination and fragmentation.

III. *FILMI SONGS, KESKAR & CEYLON*

12. Inaugurated on December 16, 1925, Radio Ceylon was the first broadcasting station of South Asia beating India to the game. As a broadcasting station located nearest to South East Asia, Colombo was an integral asset of the British Empire, especially during the Second World War. The South East Asia Command functioned as the voice of the Empire for servicemen in the East and was an instrument to counter the propaganda of the Axis powers (Japan and Germany). With its huge infrastructure of Short Wave transmitters, Radio Ceylon soon set the benchmark for radio programming and enjoyed immense popularity, because of its long reach and clear sound. This continued till the 1970s thanks to great programmers like Ameen Sayani, even after All India Radio (AIR) took up the challenge. When India's Information & Broadcasting Minister, B.V. Keskar, banned film music on AIR in 1952, Indian listeners were driven to Radio Ceylon: its popularity soared, while AIR became increasingly isolated. AIR, however, did perform an extraordinary service in the revival of public interest in traditional, classical, semi-classical and folk music. Without

Dr. Keskar and Akashvani, these genres would have actually died down or would have remained as esoteric entertainment for a limited few.

13. Vigilance was mounted by the Ministry of I&B against plebeian *laralappa* film songs, and they were replaced with light, classical music that would edify and uplift perishing cultural tastes. However, the move was not mounted without resistance. On April 7, 1954, Parliament reeled under a scathing attack from Harindranath Chattopadhyay, who roundly criticised the exclusion of popular music from AIR, "*without any effort made by government to understand what listeners wanted*". Sardar Hukum Singh in the same session emphasised that "*AIR had failed to satisfy the people*" with its 'light music'. Menon reports that the stupendous success of Radio Ceylon in capturing Indian audiences was produced as testimony of this fact. Some reports even suggested that the decision by Radio Ceylon to launch a Hindi broadcasting station in Bombay was a calculated move to cash in on the rising public annoyance because AIR ignored what they loved to hear.

IV. VIVIDH BHARATI IS BORN

14. In the face of the unprecedented popularity of Radio Ceylon, Keskar reversed his public stand towards Hindi film music, and announced the launch of Vividh Bharati on October 2, 1957. The move was aimed at meeting the challenge of Radio Ceylon, and the channel's content was designed accordingly. The official press release actually made a specific mention of the fact that out of the five hours of programming each week day, close to four hours would be dedicated to film songs. It may be recalled that the cinema halls that were set up in the urban centres of India were not just centres of entertainment: they were, in fact, the focal points of the community in more senses than one can imagine. People would refer to their homes by indicating their nearest cinema

hall like, Savitri, Priya or Regal. Yet, if one goes through the figure of the number of seats available and the possible viewership, one would find that the absolute number of Indians who had the occasion to see a Hindi movie could not cross a small percentage. But even those who were not fortunate enough would hear the filmy songs over and over again on the gramophone.

15. Again, let us not forget gramophones and records also cost money and, therefore, had it not been for the radio waves that emanated first from Radio Ceylon and then properly copied by Akashvani's Vividh Bharati, the democratisation of music among the masses of India would simply not be complete. It was as if the privilege of the upper middle class was suddenly thrown open, through magnetic waves, to the masses. Hindi film music on radio soon became the main form of 'home and mass entertainment', and thus enjoyed wide listenership, even with people whose first language may not have been Hindi, or who did not have a proper grasp over the language. Yet, these songs were more than pure lyrics and melody: they were the sentimental ties that bound together a nation, with unforgettable memories of a common shared childhood. The speakers of twenty four major languages that were often hardly understood outside their own zones, thus gradually came together through this new common vocabulary of rhythm, lyrics and melody of filmi Hindustani music. To that extent, film music generated from Bombay helped promote the national language in its most 'user-friendly' version – Hindustani, and did indeed help integrate and unify people in one nationhood. The moot point here is that if film music had not come over the air waves, they may have remained restricted to movie halls, and upper class homes that could afford gramophones. Or, they would have had to wait for the cheap cassette revolution to come, as it did: many decades later.

16. Radio Ceylon programmes such as *Binaca Geet Mala*, a ‘hit parade’ sponsored by a Swiss company called CIBA, were instrumental in forging a ‘national audience’ around the songs and stars of Bombay cinema. Each Week’s show, recorded in Bombay and dispatched to Colombo, was broadcast from 8 to 9 pm on Wednesday and as Ameen Sayani, the legendary presenter and producer, recalled ‘Wednesday came to be known as *Geet Mala* day’ (personal interview, July 2008). In a recent interview in *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, Ameen Sayani said that inspired by his brother, he went to AIR to audition for the post of an announcer in Hindi. He had picked up the language while helping his mother—who was a part of the freedom movement, on first name terms with Jawaharlal Nehru, and had been asked by Gandhi to bring out a journal in simple Hindustani. “*I started as a 'peon' there, and slowly built up my knowledge of Hindi. I used very simple Hindi, also because I didn't know any better*”, (Sayani, 2013). At 82, the legendary Sayani sits in his small office in Mumbai's Colaba, with his tiny studio: as bright, chirpy and charismatic as ever. Fascinating stories tumbled out as I met this handsome man, who had actually started it all.
17. Finally, on 3rd October, 1957, AIR capitulated and launched AIVP: All India Variety Programme. But since this was an English name, new India needed a Hindi title and the name ‘Vividh Bharati’ was arrived at. It combined two words *Vividhita*, i.e., ‘variety’ and *Bharatiyata*, i.e., ‘Indianism’. Vividh Bharati began its services from Bombay, and soon started broadcasting a variety of programmes for five hours on weekdays, simultaneously from Bombay and Madras. The Tamil State, incidentally, posed a few interesting issues and first among them was that Mayilvaganam’s soothing voice in Jaffna Tamil on Radio Ceylon had by now become a fixture of domestic leisure across Tamil-speaking people of the sub-continent. Radio Ceylon was such a powerful force that it had,

in fact, to dispel misinformed reports in Indian newspapers which claimed that candidates contesting for upcoming elections could campaign on it. Its terse order read: "*Ceylon Radio does not indulge in politics*". The rise of the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu and the strong desire by a group of Tamils to form a separate state (Eelam) saw fault lines emerge between Ceylon broadcasters and Indian listeners. Later, Radio Ceylon would ban songs penned by famous Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi that went "...*we will build a bridge across the sea (to Ceylon)*". The second interesting issue was that Madras had led the anti-Hindi brigade in India, by defacing all sign boards and writings that were in Devnagari, and often resorted to more violent protests. Akashvani, therefore, had to focus separately on Madras.

18. Vividh Bharati's programmes consisted not only of film songs, but also a whole variety of dramas, musical skits, features and a large amount of music of other kinds and genres. They reflected the entire spectrum of cultural variety that this nation offered. It was woven together onto one platform with one language of delivery: even in the 'protesting cities', at the street corners and tea-shops. One of Vividh Bharati's first programmes, which continues to this day, is *Hawa Mahal* which is contributed by other local AIR stations. During the 1962 war, Vividh Bharati broke new ground and started its iconic *Jaimala* programme that was led by film personalities: almost unheard till then, anywhere in the world. Nargis started it, followed by Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle, Mukesh, Manna Dey, Naushad, Sunil Dutt, Amitabh Bachchan, Meena Kumari, Balraj Sahni, Ashok Kumar and Dev Anand. *Jaimala* aimed to encourage Indian soldiers, who were fighting on the front, in a war that was not particularly favourable. In 1965, Akashvani's Vividh Bharati service played a historic role in uniting the entire country in one single voice. This is when it was realised that the earlier barriers between different groups of Indians seemed to have melted away and a totally unified India stood behind the diminutive Lal

Bahadur Shastri. Both Akashvani and (more so) Vividh Bharati had thus scored over Radio Ceylon in this short span of time.

V. COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING SERVICE

19. The next significant step in the life of Vividh Bharati comes on 2nd Nov 1967, with the introduction of commercials and advertising (the Commercial Broadcasting Service) and Vividh Bharati is still officially known by this name. It was started in the Bombay-Pune-Nagpur chain of radio stations, slowly spreading to others. By the late 1960s, transistors replaced valves in radio sets, and this made receivers smaller and portable. There was an immediate expansion of radio services and listenership, and transistor radios started becoming so affordable that they became an essential part of a middle class family, along with at least one steel almirah and one ceiling fan. “Mother, brother, sister and transistor”, was one of the common-place sayings. Where Vividh Bharati was concerned, every tiny shop, from the *paan-wala* to the local vendor, would have its songs and other programmes blaring from every possible place. Entire generations were thus brought up on Vividh Bharati and until the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* came on Doordarshan, there was practically no competition, not even from Hindi films (that only limited numbers could see). Songs were free and songs were omnipresent.

20. But, this decision of the government to introduce advertising on the recommendation of the Chanda Committee, which stated that “*advertising would be the most fruitful source of revenue*” was resisted by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and also by AIR. They termed the Chanda Committee’s recommendations as “the uninformed opinion or personal predilection of one or several persons” and the Ministry’s objection was:

*“The advertisers who will make use of All India Radio and the infant television network in this country will be those interested in selling low-cost, mass-produced productsThese [cosmetics, toilet goods, fancy high-priced textiles] are precisely the areas which the Planning Commission and the Government of India are at pains to control”.*¹

21. Whatever be the resistance, CBS took off with sponsored programmes like ‘*S Kumar ka Filmy Muqadma*’, ‘*Inspector Eagle*’, ‘*Bournvita Quiz Contest*’, etc. and there is hardly anyone from that generation who did not look forward to such programmes. Short Wave transmitters provided synchronized operations for Vividh Bharati’s programmes to ensure all India coverage, through its centres at Mumbai, Guwahati, Chennai and Delhi. Its programmes could now be heard on the same wave length in any part of the country, and this was useful in hooking up remote corners, where local CBS stations on MW failed to reach.
22. Vividh Bharati soon became the de-facto and easy *lingua franca* among Indians from different States and languages: a supra-ethnic identity to which all could relate and emote. India and its far-flung corners were no more distant from each other and even obscure *Jhumritalaiya* became a permanent fixture on the mindscape of Indians. Whether at picnics or during excursions, or at school and college events, or even during larger public gatherings, it was Hindi film songs popularised on Vividh Bharati that was the medium of emoting that Indians had now learnt. With programmes like *Antakshari* and other competitions, Hindi film songs soon became serious staple for many Indians, as it defied existing social stratification, in favour of phenomenal memory, that some persons could display, at the drop of a hat. Some of other oldest programmes of Vividh Bharati still running are: *Manchahe Geet*, *Sangeet Sarita*, *Aap Ki Farmaish*, *Chhayageet*, etc.

¹Chanda Committee Report on PB published in 1964

23. In 1977, that is exactly 10 years after Vividh Bharati became the CBS, a new FM service was started in Chennai. As a carrier of radio waves, Frequency Modulation or FM offered superior clarity as compared to the crackly Short Wave or even the Medium Wave, as traffic was getting increasingly overcrowded on these routes. But its reach was small: a city or a town and its immediate vicinity. Yet AIR had to go on hammering the advantage of FM, as India was not yet ready for it. It was only in the early 90's, when the Times of India group introduced a 2 hour band on Akashvani's FM service that radio presentation was completely revolutionalised with updated professionalism: FM was finally getting its act together. The sudden popularity can be seen from the rise of FM channels that were stuck at 15 till 1991, but shot up to 128 AIR Stations by October, 2001. As FM was basically a carrier, it offered Akashvani and Vividh Bharati an opportunity to supplement their efforts to reach classical, semi-classical and folk music to the millions. AIR started its two FM brands: 'FM Gold' for the metros and 'FM Rainbow' for all cities. They relay a large amount of music content similar to Vividh Bharati, though there are some spicy modern additions by Radio Jockeys, as well.

VI. PRIVATE PLAYERS ENTER.

24. In 1999, Government announced its policy of opening up of FM channels to private players and the first phase of spectrum auctions was started from May 2000. This led to 108 successful bids, but only 21 Private FM stations could actually become operational. The second phase of FM auctions was notified on July 2005, which led to the establishment of 221 more private FM channels. In January 2014, private FM channels in the country numbered 242, and 21 of these channels were from Phase I. FM offered Vividh Bharati not only opportunities over new air-waves and brought in its companions (FM Gold &

Rainbow), but also spelt competition. FM is often confused with music programming and channels, but as explained, FM is only a system of carrying radio waves. What content it is to carry depends entirely on the entity that operates it. The real advantage of FM lies in the fact that, unlike Medium Wave and Short Wave, which require a radio or a transmitter, (with an aerial) to receive signals, FM's content can be picked up by mobile handsets as well. This led to the sudden expansion of listeners and potential listeners, as India has an estimated 900 million plus mobile users, for a population of 1.29 billion. It is, however, estimated that between 750 and 800 million mobile sets are actually activated, but this too is a very large number.

25. To return to Akashvani, we see that it has, at present, 15 Vividh Bharati Commercial Broadcasting Centres (CBS) nation-wide². Most of them play regional film-songs which means that after Hindi which sits comfortably as the link language of India, regional languages and their films have been given space for full play. A large sample survey carried out by the Audience Research Wing of All India Radio in 2013, revealed that the daily reach of Vividh Bharati at Nagpur and Pune is more than 90%, at Vadodara, Indore, Bhopal and Ahmedabad it is between 80% and 90%, while at Patna, Thiruvananthapuram, Dharwad and Jodhpur are in 70% to 80% range. So far, Vividh Bharati has been able to retain its primacy of position by using both MW and FM transmissions, despite the private music FM bands working vigorously and with a lot of style on the younger generation, through non-traditional music content.
26. Incidentally, the metro cities of India do not, quite strangely enough, have, AIR's Vividh Bharati available on FM, and no one in Prasar Bharati noticed that it was not available on mobile handsets in cities that had the maximum density

² Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Cuttack, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Srinagar & Thiruvananthapuram. In addition, Regional Languages variations are available from Cuttack, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Srinagar and Thiruvananthapuram.

of mobiles. Recently, Prasar Bharati has approved a plan to start relaying Vividh Bharati on FM mode in these metros, so that listeners can hear it on their mobile handsets as well, in addition to Medium Wave transistors and radios. Incidentally, MW services are coming down, or at least not growing, for the last few years, because listeners prefer FM. The challenge for Vividh Bharati is now to ensure that its relay stations are on FM transmission mode, either singly or along with the original Medium Wave, because FM can reach the maximum number of listeners, through mobile handsets.

26. Thus, today, Vividh Bharati has 6 MW stations and 113 FM stations of its own, while Akashvani's other 2 music services (FM Gold and FM Rainbow) have a total of 42 stations. At the same time, private FM channels today number 245 and the third phase of FM auctions for the private sector has already been announced by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. This paper has travelled a very long journey, and in conclusion, I would like to reiterate my original submission: i.e., we need to re-assess the role played by different unifying agencies and factors, when we re-visit the story of modern India. The railways, the postal service, along with its telegraphs and money order systems, the English language, the national movement, Hindi films, and national pride in cricket matches have all been studied to some extent. But, it is unfortunate that there is not a single comprehensive work on the role of Akashvani's Vividh Bharati service in reaching film music and other integrative programmes to the people of India. Its role in subtly but surely mainstreaming the different ethnic, linguistic, religious and other groups through emotions, shared memories and common identity also demands further academic study.

27. An interesting fact that we may note is that Vividh Bhadari has been quite agnostic about the country of origin where Hindustani film music and its other genres are concerned. Some of the best singers whose music has been repeatedly broadcast on AIR are in fact Pakistanis like Ghulam Ali, Mehdi

Hasan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Ali Zafar, Mohsin Khan, Mira, Monalisa, Shafqat Ali Khan, Abida Parveen, Adnan Sami, Atif Aslam etc. The 'Two Nation theory' was thus effectively negated, as the singers of both countries sang together, in deference to popular demand: defying boundaries to entertain and reach out to all people across the sub-continent. Where Pakistan is concerned, this "problem" has reached such a phase that one of the first open statements made by its top Army Commanders was that "*the general public is compelled to tune in to All India Radio, the BBC and Indian satellite channels during a period of crisis or whenever an important event takes place*". Citing the 1971 war, he said "*primary aim of the Indian media was to defeat the enemy psychologically and disarm them morally*".

28. The General may please like to note that Akashvani, Vividh Bharati or even Indian Television are not really "threats", but are bonds that unite the people of this subcontinent. They have, thus, achieved a large measure of cultural unity through popular content, lyrics, songs and music: that reached our fellow human beings, through electro-magnetic waves, celluloid films, DVDs and the digital media. A common heritage and shared tastes often helped catalyze a spirit of peace and harmony: as electro-magnetic waves flew over borders and armed brigades. And in this story, the real Field Marshall of peace has been Vividh Bharati.

29. It is time for scholars to sit down and take up some organised research in one of the least discussed factors that helped India emerge as a firm, unified nation, ready to take on the 21st century, as one body and one soul. The unifying role that Vividh Bharati played in the history of modern India needs to be taken up by serious academics, and not left to simple articles like these.

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