Chapter 5

Conclusion: Observations and Findings

5.0. Introduction

In this chapter I am offering a brief account of all the chapters that I discussed in the study. The first chapter focuses on a brief introduction to the discourse of political economy of media; state experiments involved with television in India as a basis for the development of society; television revolution in India; a review of studies that theorize what the political economy of media is all about and perspectives on television as culture industry, the statement of research problem, the importance and scope of the study, the aims and objectives of the study, and the research methodology.

The second chapter deals with the review of literature of television studies in India, a study of political economy of media in general and the Indian context in particular. In my survey of television studies in India, I reviewed the studies that look at television in contemporary culture and the sociological study of audiences and analysis of television programmes as 'texts'. Television Studies is a new, dynamic and rapidly changing field of research. The third chapter discusses the historical and cultural context of the emergence of mass media and its basis for establishing the media industry in Andhra Pradesh. It also elaborates the roots of the Green Revolution and the rise of the Agriculture Industry in Andhra Pradesh, the rise of cinema industry and the emergence of regional parties in AP, social movements and the rise of SC, ST and
OBC voices in politics, political decisions on SEZs, real estate and supporting neo-capitalists in the name of development. It also narrates the history of private satellite television news channels in Andhra Pradesh and the impact of 24-hour television news and the cultural changes that it brought about based on empirical data.

The fourth chapter elaborated the significant role of the political economy of television news channels in Andhra Pradesh and how it has become a laboratory experiment on the Public. Television news channels have become a powerful medium for neo-capitalists in AP and a political communication tool in maintaining the status quo in the political platform. The rise of the 24-hour television news channel proliferation is a big question based on the demand and supply model for the television medium in Andhra Pradesh. The qualitative data for narration of the political economy of television news channels and its growth in AP is provided in four sections. This chapter focused on four core areas of political economy of media: perspectives on television as culture industry in Andhra Pradesh, political economy of media and caste role in AP, elaborated with the support of empirical data on cross-media ownership and corporatization of the media, economics of television and revenue sources for the survival of media and television regulation, democracy, and social responsibility.

5.1 Television as a neo-feudal enterprise and business model

Television has become a neo-feudal enterprise and business model for the upper class/castes or neo-capitalists. The real challenges that lie ahead for television in Andhra Pradesh are to ensure that growing concentration of ownership in an oligopolistic market does not lead to loss of heterogeneity and diversity. In the
absence of cross-media restrictions and with government policies contributing to further corporatization of media, especially with respect to the television medium, diversity of news flows could be adversely affected contributing to the continuing privatization and commodification of information instead of making it more of a "public good". For television, the political propaganda model and business models are like two edges of the knife which will kill democracy and public voice in the name of media as the fourth estate. For instance, the Reliance Industries Limited deal has enabled Network 18, Eenadu, and the merged group to expand its offerings to benefit both stakeholders and its advertising target audiences. But, it remains to be seen whether clear boundaries can be etched between the boardroom and the newsroom. The deal, therefore, raises significant questions about the diminishing levels of media plurality and diversity of voices in a multilingual and multicultural country. Most of the reportage on the deal has focused on business aspects and not on developmental issues or concerns. Big questions about the future of editorial control remain unanswered and already are in the hands of businessmen. The complicated holding structures and investments made through layers of subsidiary companies make it difficult to discern the real "bosses" and the powers they wield. In the name of media multinational companies and corporations get the benefits and divert public issues from mainstream media.
5.2 Television Journalism has lost its Professionalism

When the government started Doordarshan Television in 1959 its objectives were "Information, Education and Entertainment." After fifty years of Indian television has changed drastically at the level of content, form and ownership and structure of the media organization. Television has become a symbol of social status, a powerful tool of communication and an influential medium in the hands of capitalists and multinational corporations. Now, it is working under their direction for their wealth and these aspects have changed the face of television as a mode of political communication: in short, infotainment, entertainment and sensationalization of issues are fundamental to the discourse of television. The original objectives of the television medium, i.e., information and education are distant in comparison to the current objectives.

There is a lack of sharp distinctions in news themes or investors views as news across channels within a language market in the Telugu language market of over 15-20 news channels. The overall viewer experience of sameness in news offerings, the scenario is clearly in front of us as "many channels, same news package". The sensationalization of news presentation is happening across television channels, language, region and even news themes. This includes dramatic presentation of footage using stylistic devices, especially audio and where footage is not available events are enacted using graphics or actors with large doses of imagination rather than real representation. The sensational treatment of news and current affairs programmes makes for public confusion. It is easy for the management to confuse the
public and manufacture news because their views become news to the public. The same news deserving mention concerns the representation of public voices. But in the name of public, the voices from the formal spheres of the state, administration, police and political leaders with business interests are being represented. This study has observed tendencies towards sameness despite the still growing multitude of channels, a tendency towards sameness in ideas of newsworthiness in the emphasis on news themes and in mechanisms of news treatment thus leading to a loss in credibility. The corporatization of media management wants benefits out of the television news since they manufacture public opinion for their support like real estate business, special economic zone policy, foreign direct investments in media, retail, corporate education and hospital. There is no single item telecast against the corporate ownership and companies due to investment in the media. When we question media and ethics, the credibility of news media, accountability and transparency of mainstream media is still a million dollar question. They are not showing interest in investigative or development journalism. At this juncture, multi-channels cannot sustain journalism profession as a mission but it will rather end up with a commission agent.

5.3 Watch-Dog has become Pet-Dog in the hands of Multi-National Corporations

Deals like the three outlined ones raise several key concerns relating to consolidation within the Indian media industry. Larger television broadcast networks, including Zee, Turner/CNN, Viacom/MTV, RIL/ Network 18 and Sony are expected to acquire/partner regional networks leading to the commoditization of news that seems
almost inevitable but not necessarily desirable. In this country, as in the world over, large media corporations are today clearly playing a bigger role in the political economy they report on. Though a free media is fundamental to the existence of a liberal democracy, concerns about the accountability and transparency of media companies remain.

Sectors such as telecommunications, consumer goods, and automobiles are considered high growth sectors especially in Tier I and II cities and rural areas. The revenue from advertising for regional channels is thus expected to increase significantly. Regional media have been relatively insulated from market fluctuations, a recent report by KPMG has pointed out. While deals such as the RIL-Network 18-Eenadu deal, are diversifying into different media genres, they are potentially lucrative for the corporate entities involved, and several key concerns are raised from the point of view of users or consumers.

5.4 Television media proliferation weakens Democracy and Pluralism: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India’s (TRAI, 2009) report on “Recommendations on Media Ownership” mentioned that, it is important that “necessary safeguards be put in place to ensure plurality and diversity are maintained across the three media segments of print, television and radio”. It has argued for restrictions on vertical integration, that is to say on media companies owning stakes in both broadcast and distribution companies within the same media. The reasoning behind this restriction is that vertical integration can result in anti-competitive behaviour, whereby a distributor can favour his own broadcasters’ content over the content of a competitive broadcaster. In this scenario, large conglomerates would be able to impose their preferred content,
which is clearly undesirable. At the same time it will suppress the small media which is voice for the voiceless people and it will also destroy the alternative media model.

TRAI’s report mentioned that vertical integration in the media market is already causing serious problems. There have been numerous disputes brought before the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) between broadcasters and cable operators alleging denial of content by other service providers. New cases are being added regularly, which the TRAI regards as “a clear indication that the current market situation requires corrective measures”.

Further, the report calls attention to the fact that all restrictions on vertical integration are currently placed on companies. However, Indian media conglomerates comprise many different companies which allow them to have controlling stakes both in broadcasting and distribution by acquiring licences under their different subsidiary companies, thus totally bypassing current restrictions and defeating the purpose of their existence in the first place. The TRAI report, therefore, suggests that the restrictions no longer be placed on “companies” but on “entities” or groups, which would include large groups and conglomerates such as the Sun TV Network and Eenadu TV Network (Ramoji Group), the groups that publishes the daily newspapers, which, besides owning newspapers, magazines and radio stations, also has a significant presence in the printing, textiles, oils, solvent extraction, hotels, real estate and power generation industries. The Union Government has not accepted the recommendations of the TRAI and given the clout of media groups among Indian politicians cutting across party lines seems unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.
The Indian skies opened up over the last two decades to coincide with the period of economic liberalization and deregulation. With a relatively small number of corporate groups dominating the industry, there is a concomitant tendency to narrow the agenda of journalism and, at deep cultural levels, simultaneously making it self-serving. For democracy to strengthen and mature, the presence of people with informed opinions and plurality in dialogue become intrinsic.

5.5 TV as Propaganda Model and Political Communication Tool

TV has become a Propaganda model for the political parties and business people for protecting their interests. This study witnessed the data that the ownership of the television news channels are by politicians and political parties. In the constitution of India, Four important pillars as Legislative, Executive, Judiciary and Media plays key role for the betterment of the society. Legislative and Media merging together and fourth pillar disappeared from the battle field in support of the public.

Complicated holding structures and investments made through layers of subsidiary companies make it difficult to discern the real "bosses" and the power they wield. The Reliance-Eenadu-Network, 18 deal, as an example of a corporate consolidation within a corporate deal that only adds to the process of shrinkage of diversity and lends itself to increasing homogeneity in news and entertainment. The fourth estate is now about revenue streams and corporate profits, like real estate, that journalism ought to be for the public and not merely for corporate stakeholders. Though a free media is fundamental to the existence of a liberal democracy, questions about the accountability and transparency of media companies need to be addressed. In India in general, AP in particular, these concerns have acquired greater relevance after the
disclosure of the role played by prominent journalists in the nexus between politics and big business in the Nira Radia conversations and in the Liquor Syndicate in AP.

5.6 Suggestions for further studies
There is a need of studies on Corporatization of Media in Indian Context with Global perspective. Mass Media has connection with Global Communications networks, Market concentration, production, distribution and transnational culture influence on the specific regions. Political economy of media is a study which will go in-depth and gives empirical date for prove the argument based on the region.

There are very less studies focused post-economic reforms and its influence on Indian media and cultural changes in the society. It will give us liberalization of mass media and foreign direct investments into mass media and changes in media policy. This will focus on neo-capitalism and the corporate impact on Indian state and society which will open the door for global market and corporations.

This study will develop the academic scholarship for discussion on democratization of media which explore the Public voice and policy for the development of the society. It will also give in-depth knowledge to prepare the policy on mass media. It will also suggest to strengthen media as fourth pillar/estate for the society to be watch dog.

Television studies in India are need of the study for strengthening the academic and intellectual discourse. It will give us the historical, political, economic and cultural context and growth of media market. Role of the television in global context and local conditions like regional media proliferation and deepening the democracy is needed to be studied in the academic and intellectual discourse.