

# MEDIA AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DANCE REALITY SHOWS

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the evolving dynamics of national integration in India through the lens of media, with a particular focus on dance and music reality shows. Tracing India's diverse socio-cultural fabric from the time of independence to the present day, the study raises pertinent questions about the formation and endurance of a unified national identity. It argues that despite political, linguistic, and regional divisions, mass media—especially television and digital platforms—have emerged as powerful tools for fostering emotional and cultural unity. Programs such as Kaun Banega Crorepati, India's Got Talent, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Dance India Dance, and Just Dance transcend boundaries of language, religion, and region by promoting shared emotions, aspirations, and participation. The paper highlights how stories of ordinary individuals achieving national recognition inspire a sense of collective pride and belonging among viewers. Furthermore, it emphasizes the dual role of traditional Indian cultural elements and global dance forms in shaping a modern, inclusive, and aspirational identity. Ultimately, the study concludes that media, particularly music*

## THE INDIAN NATION THEN AND NOW

Dawn of 1947, India had 350 million people. Nearly 100 princely states, 2000 ethnic groups, 1652 languages and dialects, 8 major Religions of the world being practiced when the Indian Nation was yet to be formed. Indian leaders and freedom fighters under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru formed 14 states and 06 Union Territories on linguistic basis in 1956. The formation of linguistic states in 1956 played a key role in preserving regional identity while building national unity (Raghavan, 2014). After much debate and little consent ultimately the National language was decided to be Hindi which was at that timespoken by only 43% population, were as 29 major Languages were actually being spoken in India then. The National Flag, the National Anthem, the National Emblem, the National Bird, the National animal all later became signs and symbols of Pride and Identity for all Indians to unite them in the new found era of independence. In the search for National Identity, the RepublicDay is celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> January from 1950 onwards as a National festival till date showcasing our military powers ,ourFolk dances , parades and our rich cultural heritage highlighting the 'Unity in Diversity'. When we fast forward and look at the India of 2017, India has 135.97 crore citizens. we see that in spite of further formations of 29 states and 07 union territories, there are new Political agendas with ulterior motives in Uttarpradesh to further divide it into 03 more states, the agitation for Telangana, Bodo land and new states and UTs till date makes the new generation Indian wonder, is the Indian Nation still in its formative stage?. Most Indians down south and in North East regions still do not accept Hindi or even English as a communication language. When India was being shaped by our leaders, freedom fighters and politicians it was going through turbulent times and itis still going through turbulent times after 60 strong years. We may be bound by our Constitution, our Political setup, our Physical and geographical boundaries, but in spite of our 6000 years old Civilization or say 60 years of so called Indianization , are we one ?or are we actually divided? What is it that makes us call ourselves Indians? Is it the shared legacy of rituals, customs and traditions? Do we have a legacy of shared collective consciousness and movements and a shared History? Do we have shareddreams, goals, aims and aspirations? Because only these aspects can integrate different communities worldwide! The major aspects needed for unity in a family is Love, tolerance and understanding. The same goes for the Nation family.The National Identity that Indians had developed from time to time in History especially during the Independence struggle, theNational pride on achieving Independence, showcasing ourselves to the world new and bigger achievements in this decade. Winston Churchill had predicted that India would fall apart once the British left the land. Yet this country of 1.2 billion isgoing strong within its democratic set up bewildering not only the outside world, but also our *Political Pundits*. In spite of it, one wonders as to what were the political and social circumstances that the need to form a National Integration Councilwas felt way back in 1961 and the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the reorganized NIC was held in Delhi recently in 2011.

## UNITY IN DIVERSTY : A MYTH OR REALITY?

The diversity of India's languages, religions, and cultures has always posed a challenge to integration. However, government schemes and educational reforms have aimed to bridge these divides (Kohli, 2006).

On 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, the 15<sup>th</sup> NIC meeting was held in Delhi under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, in the presence of 147 members consisting of all the Chief Ministers of all the States, Eminent persons from various fields in India. The very first Agenda to be discussed was the 'Communal Violence Bill'. Azgar Engineer in his article, "For the cause of Secularism" quotes the violence against Meo Muslims in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, and the Godara Kand in Gujrat. He has highlighted that the Meo Muslims in Bharatpur are early converts to Islam from Rajputs and they never gave up their ancestral cultural practices and even Tablighi movement which was launched in early twentieth Century failed to completely Islamize them and they continue to remain halfHindu halfMuslim culturally and ritually. Thus the theory of mainstreaming Muslims is patently false as all Muslims from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari and all other minority communities are Indians both culturally and in terms of social ethos , especially so in rural areas. Whereas Political parties play the religion, caste, creed communal card for petty politicking.

When one Compares this with the illusion or should one say the fantasy world of people thronging the Cinemas to see Salman Khan's *Dabang* and *Ready*, Amir Khan's *Gajani*, and 3 *Idiots*, Shah Rukh Khan's *Ra.One* and *Don* there are no dividing lines. The euphoria and Cricket mania in 2011 for the World Cup, from Sachin to Irfan Pathan, through controversies or no controversies, the music and dance reality show fever, the Hero worship for Cricketers, Cine Stars and Reality Show actors beyond caste, creed, color, religion and the whole Nation singing with A.R.Rehman, "JAI HO" ! Is like Mantra for the youth who feel that 'Yes we are one as a Nation'.

Whenever 'Wrong Political Decisions' have harmed society, it was set right in some measure by the Media. If 'petty Politics' was dividing the Nation, 'Pretty Media' was taking right TRP decisions to unite the Nation, may be for its own end, but the results were good for one and all. If not all of 1.2 billion feel some bonding then at least 125 million TV viewers and cinema buffs in this country have an emotional bonding and that is not a small number to influence the rest.

## MEDIA THE NEW MANTRA OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Television, especially state-run Doordarshan in the 1980s, was instrumental in Showcasing unity-oriented content. By 2017, Indian households consumed over 800 satellite channels (TRAI, 2016). India today has 125 million TV viewers, 515 TV Channels, 164 HINDI channels, DD National reaching 90% population and paid and others reaching 76%. 20 million using \_face book, Twitter and other social networking sites. 100 million people are using Internet making India the third largest Nation in the world in Internet users after China and USA. Out of which 84 % Youth in the age group of 16 to 34 are using social networks and Internet. Next to China, fnd1a has the second largest mobile phone users in the world with 881million users. Out of this 45% are rural users and the figure is ever increasing. The latest Social Network users are the Politicians themselves who are reaching out to the youth and citizens.

The new age India's growing digital information and entertainment needs are being met by Cell Phones as the cell phone penetration is bigger than Land Lines and PCs, because majority of Indians cannot actually afford PCs, so mobiles help to bridge the digital divide. The availability of a browser on the lowest specification handsets means many people can now not only call but also access the Web. The ability to access information changes people's lives and livelihoods. From health services to weather reports to prices of commodities for farmers to information on job portals, the sky is the limit for the coming times and in many ways this will integrate the country faster as more and more people are becoming interdependent and also into Social networking to "SHARE." Shows like 'Dance India Dance' and 'India's Got Talent' brought performers from across regions and social strata, offering a stage for cross-cultural representation. The 2015 season of DID alone garnered over 100 million viewers (BARC India, 2016).

According to Rajiv Hirandani, Co-Chair, MMA India and co-founder Mobile 2 win, for all reality TV shows and Song and Dance contests to KBC to Big Boss mobile users are choosing their winners through SMS which is 86.3% people. This is linkage between TV and mobile and communication leading to SHARING and leading to INTEGRATION. A mobile user in Tamil Nadu who may not understand Hindi but is a fan of Ranbir Kapoor subscribes to caller tunes and dialer tone of "*Sadda Haq ethe rakh*" and a Punjabi may subscribe to the latest National Tamil rage, "*Why this Kolavari Kolavari di*".

As per Divya Pal, Times of India reported that KBC 5 on Sony TV had the biggest TRPs in 2011 with the iconic Amitab Bachchan as host. This game show in itself is a huge example of integrating the country. The physically challenged Muslim contestant Yusuf Mallu being comforted by Amitab Bachchan and giving encouragement to him is a beautiful ever to remember example of bonding showcased to more than 27 Million viewers. The impact probably was manifold with Mr. Bachchan as Brand 'India'. The ingredients that made KBC an ideal program for National Integration is emotion and making dreams come true for millions of Indians.

The slogan 'An Idea can change your life' became a reality in this Reality Show. The victory of Sushil Kumar was the victory of many middle class Indians. An apt example of SHARED NATIONAL EMOTION and of course the Government of India made Sushil Kumar their Brand Ambassador for the MENREGA project in the Country. As commented by Santosh Desai, CEO of Future Brands in the IBN Live Channel discussion, Amitab Bachchan's bilingual ease of Elite English India meeting humble Hindi Bharat contestants reiterated the fact that Hindi and English together can continue to play a role in uniting us. KBC was like the new TRANSPARENT noble way of making money where in the true Indian sense *Saraswati* and *Laxmi* come together to bless the Indians. This was happening, ironically in the backdrop of Anna Hazare's Campaign against corruption, representative of Indians' dream to cleanse the system. Once again Media in all its form played a pivotal role in integrating the people especially the youth, who were yearning for new aims, goals and new political Heroes to look up to. It instilled in them the sense and sensibility, the awakening that some good things needed to be done for India their country they have inherited.

## DANCE AND MUSIC REALITY SHOWS AS PLATFORM FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

In India's Got Talent, on Color TV, credited to be Asia's biggest talent show, in 2009, talents were picked up from all over India. The story of Prince Dance Group from Behrampur Orissa and the members of this troupe all disadvantaged labourers were from remote area of Ganjam district, including two physically challenged participants. Their unique choreographies and concepts showing mythological stories of Bhagwat gita, Krishna and of course the Indian Pride of National Flag made the audience awe struck and chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 and their winning the show was again victory of the common man of India who were helped by their brethren to achieve this aim by way of voting, praying and sharing their emotions.

Many such stories speak of the emotional Indians bonding in new ways through the reality TV shows. Kamal Khan of Patiala winning the Sa Re Ga Ma pa music show in 2010, Ten year old Azmat Hussain winning Zee TV's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Lil Champ show 2011. The very slogan of the other dance show like 'Dance India Dance' on Zee TV speaks of introducing Indian talent to the Nation as a matter of Pride. Here again the winner of first season being Salman Khan from Bangalore, Shakti a female contestant from Mumbai, and many such success stories under the glamour of Grand master Mithun Chakravorty integrated the Nation. 'Just Dance' the new dance show on star plus in September/October 2011 with the 18 year old winner Ankan Sen from Bengal locking and popping with Hritik Roshan and showcasing the victory sign is like victory for all the young talent in India a shared victory.

This is not surprising taking into account the fact that India has always bonded and integrated through Dance and Music since ancient times. The *Natya Shastra* compiled in 2nd century BC codifies the Technique and system of Music and movements, emotions as Rasa and acting as *Abhinaya* which was followed by all the Classical dance forms from Manipur to Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh to Tamil Nadu, Orissa to Kerala, Assam to Andhra Pradesh.

The Classical Music styles of Hindustani and Carnatic similarly binds the whole of India with its Genre. Muslim Patrons like Akbar and Wazid Ali Shah had Hindu artistes adorning their courts and Hindu disciples in Music, Dance, Painting and many art forms have had Muslim Gurus. When at one time may be the Classical Dance and Music forms were for a class of people and could not reach the mass till today, but the new aspect of National Integration seen in these reality shows is that it reaches out to the masses and integrates them in larger than life ways. Another aspect which may be a negative to the traditional Indian culture but positive for the youth is that they are showcasing the global trends in dance by performing all forms of western dances, which, like the English language is uniting the youth. Ballet, Aerobics, salsa, hip hop, Ball room dance, acrobatics, locking and popping, shadow dancing, contemporary, the list is endless. However these very shows have given a new glamorized look to Indian Classical Dance as well when a UK based dancer Karan performed Classical Kathak in the show 'Just Dance' on Star Plus. Thus on such occasion the youth once again realize the true value of Indians and respect the deeper aspects of our culture, by touching the feet of the Dance Gurus and mentors in the shows.

## CONCLUSION

In her paper, "Corporate democracy: the Times of India 'Lead India' campaign", (2009), Alessandra Consolaro highlights that, for the 'Star One channel' and 'Times now', how the 'India Poised Anthem' is an emblem of unity in diversity, where in the Video, the lyrics of Gulzar (A Sikh by birth having Urdu/Muslim Pen name) having a strong Urdu flavour, the music by Shankar Eshaan Loy as their names are remindful of *Amar Akbar Anthony* as their names reveal the Hindu, Muslim and Christian origins show a perfect fusion of the diverse communities living in this country supporting common goals.

This ad campaign was also targeted towards the youth. The best way to capture the attention of the youth and to influence their influential minds is by motivating them to use their time and energy and talents in the right direction. Thus Indian culture has always laid stress on engaging in dancing and music with India boasting of 08 classical dances, more than 240 folk and tribal dances, because dance and Music are languages in themselves. We may have differences and we may have diversities, but we end up dancing and singing holding hands, and will continue to do so. The Media today has rightly captured this essence of true cultural bonding of the people through dance and music and it showcases those aspects which today directly or indirectly integrates us in spite of all odds. These reality dance shows are indeed the silver lining to National integration when the dark clouds of divisive politics tries to cast a shadow on this rising Nation. The transformation of media, especially reality television, from entertainment to a subtle vehicle of national unity cannot be overlooked. Its influence on youth, cultural pride, and identity continues to grow (Singh, 2015).

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