

**Media Laws and Ethics**  
**Unit - 2**  
**Constitutional and Legal Framework**

**Committees: Chanda Committee, P.C. Joshi Committee, Sengupta Committee and Verghese Committee**

**Chanda Committee**

**Formation of the Chanda Committee**

During Indira Gandhi's tenure as the Union Minister for information and Broadcasting, the Chanda Committee was constituted in December 1964, and it submitted its comprehensive report in April 1966, which was tabled in Parliament only in 1970. The committee was composed of distinguished members, including M. Chalapati Rao, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Vidya Charan Shukla, Ashok Mitra, Dr. Laxmi Singhvi, and Ms. Mehra Masani. Under the leadership of Chairman **Ashok Kumar Chanda (A.K. Chanda)**, the committee embarked on the task of reimagining the future of broadcasting in India. It recommended the liberation of Radio and from rigid government control by converting them into separate corporations. It took another six years to separate 'Doordarshan' from 'Akashvani' to create Akashvani and Doordarshan in 1976. though both function under the same administrative and financial procedures with common engineering and programme staff cadres.

**Objectives of the Chanda Committee**

The primary objectives of the Chanda Committee were to examine the working policy of All India Radio and Doordarshan, both of which were under the strict control of the government. The committee aimed to address the challenges faced by these broadcasting entities and provide recommendations for their transformation.

**Key Recommendations**

The Chanda Committee's recommendations were groundbreaking and laid the foundation for the modern Indian broadcasting landscape:

- ☐ **Separation of Akashvani and Doordarshan:** The committee emphasized the need to separate radio (Akashvani) and television (Doordarshan) to enhance their independence and effectiveness.
- ☐ **Autonomous Corporation for AIR:** It proposed that All India Radio should function as an autonomous corporation, **free from the rigid financial and administrative procedures of the government.**
- ☐ **Introduction of Advertisements:** The committee recommended that advertisements be aired on both All India Radio and Doordarshan to **generate revenue** and ensure financial sustainability.

- ☐ **Focus on Science and Agriculture:** Priority should be given to programs related to science and agriculture to address the informational needs of the nation.
- ☐ **Expansion of Rural Radio Stations:** To reach a wider audience, the Chanda Committee called for an increase in the number of radio stations in rural areas.
- ☐ **Administrative Reforms:** Administrative reforms were suggested for Doordarshan and All India Radio, including employee training to enhance efficiency.
- ☐ **National Council for Mass Communication:** To oversee broadcasting and ensure quality standards, the committee proposed the establishment of a National Council for Mass Communication.
- ☐ **It should be a Semi government body.**
- ☐ **The broadcasting corporation board should be established by an act of parliament.**

### History of Prasar Bharati Act, 1990

- ☐ **During the Emergency period,** Indira Gandhi buried the Chanda Committee Report. She openly questioned the need for credibility for the Government media. She widely misused the AIR for political propaganda.
- ☐ **In 1977,** initial steps were taken by the Janata Government and to suggest a remedy for this, **B.G. Varghese** Committee was appointed. In 1978, a report was submitted by this committee where it was recommended that there should be an independent National Broadcasting Trust (Akash Bharati) responsible for both Akashvani and Doordarshan.
- ☐ **In 1979,** a bill was introduced by **L.K. Advani** in the Parliament. He was Information and Broadcasting Minister at that time. This bill proposed the “Autonomous Corporation” for both AIR and Doordarshan which was known as Prasar Bharati. The bill lapsed and the Congress Government did not reintroduce the bill of its previous government.
- ☐ **In 1982, P.C. A Joshi Committee** was appointed whose main aim was to prepare a software plan for Doordarshan. According to this committee, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should be recognized. They also said that the Railway Board should be created in which only professional experienced people should get the entry.
- ☐ **In 1989,** the **Prasar Bharati Bill** was introduced by the National Front Government. Bill borrowed some contents from the previous bill and also added some new changes. V.P. Singh Government moved this bill and it was passed in Lok Sabha in August 1990.
- ☐ **In 1992,** the **Vardan Committee** was set up by **P.V. Narasimha Rao**. The committee was under K.A. Vardan, the additional secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. According to this committee, the second channel of Doordarshan should be leased out in 4 metros and some FM stations should also be leased out.
- ☐ Finally, Prasar Bharati came into force in 1997 which was established under the “Prasar Bharati Act” and came into existence on 23rd November 1997.

### P.C. Joshi Committee

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### **Working Group on Software**

For the Congress government, back in power by 1979, autonomy for AIR and Doordarshan was not considered necessary to enable these mass media to discharge their basic objectives of serving the people. The government appointed, in 1982, a Working Group with Dr. P.C. Joshi as Chairman **"to prepare a software plan"** for Doordarshan. The working group in its report submitted in 1984, emphasized the lack of functional freedom. It suggested reorganization of the information and Broadcasting Ministry on the Railway Board pattern and insisted that it should be similarly manned only by people with professional experience.

Consequently, the committee noted that the crucial issue is not autonomy versus government but urgent reforms in structure and management styles for support to creativity. It recommended the creation of an institutional arrangement which provided co-orientation and integration among political and communication spheres for policy guidelines and evaluation of the software.

### **Vergheze Committee**

#### **B.G. Varghese Committee**

Meanwhile, the Janata government appointed a Working Group on Autonomy for Akashvani and Doordarshan in August 1977 headed by B.G. Verghese, which submitted its recommendations on February 24, 1978. But the main suggestion of the Verghese Committee, the formation of the Akash Bharati or the National Broadcasting Trust for both AIR and Doordarshan, did not find favor even with the Janata rulers. Explaining the background to this bold recommendation, B.G. Verghese later said: *"the reason the people want an independent corporation is because the executive, abetted by a captive Parliament, shamelessly misused broadcasting during the Emergency. That is what has to be prevented for all time. Democracy is not something based on the pillar of only one institution, such as Parliament or the Judicial, however important it may be. It is a tapestry woven out of many institutions of which a free, responsible and creative broadcasting system is one of the most significant"*.

The Verghese committee Report was tabled in both houses of Parliament and finally, L.K. Advani, the Minister for information and Broadcasting introduced a bill on May 16, 1979. The Bill proposed the setting up of an Autonomous Corporation known as Prasar Bharati for both AIR and TV. But it substantially altered the basic structure of the proposed Corporation as

suggested by the Verghese Committee and rejected the provision of constitutional safeguards. But on the untimely dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the bill died a natural death. During the Emergency period, Indira Gandhi buried the Chanda Committee Report. She openly questioned the need for credibility for the Government media. She widely misused the AIR for political propaganda.

Consequently, it recommended the setting up of a National Broadcast Trust called Akash Bharti under which a highly decentralized structure would operate. Verghese committee in 1978 strongly recommended granting broadcast franchises to educational institution higher education projects launched in August 1984 known as Countrywide Classroom.