What is the role of Sindhi electronic media in bringing out a social change in Interior Sindh?

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INTRODUCTION

The electronic media in the interior region of Sindh, as elsewhere, serves as a link not only among people but also between the government and the people. Its role is very vital, as it informs people about social, economic and political issues besides the government’s policies vis-à-vis such issues and also provides subscribers the rationale to take better decisions for future. Since we see many bold and taboo topics being discussed in news based programmes in recent years, so therefore, one can state that the media is not only the conscience of society but also its safety valve. It should keep on playing the role of a catalyst for a rapid and positive social change not only in big cities but in remote areas as well where a large number of channels have appeared in recent years.

I want to explore what is the role of Sindhi language electronic media in bringing a positive social change among the people in the interior of Sindh. After their identification, the social issues I am going to explore include feudalism, as I feel that the social ills related to feudalism can be overcome if our media starts to play the role of a reformer. Apart from feudalism, lack of education among the population is another issue on which valid research about the current literacy rate as well the quality of education can help make significant difference. The problem of early marriages gives rise to numerous problems as well. I will also be focusing on karo kari which is considered as yet another major issue afflicting the people of the interior parts of Sindh these days.
The research will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will explore the existing concerns of the Sindhi language electronic media. There are six major Sindhi language channels like KTN, KTN News, Sindh TV, Sindh News, Dharti, and Mehran that offer news stories, special bulletins, debates, current affairs, talk shows, dramas, songs etc. By focusing on these channels, one can better comprehend the specific role of the Sindhi electronic media in addressing the major social problems of the targeted population. The second phase of my research is intended to interview two sample groups consisting of ten individuals each from the middle class and the lower income groups.

As such, I want to establish my study based on the facts to be derived from above research and to provide a reasonable conclusion in the end.
CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

While the use of electronic media around the world in introducing social change is by no means a recent phenomenon, it is rather a new concept in Pakistan and much more so if we take the case of interior parts of Sindh. As the television and radio were controlled by the government, the extent of impact electronic media was limited to the aims and objectives of the government. The other options available to the people were in the form of foreign radio services such as the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Ceylon, etc. With limited competition, the amount of information available to the people as well the impact of electronic media on people’s lives was also limited. The change in the role of electronic media started in 1990, when Shalimar Recording Company with its majority shares held by the government, awarded a contract to private channel NTM to provide programmes and advertisements for Pakistani viewers. Although this was a humble start, the idea of independent channels became popular and with the passage of time numerous channels like GEO, ARY, FM radio stations, also viewed in some parts of interior Sindh, competed with the government owned services. The Sindhi programmes on Pakistan television and radio started in the 1970s but the private Sindhi channels only started about two decades later. The

\[1\] http://www.pakistaneconomist.com/database2/cover/c2002-52.asp
\[2\] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindhi_language_media_in_Pakistan
competition among the channels has definitely increased the quantity and quality of the information to the people of interior of Sindh.

While evaluating the impact of electronic media on Sindh, it may also be useful to examine the extent to which the electronic affects other countries and regions. Although, in the case of Sindh, the role of the electronic media has become much more prominent over the past one decade with the introduction of numerous television channels, other regions particularly the western and developed countries have already developed a sophisticated media. The electronic media in these countries is relatively independent and devoid of unnecessary sensationalism. The level of progress of the media also determines the nature of its impact in different regions. For instance, if the electronic media is independent backed by highly educated anchors, journalists and media teams, its impact on a society is also likely to be more educational, durable and positive. On the other hand, biased and backward media will adversely affect the society and the people.

**i) United States of America**

The electronic media in the USA, due to its level of progress, sophistication and size is considered the most effective in the world with billions of dollars invested in it. The variety of mediums, networks and channels in the USA developed earlier in relation to other countries. While the CNN may focus on political issues, financial markets and weather forecasts from Los Angeles to Sydney, the local TV channels and the FM radio stations with their limited reach may only cover the local counties
i.e. equivalent of the districts in Pakistan. In relation to the social problems, the electronic media in the USA has been an important tool for change. Racial segregation was, and to some extent remains, one the major American social problems. But if it was not for the TV cameramen and scores of reporters covering the freedom march of young Americans in Birmingham, USA under the patronage of Martin Luther King Jr., where the segregationist mayor Bull Connor outraged the American by shouting ‘look at those niggers run’ after unleashing his fury, who knows how much longer it may have taken the blacks to at least get legal equality in the US system. The impact of the electronic media in the USA is also more obvious in the manner it affects the political system of that country which also eventually has a bearing on the social issues. There have been numerous cases of people dropping out in the electoral process or resigning from offices after being elected because of the sophisticated coverage by the electronic media. Richard Nixon, who was initially considered a very popular politician and a capable President had to resign from office because of the Watergate scandal investigated and reported upon, amongst others, by an advanced and responsible electronic media as far back as the early seventies.

(ii) Israeli-Palestinian conflict
The coverage of the conflict in the Middle East provides a complex example of the impact of electronic media around the world. The issue of Israeli-Palestinian conflict has drawn the most attention at the international level over the past sixty years. The

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4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate_scandal
7
issue has been covered from different perspectives by the electronic media in various parts of the world. While the electronic media in the western countries, despite being claimed as objective, has mostly remained pro-Israeli, the media in the developing and Muslim countries has also focused on the plight of the Palestinians\textsuperscript{5}. The consequence of the biased coverage of western electronic media is that most of the American and European people are not even aware of the exact number of Palestinian casualties or the sufferings of the refugees. Due to lack of such awareness, the people in these countries are not in a position to exercise influence on their governments which may result in amicable resolution of the conflict. Instead, the lack of pressure on the powerful western governments results in availability of military and financial assistance to the Israeli government which only extends the conflict, adding to the misery of the Palestinians. On the other hand, the coverage of the issue by the electronic media in most of the developing and Muslim countries, which owes more to proper comprehension of the issue rather than sophistication of the electronic media, has resulted in some moral and material support for the Palestinians in these countries.

The coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by western electronic media raises the question if it is at all possible to have a completely independent electronic media without the biases of media-owners, hosts and reporters. Nevertheless, the awareness created by the electronic about the sensitive nature of the conflict has resulted in numerous rounds of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This is despite

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5} http://electronicintifada.net/new.shtml}
the adamant positions of the two sides and the strong support for Israel by the powerful and influential western governments. During the recent Israel offensive in Gaza, it was the pressure that resulted from the massive coverage of the Israeli aggression, which eventually forced Israel to withdraw from the region. Therefore, while the international media may not be totally unbiased but its impact tantamount to creating awareness, addressing and contributing towards resolving the issues.

(iii) Iran

Between 1979 and 1986 Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines underwent dramatic political and social revolutions. In the couple of decades which followed the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatullah Khomeini, there was great emphasis on values like 'hijab' for the women. But with outreach of the electronic media, social changes did find their roots in the later years. With the growing civil society, the discontented youth, women who refuse to cover, and an educated population, Iran is steadily advancing towards a change. There is demand for change in the past social structures by the majority of the population who has struggled together for many years. This process is not led by a vanguard of the society's elite, nor directed by outside sources. Rather, and more importantly, this process is in motion as a result of a transforming population some decades after a popular revolution. Over the past two decades, different portions of Iran's population have protested against the government at various times and the electronic media has come out of government control as well. It is interesting to note that the degree of independence in the Iranian films, the books

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6 http://www.time.com/time/time100/leaders/profile/khomeini.html
by Iranian authors as well as the Iranian designs have become popular even with the western subscribers.

In order to understand the impact of the collective actions of the Sindhi electronic media to bring positive social changes in Interior Sindh, we have to look into the causes of revolutions, their development and outcomes as well.

(iv) Sindh

Compared to the electronic media in other countries, the impact of the electronic media in Sindh has only become apparent, and not even effective, in the recent years with the coverage of events like the restoration of the Chief Justice of Pakistan. Until the nineties, the people in Sindh as in other of Pakistan relied for information on the state controlled television and radio. The exception was only the foreign radio channels like the BBC and the Voice of America. While these channels did provide the information not available on the state controlled television and radio stations, their role in mobilizing the people was non existent. Our electronic media, in the context of its impact, as such has to go a long way and acquire latest technologies, highly educated hosts and independence before it can attain the level of impact which exists in developed countries.

The electronic media in Sindh started in the 1970s. Initially 25 minutes were set for Sindhi language program in Sindh. The programs were being telecast on Pakistan Television in early evening time. Then there came another channel named PTV national where only regional programs were telecasted. KTN is considered as the first
private channel of Sindhi language, after which Sind T.V and Kashish have also chased the way. Now we also have Mehran and Dharti. Sindhi language media may suffer from the lack of advanced technologies, educated media teams but it cannot be solely held responsible for not being independent and objective. The biased reporting can even be observed in the western electronic media despite the high level of its progress.

http://www.doublestandards.org/biaspale.html
CHAPTER TWO

THE PROPAGANDA MODEL BY NOAM CHOMSKY

The propaganda model is a theory advanced by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky that alleges systemic biases in the mass media. In their 1988 book Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, the Propaganda model views five general classes of filters that determine the type of news that is presented in news media. The five so-called filters include:

(i) Ownership

Herman and Chomsky argue that since mainstream media outlets are large corporations, the information presented to the public will be biased with respect to these interests and have extensive financial interests that may be endangered when certain information is widely publicized. According to this reasoning, news items that most endanger the corporate financial interests of those who own the media will face the greatest bias and censorship. It then follows that if to maximize profit means sacrificing news objectivity, then the news sources that ultimately survive must be fundamentally biased.

(ii) Funding

Since the mainstream media depend heavily on advertising revenues to survive, the model suggests that the interests of advertisers come before reporting the news. The
news itself is nothing more than filler to get privileged readers to see the advertisements which makes up the real content, and will thus take whatever form is most conducive to attracting educated decision-makers. Stories that conflict with their buying mood will tend to be marginalized or excluded, along with information that presents a picture of the world that collides with advertisers interests. The news itself has only a marginal role as the product.

(iii) Sourcing

The third filter concerns the mass media's need for a continuous flow of information to fill their demand for daily news. During the year 2005 in the USA, the the Bush administration was criticized for the preparation and distribution of videos which falsely give the impression of being interviews made independently of the administration. The New York Times reported that "more than 20 federal agencies, including the State Department and the Defense Department, now create fake news clips. New York Times revealed how the US Pentagon and Defense Department traded access to valuable information and powerful decision makers to ex-military officers, many now military contractors, who were parroting administration talking-points and providing favorable analysis regarding the Iraq War and related topics on/in major television, radio and print media.

(iv) Flak

For Chomsky and Herman "flak" refers to negative responses to a media statement or program. The term "flak" has been used to describe what Chomsky and Herman as
targeted efforts to discredit organizations or individuals who disagree with or cast doubt on the prevailing assumptions. Flak is characterized by concerted and intentional efforts to manage public information. Flak from the powerful can be either direct or indirect. The direct could include the following hypothetical scenarios: Letters or phone calls from the White House to Dan Rather or William S. Paley; inquiries from the FCC to major television networks requesting documents used to plan and assemble a program.

(v) **Anti-ideologies**

Anti-ideologies exploit public fear and hatred of groups that pose a potential threat, either real, exaggerated, or imagined. Communism once posed the primary threat according to the model. Communism and socialism were portrayed by their detractors as endangering freedoms of speech, movement, press, etc. With the Soviet Union's collapse, proponents of the propaganda model have argued that the functionality and credibility of anti-communism has been fundamentally compromised.

If the propaganda model is indeed right and the filters do influence media content, a particular form of bias would be expected. To analyze mainstream media functioning, Some groups like the , Free Press, FAIR and Media Lens subject media to close scrutiny.

The assertions made in the propaganda model basically mean that out of the information available to the people, only the select goes through to the people. The filters of information including ownership, funding, sourcing, flak and anti-ideologies basically change the essence and spirit of information. One can well imagine the
extent to which indicated filters would adversely affect the available information in a semi-literate and under developed region like rural Sindh when even the most and conscious cannot remain unaffected. The electronic media in Sindh also remains susceptible to the model as ownership, funding and sourcing is concentrated in a few families with vested interests while the government is also able to affect the content and push for its ideological approach through direct or indirect means, whether these be in the form of advertising revenues or other coercive measures. The viewers as such are vulnerable to the policies of the owners, the government and other vested interests.
As a part of Pakistan, with similar history, government, religion and even cultural values, there is considerable degree of similarity among the social problems of the interior parts of Sindh with those of the other regions of the country. However, what sets them apart is the impact which the electronic media has had due to its outreach in the different regions by addressing such issues.

(i) Karo kari
Karo kari can be described as one of most the heinous social evils of the rural areas of Sindh. The term is basically a compound word literally meaning “black male” and “black female”, metaphoric terms for an adulterer and an adulteress. In practice, Karo kari means killing both the alleged culprits. But more often than not, only women become the real victims of the Karo kari and lose their lives in a brutal manner. The murderers believe the victim to have brought dishonour upon their families. Every year dozens of women fall victims to this social evil. These killings target women and men who choose to have relationships outside of their families. It is ironical that despite observing so many brutal deaths around them on the same charges the women
and men indulge in the adultery. The way these people are killed must be an example for others, yet such incidents happen and the so-called honoured ones of the area resort to Karo kari, which rather than being a matter of honour is actually a stigma upon our otherwise vibrant Sindhi culture as the principles of justice like providing ample opportunities of hearing to the victims is not provided. The reasons why honour killings continue to take place are several. Jealousy that arises from male suspicion and insecurity, is one of these, which eventually leads to extreme rage and violence. The male’s perception of his superiority is also a contributing factor. There is also the male hypocrisy that women must not be allowed to exercise choice in relationships, an attitude that perhaps also reaches far beyond the borders of Sindh. Karo kari is at times proudly cherished in the rural areas of Sindh. In the name of honour, numerous scores are settled which are mainly related to inheritance problems, feudal animosities or just to get rid of a wife for a second marriage. Women or even men, at times, manage to flee after being accused as they know that they will be killed but then the feudals of the area give them their word, and when they come back, they meet their fate in a brutal mode. To elaborate the social evil, one can for instance cite the example of village Muhammad Ismail Mahar in district Ghotki where a lady Hanifa was brutally killed by her spouse, Waryam, who accused her of having illicit relationship with her sister's husband. Before killing and burying her without funeral, Waryam put her in a ditch and tortured her with threats that she would be buried alive if she did not confess. Hanifa refused to accept the charges against her which resulted in her murder by the husband. Before her assassination, the victim had to seek shelter
in Rahim Yar Khan and had only returned when the feudal of area, Muhammad Ismail Mahar assured her that she will not be killed. As she came back, she was taken hostage by her husband, tortured and killed and Muhammad Ismail Mahar did not provide the promised protection. This is in fact a norm in most assassinations carried out by the proponents of this evil practice.

The question then is how to eliminate the evil of the so-called honour killings? There must be strict adherence to the laws but the basic root cause of this social evil is lack of education and ignorance. The people lose their souls when they lose their essential human rights. Why cant the rural people of Sindh be taught about their basic rights and morality? When the people are not aware of their rights and also do not have easy access to justice, abuses such as discrimination, intolerance, injustice, oppression and slavery arise. If one can reach the young people of Sindh, educate them and also and teach them what their human rights are, we might begin the social revolution that erases the social evil of honour killings from our society. No more young women or men will then become victims of the whimsical fashion in which revenge is served for so-called honour.

Bina Shah, while quoting the Youth for Human Rights website said, "when human rights are not well known by people, abuses such as discrimination, intolerance, injustice, oppression and slavery can arise. If we can reach the young people of our province and teach them what their human rights are, we might begin the social revolution that erases honour killing from our society. No more young women or men shot or killed or buried for honour, ever again."
(ii) Feudalism

One cannot change the past but the efforts of individuals as well as the society can make a difference to the present as well as to the future. Wise people always find solutions by accepting realities of the day. Since the creation of Pakistan, new forms of feudalism have spread in Pakistan. There is no question that socially, culturally and ethnically, Sindh is the only province affected by major transformations compared to the pre-Pakistan Sindh. This may mainly be due to the feudal system prevalent in Sindh.

In his essay titled ‘Feudalism and Honour killing’ in Worldpress.com, Mr Akmal Wasim states that the “history of feudalism can be traced to the medieval period in the sub-continent. This is evident from the practice that each time the emperor or king died, the existing incumbents of the military-feudal land-holdings risked losing them because they had no right of ownership and the new ruler preferred to place his own men in such places. As the assets were sources of power and authority, loyalty was naturally closely associated with these sources. Consequently, any chance to occupy such holdings was precarious and was used to acquire as much wealth as possible. This resulted in a rapacious system of exploitation. After the British had ruthlessly crushed the 1857 uprising, they established a more stable structure of feudalism by conferring property rights on those who remained loyal to them. This class became the mainstay of the colonial system and most of the people who belonged this class (maharajas, zamindars, khans, and pirs) opposed the freedom struggle. The radical
and popular scholarship described this class as feudals and its practices as feudalism. Since independence, the promise to relieve the peasant from feudal oppression and the economic stranglehold, which the main proponent of the independence, Muslim League as well as other national level political parties made to the people, has not been fulfilled. It is interesting to note that the feudal system received its greatest support from the fundamentalist ideologues who argued that in Islam there has no limit on the ownership of land if it is legally acquired. Despite the fact that at least two attempts to redistribute land holdings have been made since the independence of the country to reduce the concentration of wealth, these have not proved successful in eradicating the evil of feudalism. The first attempt, announced by Ayub Khan in 1959, limited the holdings to 500 acres of the irrigated and 1000 acres of the unirrigated land. Subsequently, the land reforms launched by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972 further reduced the of irrigated and unirrigated holdings to 150 and 300 acres respectively. At the same time, it was observed that although the land holdings were in the hands of the feudals, the actual concentration of wealth in Pakistan shifted from this class to the industrial and the commercial classes in urban areas which also acquired influence with the power. But the interior of Sindh, which is the focus of research, remained vulnerable to the political, economic and social influence of feudalism.

The feudals of Sindh, are among the biggest land holders in Pakistan and it has been argued that, like others, they have never been found to be sincere in relation to the

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interests of the people of Sindh. This is evident from the fact that the poor people are still found in private jails being operated by renowned political elites-cum-feudals. Those in power must change themselves before the masses will change their attitudes. Feudalism should be wiped out to end the evils associated with the exercise of power by the few against the interests of the majority, at times completely disregarding the law of the land and the overall welfare of the region. This can best be achieved if there is awareness and awareness only comes through education. Sindhi society, culture and language can best be served in an effective manner only through an independent electronic media, free from the grip of feudal lords as well the interests of this class.

(iii) Lack of education

In Sindh, known for its ancient culture and civilization, the educational standard is on the decline and needs reformers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Hasan Ali Effendi to infuse a new spirit of learning in its people and enable them to face the challenge of competition. Lack of education is essentially linked to economic conditions, awareness and social structure. As most of the population in Sindh, particularly the people in rural areas, are suffering from poverty, lack of awareness about the actual benefits of education as well as a deeply polarized social structure, education has not made the required level of impact on peoples’ lives. Lack of education not only results in poverty as in economic terms but also in poverty of opportunities. A report of the Asian Development Bank indicates the level of literacy among women in the
country at 29% as against 55% for men. The report also suggests that gender inequalities in education affect the role and status of women.

In addition to lack of access to education of men and women, the quality of education has also deteriorated over the past decades. The introduction of regional politics in the educational institutions, recruitment of teachers on political basis and failure to maintain strict and transparent standards in examinations have brought the quality of education to such pathetic levels that even the post-graduate students are found at a loss in different forms of communication. In the interior parts of Sindh, it is generally believed that it no less than a miracle for a so-called highly educated student of the local institutions to write a proper application for a job.

“A majority of Sindhi girls and almost half of Sindhi boys do not receive even basic schooling and remain illiterate”. Says Sughra Junejo, Nazim, Mirpurkhas. She also adds that the Sindhi electronic media must highlight the issues confronting the Sindhi society living in remote areas by adopting a professional, objective, fair and impartial approach.

In the rural areas of Sindh, the tea shops in small towns and villages, particularly around the highways and roads are popular socializing venues. These venues are not only popular among the population in higher age brackets, but even the young are found wasting their time in such places. Besides the tea shops, ‘autaqs’ or house portions for males are used for exchange of gossip and carrying out ‘faislas’ or jirgas. As such, the overall impact of the social venues in rural areas appears to be negative
instead of one which can enable people to deal with problems like lack of education, poverty, lack of awareness and a polarized social structure. Unless due attention is paid to primary education, the future of higher learning for new generation would remain bleak.

(iv) Early marriages

The practice of early marriages, common among the uneducated people of the province, mostly afflicts the rural areas. Poverty and lack of education are the major contributing factors for this social evil. As a consequence of lack of education and ignorance, a significant number of people in the rural areas consider it a waste of money to spend on the educational requirement of girls. On the other hand, as soon as the girls grow a little older, they are used for work in the agriculture fields, around the house and married at early age in exchange for money, In other words, the females are treated as commodities rather than human beings. There have been horrific cases of young girls married to older men for financial benefits of her family. The case of Sassi, a young girl from Thatta, married to a 70 years old man at the age of only nine years for Rs.70,000 indicates the extent of the practice in Sindh. Married at young ages, the females are unable to properly train or educate their own children or to cope with other social problems. The males too cannot handle the pressures related to taking care of their families whether these pertain to social responsibility or economic independence.
From a religious point of view, Sindh was one of the few places which were first exposed to the enlightenment of Islam. But if one looks around today, instead of the progressive ideas of Islam, the tribal and cultural notions, based on gender discriminatory practices, appear to be more powerful in Sindh, as perhaps in the rest of the country, in determining the status and role of the women. As the issue of early marriages is closely linked with ignorance, there is tremendous potential for the electronic media to educate people on the problems related to early marriages. Only those people who are educated themselves are able to ward off the curse and properly educate their children before their marriages.
CHAPTER FOUR

EXISTING ROLE OF LOCAL MEDIA

In his book ‘The Access Principle’, author John Willinsky has elaborated on Aristotle’s statement that ‘all men by nature desire to know’. The author considers this statement as the basis for what he terms as the modern knowledge economy and constructed his arguments for the principle of free access to information particularly in developing countries. In the West, media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy. The other pillars of include the parliament, judiciary and administration. All the pillars of democracy work in their respective fields and concentrate on their respective rights and obligations. All the three pillars except media have their defined set of duties and responsibilities. Undoubtedly, the media in recent times is tasked with a great role as well as responsibilities. Compared to the role of the media in introducing social changes around the world, the electronic media in Sindh is also striving to come up to peoples’ expectations despite being subjected to the odds one observes in the cases of the USA, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iran. As the people desire to know more about the issues which concern them in a developing region like the interior Sindh, the media, reflecting the ground realities, helps the government in successful implementation of its policies. There are numerous examples when programmes of the government achieved their targets due to the efforts of media. The major examples of this include the polio eradication campaign, family planning programmes, Aids awareness programme. Media has given a boost
several development initiatives by providing proper coverage to them, for instance, to schemes related to rural development. Media offers infotainment to people which means it is not only providing information to people regarding various fields but it is entertaining the people as well.

If one is to assess the existing role of the electronic media in dealing with the social evils like karokari, feudalism, lack of education and early marriages, it is apparent that these issues are addressed in different teleplays as well as talk shows. Based on such issues, the focus of the media appears to be on highlighting the social evils not only to draw the attention of the people but in creating an outrage to the extent that government is also forced to take remedial measures. Besides television and radio, internet has also become popular particularly among the youth in the smaller cities in the interior of Sindh. As such, people of Sindh have much more access to information in the recent times.

According to reports, there were 2,722 human rights violation complaints all over Pakistan from 2002 to 2006. Sindh topped the provinces in terms of human rights violations (1,255), followed by the Punjab (988), the NWFP (262) and Balochistan (154). The bi-annual report on human rights violations by World Sindhi Institute has also revealed that a huge number of cases of human rights violations, including disappearance of political and human rights workers, lack of press freedom, violence against minorities and women and the bulldozing of villages, are prominent problems
in the Sindh. The electronic media in Sindh has continued to report such violations. In fact, the coverage of some of the cases has been so intense that the government and some observers have accused the Sindhi television channels of indulging in sensationalism.

Despite the electronic media’s focus on certain issues, it must embark upon an effective and genuine campaign in the interior of Sindh to change attitudes. Its responsibility should not only be to entertain just some sections of society but also to spread awareness. The electronic media, in the past, has mostly highlighted the glamorized version of the lives of the feudal class, the so-called celebrities or the criminals. There are few solutions, linked to education, for instance in the TV serials and other programmes available in the native Sindhi language which can motivate people to educate their children. The focus on the criminals in the teleplays rather has an adverse impact on the people who are influenced by ideas of getting easy money through criminal activities. The enduring impact of education on economic and social uplift of the people, on the other hand, is not given its due importance in the media.

The programmes on the radio are comparatively more constructive but due to the limited number of listeners of radio talk shows in this day and age, the benefits of such shows are also limited.

After viewing the news stories shown on major channels like KTN and Sindh news, one finds that the Sindhi electronic media is helping the people in getting justice as many people approach to media for justice and numerous criminals confess their crimes before the media. Media creates awareness among people about their rights as
well as duties. Sindhi media can also help in successful implementation of democracy by providing correct information about activities of various political parties to the people.

**CASE STUDY:1**
At times, electronic media in the interior parts of Sindh does play a vital role in highlighting the concerns, hopes and dreams of the poor people. We all know that innocent women are becoming victims of acid attacks across interior region of Sindh basically due to the rising trend of malignant aggression and a police system riddled with inefficiencies and indifference. As a result of the hue and cry in the media, the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, took notice of the incident and directed the Sukkur Regional Police Officer to investigate the case of Maria Shah, who became a victim of the heinous crime. Aslam Sanjrani, a rickshaw driver, threw acid on the 25-year old Maria Shah, who was a lady health worker from Shikarpur. While she was working in a clinic, she was attacked when only fault was that she declined to marry the offender. Through the electronic and print media, Maria Shah’s case drew attention of the Prime Minister, who not only announced financial assistance for the girl but also issued order that the culprit should immediately be apprehended and be made to pay for his crime.

Dr. Samrina Hashmi, General Secretary of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Karachi, while commenting on the crimes against women stated that “we have sent as many as 300 women in the assemblies but they are not even aware of what is going on in their own locality. Until and unless social inequality is not removed and women
do not become independent economically, ugly incidents of acid burning and
domestic violence will continue.” It is important that primary and secondary
education should be ensured to all women, and economic equality between women
and men should be guaranteed because if this does not happen, we will continue to
witness horrendous incidents like the horrific attack on Maria Shah.

**CASE STUDY: 2**

The daughter of a bank officer and member of the Khaskheli tribe in Sanghar, Shazia, an intermediate student, left her home on September 27, 2003 and eloped with Mohammad Hassan Solangi, the driver at a neighbour's house. Shazia and Hassan Solangi, were subsequently brutally murdered in Sanghar, Sindh. The murders followed hours of unimaginable inhuman torture inflicted on the victims. Their murder was not just a simple crime, but a premeditated execution. The incident was not considered shocking, not even out of the ordinary in a region which is in the grips of social evils like ignorance and feudalism. It was basically a murder conducted in the name of karo kari. Significantly, it was only after the Sindhi media got wind of the incident that the Supreme Court took notice of it and it also became known to the people. Reportedly local journalists following the story were threatened by Khaskheli tribesmen. While karo kari murders are tragically common place in the interior parts of Sindh, this particular incident had some variations. "It is a new trend when people other than the immediate family declare a girl kari and kill her without the consent of her father. Since the incident there has been a gloom in Sanghar and many people
stopped their girls from going to college\textsuperscript{11}. This incident was one of the worst violations of human rights and the local T.V channels proved to be effective in highlighting the crime.

According to Dawn, 4\textsuperscript{th} May 2006, the former Senator Javed Jabbar called for framing laws to further streamline the working of electronic media. While speaking as chief guest at a seminar on ‘electronic media,- its problems and impact’, the ex-senator who is also involved in social work stated that ”positive use of electronic media can be useful while those having negative approach can use this effective medium deterring society, causing damage to the interests of people and the country“. He analyzed the existing role of the media by admitting that a majority of the channels were presenting analytical programmes on current affairs involving a limited number of experts and intellectuals, without giving sufficient time span to the subject or issue, which largely caused confusion among the viewers.

“While watching Sindhi Channels, I find that many of the things which were considered improper are now talked about with an open mind. Our Sindhi society is changing and acceptance has come. But I also find it strange that people have adopted a very artificial style of speaking. The body language of the girls shown in Sindhi songs on Kashish is so bold at times that it certainly does not depict our cultural values. I feel there is less sensitivity among the new lot of writers.” Says Mehtab Akbar Rashdi.

\textsuperscript{11} \url{http://www.newsline.com.pk/newsNov2003/cover1nov2003.htm}
WHERE THE ROLE OF MEDIA IS LACKING

If one looks back at last 60 years, the electronic media in Pakistan has become more confident and aggressive. A socio-political awakening began during the era of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto when Sindhis started to take an active interest in the country’s political process. This awareness spread rapidly during the struggle against general Zia’s martial law regime in the 1980s and blossomed with time. However, it would be an exaggeration to state that the electronic media has been successful in its role in introducing social changes in the interior of Sindh.

To begin with, the Noam Chomsky model which includes factors like ownership, funding, sourcing, flak and anti-ideologies apply as much to the electronic media in Sindh as in other parts of the world. Issues like biases of the owners, advertisers, ideological tendencies and government influences prevent the electronic media from being objective. While one would observe a glamorized and villainous landowner in the teleplays, there is lack of focus the positive aspects of the society to provide the subscribers with sources of comparison and ideal role models to follow. Similarly, there is also a dearth of self-searching or positive criticism which may evoke enduring positive changes. In the west, managing change is considered as a way of life for the electronic media personnel who have to routinely contend with a shifting public policy climate, accelerating technological innovation, operating profitably
besides responding to the interests of the community it serves\textsuperscript{12}. Therefore, the question arises if the electronic media is able to manage social change in the interior parts of Sindh, despite the numerous obstacles or social evils. While the media does report specific issues and provides entertainment desired by certain segments of the population, there is a still considerable way to go before it can be in a position to manage change in the interior parts of Sindh.

Social change normally starts from exchange of information among people at social venues. In the interior region of Sindh, road-side teashops and now to a lesser degree, the ‘autaqs’ are popular socializing places. However, the people visiting such places are preoccupied with Indian movies, TV serials or the teleplays on Sindhi TV channels. Some of them, including school-going children, are in fact addicted to such shows to the extent that the activity serves as a diversion from economic and educational pursuits. The electronic media, as such, should not only focus on constructive programmes but also inculcate the need for setting priorities for the people so that the people are not distracted from economic and educational pursuits.

At present, there are only a limited number of educational programmes available in English and Urdu languages but these can be comprehended by people in urban areas or a small educated minority in the rural areas which does not suffer from the lack of education.

The electronic media in Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim nation, could have provided a conducive atmosphere for females by emphasizing how the religion served

\textsuperscript{12} Peter K. Pringle, Electronic Media Management (Elsevier, 2006), 2.
to deal with social evils 1500 years back. However, the existing role of the Sindhi electronic media is at best limited in dealing with social problems like karokari, feudalism, lack of education and early marriages. There are a number of programmes, especially teleplays, which have touched these subjects to some extent and depicted the problems associated with such social evils. Nevertheless, the number of programmes available in the electronic media which spell out the progressive nature of religion to bring about positive changes is limited and that too mostly in the English and Urdu languages.

The role of the electronic media in relation to politics in Interior Sindh which also has an impact on the social issues is demonstrated during coverage of elections, a time when behind the scenes activities are open for public. This is the time when party leaders fight for party tickets and alliances are made. In a country like Pakistan, where the people hardly get the power to vote once in five years, electronic media has a vital role to play. After the elections an ordinary citizen can only exercise his control, for the rest of the time, through public debates for which the media is the most important platform. As Pakistan's political system is dominated by elite groups and it also faces the dilemma of chronic military rule, media also acts as an eye, keeping a check on the people in power who often tend to misuse it in the absence of such checks. But the question remains that can we spot the credibility of some of the important reports in the electronic media that have made any difference to the lives of people in Interior Sindh. The coverage of the electronic media would be much more effective if the misdeeds of the candidates and the unfulfilled promises were exposed.
But it appears that in relation to political issues, the coverage of the electronic media is subjective and the factors indicated in Noam Chomsky’s model overweigh the need for fair coverage which can initiate positive social changes.

When one tunes into a Sindhi news channel, one often comes across ground breaking investigative reports and charged political commentary. While Sindh T.V telecasts programmes such as, Issues & Ideas, Jaizo, Karachi Talk, Reports Time, Goth Goth mein and Fikri Sawal to highlight the past and current social and political issues, KTN has programmes like 50 minutes with Manzoor, Special reports, From reporters desk, News extra, Views line, Iqtidar-e-aiwan man and Issues. These channels also show an increased level of cynicism among poor people about their living conditions in interior parts of Sindh. A void that existed a decade ago when Sindhis needed a platform that could discuss their socio-economical and political issues from a Sindhi perspective is no more and the struggle for life of these people shown on television is an example for the entire nation. It is also seen that whenever a Sindhi news channel breaks some violent story about social discrimination like innocent villagers being murdered or stories of hunger strikes protesting the injustices of wadera or the police, it is further picked up by the national media.

Abbas Jalbani writes in his article ‘Speaking for Sindh’ in The Herald, August 1998, that “Sindhi electronic media is overly politicized and overlooks other areas of viewers interest, such as sports, business and decent entertainment”. Most Sindhi language news channels are backed by the ruling government, therefore, there is a tendency to project the government’s stand on certain issues while ignoring the
alternate perspectives. In fact, the media must serve as a mirror to the society by representing the facts as they are. All Sindhi language media should put in collective and concrete efforts to raise the awareness among the masses particularly in rural areas about basic issues like health, education, domestic violence etc. In such critical times as these, the work of the channels for the welfare of poor people is nothing less than a struggle.
CONCLUSION

Although the role of the electronic media in bringing about a social change in the interior parts of Sindh has a limited history, it has assumed considerable significance over the last decade with the rapidly expanding means of communication. Initially, the only means available to the people in Sindh in terms of the electronic media were the local and foreign radio stations but with the passage of time, a large number of television channels and to a limited degree, the internet, have also attracted subscribers from across the province. The case studies reflect that by concentrating on specific issues, the electronic media was able not only to draw the attention of the people to these issues but the government also responded by providing relief to the people affected by social crimes.

Despite its expanding role in recent times, the electronic media still has a long way to go before it can bring about enduring positive social changes in the interior parts of Sindh. Social evils like Karo kari, feudalism, lack of education and early marriages are deeply rooted not only in Sindh but throughout Pakistan. At present, the electronic media appears to be engaged in sporadic efforts to portray the evils. But as in other countries, like the USA, Iran and the Middle East where the electronic media has been more successful in creating outrage among the people and the governments despite their limitations in terms of Noam Chomsky’s model, the efforts of the electronic media in Sindh have initiated the social changes which will perhaps require several years to materialize. By acquiring latest technologies, avoiding
sensationalism, supported by well-educated personnel and remaining objective, the electronic media may be in a much better position to strengthen its efforts and accelerate the process of bringing about positive social changes in the interior parts of Sindh.
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THESIS STATEMENT

By acquiring latest technologies and avoiding sensationalism along with the support of well-educated people and remaining objective, the Sindhi electronic media will be in a much better position to strengthen its efforts and accelerate the process of bringing about positive social changes in the interior parts of Sindh.
I dedicate this dissertation to all the male dominated females living in rural areas of Pakistan.

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