A South Asian Platform

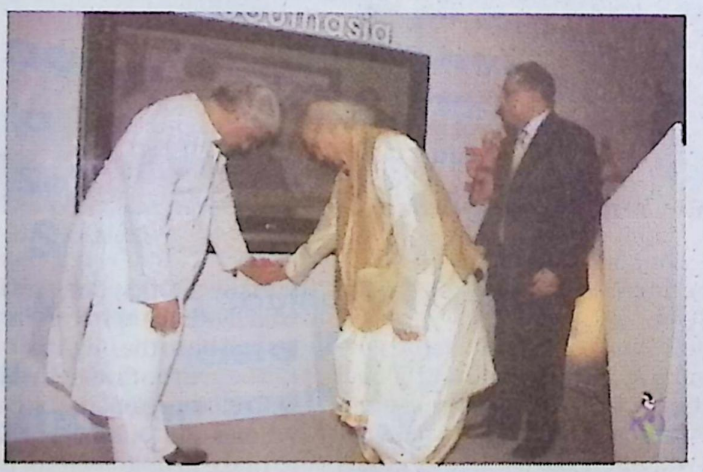
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On October 4, 2008, journalists, academicians, young students and professionals from all over South Asia came together at the ITC Sonar Bangla hotel in Kolkata for a colloquium on 'Religion and Media', organised by TV South Asia in collaboration with Tara TV. Moderated by Rubana Huq, the CEO of TV South Asia, the otherwise cosy and cheerful environment inside the hall turned slightly sombre when clips from a recent Pakistani talk show episode were presented to the group. Right after the bombs hit the Marriott Hotel in Pakistan, a caller got into a riff with George, one of the hosts of the talk show 'Kiran aur George' on TV South Asia, a live talk show, when the caller suggested that the media was probably worsening the situation by presenting all the negative elements of the bomb blasts to the outside world. "Why can't we be more positive?" asked the caller. The disturbed talk show host, instead, wondered how the media was supposed to play a more positive role, where a catastrophe had just struck the civilians.



TV South Asia links lands and legacies.

On a stretch of land where people share religions, languages and cultures, such devastations have now become a part and parcel of people living in South Asia. Probably with this in mind, a group of activists and broadcasters had met in Kolkata in early December 2006, at the initiative of Tara News and decided to put together a magazine show, 'Southasian'. Incidentally, the launch of 'Southasian' happened on the eve of the 14th SAARC Summit in Delhi. The first programme was aired on the April 8, 2007 which led to the broadcasters' decision on the 16th of August 2007 to form the channel, TV South Asia. The channel officially began telecasting programmes on the April 19, 2008. The 30-minute weekly show, 'Southasian' had news analysis, music, features, interviews and much more.



Famous personalities Javed Akhtar and Pandit Jasraj launch the channel, while Rathikant Basu looks on.

According to Rathikant Basu, the owner of Tara TV and TV South Asia, the objective of this television channel is to address the common issues of the region and make the audience aware of the same. For instance, in the programme, 'Southasia Calling', people from all over the region connect together on a virtual platform to discuss issues common in the region, starting from politics, music to daily habits. The show 'Is Southasia ready for the truth?' actually addresses the Truth Commissions all over the region, focusing on the judiciary and also violation of human rights in South Asia and much more.

Rubana Huq, the CEO of TV South Asia says that for the very first time in history, private electronic media channels have come together and formed a collaborative channel sharing the same viewpoints on diversity, heritage, bondage and possibilities. Channels like Aaj TV from Pakistan, Rtv in Bangladesh, Image Channel in Nepal, MTV Channel in Srilanka and Tara News in India have partnered with South Asia, to contribute contents and airtime.

With the motto, linking lands and legacies, the people behind TV South Asia believe in unity within diversity. For instance, very soon, viewers living in Nepal might be experiencing the rich heritage of music and theatre that we have in Bangladesh through this channel and viewers in Bangladesh will also be more aware of the daily activities in art, politics, business and so on in the neighbouring countries through this channel. "The channel is essentially an English Channel," explains Rubana Huq. "But there are many programmes like live shows like 'Kiran Aur George' from AAJ TV, Pakistan which is