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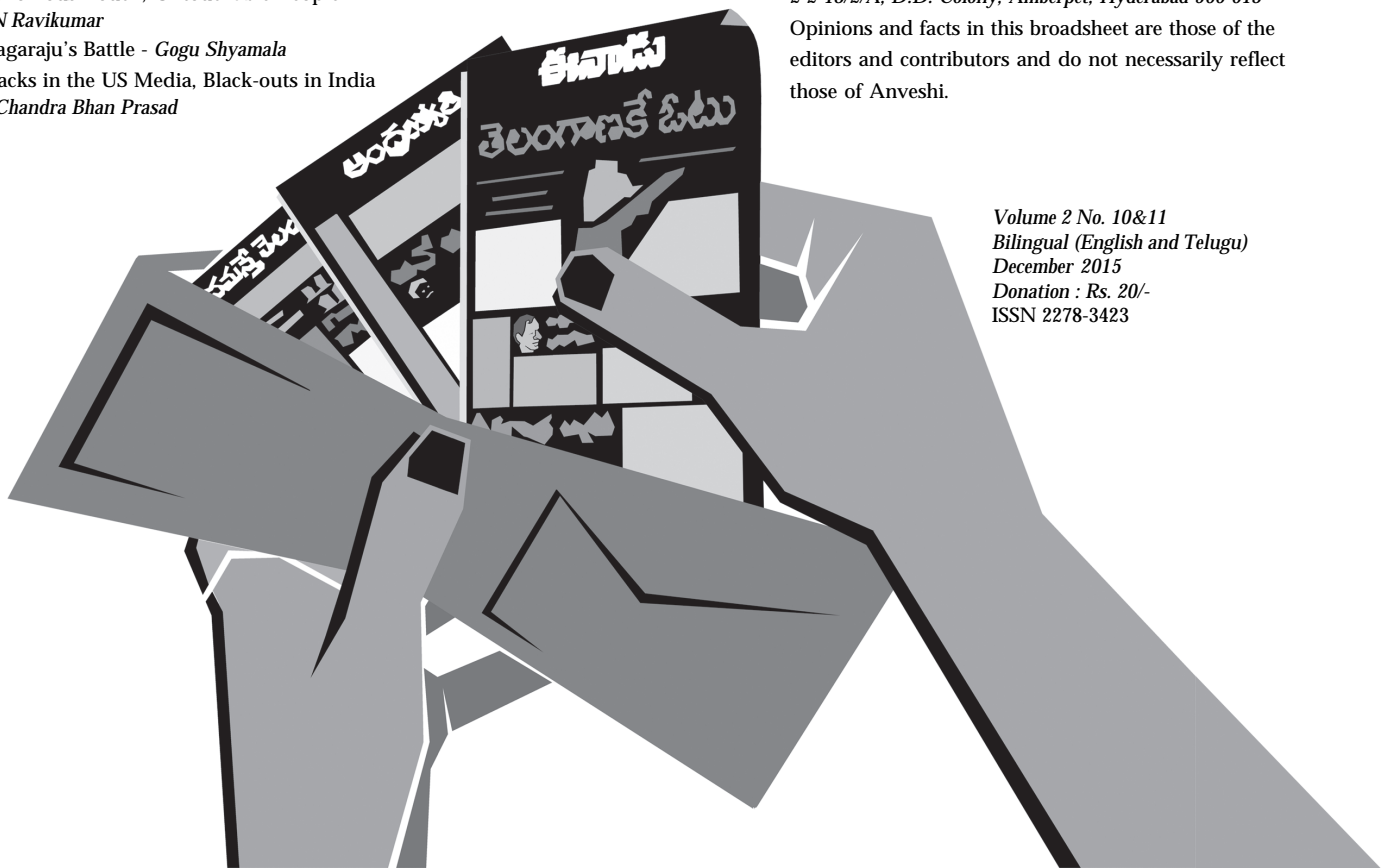
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THE MEDIA



Editorial

Mass media is a part of society and is expected to be more socially responsible than are other fields. Nowadays, with Indian media at a crossroads, civil society raises questions about the credibility of journalism, representation, ownership patterns, media regulation and self-regulation. Everyone has something to say about the daily encounters with news media as it occupies a pivotal position in contemporary life. Debates rage on representation in editorial boards of dalits, adivasis, women and religious minorities, the minimal space provided for social content, and dominant caste-class based ownership pattern which leads to a lack of social diversity in the content and the programs. However, very few attempts have been made to bring out a consolidated volume addressing the politics, economics and the many cultures of Indian news media.

We feel immense pleasure in bringing out this media broadsheet focusing on the contemporary practices of Indian news media and connecting it to the history and politics of the region. An attempt has been made to knit together a critical mass of thinking on Indian news media from differing perspectives ranging from political economy, politics of representation, participatory communication, caste, gender and other cultures of media experience. This broadsheet has been structured in a manner that tries to provide an opportunity to small voices, and an insight to developmental issues.

The structure of media in India is changing rapidly in several ways. One, the objective of journalism has changed from being a 'mission' to a 'profession'. Two, media outlets have been corporatized. Three, there is a change in ownership and increase of Foreign Direct Investments in Mass Media first from 25 percent to 49 percent, and then to 75 percent. Four, global communication

networks are entering the Indian media business in a visible way. Finally, media monopoly and change of cross media ownership results in the loss of the common man's right to information, education and public opinion.

Islamophobia has engulfed the neo-liberal world and it gets reproduced in a manifest form in our news media. The section on 'Islam, Muslims and Media' tries to capture the politics of hatred spread across the contemporary global media scenario, at the same time, focuses on the history of other cultures of journalism that go unmapped. The history of Urdu journalistic practices in Hyderabad embodies the other cultures within which the institution of journalism and takes a different shape vis-à-vis the question of Islam.

The history of media representation of Dalits shows a long term, extended axis of exclusion. Historically, the nationalist and corporate media structures demonstrate the violence not only of blatant exclusion but also of the humiliation of the figure of the Dalit in many ways. The tragic demise of Dalit journalist Nagaraju, the indifference shown by the newspaper management and the journalist fraternity gave us another opportunity to reflect upon the implicit caste violence that structures the assumed liberal space of the news media. The section on Dalits and media has essays from the past, which we have reproduced for the new readers, and also has contributions on contemporary issues relating to Indian news media.

The issue also carries interviews and essays about voices that oppose the trend of mainstream media, efforts that strain against the dominant flow of ideology and practice. The interview with the team behind the

journal *Nalpu* gives the English reader a rare glimpse of counter-cultural politics of the media, as does the interview with one of the people who started the website *Round Table India*. The intent is to celebrate these efforts, but we feel it is also very important that they serve as inspiration for newer efforts that make more of a difference in times to come.

While the broadsheet carries archival essays of interest, e.g., Kanshi Ram's first editorial for the *Oppressed Indian*, and an excerpt from Edward Said's *Covering Islam*, this issue is characterized by a new reflective turn to the archive and its function in contemporary memory. One essay ruminates on archive theory and another reflects on the archival effort in Warangal. There is also an interview (one among three in this volume) that looks at movies that face problems drawing on the archive with respect to specific events and memories.

At the other end, we have essays on the cutting edge of media that point resolutely to the future—websites, blogs, social media and net neutrality.

We have also a unique turn on the visual in this broadsheet where Kush Badhwar and Shubhangi Singh have drawn thematic images to accompany some of the essays, which then come together in a suggestive whole in the central collage.

We really hope that media professionals, experts and students will find this volume interesting, educative and reflective of critical concerns.

Panthukala Srinivas and Ranjith Thankappan

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The Political and Economic Context of the TV News Media Industry in the Telugu Region

■ Panthukala Srinivas

This short note sketches the historical and cultural context of the emergence of mass media in Andhra Pradesh. It touches on the roots of the Green Revolution and the transformation of agriculture into an industry in Andhra Pradesh, the rise of cinema industry, the emergence of regional parties in AP, social movements and the rise of SC, ST and OBC voices in politics, political decisions on SEZ's, real estate and supporting neo-capitalists in the name of development. It also mentions 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 has brought about based on empirical data.

Television came to Andhra Pradesh in 1975 because the state was found to have an abundance of backward, underdeveloped areas. It was part of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) that was launched in six states of the country. The experiment was to see whether the use of satellite technology for education and development can transform societies. The experiment lasted from 1 August 1975 to 31 July 1976 and for another ten years, the Hyderabad Doordarshan Kendra continued its programming as a development and education broadcaster, when in the early 80s sponsored serials began to be accepted on Doordarshan. By 1986, instead of transmitting only SITE continuity programmes or relaying national programmes from Delhi, the transmitters in the state were networked to receive general entertainment and news programmes made by Hyderabad Doordarshan in Telugu.

The central government of India has a Constitutional monopoly over broadcasting.

Using these provisions, the government of India did not permit private broadcasting till 1990. By 1991, when India began to liberalise its economic policy, the government saw broadcast policy as a test case for proving its commitment to liberalization. From the Marxist point of view we see a rise in the strength of national and regional neo-capitalists. From the 80's onwards we see the emergence of regional parties, their influence on national politics and alliance with national political parties. Earlier in the 1970s we witness the Green Revolution, globalization and technological advancement. In this context, surplus capital generation from agriculture strengthened agribusiness and gave rise to the cinema industry. The surplus generated in the 80's combined with globalization opened avenues for the mass media industry. Media industry underwent massive changes in the 1990s after which media bifurcated into private and state owned media.

Agriculture, caste culture and media after Independence

In Andhra Pradesh, contrary to the ideals of the 1950s, Telugu society is dominated by powerful caste groupings. The analysis of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia in the 1950s that Telugu society would travel from the then existing political predominance of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Reddys and Kammas to the ascendancy of backward castes, became a reality in a crude fashion. Telugu society only proved the analyses of the US social scientists Selig Harrison and Caroline M Elliott that in the 1950s and 1960s caste is a dominant factor in Telugu society and it was the basis of the strength of all political parties. The same kind of castes and caste compositions that had supremacy in the state's political,

economic, social and cultural fields is in power even after fifty years in AP. These are Reddy, Kamma, Velama, and Kapu.

The majority of the Reddy community is located in Rayalaseema and Telangana region in which rocky soil and poor irrigation permit only sparse rainfed crop cultivation. They could not benefit from the green revolution but they are landlords who have hundreds of acres of agriculture lands in their hands and have ruled in Andhra Pradesh before Kamma emergence into political power. Velamas in Telangana and Kapus in Coastal belt also own land but had not till recently a share in politics. Now, in the Telangana context the Velamas, and in the Praja Rajyam Party context the Kapus have entered politics. However, failing to capture political power, they have had alliances with the Congress Party.

It is very important to understand the numbers game played by caste groups in the AP political scenario to understand the caste dimensions of society and media. Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Madiga and Mala communities are in the top five positions in the Assembly.

In 2001, The Telangana Rashtra Samithi was started by K Chandrasekhar Rao to assert the self-respect of the region and demand a separate state. It started second phase Telangana movement (the first was in 1969), which through parliament democracy and political power had Telangana declared as a separate state in the Indian Union. In this process, the TRS educated and mobilized the people of Telangana and contested the elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014. Once they achieved the goal of a separate state in 2014, they have entered the culture industry. We need to note that the Velamas, a population fraction not exceeding 2 per cent of the state's population, have the TRS political party, state government rule, and the Telangana news channel to promote their community leadership.

Now, the mainstream media and film industry are largely in the hands of the Brahmins, Vaishyas, Kammas and Reddys. They are a part of the culture industry.

The growth and transformation of the media industry

In tandem with this socio-economic development, the communication process in the 1980-90s started moving from direct/face-to-face communication to a more centralized communication process. News became mass

oriented and there has been the emergence of mass politics and society. Economically, politically, socially, culturally conditions have matured in society whereby in times of globalization private capital has opened the media industry. The government is under pressure to expand privatization of television channels and radio stations. Secondly, in terms of ownership, the medium of television and print news has moved from simple reporting to enhanced lobbying capacity with governmental forces. The media owners have sought to get closer to parties that ruled, rather than act as a check (as traditionally envisaged for the media as the Fourth Estate) to the parties/ government.

An important function of owning a newspaper was to lobby for other interests and industrial concerns. The media itself never was the sole concern—it was an instrument to promote and sustain interests of and protect other industries by lobbying and influencing the government. Eenadu is a classic example in AP in the way in which it moved towards the Telugu Desam. But now, we see that Eenadu was started to control the party, not just being close to governmental power. The Eenadu management was not only very aggressive, but was a determinant factor in the emergence of the TDP. It also had a clear idea of controlling its politics.

By late 80—90s the media industry started and it has become an instrument for promoting some bodies or management interests, but more importantly the media has become a profit generating machine. In the 90s, private channels were not merely controlling, lobbying, moving closer to politics, but were also engaged in profit generation, thereby becoming an industry. With time, the media became more aggressive. The media is one of the major frontrunners of the industrial sector. Another thing is that cultural forms and entertainment have become an industry and the commodification of culture began in the 80s and 90s.

Social Movements and the Rise of SC, ST and BC Voices in Politics

The anti-arrack movement was completely supported by the Eenadu daily Telugu newspaper owned by Ramoji Rao who supported the Telugu Desam Party's emergence in politics. The anti-arrack movement was the first case study that taught the media moguls the lessons of the survival and sustainability of

media organizations. This case study was visible and witnessed by all parties owned and managed by neo-capitalists who run the liquor syndicate and fund political parties and election campaigns. Later Congress party also promised prohibition on liquor but it could not due to pressure from neo-capitalists and soon lifted the ban on liquor. TDP and Congress parties both benefited by liquor business and the media got its share in the profits. In this way media protects economic and political interests of the dominant classes by suppressing the social movements in AP through the manipulation of media.

The evolution of modern AP has also witnessed caste oppression and the first recorded sign of such brutal practices was in the killing of Kotesu in 1968 at Kanchikacherla of Krishna district. This kind of brutality against Dalits and the downtrodden got its response in a great upsurge in the form of Dalit movement. This happened after a carnage in which six Dalits were killed in Karamchedu in Prakasam district on July 17, 1985. The ghastly incident was followed by several other cold-blooded incidents in Neerukonda, Chundururu, Timmasamudram, Chalkurthi, Vempenta. Then, there was the Tsundururu dalit massacre by the Kamma community. These incidents united dalits for fighting for their rights and protection from upper castes. This movement gave voice to the voiceless and the emerging representation of dalits into politics in AP. The role of the media in these atrocities has been mixed. Depending on alliances and the political climate, they have taken subtly varying stands with respect to these atrocities and the question of justice to the victims.

Special Economic Zones, Real Estate boom and Neo-Capitalists

The media's investments came from real-estate, politics and from technological developments in IT sector. Most of the investment came from land transactions and new political and financial alignments. For examples in the 70s, and 80s, Andhra Bhoomi, Andhra Patrika and Krishna Patrika (which came 1931-41) all emerged at least partially from investor groups. When Chandra Babu Naidu linked the state's development to World Bank money, investment increased. Prior to Chandra Babu Naidu, NT Rama Rao had some discussion with World Bank in 1983-84 and even with that move, money availability for investment rose. This money brought new infrastructure, new

industries and more land. The real-estate boom that emerged was Hyderabad-centred and expanded to the tune of several hundred crores. Some of this money was invested in the field of media.

The establishment of SEZs in several places led to the displacement of the poor, especially small and marginal farmers, agricultural workers, fisher-folk, other communities who are dependent on the lands and related natural resources for their livelihoods. Apart from this, the health and environment impact of polluting industries like pharmaceuticals, chemicals, leather, iron-ore, thermal power based SEZs also appear to be steadily unfolding in many parts of the state and nowhere is there any discussion or debate in the mainstream media (Print and Electronic Media). According to the official data provided by APIIC in January 2009 the total land acquired for 100 SEZs in all categories all over the State is only about 33,296 acres whereas a report published in Andhra Jyothi, a leading daily newspaper in the state, projected that around 75,000 acres of land have been acquired for various SEZs in AP (Andhra Jyothi, January 27, 2009). In the face of forcible acquisition of lands for SEZs, there has been resistance from people in various places of the state. The nature, content and forms of these resistance vary from place to place ranging from sporadic, spontaneous opposition in some parts such as Ananthapur, Kadapa and Ranga Reddy districts to taking on a more protracted form and sustained struggle such as in Kakinada, Polepally SEZs which led to a more fundamental questioning of what is development and challenging the SEZ-led growth model. The TV media has telecast these developments as 'news' but has not shown any interest in starting a debate or discussion on screen because some of the media owners are stockholders of SEZs.

Conclusion

Broadly summarizing the trends described above, it is clear that the media is growing organically in relation to the dominant caste/class groupings and their stakes in capitalist industry. Media as the guardian of the republic has given way to first, media as the promoter of interest groups, to second, media as an industry that is able to create profits on its own.

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Stringers in Telugu Media

■ P Purnachandar

*If not for us, the district special pages from the newspaper would disappear.
(Ravi, a stringer from Nizamabad, in an interview)*

Introduction

Correspondents and reporters are the regular employees of the media house who work towards collecting information, making it into a story and publishing it as news. They are very few in number, have an identity within the organization and the news they report is given importance. Reporters and correspondents make sure that the news reaches the media houses. Reporters, depending on the situation, send different kinds of news from different localities to the media house. Correspondents work with a set location and agenda regarding a particular story.

There is a third kind of newsman, the stringer who is unlike reporters and correspondents. He works without any regularized salary and

is paid a small remuneration when the news collected is published, according to the length of the column in centimeters. This is called a 'line account'. Stringers are important newsmen who send news to the media from the specific localities they are assigned to. The print media house recruits them under a news agency. They don't have recognition from the organization. Often, the news they collect is given no importance.

The system of stringers was started after the 1980s. This was when district editions began to be published to give importance to local news. Stringers as local operators provide district news without difficulty.

Qualifications

The more prominent newspapers explicitly require that stringers should at least be

qualified as graduates. What is implicit is that they should have a two wheeler, camera, cell phone, laptop with internet, a pen drive and CD writer. Even through the organization doesn't demand all this, these 'additional qualifications' are necessary for the job. They should also be able set up an office in their locality. Stringers are expected to adhere to the policy of the organization. They should be able to go to the location of the incident at any time. The news writing should include all the relevant information.

In a small newspaper organization, 10th standard/intermediate passed, or degree pass or fail candidates are also recruited. However, here too, it is essential for the person to have a camera, a two wheeler and a cell phone. In these organizations too stringers need to abide by and behave as per the organizational policy. Here, along with collection of news, the ability to get advertisements is an added requirement.

People enter this profession because of unemployment, poor educational qualification and also because they are unable to pursue higher studies. Alongside these reasons, some people also join as stringers because they think that being a journalist is the right thing to do in order to bring their local social issues into public light, to ignite the people's enthusiasm about their issues and to bring them to the notice of local officials and public representatives.

Importance to society

Because he is a local person a stringer establishes contacts with lot of local people. He is considered as an important person in that place. He becomes familiar with the local politicians, officials, and social activists and other people of a public profile. He is well versed with the key issues of his locality and the social, economic and political problems in it. He is also aware of illicit activities in the locality and knows who are the people involved in these activities.

The stringer writes in a simple way and also highlights the local news. He writes about almost all local issues and news. These would be about drinking water problems, roads, drainage, streetlights, government welfare schemes, development activities, crimes



related news and so on. The district newspaper special pages are generally filled with these news reports.

Some sections of the people also find the stringer useful in seeking information about their personal problems such as those related to ration cards, to pensions for old age, handicaps, and to widows. He often helps people around him. By helping one or another person almost every day he gradually evolves to be a focal point in the community.

Informal worker

Reporters often write our stories in their own name, because of which we lose credit for our work and also are not paid the line account.

(Raju, a stringer from Hyderabad in an interview)

In prominent print media organizations stringers have a duty to collect news and write at least 3 – 4 stories a week. As part of the job they also do surveys to find out the rate of success of government welfare programs and write stories based on them, they also do case studies on individuals, organizations and government schemes. Based on this they write a story about the reasons why government schemes are failing. These primary news papers have special agents (other than stringers) for ads and circulation related work.

The conditions are different in smaller news houses. People who are not aware about the working conditions of small print media organizations usually think that the stringers do only the work of “collecting news”. In a majority the small print media houses they do a variety of tasks such as,

- Collecting news and features, writing stories
- Bringing in advertisements
- Getting individuals subscribers to the paper
- Collecting bills
- Surveys
- Case studies
- Sending news to the TV news channel of the concerned newspaper.

All this is the ‘informal work’ stringers do for small time news organizations that employ them.

In the smaller print media, stringers have a target of 1 – 2 lakh rupees advertisement revenue per year. Beside this there are also several special targets during Dassera, Diwali, the New Year and of course during the elections.

To reach this target the stringer follows a clever strategy. He writes stories about important leaders, their meetings and so on, thus establishing a relation between the paper and the leader. This also results in followers of that leader getting in touch with the paper. The stringer thus connects the party, its leader and party members to the paper. Thus, he attracts advertisement revenue from the party by writing stories and news articles about it and its special events. However, because he is dependent on advertisement revenue, he sends only news articles of this ‘informative’ positive kind. He does not write any negative or critical news about these parties because of the loss of this revenue stream.

Stringers rely on important local functionaries and individuals like sarpanchs, corporators, contractors, government employees and so on. They also make the party leaders instruct party workers to subscribe to the paper. By using such strategies they raise the circulation each year by around 20 to 200 subscriptions.

In spite of the fact that stringers do so much work for the organizations, they are considered as part time workers, whose names do not appear on the organization’s formal employee rolls – they are in short, informal labour.

There are part time correspondents even in All India Radio and Doordarshan. Even people who collect news information from entire districts are considered part time correspondents by Government. The only reason for which the private media organizations call such employees as part timers is to deny them the legal right of a full-time employee.

(Prabhanjan Yadav, Asst Professor
Journalism and Mass Communication,
Telangana University, Nizamabad)

The irony is that the news in district pages increases due to stringers, more people subscribe, circulation and advertisement revenues increase, the media house flourishes

and salaries are increased – all this because of the stringers, and yet the stringers don’t reap any of this benefit.

If stringers weren’t there the news network would collapse.

(Prof Rajaram, HoD Dept of Journalism,
Telangana University, Nizamabad)

Relationship with newspaper

Print media organizations majorly have two different kinds of employees.

One, the working journalist: anybody from an editor to part time news correspondents.

Two, non-journalist newspaper employees: People who work in advertisements, circulation, accounts, printing and marketing.

By collecting news for the organization and by working on ad collection, circulation and so on, as stringer works both as a working journalist and non-journalist employee. However, the media organization treats them as employees of a ‘news agency’, thus never letting them become part of the media organization.

The News network organizations that contribute news to the media organizations are called ‘news agencies’. Almost every media organization has its own news agency. The employers show the stringer as someone related to the news agency and not to their own media organization. They are not even provided with any appointment letter when they join the organization. By doing this the organizations take all possible measures to ensure that stringers cannot act legally in any way.

(Narendar Reddy,
Journalist Union leader, Hyderabad)

One of the major problems that stringers face is job insecurity. The state of affairs is so bad that the organization can sack stringers with a single phone call. As one stringer puts it, “Our job is like a nose that can fall off any time because of a sneeze”.

The second major problem is of not having a fixed salary. Some newspapers pay on the basis of a line account and some simply don’t pay. However, no newspaper organization pays as per the line account according to legal requirements. All the newspaper paper organizations exploit stringers.

¹ S.O. no. 2532 (E) dated 11th November, 2011 in the Gazette of India.

It is because of these problems that the journalist unions have protested against the exploitative acts of media organizations heads. In response to this, the government has established wage boards since Independence. The GO accepting and notifying the J.R. Majithia Wage Board Recommendations (2011) explicitly states that all working journalists should be eligible for variable pay, and categorized by default under the lowest group (6) of the working journalists.¹

As per the law the authority of deciding salaries of the journalist and the non-journalist employee is vested with the Wage Board appointed by the central government. Central Government notifies the recommendations of the wage board. It is the responsibility of the state governments' labor commissions to make the notified wages implemented. To monitor this, the state government has established a three party committee consisting government officials, print media organization heads and journalists.

On the field

Stringers face a great deal of difficulty working in the field. They need to travel to location whether the weather is harsh and sunny or raining heavily. During natural calamities, and communal riots, stringers need to go out to collect news in spite of all difficulty. Though there are accredited journalist passes which can be used for bus and rail travel, stringers hardly get to use them because of the unavailability of buses on time. Thus they invariably use their two wheelers at their own expense.

A day before or on the early morning of a given day a stringer tries to gather all the information regarding events and meetings in his locality through calls to officials, locals and other stringers. Every day the stringer goes through all the local newspapers including the newspaper he is working for and checks his news articles to see if he made any mistakes.

We witness the result (printed item) of yesterday's hard work (news reporting) today.

(Santosh, a stringer from Hyderabad, in an interview)

The stringer is sometimes praised for his contributions, whereas at other times where

he writes about corruption and stuff he is criticized and even threatened.

The stringer sometimes reaches the scene of crime before the officials and police and tries to collect information by talking to the local residents over there. He would also find details from the police officer who registers the case. Finally he would also collect the postmortem report from the doctor, and using all this information, he follows the case till it ends.

The stringer expresses sympathy for the students in his locality who are excelling in their studies and writes stories aiming to get the financial support to them, with such titles as "Blessed by Goddess Saraswathi but not by the Goddess Lakshmi". He also writes about children of backward classes with health issues and about aged parents abandoned by children. One or two such 'human interest' stories are seen in the newspaper every other day.

The local public personalities and people who look for publicity for their meetings or events give Rs 100 or 200 to the stringer so that their news is carried. Other people give him cheap gifts. He is also provided food along with others when there are meetings or events. Most of the times it is difficult for the stringer to get even water to drink, and most of the days on the field he would starve with no food on time.

For the collection of advertising revenue, stringers perform all kinds of tough tasks. They travel to meet the subscribers ten to fifteen times. This adds to the additional petrol and cell phone expenses. The debtor may refuse, or act tough. Thus, sometimes there may be a lot of stress and anxiety related to this fieldwork in one form or another. Their health suffers and stringers end up with blood pressure, diabetes and ulcers because of irregular food habits and repeated bouts of hunger, and work stress. They are also more than usually prone to sunstroke in the summer months. In their rush to meet news deadlines there are also accidents and deaths.

Family

The kind of work a stringer does to the newspaper has severe a impact on his family. He is bound to attend duty at any point of time—day or night. Reaching any place or

time to cover an incident is his primary duty. When a stringer reaches home to rest is decided by situations beyond his control. This deprives him of quality time with family and it is difficult for him to involve himself with his children in their homework and other things. Even when family members and relatives are seriously ill, it is extremely difficult for a stringer to give time for them. This affects the relationships with their relatives and family members. However, with his creative writing the stringer helps the newspaper to become closer to the reader and he also plays a vital role in businessmen and leaders to the newspaper.

Conclusion

The newspaper organizations benefit hugely from the stringers in various ways, but at the end of the day stringers are largely only at a loss. A stringer's work towards gathering of ads makes sure of salary payment of all the people in the newspaper, but he doesn't get a salary. He plays a major role in increasing the circulation and makes sure the existence of newspaper in the public space, but he doesn't have a space of his own in the organization.

In a newspaper organization stringer is a second class citizen.

(Kasula Prathap Reddy,
Senior Journalist, Hyderabad)

The killing of a stringer either by sand mafia or in police-naxalite encounters becomes a major sensation. But their deaths that occur due to sunstroke or ill health do not attract any attention. In such situations the organization doesn't bother to get in touch with the family. Considering it as a normal death they don't even pay any compensation to the family.

The kind of attention the organization would have on finding a replacement for a dead stringer would be the first priority and there would be no bothering about the family of the dead stringer. It is this inhuman attitude that the newspaper organization leadership has towards stringers.

(Prof Rajaram TU)

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Struggles for 'Net neutrality' – economics, policy and politics

■ Sujith K G

The history of human communication began with the oral or spoken tradition and since then there have been attempts of censorship of the speech of the multitude by various agencies across all societies. To put it in the simplest way, no medium was ever free in the absolute sense. And that applies to the Internet too. Just as through the course of history, the modes of dissemination of messages have progressed from oral tradition, to script, print, wired electronics and finally digital communication, so too have the instruments of regulation.

The moves to curb internet freedom and the freedom to utilize the data that we buy in whatever way we want, and the long lasting repercussions of such curbs, are becoming more visible in India. As this is something that pertains to the freedom guaranteed by democracy and the Constitution, it needs to be debated and contested. Internet today is a freedom: it is a right.

The combination of curbs and selective facilitation of the internet have been fought under the banner of 'net neutrality', i.e., neutrality of the internet service with respect to paying power, with respect to geographical and subjective location of the user, and with respect to the content posted on the internet. The following are some of the issues to be considered:

Economic Curbs

One move to curb internet freedom is motivated by the corporate agenda to regulate data as their product, at their will. Under the proposed scheme or situation the companies not only can adopt discretionary pricing for the data they sell, but they can also regulate the availability of that data for various purposes. They can take away the

freedom of user in deciding and selecting the amount of data he wants from an application and charge for the overall scope of the medium. It not only limits the customers' right of choice but also tests their spending power. It eventually leads to a situation in which social media like Facebook or Twitter would work in a differentially regulated, unevenly facilitated, unequally powered framework according to the paying capacity of people.

Different rates for different services are effectively a curtailment of freedom in using a resource that a customer has paid for. Making a medium that is fast becoming a basic necessity into a commodity traded for profit is undemocratic, and eliminates all scope for human sharing and well being. If these policies are widely implemented, they would challenge the fundamental historical bases on which the medium has grown.

In the United States, net neutrality has been an issue of contention among network users and access providers since the 1990s. Until 2015, there have been no clear legal restrictions against practices slowing down net access. In 2005 and 2006, corporations supporting both sides of the issue spent large amounts of money lobbying Congress. Between 2005 and 2012, five attempts to pass bills in Congress containing net neutrality provisions failed. Each sought to prohibit Internet Service Providers from using various variable pricing models. These models based upon the user's Quality of Service level, were described as 'tiered service' in the industry and as 'price discrimination' by some economists. Projects such as Facebook's internet.org sparked a new debate as they offered free access to a bouquet of websites on the internet.org platform. The move was

criticised and opposed for the reason that selective promotion like selective censoring thwarts the neutrality of internet.

The crisis of regulatory policy

In digital communication, time has been compressed by reducing the effective distance between different points in space and this sense of newly defined space has led people to feel that the differentiation between local, national, and global spaces are obsolete. In addition, digital media can now reach everyone, instead of a limited audience. In older media forms, content and propagation are controlled through either a censor board, or self imposed regulation, where media organizations comply with the rules of the land and are accountable for the content disseminated on their platform. But for the new (social) media, the ownership of the content is the trickiest and toughest part to deal with. Social media giants like Facebook seldom create their own content. Social media is a volatile communication medium because an individual user may generate whatever content he or she pleases and is free to let it go on cyberspace without any agential or state mediation. This dynamism of new media has been raising issues regarding the breach of law and codes of conduct – mandatory and optional – in societies or spaces that they operate in.

Digital media, a) which converge rapidly (e.g., Skype with Microsoft); are interactive (e.g., as in Facebook); use hypertexts that allow a user to transparently follow links to different programmes; and the fact that all these are all virtual excursions without a physical presence are unique traits of digital media, making monitoring and regulation very difficult. Because the new media is characterized by a many-to-many message transmission, which is only recorded virtually in a digital form, it ceases to follow the scope envisaged by the primary material. As Manuel Castells puts it, the emergence of the global network has contributed to the construction and formulation of a new life experience all together for human beings. This in turn will lead the transformation of economic activities, cultural patterns, interactional styles, and other aspects of human society. The invisible world of digital networks induces a gap between reality and

the virtual, facilitating the free alteration of one's gender, personality, appearance, and occupation.

The digital media forms a virtual community that crosses the possible physical boundaries and operates at a level that is beyond the scope of traditional media propagation. In the international electronic exchange culture, new media play a significant role in affecting the process and outcome of the interaction at various levels. It is thus to be expected that like any other cultural message, messages disseminated over any digital platform will have takers and opponents. The message and the cultural context of its communication may dictate the use of media and this aspect is most prevalent in the debates pertaining net neutrality. Thinking patterns, expression styles, and cultural context of the media user determine the use of media and messaging, and as these are subjective, their effects will be multidimensional.

The new media not only provide a space in which people of different cultures can freely express their opinions and establish relationships. More, they may also challenge the existence of human communication in intra-cultural and inter-cultural contexts because of their specific characteristics that are significantly dissimilar to that of in the traditional media. The impact of new media on aspects of cultural communication such as intercultural relationships, intercultural dialogue, and intercultural conflict is crucial to the discussions on net neutrality.

Political challenges

Net neutrality: the phrase has been everywhere, in campaigns, discussions, writings, canteen chats, court cases and what else not! The concepts of the netizen and netizenship are deeply dependent on the state of internet, its regulations and freedom. The question that is most widely circulated regarding this most volatile medium of our time, with its multiplicity of scopes and possibilities, is whether this entropic medium should be brought to order as has been the cinema or any other medium that is censored by the state. This was the fundamental thought behind the hue and cry for and against the idea of net neutrality. The turmoil, mostly on the new media forums settled down as the Supreme Court of India struck down the much contested internet censorship law.

This decision ended the 'section 66A' enactment that made posting information of 'grossly offensive or menacing character' punishable by up to three years in jail. There have been numerous cases where people have been arrested for posting derogatory material or insult regarding government, community or person. The apex court decided to scrap the law after a two-year campaign by free speech activists, led by a law student, Shreya Singhal, one among the first to challenge it in the Supreme Court. The court observed that section 66A, an amendment to India's Information Technology Act was unconstitutional and restricted freedom of speech. Quoting Shreya, "Nobody should avoid putting up something because of the fear of going to prison. The court has upheld the rights of all citizens today". Obviously the drafting committee of Indian constitution never had the internet under consideration while drafting clauses on freedom of expression. When things started falling out of frame, amendment section 66A was born.

Most nation states are paranoid and are fearful of their people being free – most importantly when they write and speak uncensored in public. Most nation states and systems of governance thrive on a multitude of fears they induce in people. These fears are numerous and vary across any regulated society: the fear of being imprisoned on a post of dissent on the internet is just one among many: be it in a democracy like the Republic of India or a totalitarian regime like the Peoples Republic of China—the only thing that varies is the reason for fear, the enforcement of Censorship and the penalty for breach of the code of conduct. The Indian government's proposal to boost or reduce the visibility of an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or availability of a web site was one way to bring in an indirect policing where the platform could be asked to censor the content and not let it go public. However this does not mean that the government would not prosecute and persecute writers, film makers or bloggers. In the case of publishing what it mostly does is to act through one of its agencies to get the material withdrawn before or after printing.

Things went several steps ahead when the Government of India considered empowering ISPs to regulate the visibility and traffic of a website at their discretion. This is an extremely tricky issue in which the critical question is, who is to be approached in case

of a dispute in this regard? Is it the ISP? Given the way corporate organisations in India work, they are not answerable to public or even to the government (in practice). They are neither under the purview of RTI or any other similar regulations. And the only way to pin them would be a duel in the court of law, and a layman fighting corporate power in courts would be like wrestling with a pig in the mud.

Authoritarian states like that of North Korea never even went this way; the strategy was simple – people speak of curtailment of freedom only when there is a bit of it which permits protesting curtailment, so let's not even have a bit of freedom, not on the internet or traditional media or word of mouth. However in India, one thing is for sure, the government is any day an easier target for civil societal challenge and contest than a private sector corporate organisation which can afford to fight cases in the courts of law for sport.

Facebook has reported that 5,832 pieces of content were restricted between July and December 2014 following requests from India, "primarily by law enforcement agencies and the India computer emergency response team including anti-religious content and hate speech that could cause unrest and disharmony".

"The public's right to know is directly affected by section 66A," said Justice R F Nariman, reading out the judgment. The law, which received presidential assent in 2009, makes posting information of "grossly offensive or menacing character" punishable by up to three years in jail. Campaigners claimed that it was repeatedly misused by police. Sometimes in India, among the agencies of governance, the court of law and (very rarely) the government throw a little hope in cases like these. For the time being the debate is off the cards and we can continue using the bandwidth that we pay for the way we like it. However it's not as simple as we think. What about the firewalls installed by organisations like universities and companies that restrict the content to the community that it serves? The debate is set to be there forever at multiple levels.

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The Globalization Reader (Excerpt)

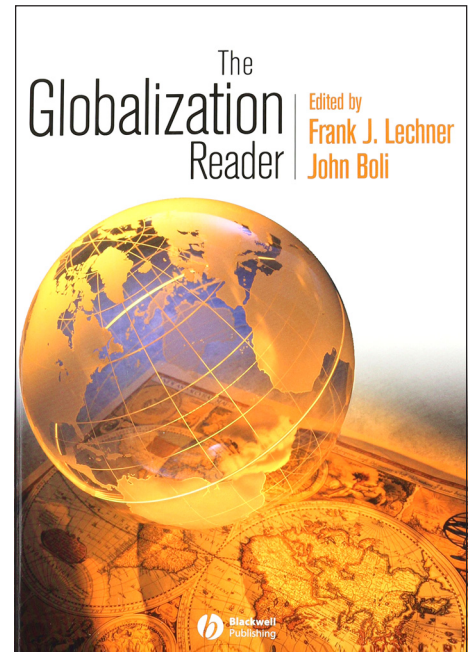
Cultural globalization is probably the most familiar form for most people. Every one knows that prominent icons of popular culture, like Coca-Cola, blue jeans, rock music, and McDonald's Golden Arches, can be found "every-where" We are also all aware of the seeming sameness engendered by the diffusion of such cultural objects and genres. Add to the list Hollywood movies, French philosophizing, and Japanese organizational techniques that have been widely adopted by American and European companies, and it is easy to believe that cultural globalization inevitably acts as a universal solvent that will dissolve all cultural differences in a dull and colorless homogeneity throughout the world.

Call it "Americanization," call it "westernization," call it cultural imperialism (and many have, both within and outside the West) – the driving forces behind this homogenization, critics claim, are the mass media. Controlled mainly by American and European companies, spreading their ethereal tentacles through the airwaves to the farthest reaches of the globe, the media impose their powerful images, sounds, and advertising on unprepared peoples who succumb meekly to their messages, which are designed to increase the profits of capitalist firms. Such is the kernel of one side of the debate on the role of the media in world society. But contrary voices can also be heard, and changes in the structure of the global news, television, radio, music, and film industries have changed much of the received wisdom about cultural imperialism.

The cultural imperialism debate picked up speed soon after decolonization had begun to produce dozens of new states in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Though colonialism was dead or dying, in its place scholars identified a new form of capitalist

subjugation of the Third World (the latter term itself comes from the 1960s), more economic than political, more ideologically than militarily supported: neo-colonialism. As the argument goes, because direct politico-military control could no longer be practiced, neo-colonialist powers turned to symbolic and psychological means of control, conveniently facilitated by the rapid integration of global telecommunications systems and the proliferation, especially, of television. Pushing mainly American culture that promoted ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, self absorption, and the like, the expanded mass media fit neatly with the further extension of global capitalism in its struggle with the Communist dominated "Second World" led by the Soviet Union.

One prominent outcome of the cultural imperialism thesis was the strident call for a "New World Information Order [NWIO]." Less developed countries pleaded their case against the domination of western media in UNESCO and other UN forums, arguing that restrictions should be place on western cultural propagation and that aid should flow to the former colonies to improve their nascent communications systems. A related issue was the purportedly biased view of the world presented by the major global news organizations, Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) from the USA, Agence France-Presse (AFP), and British owned Reuters, which together accounted for the vast majority of stories entering the newsrooms of the world's major newspapers and television stations. The NWIO debate led to few concrete actions, in part because the less developed countries lost interest as many new states took direct control of the broadcast media in their countries and turned radio, television and major newspapers into mouthpieces of official government policy.



While the press wire services (AP, UPI, AFP, Reuters), all with their roots in the nineteenth century, represent a long standing form of news globalization, it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that electronic media globalization assumed serious proportions. Mergers and acquisitions by aggressive media companies like Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation yielded massive conglomerates with truly global reach. Ted Turner's upstart Cable News Network (CNN) survived the struggles of its early days to become a ubiquitous, 24-hour news provider watched almost religiously by global business and political elites. At the same time, however, a steady process of decentralization of global media industries was underway, as major countries in different world regions became regional production centers: Mexico for Spanish-language television, India for film, Hong Kong for East Asian film and television, and so on. Alongside this development has been the "indigenization" of many television formats and genres that originated in the West. The once hugely popular "Dallas" has given way to local equivalents with local twists – Brazilian soaps, Mexican telenovellas, and so on. The net result is an undeniable global increase in the degree to which people's everyday lives are experienced through the media, but the homogenizing effects of media globalization are much less clear than was once supposed.

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Cross-Media Ownership and Corporatization of Media in Telugu Regions

■ Panthukala Srinivas

The changing face of media ownership has provided several options for political leaders, realtors, businessmen and capitalists. Media organizations in the state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are often controlled by corporate bodies, real estate agents, political party leaders, businessmen, chit fund companies, liquor barons and seed companies; societies, trusts, sometimes stockholders and rarely journalist-managers. In India there are no cross-media ownership restrictions; anyone can start and own newspapers, television news channels and FM radio stations.

In India's media landscape, it is said that the number of publications, radio stations, television channels, and internet websites are a guarantor for plurality, diversity, and consumer choice. There were over 82,000 publications registered with the Registrar of Newspapers as on 31 March 2011. There are over 250 FM radio stations in the country though India is the only democracy in the world where news on the radio is still a monopoly of the government. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has allowed nearly 800 television channels to uplink or downlink from the country, including over 300 which claim to be television channels broadcasting "news and current affairs". There are also an unspecified number of websites for

social media in India. Thus in this country, which is still home to the largest number of illiterates, poor and malnourished on earth, the proliferation of mass media is impressive.

Has this expansion and power of media been translated into the greater public good? Is our democracy more mature now? Is there more informed public discourse on account of the media? Are media still a part of the solution as perceived for decades, or have they become a part of the problem? Are there signs of self-correction/ regulation and growing public-spiritedness or is there more decay and crass consumerism at the

cost of rational discourse and public good? Such persistent questions have become relevant.

Advertisement revenues in the South Indian states in media industry (FICCI and KPMG; 2012) are: in Tamil Nadu Rs 1,170 crores, in Andhra Pradesh Rs 800 crores and in Karnataka Rs 560 crores. In comparison with the national media (Hindi and English have reached stagnation) the regional languages markets in the South are booming.

Political parties and leaders with political affiliations are increasing their ownership and control of large sections of the television media in Telugu regions. In the case of Ushodaya Enterprises (Eenadu TV Networks) owned by business magnate Ramoji Rao there are on and off alliances with the Telugu Desam Party and significant involvement in its economic interests. *Eenadu* since it began in 1974 has editorially never been very friendly towards the Congress. Before it supported TDP (formed in 1982) the newspaper was more oriented toward the Kamma dominated communist party. The Emergency declared during the Congress regime was another anti-Congress rallying point for Ramoji Rao. The paper had

championed prohibition in the State in opposition to the Congress that had control of the liquor business. The movement did result in a prohibition policy, but there was no critical reaction from the same newspaper when this policy was lifted by the TDP.



The politician Jagan Mohan Reddy, son of the late chief minister, Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, owns the newspaper Sakshi and the television channel Sakshi TV, under the umbrella groups of Indira Television Limited and Jagati Publications Ltd. Sakshi TV openly supports YSR Congress party which was started by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The other important media player with a clear political agenda is the current chief minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao and his son K. Taraka Rama Rao who hail from the *Velama* community. They own and control and the television channel *T-News*. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi chief KCR and his family control the channel through the holding company, Telangana Broadcasting Private Limited.

TV 5 and N TV management came from the real estate and power businesses. These channels were formed by capitalists with the idea that if they had a television channel in their hands, they could force the government do things that would benefit them. I News channel was established by MRI educational institutions. Studio N channel was backed by Chandrababu Naidu the current Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Recently, the left party, CPI(M), established the TV10 news channel to show their party activities and protests led by them. CPI also started TV99 television news and current affairs channel.

When ETV and MAA TV began, their beginnings were modest starting with one television channel. Soon, they became networks, expanding into other regions. Now their presence in the market has induced them to merge with big companies, turning them into big business corporations, as if following the Rupert Murdoch business model, and having trans-national presence and influencing politics in various regions where they have their business stakes. The case of MAA TV ownership is interesting. Though this is not a news channel, it has stakes in other businesses and political affiliations. The families of the actors Chiranjeevi and Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and Nimmagadda Prasad Rao are stake holders of MAA TV. The film industry and business groups have influenced the growth of the channel and the channel has merged

with Sony Pictures Television network. Nimmagadda has shares in Sakshi TV and also other business firms. TV9 has also been in the news for merger with bigger corporations, but so far this has not materialized.

In India and in the world, large media corporations are today clearly playing a bigger role in the political economy as part of forward and backward linkages plans. In India large international television broadcast networks including Turner/CNN, Viacom/MTV, RIL/ Network 18 and Sony are acquiring or partnering with regional networks. Moreover, a fair degree of consolidation and convergence has already taken place in general across the country and

number of channels have increased in AP. There is no chance of deceiving the public. This is good for democracy". (Personal Interview, 2013).

Diverse views are expressed by Vijay Narra about television journalism in AP, "there is a difference between past and present journalists. Presently, journalists are owned and controlled by media barons and everything goes according to the owners' will in covering the news or its presentation. Journalists freedom is snatched from their control and they do not have right to cover the news at will. Moreover, they have to

List of Television Companies: Merger and Acquisition

S.No.	Media Outlet	New Stakeholder	Acquirer
1.	Eenadu TV	RIL and Network 18 Group 50% (5 Channels) and 25.4% (2 Telugu Channels) in January 2012	Network 18 Group for Regional Expansion
2.	MAA TV	Sony Pictures Television 30% in April 2012 (recent updates) Star Television Networks bought the MAA TV in 2015	Sony Pictures Television Private Limited for Regional Expansion
3.	TV 9?		

Source: FICCI & KPMG REPORT 2013

in Telugu regions too. For Example in 2015 Star TV Networks has acquired all MAA TV broadcasting channels.

Ankam Ravi Chief News Editor and CEO of V6 News says:

"The affordability/low cost will help in widening the media reach. Now one can set up a channel with just 10 crores to 150 crores. Content is primary thing, more important than the technology; the content should be diverse and attractive. But there are always hurdles in reaching the public, and now the distribution system is under the control of a few media houses. We should see the media organisations as business enterprises and so we cannot expect social responsibility from them. In 2014 General Elections, the media's impact on public was 100 percent whereas it was 30 percent in 2009 elections. Now, I think there will be no such influence on the public in the next election to be held in 2019 as the

work as per the policies and principles of the owners" (Personal interview, 2013).

Padmaja Shaw who teaches communication and journalism at Osmania University said the following regarding cross media ownership: "If there is an information monopoly situation, there is something to worry about. Today Eenadu is a very high ranking newspaper maintaining first position, whereas E TV it is not doing so well. TV9 and TV5 does not have a newspaper but they are doing well in TV Industry and Market. The problem comes when two or three channels get together in support of one political party. That is called information cartelization". (Personal interview, 2013).

Explaining cross-media ownership and its impact on the society Madhusudan Pamidikalva says, "Cross-media ownership is always a threat and danger to society in the

Cross Media Ownership of Media Organisations in Andhra Pradesh

S. No.	Name of the TV News Channel & Organisation	Print Media	Radio	Television	Internet (Website)	MSO/ DTH
1.	Gemini News Channel Sun Network Private Ltd.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Eenadu TV2 Ushodaya Enterprises Pvt Limited	✓		✓	✓	
3.	TV 9 Associated Broadcasting Company Private Ltd			✓	✓	
4.	N TV Rachana Television Private Ltd			✓	✓	
5.	TV 5 Shreya Broadcasting Pvt Ltd			✓	✓	
6.	HMTV Hyderabad Media House Pvt Ltd	✓		✓	✓	
7.	I News Integrated Broadcasting Company Pvt Ltd			✓	✓	
8.	Sakshi TV Indira Television Private Limited	✓		✓	✓	
9.	MAHAA TV Monica Broadcasting Private Ltd			✓	✓	
10.	ZEE 24 Gantalu Zee Television Network Limited			✓	✓	✓
11.	Studio N			✓	✓	
12.	ABN Andhra Jyothi News Aamoda Broadcasting Pvt Limited	✓		✓	✓	
13.	HY TV PositiveTV Pvt Ltd			✓		
14.	T News Telangana Broadcasting Pvt Limited			✓	✓	
15.	V6 News VIL Broadcasting Private Ltd			✓		
16.	10 TV News Spoorthi Communications Pvt Ltd	✓		✓	✓	
17.	CVR News			✓		

Source: Table based on Ministry of I & B, field data and secondary sources

long run. In the present day scenario, establishing a television channel requires a minimum of 20 crores rupee investment. To start a print media house, 400-600 crores are needed. This can't be done by an individual journalist or even by a group of them where as an MNC or a business syndicate can. When they gain control over three segments of the media i.e TV, radio and news paper, the people have less options to choose from.

“On the other hand a few channels like Vissa TV, Zee 24 Gantalu, HYTV, RVS, RK News are using satellite and have incurred financial

losses. Asianet, Sitara TV, Satya TV and Tulasi TV have not yet done so. These channels are well supported and can run for 1-2 years in case of the loss but when such channels when a situation arises, they usually tie-up with one of the political parties. Raj TV, N TV, Studio N etc, are channels that may not sustain themselves if become fully commercial. In all our television networks, Zee network is the most profitable one—but as a news channel it is a failure. It is now running on contract basis for a political party. No one can guess the future of the Zee News

once the agreement is over. So overall, starting a television channel has become viable and affordable (Personal interview, 2013).

The corporatization of media and cross-media ownership is a dangerous trend in India. It is a weapon in the hands of corporations for vertical and horizontal spread across the fields in India. Cross-media conglomeration reduces competition and denies entry to newcomers and small entrepreneurs. A report¹ recommending restriction on cross-media ownership says there is an “ample evidence of market dominance” in specific media markets and argues in favour of an “appropriate” regulatory framework to enforce cross-media ownership restrictions, especially in regional media markets where there is “significant concentration” and market dominance in comparison to national markets (for the Hindi and English media).

The Standing Committee on IT, headed by Congress MP Rao Inderjit Singh, stressed the critical need for restrictions on cross-media ownership. It urged the Ministry to “formulate” its stand on the issue in coordination with TRAI “after taking into account” international practices. There has been strong resistance on the part of media groups to the idea of restrictions on their sector, arguing that regulation would stifle growth, and that the multiplicity of media and the highly fragmented nature of the Indian market prevents monopolization and further that regulation of the sector amounts to an impingement on the Constitutional right to freedom of speech.

However, with this trend, alternative perspectives and media outlets vanish from the mainstream. Media coalesce into a seamless, pervasive, and increasingly homogenized cultural environment that has drifted out of democratic reach. The data suggests that there is a need of broadcast regulation or self-regulation for television in India.

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¹ Report of the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad (ASCI) at the instance of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B). See this link for full report: <http://www.mib.nic.in/WriteReadData/documents/ascstudyreport230312.pdf>

Book Review:

Edward Said, *Covering Islam*

(London: Vintage Books, 1997)

■ Aisha Farooqi

Covering Islam is the last book of a major trilogy that Edward Said wrote on the relationship between Islam, Muslims and the West. The other two are: *Orientalism* (1978) and *The Question of Palestine* (1979).

This book is about 'malicious generalizations about Islam' and, distorted depictions of Muslims as 'fanatical, violent, lustful and irrational'. In this book Said walks us through events such as Iranian Revolution, hostage crisis, Gulf war and World Trade Center bombing (1993) and subsequent negative media coverage.

It was first published in the year 1981, after the Iranian revolution and the hostage crisis. The revised edition was published in 1997 fully updated and with a new introduction. Islam then (1981 and 1997), as it remains today, was a topic of intense media attention.

The central theme of *Covering Islam* is the extension of the core ideas presented in his most important work, *Orientalism*. In that book Said discusses 'the affiliation of knowledge with power' arguing that the knowledge of Islam and Islamic peoples in the West through the discipline of Orientalism, proceeds not only from dominance and confrontation but also from cultural antipathy. Islam is defined as the mirror opposite of the West – its Other, and this establishes a framework which 'radically limits the knowledge of Islam'. Said contends that so long as this framework operates, Islam as a 'vitality lived experience cannot be known'. The basic flaw in Orientalism as a disciplinary formation, asserts Said, is its imputation of a universal character to Islam. This he sees as a 'violent attack on Islam and Muslims, an attack that coerces them into

conforming to roles imposed by imperialism'.

Covering Islam has three main chapters: Islam as News, The Iran Story and Knowledge and Power. In Islam as News, Edward Said traces the history of relationship between Islam and the Christian West and specially the threat posed by Islamic armies to Europe. This sense of threat he argues, still persists in the psyche of the West. The fear and threat perception of Islam, Said argues has deep religious roots, where Islam is seen as a 'competitor to Christianity'. The dramatic rise in oil prices in early 1970s was seen as an attempt by the Muslim world to conquer the world again and this left the West 'trembling with fear'. This threat perception evokes anti-Islamic sentiment across the West.

This section considers how Islam and Muslims are largely unknown to Americans and by extension to the West as a whole, which knows about Islam as it related to 'newsworthy issues' such as oil, Iran and Afghanistan, or terrorism. The media by covering newsworthy issues related to Islam and Muslims actually covers up or obscures Islam. Thus, 'covering' Islam has a double meaning – covering, as in writing the news about, and covering as in screening, hiding the truth of, and masking. This writes Said, is in sharp contrast to what is 'revealed': The representation of Muslims as 'potential terrorists' or as 'oil suppliers' covers over the history of Islamic culture as peaceful, pioneers in logic, astronomy, and medical science and the inventors of algebra.

The "Islam as News" section also examines how 'newsworthy issues' are determined. News, writes Said, is less an inert given than the result of a complex process of deliberate selection. 'The journalists, news agencies,

and networks consciously go about deciding what is to be portrayed, how it is to be portrayed and the like. Journalists and the American media inevitably collect information on the outside world inside a framework dominated by government policy'. In broader terms, 'newsworthy issues' are determined largely by groups representing the political and economic interests of energy corporations, Zionists, the defense and intelligence communities.

Said contends that media does not always make the truth readily available to its American citizens. He states that 'pictures and ideas do not spring from reality into our eyes and mind, truth is not directly available to us'. Said argues that this jaundiced view arises out of the media's representations of specific aspects of reality over others.

The next section 'The Iran Story' deals with the West's portrayal of the Iranian Revolution, the overthrow of Reza Shah Pahlavi and the hostage crisis. Describing media coverage of Iran at the time of hostage crisis, Said noted, 'clichés, caricatures, ignorance, unqualified ethnocentrism and inaccuracy were inordinately evident', while 'we' were 'normal' 'they' displayed 'neurotic moral fervor and writhed in 'self-provoked frenzy' and longing for 'martyrdom'". The American media depicted Khomeini as a brooding turban clad medieval despot who wanted to drag Iran back to the seventh century. Ayatollah Khomeini and Iran embodied all that was objectionable about Islam from terrorism to anti-Westernism. The revolutionaries were shown as opposed to Shah's modernization process. It was 'Islam out of control' – a threat like communism. Some experts who studied the Iranian revolution purported to show that it was equivalent to Marxism-Leninism and that the disorder was endemic to Islam. Media stories such as 'Iran Sucks' or 'Militant Islam' or 'The Dagger of Islam' or 'Ayatollah's Mein Kampf' or 'The New Barbarians are loose in Iran' created and fuelled a national obsession to an extent that public opinion demanded military intervention and 'Nuke Tehran' buttons were displayed. Edward Said's analysis reveals that a complex international event was portrayed as a simple dramatic story. The American audiences were mobilized into positions of antagonism against another nation by supposedly 'objective news', and on the basis of very little factual information. The history of American involvement with Iranian politics never became part of the common knowledge. The strategic motivation

provided for the US intervention by Iran's 1600 mile border with USSR was scarcely mentioned. The United States' leading role in putting the Shah in power and keeping him in power in the face of growing opposition was understated.

The final chapter Knowledge and Power considers how Western 'science', the 'relatively detached instruments of scientific quasi-objective representation' can be used to misrepresent a 'distant and alien society' such as Islam. 'Anything written about Islam by a professional scholar, writes Said 'is within the sphere of influence of corporations, the media, the government, all of which in turn play a very large role in making

interpretations about Islam, and subsequently, knowledge of it, desirable and 'in the national interest'. In other words knowledge and coverage of the Islamic world are defined in the United States by geopolitics and economic interests. The idea that Islam is 'medieval and dangerous as well as hostile and a threat' has acquired the status of a canon.

In opposition to this long history of hostile coverage of Islam, Edward Said calls for a new knowledge which he calls 'antithetical knowledge'. He defines antithetical knowledge as a 'kind of knowledge produced by people who quite consciously consider themselves to be writing in opposition to the

prevailing orthodoxy. Here 'the methodological silence of Orientalism is replaced by discussion of the political meanings of scholarship'. In antithetical scholarship Islam does not become 'reductive and monochromatic'. More importantly an antithetical scholar puts intellect not at service of power but at the service of criticism, community, dialogue and moral sense.

This call to antithetical knowledge remains relevant today.

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Seminar/Lecture, Edward Said, Pour une réinterprétation des formes culturelles; L'Islam, l'Occident et l'orientalism, Paris, Collège de France, 11/28/1996. Photographs: Rainer Ganahl.

EXCERPTS FROM COVERING ISLAM (SAID, 1981)

"In *Covering Islam* my subject is immediately contemporary: Western and specifically American responses to an Islamic world perceived, since the early seventies, as being immensely relevant and yet antipathetically troubled and problematic. Even though the pun in "*Covering Islam*" will be obvious to any reader proceeding through this book, a simple explanation is worth having at the outset. One of the points I make here and in "*Orientalism*" is that the term "Islam" as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. In no really significant way is there a direct correspondence between the "Islam" in common Western usage and the enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam, with its more than 800,000,000 people, its millions of square miles of territory principally in Africa and Asia, its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures. On the other hand, "Islam" is peculiarly traumatic news today in the West, for reasons that I discuss in the course of this book. During the past few years, especially since events in Iran caught European and American attention so strongly, the media have therefore covered Islam: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it and consequently they have made it "known." But, as I have implied, this coverage –and with it the work of academic experts on Islam, geopolitical strategists who speak of the "the crescent of crisis," cultural thinkers who deplore "the decline of the West"-is misleadingly full. It has given consumers of news the sense that they have understood Islam without at the same time intimating to them that a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances "Islam" has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility. All this has taken place as part of what is presumed to be fair, balanced, responsible coverage of Islam.....there is an unquestioned assumption that Islam can be characterized limitlessly by means of a handful, of recklessly general and repeatedly deployed clichés. And always it is supposed that the "Islam" being talked about is some real and stable object out there where "our" oil supplies happen to be found. With this sort of coverage has gone a great deal of covering up."

Yet there is a consensus on "Islam" as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world's new political, social and economic patterns. For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a distasteful exoticism. In all camps, however, there is agreement that even though little enough is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved of there. Let us say that the discourse on Islam is, if not absolutely vitiated, then certainly colored by the political, economic and intellectual situation in which it arises: this is true of East as it is of West. For many evident reasons, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that all discourse on Islam has an interest in some authority or power. On the other hand, I do not mean to say that all scholarship or writing about Islam is therefore useless. Quite the contrary; I think it is more useful than not, and very revealing as an index of what interest is being served. I cannot say for sure whether in matters having to do with human society there is such a thing as absolute truth or perfectly true knowledge; perhaps such things exist in the abstract- a proposition I do not find hard to accept- but in present reality truth about such matters as "Islam" is relative to who produces it.

Beware Bigotry-Free Speech and the Zapiro Cartoons (Excerpt)

■ **Mahmood Mamdani**

Excerpt from the text of talk on receiving an honorary doctorate at the University of Johannesburg, 25 May 2010

Yesterday, when I was in Cape Town, a friend gave me the week's edition of Mail and Guardian. I went straight for my favorite section, the cartoon by Zapiro. To my surprise, Zapiro featured a cartoon of Prophet Mohamed, agonizing: "OTHER Prophets have followers with a sense of humour!" I want to take this opportunity to reflect on times and places when humour turned deadly. Such a reflection should allow us to think through the relationship between two great liberal objectives, freedom of speech and civil peace. Since Zapiro seems to present his series of cartoons as a second edition of the Danish cartoons, I shall begin with a reflection on the original.

When the Danish cartoon debate broke out I was in Nigeria. If you stroll the streets of Kano, a Muslim majority city in northern Nigeria, you will have no problem finding material caricaturing Christianity sold by street vendors. And if you go to the east of Nigeria, to Enugu for example, you will find a similar supply of materials caricaturing Islam. None of this is blasphemy; most of it is bigotry. It is well known that the Danish paper that published the offending cartoons was earlier offered cartoons of Jesus Christ. But the paper declined to print these on grounds that it would offend its Christian readers. Had the Danish paper published cartoons of Jesus Christ, that would have been blasphemy; the cartoons it did publish were evidence of bigotry, not blasphemy.

Both blasphemy and bigotry belong to the larger tradition of free speech, but after a century of ethnic cleansing and genocide, we surely need to distinguish between the two

strands of the same tradition. The language of contemporary politics makes that distinction by referring to bigotry as hate speech.

Just a few weeks after the Danish cartoons were published, the German writer Gunter Grass was interviewed in a Portuguese weekly news magazine, *Visao*. In that interview, Gunter Grass said the Danish cartoons reminded him of anti-Semitic cartoons in a German magazine, *Der Sturmer*. The story was carried in a *New York Times* piece, which added that the publisher of *Der Sturmer* was tried at Nuremberg and executed. I am interested less in how close was the similarity between the Danish and the German cartoons, than in why a magazine publisher would be executed for publishing cartoons. One of the subjects I work on is the Rwanda genocide. Many of you would know that the International Tribunal in Arusha has pinned criminal responsibility for the genocide not just on those who executed it but also on those who imagined it, including intellectuals, artists and journalists as in RTMC. The Rwandan trials are the latest to bring out the dark side of free speech, its underbelly: how power can instrumentalize free speech to frame a minority and present it for target practice.

To understand why courts committed to defending freedom of speech can hold cartoonists responsible for crimes against humanity; we need to distinguish between bigotry and blasphemy. Blasphemy is the practice of questioning a tradition from within. In contrast, bigotry is an assault on that tradition from the outside. If blasphemy is an attempt to speak truth to power, bigotry is the reverse: an attempt by power to instrumentalize truth. A defining feature of the cartoon debate is that bigotry is being mistaken for blasphemy.

Can we deal with hate speech by legal restriction? I am not very optimistic. The law can be a corrective on individual discrimination, but it has seldom been an effective restraint on hate movements that target vulnerable minorities. If the episode of the Danish cartoons demonstrated one thing, it was that Islamophobia is a growing presence in Europe. One is struck by the ideological diversity of this phenomenon. Just as there was a left wing anti-Semitism in Europe before fascism, contemporary Islamophobia too is articulated in not only the familiar language of the right, but also the less familiar language of the left. The latter language is secular. The Danish cartoons and their enthusiastic republication throughout Europe, in both right and left-wing papers, was our first public glimpse of left and right Islamophobia marching in step formation. Its political effect has been to explode the middle ground. Is Zapiro asking us to evacuate the middle ground as testimony that we too possess a sense of humour?

If so, Zapiro has misread the real challenge that we face today. That challenge is both intellectual and political. The intellectual challenge lies in distinguishing between two strands in the history of free speech—blasphemy and bigotry. The political challenge lies in building a local and global coalition against all forms of bigotry. The growth of bigotry in Europe seems to me an unthinking response to two developments: locally, the dramatic growth of Muslim minorities in Europe and their struggle for human and citizenship rights; globally, we are going through an equally dramatic turning point in world history.

The history of the past five centuries has been one of western domination. Beginning 1491, Western colonialism understood and presented itself to the world at large as a civilizing and a rescue mission, a mission to rescue minorities and to civilize majorities. The colonizing discourse historically focused on barbarities among the colonized—sati, child marriage and polygamy in India, female genital mutilation and slavery in Africa—and presented colonialism as a rescue mission for women, children, and minorities, at the same time claiming to be a larger

project to civilize majorities. Meanwhile, Western minorities lived in the colonies with privilege and impunity. Put together, it has been five centuries of a growing inability to live with difference in the world, while at the same time politicizing difference. The irony is that a growing number of mainstream European politicians, perhaps nostalgic about empire, are experimenting with importing these same time-tested rhetorical techniques into domestic politics: the idea is to compile a list of barbaric cultural practices among immigrant minorities as a way to isolate, stigmatize, and frame them.

But the world is changing. New powers are on the horizon: most obviously, China and India. Neither has a Muslim majority, but both have significant Muslim minorities. This Danish case teaches us by negative example. To the hitherto dominant Western minority, it presents a lesson in how not to respond to a changing world with fear and anxiety, masked with arrogance, but rather to try a little humility so as to understand the ways in which the world is indeed changing.

There is also a lesson here for Muslim peoples. The Middle East and Islam are part

of the middle ground in this contest. Rather than be tempted to think that the struggle against Islamophobia is the main struggle – for it is not – let us put it in this larger context. Only that larger context can help us identify allies and highlight the importance of building alliances. Perhaps then we – and hopefully Zapiro- will be strong enough to confront organized hate campaigns, whether as calls to action or as cartoons, with a sense of humour.

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RACE, MASS MURDERERS AND MEDIA

■ Faria Athar



On the 20th of April, 1999, over 30 people were either killed or injured in a shooting in Colorado. Most of the victims were teenagers aged 15 to 18. They were just attending their regular school. The fatalities would have been almost ten-fold if not for the failed bombs. The two perpetrators had bombs fitted in the school cafeteria, a fire bomb and over 99 explosive devices. They hoped to set off the bombs in the cafeteria at the busiest times of the day¹ thus killing the maximum number of people, had the bombs exploded around 455 people would've died.

During the investigation after the shooting, the media tried to rationalize the shooting citing various causes that ranged from bullying to music, video games, family background and so forth. Researchers noted that the perpetrators suffered from depression and perhaps loneliness. But among their miseries the perpetrators had one privilege that helped dismiss them as loners, ignited larger debates on gun control and most importantly gained them forgiveness. They were both white American males.

Flash forward to 2015 and such attacks still persist. Dylann Roof (a young white man) opened fire in a black church killing nine people. Following his attack white supremacists in the country decided to burn down four other black churches. It was a heinous example of racism and hateful chauvinism. The media however chose to report it very hesitantly as a crime. It was reported in passive mode and the sheer atrocity of the incident was heavily downplayed.

Compare these to an ISIL mediated attack on Christian Churches. The reporting is aggressive and continuous. It almost inevitably gets the front page with titles such as "Islamic terrorists turn Churches into torture chambers". The tone they use is active and intentionally horrifying making it seem almost as if the reader could be the next victim even though the attack would've happened miles away.

While a white man's crime is caused by depression, a Muslim's is caused by his religion, an African-American's because of his color and an immigrant's because of his nationality. The media lazily categorizes crimes by such minorities into labels such that a crime by a member of any of the group always falls into that label irrespective of the context. It also helps them to reach convenient conclusions regarding the killers' motives. Sometimes when ties to the label they've created and the killer's personality seem weak they attempt to reinforce them by images, history etc.

For example, when the world was protesting the death of unarmed black men in America, the media would bring up random instances from the past where the victims 'appeared' to be violent. They weren't related to the victim's death and often happened way back in the past, but still bolstered their image as 'bad'. Similarly, in 2014 when a Malaysian aircraft crashed, a popular South Indian news paper published a picture of the Malaysian Muslim pilot grinning holding a butchering knife. Underlying connotation? He probably liked killing.

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Islamophobia

Excerpted from AG NOORANI, *Islam and Jihad*
(New Delhi: Leftword, 2002)

“The Media and the Burden of History”
(pp 31-34)

[...]

Western media wields considerable influence in many third World countries. In an extremely able survey Daya Kishen Thussu demonstrated that the Western media “projects Islam as inimical to civilized values. The demonizing of Islam fits in well with the Western geo-political interests in arms and oil. Today, after the demise of communist states, when Islam is being seen as a security threat to the West, the media in the Muslim world needs to devise ways and means to reduce the dependency on western news sources.”

The writer pointed out that “with the expansion of western electronic empires, western media have instant global reach through satellite and cable technology. Western and, more specifically, Anglo-American media dominate the world’s online services, television, radio and print journalism”.

“The bulk of international television news is disseminated through western news organizations- both raw footage from TV news agencies such as Reuters Television, Worldwide Television News and APTV, and completed reports from satellite and cable-based organizations such as CNN, Sky and BBC. The Voice of America and the BBC World Service, with their various language services, dominate the world’s airwaves”.

“Of the world’s four biggest international news agencies Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters and Agence France Presse, the first three are Anglo-American, and between them the four disseminate nearly 80 per cent of global news. Despite having international staff, these companies promote, consciously or unconsciously, a western, and more specifically, an Anglo-American, news agenda.”

Moreover, virtually all major English-language newspapers in India and news magazines proudly carry regular commentaries and features from western newspapers and magazines, thanks to syndication arrangements. Thus western news organizations wield great influence in setting and then building a global news agenda, conforming to western interests.

Many Indian journals ‘mimic’ the idiom of Western media and adopt its language, news, values and styles. Thussu cites a specific instance. When P.V.Narasimha Rao visited the United States in 1994 one Indian periodical ran a 20 page cover story ‘Pan-Islamic Fundamentalism Exporting Terror’ on the so-called threat from militant Islam that India faced.

A consultation paper produced by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, set up by the Runnymede Trust in 1996, entitled *Islamophobia* provides illustrative example of the results which the media and the burden of history have produced in British society. The Commission was headed by Prof. Gordon Conway, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex. Among its members were: Dr. Zaki Badawi, Principal of the Muslim College, London, The Rt. Revd. Richard Charters, Bishop of London (till December 1996), Ian Hargreaves, editor of *New Statesman*, Dr. Philip Lewis, adviser on inter-faith issues to the Bishop of Bradford, Zahida Manzoor, chair of Bradford Health Authority, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, trustee of the Runnymede Trust, Trevor Philips, chair of the Runnymede Trust, Dr. Sebastian Poulter, reader in law at the University of Southampton, Usha Prasahar, civil service commissioner, Nasreen Nehman, Trustee of the Runnymede Trust, Saba Risaluddin, director of the Calumus Foundation, Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, director of the Sussex Muslim Society, Dr. Richard Stone, chair of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, The Revd. John Webber, adviser on inter-faith issues to the Bishop of Stepney.

Conway wrote in his foreword: “If you doubt whether Islamophobia exists in Britain, I suggest you spend a week reading, as I have done, a range of national and local papers. If you look for articles which refer to Muslims or to Islam you will find prejudiced and antagonistic comments, mostly subtle but sometimes blatant and crude. Where the media lead, many will follow. British Muslims suffer discrimination in their education and in the workplace. Acts of harassment and violence against Muslims are common.”

The consultation paper said: “Islamophobia is dread or hatred of Islam and of Muslims. It has existed in western countries and cultures for several centuries but in the last twenty years has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous. It is an ingredient of all sections of the media, and is prevalent in all sections of society.”

It listed seven features of Islamophobic discourse. “1. Muslim cultures seen as monolithic and unchanging. 2. Claims that Muslims cultures are wholly different from other cultures. 3. Islam perceived as implacably threatening. 4. Claims that Islam’s adherents use their faith mainly for political or military advantage. 5. Muslim criticisms of Western cultures and societies rejected out of hand. 6. Fear of Islam mixed with racist hostility to immigration. 7. Islamophobia assumed to be natural and unproblematic.”

There are four main perceptions of “Islam as threat”: Muslim colonization; chief threat to global peace; “there will be wars”; and “the hooded hordes will win”. This is what Charles Moore, editor of *The Spectator* wrote: “You can be British without speaking English or being Christian or being white, but nevertheless Britain is basically English-speaking, Christian and white, and if one starts to think that it might become basically Urdu-speaking and Muslim and brown, one gets frightened and angry... because of our obstinate refusal to have enough babies, Western European civilization will start to die at the point when it could have been revived with new blood. Then the hooded hordes will win, and the Koran will be taught, as Gibbon famously imagined, in the schools of Oxford.”

Readers of the RSS organs *Organiser* and *Panchjanya* (Hindi) will be struck by the affinities between Islamophobes in the West and in India, very “natural allies”.

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Telugu press and Muslim issues

■ Madhumeeta Sinha and MA Moid

This article is about the response of the Telugu press in the coverage of Muslim issues in general and issues related to terrorism in particular. In the Hyderabad context what has come to our notice is that the Telugu press has begun to agree largely with police versions of stories, labeling young people as terrorists in their reports with much enthusiasm. The recent encounter at Alair, April 7th 2015, in which five under trial Muslim convicts were killed, shocked and surprised many of us with its sheer bias. All the Telugu newspapers and TV channels were unanimous in justifying the action of police and were sure that all the under trials were

dreaded terrorists and rightfully deserved this treatment. This attitude of Telugu press and media towards Muslims shows the deep rooted mistrust on the one hand, and on the other the knee jerk reaction of easily branding Muslim youth as terrorists without even a trial. Most of the time the Telugu press is unconcerned and non committal, and maintains a selective silence, but in others, as with Alair, where the gruesomeness of the killing makes it too visible, rather than attempt any investigative journalism it tends to go completely with the police perspective.

Let's take few headlines about the Alair 'encounter' from the Telugu newspapers and

TV reports and the last two from the Urdu press:

- Khel Khatam (8th April 2015, *Eenadu*, district main page)
- Terrorist adda - Nalgonda (9th April, *Eenadu*, district main page)
- Our snake den of sin (17 August, 2008, *Eenadu*)
- Warangal encounter- Terrorist Viqaruddin shot dead while escaping - TV channel V6
- ISI agent Viqaruddin and 4 SIMI activists Encountered at Warangal - TV ABN News
- Encounter of Viqar and four friends by police (8th April 2015, *Munsif*, Urdu daily)
- Five muslim under-trials killed in an encounter in Nalgonda (8th April 2015, *Itemad* , Urdu daily)

The questions that this situation raises are many: why is there so much unanimity in the Telugu press and media against Muslims? What do they intend to achieve through this? Was the Telugu press anti Muslim from the beginning? How does it cover the communal riots and the problems of the old city and the



Muslims? Who are responsible for these decisions in the press and media? Are they aware of the repercussions of such reports towards the society in general and the creation of divisions and hatred in the minds of Telugu readers in particular? What do management think of these problems? What is the background of Telugu journalists? Who makes decision in choosing and presenting news and what does the government think about these?

These are the questions which bothered us and to get some background we decided to talk to a prominent journalist, M.A. Majid, from the Urdu press of Hyderabad and a member of Indian Journalist Union. We felt that being an insider to the Urdu press and the journalist community he would enable to get a broader view about this situation.

The event of 9/11 has played an important role in spreading the image of Muslims as terrorists all over the world. But long before the incident Edward Said, while writing about the global media's hateful response to the Islam, said in his famous book *Covering Islam*: "yet there is a consensus on Islam as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world's new political, social, and economic patterns. For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the centre, a kind of distasteful exoticism." This opinion reflects in the journalistic domain as well where religious polarization shows itself up most bitterly against the Muslims. The Telugu press and media has also picked up these tendencies under the influence of international events and popularized the word "terrorist" among Telugu readers according to Majid. The Telugu press has little understanding of Hyderabad's Muslim ethos. But their opinions matter as they have a far greater reach in the state. Their wide readership and coverage naturally influences a wide section of the Telugu speakers.

According to Majid the Telugu press entered in to a new phase when NTR formed the government in 1984 and with that an influx of Telugu speakers and entrepreneurs to Hyderabad city took place. The population of Telugu speakers in the city has been rising to great proportions and more and more news papers and TV channels are established. Almost all the media houses are owned by the Andhra capitalists who employ journalists and editors belonging to their own region. These people have no sense of Muslims and of the Telangana region as well.

In Majid's view the TRP and circulation needs also force newspapers to present Muslims in a negative light. Stories of Muslim terrorists increase their circulation and TRP where as the Hindu terrorists in the Mecca Masjid blast case doesn't and thus completely ignored.

Talking more about Telugu press and media, Majid pointed out that first of all the only people who come to journalism are those not absorbed in other professions. They have no commitment to the journalistic norms and methods and no sense of social issues. They are easily controlled by the media management which runs the organization like a corporate firm and has sympathies towards right wing politics. Also in many editorial teams the biases some key members seem to harbor reflect in the anti Muslim reporting. When Majid questioned a couple of these senior journalists they expressed their helplessness in changing the trend in their respective papers. They always shifted the blame on some key person in management saying that these persons are responsible in the selection and rejection of particular news items. In relation to the coverage of Alair encounter case they said that the Telugu press and media published and presented the version that was supplied to them by the police. The absence of any individual investigation of the case and full acceptance of the police story shows their apathy, if not bias, towards the Muslim population.

These may be lame excuses to justify their biases but Majid was of the view that leftist tendencies were quite strong in the press earlier but now shift towards the right has taken place and now more and more papers are showing right-wing tendencies. According to him this is a great loss to journalism and to the common people as it affects the perception of day to day realities. When asked if the Press Council could play a role, he was of the view that it has neither the teeth nor the claws to intervene in this matter. He was also skeptical of government's role and said that government does not want to play any role, it just want to be a spectator and waits to utilize the outcome for its benefit.

A perceptive report "Terror Accused Muslims: How Fair are the Trials By Media?" by Hyderabad Forum for Justice (No date and author mentioned) echoes many of Majid's views:

"The influential local English and Telugu media however has not paid much attention

to these aspects in their reporting about 'terrorism'. Routinely publish police reports may assuage the feelings of the general public by assuring them that police are doing something, but the media has the obligation to create a public opinion or a perspective around these issues. It is important that biases in reporting also be addressed. For instance, the fact that a large number of Muslims died in blasts does not find sufficient mention whereas Muslims and terrorists are spoken of in the same breath. Almost always we find police or intelligence agencies versions reproduced in the news papers without even slight journalistic distance. Terms like 'jihadi', 'jihadi literature' are used without slightest comprehension of what is involved. Obnoxious and offensive terms such as 'Islamic terrorist' or 'jehadi terrorist' are being routinely used. Mosques and madrasas are being referred to as 'dens of terror' without slightest hesitation. The arrests of the young men are splashed across in sensational headlines. The arrested men are described ISI agent, Lashkar-e-Taiba, SIMI, Indian Mujahideen, depending on the current fashion. Their photos are splashed across repeatedly in the regular and special reports, without the slightest concerns that status is that of the 'accused', till proven guilty by the court. But when the courts or police say that no evidence has been found such news does not merit any attention. Acquittals by courts are not even mentioned. Similarly, fact finding reports by civil liberties organizations do not find any mention."

According to Majid these are nothing but larger tendencies of society that have crept into the media and press. This situation has put the press in a dilemma whether to follow society or enlighten and lead it; whether it should follow the crowd or educate it. Majid and many others seem to agree with the view that the regional press in India is not rising to the occasion, in other words it has become one of the biggest causes for spreading misunderstanding and enmity among people. It is also felt that the profit motive of the press and media owners will continue these dilemmas and in the process harm many innocent people and the interests of our collective lives.

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Urdu press in the princely state of Hyderabad

■ Muhammed Ashraf T

Introduction

The study of print culture and literature in India has been mostly concerned with immediate and overt political implications, like the Hindi-Urdu controversy over Hindustani in upper India during the nineteenth century, or the formation of regional identities based on a commonly shared language. Francesca Orsini has studied the Hindi public sphere in 1920-40. She demonstrates how educated Indians advanced their political, social and literary agendas through creating institutional spaces. Ulrike Stark analyses the hitherto untold story of the social, cultural and material aspects of book production in nineteenth century North India. It concerns commercial publishing of the Naval Kishore Press in the second half of the nineteenth century. Stark applies Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and the theory of cultural production in her study.

Masood Ali Khan had conducted a chronological study about the Urdu press in Hyderabad. When Kavita Saraswathi Datla looks at the establishment and intellectual history of Osmania University and Urdu language in Hyderabad she explores translation, book production and print activities. Her work is basically an attempt to look at the intellectual history of Hyderabad concerned with Urdu language, education and nationalism in a Muslim space. There are no analytical or descriptive studies available which discuss the print culture in Hyderabad.

In a more theoretical register, Veena Naregal has argued convincingly that linguistic hierarchies, literate audiences and political structure are interrelated.

Given this context, it becomes inevitable to look at the print culture of Hyderabad focus on Urdu popular press, political spectrum and public sphere in Hyderabad.

Hyderabad: power, culture and public sphere

The princely state of Hyderabad had been reputed for its composite multiculturalism and social diversity. The social body of this place comprises a variety of religious and linguistic communities. Muslims from Iran, Yemen, and Turkey, Africa, Armenia and many other countries and native Hindus with their various streams and groups came together as the population of this part of Deccan plateau. Hyderabad was the largest princely state which could be seen as a site of migration, diaspora, diversity, universalism and multiculturalism. As Benjamin Cohen's work, *Kingship and colonialism in India's Deccan* has demonstrated, princely states such as Hyderabad have to be studied on multiple levels, since they were 'multitiered, multiethnic' states, unique in their combination of state forms drawn from earlier Hindu empires 'embedded within the Muslim regimes'.

Osmania University, the first Urdu university in South Asia was established in 1918 in the reign of Mir Osman Ali Khan. It contributed towards the intellectual development of Hyderabad in general and the immense growth and standardization of Urdu language in particular. English was the compulsory second language in Osmania University.

The political arena and public sphere of Hyderabad had been constituted influenced by various socio-political, linguistic and cultural collectives like Andhra Jana Sangham, Andhra Maha Sabha, Hyderabad State Congress, Arya Samaj, Hindu Maha Sabha, Communist Party, Indian National Congress and Muslim League from outside. Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi were the prominent native languages of the state. In Hyderabad, until the 1940s, Muslims dominated the public sphere not only because

they owned most of the land and had government jobs, but also because Urdu was the official language.

Civil societal institutions and movements took lead in providing space for public discussion and debate over social and political issues to cultivate public life. The decades leading up to Indian independence saw in Hyderabad a surge of civil societal activism despite many constraints placed by the state's administration.

Rama Sundari Mantena suggests that the modernization schemes implemented by Salar Jang along with calls for constitutional reforms starting in the second decade of the twentieth century nurtured the conditions for the emergence of a thriving public sphere in Hyderabad, a public that eventually not only posed a challenge to the monarchical power of the Nizam, but also the dominance of Muslims in the bureaucracy.

The theme politics was very crucial in all arenas of the princely state of Hyderabad. Religion, caste, language, geography and any other categorical, group or identity measurements were deeply shaped by political ideas and perspectives.

Language and Hyderabad Princely State

With the coming of Muslim rulers from North India into Deccan, Persian and Urdu languages gained currency in administrative and educational spheres. Thus Dakhni language was also developed in Hyderabad. Kavita Datla in her study about Urdu nationalism in colonial India in the context of Hyderabad suggests that the Urdu language in the early twentieth century became a means not only of asserting difference but also of imagining a common secular future. She argues that intellectuals in Hyderabad used Urdu not against Hindi but to rival English language and Western education and the language was put above religion. Persian and Urdu were considered also as the symbols or contributions of Muslim rule in Hyderabad state.

With the rest of Muslim India, the elite of Hyderabad considered Persian as an essential part of their cultural heritage and a marker of their elitist identity and political domination. The Paigah nobility of Hyderabad studied Persian as part of their socialization. Elite groups paid more attention to Persian in the

beginning and then moved to English and Urdu, as those languages gained currency in the domains of power. Persian was a symbol of Muslim cultural and political domination until it was replaced by Urdu in 1884.

The transition from Persian to Urdu was connected with state politics: specifically the tension between the locals (Mulkis) of Hyderabad and the outsiders (Ghaer-Mulkis), mostly the Urdu speaking elite of North India. The Hindustanis who had come from British India where they had been using Urdu rather than Persian in their youth (the language of schooling and the courts being Urdu since the 1840s) were in favor of using Urdu in the affairs of the state.

Hindustani officials created a lobby which promoted Urdu in the state. Syed Husain Bilgrami was the Indian tutor of Osman Ali Khan and the chief executive of education for thirty two years. He was a great supporter of Urdu as a medium of instruction. The pro-Urdu group was active even after the replacement of Persian by Urdu, however, now their focus was to counter the influx of English. Thus, the pro-Urdu campaign which was originally against Persian now opposed local languages and English. Salar Jang 1 who had resisted the transition from Persian to Urdu at last gave some concessions to Urdu language. The official shift happened in 1884. Local languages were tolerated, but not in urban areas such as Hyderabad where only Urdu was to be used.

Urdu had a royal and symbolic currency even when Persian was the official language of the state. The common people, and especially the middle classes, learned it in order to find employment in the state services. There were many institutions and individuals to promote the learning of Urdu. One of the personalities associated with Urdu was Maulvi Abdul Haq. He was known as 'Babae Urdu' (Father of Urdu). He was also one of the pioneers of Osmania University. He presided over the Daru Tarjuma (Translation Bureau) and invited eminent scholars from North India to Hyderabad. Maulvi Abdul Haq was of opinion that one characteristic of a Muslim was the 'love of Urdu'. When upper classes were shifting to English, the middle classes were fully given to the education in Urdu.

Urdu language was conceptualized in multiple ways in Hyderabad state. It was imagined as a symbol of Islam and Muslims,

as a rival to English language and English education and as a common language to engage with other languages in the Deccan. However, in North India, a movement had started by the end of the nineteenth century, identifying Urdu (Persian script) with Muslims and Hindi (Sanskrit script) with Hindus.

Urdu press in Hyderabad

In Hyderabad, when Captain Sydenham first displayed the model of a Man-of-War, an air pump and a printing press to the Nizam as specimens of the 'appliances of European science', the ruler showed 'so little interest in the press, that he had not even made a present to the compositors who had come round from Madras to exhibit the application to practical purposes of the implements of their craft'. And yet by 1886 there were 1094 presses in India of which 200 were in the South.

The printing press in Hyderabad is deeply connected with the Paigah family which was part of the nobility in the Asaf Jahi period. Abdul Fateh Khan was the first Paigah noble. Fakhruddin Khan, son of Abdul Fateh Khan was appointed as 'Madarul Maham' (Prime Minister), he resigned later and engaged in educational and intellectual activities. He acquired and disseminated knowledge. He established an academy and a printing press, where books mainly on science and mathematics were written (or translated from foreign languages) by scholars, and published. Sajida Adeeb opines that "incidentally, this was the first printing press in Hyderabad state". Fakhruddin Khan was conscious of the scientific and technological developments in Europe. He brought books on subjects like science, mathematics and technology from England, France and elsewhere and got them translated in the court languages of that period like Urdu and Persian, printed them in his press and made them available for people.

The print culture in Hyderabad started with modern and scientific educational activities. The first Urdu magazine on medicine entitled *Risala-i-Tababat* was published in 1857 in Asaf Jahi period. It was edited by John Smith. The history of Urdu journalism began not only as a political, social and literacy urge but primarily a need to get acquainted with Western science and medicine. The foundation of Urdu journalism was thus laid first on Medicine and Science.

Dr. Masood Ali Khan presents a chronological history in his study 'The history of Urdu press (A case study of Hyderabad)'. According to Qasim Ali Sajjanlal, the *Aftab-e-Deccan* was the first Urdu paper published in 1860 from Hyderabad. Anwarul Haq Jafari writes that Urdu journalism in the Deccan had developed in the last quarter of 19th century. According to him the *Khursheed-e-Deccan* was the first newspaper of Hyderabad which started its publication in 1883 under the editorship Sultan Mohd Dehlavi.

Kursheed-e-Deccan, *Hazere Dastan*, *Afsarul Akhaber*, *Akbar-e-Asafi*, *Musheer-e-Deccan* were the newspapers belong to the early phase of Urdu journalism. The *Ilm-vo-Amal* was the third daily started by Mohib-e-Hussain in 1902. Before the publication of this daily there were 14 newspapers and magazines which were being published till 1901. Out of these 12 were in Urdu and 2 were in Marathi. Out of 12 Urdu papers seven were dailies.

From the beginning of the publication of newspapers in Hyderabad till 1918 and before the formation of the state propagating Congress of Hyderabad and Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen all newspapers were projecting a reformative attitude. The national movement in British India came into Hyderabad and changed the political face of the state. *Subha-e-Deccan* and *Nizam Gazette* were important newspapers in the state. Hakim Gufaran Ahmed Ansari was always associated with press. He published nearly 17 newspapers with different names. Because of his strong criticism of government he could not be granted permission mostly for publishing newspapers. He published *Majlis*, *Al-Azan*, and *Charminar* under the editorship of Syed Nooral Haq Jafari.

M.N. Narasinga Rao was a politician and journalist. He started publishing a newspaper *Raiyyat* in 1928 to popularize his views. Government took serious action against this newspaper and he stopped the publication of this newspaper. Abdul Rahman Rayis published *Manshoor* in 1929 and later, *Waqat*. Many writers cooperated with him and his newspapers became very popular. He was regarded as a nationalist; he also took part in the Khilafat movement. Rayis and his companions were always under the watch of the government. In 1930, Ahmedulla Qadri started publishing *Saltanat* which kept away

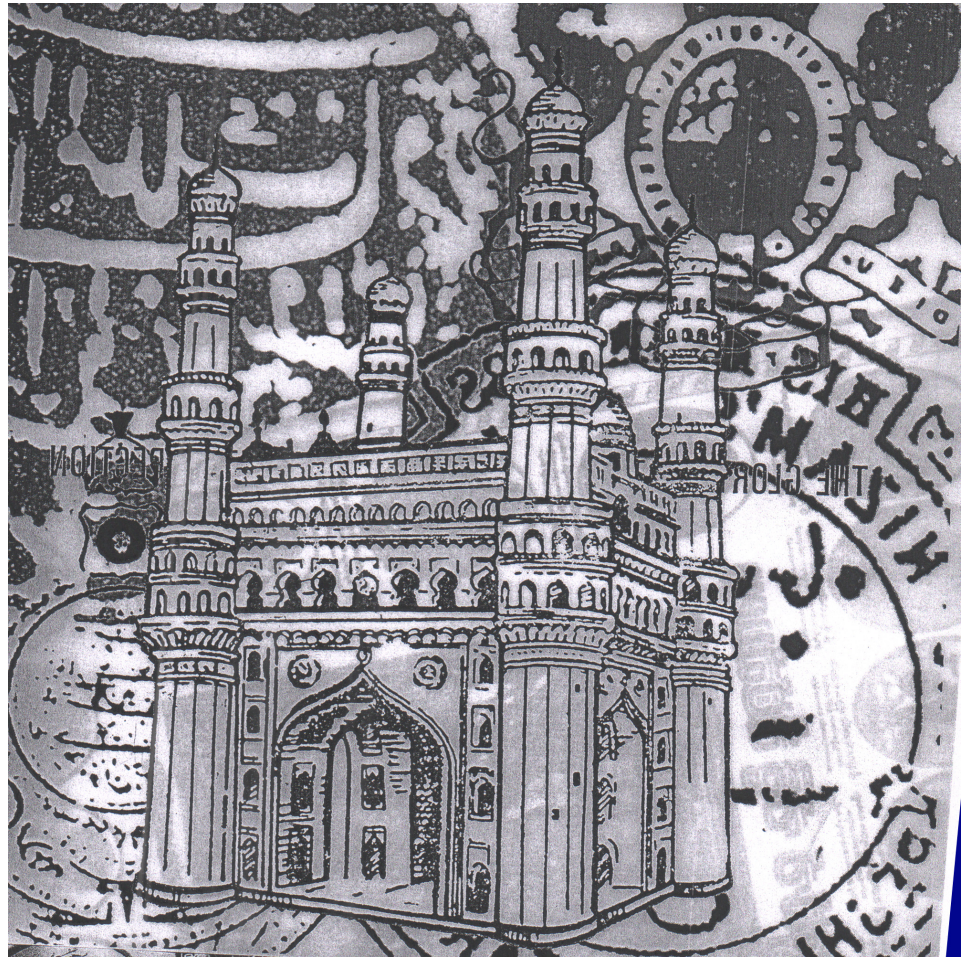
from politics. It used to publish firmans and poetry composed by the Nizam.

Quazi Abdul Gaffar started *Payam* in 1935. The Urdu journalism had attained high quality by the publication of *Payam*. It showed literary taste and dealt with local, regional, national and international affairs. It supported progressive ideas. The establishment of State Reforms Association and the state Congress on one hand and the political activities of Majlis under the leadership of Bahadur Yar Jung on the other had their political and cultural impact on the journalistic trends in Hyderabad. The newspapers were naturally divided into conflicting groups. Mohib-i-Hussain started earlier reformative movements which were taken up by State Congress in later period of 1938-40. This was supported as organized movements through newspapers like *Rayyat*, *Payam* and *Imroze*.

Ittehad was the product of political crisis in 1947. Abdul Qader Hashmi and Sultan Bin Omer were the editors of *Ittehad* which was the official organ of Majlis. Mazhar Ali Kamil in the beginning was its chief patron. Later it came to be published under the patronage of Qasim Razvi who started Razakar movement in Hyderabad. They used to publish *Al-Balag* weekly also. Sultan Bin Omer became its editor after Hashmi. *Imroze* was a nationalist newspaper, it was published in 1948. Shoebullah was its editor who was enjoying the strong support of the Congress party. When Shoebullah was murdered, *Imroze* was closed.

In the initial period of *Musheer-e-Deccan* and *Ilm-vo-Amal* some healthy literary trends developed among the masses. It is in the fitness of things to name this period both as formative as well as reformative, and the press was slowly establishing its credibility. The growth of Urdu press can be conveniently divided into two phases. The first phase began from 1850 to 1925 and the second phase begins from 1925 to 1948 till the merger of Hyderabad into Indian Union.”

The most intellectual journalists who started their carrier in the second phase of Urdu journalism were all the products of Osmania. Between 1945-1948 some of the journalists were for Nizam's paramourcy, some of them were pro-Majlis, a few of them were progressive and the rest were nationalists. The press and journalism were very active during the period of 1935-48. The



newspapers of this period can be divided into three different schools of thought.

The first group of newspapers which were strongly supporting the existing rule was *Nizam Gazette* and *Subha-e-Deccan*. Though every newspaper was supposed to publish the 'Farman/Firman' (Royal order) of the Nizam, these two newspapers were considered as authentic channels of the royal orders. There was a second group of newspapers such as *Rahbara-e-Deccan*, *Majlis*, *Ittehad* and *Aghaz*. These were the strong supporters of Majlis. The policies of these newspapers declared that the Nizam of Deccan was the representative and protector of Muslim's interest and pleaded for independent Hyderabad whereas the third group of newspapers as like *Raiyyat*, *Payam*, *Waqt* and *Imroze* were arguing for constitutional and responsible government and they were nationalists as well. *Payam* promoted modern ideas and created basis for communists in the state.

To sum up the discussion, the Urdu press in Hyderabad emerged and passed through various stages by engaging with socio-political, cultural and educational domains.

Modern education, Western science, social reform, political mobilization and literary and cultural development had shaped and configured the contents and agendas of Urdu popular press in Hyderabad. This press was not started as commercial venture. It was connected with intellectual, educational and political projects. In the first phase it targeted social reform and modernization of the society. In the second phase Urdu press aimed at educational and political development of the state. From 1920 as a period of high political activism up to the integration of Hyderabad into India, the Urdu press was immensely political. Nationalism, Communism, Islam, Hinduism and other ideologies were incorporated to the political projects of the state. Language, religion, caste, region and other elements were overlapped and interconnected and they played crucial role in shaping the body of the state. They had vital implication in the emergence and development of Urdu popular press.

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Dalit (In)visibility and Journalism as Site of Caste Violence

■ Ranjith Thankappan

The demise of Nagaraju, a Dalit journalist and the newspaper management's attitude towards him has once again brought to the fore the issue of Dalit exclusion and subjugation in Indian media. Not that it has opened the eyes of blatantly caste blind Indian media houses and broken the historical silence of civil society on the Dalit question. But it has paved way for critical debate on the cultural practices of journalism in the Indian milieu.

Can one reduce the apathy shown by the newspaper management towards Nagaraju to a universalizing argument about the corporate capitalist class's ideological indifference to the working class? Is there a caste pleasure that a non-Dalit editor enjoys while chopping off Dalit news stories, which might deserve a front-page space? Is there a kind of 'Brahmanical itching' that one feels when a Dalit applies for an editorial position in the media? Is there a silent caste dictum in media houses that Dalits cannot do journalism in India?

In this essay, I try to briefly address the critical questions raised vis-à-vis Dalits and the institution of journalism in India and seek to suggest the overarching constitutive frame of gendered caste-class praxis of exclusions in it. In other words, I suggest that the politics of representation of Dalits in journalism points towards the exclusionary hegemonic practices in civil society, which, while keeping a proclaimed vigilante distance from the state seems to be shaped out of the same

ideological space that nurtures societal inequalities.

The Invisible/Visible Dalit

The paradigm of invisibility/visibility frames the basic mode of representation of Dalits in news media. On the one hand, there is lack of adequate coverage of Dalit issues and on the other, even if there is adequate coverage, it is limited to specific issues which are considered to reproduce the stereotype of 'Dalit as lesser human'. In the first case, there is an empirical vacuum in the news space. In the second, there is an extension of the first case to a patronized inclusion which silences the assertive political self of the Dalit. Instead, it contains the Dalit self within the nation state's paradigm of the subject who needs to be civilized through modernist civilizing projects. Let us wade through the debates first.

The existing scholarship shows the lack of representation of Dalits in the Indian national media. The pan-Indian national paradigm that addresses the question of representation of Dalits in journalism has been debated since the time of Ambedkar. Historically, one can trace back to Ambedkar the apathy shown by the nationalist press towards Dalits. Ambedkar contested the claims of Congress and Gandhi that they represent Dalits, by citing the propagandistic nature of the national press. Pointing to the lack of representation of Dalits and their politics in national media, Ambedkar noted:

The first and foremost circumstance for the spread of this view is the propaganda by the Indian press in favour of the Congress... [T]he second circumstance why the world outside believes that the Congress is the only organization which represents India, including even the untouchables, is because of the absence of propaganda on behalf of the untouchables to advertise their case against the Congress claim... [T]hey (Dalits) have no press and the Congress press is closed to them. It is determined not to give them the slightest publicity. They cannot have their own press (Ambedkar 1945).

He carried on with his critique by focusing specifically on the Brahmin domination in the Indian press as:

The staff of the Associated Press of India, which is the main news distributing agency in India, is entirely drawn from Madras Brahmins- indeed the whole of the press in India is in their hands and who for well-known reason are entirely pro-Congress and will not allow any news hostile to the Congress to get publicity. These are reasons beyond the control of untouchables (Ibid).

But it was decades later when Kenneth Cooper, *The Washington Post's* Indian correspondent confronted B. N. Uniyal, then the editor of *The Pioneer*, with the question of Dalit representation in Indian media that it was once again brought back to the fore in the mid 1990s, the period of political and economic upheaval. B.N. Uniyal in a reply to Kenneth Cooper wrote:

Suddenly I realized that in all the thirty years I had worked as a journalist I had never met a fellow journalist who was a Dalit; no not one. And worse still was the thought that ... it had never occurred to me that there was something so seriously amiss in the profession (Uniyal 2006).

Kenneth Cooper's journalistic quest and Uniyal's explorations on the question of one of the missing links in India's newsrooms – Dalit journalists- expounds this dominant

¹ See The Task Force Report on Bhopal Declaration: Charting a New Course for Dalits for the 21st Century, Government of Madhya Pradesh, January 2003, p.59

nature of journalism culture in India. Later, Dalit writer and activist Chandrabhan Prasad and S. Bachchan have taken the initiative in demanding affirmative action for Dalits in Indian media, which was articulated through the famous Bhopal Declaration.¹ Later, in a path-breaking seminal work on the revolutionary surge of Indian newspaper industry, Robin Jeffrey argued:

In more than ten years of studying Indian-language newspapers, including twenty weeks of travel in which I stayed in twenty towns, visited dozens of newspapers and interviewed more than 250 people, I did not – so far as I know – meet a Dalit journalist working for a mainstream publication, much less a Dalit editor or proprietor (Jeffrey 2003, 160).

Jeffrey met journalists from across the country and one of the questions he raised was about the absence of Dalits in Indian media. Indian journalists' responses to Jeffrey throw light on the apathy shown by Indian national media towards Dalits. The following section describes some of these responses

The Meritocracy of Caste Exclusion

The liberal Indian journalists answered this fundamental question of Dalit representation with an implicit casteist response hidden under the garb of meritocracy. Below are some of their responses quoted in Robin Jeffrey's seminal work *India's Newspaper Revolution*.

1) Balwant Shah, senior Editor, *Sandesh*: "We have not looked at that [the presence of Dalits on the editorial side of the newspaper]. We don't really bother what caste he [a journalist] is. We like to give opportunity to a deserving person."

2) D. S. Ravi Doss, one of the very few Dalit journalists Jeffrey met during his exploratory research, explained: "Even if there are some Scheduled Caste journalists, they won't expose themselves because they will be treated separately [and] identified as Scheduled Caste. Even though they are all

educated and progressive people, some journalists have in their mind communal feelings. [...] Practically no newspaper is against Scheduled Castes. But at the same time they are not bothering about their life also. They don't take any special care for the treatment of Scheduled Castes. [...] Only Dalits can have the full feelings of their sufferings. They are the people who suffer. That cannot be experienced by others. [...] If a particular journalist is a Scheduled Caste, he can write more than other journalists because he is the person involved in the problem."

3) Jose Panachipuram, *Malayala Manorama*: "We never treat them [Dalits] separately, but they are not in a very big position of course."

4) Jose T. Thomas, Former News Editor, *Deepika*: "They [Dalits] are not present in the newsrooms, they are not present in press clubs, they are not present in journalism departments. Their issues are not reported or published in the dailies."

The empirical reality of 'Dalit invisibility' points to the peculiar feature of Indian media: the exclusion of Dalits from the media spaces i.e., newsrooms and news holes/slots. This empirical fact has been proven by a study conducted among accredited journalists in Delhi, India's national capital by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (C.S.D.S.), New Delhi.² The study has pointed towards not only the mere absence of Dalits, but also the domination of one particular community- the Brahmans-in the Indian English language national media. The absence of Dalit related issues in media not only reflects the absence or almost negligible presence of Dalits as professional journalists, but also Dalits as a community of potential consumers of media. Robin Jeffrey observes:

The fact that almost no Dalit men or women worked even in minor editorial jobs on Indian language dailies meant that aspects of the life of Dalits were neglected. And the fact that no sizeable daily in India was owned or edited by Dalits meant that stories about them were unlikely to receive the constant, sympathetic coverage of stories about,

for example, the urban, consuming middle class (Jeffrey 2003, 178).

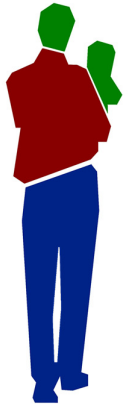
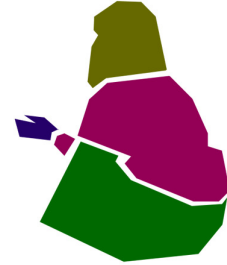
The historical reality of the exclusion of Dalits in national press has occurred at the juncture of the Brahmanical monopoly over Indian media. Historicising this aspect of Brahmanical cultural monopoly in Indian national media, Thirumal observes:

Other outstanding Dalit individuals early on took up the task of cultural production to attack Hindu nationalism and colonialism, including Iyothee Thass in the south and Swami Achhutananda in the north, both of whom launched newspapers of importance to the Dalit community from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. However, these efforts were not comparable to the near-absolute monopoly of the press by the Brahmans (Thirumal 2008, 99).

While the statist welfare policies binds Dalits to the modernist civilizing projects, civil society with its predominant Brahmanical domination masquerades as liberal leftist rhetoric, loops it to the spiral of silence over caste and caste based inequalities. The state has ensured the political and bureaucratic representation of Dalits as part of constitutional legality. But the civil society and media have yet to realize it as one of the basic tenets of democratic polity. Noted Tamil political thinker and writer Ravikumar argues:

Running a magazine is not similar to owning a factory. Since the press is regarded as one of the pillars of democracy, it plays a significant role in shaping a country's polity. So demanding the inclusion of dalits in the media should not be merely regarded as a plea for jobs. It is a demand for democracy, like the demand for representation in the Assembly, Parliament and Judiciary. Is it ethical on the part of the owners of Indian and Tamil newspapers to ignore such a demand for so long? (Ravikumar 2007, 30).

² C.S.D.S. study on national media showed that Hindu 'upper' caste men dominate media. It was designed and executed by Prof. Yogendra Yadav, Senior Fellow CSDS, Freelance Journalist Anil Chamadia and Independent Researcher Jitendra Kumar and between 30 May- 3 June 2006.



However, it needs to be seen not merely as an empirical question as the careful inclusion has resulted in the stereotyping of Dalit as the problematic caste self of the Indian 'Other'. Over the years the Brahman has become the 'nation' and the 'national', whereas the Dalit has been relegated to the margins as a space of anti-national identitarian caste politics. The Brahman has become invisible as the epitome of secular liberal space and therefore, seen less as a caste self, whereas Dalit that resists such hegemonising politics is projected as 'casteist'. Hinting towards this modern secular self of the media, S. Anand writes:

Coverage of caste in the Indian media has been equated with reporting on issues that concern the 'lower castes' – the dalits and other backward classes (shudras). The mostly urbanised media reflects the common sense of the brahminical upper middle class that caste has always something to do with others and not the dwija (twice-born', non-Dalit, non-shudra) (Anand 2005, 172-173).

The anti-reservation campaigns of the ilk of 'Youth for Equality', the liberal euphoria created by the Aam Admi Party and such like, and Marxist radical politics are all based on similar thinking. Media owners and journalists seem to be 'frogs in the well'

unleashing modern forms of caste violence on the prospective Dalit journalists. Nagaraju is only the living victim of the same ideological caste violence of Indian national media.

Conclusion

The 'Dalit-less' newsrooms in effect erase Dalit writing and silence the Dalit voice in the field of journalism. The question, "Where are the Dalits?" is not only as an empirical one but also an ideological one pointing to the cultural void that structurally makes invisible/silences Dalits in the public domain (Thankappan 2006). The social positioning of Dalit as outcaste gets embedded in the cultural realm of journalism as the latter weaves it into its ideological fabric. The empirical reality of 'Dalit-less' or 'Dalit-silent' newsrooms defines the cultural space of the Indian national media. This empirical reality of absence/silence/invisibility becomes the nationalist grand narrative of mainstream journalism vis-à-vis the question of Dalit. The regional variation of the same transforms specific cultural modes of narration through which the framing of the Dalit in the journalistic culture takes shape.

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In search of a Dalit journalist



■ B.N. Uniyal

One morning last week, a correspondent of a foreign newspaper stationed in Delhi rang me up to find out whether I knew any Dalit journalist from whom he could get a quote on Kanshi Ram and Mayawati's recent squabble with some media persons. "Mr. Uniyal, could you tell me if it would be offensive to ask an Indian journalist whether he is a Dalit?" he began.

"I don't know, friend," I said, "I really don't know!"

"Okay, tell me, if you would feel offended if asked you this question?"

That left me baffled for a response.

"Well," I hesitated for a while, struggling in my mind with my various selves to formulate a correct response on behalf of them all, but before I could do that, I found I had already launched myself on a long, peroration which, when I began, I did not know how I was going to end it. "You know, the thing is that in India it should be seen in the context of the ceaseless struggle which has been conducted through the last 200 years or so against it in various ways and" Oh, God! What a rock fall of gibberish, I thought. I tried to bring it to a halt, but I just could not.

Thankfully, he interrupted me in the middle of the delinquent sentence.

"That is nice, Mr. Uniyal, but what I want is a brief quote from a Dalit journalist. I am not writing an article on the caste system, but just about this matter."

"Frankly, friend," I said. "I do not know any Dalit journalist but I can ask some friends. I shall let you know in a day or two."

Suddenly, I realized that in all the 30 years I had worked as a journalist I had never met a fellow journalist who was a Dalit; no, not one. And, worse still was the thought that

during all these years it had never occurred to me that there was something so seriously amiss in the profession, something which I should have noticed as a journalist. In all these years I have travelled through almost every district of the country in the company of numerous journalists and met hundreds of others in different cities and towns, and yet I did not remember having met any Dalit journalist. I have journalist friend who are Christians or Muslims, and a few Jains and Sikhs too, but none who is a Dalit. How strange? There must at least be a few in the profession here in Delhi, I told myself. I decided to find out.

I rang up an English language columnist friend, a former editor of a weekly who knows and meets more journalists from among the younger lot these days than I do. "No, I don't know any," he said. I rang up another friend. He said the same, I rang up another friend. He said the same. I rang up an editor of a Hindi daily. He got angry with me.

"These western journalists don't understand India," he fulminated. "They have no knowledge of Indian history. They just want to malign the country. Why do you encourage such people?" I hung up, feeling uncertain about the usefulness of such an enquiry.

Just then walked into my room a well-known Hindi columnist who had also once been an editor of a very popular Hindi weekly. I put the same question to him and he also came out with the same response. I decided to call up another journalist friend, a trade union activist of long standing. He must know someone, I told myself. But, he too felt upset about it all. He saw in my query a conspiracy to divide the journalist fraternity. I hung up again, now feeling uncertain of the intentions of the foreign correspondent who had set the ball rolling in the first place.

The poet's anguish

That night I went to Press Club and asked several friends and acquaintances whether they knew any journalist who was a Dalit. Nobody did. A friend thought I was trying to act smart or score a point over others by thinking of writing on such a subject. "This is what is called one-upmanship," he said, admonishingly, "you want to show that you are the only one who is not a casteist amongst us!"

Another friend of long years told me that journalists are journalists and should not be screened on caste basis. "Do you mean to say the Press is really Manuwadi as Kanshi Ram says? Do you think any of us writes or reports as a Brahmin journalist, or as a Kayastha or a Jain journalist?" asked another friend. I admitted that that was not true, though I was by now becoming unsure of such an assertion. Does it really mean anything not to have any journalist amidst us from among the Dalits? I asked myself. I even wondered whether I could now trust a reply from myself to a question like that?

I came home and began leafing through the Accreditation Index, 1996, of the Press Information Bureau of the government of India which lists the names of all the accredited correspondents who serve as the eyes and the ears of the nation in the capital city of Delhi. They are the ones who decide what is news and what is not; what is worth reporting of the day and what is not.

Though it is not they alone who decide what or whom to play up or play down in next morning's newspapers or in the next edition of their weeklies and fortnightlies, it is basically they who give the news the slant which shapes our attitudes towards men and women in the news. Everything depends on what questions they ask at a Press conference and how they ask these. And, at the end of the day, it all depends on how they compose their reports.

The Accreditation Index was revealing. Of the 686 accredited correspondents listed in it, as many as 454 bore their caste surnames and, of them, as many as 240 turned out Brahmins, 79 Punjabi Khatri, 44 Kayastha, 26 Muslims with as many Baniyas, 19 Christians, 12 Jains and nine (Bengali) Baidyas. I checked out the caste affiliation of the 47 of the remaining 232



correspondents at random none of them turned out to be a Dalit either.

“There must be some,” said a senior official in the PIB, but it is difficult to find out because they don’t write their caste surnames. They must be wanting to hide their caste identity you know. Who would want to be known as a Scheduled Caste?”

“What are you trying to achieve by making such an enquiry, anyway?” asked another, Do you want to provide grist to Mr. Kanshi Ram’s caste mill? Why do you think it is necessary to ascertain the caste of journalists?

After all most journalists are not casteist. You are not for example, are you?”

“I am not sure,” I said and hung up.

What would journalism be like if there were as many journalists amidst us from among the Dalits as were among the Brahmins, I asked myself. I was reminded of some lines of Maharashtra’s Dalit poet, Namdev Dhasal, searched for the anthology in which I had read those lines;

One day I cursed that mother-fucker god
He just laughed shamelessly.

My neighbour, a born-to-the pen Brahman
Was shocked.
He looked at me with his castor-oil face
I cursed another good hot curse
The university building shuddered
And sank waist-deep
All at once scholars began doing research
Into what makes people angry....

Reproduced from **The Pioneer**,
16 November 1996
BN Uniyal is a journalist who lives in Delhi

Need For News Service: “The Oppressed Indian” – April 1979

■ Kanshi Ram

The Oppressed Indian was a monthly journal started by Kanshi Ram in April 1979. We have reproduced an excerpt from the editorial written by him for the inaugural issue. The logic of the initiative and the problems it sought to alleviate constitute the editorial and make for illuminating reading.

Editors (Media Broadsheet)

Having a news service run by ourselves was the urgent need felt by Kanshi Ram. This was because the existing media was reporting on what was happening in a casual manner, especially on atrocities, inhuman insults and injuries while the educated among us were groping in darkness without being fully informed.

Manohar Atey,

Editor of the compilation, *Editorials of Kanshi Ram.*

The backward classes (SC, ST, OBC) constitute more than 2/3 of India's population and the conventional minorities another 17.2%. Even amongst the backward classes the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes form the hard core of India's backwardness. All these people of the backward and minority communities, who form about 85% of India's population, have little share in the news service of the nation. News regarding them or pertaining to their pressing problems appear in the press in a casual manner. Youth, students, farmers, workers, educated employees, and even leaders of these communities keep groping in the dark and struggling without being fully informed.

Atrocities on the oppressed

The scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes are subjected to such inhuman insults, injuries and atrocities that one is inclined to feel that they have taken birth in this land just to endure them. It is a well-known, recognized and admitted fact that whatever appears in the press is only a tip of the iceberg and the bulk remains hidden beneath the cool, cold and calculated designs of the establishment and the ruling classes.

The compiled figures of such atrocities during the Nehru and Indira era are simply shocking. The nature and gravity of the crimes committed on these helpless and oppressed Indians throughout the length and breadth of the country is so well-known by now that it needs no new mention. The instances and the gravity of crimes committed against the oppressed Indians during the last two years of the Janata Raj indicate that the Janata Raj is bent upon surpassing the 30 years Congress score within 3 years. Looking at the instances from Belchi in the North to Belapuram in the South, the 'quota' for the scheduled caste appears to have been already completed. Bihar has become a burning and boiling pot for the tribals. Past performance of the caste Hindus in committing murder and rape on the helpless tribals in the Purnea district of Bihar has already paled into insignificance by the current happenings in Santhal Parganas. Insult to injury has been added by the mass rapes committed on tribal women by the Central Reserve Police and Bihar Military Police at Beldiha Village on Dec. 31st, 1978. In the past such outrages were the pressure of the feudal lords and the Mahajans who are the chief exploiters in the tribal areas.

The caste Hindu monopoly of the press gives only sketchy news about the outrages and the atrocities committed on the oppressed Indians. The aftermath and the actions taken, if any, are not given publicity by the caste Hindu press. The real fact is that in most of the cases the offenders are lightly penalized or go scot free. This could be remedied by a vigilant and up to date news service armed and operated by the oppressed Indians themselves creating proper public opinion.

Insults to the Elitists

Even the elitist's among the untouchables are not spared. They keep on undergoing various forms of insults and humiliations on their day to day otherwise affluent life. The following two incidents from Gujarat will prove the points:

A caste Hindu woman at Jamnagar refused to get operated when she came to know that the surgeon who was to operate on her was an untouchable. She was actually brought to the operation theatre. Even then she preferred to invite death rather than be touched by an untouchable. Narrating this incident the then Gujarat Governor Shriman Narayan said that a highly qualified Harijan Youth was refused a job in a college in Ahmedabad after being selected when the authorities came to know his community.

Nothing is known about what happened later to these highly qualified untouchables. What action, if any, was taken against those who violate the Untouchability Offences Act as narrated by Governor? Possibly and most likely these highly qualified—and highly offended—untouchables kept suffering in isolation. But a news service owned and operated by the oppressed Indians would have helped them to maintain wider touch with other such highly qualified and humiliated untouchables. Thereby their common efforts could have been a great help in redressing their grievances, in punishing the offenders and as a by-product, shaping the future of the untouchables.

Untouchables' effort and News Black out

Members of the oppressed and the exploited community are making efforts to fight injustice and to improve their lot almost all over the country. But all these efforts are blacked out by the caste Hindu press. Whatever efforts we make in Delhi are not normally known to our brethren at such close places as Agra or Ambala—not to speak of distant places in all corners of the country.

On December 6th, 1968, a widely attended Adi Andhra Convention was called at Hyderabad. But news was so heavily blacked out that we came to know about it a few years later—and that too though a pamphlet produced by the oppressed Indians themselves. In that Adi Andhra Convention, a call was given for an All India Conference of SC, ST communities to be held either at Hyderabad or at New Delhi. But the people outside Hyderabad did not know about that call and the proposed (and much needed) conference never materialised.

During 1964-65, the people of backward communities across India agitated through the Republican Party of India to express their grievances and get their due. Even though more than 3 lakh people courted arrest the caste Hindu press gave little news.

Shri Elia Perumal and many others are making strenuous efforts in the South to secure justice for the oppressed Indians. But their work is getting very little publicity. Shri Perumal got enough publicity when govt. appointed a committee and made him a chairman of that committee, but after the release of that report, Shri Perumal's efforts are completely blacked out because the report exposed the Caste Hindus and their Governments—both at the Centre and the States.

All such efforts of the oppressed Indians made throughout the length and breadth of the country would have resulted in a solid organization, but the blacking out of the news keeps them isolated and in the dark. An efficient news service owned and operated by the oppressed Indians would have removed such darkness and ended isolation.

[...]

Persecution of the Minorities

A few days ago the Congress, Cong (I) and AIADMK members walked out of the Lok Sabha in protest against the persecution of Minorities. Every now and then we have been hearing through pamphlets and leaflets, about the persecution of Christians in Arunachal Pradesh. The alleged demolition of churches and other places of worship over there, the murder of a priest in a cathedral, ransacking of a convent, looting, beating and alleged raping of the nuns and sisters in Bihar, this is the shocking news regarding the plight of Christians in India. The Scheduled Castes who have converted to Christianity have lost all their privileges. As if this was not enough the Tyagi Bill has been introduced in the parliament. The Bill, if passed, may become a permanent source of harassment of Christian priests. Rightly, the Christians have come in the streets everywhere in protest against the bill. On 29th March, 1979 more than one lakh Christians in Bombay protested against the Bill.

The plight of the Muslims, the largest minority, is still worse. The recent holocaust at Aligarh is an eye opener. Here again an alert and independent press of our own is necessary to expose the designs and actions of the offenders.

Let the co-sufferers come together to put an end to their suffering.

To resist the outrages and atrocities committed on the scheduled castes and tribes and to project their pressing problems, these

peoples are struggling to build their own media in a small measure for news circulation among their own people. The minorities are also having their own media to project their own problems among their own people. Thus both the backward and the minority communities keep suffering and struggling in isolation. They do not have much appreciation of each other's problems. The logic of the situation demands that they must learn to understand each other's problems and co-operate with each other to put an end to their sufferings. Thus building of a common and combined news service of their own is a must for them. The earlier it is accomplished the better for all of them.

[...]

Foreigners know us only through caste Hindu press

In this fast moving and shrinking world, the advanced countries take keen interest in the affairs of developing and underdeveloped countries. They view us as a next door neighbor and contribute to our development. Normally, aid comes to ameliorate the sufferings of the downtrodden. But our common experience is that foreign aid is rarely utilised for the needs of those it was meant for. Aid apart, foreigners do not know our complex caste-ridden social structure. It is quite essential that the world knows and understands us properly. Our own news service is essential for this purpose as well.

Ambedkarite Effort

Baba Saheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar realized the importance of our own news service to ventilate the grievances of our people and to create public opinion in favour of speedy redress. He realized this some 60 years ago when there were no literate persons amongst the untouchables. At that time in 1920, he started a fortnightly and rightly named it 'Mooknayak', i.e., leader of the dumb. He started then 'Bahishkrit Bharat' (Untouchable India) in 1927, 'Janata' (The People) in 1930 and 'Prabudha Bharat' (Awakened India) in 1955. All these efforts indicate how he kept moving with the times starting from Mooknayak and advancing to Prabudha Bharat. And now we reached a stage where we should be in search of 'Mooknayak' again. What a mighty fall!

Need and Opportunity

All the instances indicated above suggest the pressing and immediate need for our own news service. As a result of this conscious or

unconscious realization, many people make small efforts to fulfill the need. But the need is so much that all small efforts prove to be of no avail. It is like offering a loaf of bread to an awfully hungry person. Thus, a magazine here and a tabloid there will not do when the need is for a well planned broad-based and evenly spread network of news service though out the length and breadth of the country. Besides, the nature of the news should not be merely of the reporting and informative type. It must be of a constructive and probing type of news service.

Baba Saheb Dr. Ambedkar realised this about 50 years ago and to fulfill this great need he issued an appeal for massive donations as long back as November, 1931, when there were very limited opportunities. Today the need remains same, but the opportunities have multiplied manifold. 50 years ago there was hardly any education amongst the oppressed Indians. Today there are 4 lakh students in the colleges and more than 20 lakh educated are already gainfully employed in the public services. Emergence of this oppressed elite offers opportunities of our own readership, high class journalistic ability and above all our own capability to find the truth. It should be quite gratifying to know that about 2 lakh oppressed Indian employees are in a four figure salary bracket and another 10 lakhs average Rs.500 per month. What is to be done is availing of these vast opportunities. 50 years ago nobody was willing to co-operate with the untouchables and the tribals had not left their jungles. Today some sections of OBC and almost all minorities appear to be anxious with the oppressed Indians. This is an added opportunity.

The Oppressed Indian, the Beginning

Publication of the **Oppressed Indian**, a monthly news magazine is just beginning. The task ahead is challenging! Both the need and the opportunities have inspired us to accept this challenge and jump into the field of news service. With the co-operation of well wishers and like minded friends, we are sure to make a success of the challenging job we have undertaken. We sincerely hope to spread the network of the new service throughout the length and breadth of our vast country within two years.

This editorial is excerpted and abbreviated from Manohar Atey, ed. The Editorials of Kanshi Ram, (New Delhi: Bahujan Samaj Press, 1997)

Venomous Touch, Untouchable People¹

■ Ravikumar

VAASANTI'S SHORT STORY '*Thinavu*' (The Itch)² has a clear reference to Mayawati. It portrays her as having become the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh by fluke, and denigrates her as someone who was a mistress of a Thakur. Vaasanti needs to be introduced to non-Tamil readers. She is a well-known journalist and writer in Tamil. For many years she was the editor of the Chennai-based Tamil edition of the English newsmagazine *India Today*. A translation of her short stories was recently issued in English. She continues to write regular columns in *India Today* (Tamil) and *New Indian Express* (English), and regarded as a leading political commentator in Tamil circles.

The plot of *Thinavu* is as follows: Chameli's mother is forced to send her daughter to 'feed the lust' of the arrogant Thakur, Ratan Singh. One day, in an orgasmic moment, Ratan Singh decides that Chameli should contest the elections. Frightened, Chameli says she is not eligible. Ratan Singh's response: 'what kind of eligibility do you need? The law says you can contest.' Thinking that she should not shy away from 'blind luck' and refuse a position of such power, Chameli changes her name to 'Charumati' and contests. She also changes the way she carries herself (she cuts her hair, dinks masala tea that is denied to 'lower castes,' and eats buttery parathas).

One day, a group of men from Sohanpur, her constituency, come to see her, but for some reason, they leave without doing so. She sets out in search of the men and meets them by the roadside. Though Charumati has ordered that the public well be accessed by everyone in the village, the Thakur has warned them

against even touching the well, as Grandpa Kaalu of the group informed her. 'That you are in this position is a result of some silly gesture shown by the Thakur. Nothing will change,' says the old man. Realizing that the village folk are accusing her of being an incapable woman, Charumati orders that the Thakur's application for a tender be kept pending. As expected, Ratan Singh turns up at her door pretty soon. He warns her: 'Don't try to introduce what is not part of the village tradition.' Charumati replies: 'I am doing only what is in accordance with the law.'

Ratan Singh shouts: 'You, who survive on my charity, how dare you talk about the law? Have you forgotten that in these parts what I ordain is the law?'

The same day, the police barge in to Ratan Singh's bungalow, wake him from his sleep, and arrest him in a brash manner. The Thakurs now fall Chameli's feet. 'The world is turned upside down... Chameli has now become a Thakur. Is it for the better or for the worse?' wonders a confused Grandpa Kaalu. Chameli, who has never slept peacefully, now rests in peace. There is a copy of the text of POTA under her pillow.

Some may ask why we must think that this story is about Mayawati. There are several unmistakable indications to this effect throughout the story. The protagonist 'Chameli' is referred to as a 'lower caste woman': who has 'cropped her hair; the 'Sohanpur' of the story sounds like Saharanpur, a district which houses Mayawati's present assembly constituency, Harora. The fact that the villagers are dalits

and Chameli one of them becomes clear over the issue of access to the public well. That Chameli holds the post of chief minister is evident from the fact that she is in conversation with the Prime Minister over the phone, as also from her order that the village wells be thrown open to everybody. Moreover, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) is newly enacted, and the 'lower caste woman' chief minister who used this law is obviously Mayawati (and cannot be confused with Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalitha, or Delhi's Sheila Dixit or Bihar's Rabri Devi).

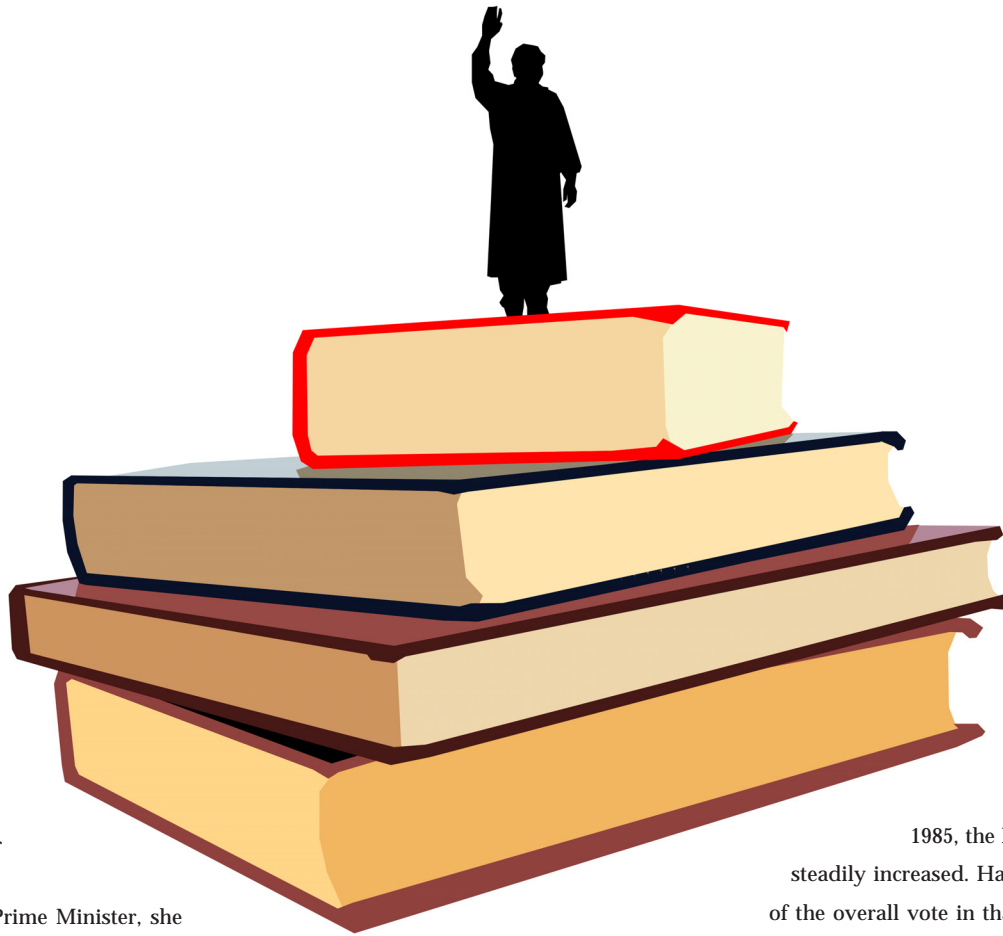
There are enough indications in the story for us to realize that the character of Thakur Ratan Singh is based on Raja Bhaiyya, the Uttar Pradesh MLA recently arrested under POTA by the Mayawati government. (According to the story, his backyard is filled with hidden wealth, his house has secret chambers full of weapons, and nobody has kept a record of the murders he has committed.) That Raja Bhaiyya is a Thakur is well known.

Sitting in an air-conditioned room, Charumati is disturbed by memories of her mother. She hears mother calling out to her by her old name, Chameli. As her mother's terror-struck eyes envelop the room, Chameli uses her whip and revolver to chase the memories away. Any memory of the past drives her mad.

Charumati's mother was a domestic servant. She was mortally scared of high caste people. She sent her daughter to Thakur Ratan Singh to satiate his lust (Vaasanti uses the words '*udal passikku theeniyaga*,' literally, to feed the body's hunger'). As a child, Charumati/Chameli/Mayawati was someone who roamed the streets half-naked, dressed only in underwear and a piece of her mother's torn sari wrapped over her torso. She was someone who while sweeping the verandah of Seth Laal's shop, would yearn for drop of the spiced tea that the Seths enjoyed. That Lakshman Seth threw hot tea on her when she spilt a little of it on his dhoti is an event ingrained in her memory. When mother sent her to sleep with Ratan Singh, Chameli understood that 'Mother had no choice.'

¹ First Appeared in Dalit, June 2003,

² *India today's* Tamil edition of 14 May 2003.



Even as a chief minister engaged in telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister, she amorously observes the body of Ratan Singh seated on the sofa and his rough hands that smell of lust. She notes the movements of his body. She recalls his expression at the 'moment of orgasm' when she was sent as 'fodder for his lust'. Once armed with POTA, not only does Charumati clumsily effect the midnight arrest of Ratan Singh, but also directs the police to arrest Lakshman Seth who had thrown hot tea on her face. This is Vaasanti's conception of Chameli who is Charumati, who is in fact, Mayawati. This chief minister of India's largest state; the leader of a party that wields influence not only on Uttar Pradesh which has 23 per cent dalits, but also the neighboring states of Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh; Mayawati was described by a news magazine as the person who mobilized dalits most effectively after Ambedkar.³ According to Vaasanti such a leader has come to power by mere chance. Vaasanti seems to be of the view that a dalit cannot come to power

without the support of a caste Hindu. A dalit leader thus elected makes use of the law only to settle personal scores according to her personal likes and dislikes. Once she wields authority, she too becomes a "Thakur". This is Vaasanti's idea of justice. To ascertain if Vaasanti's views and her perceptions of Uttar Pradesh are right we need to know a little about the state's politics

The growth of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is an example of how dalit assertion can be achieved through electoral politics. In 1998, the BSP won 60.6 per cent of the dalit vote in UP. In the 1996 general election, the party contested 201 seats and won eleven. Of these only three were won in reserved constituencies. At the all-India level, the party won 12.1 per cent of the dalit vote-share and according to the Election Commission's data, the party secured 20.16 per cent of total

votes in UP. Since 1985, the BSP's vote share has steadily increased. Having won 4 per cent of the overall vote in that election, it won 10.8 per cent in 1993 and this shot up to 20.16 in 1996. Among those who vote for the BSP, a majority (62.7 per cent) are unlettered, rural dalit masses who are, however, politically sensitized.⁴

The rise and growth of Mayawati and the BSP is not a result of 'mere chance' or the benevolence and support of Thakurs, as Vaasanti portrays it. The background to this can be traced to the history of the dalit struggle in Uttar Pradesh, played out over the past seventy-plus years. Dalit politics in UP came under the umbrella of the All-India Scheduled Caste Federation in the 1940s. There was a history of a refusal to do traditionally-assigned degrading jobs; a refusal to provide ritual labour (*beggar*) for no wages; a struggle for fair wages, or to start with, any wage at all—dalit struggles manifested themselves in several forms. The participation of dalit women in these

³ *Outlook*, 3 February 2003.

⁴ All data from Pushpendra, 'Dalit Assertion through Electoral Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly* (4 September 1999).

struggles was notable.⁵ Until the formation of the Republican Party of India, the SCF was active in UP politics. Till 1969, the RPI was an influential player in the state elections. There was only one decade without any dalit political party in the fray, till the BSP was formed in the 1980s.

Vaasanti seems to have an urge to write despite being absolutely ignorant of this history of dalits in electoral politics in UP. But can this account of the history of UP's electoral politics render Mayawati beyond criticism? That is not our point here. Dalit activist and intellectuals with standing such as S.K. Thorat, Udit Raj and Chandrabhan Prasad have been critical of Mayawati at times. In fact, several dalits have been critical of Mayawati's ways of conducting politics. But non-dalits who criticize Mayawati never mention the good work she has done over the years.

During her earlier six-month stints, she offered land to the dalits, effected a two-fold hike in the scholarships to dalit students, established more than 5000 Ambedkar Model Villages, saw to the effective implementation of the SC/ST prevention of Atrocities Act, filled the long-unfilled vacancies in reserved posts, and much more. In the fifty-years of Indian independence, no other state could boast of such achievements.⁶ During her present term, Mayawati, by pioneering reservation in the state judiciary, and by suggesting that the union government suitably amend the law to ensure proportionate representation to dalits in the cabinet, has been broadening the scope of Indian democracy. No non-dalit ever comments about these issues. Why are caste Hindus who suddenly remember Ambedkar's ideals when they see Mayawati celebrating her birthday in grand style and chide her for not living up them—silent about those policies of Mayawati which are a realization of the ideals of Ambedkar? It is another matter that caste Hindus seem to think that Ambedkar's ideals and philosophy are applicable only to dalits (like Mayawati) and are not for them to follow in their own lives.

Even newspapers and magazines that criticize Mayawati are more direct. But Vaasanti avoids such straightforwardness. Her allegations come draped in the garb of fiction; under the guise of appreciating Mayawati, she indulges in mudslinging. She has indulged in slander that even Mulayam Singh Yadav would not have thought of. Her charge is that Mayawati/Charumati was someone who offered her body to a Thakur. Vaasanti often identifies herself as a feminist. And the feminist perspective that Vaasanti offers in her story is that a woman can rise to a position of power only by being the mistress of an influential man.

In a recent interview Vaasanti sobbed over the fact that she was subjected discrimination for being a woman and a Brahmin in Tamil Nadu.⁷ She also admitted in the same interview that her knowledge of Tamil Nadu was superficial. When you read this story, what is evident that it is not just a question of Tamil Nadu, her knowledge, of many other important issues is also superficial.

Is Vaasanti a feminist or not? Is she an intellectual? Is she a writer? These are not the issues here. We do not even need to look at whether what she has written can pass muster as a work of fiction. It is the disgust and contempt she has packaged in the form of a story that concern us. Vaasanti seems to have indulged in 'transborder terrorism' by crossing the boundaries of state and language to humiliate and demean Mayawati.

Vaasanti has titled her story, '*Thinavu*'. The Tamil Lexicon (1982) says *thinavu* means *arippu* (itch). *Undudal* (insolence), *thimir* (haughtiness) are the other meanings offered by *the Dictionary of contemporary Tamil* (Tharkala Tamizh Agharadi, Cre-A, 1992). We must also examine what the word has come to mean in usage. *Tinaveduttha Thol* ('haughty shoulders') is a phrase that connotes a man's bravery, and his urge to go make war. However, when a woman is said to be

'strutting with an itch' (*thinaveduthu thirigiraal*) it has a sexual connotation, indicating that the woman is keen to satiate her lust. In Vaasanti's story, though it is said at one point that '*thinavu*' (the itch) springs from the tip of a whip (connoting authority), the itch here equally refers to the desire with which Chameli casts a glance at the Thakur's rough hands. The choice of the title only reveals the author's contemptuous attitude.

A novel written after the 1968 massacre of forty-four dalit labourers in Tanjavur's Keezhvenmani village offered a psychoanalytical rationale to the mass murder by portraying the male landlord who orders the killings as impotent (*Kurudippunal* by Indira Parthasarathy, which won him the Sahitya Akademi award). Similarly, Vaasanti has sought to understand the arrest of Raja Bhaiyya in Uttar Pradesh not only in terms of the lowborn status of the woman chief minister, but, in fact, in terms of her desire. While one Brahmin male writer traced an atrocity to the landlord's phallus, another Brahmin woman writer today seeks to locate 'dalit revenge' in a dalit woman's vagina.

Not just Mayawati, but dalits and dalit politics have been 'uglified' here. Realizing the repercussions she might have faced if she had expressed such base thoughts in the form of an article/essay, Vaasanti has taken advantage of the licensee fiction allows. She may be under the impression that she has spit out a precious gem; however, the dalits will realize the kind of vicious venom that it actually is. Vaasanti might have felt emboldened by her belief that 'snake worship is our culture'. However, people belonging to a different culture also live in this land. For them, the snake is no god, just a snake. And they also know how to protect themselves from a snake.

Ravikumar is a political activist-theoretician of the dalit movement in Tamilnadu. Translated from the Tamil into English by S. Anand.

⁵ For details of the SCF's electoral and social activities in UP in that period, see Ramnarayan S. Rawat's Partition Politics and Achhut Identity: A Study of the Scheduled Castes Federation and Dalit Politics in UP, 1946-48, in *The Partitions of Memory*, edited by Suvir Kaul (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

⁶ Chandrabhan Prasad and Sheoraj Singh Bechain, *Where Non-Dalit Commentators Err*, The Hindu, 4 January 2000.

⁷ *Kaalchuvudu*, May-June 2003.



Nagaraju's Battle

■ Gogu Shyamala

If any one were to ask themselves what it would be like for a madiga to be a creative writer in the media, the answer would be “like the journalist Nagaraju”. Endowed with the skills of an English journalist, and of a painter, an aspirant to the Indian Administrative Services, the multi-talented Koppula Nagaraju's life provided the youth of all social castes and classes, and especially those of the dalit/madiga and kin communities with many insights and examples.

Everybody knew that Nagaraju was about to die. An emaciated dark skeleton on the bed, he would greet all who went to meet him heartily and had endless conversations with them. He would advise those younger, speak to journalists about stories, and to painters about painting. With the sharing of the doctor's prognosis among well-wishers through social media like Whatsapp, almost everybody knew of the impending tragedy, but no one was willing to confront or accept

its reality. Nagaraju's friends, mainly journalists and scholars were trying various ways to assist with his treatment. As part of this they wanted the Telangana government to take care of expenses towards better treatment. Even as some of these efforts succeeded, Nagaraju died on the morning of 12th April 2015.

When he finally breathed his last, those around him felt, as I did, not pity that he passed away, but grief at the loss of a great journalist, painter, dreamer and scholar.

Nagaraju was born in Sarapaka village, in the Bhadrachalam mandal of the Khammam district on 25th May 1980, to a madiga couple. His parents worked as agricultural wage labourers, and because of the shortage of work, also worked at a paper mill six kilometers away. His mother was pregnant with Nagaraju when she worked at the mill. She laboured right until the time of delivery.

It thus seems as if Nagaraju learned about hard labour from within his mother's womb. Nagaraju's father died when he was four, leaving his wife with the burden of bringing up four children. By the time he was five or six, Nagaraju would go to school slate and chalk in hand, and after school sell ice-creams. His mother remembers that he paid all his expenses with money earned that way. As his expenses grew with his moving to the higher standards in school, he met these by painting signs, and images of cine stars and social reformers for shops. He had learned to paint from the time he began school. We may notice signs and hoardings signed by Nagaraju in and around Bhadrachalam town and Sarapaka village.

He joined the MA history programme at the University of Hyderabad after finishing school at Sarapaka. He then acquired a journalism diploma in Chennai and went to Delhi on a Tehelka Fellowship. After this he began working in the New Indian Express as a journalist.

Nagaraju was deeply interested in journalism, and had many dreams about his work in English media. He said on one occasion that he would write stories the like of which had never been seen. We can understand the depth of his imagination about the media and the strength of his heart from this comment. As part of this effort, he wrote many stories and special articles for the New Indian Express. He wrote about the experiences, suffering and oppression of those who laboured endlessly; their thoughts and desires for social justice. He would travel hundreds of kilometers through towns and wilderness, in trains, buses and on foot to research his stories. His eyewitness style of writing made his essays irrefutable proofs of the truth of the situation. These stories brought a plurality to the vision of the newspaper.

In the public meetings held to mourn his death, and in the ensuing protests and demands, some issues and questions came to the fore in common thinking.

Dalits who come from the bottom rung of society suffer poverty, endure bondage, have been targets of bodily and mental exploitation, and are left behind with no growth of wealth, education or health. Nagaraju the Learned (as we may title him) was different from this. How his mind gained access to the secrets of the knowledge of education we do not know, but we do know that however many obstacles he faced, he never lost grip on education and more, on higher education. One way to put this would be to say that rather than study to live, he lived to study. That is why, being a painter and journalist, he decided on the IAS as a career goal. If he were a person who simply studied that he may survive, he may have survived either with his sale of ice creams, or with his earnings as a hoarding painter, or as many a wage labourer and dalit have done. However Nagaraju, never descended to the limited passivity of 'money security' and immediate well being; instead he always demonstrated a deep desire to keep moving towards a future of higher education. Nagaraju would leave behind money and wealth without hesitation, but in keeping with Ambedkar's teaching, never missed an

opportunity for higher education. This character which marked Nagaraju was something I and many around me loved. Several scholars felt deeply that this goal-drivenness should not end with Nagaraju's life, but should be disseminated to youth in general and the bahujan youth in particular.

There are some saddening and regrettable aspects of Nagaraju's health, which I would like to share with you here. The Mala/Madiga kin communities and bahujans keep society working through their labour and service. However when they fall ill, neither government, nor private institutions seem to provide an adequate return to them. Not only this, these individuals from oppressed communities seem to lack the consciousness to draw on the state and other institutions for these services. If we look at Nagaraju's health, we see that he was unable to notice the changes in his body. Even if he noticed these changes, we see no sign that he would have consulted a proper doctor or have taken a second opinion in order to diagnose his disease (even though he had the capability to do so). Nor did the doctor he consulted, as the disease progressed, diagnose his disease correctly. Once when he was travelling to Sarapaka he suffered unbearable pain in his chest and got off the bus at Suryapet. The doctor advised a chest X-ray and sputum test. He was then advised to go the TB hospital in Erragadda. There he was prescribed TB medication, even though his sputum test was negative and the chest X-ray was illegibly dark. He later said that even though it was extremely difficult and painful, he followed the regimen for five to six months. When the disease did not respond, he finally went to a cancer specialty hospital. By then the cancer had reached the fourth stage. In the end, Nagaraju did not survive any measures to keep him alive. I feel, had he received a proper diagnosis earlier, he could have been treated more successfully and survived a little longer.

The media too, was both indifferent and discriminatory towards Nagaraju as evident in two actions. One, the Resident Editor of New Indian Express did not grant him leave

to take care of his illness. Two, when he was unable to go to work, the paper removed his name from the rolls. Nagaraju was deeply depressed when he heard of this. It is certain that the newspaper did not take care of Nagaraju as a journalist who was one of their own when he was seriously ill. In addition, the Dalit journalists' accusation that the newspaper had been indifferent and discriminatory to Nagaraju because he was a Dalit is also inescapable.

His greatness was that his stories brought strength and a wider perspective to the newspaper, but the ownership of the press, had acted towards Nagaraju as if it had lost its progressive orientation and had fallen back onto an outdated dominating mindset. There is nowhere in evidence a consciousness that a person/journalist/creative journalist in their staff has to be given some importance. It is likely that those who see Brahminical hegemony, which perpetually seeks an ideological stranglehold on society through its caste practices and is extending its grip on the media, will not expect that the paper will take responsibility, assist or take care of him. However, the actual question is what the rights given by the Constitution to the journalist worker Koppula Nagaraju are. A further question is how can a modern news paper like the New Indian Express fall back on medieval Manuvada practices? The effort to rescue those like Nagaraju from chaotic and insecure situations like the one he was in should have been conducted as a struggle. In this struggle, confronting and surmounting the paper's capitalist, landlord, Manuvada hegemony is inescapable. It is also an absolute necessity that we see clearly that Dalit rights are human rights.

If the journalists who are emerging from the new generation of Dalits should not be lost as Nagaraju has been, we must learn from his experience and establish mechanisms at different levels in the community, professional bodies and society that help them surmount economic and health problems and those such as discrimination and indifference.

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Blacks in US media and blackouts in India

■ Chandrabhan Prasad

“Suddenly, I realised that in all the 30 years I had worked as a journalist, I had never met a colleague who was a Dalit. No, not one,” wrote BN Uniyal in his path breaking article, “In search of a Dalit journalist”. For his article, Uniyal had scanned all available resources, including the Accreditation Index of the Press Information Bureau, but he couldn't locate a single Dalit journalist in Delhi.

However, his work was ignored by the Delhi Press. No editor/columnist “wondered” why, from a population of over twenty crore, there wasn't a single Dalit journalist to be found in Delhi. When we, inspired by Uniyal's article, began arguing our case before the Delhi Press, we were often mocked: “Look at these ultra-Ambedkarites, they now want a reservation in the media, too.”

We have always thought the exclusion of Dalits from the (Varna) media is an extreme form of untouchability. While we wandered through the “intellectual corridors” of the capital, looking for well-wishers, a broad-eyed Delhi based Tamil girl, working for a popular American daily, stunned us by revealing that there is a reservation-like policy in the American media for Blacks and other ethnic groups.

Every word the tall Tamil genius said about the American media, we believed and every word we wrote, another short genius, a woman with deep feeling for our mission, typed and edited. Thus, came into being: End apartheid in the Indian media, Democratise the nation's opinion - a memorandum submitted to the Editors' Guild of India and the Press Council.

On the second anniversary of Dalit Diary, I reproduce the highlights, with updates. Readers can for themselves judge the

intellectual integrity of Indian editors and anchors.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), founded in 1922, is the largest organisation of editors. In 1975, ASNE found that Blacks/Ethnics comprised only 3.95 per cent of the journalistic work force in America. At its annual conference in 1978, race based discrimination and exclusion was intensely talked about. The conference unanimously decided upon “Year 2000 Goal” - that is, by 2000, Blacks/Ethnics must have their proportionate representation in all American newspapers.

To accomplish this, it was decided that newspapers must open a diversity department, offer special scholarships to train Black/Ethnic candidates in journalism, organise job fairs to recruit them and participate in the Annual Newsroom Racial/Ethnic Census.

The result was stunning: out of 1,446 newspapers, 950 decided to abide by ASNE's resolution, including all papers with a daily circulation of more than one lakh. Today, journalists of Black/Ethnic origin comprise 11.64 per cent of the total. And between 1978-1998, the number of these journalists grew by 270 per cent. Better still, larger publications have shown greater commitment to implementing diversity than the smaller ones. Consider the 2001 survey report of ASNE:

Name: Circulation: Blacks/Ethnics
Wall Street Journal: 17.52 lakhs: 17.1%
USA Today: 17.58: 18.7
New York Times: 11.32: 16.2
Los Angeles Times: 10.80: 18.7

Washington Post: 07.75: 19.5

The ASNE documents the minutest detail about Black and Ethnic professional positioning. Consider the following:

Designation: Total Blacks/Ethnics %

Supervisors: 13,728 (9.10%)

Copy/Layout Editors: 10,901 (10.20)

Reporters: 25,593 (12.70)

Photographers: 6,171 (15.40)

Grand Total: 56,393 (11.63)

ASNE, in this year's mission statement, asserts “to cover communities fully, to carry out their role in a democracy and that to succeed in the market place, the nation's news rooms must reflect the racial diversity of American society.” Keeping in mind that the Black/Ethnic population will reach 38 per cent by 2025, ASNE has set itself a goal, of enhancing their recruitment by 229% by the year 2025.

On the other hand, what is the situation in India? Blacks/Ethnics make up over 11 per cent of the American media. Do we know of even 11 Dalit journalists in the Varna-media? Did the Editors' Guild of India ever try to carry out an ASNE like exercise?

In comparison to America's best circulated dailies, Varna papers would at best look like, in terms of credibility, content, aesthetics and revenue, the morning insertions which tell us of the newly opened tent houses or grocery shops. And most Varna editors would probably find it difficult to work for American papers even as interns.

And yet these editors, of questionable intellectual calibre and doubtful integrity, talk of “merit” and “blacking out” the Dalits' entry into the media! I wonder not why these editors are against the entry of foreign newspapers into India and dedicate this column to two women of substance - Ramalakshmi and Meenakshi Nath.

A version of this essay is published in Chandra Bhan Prasad, 2004. *Dalit Diary: Reflections on Apartheid in India*. Pondicherry, Navayana. (Reproduced courtesy of www.ambedkar.org from: <http://www.ambedkar.org/chandrabhan/Blacksin.htm>).

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Anti-Arrack Movement, Prohibition and After: Eenadu's Strategic Support and Silence¹

■ Uma Maheswari Brughubanda

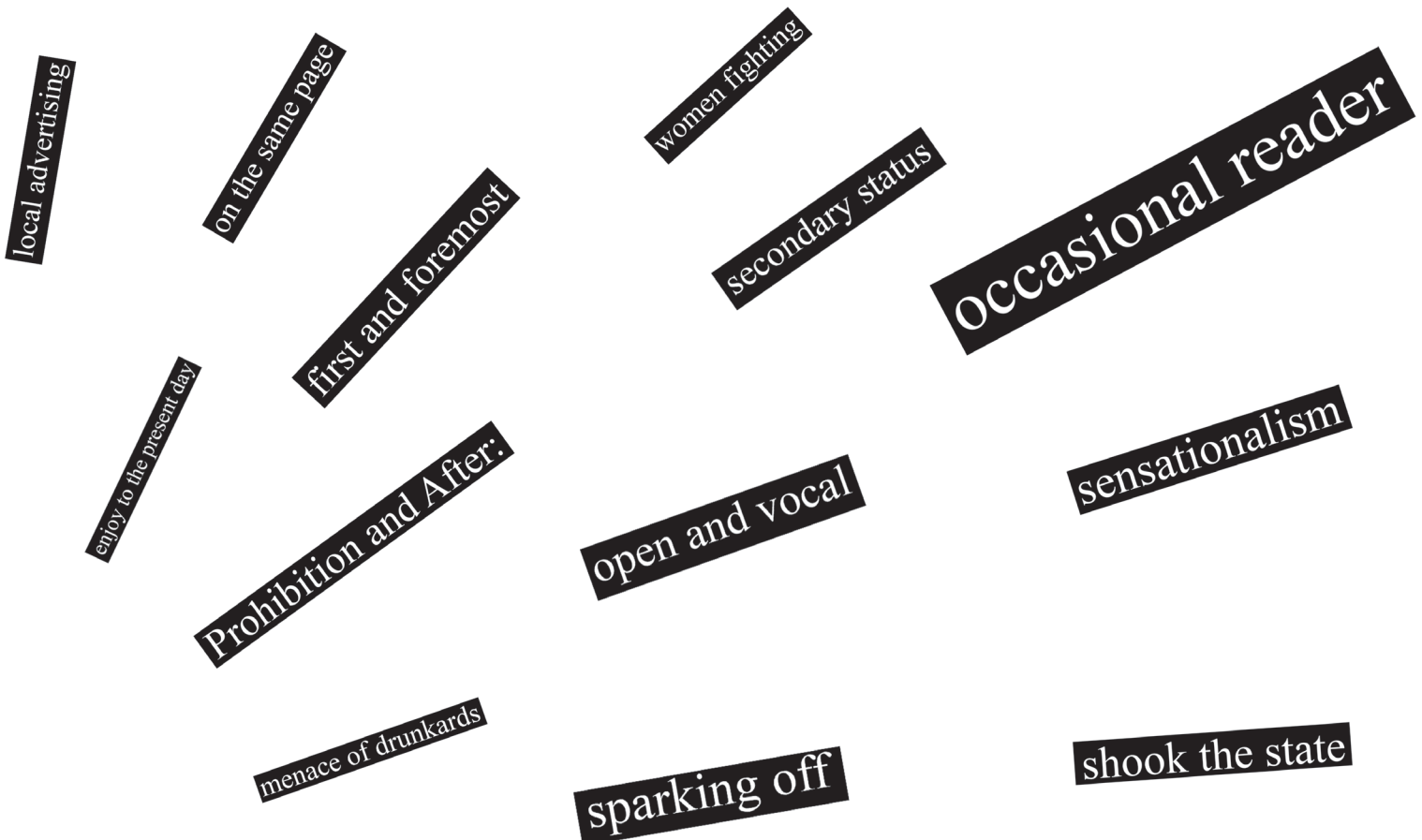
Eenadu, the largest circulating Telugu daily in Andhra Pradesh, played an unprecedented and sensational role in the anti-arrack movement that shook the state a few years ago. When some inspired neo-literate women in Dubagunta village in Nellore district attacked the excise jeep bringing arrack into their village, thus sparking off the anti-arrack movement in the state, *Eenadu* was the first newspaper to report the incidents in its Nellore district tabloid.

This essay is an attempt to (a) examine *Eenadu*'s history as a regional language newspaper and (b) to document the role that it played in the anti-arrack movement and

subsequently in the struggle for prohibition. I have also tried to reflect upon the effects that the paper's coverage had upon the struggle.

It is quite evident from the self-congratulatory articles in the *Eenadu* Sameeksha that the newspaper's self-image is that of a social and political crusader. In one of the articles, Ramoji Rao is quoted as saying that what mattered was not mere reporting but the role *Eenadu* played in solving political and social problems. The paper also claims to have played a major role in different people's movements like the literacy movement, the consumers' movement, the prohibition movement and the savings movement.

The anti-arrack movement undertaken by rural women in Andhra Pradesh in 1992 was unprecedented and unique among social movements. Although women in Andhra had participated in anti-arrack agitations in the 1920s and 30s which were part of the Gandhian agenda, there had never been a sustained grassroots movement by women against arrack. In the 1930s a combination of several factors contributed to this struggle. One major reason [for the 1992 agitation] was the active promotion of arrack by the state government in an effort to augment its revenue. In Andhra Pradesh the state government has a monopoly over arrack production. In AP the excise revenue has been much higher in comparison with all the other states in India. However, as K. Ilaiah argues, in addition to the state revenue "there is an unstated income which works out to 2500 crores per year. For every 25 paise that the state gets, the contractor gets 75 paise. Part of this huge amount gets back to political parties in the form of party funds'. The increased alcohol consumption was concentrated in the rural areas. This meant that the poorer sections were spending on arrack much more than they were earning. This in turn meant an increase in violence



against women, hunger and starvation in the family, and lack of education for children.

In the northern Telangana districts, the CPI-ML groups, including the People's War Group (PWG) have been agitating against arrack and liquor since the early 80s. However, in Nellore, Chittoor and Kurnool districts, it was the literacy programme, Akshara Jyothi that brought many rural women together. It was these neo-literate women who resolved to fight against arrack. It must be noted, however, that the science forum Jana Vignana Vedika played an active role in the spread of literacy. The women in most villages formed groups which physically prevented men from going to the arrack shops, publicly shamed arrack contractors and sellers, attacked liquor shops, set fire to the arrack barrels and sachets, and prevented auctioning of arrack shops. In Nellore alone they stalled auction sales 36 times. This is true of all district auction counters. As a result many women have been arrested and police have filed false cases against them. The women involved in the struggle were up against a powerful nexus involving the excise officials, the police and the arrack contractors.

News Coverage

In April 1992, Eenadu carried reports of women fighting against arrack in the villages of Ayyavaripalem and Saipeta. Eenadu is said to have been instrumental in the spread of the movement to a number of other villages through its extensive reporting in the district tabloids. By June 1992 the movement had spread to many more villages in Nellore district. However, until July of that year most of the reporting was confined to Nellore. After the first news item on 18th July Eenadu began extensive coverage of the anti-arrack movement between October 1992 and April 1993

In October 1992 the paper started a special page on the anti-arrack movement titled "Saara pai samaram" (The war against arrack). This page was devoted entirely to reports on the progress of the movement, the responses of various political parties, activist groups, the reports of deaths due to illicit

liquor and so on. But significantly the reporting of the anti-arrack movement was not confined to the saara page alone. It occupied a conspicuous place on the front pages, in the city editions and in the women's supplement Vasundhara as well. I list below the kinds of reports and items that were part of Eenadu's coverage in the six month long campaign:

1. During this period several editorials including six front page ones carried constant exhortations to the people to keep up the struggle, and appeals and warnings to the government ban on arrack and liquor.
2. The regular political cartoon by Sridhar which appeared under the title "Idi Sangathi" was suspended. In its place Sridhar began a new series called 'Saaraamsam' (meaning "summary" but also punning on the word "saara" meaning liquor) which he vowed would continue until the government imposed a ban on arrack. This feature continued for the next six months until April 1993, when the ban was finally announced.
3. Deaths occurring due to illicit liquor and accidents caused by drunk driving were reported in great detail.
4. The statements made by the leaders of different political parties like the BJP and the TDP, by writers' associations like Virasam, Arasam (both Leftist groups), the POW (Progressive Organisation for Women), and right-wing political organisations like the RSS in support of the anti-arrack movement were also reported in detail
5. In its women's supplement, Eenadu carried interviews with women legislators seeking their opinion regarding the movement. In its film supplement carried a new feature "Saara pai Cine Thaaralu" (Film Stars Comment on Arrack). Religious leaders and religious organisations like ISKCON also issued statements expressing their support. Thus it was an astonishing range of people that Eenadu brought together to build a moral consensus against arrack

and liquor. (As independent reports confirmed, the women in the anti-arrack movement did not see the issue as a moral one.)

6. Interviews with cardiologists, psychiatrists, neurosurgeons, gynaecologists and gastroenterologists, provided authoritative medical evidence against the consumption of liquor.
7. A news feature titled "Saro Kathalu" (Liquor Tragedies) was introduced. These presented moving accounts of individuals and families ruined by arrack and liquor. Most of these stories were about violence against women by their drunken husbands. "Pachani Samsarallo Nippulu Posina Saara" (Happy Families ruined by Arrack) [Eenadu 12 November, 1992] goes a typical caption. There were other stories which described the suffering of children working in liquor shops; lovers gone insane after drinking; murders and suicides committed in a drunken state; fathers who sold their children for liquor and so on. The paper also reported the release of a book titled Saara-Saro (Arrack and Sorrow) which was a collection of account of such liquor tragedies.
8. In the city supplement reports were carried of the increasing menace of drunkards in different neighbourhoods and public places like bus stands, railway stations, cinema halls. One report stated- "Local Trains Turn into Running Bars". {Eenadu, 10 October 1992}, another described how various public parks in the twin cities like Public Gardens, Indira Park and Sanjivayya Park have turned into places for sinful activities. -"Parkulu Kavuvavi Papakupalu" (Eenadu 9 October 1992).

It is evident that Eenadu sought to present arrack and liquor as the main problem facing the people of Andhra Pradesh. Apart from the coverage of the movement, the paper also took upon itself the task of coordinating and guiding the activists and supplying paraphernalia like a flag, a pledge, slogans and songs. Eenadu regularly published



slogans which it encouraged people involved in the struggle to use. It conducted poetry and drawing competitions with the anti-arrack movement as the theme. The newspaper also conducted a contest inviting its readers to design a flag for the movement.

These forums were aimed at bringing together the women involved in the struggle, activists and political leaders. On January 2, 1993, Eenadu organised a huge gathering of all such forums in Hyderabad presided by the editor Ramoji Rao, attended by the Governor, the Chief Minister and leaders of different political parties. Significantly, this meeting was not called an anti-arrack meeting but a meeting to promote the struggle against liquor.

The courage and perseverance of the women fighting against arrack and the support their movement received from various quarters including Eenadu forced the Congress Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy to impose a ban on arrack first in Nellore district and subsequently in the rest of the state. Though the "Saara pai samaram" page and the "Saaramsam" cartoon were

suspended in April 1993 following the announcement of the ban on arrack, Eenadu continued its campaign for total prohibition until January 1995 when it was finally announced by the new Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao of the TDP.

Why did Eenadu do all this? What were the stakes involved? It seems as if the paper's campaign for prohibition had a political as well as a business angle to it. Woven into the anti-arrack reporting and editorials were calls to bring in a government that would implement total prohibition. The movement itself is described as being born out of the agony of housewives. What is more interesting is the last section of the editorial, which suggests that the women have a secret weapon in the form of the vote with which they could oust a government that did not have the courage to announce total prohibition and bring in a party that would do so. This front page editorial was published alongside a report announcing the TDP's support to the struggle for total prohibition. The message that was sought to be conveyed through this juxtaposition is too obvious to require elaboration. Total prohibition was

the major plank upon which NTR fought and won his electoral battle. It will also be recalled that NTR insisted upon dramatically signing the prohibition bill within minutes of assuming power on 16th January 1995. Eenadu's anti-liquor campaign is also rumoured to have had a business angle, directed as it was against a rival newspaper Udayam, supposedly sustained by the liquor trade of its proprietor Magunta Subbaramireddy. Interestingly Udayam collapsed in 1995 following the implementation of total prohibition.

The two achievements of the paper's campaign on the struggle were:

a) To shift the scope of the movement from the village level to the state level. A team sent by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies to Nellore in October 1992 reported that the women engaged in the struggle were vehement in their decision to "locate their efforts within their villages in order to retain control over the situation." The slogan that had been popular during the struggle was "Maa Uriki Saara Vaddu" (We don't want arrack in our village).

b) To shift the focus from arrack to liquor. Many women activists have characterised arrack as a problem for poor rural women while the fight against liquor was more an urban middle class women's problem.

What Eenadu successfully achieved was an erasure of the political, social and economic aspects of the struggle. The women in the anti- arrack movement were fighting for basic amenities like water, health care, and education even as they were fighting against arrack. Eenadu's coverage not only underplayed these demands but also simultaneously presented prohibition as a panacea to all the problems plaguing the people of Andhra Pradesh.

The day prohibition came into force in the state, the paper published an editorial describing the implementation of the dry law as a victory of the Telugu people. "This is the day when the tearful appeals of the Telugu daughters are being finally heard." (Eenadu, 16 January 1995) While prohibition was in force the paper initially published reports of decrease in the crime rate alongside pictures of triumphant policemen and excise officials with liquor and arrack bottles seized through their raids. That year October 2nd, Gandhi's birth anniversary, was celebrated as Prohibition Day. The Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu congratulated Eenadu for its "unforgettable" role in the campaign against liquor (Eenadu, 3 October 1995). In his editorial of 5th October Ramoji Rao advocated a ban on toddy as well, citing the increase in manufacture of illicit toddy as the reason.

A cursory survey of the Telugu language newspapers of this period reveals that Eenadu increasingly published reports of the failure of the government in implementing the dry law and increase in bootlegging. Interestingly, it was the newly launched Vaartha which now took up the cause of the women who were part of the anti-arrack struggle and termed the Andhra Pradesh High court ruling upholding the lifting of Prohibition as a "betrayal" of the promises

made to the people. Exactly in what ways Eenadu distanced itself from the prohibition issue and justified the lifting of the ban would require a more thorough examination of the paper's 1997 editions than has been possible here.

The Anti-Arrack Women

A study of Eenadu's involvement raises several questions of a general nature about the relationship between women's movements and their media representations. How does the media represent women's struggles and the women involved in them? How are the problems and questions framed and articulated? How are struggles sought to be organised? How is their scope defined and demarcated? Most significantly, what are the vocabularies that the media draws upon in its representations? In one of his editorials, Ramoji Rao describes the movement as a "sacred struggle." He says that women who hesitate even to step out of their homes have come into the streets, reminding us of the days of the freedom struggle (Eenadu 2 October 1992). The figure of Gandhi and his strategy of non-violence are frequently invoked. But the movement was not at all Gandhian in character. More than one editorial is a direct address to Gandhi. Ramoji Rao condemned the PWG's use of violence as part of the anti-arrack movement, stating that the women were fighting to keep their families intact. The implication was that this made their cause commendable, even legitimate, unlike the PWG whose motives were questionable (Eenadu, 24 October, 1992). He also repeatedly describes the struggle as having been born out of the women's tears - "With hungry stomachs, tears flowing, the helpless womenfolk endure this sorrow" (Eenadu 30 January, 1993); "Our daughters are weeping copiously" (Eenadu 16 January, 1993).

At the same time the women are compared at different times to Satyabhama, Durga, Kali, and Draupadi waging a battle of Dharma to

slay the demon 'Sarasura'. However, this kind of vocabulary is not used by Rao alone but is deployed by reporters, by legislators and film stars as well. These women are repeatedly described as icons of purity and idealism who are entrusted with the task of cleansing the nation.

Several writers have pointed to the fact that the majority of the women involved in the struggle belonged to the Dalit and Muslim communities. "The village committees formed in different villages are invariably led by the women belonging to the poorer Dalit households." However, the dominant images of these women deployed by the press erase the caste and class identities that overdetermine their lives, turning the category 'women' into a monolithic construct.

The twin images of the weeping, helpless and vulnerable woman clutching her 'taali' and the woman roused to rage and action with flowing hair, flaming eyes, resplendent kumkum and trident in hand are part of our everyday mythologies about Indian women. Given the pervasiveness of these vocabularies the questions to ask seem to be - whether they are really empowering, and whether anything is to be gained by critiquing them. What these images seek to do is to legitimise only those struggles which seek to keep the family intact or protect a woman's 'honour' and which in no way challenge patriarchal ideologies. For instance the Eenadu editorials' repeated emphasis on women's tears and the family mask the multiple methods the women were employing in their struggle, such as attacking the contractors and excise department officials, destroying arrack shops, using household items like the broom and the chilli powder, refusing to cook at home, even threatening to divorce their husbands and confronting the goondas belonging to the liquor mafia.

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¹This is an excerpt of the original article. For full article, please see Journal of Arts & Ideas, no. 32-33 (April 1999) p. 73. reproduced at: http://dsal.uchicago.edu/books/artsandideas/pager.html?objectid=HN681.S597_32-33_075.gif

When They Sat Down

■ Suresh P Thomas

Irikkal Samaram (Sitting Strike), carried out by six women employees—five sales girls and one sales supervisor—of Kalyan Sarees, one of Kerala’s high-end clothing shops in its already overcrowded but still burgeoning textile retail sector, began on December 30, 2014. For the next 106 days, Padmini S K, Maya Devi P, Rajani Dasan, Devi Ravi, Alphonsa Johnson and Beena Sojan, six middle aged women, under the banner of Asanghaditha Meghala Thozhilali Union-AMTU—(Unorganized Sector Labour Union) sat outside the textile showroom at Kovilakathumpadam, in Thrissur district, famed as the cultural capital of the state. Their charter of demands read thus:

- Cancel the transfer orders.
- Re-arrange the break timings and make provisions for the sales girls to sit.

- Implement an 8-hour work schedule.
- Stop the practice of making women employees work after seven in the evening.

In a nutshell, theirs is a protest to obtain a legal acknowledgement from the textile sector management that the right of sales employees to sit during working hours is a basic human right that cannot be violated. It is a protest to let the management and the consumer world know that sales employees won’t stand anymore without breaks for ten or eleven hours like human mannequins; that they won’t now greet their customers with lifeless smiles pasted on their faces when the only thing on their mind is a toilet break; that they are now organized enough to collectively confront hitherto unchallenged violations of legitimate rights; that slavery is no more acceptable.

None of the women come from a background of political activism. It is as “poor, ordinary women with not much education and a lot of financial problems” that they prefer to describe themselves. Irikkal Samaram, in fact, is not just the first strike they have participated in, but also the first one they have paid exhaustive attention to. “Earlier, when I used to see people striking, I used to sneer at them: couldn’t they just shut up and work?” says Maya Devi. But now she tells her son and daughter to always make an effort to find out what is going on if they were to chance upon a group of protesters.

She has given them one more advice: to be skeptical of what the media feeds them. “I have lost all faith in our print and visual media. All of them are slaves to money. If you have enough money, you can buy the whole media and create your own news. And if you have no money like us, there is no way you can find a space in the media”, she says.

In the first week of the strike, the women had organized a press conference at Thrissur Press Club. For this, they had to pay Rs 1,500 as rent. None of the news channels or newspapers, however, carried a report of this press conference. The protesters were not prepared for such a complete blacking out of their strike. “It was not as if we expected



them to strike with us. But they could at least have reported that a strike like this is taking place”, says Maya Devi.

Padmini, who had once dreamt as a child of becoming a journalist, is now sympathetic to the plight of those reporters and ‘media labourers’ who she has come to think of as “very much like us: workers at the mercy of the management who has sold itself out to the corporates.” What fills her with anger and disgust, though, is the way the media—in particular television news media—posits itself as an ethically infallible institution. “Don’t they feel ashamed one bit to play God day and night?” she asks.

Like every other important strike in history, *Irikkal Samaram*, too, is the consequence of a protracted and firmly entrenched system of exploitation, the resistance to which has its loci in both trade union and feminist movements. The immediate reason for the strike was the transfer orders given to the six women employees, without prior notice, on the evening of December 11, 2014.

A week before they were given the transfer orders, the six women had attended the first state convention of Asanghaditha Meghala Thozhilali Union (AMTU) held at Kozhikode, and had got themselves the tags of the union. They had joined the union four months ago after they had come to know that a union existed for unorganized labourers. It was a decision borne out of an assessment that individually expressed voices of opposition against various human rights violations at their workplace was never going to yield success. From their numerous experiences, both at Kalyan Sarees and at the various showrooms they had worked previously, they knew that such singular acts of defiance invariably culminated in the abrupt expulsion of the dissenter.

In spite of this they then took the initiative in inducting their fellow employees into the union. Stringent frisking measures—carried out by male security guards—and the presence of an intensive surveillance

network—there is a camera even in front of the toilet—meant the act of peddling in a union notice inside and then passing it on to someone else turned out to be the greatest adventure of their lives. Out of the 210 sales employees in the showroom, they had managed to induct thirty one more sales girls into the union. The news was spreading fast; so fast that there was no option but for it to reach the ears of the management.

Five women were transferred to Thiruvananthapuram, and one to Kannur. “It was their way of telling us to leave”, says Padmini. Transfers, according to her, are not common in textile retail sector, especially for sales girls who usually come from places in the vicinity of the showroom. A localized labour force, in fact, is a key attribute of the work culture of women sales employees.

Padmini refused to put her signature on the transfer order. She asked for a meeting with the general manager and decided to put forward her resignation letter to him. She was, however, denied permission for the meeting and was asked to leave the showroom immediately. Padmini was under the impression that she was the only one to be transferred. But once she got out of the showroom, she realized that she was not alone. The next day the six women were denied entry at the gate.

After a couple of failed compromise talks, a *samara samithi* (strike committee) was formed comprising the six protesters and their closest relatives—who in this case happened to be either their husbands or son. An *aikyadardya samithi* (Solidarity Committee) was also formed with P K Lijukumar, the state president of AMTU as its convener and Yamini Parameswaran, a human rights activist, as the chairperson. The charter of demands was prepared and the political agenda of the strike was laid out—the right to politically organize and claim their legitimate rights.

The giant hoardings that are ubiquitous on the state highways, and the TV ads on

Malayalam channels are flush with pitches by Amitabh Bachan, Mohanlal, Aishwarya Rai, Prithviraj, Manju Warriar and Shreya Ghoshal, the biggest and most commanding names of Indian and Malayalam cinema. The ads are invariably swanky, a riot of ostentation in the garb of celebrating a great and mythical Indian way of life—to be read as exclusively Brahmanical and upper class.

The textile and jewellery retail chain sector is also the biggest source of advertisement revenue for all Malayalam channels—entertainment and news. The brands don’t discriminate on the basis of ostensible ideological positions the channels claim to be flag bearers of, and on their part, the channels are prudent enough to confine those positions within their editorial walls: even fiercely anti-corporate/anti-establishment news channels have no misgivings about being in compliance with, and profiting from a business that aims at preying on the vulnerabilities of a compulsive and gullible consumer society. And when, as in the case of *Irikkal Samaram*, there is a case of conflict of interest that demands a stand be taken, no one has to show them whom to side with.

Kalyan Sarees, part of Kalyan Group, is owned by T S Ramachandran; his brother, T S Kalyanaraman who owns Kalyan Silks and Kalyan Jewellers is the more famous and richer face of the group with a net worth estimated by Forbes at \$1.03 billion. The tagline of Kalyan Sarees reads “*Stories Crafted in Silk*”. It is a tagline that Padmini too uses for the narrative of her life as a sales girl.

“*My name is Padmini S K. I started working as a sales girl in 2005. It was a not-so-big shop at City Centre. My salary then was Rs 500 per month. I did not have many other options.*”

On the first day itself, I was told about the rules of the job. First and foremost: A sales girl should never think about sitting down. Not even when there are no customers. You don’t have to ask why. That’s just how it has been ever since there were sales girls. So from 9: 30 to 7: 30, I should just stand there. No toilet breaks. In the showroom that

I joined, there was not even a toilet. So I used to go out to a hotel, or to the corporation office to relieve myself. That too, only once a day, maximum twice. Sometimes, not even once.

After working in the showrooms of a few big brands, I joined Kalyan Sarees in 2012. By that stage, I had worked my way through to be a sales supervisor. I was fortunate — the standard hierarchy among sales employees is that men will be the supervisors and floor managers while women will deal with the customers. This works well for the management because the women who work in this field are usually meek and are afraid to challenge the supervisors.

I was offered around 8,000 in the interview. But when I joined, the management told me that even those with 10 or 12 years of experience was given only Rs 6,500. They might have lied to me about my salary, but what they said about the salary of those people was true. Most were paid around Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000, and the really experienced ones were paid around Rs 6,000. None of us knew that there was a Minimum Wages Act or that we were rightfully entitled to a minimum salary.

For a sales girl, work starts at 9.30 in the morning. Imagine this: Rs 4,000 for a minimum of 11 hours of work. And from this, money is deducted for PF and welfare fund, and there wouldn't even be any legal acknowledgements. We were not given salary slips. We did not even know that according to law, we should have got at least Rs 7,200. Or that according to law women were not allowed to work after seven in the evening. We have a lunch break of 20 minutes. It is at the fifth floor that we have to go and eat. We are not allowed to use the lift to go there. It was so bad that to even be asked to go and eat there is a punishment. If it is raining we will be drenched. Many days, we don't even bother to have our lunch.

Even when there are no customers we are not allowed to sit. So what we do is this: we will put already folded clothes on the floor and then we will pretend that we are folding or arranging those clothes again, and in between we will steal a moment to sit. But now with cameras everywhere, these stolen moments have become rare.

And yet, despite all this, if we have to attend to a customer, we will be ready with our happiest,

prettiest faces. It comes naturally to us, like an addiction that cannot be chucked. Even today, if I were to go to the showroom from this strike site, I will straight away start smiling.

Because we keep standing for hours, and because we hardly ever relieve ourselves at work, most of us have uterine problems, urinary infections, back problems and varicose vein issues. Once, the varicose vein of a sales woman burst and she didn't even know. The customer who saw the trail of blood on the floor fainted and only then the woman realized what had happened to her."

All through the strike, there was steadfast support for it from an enthusiastic section of the social media. A Facebook solidarity committee was formed which planned a march to various showrooms of the Kalyan group. Mainstream media came in for widespread denigration. On March 8, as part of Women's Day, a solidarity march was held by this Facebook solidarity committee. For the women, this support came as a welcome surprise, motivating them to carry on with the protest. "We never thought people would be interested in our strike, especially after print and television media had snubbed us from the outset", says Padmini. "It was not just moral support, they supported us financially too. And we are grateful for that."

There were interesting asides too. After she put up a Facebook post thanking her 'dear Kalyan family', there was a torrent of raving and ranting against popular actress Manju Warrier, the brand ambassador of Kalyan Jewellers and a blockbuster feminist icon of sorts ever since she split from her superstar husband and made a comeback last year following a fifteen year hiatus from the film industry.

Social media mobilization of protest movements has been a prominent feature of Kerala's political topography in the last couple of years. Some of the major protests that were mobilized in this fashion include the Nilpu Samaram conducted by Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha; a chain of Kiss of Love protests against moral policing after a

restaurant in Kozhikode was vandalized by Yuva Morcha; the campaign of mailing sanitary napkins to the managing director of ASMA Rubber Products Private Limited Ltd based in Kakkannad, Kochi, following allegations of fifteen employees being subjected to strip search after a sanitary napkin was discovered in the company bathroom; Pampa Menstruation strike which asked women to fill the KSRTC special buses to Pampa, Sabarimala after Naseera, a journalist with TV Now was asked to step down from one such bus by its staff since they felt the presence of women would be interfering with the purity of the pilgrims.

Of these protests, all of which are characterized by a marked departure from forms of traditional Marxist practices of dissent like hartals and blockades, only Kiss of Love was covered by mainstream media; in fact it was turned into a festival of sorts. While the role played by social media in campaigning for such protests has been acknowledged as pivotal in the state's contemporary culture of political dissent, there has also been criticism against it, targeted in particular against its apparent lack of political focus.

On April 15, 2015, the 106th day of the strike, the management and the protesters reached an agreement. Of the four demands, the protests had laid out in their charter, two were fully met: cancellation of transfer orders and stopping the practice of making women work after seven in the evening; while one was partially acknowledged: the demand to re-arrange the working hours and make provisions for sales women to sit. The demand to re-arrange the working hours to an eight hour schedule was not even considered.

The social and traditional media have been silent since.

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The Joys and Woes of a Woman Reporter

■ R Akhileshwari

I was always interested in women's issues, perhaps influenced by my mother who shared her experiences of being a second wife in a privileged household. Though some of her stories were real and some exaggerated they taught me that injustice and inequality were woven into the life of a woman. As a result, I rebelled: against everything that was upheld as a norm, whether it was performance of puja, or a bath as a daily compulsory ritual, visiting temples or keeping fast on 'auspicious' days, wearing gold, a traditional sari or a long plait.

The Careers of a Woman Journalist

After journalism in 1974 in Osmania University, I passed up a better-paid bank job and became a trainee journalist as sub-editor in Deccan Herald (DH), Bangalore. I was the only female sub on the desk, aged 20, amid colleagues who were 40 years OLD! While I was almost friendless as the older men would not talk to me except to give work, the atmosphere was not hostile perhaps because I was related to the management. This made my job doubly difficult as this perception overrode any appreciation of my abilities. Much later my colleagues would grudgingly admit that I was good at my work despite having connections to the management!

I requested a shift to reporting but the editor declined: women could not withstand the 'rough and tumble' of reporting. Later, he entrusted me with a reporting assignment that turned into a series of investigative reports on the terrible status of schools, the plight of the teachers, and the exploitation of the parents. The matter was raised in the

Karnataka Assembly, and the Education Minister took a press party to verify the stories we had reported. My woman colleague and I (the team for the story) were invited. The male reporters were resentful: locals, that a 'non-local' like me shook the government; those at DH, that a sub-editor was chosen for the assignment and not one of them. They attributed it to the 'sweet eye' the old man (Editor) had for young women.

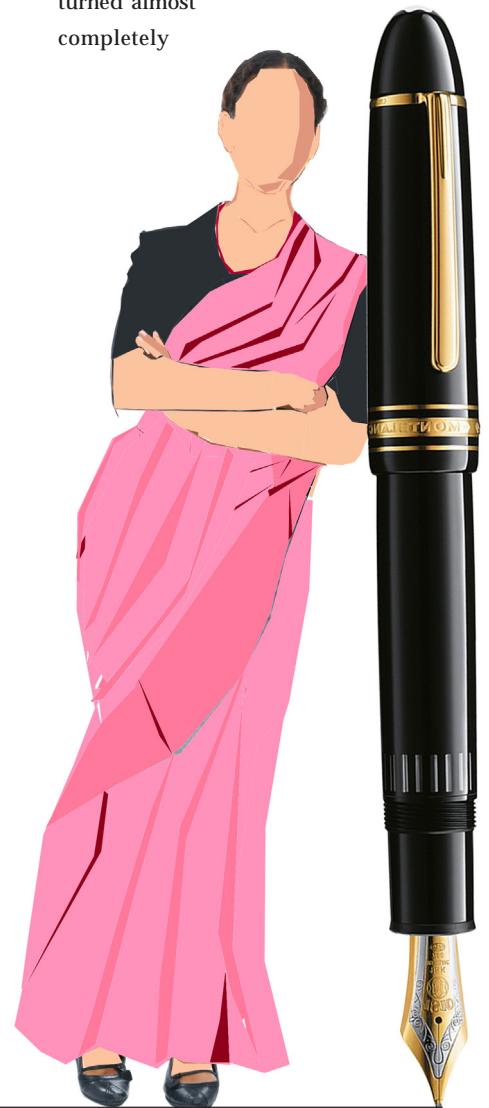
Those post-Emergency days were the golden period for investigative reporting and our work was recognised with an award. While we were perhaps the first women reporters to do investigative reporting, our stories were not noticed at the national level because of the DH's regional profile. Later, the Karnataka Union of Working Journalists selected one of my stories as the Best Feature published during the year.

Married, three years later, I moved back home to Hyderabad in the late 1970s. As I explored the market of English language journalism (precisely two news agencies and two daily newspapers), I found that my awards and experience as sub-editor/reporter in the reputed DH could not tip the scales against my gender. All the newspapers and news agencies had already one woman reporter/sub editor on their rolls—a second one was 'an unnecessary burden'. I applied in Eenadu Telugu daily. The chief of the group, no less, interviewed me and asked if I was prepared not to see my name in the byline as per Eenadu policy. I

had accumulated a bagful of bylines in DH, so I agreed, but did not get the job.

Fortunately, around that time, a senior Telugu journalist started a features agency, the first of its kind in AP. This was after the journalists revolt in Eenadu had led to mass dismissals of senior Telugu editors; many were rendered jobless. My salary, after three years of experience and awards, was at the level at which I had started: Rs 300 with a bonus bus pass of Rs 35! A year later, this burden on my employer too was removed since accreditation came with a free bus pass and other concessions.

A shoestring budget to run a household forced me to rethink my situation. When an opportunity as Assistant Editor opened in a central government-run rural development research institute, I joined. I faced the most demanding boss in my entire career, and my hair turned almost completely



grey in those five years. When I wanted to apply for the post of deputy editor in my department, my boss was scandalised (I was 35 and he had occupied that honoured post only in his mid-40s). He wrote to the Director General that he did not need that kind of senior person in his department. The advertisement was withdrawn! Determined to quit I saw an opening in my alma mater, applied, was selected. I became Lecturer in the Dept of Communication and Journalism in Osmania University—not a satisfying experience.

I resigned three years later to become a correspondent in Andhra Pradesh in DH. This was an important post for a regional paper in Hyderabad, because the political scenario had attracted national attention. The Congress (I) had been decimated by a fledgling Telugu Desam Party launched in the mid-1980s by an unlikely politician, the highly popular Telugu film star N T Rama Rao. NTR turned out to be an unusual CM, making news with his quirky style. Thus, eight years after research and teaching I returned to journalism, my first love. No looking back since!

Within a year my Associate Editor who knew only my work of reporting and stories for the different supplements, recommended to my Editor that I be sent to Namibia, then a colony (the last in the world) of South Africa. A post-apartheid South Africa, understanding the agony of the colonised, decided to grant it independence. DH wanted exclusive coverage. I was to fly out of Delhi and my Associate Editor, an old Delhi hand with connections, decided that I would need a briefing on South African politics from a globe-trotting Africa specialist. When this person heard that I had no hotel reservation, he was scandalised. The entire world media would descend on Windhoek, Namibia's capital, the government would have had commandeered all the hotels in the small city for the dozens of heads of states attending the ceremony, and here was a foolhardy reporter going to cover it without assured accommodation. "To top it all, you are sending a woman," he berated my colleague. Worse, it was her first trip abroad. "Go back to Hyderabad!" was his peremptory advice. I

was aghast. What on hell had gender to do with having ability and wits to survive? All set as I was to take the flight in three hours' time this man put the fear of the devil in me. My aplomb and confidence took a beating. My colleague tried to assuage my fears on the taxi to the airport. He asked me to ignore his friends' remarks saying I would emerge in flying colours. "I know you and he doesn't", he said with conviction. The butterflies in my tummy remained overactive.

I managed to find accommodation in Windhoek and report the independence of Namibia.

Soon after, I was offered the coveted Foreign Correspondent post in Washington DC. Extended family of brothers and sisters, in-laws, neighbours, their friends and relatives tried to dissuade me: I would leave behind my daughters who were three and eight, and they would be traumatised by my long absence; I would be vulnerable without male protection; I would not have the support of friends and family; I was being un-Indian and un-womanlike, putting career ahead of motherhood and wifely duties. However, my husband firmly supported my decision and I flew off to new experiences. I was perhaps one of the first woman journalists to be posted as a foreign correspondent. It was all the more unusual because a regional paper had taken the bold and rather expensive decision of posting a full-time reporter to Washington DC.

I took my elder daughter along, ironically to protect me from predatory men, soon realising that she was never a dissuading factor for any man who targeted me as a single woman. In my four years in Washington, I covered the last years of George Bush and the first term of Bill Clinton's. I was given the dream assignment to Moscow to cover the fall of the USSR. As a post-Independence generation Indian, the USSR had a special place in my heart. Four years later, I returned to a posting in Hyderabad to be with my family. I served DH for several more years as its special correspondent in AP and retired to take up teaching.

Challenges of a woman reporter

So does a woman reporter face more challenges and problems than women in other professions? Not really. Like any other woman professional, a woman reporter/journalist encounters discrimination, bias, prejudice and sexual harassment in the course of her duty in a patriarchal society. How much her performance is affected by these depends on her mental strength, her commitment to her job, her adventurousness and the risks she takes in the course of reporting.

Belonging of the second generation of women journalists, my research for the National Commission for Women and for my doctorate showed that the situation hasn't changed much in the 30+ years that I have been associated with the media. Women continue to be second class citizens in media houses, confront the glass ceiling, and face sexual harassment at the hands of news sources and colleagues. Should they score over their male colleagues, their character is shredded; her success attributed to her 'trapping' the editor/news editor/chief reporter or even sources such as a politician, et al, invariably male. While women journalists are now visible, especially on TV, they remain marginalized in terms of opportunities, beats and promotions.

If you are a woman, your success becomes your bane. Both your colleagues and your immediate superiors resent you. When I was posted to Washington DC, the senior who was handling the Foreign Page in DH was so resentful that he had been overlooked for the post as a natural choice he killed at least 20 of my stories. With no internet and expensive phone calls then, there was no way of knowing if the story appeared. We would get to see our papers in the Indian Embassy 10-12 days later. One day, my editor called up to ask why I was not filing any story! I said I was and then sent him on the teleprinter a list of stories I had done. He immediately transferred the Foreign Editor. Several women journalists have experienced jealousy of male colleagues and superiors because they got special stories or scoops; some were removed from their beats by a jealous chief

reporter, others have found their byline dropped in print 'by mistake'.

In Washington, the Indian press contingent comprised three women and seven men. The men formed a clique to discuss the leads of every story that broke. Two of us women were out. The third, married to one of the men, was part of the clique. They would snigger if a woman asked a question in a press conference; comment loudly, laugh and pass nasty comments if a woman reporter went for an 'exclusive quote' from an official after the press conference. Three of the men in fact functioned like a new agency: one would do the leg work, often sending the wife, and the others would write the story. One would use the original and the others re-wrote it differently. Needless to say, we were kept out of this cosy club.

They would dissect our stories after they appeared in print and at times grudgingly admit, "Not bad, she can write." When they were not patronising they would deliberately mislead.

Sexual harassment is an epidemic in the media that is conveniently swept under the carpet. If action is taken against the culprit, it is often a light slap on the wrist. Every woman journalist experiences sexual harassment on duty but rarely admits to it, or complains to her superiors. The harassment can come from boss, colleagues, fellow journalists and news sources. Let me cite my own experiences. In Washington DC, a single woman with a daughter in tow, innocent of American protocol and culture, I invited to my home, a news source – a doctor, perhaps in his 60s, from Mysore. He showed no signs of leaving even as it got dark. He got calls from his daughter which he answered in Kannada saying he was somewhere else, thinking I did not follow Kannada. I lacked the courage to ask him to leave and he continued his vigil hoping (I suppose) I would come to the point. On another occasion the American Ambassador to Pakistan who had just returned home after completion of his term wanted to play 'toey-toey' so I hastily concluded my interview and fled.

One day, I met a Karnataka cadre IAS officer had been deputed to the India office of the World Bank. After a professional lunch in the Bank cafeteria, he walked me to the Metro. As we stopped at a red light at the zebra crossing, he asked "What do you do for sex?" I was dumbstruck. "I am here for you", he offered. The light turned green, I fled.

Back home, as correspondents of outstation newspapers, we keep in touch not just with news sources but also fellow outstation newspaper correspondents. So we would cultivate our male colleagues, which is a sure invitation to trouble as I realised soon enough.

If I stayed in hotels by myself, it invited unwanted attention. Just before I went to bed in a hotel in Trivandrum, the phone rang repeatedly and a male voice kept asking "Shall I come?" On my insistence, the hotel management followed up the next day and subsequently told me that it was a waiter and that they had suspended him.

One of the common beliefs among men is that women can and should do the 'soft' stuff, not hard news like politics or crime, that they are simply not capable of reporting and analysing politics. While in the earlier days, women were asked to report beauty shows, flower shows and cultural exhibitions, nowadays women are in charge of the supplements that deal with features or the 'soft' news. Women journalists are ghettoised even today by limiting them to some areas of journalism, very rarely politics.

Yet, if some men discouraged us, there were others who supported us; if some men ran us down, there were others who egged us on; if there were some men who resented our achievements, there were others who recognised our

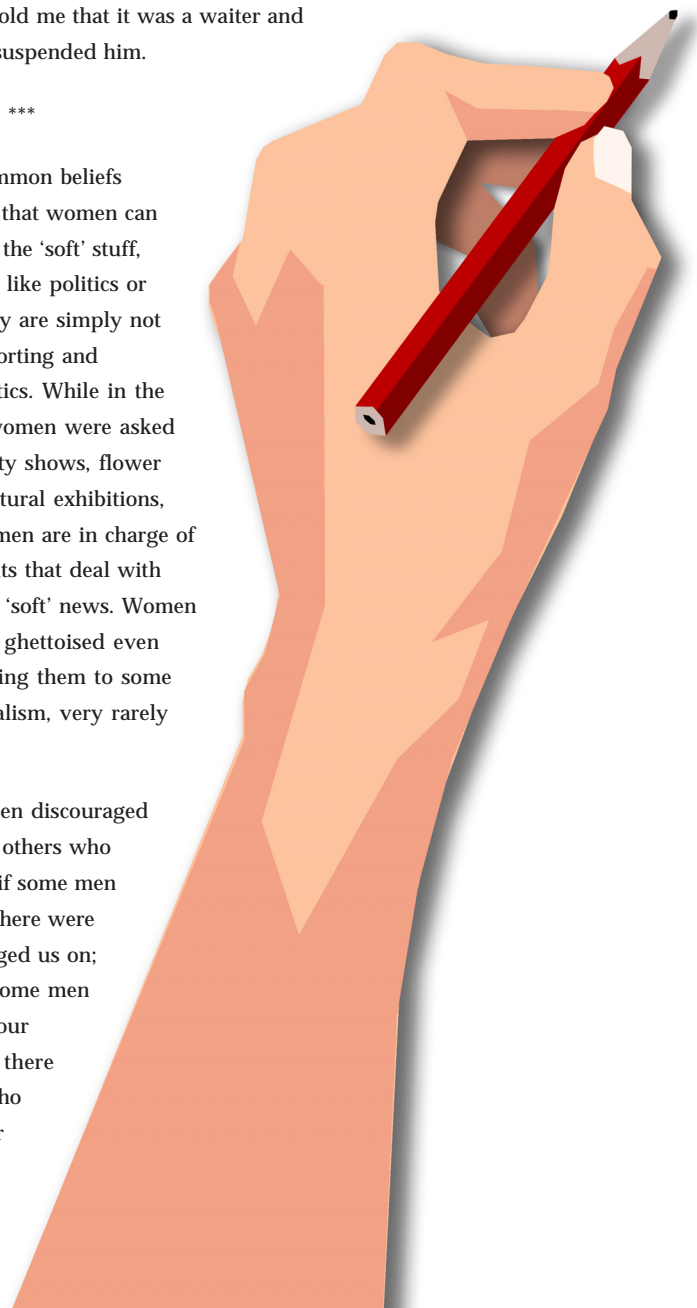
talent and gave us our due; if some refused to cooperate, others went out of their way to help us; if some sabotaged our work, others shared their leads with us.

Conclusion

So were the trials and tribulations as a woman reporter worth the effort? Unquestionably! Despite the long hours, despite daily deadlines, despite the stress and anxiety of meeting them, despite taking risks and despite the disappointment of your stories being rejected or pruned badly, despite the disadvantages faced, discrimination endured, every single moment has been worthwhile!

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Blurred Vision: Development Communication and Community Radio in India

■ Vinod Pavarala

Resistance to media globalization is often predicated on the well-founded assumption that the state and transnational commercial actors would control and direct the development of technology to suit their own interests. Since the mid-1990s, we have had to face the irony of proliferation of media outlets, on the one hand, and the rapid decline in the range and quality of information available, on the other.

A number of civil society organisations in India have challenged the hegemonic roles played by state-centred or market-run media, and have been propagating the need for popular, community-based, alternative media such as people's theatre, small local newspapers, community radio, participatory video, and alternative documentaries. The emergence of these media, it was suggested, would help revive the spirit of development communication envisaged by some of the communication pioneers in the country. The community radio initiatives by several groups across India for a share of the airwaves, which are 'public property', are one significant indication of this popular resistance.

In order to re-energize civil society weakened by state and corporate-dominated media, citizen groups, community organisations, and media activists across the world have been advocating for an appropriate institutional space. By taking stock of the political realities associated with broadcasting in India, community radio activists in India made a case, more than a decade ago, for the functioning of radio in the country to be based on the principles of "universal access, diversity, equitable resource allocation, democratisation of airwaves, and empowerment of marginalised sections of society" (DDS, 2000).

Development Communication: the dominant paradigm and beyond

There is a long, chequered history of the so-called 'dominant paradigm' in development communication, which emerged in the post-World War II years as newly independent Asian, African, and Latin American countries ventured out to become progressive, self-sustaining and industrialized. The use of the term 'development' became associated with themes like modernization, economic growth and technological diffusion leading to centralized planning, large-scale industrialization, and the expansion of basic communication infrastructure with a top down approach. The role of mass media was to motivate change in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

The post-colonial political and policy elites in India enthusiastically embraced this vision of using communication and media as tools of persuasion, directed especially at the rural poor, to change their attitudes and bring about desirable social change. Communication campaigns promoting family planning and green revolution agriculture are now the stuff of legends in India's development story. The Radio Farm Forums organized in Maharashtra in the mid-1950s to impart information on improved agricultural practices and the massive Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in the mid-1970s in six States are both significant examples of this approach.

The mid-1970s saw disenchantment with the postulates underlying the modernization and economic growth as they did not correspond to the social realities and cultural milieu in the developing countries. Evaluation reports of extension programs indicated that there was little evidence of the 'trickle down' effect because the rural social structures thwarted all attempts to reach the poor. The extensive mass media networks degenerated into being

tools of government propaganda or a source of superfluous entertainment for the urban middle-class. The few attempts to use mass media for development were rendered ineffective by the elitist bureaucracies and the existing social hierarchies. In India, the delegitimisation of the state during the Emergency, disenchantment with party politics, and the emergence of social movements and non-governmental organizations since the 1980s around issues such as ecology, gender equity, and rights of indigenous people and peasants have contributed to a comprehensive critique of the dominant paradigm and the formulation of an alternative, participatory development discourse.

These new approaches to communication emphasised the need to establish decentralised media systems with a more 'receiver-centric' rather than 'communicator' orientation, and with accent on exchange of information and 'meanings' rather than on persuasion. Community-based independent media, such as community radio, participatory video and popular theatre are now perceived by media activists and grassroots organizations as a means of enabling rural people to manage their own development and to acquire a sense of control over its course through self-management.

Broadcasting Policy in India

The history of the broadcasting system in India reveals that one of the main factors that perpetuates status quo is the desire of the state to retain control. In fact, the attitude of successive governments even after nearly seven decades of Independence have unmistakable traces of the norms set by the British who introduced organised broadcasting in the country. In 1933 the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act was brought into force, which made the possession of radio receivers and wireless equipment without a license an offence. The Indian Government's current monopoly over radio and television broadcasting derives from this Act together with the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 which gives exclusive privileges of the establishment, maintenance and working of wireless apparatus to the Central Government.

After the termination of the Emergency, during which credibility of the state-run media took a severe beating, the country's first non-Congress government pledged 'genuine autonomy' to the electronic media which had hitherto been reduced to a vehicle for political propaganda. For about two

decades, successive governments in New Delhi sent 'mixed signals' about autonomy with a series of proposals which eventually culminated in the notification of the Prasar Bharati Act by Parliament in 1997 (Kumar, 2003).

As cable-delivered foreign satellite television channels started making rapid inroads into the country in the 1990s, the argument for autonomy was expressed in terms of competitiveness and commercial viability. Conditions for broadcasting changed radically in the early 1990s with the so-called 'satellite invasion' (Pavarala and Kumar, 2001). In February 1995, the Supreme Court delivered a historic judgment in *Ministry of Information and Broadcasting v. Cricket Association of Bengal*. The Court ruled that: 'Airwaves constitute public property and must be utilized for advancing public good'. A number of civil society organisations and media activists took the 1995 Supreme Court judgment as a point of departure and started making efforts to carve out an alternative media sector in India, which would neither be state-run nor market-driven. These groups saw radio as a tool for empowerment, an appropriate technology to conscientise and build capacities of communities to become active participants in grassroots development.

Community Radio in India: Redefining the Public Sphere

Even as radio was commercialized through private FM stations, the long-standing demands for a third tier of independent, not-for-profit broadcasting in the country yielded only a restricted 'campus' avatar of community radio in the first quarter of 2003. That allowed "well-established" educational institutions to set up FM transmitters and run radio stations on their campuses. This decision diluted somewhat the hegemony of the state and market over radio, but the government for a long time resisted the demands for opening up this sector, under misplaced apprehensions that secessionists, militants or subversive elements would misuse the medium. Several non-governmental organisations and media-activist groups campaigned for nearly a decade, culminating in a more inclusive community radio policy approved by the Union Cabinet in November 2006. The new expanded policy permitted NGOs and community-based groups, with a track record of developmental work, to set up Community Radio Stations (CRS). In the 10 years since a putative community radio policy was announced by the Government of India we now have about 180 operational



stations licensed under the policy, of which about a third are those run by NGOs.

Ten Years After: A Blurred Development Vision?

Civil society organizations, media activists and advocates who campaigned for opening up of airwaves had emphasized the potential of using community radio for development, rather than foregrounding what seemed to be the more radical framework of communication rights. Many of these groups and individuals had themselves emerged in the crucible of the post-Emergency civil society ferment and had strong belief in the power of non-governmental action in articulating an alternative development vision from that of the state.

Research conducted by our team at the UNESCO Chair on Community Media over the last decade (Pavarala and Malik, 2007; Pavarala, Malik, and Belavadi, 2010) compels us to reflect critically on the role of civil society organizations in the development of community radio in India. The funding imperative, the policy specifying NGOs as the eligible applicants, and the overall developmental framework led to the growth of community radio in India largely through the efforts of NGOs. While some of the best examples of genuine grassroots community radio in India come from NGO initiatives, some organizations are beginning to enter the arena solely to further the organizational objectives and they take to non-participatory methods under pressure from donors to 'scale-up' operations and to demonstrate

'impact' on behavior change. The implications of this incipient NGO-ization of community radio in India are beginning to be felt across the sector.

A community radio project in eastern India translated its 'rights based' approach into government officials holding forth on various schemes to which the rural poor are entitled. Without any community voices pointing to loopholes in the implementation and bereft of any lively discussions on the scheme, the expert-driven broadcasts were reduced to mere extensions of state radio. A second change that happened at this NGO-run station is that an economy of scale was sought to be achieved, apparently at the behest of certain donors, by expanding coverage area. It not only led to the decline in participation of the people in the villages in the selection of issues, planning and production, and post-production activities, but also to the dropping out of all women reporters who found it difficult to negotiate such a large geographical area without adequate security or transport. With the gradual shifting of the programme towards an information dissemination paradigm directed and driven by fewer and fewer people, it did not help strengthen individual and community communication capacities and decision-making abilities.

In another comprehensive study done more recently by the same team of three community radio stations in the Bundelkhand region (Pavarala, et al, 2013), it was found that the mandates of two of the stations funded by a multilateral agency significantly showcased the social and developmental agendas of the funding agency as well as those of the NGOs. The overarching approach was to 'cater' to the perceived 'information needs' of the community, bordering on being instructive and prescriptive. The stations that were being funded by the multilateral agency got accustomed to a steady flow of funds, making them put in place unsustainable practices such as hiring a large number of salaried staff members. As the agency announced its withdrawal from the project, the stations suddenly realized the challenges of such a donor-driven model of community radio.

While the way some of the NGOs are deploying radio is unwittingly aligning them with an older state-centred paradigm of broadcasting for development, there have been other developments in the community radio sector that are threatening its autonomy from the state more directly. The Ministry of I&B recently launched a Community Radio Support Scheme mainly to subsidize the

acquisition of technology by stations. While public funding of community radio is welcome, it should have been set up as an autonomous fund as in many other countries instead of a government Ministry controlling the purse strings tightly. In other words, the present government sees community radio as an ideal low-cost, last-mile delivery platform for the many government schemes such as *Swachh Bharat*, *Beti Bachao*, and *Jan Dhan Yojana*. If community radio were to function merely as All India Radio, doling out information that would rally people around 'national' development goals and mould them into 'good' citizens through top-down, expert-driven communication, the years of struggle for an independent space would have been in vain. The troubling aspect of state funding is whether it is preferential advertising or funding for content production by interested ministries, these have the effect of reducing community radio to a supplicant in a complex patron-client relationship. Combined with the increasing NGO-ization of community radio in India, negotiating an acceptable relationship with the state has become a key challenge for the sector as a whole.

Conclusion

The trends discussed above must make us reflect on the strategic choice of the development paradigm within which activists and advocates in civil society have pushed the CR agenda in India. If community radio were to contribute to the making of a subaltern public sphere, the time has come for the movement to shift to a more radical, communication rights paradigm.

It was hoped that community radio would offer to people opportunities to debate issues and events of common concern and to set counter-hegemonic agendas. The forging of 'subaltern counterpublics' would, it was envisioned, help expand the discursive space, eventually facilitating collective action and offering a realistic emancipatory potential.

A decade after the community radio policy was announced, there are many aberrations that have emerged on the Indian community radio landscape. On current evidence, it seems like the entire sector, marked by a complex play of collaborations between the state, the NGOs, multilateral agencies, and other related stakeholders, is handicapped by a blurred vision that seems to reproduce older paradigms of development communication.

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Nalupu

■ K. Sajaya

June 17, 1985...Karamchedu village in Guntur zilla (now Prakasam zilla) in Andhra Pradesh state...The day when kamma domination and arrogance, gaining the support of political power, hunted 17 dalits in broad daylight with knives and spears and killed them. The Telugu Desam party was ruling then. The chief minister was Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao.

August 6, 1991...Chundururu village in Guntur zilla in Andhra Pradesh state. The day the upper caste Reddys, with the police as witness, attacked the dalit community there, killed 11 people with knives and axes, stuffed them in gunny bags and dumped them in the Tungabhadra canal. The Congress was ruling then. The chief minister was N. Janardhan Reddy.

What was the period between these two atrocities like? First, there were serious changes that were making a place for liberalization in the country's economic system. Then there was brahminical ideology which was Hinduizing the society with religious superstitions. There were also increasing attacks on dalits and people belonging to minority religions. Four years after the Karamchedu incident, *Nalupu: Prajapaksa Patrika*, began as a voice for the lowest classes.

When an important social issue begins to be discussed in the society, there will be many efforts to discuss this issue and to publicize it. Some of these efforts some might be successful, in some disappointment also sets in. Once in a while the efforts are also unsuccessful. When we are thus searching for a solution to the problem, a forum where the search can be immediately presented in writing and a strong voice that says we are on

your side become necessary. It is only then that theories necessary for the problem will emerge. Whether that is Marxism, Ambedkarism, Dalitism or feminism...or all at the same time, one problem keeps appearing after another. This forum should function not just to search for a solution or present a solution when a problem emerges but to show ways of resolving all of the people's problems by giving them a theoretical direction and discussing them. News about such a forum should reach people. The approach will depend on the intensity of the problem. Bojja Tarakam, editor of *Nalupu*, said they began the magazine to enable such explicit discussion.

In 1990, on the occasion of five years since the Karamchedu incident, Bojja Tarakam wrote in his essay in *Nalupu*, "Today Karamchedu is not a village; it is not the name of a village. It resonates differently with different people. If it was a bow for some people, for some others it was a shield. If it was useful for some to frighten others, it became something that gave courage to some others. Karamchedu itself split into two. Rich – poor; landlords – laborers; 'upper' castes – 'lower' castes; those who attack – those who are attacked. It has been exactly five years since the carnage happened. Later, Karamchedu became the reason for a number of social and political changes that came about in the Andhra region. Karamchedu intensified people's movements that were already ripening. It established resistance and counter-response [pratisbandana] in the lives of dalits. It became a weapon in the hands of dalits who were stranded on the path, shocked, and with empty hands." Today Karamchedu is a protest. It is a resistance, a shaking, a turn".

In discussion with me he said that when people heard that a magazine titled *Nalupu: Prajapaksa Patrika* was to be published under the aegis of the Hyderabad Book Trust, there were many who asked "what kind of a name is that, couldn't they find another name?" Though initially he was also a little hesitant about the name, he said they later decided to use it. "There were also those who asked how they could make it comprehensible only to the dalits as a group when they call it a people's magazine. Maybe the reason for this is the lack of awareness that 'people' [*praja*] consists of many different collectives. Dalits are a part of the *praja*, the *praja* consists of dalits. We the editors of *Nalupu* are of the opinion that the *praja* consists of those who are targets of exploitation, those who are suffering, those who are experiencing violence, and everybody who is experiencing these disparities—on the other hand, those who are exploiting should not be called the *praja*. Bringing out a magazine or writing essays especially for dalits emerged as part of the attempt to do this. Anybody who examines the magazine will understand that it was the aim to make *Nalupu* into something that is especially for the people who have been suppressed, crushed and for the groups that are the targets of exploitation, to bring them to consciousness from different angles. *Nalupu* explicitly proclaimed that all those who were being subject to exploitation, violence, those who are losing their rights were the *praja*. Our entire editorial body consists of people who are in people's movements, people who are fighting on behalf of the *praja*'s problems; they are people who are searching in multiple angles for the solution to these problems. Their influence on the running of the magazine is clear."

Tarakam has a long political relationship with many people's movements. He works as an advocate in the High Court. He is a lecturer, poet and writer. Taking up the editorship of a magazine in between these many activities is an extremely difficult task. Talking in this regard, he said, "Actually I had long wanted to bring out a magazine. When I was in high school I brought out a written magazine. I used to write it by hand using carbon papers. Two, three, even four double foolscap size papers at the same time.

I used to write them myself and sell them in my village. Thus, I have always wanted to run a magazine since my childhood. My father also ran a monthly magazine, *Jyoti*. He was an MLA at that time. He was deeply immersed in politics. He didn't have the time. He asked someone to look after the magazine but because they didn't, the magazine stopped. I used to think about the magazine like this but it wasn't possible [to run it] because I didn't have financial resources. This desire remained since then. I was inspired by the Black Movement. Martin Luther King led an extraordinary movement that developed extraordinary intensity in 1964. There are a lot of similarities between this movement and those who are living as an untouchable collective in our Indian society. Though I did not discuss this extensively with friends in the movements with whom I was later involved in bringing out a magazine, the desire remained unfulfilled. In 1985 the inhuman Karamchedu atrocity against dalits jolted people's lives. Even those who until then did not think about caste and its origins began to think critically after seeing the ugly form of the upper castes. This showed a lot of influence not just in Andhra Pradesh state but across the country. It was a prologue for a united dalit movement. Assemblies, rasta rokos, processions, struggles created unrest. All of these would end at some time. If a record was not made of them then and there we would not find anything about them after, anywhere else. The other magazines did not record these movements, thoughts, struggles and realities of the dalit people. Many like us were fully immersed in the movement against the Karamchedu atrocity. We had no other task—arranging meetings, assemblies, fighting cases, going to courts, collecting evidence, getting witnesses, giving them courage.

Because of this the magazine could not start till four years after. Actually it was only after the Karamchedu incident that this thinking was further strengthened. In the beginning of the 1980s, Hyderabad Book Trust was started by CK, Gita Ramaswamy, Cyril Reddy and a few other friends with the goal of making alternative progressive, political literature available. When I got acquainted with Cyril during this phase, he and I used to have discussions on contemporary politics,

especially dalit politics and movements and aspects related to them. Similarly, in discussion with Kancha Ilaiah, Balagopal and other such friends we arrived at a decision to bring out a magazine that was in accordance with our thinking. By then Hyderabad Book Trust had a special place as publishers for alternative people's movements. By 1989 we began to have some time to spare. All of us felt that there definitely has to be a magazine which is a forum for sharing these movements and thoughts. Actually, Cyril was the inspiration for such thinking. He asked me to head it and said he will take care of all the other tasks as the publisher. The magazine began with his encouragement and initiative. We began *Nalupu* with me as the editor, Cyril as the publisher, and the editorial board consisting of Balagopal, the leader of the human rights movements, Balagopal; D Narasimha Reddy economics professor at Central University; Kancha Ilaiah, political science professor at Osmania University; PL Vishweswara Rao, professor of journalism at Osmania University; and the journalist R Akhileshwari.

As I had mentioned earlier, after we decided to start the magazine there were a lot of debates about the name. Almost everybody accepted the name *Nalupu*. *Nalupu* symbolized oppression and discrimination. It also became a symbol for untouchability. All those who are subject to torture and violence are related to *Nalupu*. As I said earlier, there were some doubts about the name. Cyril argued strongly that we have to retain this name. Ilaiah too. They argued, and convinced me, that for the issues we want to discuss through the magazine, 'Nalupu' would be a good name symbolically. They said that this name will put our magazine in the lead. Once the magazine began, all the hesitations and doubts I had prior to that went away. Right from the first issue there was a wonderful reception. Many people made this magazine their own.

Nalupu ran very successfully for five years, from 1989 to almost 1995. Dalit and identity movements were just then beginning to gather strength. The Left movements were unable to extend assurance to these movements. There used to be a number of

doubts about the Left in the dalit groups. We took on the job of bringing caste and class on par with each other. We used to extensively publish the discussions related to this. I think we were successful to a great extent in our writing and in spreading views about this.

Gita Ramaswamy, who oversaw the company responsibilities for HBT [Hyderabad Book Trust] said, "In the Telangana regions where there was influence of the revolutionary parties, there was an unspoken restriction on *Nalupu*. They used to prevent the magazine from being sold in bookstores. Police took away the copies that were kept. We used to get the news later. Sometimes they would return the books and sometimes they wouldn't. It used to be extremely difficult to distribute the magazine to places such as Gadwal, Karimnagar, Warangal, Adilabad. There was surveillance of *Nalupu* subscribers. If an explicit restriction against revolutionary politics was implemented, this kind of an invisible restriction was implemented against people, groups and forums that were raising their voices on behalf of people's problems. Even though we had all kinds of necessary permissions from the government for the publication of *Nalupu*, we faced these problems in distributing the magazine. The police never spoke directly to our editorial board. The State always looks at pens and voices that raise questions with suspicion. It tries to crush them if possible."

Kancha Ilaiah, talking about his connection with *Nalupu*, said "Karamchedu brought about a major change in the lives and thoughts of people like us. At that time we were all working with Marxist—Leninist groups. We were organizing discussions about the fundamental nature of the caste problem. There was an ongoing difference among us there. When we were thinking about how to analyze the caste problem in India, the thinking of black nationalists and black feminists that 'Black is beautiful' inspired us a lot. In the revolutionary politics and Leftist politics here there was no respect towards blackness. This is why when the idea of a magazine was put forth we decided that its name should be 'Nalupu.' Discussing the caste system through an angle that made sense to us at that time was one thing. We

began writing to powerfully record the exploitation and violence that was happening, record an argument that is theoretical, and to take Phule's and Ambedkar's writings, combining Marxist theory with the dalit question in a way that takes these arguments not just to people organizing the movements but to a wide public. At that time except for one or two books written by Dr. Vijaya Bharati, there were no writings about him in Telugu. After this the magazine that widely introduced Phule's writings in Telugu was *Nalupu*."

Nalupu played a powerful role during the Mandal agitation. When Arun Shourie and others were campaigning against reservations and writing about it, I wrote a long essay in *Nalupu* titled "Paraannabhuktulaku Pratibhekadundi? ["Where is the Merit in Parasites?"]" The magazine turned into a vehicle for discussing a number of issues such as these. As a movement magazine, a number of copies used to be sold in railway stations and bus stands. Before this such magazines were not available there. At that time there was a lot of restrictions against people's movements and civil rights. With copies of *Nalupu* being found on Naxalites who were encountered and killed, the police tried a lot to obstruct the distribution of *Nalupu*. In my understanding, the magazine reached all political sections. Everyone was reading it. Till before Karamchedu, Ambedkarism had remained as welfarism. The term SC/ST connoted only welfare and welfare organizations. Karamchedu transformed that meaning. There were those who combined Marxism and Ambedkarism, examined what was happening in the field and discussed this. Even if in an embryonic form, *Nalupu* performed the task of combining Marxism, Ambedkarism and feminism. A number of essays in *Nalupu* were written in a way that the communists could relate to. *Nalupu* field reports were very useful in discussions in the parties about how a friendship between caste and class struggles could be made possible.

Actually *Nalupu*'s strength was in the stories that came from the field. It maintained a crucial role in creating a forum for the attack that had to be undertaken against

Brahminism. This magazine was a common forum that was capable of making everyone read. We made very strong efforts for the language to be easy enough even to be understood by those who have studied till the X standard—to get rid of vocabulary that is not comprehensible. The magazine played a very important role in people from different groups identifying with their local problems and taking to the path of movements. At that time there were a lot of discussions about feminism. Perhaps our *Nalupu* was a team that was conducive to feminist philosophy. We used to have a good friendship with Stree Shakti Sanghatana. We collected and published a number of essays about them. In this way it is necessary to recognize that from all angles the magazine played an important role. Though the respect from readers and movements was good, it is very saddening that the magazine had to be stopped because economic resources reduced. Cyril put in a lot of effort to sustain the magazine. He took on the entire responsibility.

The magazine's first strength was its name. A lot of people identified themselves with it. It was inspired by this name that I named my book *Why I Am Not a Hindu*. I was able to write this book through examining the field reports in *Nalupu*. With the same inspiration I named another book *Buffalo Nationalism*. It is very saddening that the magazine stopped during a key phase in national politics, that too because of economic resources. After *Nalupu* stopped I began to write more in English. In current political conditions, it is very necessary for magazines such as *Nalupu* to exist to oppose the frenzy of Hindutva and its politics. It is a huge loss to not have a voice that is our own. To oppose current conditions, if anyone is able to restart this magazine again, if anyone is able to come forward for that, it would be really good."

Publisher Cyril said, "When we thought that managing the finances will no longer be possible, we called the writers and friends who had until then participated in the management of the magazine and explained why we were thinking of stopping it. If collecting writings is one important part of managing a magazine, economic resources are another important part. For some time we

took government notifications. For this we had the help of a few friends who were working in the IAS. We reprinted Hyderabad Book Trust's *Where There is No Doctor*. We spent the money from selling the reprint on this magazine's management. We used to publish 3000 copies of each volume. It was a lot of work to distribute them, search for distributors in the zillas, and collect the money from the copies they sold. In the midst of this there were restrictions by the police. They wouldn't let us sell the magazine. Because of this, bookstores would be frightened to display the magazine in a way that was visible from the outside. This had an impact on sales. We weren't getting money immediately. We strongly thought that we should continue but it became difficult financially. Actually for a long time we had economic resources from the Trust. Later we felt that this will be difficult. If the magazine had to come out on time there had to be four or five staff members who worked full time. There had to be coordination between them. A lot of people asked us to continue but it wasn't possible."

Nalupu was a magazine that stood as the backbone for identity movements at a historical moment and played an extraordinary part for five years. From April 1989 to June 1993 the publishers ran the magazine with commitment even when they faced financial, political and many other obstacles. That the magazine ceased publication was saddening not only for the editors but also for people like me who were taking their first steps as essayists. As Ilaiah says the contemporary period is a political situation where the necessity for magazines such as *Nalupu* is brought forth even more forcefully. If one observes the period starting from Karamchedu to the present, there is a necessity for magazines with a democratic voice that examines the struggles which have continued endlessly and their widening political contexts. We have to wait and watch whether we will be able to revive *Nalupu* or if it will emerge in another form.

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Round Table India: Interview with Kuffir

■ Panthukala Srinivas and Prudhvi Raj Duddu

PS and PRD: Could you give a brief introduction about yourself, your background and the idea of Round Table India? How did it come into being, and what made you to start this kind of website for unheard voices?

K: I will start with the background of Round Table India (RTI) how it was started, so that it could also give you the idea of people who built it or founded it originally. RTI was conceived in the year 2008. It was planned and discussed during the year 2008. There was an environment of Dalit, Bahujan blogging that was building up. Blogging had come up around year 2000 and it came to India in 2003 and 2004. I had been blogging since the very beginning about caste issues and I have been part of several group blogs and my own blog has entered its 11th year. There were very few anti caste Dalit, BC and Adivasi bloggers. I was trying to approach this community to find out how many of these actually there. There is a blog aggregator called Blog Bharati. We used to read every post on blogs, choose 7 or 8 blogs and feature them in the aggregator side. It was manually aggregated. I started actually, because my interest is basically anti caste politics, I would search for hours and hours to see who the dalit bloggers are. I was searching on Google blogs, there is a tool called Google blog, and sometimes the Google came up with questions like “Are you really a person? I was one of the very few anti caste bloggers who was speaking for reservations along with a few dalit students from JNU. There were also two groups called Ambedkar.org and Samatha. Ambedkar.org was a resource library for us. There were only a few sites like this, and many sites came up and went away because of fear and the comments and attacks they faced (this problem exists even now). Whoever wrote about dalit issues and caste issues online as a blogger or in social media like Facebook or Twitter—Twitter is still a jungle for most dalit, bahujans—would disappear after being blogged twice or thrice; this happened

dozens of times. Around this time I also came across another blog which was run by Dr. Anuram Das, who was originally based in Bangalore India but is now in USA. We were commenting on each other blogs, discussing policy, caste, dalit exploitation, adivasis and OBCs—how these people have a common structural oppression against which they must fight.

We knew that regional media is more progressive when compared with the national media. Which means the regional *language* media could be more progressive, even though they are very obscure, than *English* media. This was visible during the Mandal tour; we (Anuram Das, other bloggers and I) used to discuss this issue. There was a group blog called ‘Insight’ which was run by Anup and others. Anup had earlier run the *Insight* youth voices magazine with four students from JNU. He had brought eight issues over a period of three years. *Insight* was read across the country. So, there is an environment for blogging in and outside the campus. This was surely because of dalit movement and the extension of Bahujan movement and it was mostly led by students. ‘Insight’ closed down for various reasons. At this point of time we were discussing a more comprehensive portal than just a blog; a website where we could resource dalit history and anti caste history, Ambedkar’s writings and philosophy; where we could also get dalit poetry, women’s poetry, anti caste poetry across religions, Muslims, Buddhist, Christian in whatever form. So, you will find the largest collection of anti caste poetry shared in the blog which is affiliated to RTI. We also wanted to be very current and aggregate news related to dalits and adivasis from mainstream media. We wanted a section on reservation policy, policies affecting dalits, adivasis and OBCs. We planned multiple sections on different issues, a complete portal just like a news site, but on a very micro scale. This, instead of just a blog, is our idea. We do also have a

contemporary commentary section and also one section on activism which features activists like Panthukala Srinivas, DIET and others. What are the current events these activists are involved in, what are the books being released, reviews – we took up several leads to approach people from all regions and to reach all sections of readers from India as well as other countries. So, if we are able to reach all these people, the community as such already existed. It sprang together once we started the site. Thus just as the *Insight* blog was triggered, the RTI idea too emerged with the combination of likeminded people—two dalits and one OBC. It is also probable that various common features we shared with respect to social class brought us together—urban upbringing for example. This is why we chose English (and also because the regional vernaculars are caste specific)—to reach out to all people. This is how it happened. So, broadly speaking the idea evolved in 2008.

PS and PRD: What is the effect of caste in running a social, new media site? How do you run it? How many people are involved in preparing the stories or interviews or features or writing? Did you get any feedback from readers?

We get feedback all the time from almost every university. When we approach people they say ‘we read RTI’ and it is mostly upper caste people who keep praising us a lot—but we don’t fall into that trap, because we know for them we are data to be studied; for them our writing is something to be stolen and not cited or given courtesy. We are quite aware that upper caste academy and media, especially, have been trying to poach on us; every few weeks people point out that they have stolen inappropriately this writing or that writing from our site. So, we are quite aware of that, but my vision and objective from the beginning is to have impact on the readers. The focus was primarily on building a platform where democratic debates are given to the dalit-bahujan educated public. We are very aware that a cream of the community in many senses has emerged, and there are all highly educated, very articulate people, they have fought and come up to a high level. They will not take any kind of bullshit and they are intensely involved in the movement. Their impact is such that you know we have been provided a ground where people can congratulate and speak to each other. However even this is limited because we need to recognize the time line in the caste system itself. If untouchability was born in the fourth century and then traveled south by 1080, 4th AD to 1080, it took a long time and by 1080 it was experienced strongly.



It kept strengthening itself through every form of sociopolitical approval even in the colonial period. We are aware that these time lines are long. What we felt was that this critique should sustain itself, remain open to all kinds of challenges and adapt itself to all kinds of circumstances. What its impact is, you as a social researcher, should measure it and tell us. It has been a brilliant experience; I am now 51 years old, and I hope I can continue to learn during the rest of my life as I have in these 7 years. Our impact cannot be measured in terms of awards received or in terms of capital generated or revenue generated. Our award is in terms of meeting every new epistemic challenge by the ruling class and every form of violence committed at the village, town level or in the universities. This platform could challenge this violence everywhere; however, this is

happening on a very minute scale. This should happen on a bigger scale, but the existence of this platform for seven years is an achievement and it is attracting the belief of the community. Two to three hundred writers—from Delhi to Kerala, from Assam to Gujarat, from Punjab to Odessa, from here to UK to Germany to USA to Australia—spend time on this site and some of them write repeatedly. The many contributors and readers have a kind of ownership over RTI. Their trust in us, their faith in us, their confidence in us and their sense of finding meaning in this site is crucially important. This is the best indicator of the impact. It keeps us committed and sustains our interest and energy. If I was 20 years younger I could be doing much more, but even at this age it gives me energy to work more. Despite having extra jobs our other editors like Anup

and Bhanu, put in that extra effort—this is our capital. It is a medium or platform sustained fully by a community. However, even though the community is always a promise it will never be fully homogeneous, it will never be fully undifferentiated, there will be differences of opinion that will strongly oppose each other but across globe these people feel a sense of ownership and have a stake in it. It continues to be appreciated and that can't be measured.

PS and PRD: Is there anything important you would like to say to the readers?

K: Yes, we have built this space together. It should be sustained and it depends on totally on the community which has been involved. It is a communal home. Everyone has contributed to it brick by brick. I am a strict follower of Manyawar Kanshiram sir, I envisage a bahujan society. He said in a meeting "I believe in two nation theory those who are oppressors and those who are oppressed". So the educated community has a larger responsibility among the dalits and bahujans too—they have to seek and understand each other. This space has to be sustained and expand into other dimensions. We are expanding into publishing so that we don't remain mere clients to upper class publishers and media. So this model can be replicated. We could develop knowledge and research completely independent of mediation of brahmanic institutions like academia or media just like BAMCEF and Ambedkar's discourse are constructed. There is a need for bahujan civil society to grow. The brahmanic civil society is old, dying and decaying but it won't give up without a fight because of the 2000 years old history of caste. We underestimate our strength. We have to build bahujan civil society and the dalit is the natural leader. The dalit movement should strengthen itself through production of much knowledge that is very necessary, and we should do it independently. We don't need upper caste mediation or white people's mediation. We will probably build concrete institutions too, but that is for future, but the message is that we can build independently. We don't need to seek brahmin or upper caste support in any sense because we are the producers of this. Kanshiram sir also said, when he was once asked where will you get money for all these elections? He said 'it is simple the bahujan samaj produces all the wealth in this country, why will we be short of money?' He was never scared of lack of resources but we should beware of lack of confidence in ourselves.

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Archive Musings

■ Kush Badhwar

In what state does media come to us and once it enters our lives, how does it affect our existence? What life does media live after it has been produced, performed or published? What is the role of the past in our lives today and how does it make itself apparent? Throughout its existence, the Anveshi Broadsheet has often republished, re-enacting the past to consider its effect on the present. In this issue we see the reappearance of Kanshi Ram's introductory editorial from *The Oppressed Indian* (1979), excerpts from Edward Said's *Covering Islam* (1981) and B. N. Uniyal's "In search of a Dalit Journalist" (1996). This section of the broadsheet turns attention to such attempts to recover, remember or record a past, through various glimpses at the

ongoing life of media: Shubhangi Singh looks at the use of media in the process of creating a state identity in Telugu University's School of Folk and Tribal Lore; I speak with two Hyderabad-based film-makers about how existing media has figured in the conception or making of their films; and finally, or rather firstly, in the following paragraphs, we meander in and around the archive, a hazy site that features in our thinking as a place where the traces of our past, including the great amounts of media materials we are presently generating, may end up.

For some the past is a non-issue, something that does not figure in their day to day dealings. For others it is painful and needs to

be forgotten. For some the past has been ignored and others need to be made to realise it. For others still, it is glorious. For some it needs to be rescued from being destroyed at a catastrophic pace. For others it is something to go back to when there's nothing better to do. Some would like to learn from it in order not to repeat mistakes. It takes power to collect it. In turn, collecting it generates power.

Eye-level with the cityscape the metro swishes above the uncrossable road. The line it travels on is one kind of a pipe among many that constitute the city. These pipes lead seemingly everywhere, except to places they haven't reached yet — the borders of urban

imagination. Apart from metros, these pipes transfer various things including water, electricity, online presence and the songs streaming to passenger headphones. The simultaneous flow of all the pipes is luxury, but as long as any one pipe is flowing there's enough to keep one distracted. Despite having been promised uninterrupted flows at high speeds, the stream to one passenger's headphones sputters to an end. Swiping right, the passenger enters their 'archived chats', a section that doesn't need the real-time flow of a pipe to be read. Loading earlier and earlier, the passenger recounts a conversation backwards, getting lost down memory lane in a swirl of text, sound, images and emojis. Where are we? Out of the window, the sun pokes out his tongue and winks. Certain things jump out and other things recede out of view. One of these is a state archive, a dated piece of architecture coated in peach. What's in there?

To define the archive, let us turn to a book bound hard in regal maroon. I can't tell you its author or title or publisher, because those pages are missing. In fact, it's a book salvaged from a kabadiwala just a few days ago. The introduction works through a series of situations in which a document could end up in an archive, finally arriving at this definition: "A document which may be said to belong to the class of Archives is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors." At the bottom of the page that carries this definition is a purple stamp: "STATE ARCHIVES LIBRARY ANDHRA PRADESH HYD," indicating where this book once belonged. But why is it no longer in "the class of Archives"? Does the definition still hold (now that the book carrying the definition is no longer preserved by the archive, but has gone to a kabadiwala instead)?

Perhaps entering the state archive will shed light on this.

Unlike a museum, there's no ticket-window. Should we be in here? To access the contents, our best foot forward would be a letter with an institutional letterhead that carries an



indication of our intention and someone's signature at the bottom. It is unlikely the authenticity of this letter will be verified as long as we play by the rules of the archive. We gain entry. There exist both written and unspoken ways to behave in this place. An identification number/letter combination will be issued and we will now have general access to the archive. Our navigation around the building's accessible and inaccessible parts will now depend on the relationships forged with the archive's staff or their superiors. For all intents and purposes, the staff will now perceive and identify us as a 'research scholar'. This is because, apart from staff, it is normally 'bona fide' research scholars that inhabit the site. We only sense the unending array of documents and files stored within.

How much will our sudden rise in rank allow us to retain our publicness?

An ordinary member of the public possessing no other specific designation rarely enters the archive. There could be a variety of reasons for this: members of the public may be too busy outside the archive compound and archival contents may be too dry to enter their lives; the archive may lack resources to engage with members of the public; and there may exist an inherent fear towards the safety of archive contents in the hands of the multitude. The archive has also identified the

'enemies of records' it keeps within its own walls. The enemies of records differ from the bickering content between records. These enemies pose a threat to all records no matter what side they take. They range from bad handling to rats to things we cannot see that exist on a molecular level. A few methods have been devised to protect archival contents from these threats, all of which require varying amounts of infrastructure to implement and maintain. According to the methods our archive uses, one can get a sense of how well resourced our archive is and if we compare its methods to those used by other archives both around the country and the world, this sense can translate to an order of archives in terms of privilege and importance. While this order may not strictly reflect on the contents of our archive, if the content is deemed more important than the local archive's ability to look after it, another archive, higher up the order, may extend its excess resources to our archive.

The archive contains history, but what is the history of the container? It may have emerged from a split in another archive. More such containers may emerge from it in the future as a result of the same, or at least similar, processes. At the sign of a split, engaged members of the public will raise concern. What material will end up in what 'state'? A split might suddenly acknowledge certain records that have circulated or lay dormant amongst the public for sixty years or more. In this period of time, similar records might be lost, forgotten, destroyed or damaged beyond repair. The pieces that remain do so in the possession of individuals who may be authors, publishers or those who are interested in the work. What happens if they are found? Owners of these records will feel proud of their foresight, that what they said so long ago or possessions they kept for so long are now worthy to enter the archive. By now, these people might be in power. Their former expression of personal or public sentiment and remnants of ritual will now perform new roles as records on the shelves of the archive. But let us not linger on this long-brewing moment of acknowledgement. Let us now exit the gates of the archive and view the matter from the outside.

What will we do now that we are out?

Kush Badhwar is India Foundation for the Arts' Archival Fellow across 2014-2015.

Conserving identity- Who speaks for whom?

■ Shubhangi Singh

The Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University established its School of Folk and Tribal Lore in 1995. The school was founded with the intention of systematically classifying indigenous folk art and culture existing within the Telugu diaspora. There were two major driving forces for this intention – firstly, the then Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and his cultural collaborators felt the need to collect, organise and revive artistic and cultural forms emblematic of Telugu people; secondly, there existed a statist impulse to archive forms that pre-existed the burgeoning migration, urbanisation and apparent drain of rural culture.

Amongst four new departments of the university, the School of Folk and Tribal Lore established itself in Warangal due to its proximity to indigenous and scheduled caste populations around the district. The focus of this department has been research and multifaceted documentation of folklore in the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh region, preserving this research and documentation by way of an archive and a museum as well as publishing material on the basis of their holdings. The school also initiates and participates in outreach activities such as the State and Regional Folk Festival it organised in Warangal in 1997 that witnessed the participation of around four hundred folk artists and performers.

According to Professor Bhattu Ramesh, the current dean of the School of Folk and Tribal Lore, “Before the folk festival of 1997 and the department’s involvement in the tribal community, there was a stigma attached to the work of these folk artists and performers of the community. There was little dignity to their craft, driving them to very bottom of the social ladder. The folk artists within many indigenous communities like the Chindu, Kunapulli and Padmashalis were often referred to as ‘beggars’ amongst their parent and dependent communities.” “Through the school’s study of their practices”, Ramesh adds “there is a new respect associated with folk art and the manner in which the folk artists were addressed had undergone a significant change. Statements like “where are those beggars” used commonly by people looking for the performers have notably altered to “where are those (name specific) Chindu performers” or “where can we find the Jangam-storytellers”.

While the words of the archivist seem to carry the academic weight of university truths, it would be useful to probe the extent to which these perspectives behind them express a specific point of view. Gogu Shyamala, a Telugu language writer and women’s activist who belongs to the Madiga community, diverges from Professor Ramesh’s notions of institution driven dignity for the folk artists. She believes that is incorrect to assume that these folk artists

did not take pride in their art before the involvement of the department. Shyamala states that while the instances of some folk artists being referred to as “beggars” is not unheard of, it is largely, a misunderstanding stemming from lack of cultural context and is usually cited by people outside such communities. The occupation of the folk artists is well acknowledged within their own and connected communities. “It is a common practice within most folk artists of the tribal or sub-caste community, like the performers from Chindu community for example, to have the right to demand food or a night’s shelter from their master community in exchange for their performance”, Shyamala explains. “At times, it does not need to even be in exchange of a performance. Through their art, the folk artists are believed to be keepers of history that contains stories of the caste origins (Jambavapuram or the genesis) that links together all the related communities and castes that fall within the realm of the story-teller’s community. This role puts the artists at an important position within the cultural scheme of the communities making them legitimate beneficiaries of the demands for food made by the artists. This exchange is often misunderstood as alms, hence, earning these folk artists the reputation of being beggars. The occupation of the folk artists is well acknowledged within their own and that of their connected communities” Shyamala clarifies.

Archives serve as an important source of original material that record and narrate our collective historical voice. Given this role, it is important to understand what influences an archive’s collection and how the items, both present and absent, impact our consciousness of an event or time period. Archives do not always comprise the most accurate, complete picture of any particular time or event. Items are carefully selected by archivists who are bound by their institution’s collection/development policies, the mission of their organisation and the availability of materials at the time of recording. As evident from the divergent viewpoints expressed between Bhattu Ramesh and Gogu Shyamala, they are also deeply driven by their own cultural



position and understanding of the field. The dominant narrative stored in the archives is thus inescapably influenced by institutions or individuals collating the information. How then, can these material found in the archives be treated as the truth?

The answer is that it cannot. Those studying the material can only consider it a guide, a particular representation of history that could instigate curiosity to dig deeper in a realm of interest. On the one hand, the act of research holds the potential to further amalgamate narratives missing from archives or popular discourse. On the other, purposeful examination of the archiving policy and the politics of the community whose cultural artefacts are being collected would provide the researcher an insight into the politics at play between the intention of the archive and the culture being archived.

Archivists, whether during the process of collection or conservation, always face an ethical dilemma. How does one represent people, their art and their culture through the act of conservation? This question is at the forefront of debates around conservation.

Art historian Jital Gandhi has raised questions pertaining to the authenticity of the archivist by critiquing the gaze of the data collector. He states that during the process of collecting data for archiving, a common error is introduced by the fact that "as outsiders to a culture, in addition to documenting what they observe, they subconsciously inlay records with their own personal or altruistic experience. This inlay can seep through the porous material that is collected for the purpose of preservation". Activists and scholars continuously discuss factors that influence the authenticity of collected data. The questions such discussion raise include: Who is the informant? Who is the data collector? What issues of access exist in the process? What is archived? Why and for whom? What does it mean to 'look into' the

lives of others as opposed to 'looking within' ones own community?

Arjun Appadurai (1988) examines the term 'native' with a focus on authenticity, "proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue". Those in the position to observe 'natives,' however, exempt themselves from being authentic and instead represent themselves in terms of complexity, diversity and ambiguity. Anthropologist Kirin Narayan further elaborates on Appadurai's critique of the term native, extending the term to 'native anthropologist'. A 'native' is assumed to be an insider who

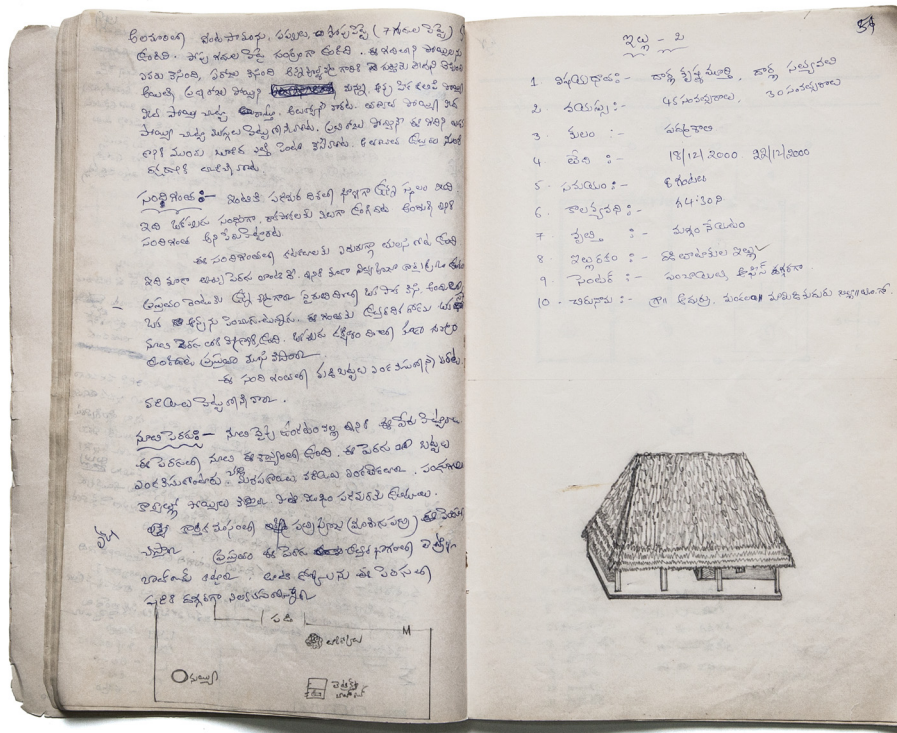
itself in some complexity. Being Telugu speakers from the same region as those who they document and study, researchers in the school can claim a degree of authenticity that did not exist in previous generations of ethnographers, namely those who operated by way of colonial rule. The cultural familiarity between the subjects and the researchers helps the latter navigate within the community where the researchers are expected to represent the identity of the community and its practices in a manner closest to authentic. Despite belonging to a larger shared cultural background, the field researchers still, often, fall on the outside due to the difference in total community

acceptance or access which would be responsible in influencing their perceptions and statistics leading to misconstrued data. There is, in addition, the dimension of power in the relationship between the researcher's community and the subject's, in this case due to the caste hierarchy. The interpreted documentation, thus often, creates a gap between the truth and the translation of that truth into data that ultimately creates the archives.

Questioning archival intent, institutional or otherwise, is to problematize the act of

conservation and, thus, to understand it better. Since so many above-discussed factors determine what ultimately sits on the shelves, in the computers for the future to access as 'truth', it is imperative to doubt its authenticity and question the influences on the source material. In the case of institutional conservation practices involving indigenous culture, as in the case of Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University's School of Folk and Tribal Lore, questioning who is speaking for whom, why and in what manner could serve as the next steps forward in the complex politics of archival practice.

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will forward an authentic point of view to the anthropological community. It is clear that the profession remains intrigued by the notion of the 'native anthropologist' which somehow bears an assumed stamp of authenticity. Narayan argues that this is particularly obvious in the ways in which identities are doled out to non-Western, minority, or mixed race anthropologists so that exotic difference overshadows commonalities or complexities. This politics of the 'insider/outsider' plays an important part in the process of data collection, allowing a more effective questioning of authenticity and authority of archives.

In the case of the School of Folk and Tribal Lore, the insider/outsider politics shows



Existing media in two documentary films

■ Kush Badhwar

Shravan Katikaneni is a film editor who self-produced and directed the documentary *Chronicles of a Temple Painter* (2014) about the Hindu temple painter Papalal who adopted a Muslim girl after the 2007 bomb blasts at Gokul Chat Centre, Hyderabad. *Mana Kaloji* (*Our Kaloji*) (2013) is a biographical documentary produced by the Kaloji Foundation for Kaloji's centenary celebrations and is directed by S. Amarnath. In conversation with each of the filmmakers, we look at how existing media figures in conception of a film or the imagination of its maker and how such media is negotiated in access and use in the making of a film.

How did you first come across Papalal's story?

Shravan Katikaneni: I first read about Papalal, a guy who is fighting many criminal cases against him, in the Telugu newspaper Eenadu. Reading it intrigued me, disturbed me and made me angry. After I read his story, I then tried browsing about him online. I found some blogs and I also saw two or three videos where his wife was waiting for him outside jail as he was being released. This is where I actually saw him for the first time. I saw Papalal get emotional about his situation and I also got emotional. It was a very cinematic experience, because I hadn't met him, to see all this about him I began to feel heavily for him very suddenly.

Meeting Papalal and his family spanned two ends of the spectrum. One was that they were cordial with me, because I told him I was a documentary maker and I said I was interested in drawing help for him. He narrated his stories to me, the incidents he described were quite painful. As he related these stories to me, he would add "this was shot by this channel". That's when I realised the story I read was a reprint, raising his story again in an effort to help him. His story had actually been heavily covered in the Hyderabad media subsequent to the Gokul Chat Centre bomb blasts in 2007, but I had missed the story the first time around.

The other side of the spectrum was that he was scared about my involvement because media coverage had already not helped him. Initially, he assumed that the more coverage he received, the more easily his cases would be solved. Instead, he found himself on the news blaming community leaders or government departments who were not doing anything for him, which, in fact, backfired. Of course, even if media outlets knew it would not help him, they would still print it or telecast it. As a result, he received calls from community elders, both Muslims and Hindus, had received threats and also had been attacked. While there was some amount of skepticism towards me initially, his

situation was at the same place it was two years prior, which gave us an opportunity to sit and talk.

When I was listening to him, I was imagining the incidents one after the other, what must have gone through his mind and, now that I had seen his family, how they must have felt. I thought legal cases might not shed much light on his personal issues, his situation would just be inside the courts and people would not know he exists in order to give him financial support. The way he's been fighting all the odds, it's been close to seven years and it's still going on. If a film is made, I thought, his story can be heard in all corners, which would sensitise people. I thought I'd make an investigative film, wherein I'd get all these interviews and juxtapose them with his story. That was the initial idea, but it didn't take off the way I wanted.

I took a note of all the news channels Papalal mentioned, then I went and met them for these videos. It was a very laborious process and I realised access is not so easy. Some of them didn't want to share; some of them were tired of telecasting it again and again and they didn't want anymore hard disk space to be used by his story so they deleted it; some of them claimed to have explosive footage, but wanted to reap their own benefits from it; some of them wanted to know more about me and since I'm not a journalist, it was tough to convince them. In the end I could only get hold of a few videos. The images that were in my mind began to fade out and what was left was only him, his family and his paintings. The investigative film faded out and a different film started to emerge. I decided I'll focus more on their personal story about their family ties. That's where the crux lies.

Through his bonding with his adopted daughter, he's deriving so much energy and strength that he's fighting the people around him, whoever they might be, Hindus, Muslims and the whole neighbourhood. That's when it turned out to be what it is now. It's become a more intimate film.

How have you used the material you had access to?

Shravan Katikaneni: When I went to his place and saw the TV, it was put in a very unusual place. His TV is not at eye-level or slightly above, it's way above, like how we watch in the movies. He was telling me one of his experiences when he saw his own interview while lying on the bed. The way he was articulating it was that he saw himself becoming a hero. For two reasons - one was that the media was projecting him that way, the second was this way of installing his television and the way he, his family and his neighbours were watching him for the first time in this interview. Because television played such an intense role in his life, the news in particular, I thought it has to be used. So I decided to use the television as an element which recurs and which tells his story or adds to his narration. Whenever he speaks about his story, I use this element to help me tell the story. It comes on and off and the story keeps moving forward.

One of the stories, the Hyderabad Deccan, is a channel I created for the film. I had to dramatise it, because I wasn't getting permission to use the original footage. So I made these actors say what the actual news report was saying. By recreating, I was getting into the news mode of telling a story. Apart from being a film maker, I was acting like a journalist, a news reporter inside the film. I used the home videos I shot of him which played in the background. The people are not actually the people from human rights commission, that's why I didn't give their names. But if you see the real video which is available online, they identify themselves. I used them to convey information, which I thought really worked, because you wouldn't bother whether it's a real person or not. Since it's on the news, you believe them.

How did your film on the poet Kaloji come to be?

S. Amarnath: The filmmaker B. Narsing Rao approached me on behalf of the Kaloji Foundation, asking whether I would like to choose from some footage available to give

to a television channel so that they will have something to air on the occasion of his birthday, the centenary celebrations of Kaloji's birth. Since the foundation had been generating and archiving Kaloji material for about ten years, I think, and very little audio-visual content exists in the public domain where one can see Kaloji speak or talk or walk, the idea was to provide some footage so they could air it between programs, small thirty second or one minute bites. It was only after I saw the footage, in which Kaloji seemed so vulnerable, that I convinced Mr. Rao that I could make an interesting film that goes beyond celebrating a personality. I myself was surprised that the film came to an hour's length.

What material were you given to work with?

S. Amarnath: I was given four pieces of material. One was an interview that Dr. Gujja Bhiksham, the writer, researcher and water conservationist, undertook with Kaloji in about 1993. In this interview, Bhiksham almost corners Kaloji into answering certain questions in such a way that Kaloji comes out as a human figure rather than a god, which such personalities can often be portrayed as. In a book published by the foundation, Bhiksham talks about why he did the interview the way he did - he's talking to this independent, free soul and trying to demystify his personality rather than celebrate the artist, clapping and forgetting about him. I completely identified with his process and formed a strong relationship with the interview in making this film.

The second was an interview that the Kaloji Foundation asked the journalist Punna Krishnamurthy to undertake with Kaloji's wife Rukmini Bai and his grandson Santosh in about 2003, after Kaloji had passed away, to get a sense of what his life was like. In the interview Krishnamurthy is driven by a brief to extract information about the life of Kaloji from Rukmini Bai which I was able to use to create a dialogue between the two interviews.

The third material I was given was from a film called Prajakavi Kaloji by Premraj, which is an informative or educative film that celebrates Kaloji's life. It was most likely a Doordarshan film from the 1990's, if I'm not mistaken. The fourth is a VHS tape shot at the book release function of Naa Godava, one of Kaloji's most celebrated books, in which the former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao makes a speech in which he seems like a student or disciple in front of Kaloji. Since I primarily had interviews, I weave in these

last two to get away from just talking heads, but also use them to build Kaloji up as a big personality or celebrated intellectual which deconstructs itself as the film proceeds.

How have you used the material you had access to?

S. Amarnath: The material I was given wasn't flowery or beautifully shot. If I had done it, I wouldn't have done it in that way, but the very fact that it's not my material and I'm still using it I think there's a lot of freedom in that, at least I enjoyed it. The whole process of capturing the way you want, conceiving, scripting, shooting and bringing it to the editing table, there's a burden you carry from the process of capturing. Here, there was a lack of choice, but there's a lot of freedom, an un-burdening of choice.

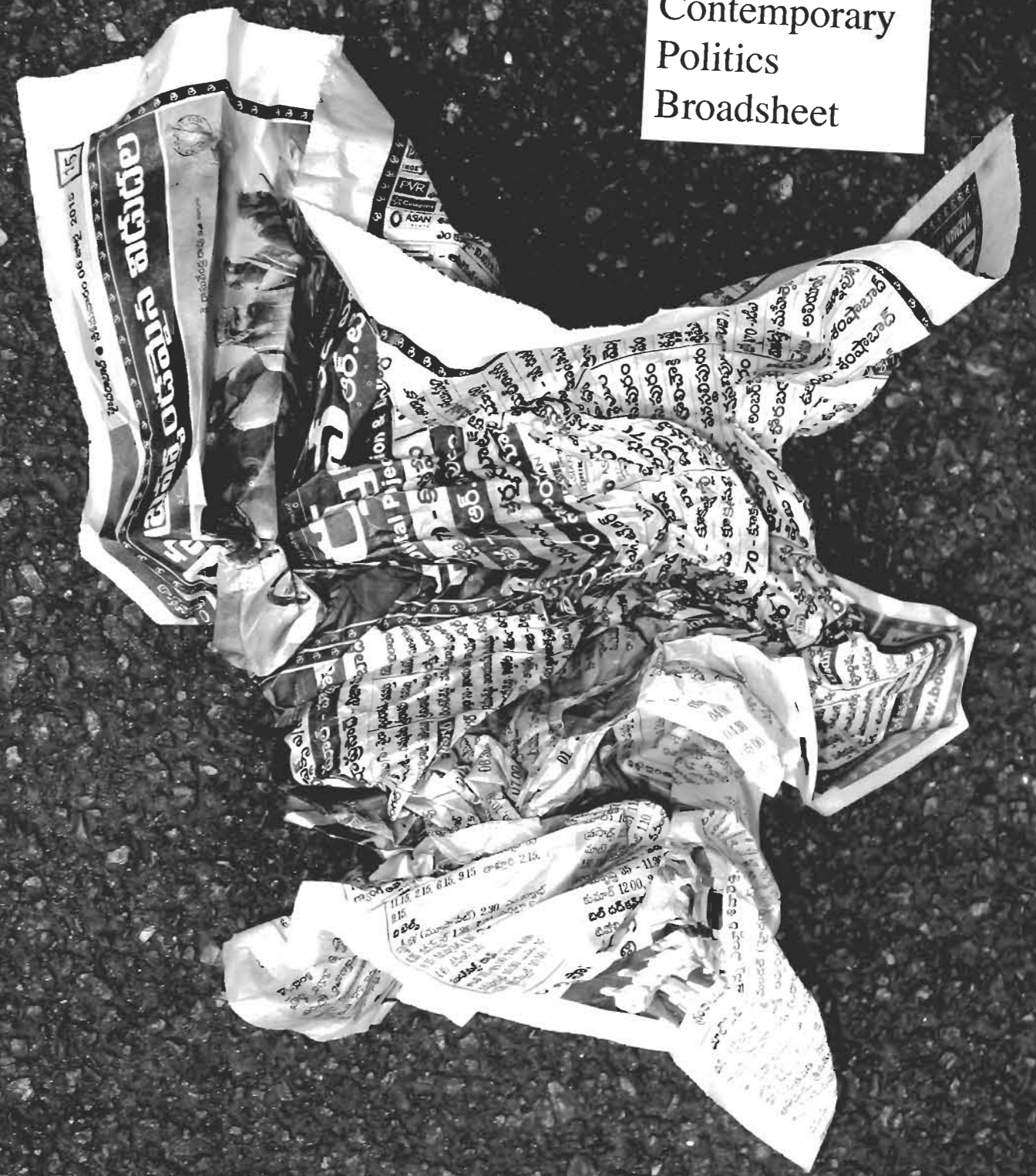
I was very much aware of the formats each was shot on, because a lot of things had changed between each material. Rukmini Bai's interview was a little more polished, a little more clear because it was on Mini-DV, Bhiksham's is on Hi-8 and Premraj's film and the Narasimha Rao speech were both on VHS. So, there were three kinds of material that I was seeing lapses of time between. For me, I was trying to create conversations between people who existed in different times. One was Kaloji - twenty years back, Rukmini - almost ten years back, and the third is us - sitting now and also being involved in the conversation.

There's a perception, when you look back at older formats, that they're bad, out-dated in terms of quality and unusable as material, which is also why we are moving towards digitisation and all kinds of cleaning. I took the opposite approach in acknowledging the aesthetic possibilities in these apparently inferior formats. I try to contextualise Bhiksham's interview as one that's personal, intimate and non-professional, not shot by a television or cinema crew. It was just by a person. It could be by anybody, like you or me, who takes out their mobile phone and records a conversation with someone. I even establish Bhiksham, and later, while he is adjusting the camera, I retain a blue frame that appears. There was a huge fight around this blue frame with my editor and the producers. They thought I should get rid of it because it looks like a mistake. But I was clear what I was doing, I was keeping it in to give an idea of the scale of Bhiksham's interview and also to pay a small tribute to an older format.



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