

# CULTURAL STUDIES JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD

VOLUME 8  
NUMBER 1  
JANUARY 1994

11.8

- ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS
- COMMUNITIES
- POLITICS OF WATER
- THIRD NATURE

11.8  
5-20

# CONTENTS

Special Section on Cultural Studies and the Environment  
Guest edited by Jennifer Daryl Slack and Jody Berland

## INTRODUCTION

- Jody Berland and  
Jennifer Daryl Slack      On environmental matters      1

## ARTICLES

- Laurie Anne Whitt and  
Jennifer Daryl Slack      Communities, environments and  
cultural studies      5
- Barri Cohen      Technological colonialism and the  
politics of water      32
- Carol A. Stabile      'A garden inclosed is my sister':  
ecofeminism and eco-valences      56
- Michael X. Delli Carpini  
and Bruce A. Williams      'Fictional' and 'non-fictional' television  
celebrates Earth Day: or, politics is  
comedy plus pretense      74
- Jody Berland      On reading 'the weather'      99
- McKenzie Wark      Third Nature      115

## REVIEWS

- Anne Balsamo      Democratic technologies and the  
technology of democracy: a review  
of John Street's *Politics and  
Technology*      133
- Ross Gibson      Review of Alexander Wilson's *The  
Culture of Nature: North American  
Landscape from Disney to Exxon  
Valdez*      139

## ARTICLES

- Ian Hunter      History lessons for 'English'      142
- Anjali Monteiro and  
K.P. Jayasankar      The spectator-Indian: an exploratory  
study on the reception of news      162
- Notes on contributors      183
- Books Received      189

ANJALI MONTEIRO

AND K.P. JAYASANKAR

## THE SPECTATOR-INDIAN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE RECEPTION OF NEWS<sup>1</sup>

What actually will happen afterwards.      the viewers  
cannot say      people like us      whether he will really say  
something or not      from this you can understand what this  
is all about      (R.G.)

### Introduction

**D**oordarshan, India's state-owned television network was instituted in the sixties, in the context of media policies informed by modernization theory, specifically the communication approach to development. This model is based on the neo-Weberian transformation school of social change, which sees underdevelopment as a product of internal cultural barriers (Krippendorff, 1979). 'Development' involves the transformation of simple homogeneous folk societies through the agency of a benevolent, Western-educated élite, into modern capitalist growth-oriented nation-states. The cure for underdevelopment calls for a massive injection of modernization through the mass media, aimed at breaking down traditional values, disseminating technical skills, fostering national integration and accelerating the growth of formal education (Open University, 1977: 56). In a country characterized by bewildering linguistic and cultural diversity, where less than a quarter of the population are native speakers of Hindi, the national language, an ambitious agenda was set for the media, the attempt being to foster a pan-Indian identity based on secularism.<sup>2</sup>

The pair modernity/development set up a 'natural' antinomy: tradition/underdevelopment. With 'tradition' being identified as the chief enemy, media policies and programmes aspired to reinforce the legitimacy of a new set of discourses pertaining to the body, the family, the population, production techniques and the institutions of the state. In defining the Third World peasant as backward and lacking in all the attributes necessary for development, modernization theory posited a site for the intervention of a range of development experts, with television being seen as a potent vehicle for this intervention.

The research that has addressed itself to these issues has been broadly of



two kinds. The first approach is exemplified by the SITE studies,<sup>3</sup> which, having internalized the legitimacy of the developmental paradigm and its implementation, was geared towards designing more efficacious ways of achieving the objectives set by this paradigm. The second approach, which could loosely be termed the cultural-dependency model, draws on Marxist dependency theory to critique the notion of development at a global level, attempting to reduce microlevel phenomena to macrorelations of power and domination. Both the approaches are convinced of the need for development *per se*, but have opposing notions of the causes and solutions for underdevelopment. The desirability of 'progress' with rational, secular Western civilization as the *telos* is taken as self-evident, natural and historically inevitable.<sup>4</sup> The former theoretical stance views the truth of development as extraneous to power, development as neutral and emancipatory; the latter is bent on exposing the repressive forces attendant on these truths. It is against this background that this study is situated. The attempt is to draw on some of the key concepts of Michel Foucault in order to explore possible strategies for understanding television reception in the Indian context. This relatively nascent endeavour at invoking notions from Foucault's work, specifically his notion of power, is not unproblematic, given that the Indian socio-cultural and political context cannot be conflated with that of modern, Western societies. This study does not purport to use this category of power in all-encompassing, transhistorical fashion to examine all orders of power relations, for instance, within the extended family, the *jati*/caste hierarchy and so on. Rather, the authors deem it strategic to employ this category to interrogate the corpus of knowledge and practices pertaining to 'development' that have been transposed on to the Third World,<sup>5</sup> and which have informed the introduction and expansion of television in India. This regime of truth about modernization accords a central role on its agenda to the transformation, through the mass media, of irrational indigenous subjectivities, located in simple societies placed at the lower end of a Social Darwinian scale. Foucault's work, with its focus on the formation of subjectivity in and through relations of power/knowledge thus appears relevant to the present study.<sup>6</sup>

As opposed to a juridical, repressive notion of power, Foucault sees power as productive, for it is in and through relations of power that 'subjects' are constituted.

The individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with its identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces. (Foucault, 1980: 73-4)

Foucault conceives of power not as originating from a unified monolithic source, but as a 'complex strategical situation' (Foucault, 1984: 93) in any society, actualized from numerous sites, implicit in all relationships, economic, epistemological and sexual. It is generated at the level of the smaller orders of the hierarchy, e.g., the familial, the communal. The larger orders of power such as the state are the effect of the configurations of these

local orders. The relations of power are marked by resistance, for these relations stay in an eternally unstable equilibrium. The channels of resistance are also multiple, never extraneous to the forms of power exercised.

Foucault thus rejects all forms of theoretical totalizing and concerns himself with specific systems of discourse/practice by which, in modern Western societies, individuals are 'made subjects'. These systems of discourse are seen as marking out the 'conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced' (Young, 1981: 48).

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault, 1972: 216)

This conception of knowledge/power, which sees knowledge not merely as an instrument of power, but as a form of power, assumes relevance in the present-day information society.<sup>7</sup> Foucault identifies three 'modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects': the 'sciences', which constitute the subject as an object of inquiry; dividing practices, wherein divisions such as mad/sane, sick/healthy, criminal/law-abiding are used to objectivize the subject; and technologies of the self whereby individuals turn themselves into subjects (1986: 208).

Foucault sees the state as a new distribution and organization of an old power technique originating in the Church, namely, pastoral power (1986: 213). The state becomes a 'structure in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition, that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns' (214). The state's power is thus both 'individualizing and totalizing' and works towards the constitution of 'subjects'

Population control programmes in the third-world context illustrate these notions of power.<sup>8</sup> These strategies mark out a site of power/knowledge which legitimizes a regime of truth regarding population growth and its scientific study. In specific terms, this involves a marriage between neo-Malthusian theories and demographic surveys which, in turn, aspire to establish scientifically the phenomenon of third-world population growth as an issue of global concern and the main cause of underdevelopment. These epistemological enterprises set the norms for the reproductive behaviour of the third-world subject. The thrust of the attendant campaign has been to equate individual 'benefits' at one level with the collective good at the other. The forms of power/knowledge displayed by these campaigns bear witness to the pastoral modes of power. The dichotomy developed/developing, which forms the *raison d'être* of the population-control campaigns in particular and the strategies of the Third World State in general, involves a self-perception of inferiority and lack both at the collective and the individual level which legitimizes these strategies (Du Bois, 1991). At a global level, these strategies are of prime concern because of the alleged



depletion/degradation of the natural resources and environment. The policy pronouncements of the developed world in this regard continue to be unquestioningly premised on the threat posed by the fast-breeding third-world populace, notwithstanding the fact that the Northern hemisphere accounts for the bulk of the world's energy consumption, greenhouse emissions and waste.

Given this perspective, television in India forms a crucial site wherein the discourses of development have been produced, circulated and consumed within the local networks of power at the level of the family, graduating into large orders. This stance is what obviates the ascribing to television of the role of a neutral vehicle of development communication or of a conspiratorial enterprise foisted on an unsuspecting populace. It is with these concerns in mind that this paper takes up for analysis a single interview, with R.G., on his reception of news.

R.G. could be regarded as a young (thirty-one), upwardly mobile urban Indian male. He comes from a lower middle-class, scheduled caste<sup>9</sup> background, his father being a peon in an institute of social sciences in Bombay. R.G. himself started off as a peon in the same institution and has worked his way up the hierarchy, presently occupying the position of a senior technical assistant in the media department. Alongside, he has also upgraded his educational qualifications, acquiring a Bachelor's degree, a diploma in photography and a Master's degree in Economics. He is the eldest son and the most educated in his family. Married since 1987, he has a four-year-old son. His wife is a matriculate and a clerical worker in a school. Their household income would be approximately Rs 4,200 (approximately \$140) per month, which would place them in the middle-income group. R.G. has lived on the campus of the institute for most of his life, including the first three years of marriage, when he and his wife lived with his extended family. His parents live in a one-room apartment, along with his younger brother (recently married, with one child) and his married (but separated) sister, with two children. Some time after his brother's marriage, R.G. set up home separately, in a rented house in a satellite township 15 kilometres away. He and his family still maintain close ties with his extended family. R.G.'s mother tongue is Marathi. He can read and write Hindi fluently, and has also studied English, in which he is relatively less fluent.

In order to contextualize the discussion of the interview with R.G., certain structural, situational and discursive features (Jensen, 1991: 5-6) of television in India need to be outlined.

### Television in India

The growth of television in India could perhaps be broadly divided into two phases, the first phase consisting of the period up to 1980. It was during this period that the SITE was introduced in order to arrive at a relevant prototype for the use of television in development. SITE was geared to the rural audience and was disseminated through community television sets. The production of programmes was undertaken under the aegis of a state-run

development communication organization: the thrust was primarily on educational and information-based programmes in the areas of agriculture, health and family planning. The structure and content of SITE reflected the dominant national credo of the sixties and early seventies; self-reliance, 'socialism' and progress through technological inputs (green revolution).

Up to the early eighties, the television network in India had a negligible viewership. In 1983, while the reach was 210 million (28 per cent of the population), the viewership was 30 million (4 per cent of the population) (Singhal and Rogers, 1989: 66). The introduction of colour television, liberalization of television imports, and the installation of the satellite Insat 1-B marked a qualitative change in both state policy and the structure of television viewing. With this, one sees an abandoning of the old development paradigm in favour of a commercial variant: more marketing techniques invoked to sell development as well as commercial sponsorship of programmes. This trend can, perhaps, be related partly to the crisis within the development paradigm itself<sup>10</sup> (Singhal and Rogers, 1989: 20) both at the global and at a local level, where inadequacies in infrastructure and extension services, as well as audience resistance (Sinha, 1985: 122) resulted in a failure to make the projected impact. Another factor that led to this shift was the redefinition of the national agenda in the direction of the country emerging as a regional power in South Asia. The 'India of the twenty-first century' was conceived of as a technologically advanced and growth-oriented nation, overcoming its underdevelopment through scientific intervention and management.<sup>11</sup>

The new development approach involved changes at the level of production structures, modes of reception and programming. With the introduction of commercial sponsorship of TV serials in 1980 and of private software production in 1984, with the shift in emphasis from community television sets to a proliferation of individually owned sets, the stage was set for a new phase in programming and reception. The soap opera *Hum Log* (We People)<sup>12</sup> marks a turning point. Based on the Mexican pro-development soap operas, the success of *Hum Log* demonstrated, firstly, audience receptivity to the use of the family as a site for working out problems and presenting messages and models; secondly, *Hum Log* underlined the commonality of interests and strategies between 'development' and 'marketing', and the possibility of using marketing strategies for effective development communication.

The state strategy of 'going commercial' with television, has been regarded by many researchers as a dilution of its development goals (Chowla, 1985). However, it is precisely this strategy that has made possible the entry of the state into the familial space, in the process redefining the viewers' relationship to both the public and private spheres. The marketing approach used for development communication was also extended to the political arena where, for the first time in the 1984 general elections, the Indian National Congress and other parties relied heavily on media campaigns designed by advertising agencies. The televisual presentation of politics in terms of human interest drama can be seen as an extension of the



state's entry into the family and the use of marketing strategies. The first portrayal in this genre that captured the popular imagination was the funeral of Indira Gandhi, in 1985. For two days, families sat glued to their television sets, experiencing perhaps for the first time a sense of 'being there', of being witness to the making of history as members of the nation-as-family

With an estimated viewership of 378 million by the year 2000 (Srivastava, 1987), television has considerably changed the face of urban popular culture. The film industry in the country, which commanded considerable viewership, has had to resort to strategies to check video piracy and has begun to explore the commercial possibilities offered by television. This has also contributed to a transposition of the language of popular cinema into television soap operas.

Owning a television set, preferably a colour TV, is very high on the priority of an average urban Indian, despite its high cost.<sup>13</sup> A recent phenomenon that poses a major threat to Doordarshan is the emergence of transnational networks like CNN, STAR, BBC, etc. Private cable networks bring these programmes to many households at a very nominal cost. These networks have made considerable inroads into Doordarshan's viewership in a city like Bombay, but their impact is yet to be assessed and studied.<sup>14</sup>

The programming patterns of Doordarshan on a typical weekday are indicated in the Appendix. There is only one channel except in the four major cities which have a second channel catering to various regional language groups. The programmes with maximum viewership are the soap operas in Hindi, telecast between 8.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. The regional language serial between 7.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. would rank next in popularity. At the bottom of the list would be the information-based programmes in the regional language (5.45 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.)

Films, both regional and Hindi, telecast on weekend evenings, have perhaps the maximum viewership. These are programmes that people go out of their way to watch; it is like a ritual and people with no access to TV sets go to other people's homes to watch. The mythological TV serials *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, that used to be telecast on Sunday mornings, enjoyed the same status.

The pattern in many households is to switch on the TV at 7.30 a.m. or 8.00 a.m. and to keep it on until 10.00 p.m. or later.<sup>15</sup> Television news is watched as a part of this flow, often by only the male members of the household. The main categories of daily news programmes are: the regional news, national news in Hindi (repeated later in English) and parliament news (including a reportage and an edited version of the proceedings). The percentage in relation to total transmission time is 1.8% for the regional news, 4.2% for the national news in English/Hindi and 6.55% for parliament news and proceedings. *The World This Week* is a weekly news magazine in English with relatively high urban élite viewership. There are also some current-affairs programmes which cannot boast of much viewership.



## R.G.: the spectator

Drawing on the notions of the technologies of the self and dividing practices, referred to in the introduction, this section attempts to understand the strategies brought to bear by R.G. in constituting himself vis-à-vis the discourses of television, which forms a fecund resource in his life. The constitutive practices organize themselves over a range of overlapping sites from the familial to the political, the identities ranging from a father (adult) to a spectator (citizen).

The centrality of television as a cultural resource in R.G.'s life is borne out by the fact that his leisure time and energies are organized around television watching. His day starts with the morning transmission:

When I wake up, if it's after 7, then TV has started news or whatever I ask for the TV to be turned on. meaning programmes until 8, I watch whatever programmes are there without doing any work, that is, lying on the bed, I watch till 8. Then after 8, I start getting ready News is around that time, only after watching it, I do this

As soon as he gets back from work, he puts on the TV again ('after 7.30, after that TV remains on') till he goes to bed around 11.00 p.m. TV does not remain a background flow, but commands R.G.'s total attention: he sits down in front of the TV to the exclusion of all other activities:

But once I put on the TV 7.30 p.m., then I don't get out of my chair even if she asks me to get something whatever the programme be.

R.G. cites two reasons for the centrality of TV in his life. The first is the absence of social interaction in the neighbourhood, which is a new satellite township on the outskirts of Bombay The second is that TV helps him to recuperate from the strains of work and commuting, a pattern that he sees around him:

around here, there's nothing else, there's only TV. There are no friends around almost everyone I feel they all go a long distance to town for work and come back and do the same.

Owning a TV is very high on R.G.'s list of priorities. It was after shifting away from his extended family that he purchased his own TV In the urban Indian context, having one's own place is a milestone, marking a movement from the extended to the nuclear family, an option not available to most, given the housing situation. This transition is crucial in terms of R.G.'s passage to adult malehood, as the head of a household. At one level, ownership of a TV holds the promise of entry into the middle class. Apart from this, TV is also a significant totemic marker of the nuclear familial space.

In the extended family, R.G.'s position within the familial networks of power constituted him as a spectator-son, subject to a different set of norms of TV viewing. Living in a 10 × 15 ft room with six other adults and three children placed its own limits on his 'freedom' as a spectator. Without these

constraints in his own nuclear household, he could become the arbiter of laws, deciding the extent and nature of consumption of TV. He is the one who, either by choice or default, 'ask(s) for the TV to be put on' even before getting out of his bed in the morning. In the evening, he switches it on after he returns from work. R.G. almost appears to luxuriate in his new-found 'freedom' to watch TV as he pleases. He can indulge in practices *vis-à-vis* TV which would have been impossible within the context of the extended family. R.G.'s new-found 'freedom', signified totemically by TV, alters his relationship with it and extends both his repertoire of televiewing as well as his position within the hierarchical order of the family. There were programmes that he could not have possibly watched with ease as a spectator-son. As a spectator-father, he can not only watch these programmes, but also begin to wonder about the consumption of television by his son.

His televiewing strategies as the head of the household bring into being a new set of dividing practices. He defines himself as different from his wife who, for instance, does not watch television news except to admire the clothes of the female newsreaders:

Now women my wife to them news is not important but sometimes when the news starts, our neighbours, they call out . they have colour TV those girls they shout out to my wife . I couldn't understand the reason why My wife would go and return start working again but later I understood the (news) reader what saree she was wearing, that was of importance of them. They don't watch the news.

In spite of his coaxing, she fails to show interest and he attributes it to her lack of 'knowledge'. In contradistinction to his son, R.G.'s wife as a member of the opposite sex stays in a relationship of metonymy<sup>16</sup>. His son, who shows the potential of becoming a spectator-adult, has the projected capability of metaphorically substituting R.G. His wife's metonymic gender identity is also reinforced by the division of labour within the household. Though both of them go out to work, it is his wife who does all the domestic chores. By attributing her lack of interest to a lack of 'knowledge', R.G. perhaps overlooks the power relationships implicit in the division of labour; even if she were interested or knowledgeable, she could not have possibly watched TV. R.G. is aware that his wife is not happy with this division of labour, but can afford to take it lightly:

No, I always sit in the evenings and watch [smiles] because of that she complains 'you don't do any work just sit and watch'

The aetiology of these relationships of power remains elusive: R.G. would regard himself as a husband who 'occasionally' helps his wife ('Cuts vegetables') and as one who encourages his wife to watch TV. R.G. cannot be seen as a repository of power within his nuclear household; power does not originate from a unified monolithic source, but is a 'complex strategical situation' (Foucault: 1984: 93).



As opposed to R.G., who, like other men in his neighbourhood, commutes long distances and returns to recuperate in front of his TV, his wife seems to have closer personal ties in the neighbourhood. Rather than watch TV, she would prefer to spend her leisure time chatting with the neighbours.

The metonymic relationship assigned to women also renders them insignificant spectators in R.G.'s scheme of things; at best they could be watching 'useful' programmes related to cookery, flower arrangement and the like. R.G. feels, for instance, that there is no need to have news or news-based programmes during the daytime. The gender differences in viewing preferences and watching routines form part of a wider distinction between the spheres of the public and the domestic.<sup>17</sup> R.G.'s interest in news is a marker of his relationship to the public sphere, his status as a responsible citizen who has to keep himself abreast of social and political events, whereas he regards his wife as situated firmly within the domestic space; her viewing interests and concerns pertain to the trivial and, at best, the sensational:

Sometimes I tell her 'there's a good programme come to watch' but she doesn't always watch only if it's something she likes. Now what they show about the parliament sessions now even I understand a little about the issues and watch a bit now, my wife, she may not know about the parliament and all that [laughs] but the fighting that goes on there that interests her. So when that is on, she keeps on coming in between to see who is talking what fighting is going on.

It is apparent from this that R.G.'s wife does not accept his definitions of what is worthy of being watched. She has her own hierarchy of interests and resists his attempts to extend his order of priorities. In contrast, R.G. perceives his son as a young spectator, who displays the potential to grow into a spectator-adult:

If he sits down to watch, he watches everything [. . .] He is also interested in TV not like my wife.

R.G. is not very sure of the direction this interest will take, whether it is positive or negative. However, he sees TV as playing a crucial role in moulding his son into an active human subject:

Whatever the effect, they become smart active I feel that sometimes it may be bad or it may be good, I don't know, but they begin to understand, they become sort of active they are not 'soft' Whatever you show on the TV, even if it is not good for children, they understand it they understand the media[sic].

R.G.'s son's relationship to the larger world is mediated by advertising which opens up not only a world of consumer goods, but also of dominant cultural and signifying practices and norms of behaviour:

The advertisements that are there he knows all of them, because of TV One day he said something about life insurance policy I didn't understand it at first some big word he said then later I understood

'beautiful dreams' something like that. So even difficult words even if they don't understand the meanings, they can they know the words.

R.G. feels the need to arbitrate this process of media absorption, to screen out elements which the young spectator cannot handle. Referring to the advertisement spots on contraception, he relates the embarrassing situations that he has faced:

It's better that they talk about rather than show it, because the pictures, they show sometimes there are misunderstandings [laughs] condom packets children sometimes think that they are something else like chocolates. They don't know Sometimes my son even asks, 'I want chocolates like that'

The difference between the young spectator and the spectator-adult are particularly manifest in domains such as sexuality. It is an area where no dialogue between the generations exists, where even watching images with latent sexual connotations (e.g., music videos) together becomes an embarrassing proposition:

But there is one problem with this Western music such programmes when one is watching at my parents' place, their dresses and all that one wonders whether one should watch their dresses it's all different so one feels that it's not quite right to watch. Now at my own place I watch.

R.G.'s transition into the role of a householder, a responsible adult head of the family, has been marked by an increase in his interest in news. He sees this interest as part of growing up, and as his responsibility as a citizen:

Actually as far as possible, I never miss the news means . . . if I am at home I watch the news. I want to compare when we were small then TV when the news came, we used to take it as a break in between the film and we would go off. When the news got over . . . when 2-3 mins were left, we would come back and wait for the picture. Even then, we never paid any attention we would impatiently wait for the news to get over. But now after growing up beginning to understand things 'picture' [film] I may not see but news I watch it's like that.

The exercise of this responsibility is facilitated, R.G. asserts repeatedly, by TV more than any other medium. Television to R.G. reveals a facile, seamless, unmediated picture of the world, a world that is monolithic and without ambiguities.

Actually . . . I understand more sitting at home easily The second thing is there are visuals also. Actually in newspapers, there may be a stray 'photo' but here . . . the war and all . . . we would never see it from up front but on TV, they used to show it all . . . So you could understand these earthquakes all in details you understand . . . because of the visuals. I feel that in 10-15 mins you get



complete information. When I go back from work now, I come to work in the morning, go back in the evening and have to go back again next morning, so I don't know what is happening in my neighbourhood but, just relaxing I get to know what is happening.

Consistent with his belief that politics is full of 'goons', who are in a hurry to perpetuate subterfuges, he finds television as an instrument that could possibly demystify these frauds:

That they all make assurance that's all. Out of 10 leaders, one might do something work genuinely others just exaggerate stretch matters. And ever since they have started showing the parliament sessions on TV since then, I have confirmed my opinion. They say anything to each other one feels that they are doing it just to show people. Whatever I felt before, that they were a sham that I feel is true now just showmanship.

Life before television evoked little interest in politics; one had to wade through mazes of conflicting newspaper reports and viewpoints, not only in a specific newspaper, but also across an array of newspapers, which R.G. suspects to represent various political interests. In addition to the vested political interests, newspapers have to market themselves effectively and, hence, R.G. feels, are forced to include stories that are sensational rather than 'true':

On TV it is more or less closer to what it is TV is unlike newspapers, TV doesn't have to sell itself by giving any news at least I don't feel that. But newspapers sometimes it is like that for sales they do that [ . . . ] This happens many times just to sell. And but there is 'crossing' [opposing viewpoints] between newspapers differ-ent political parties I feel that in news even if it is there, it is finally the same news.

With its built-in and state-guaranteed credibility, having no compulsion to sell itself, TV news comes across as a consistent and relatively objective discourse. TV's univocality, rather than detracting from its credibility, enhances it, imbuing it with a ring of truth. R.G. feels that TV can transgress its mandate, but feels that there are mechanisms that could be invoked to control these excesses:

But people also are aware, no? They can go to the TV centre if a serial is little this they can go and they do take out a *Jatha* [protest rally] so there are some checks on them [on the TV authorities].

An additional feature of TV news which makes it easily digestible is that it excludes retroactive reading, occurring as a continuum in real time that leads the viewer through a whole gamut of news of varying types and degrees of importance, with edited visuals:

It is already laid out in the beginning, political issues or some big accident they will tell about that then, the less important things

then sports. Then finally about the temperature. All this is laid out and because of that suppose some important sports event is going on I watch to see that or if there's a war or some other issue, there's something or the other which is of importance to me among the current issues. Now when World Cup is going on, one has to watch to see that event, if there's no other issue or there's something else in 10–15 minutes you come to know easily

TV not only offers the spectator a ringside seat, but also has devices which can break the event into its constituent elements, giving the viewer a sense that he knows exactly what happened, enhancing his voyeuristic pleasure:

Things one can never otherwise see, can be seen cars, scooters in slow motion in slow motion, you can make out what's happened. Sometime back they had shown about a motorcycle after it was hit, the man and the motorcycle both went flying. He couldn't retain his seat then in slow motion first he hit the ground, then the motorcycle fell on him it was terrifying. But you can make out, exactly how he fell [. . .] You feel if he'd known that this was going to happen to him, if he'd fallen a little to one side but that no one can tell. He fell down and the motorcycle fell on him.

The syntax of the specific elements in the news discourse obfuscates their relative weightage. As when R.G. watches *The World This Week*, a human-interest story about a psychopathic killer assumes great importance, on a par with world events of the week. R.G. even wonders why this item was left out of the regular news programmes:<sup>18</sup>

Even there was a close-up also. His eyes were tremendously at that time I felt really this man must have done this And absolutely unbelievable it was. That in yesterday's means I felt it was an important news in 'News makers'

R.G.'s conscious participation in political processes is minimal; he feels that his life experience has not necessitated any direct involvement in politics. His conception of statecraft and political parties has undergone a change, a change that has been brought about by his spectator status. Television has not only kept him in touch with the changing political issues, but has also changed his notions about the structures and mechanisms that underlie the working of the state. For instance, he had no clue as to how the elected representatives participated in policy-making. His conception was that elected representatives worked towards problem-solving in their own constituencies, in accordance with the policies formulated by the ruling party, based in Delhi. The ruling party was seen as a repository and source of power and the elected representatives as the mediating agents who have at their disposal resources, granted by the centre, that could be utilized for redressing local grievances. The opposition were seen as parties that are defeated and had no role to play in the scheme of things:

Before I didn't know anything I used to feel that the decisions are made by the ruling party no concept of the opposition. Even I thought



opposition meant those who lost the election. Those in opposition who were elected I thought are only for that area. Now after seeing I know that the opposition is also there.

The realization, that there is conflict and dissent within parliament, has not convinced him of the democratic credentials of the government. Rather, he is filled with a sense of revulsion at the lack of decorum:

Once what happened a visitor had come from Afghanistan or some Islamic country and they had taken up the *Mandir-Masjid* [Temple-Mosque] issue and in front of him, they began loudly. Actually it was very the Vice President, Shankar Dayal Sharma was there at that time presiding and before the visitor this issue came up and he was also a Muslim and because of that he [the Vice President] got up and walked off the Vice President Shankar Dayal Sharma means, even in front of others, they have no and he had come specially to see how the parliament session goes on and in front of him they behaved like this.

Having acquired a more complex picture of how the parliament operates, R.G.'s norms continue to invoke the notion of a family. The government is seen as an extended family, and any dissent as essentially disruptive. A multiplicity of viewpoints are regarded as confusing to the spectator, obfuscating the truth. (This can be related to R.G.'s opinion of TV versus newspapers, where a similar notion of an absolute truth, free from ambiguity and partisanship, is seen to operate.) For instance, in the Bofors issue, the controversy regarding alleged kickbacks to influential political figures appears to R.G. as another futile exercise. He would expect a conclusive verdict on the matter made available to him by the government, so that he does not have to rack his brains to infer for himself and could continue to retain his status as a spectator-citizen:

But actually, once the truth is discovered, you can give it as much coverage as you like whoever is guilty, if you expose him and finish him off, then that's fine. As long as nothing is proved, there are two sides what this one says and what that one says what the reality is no one knows. Instead of that, once it is proved, they should give full coverage show what happened right from the beginning. This issue was there before and then there was nothing in between and now again, it has come up. So, we the viewers, feel that it's their party stand that they keep bringing it up again and again, for their own ends. Up to now the truth has not come out.

The fact that this final verdict on the matter is also open to interpretation and questioning and the possibility of it being 'biased' is something that R.G. does not seem to take into account. Whatever be the goings-on in politics, R.G. has faith in a core of power underlying the state, a power centre that is neutral and omnipotent, which rises above vested political interests to deliver the goods. It is this aspect that perhaps reinforces his spectator status: R.G. as a consumer, a consumer of goods and news. The elusiveness of

political news makes it less palatable than the reassuring certainty of hard facts which can be seen and shown:

Actually, accidents, criminals and all in such cases suppose somewhere lots of people have died – the figures may be more or less, but they have died, the event has taken place, it has actually happened, that much is the absolute truth. Political issues, I have no interest that is, there are accusations and counter-accusations, I don't find it that there's no truth in it.

In relation to his wife, and the 'common people' who watch Hindi films, R.G. constitutes himself as one who knows. Thus, within his family, he alone is able to appreciate the significance of Satyajit Ray and his contribution to 'art cinema' His superior understanding of the medium of television also allows him to see through the games of politicians who use TV for self-promotion. As mentioned earlier, R.G.'s critical stance is situated within the framework of a basic acceptance of the legitimacy of state power, and its manifestation in the televisual discourse.

The regime of truth, into which R.G. is inserted as a rational, informed male citizen-spectator, is premised upon a set of concerns related to the self and the world. Within the family, these concerns are his alone; underlying them is the unarticulated belief and desire to identify with a club of spectator-citizens, an 'us' versus a 'them' of urban and rural poor, who require to consume TV to rise above their condition.<sup>19</sup> The social awareness advertisements on the government programmes of family planning, literacy, women's status and health harp on this polarity:<sup>20</sup> poor/rural/illiterate/fast breeding/superstitious/traditional/unhealthy/oppressive to women versus middle-class/urban/literate/fertility-conscious/rational/modern/healthy/tolerant towards women. The bulk of television viewers can easily situate themselves within this scheme. This is the major dividing practice R.G. invokes to constitute himself as a spectator-citizen.<sup>21</sup>

The dividing practices that effect a construction of 'us' versus 'them' take place in and through relations of power. While, in the main, the identification of 'us' is congruent with the power sites offered by televisual discourse, there are moments when this division becomes fuzzy. The inconsistencies within R.G.'s discourse point to a possible smudging of the equations of power, not as power emanating from a source, incident on 'subject', but as a no man's land criss-crossed by resistance. These moments of resistance, where R.G. questions the televisual discourse, are not extraneous to the flow of power, but lies latent within it. Though R.G. is convinced of the objectivity, credibility and the basic mandate of the televisual discourse, he finds it lacking when more immediate issues are discussed. He feels that more discussion on the issue of unemployment, according to him the most pressing problem, is called for. He also stumbles on the possibility of the televisual discourse being 'biased', specifically when he discusses the coverage accorded to the Narmada project displaced:<sup>22</sup>

Narmada, yes they show less orally, they talk about it they show the government viewpoint more not people's opinion. They



show more of the government, because our TV media because of the World Bank and all but local problems they don't show Their interviews [local people] those who suffer they won't show these. I have seen this programme called *The Price of Progress* from that you get an idea how huge the dam is.

He perceives these lacunae more as technical lapses rather than strategies underlying which are interests at work: this belief is what perhaps precludes the possibility of this realization being employed to effect a critique of the institution of television. There are moments when R.G. talks about these strategic reasons: 'the World Bank and all that', but attributes this realization to a chance exposure. Even when he is critical of televisual discourse, R.G. does not connect the specific lacunae in order to project a consistent stance *vis-à-vis* Doordarshan and the state, because these larger relationships of power are refracted and rarefied through the immediate modes of power that lie adjacent to R.G. His resistance is restricted primarily to the most adjacent forms of power that impinge on his life, the ones 'closest' to him. The most immediate and pervasive forms of power are the familial and, hence, he tends to judge the state itself by the norms that constitute an extended family:

The first thing is the Speaker they themselves elect him they don't listen even to him however much he requests them they don't listen what's the meaning of electing him such a big parliament and what respect is there to the speaker ? This is what bugs me the most in the court they bang that thing 'Silence, silence' here nobody bothers.

The propriety and decorum that apply to politics and statecraft are similar to the norms of behaviour within a family His explanation of the overall malaise affecting politics and a possible solution are also in individual moralistic terms.

Actually if those elected are educated it's good otherwise these goons sometimes people are forced to vote for them so they get elected and behave like this this should not be so. They should elect sensible people. Sometimes it so happens that even sensible people go there and start fighting.

Unemployment, which he sees as the most pressing problem, can be traced back to the actions of individual family units.<sup>23</sup> This is consistent with his conception of the state itself as a large congregation of family units:

My opinion [smiles] frankly many women also work many households with double income In some houses, double income and in others, no income. Job-seekers are more these days Earlier, women used to be at home in our community, many women now opt for jobs women are free to go out of their houses some do it out of

interest, others out of necessity Both educated and illiterate seek jobs, even small children the population has also increased.

Even larger issues like price rises or the economic reforms are seen as something precipitated and mediated by individual action:

The prices are rising anyway, for other reasons also. Sometimes, they look at the customer and raise the prices I went there, to Mysore, there were watermelon pieces on sale. When I asked him, he said 2 rupees. I took 2 pieces, and stood there, eating them When I gave him a 50-rupee note, afterwards, he took 3 rupees a piece. I told him – you said 2. He said – that was for a different piece. Actually he cheated us. My wife said – you gave him a 50-rupee note, that's why he did that. So they look at the customer and increase prices you can't ask them why are you increasing prices you can't say a thing . that's what people do.

His concept of his right of information restricts itself to his role as a consumer and a taxpayer. Even information related to weather and secessionist movements acquire relevance only within the context of his vacation plans:<sup>24</sup>

Whatever the terrorists do in Punjab, Kashmir, it's good that they show it, because even if one has no connection with it, sometimes Now we were supposed to go for a holiday to the North, but I changed my plans. After I saw all about Kashmir in the news how terrorists come with training from Pakistan and all and there's lot of trouble . we didn't go there.

These practices of apprehending the whole through the framework of personal life experiences do not obviate his constitution as a proud citizen. Intrusions by transnational television networks are regarded with ambivalence<sup>25</sup> because of their possible impact on cultural identity

Through the interpretation of R.G.'s interview, this exploratory study attempts to focus on the specific modes by which R.G. constructs himself as a subject in relation to the televisual discourse. This process of construction, achieved through a set of dividing practices, takes place in and through relationships of power In R.G.'s constitution of himself as a spectator-Indian *vis-à-vis* the news discourse, one sees at play both the individualizing and totalizing aspects of pastoral power. In defining himself as an individual, a critical, informed, rational citizen, R.G. defines his relationship to the totality At one level, R.G.'s interview emphasizes the manifold exegetic possibilities attendant on news reception; at another level, it points to how this reception process and its possible use is mediated in and through relationships of power that lie adjacent to the receiver of news.



## Appendix: Doordarshan channel I programme schedule on a typical weekday

Timing	Programme
6.30–7.00 a.m.	ETV for distance education
7.00–9.00 a.m.	Breakfast chat show interspersed with <i>Yesterday in parliament</i> (45 mins)
	News in English and Hindi (5 to 7 mins each)
	Short serials
	Documentaries and interviews
9.00–10.00 a.m.	Educational programmes for school students
1.00–2.00 p.m. and 4.00–5.00 p.m.	Countrywide classroom for college students
2.00–3.00 p.m.	Afternoon transmission
	Chat show for women interspersed with News in English and Hindi (5 to 7 mins each)
5.45–7.30 p.m.	Regional telecast in Marathi for farmers, workers, parents, women, children etc. (informative programmes)
7.30–7.45 p.m.	Regional news in Marathi (15 mins)
7.45–8.10 p.m.	Sponsored serial in Marathi
8.10–8.40 p.m.	Film songs or short Marathi plays
8.40–9.00 p.m.	News in Hindi (15–20 mins)
9.00–9.30 p.m.	Sponsored serial in Hindi
9.30–9.50 p.m.	News in English (15–20 mins)
9.50–10.00 p.m.	Parliament News in Hindi (10 mins)
10.00–10.30 p.m.	Current affairs programme/documentary/serial in Hindi
10.30–10.40 p.m.	Parliament News in English (10 mins)
10.40–11.00 p.m.	Programme of music/dance/documentary
11.10 p.m. onwards	Telefilm or late-night film (on specific days)

### Notes

Both the authors have contributed equally to the writing of this paper, an earlier version of which was presented at the seminar 'News of the World', Perugia, Italy, in June 1992. The authors gratefully acknowledge R.G.'s contribution, which has made this paper possible.

- 1 The paper is based on one interview, with R.G., conducted in Marathi by the authors (A.M. and J.S.) and translated into English. The duration of the interview was approximately two hours.
- 2 For a critique of the notion of 'secularism' in terms of the political hierarchy underlying it and the hegemony it reproduces, see Nandy (1988) and Madan (1987).
- 3 Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was conducted in 1975–6 to cover 2,330 villages of six states. SITE had an in-built programme for social evaluation, involving multidisciplinary inputs into formative, process and summative research, conducted before during and after the experiment. In the process, quantitative and qualitative survey data and village ethnographies were generated. The SITE research effort, with its emphasis on the 'holistic approach' (Sinha, 1985) departed from some of the simplistic assumptions of the communication approach to development insofar as it brought to the fore the

interpretative strategies of viewers as well as the socio-cultural contexts in which they were situated.

- 4 The emancipatory role of knowledge is a premise that has defined post-enlightenment discourses, both liberal and Marxist. Operating within a framework which conceives of human activity in terms of 'man' using 'reason' to progressively change the 'world', these discourses tend to have the following broad consequences: firstly, they invent a universalist subject (e.g., the Marxist proletariat), secondly, they view reason as a neutral tool and science as approximating truth and, thirdly, they accept the notion of progress, with its teleological promise of an ultimate utopia, beyond power and domination. For a detailed discussion, see Jayasankar (1989).
- 5 A discussion of the congruencies and disjunctures between the Foucauldian category of power and those sites of power is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 6 For a wide-ranging critique of development using Foucauldian categories, see Escobar (1984 and 1987).
- 7 Mark Poster coins the term 'mode of information' to draw attention to the fact that at the present juncture, 'technologies of power', from electronic surveillance to the mass media to psychoanalysis take the form of linguistic experiences that

constitute the historical conditions for a method of analysis that gives due recognition to the discursive nature of practice, that conceptualizes truth in relation to power, that detotalizes the historical-social field and that sets strict limits to the scope of reason. (1984: 167-8)

- 8 For a detailed discussion on this, see Du Bois (1991).
- 9 The scheduled castes are the former untouchable caste groups, which have been accorded a special status in the Constitution of India. R.G. belongs to the 'Mahar' community, a scheduled caste. The community was converted to Buddhism by Dr B.R. Ambedkar and is relatively well organized, more militant and demanding of recognition than other scheduled caste groups.
- 10 The revised version of the developmental paradigm which stresses people's participation is a strategic shift to increase effectiveness without departing significantly in its notion of development from the earlier model. See Du Bois (1991).
- 11 From the mid 1980s onwards, the Indian state appears to be redefining its cultural interventions, playing a more active role in the construction of new cultural and national identities through the use of television, Festivals of India, patronage of traditional art forms and so on. The 'commercialized' lifestyles and images embedded in the televisual discourse are not at variance with the State's vision of the 'India of the twenty-first century' – a movement away from the era of Nehruvian socialism towards a more *laissez-faire* model, where paradoxically the dismantling of licensing, import and other economic controls coexists with increasing state intervention in the familial and cultural space; so much so that the state becomes a provider and arbiter of welfare and norms for 'the masses'.
- 12 *Hum Log*, telecast in 1984-5, dealt with a middle-class family, covering issues such as family planning, women's status, national integration, corruption and so on. It achieved high popularity ratings. For a further discussion, see Singhal and Rogers (1989: 88-121).
- 13 A colour TV set presently costs between Rs 16,000 and 21,000 (\$533 and \$700), which would amount to approximately 4 to 5 times R.G.'s monthly family income.
- 14 According to a MODE survey, quoted in the *Times of India* (28



September 1992: 7), 71% of the urban population own TVs, but do not have access to cable channels and only 4% say they are likely to subscribe to cable in the near future. According to a National Television survey, quoted in an Internews documentary on Doordarshan recently, the urban viewership figures are: Doordarshan 82%; video 10.5%; cable 10.4%; and satellite 1.3%, and 3% of the entire Indian viewership has access to cable TV. However, these figures are rapidly changing in the urban context, where there is a flood of cable operators, and middle-class audiences are getting hooked on to STAR TV soap operas (*Times of India*, 28 September 1992: 1).

- 15 See Monteiro A., 'The spectator-subject: television and the construction of identity, doctoral thesis under preparation. This viewing pattern is also confirmed by R.G.'s interview.

- 16 Metaphor and metonymy are:

figures of 'equivalence' in that they characteristically propose a different entity as having 'equivalent' status to the one that forms the main subject of the figure [ . . . ] Broadly speaking metaphor is based on a proposed similarity or analogy between the literal subject [ . . . ] and its metaphorical substitute [ . . . ] whereas metonymy is based on a proposed contiguous (or 'sequential') association between the literal subject [ . . . ] and its 'adjacent' replacement. (Hawkes, 1977: 77)

- 17 The immurement of women within the sphere of the domestic should not be taken to mean that they do not exercise power. For a discussion of this, in particular women's decision-making role in forging marriage alliances and in money transactions related to this, see Das (1976) and Ifeka (1989). The power of women in other spheres is often exercised covertly, through refusal, denial and subtle manoeuvring, getting the desired outcomes without upsetting the patriarchal hierarchy of power relations.
- 18 *The World This Week* is presented by an anchorperson. In spite of R.G.'s exposure to video production, he chooses to view the anchorperson as 'free' to improvise, as opposed to the newsreaders, who 'can't add their own'
- 19 The proliferation of television has expanded the ambit of 'us' versus 'them' and helped extend the legitimacy of the pro-development discourses to ever-widening sections of the population.
- 20 For instance, in a family-planning advertisement, a woman from a Delhi slum speaks of how sterilization after two children would enable her to educate her son and make him an 'officer' In another advertisement spot on literacy, a maidservant, reflecting on the difference between herself and her upper-class mistress, comes to the conclusion that she too can make it, if she becomes literate. The representation of the whole process is amazingly simplistic: the maidservant asking the question 'What is the difference between her and me?' turns around to find the mistress reading the newspaper and arrives almost instantaneously at literacy as the prime difference. The final shot shows her walking into a literacy class.
- 21 The 'benefits' of family planning and literacy are taken for granted by 'us', justifying whatever the means necessary to persuade the ignorant 'them' R.G. narrates an incident where an illiterate villager is cajoled and coerced into attending literacy classes, against his initial reluctance. The implication that 'we' know better what is right for 'them' is obvious.
- 22 The Narmada project is a massive World Bank funded multipurpose project, involving the construction of approximately 300 dams on the river Narmada,

- displacing about one million people. The institute at which R.G. works has played a role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the project. Moreover, some of the anti-project activists are ex-students of the institute, and personally known to R.G. This is what makes this issue 'immediate' and 'close' to R.G.
- 23 When talking about the unemployment situation, R.G. reluctantly admits that the situation is so bad that even law-abiding citizens like him ('even I') are constrained to make moral compromises, to pay bribes to get a job.
- 24 R.G. and family went on a long trip to South India recently. This is considered significant, for it was the first time he and his family undertook such a long vacation trip. It is not often that such trips are undertaken by a lower middle-class Indian family
- 25 R.G. willingly grants Doordarshan the power to act as an arbitrator, to ensure that programmes broadcast are in national interests as opposed to the commercial interests of private producers and transnational networks. The state monopoly of television is seen as natural and desirable, and what R.G. fears is the monopoly of commercial interests which might be harmful.

## References

- Chowla, N.L. (1985) 'Business by the box', in *The Statesman* 24 November: 9.
- Das, Veena (1976) 'Masks and faces: an essay on Punjabi kinship', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 10 (1) (new series): 1-30.
- Du Bois, Marc (1991) 'The governance of the Third World: a Foucauldian perspective of power relations in development', in *Alternatives* 16: 1-30.
- Escobar, Arturo (1984) 'Discourse and power in development, Michel Foucault and the relevance of his work to the Third World, in *Alternatives* x: 377-400.
- (1987) 'Power and visibility: the invention and management of development in the Third World', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley.
- Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York: Pantheon.
- (1980) *Power/Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon.
- (1984) *The History of Sexuality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- (1986) 'Afterword: The subject and power', in Dreyfus, H.L. and Rabinow, P (1986) editors, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Sussex: The Harvester Press.
- Hawkes, Terence (1977) *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London: Methuen.
- Ifeka, Caroline (1989) 'Hierarchical woman: the "dowry" system and its implications among Christians in Goa, India', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23 (2) (new series): 261-84.
- Jayasankar, K.P. (1989) 'The speaking subject: a preamble to Vedanta', unpublished doctoral thesis, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.
- Jensen, Klaus Bruhn (1991) 'News of the World', project proposal, mimeograph.
- Krippendorff, Sultana (1979) 'The communication approach to development', in Lent J.A. (1979) editor, *Third World Mass Media: Issues, Theory and Research*, Williamsburg, Virginia: Dept. of Anthropology, College of William and Mary.
- Madan, T.N. (1987) 'Secularism in its place', in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56 (4): 747-59.
- Nandy, Ashis (1988) 'The politics of secularism and the recovery of religious tolerance', in *Alternatives* XIII: 177-94.
- Open University (1977) *Mass Communications in Cross-Cultural Contexts: The Case of the Third World*, Mass Communication and Society, Unit 5, Milton Keynes: The Open University.



- Poster, Mark (1984) *Foucault, Marxism and History*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- Singhal, A. and Rogers, E.M. (1989) *India's Information Revolution*, New Delhi: Sage.
- Sinha, A.K. (1985) *Mass Media and Rural Development*, New Delhi: Concept.
- Srivastava, U.K. (1987) 'National cost of television in the year 2000', in *Media Asia* 14 (3): 136-44.
- Young, R. (1981) editor, *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, London: RKP