

A Sociological Gaze into the 'Feast' of Television News in India

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**A Sociological Gaze into the 'Feast' of Television News in India**" submitted by **Supriya Chotani** in the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Masters of Philosophy** of this University is an original work according to the best of our knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Chapter I

Introduction

This research study was conceived from a sense of being violated and exasperated with the noise and substance of television news media, and an urgency to both grasp and express it. Often, experiencing and witnessing violence can leave one with a kind of speechlessness; words cringe away, as the last remnants of the belief humanness seem to powder. Language, both spoken and written, can thus sometimes be a limiting resource in expression. It *is* however, at present, a representational system closest to human society, and is intensely bound up with thought. We comprehend and describe the world through language, and both these processes are liberating, in how they help in coping with, as also recording histories and its violence. It is in the refuge of this expansive conception, that a small attempt has been made to theoretically understand and characterise what Hindi television news are trying to communicate and why, within the present historical juncture.

I introduce the context of this dissertation with a brief narrative of a few recent events captured in the news media. I move on to sociologically explicate the emergent issues from this narrative, and within its span, delineate the rationale, objectives and approach of this study

I

The Context

Breaking news and more...

June 27, Delhi

Since a month and more, television news channels in India are rejoicing in a carnival. Of death and profits. Every pore of dignity breathing its last inside human carcasses, has been bitten out and chewed over with a devouring impulse. Its juices filling cocktails of capital.

On May 16 2008, a 14 year old girl, Aarushi Talwar, the only daughter of a well-off dentist couple, was found murdered in their house in Noida. Days later, their 40-year old 'servant' Hemraj was also found dead within the premises. The case created waves for its many conflicting and 'sensational' findings by the police and the Central Bureau of Investigation, the most prominent of which alleged that the father committed honour killings when he saw the victims in an 'objectionable, though not compromising position'. The Hindi news channels, feeding on the everyday investigative disclosures; fashioned the tragic incident as a soap opera; its dramatic twists and tales buzzing the screen by every hour.

Pronouncing verdict before trial, the channels manufactured endless plots around the incident, laced with the most potent ingredient of pop fiction: sex. A few of the many stories that screamed from the screens included: the servant raped and murdered the daughter; the parents murdered the daughter because she had found out about their 'illicit' extra-marital relationships; the parents are involved in 'sex rackets' etc. Within the figurative space of television news, the parents as well as the daughter were indicted of being of 'loose character'; the girl's photographs, and transcripts of her blogs, emails, sms chats with her 'boyfriend/s' and friends were laid bare for public gaze and judgment. One news channel even telecast an MMS¹ of a perverse sexual act between a girl and a boy, claiming that the girl to be Aarushi.

It is not only the girl however, who was consumed, but also the 'servant' victim, whose Nepali background was constantly highlighted to reinforce middle class paranoia about working class/ethnic criminality, the terror of those classically termed as 'strangers' by Simmel (1908). The ravenous eye of the camera/reporter chased and captured every hearsay about the story, brewing it for a delightful menu of breaking news, special reports, exclusives, sms polls, chat shows, expert opinions and even enacted versions of 'kya hua us raat?'². A study by the Centre for Media Studies at Delhi revealed that between May 16 and June 7, six channels beamed programmes on

¹ Multimedia Messaging Service

² What happened on the fateful night?

the murder for 39.30 hours, out of a total 92 hours of prime time, from 1900 hrs to 2300 hrs (rediffnews 2008).

The result: the popularity of shows and reports based on this crime story claimed the highest viewership on Indian television for a stretch of days, crossing even the top selling Indian Premier League bonanza around the same time, as indicated in the data of system of Television Rating Points (TRPs) conducted by different agencies (msn 2008a). Viewers across homes, both shocked and rapt, savoured every update on the feast, sitting through endless advert breaks that multiplied as advertisers swarmed in to cash in the TRPs. To both the advertisers and channel owners, their crime concoction gave a lasting high.

So much being the chase for revenues, that one of the most successful serial production houses in India, Balaji productions, jumped in to produce in their hit serial 'Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki'³, a few episodes about 'a teenage girl and honour killing', lending weight to the lurid version. As its previews began to flash across the host channel, Star TV, Nupur Talwar, the mother of the girl victim, appealed to the Ministry of Child and Women's Welfare to stop the telecast since it exploited and distorted her family tragedy. In response, the Ministry sent prohibitive orders to the channel. However, despite the orders, the channel went ahead with the screening, claiming this while that the episodes bore no resemblance to the incident (msn 2008b).

The production of profitable spectacles in the media, on the living, the dead, and the 'living dead', is routinised within its existence. However, the macabre ensemble constructed around this story has left many horrified at what has become of journalism and what is to follow. Since satellite television has come into its own in India, news channels are being launched every year and the contest for TRPs and thereby revenues is getting tighter. This has a strong bearing on how 'news' is being constituted. The channels have become the focus of long-standing debates on

³ The story of every household

journalistic ethics and responsibility, as they have adopted what have been the commercially successful practices of the west: sleaze, scandal, sensationalism, sting operations, voyeurism, hidden camera exposes, malice and media trials. The list expands, though one wonders as to how long these qualifiers could be used. They seem to have been drained of their meaning and import, for the media continues to race unabashedly along this path, ever discovering newer depths of vacuousness.

The rising popularity of Hindi news channels in India is based on a menu of celebrity gossip, cricket, spirituality, superstition and more. India TV, a channel, which analysts claim is presently at top in the TRP race, despite being the most recent entrant, accounts its success to spicing up all these ingredients, including reports on spotting ghosts, and even aliens (Baweja 2008). The channel began its propitious journey with a hidden camera expose on 'casting couch', which captured celebrity male actors demanding sexual favours from newcomer actresses (ibid). Evidently, news and entertainment have lost meaning as separate analytical categories.

The context depicted above forms the turf of my research study. It forces open a number of questions, such as why news is being constituted the way it is? Why does a crime story get packaged in this manner? What constitutes 'entertaining' content, and why is entertainment so high on the TRPs? In short, what is 'saleable' news today and why? These questions occupy a huge investigative scope; however a preliminary attempt has been made here to address them sociologically. Central to any sociological endeavour is the location and analysis of human action within collective social processes, and its structures such as class, caste, race and gender. Encompassed within the scope of this analysis therefore is an effort to draw an intersectionality of news and representation with socio structural configurations, with particular emphasis on gender and class.

Drawing back to the Aarushi case, in defense of its media coverage, Surendra Pratap Singh, a senior correspondent and reporter of Aaj Tak, a Hindi news channel, asserted on a chat show on NDTV, an English news channel, that the entire programming

package in television news around the story reflected an intent of social responsibility on the media's part, as underlying it was a demand to seek justice for the girl. To substantiate this, he cited another instance of how a similar campaign led by television channels and English newspapers in 2006 led to the opening and retrial of the much talked about case of Jessica Lall, a woman model, who was murdered by a high-profile politician in a bar in Delhi.

The tragic stories of Jessica and Aarushi, certainly demand collective outrage, and it is commendable if a media campaign helps deliver justice to them. But the 'cause' of 'gender justice' which the media producers self-righteously subscribe to, needs to be examined in depth. For instance, how does their notion of justice sit with the violence entailed in the depiction and dissection of Aarushi's life for public consumption? More importantly, why do only women like Jessica and Aarushi become the protagonists of such media led campaigns, when lakhs of women become victims to similar instances of violence including rape, torture and homicide, and when violence itself is structurally embedded in the rhythms of the everyday, for all women. As an illustration, at the time that the Jessica Lall case was being campaigned for, a Dalit woman was raped in public view in a village in Kharlanji in Madhya Pradesh. Her story however never became a *cause* of fury for the media, perhaps because it was not attractive for the TRPs. One needs to probe then as to what women claim media and advertiser attention today and why. How does class and caste mediate with gender and justice? In brief, how do socio-historical processes weave in to produce 'news' in contemporary India?

II

The Rationale

The concerns laid out above, have grabbed considerable attention of media analysts and critics, and a number of writings have appeared on the same within print and online media. But the subject also demands a rigorous sociological engagement. The question as to how and why violence gets produced and consumed in society has been an important field of sociological inquiry, and it should be extended to include such

contexts, for intense violence is encoded within the visual and textual space of media, in not only the choice governing of who and what gets represented, but also how it is represented. Such an inquiry is also pertinent in an academic scenario when focus in the discipline of media studies seems to be shifting towards 'reception', and much contemporary work has begun to valorize the agency and capacity of viewers to resist meanings surfacing in mainstream media texts, marginalizing in process the politics and economics of 'production'. The very arguments of 'resistant viewers', 'audience knows best' and 'audience cannot be duped' that such academic endeavours produce are also those employed by media producers to continue manufacturing the violent content they do.

III

The Approach

The subject issue of how news and representation mediates with structural realities, can be only understood within the recognition that media is itself implicated within these realities. Media does not 'mirror' reality; it actively 'constructs' reality and is at the same time 'constructed' by it. Reality and representation are thus engaged in a dialectical relationship. A number of approaches are available today to analyze media and its salience in society. But the writings of classical thinkers, Marx and Engels have provided the richest set of conceptual resources to understand media and culture and these have been prolifically utilized and developed on, by theorists within the Frankfurt School and later the School of Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham. In the time and space that Marx and Engels wrote, media as it exists today was part of neither reality nor imagination; they did not explicate directly on media. But the analytical and material categories they produced, including of class, consciousness, ruling ideas and ideology, have since then sculpted the work of a great body of thinkers, eminently cultural theorists of the likes of Luckas, Gramsci, Althusser, Williams and Hall. The volume of work produced within this line of tradition or approach continues to illuminate how media shapes and is shaped by discourses within society.

Within my research I draw from a plurality of sources, but primarily rely on the works on media and culture within the scope of ‘Marxist approach’, even while acknowledging the epistemological limitation of using such a term. For ‘approaches’ connote ‘lines of thought’ and it is lines that produce borders and boundaries, many a time etched across the expanse of imagination. Political context such as the Cold war was fertile for delineating approaches, the ‘Marxist approach’ versus the ‘Liberal approach’, and it was expected that one made a definitive theoretical choice. However, when classical thinkers wrote, they drew and developed on ideas from each other; approaches only contained and labelled them. The writings of Marx and Engels need to be liberated from the envelope of being ‘one’ of the approaches, for they provide a trans-historical analysis of what has increasingly and forcefully come to dominate all our lives: capital. The centrality of capital and class today, enclosed within the momentous process of global capitalism, and manifest in its cultural landscapes, demands a continuing engagement with their profound and prophetic ideas. For it is materiality that produces both representation and reality.

IV

Scope and Objectives

Within the given backdrop, the proposed research attempts to

- a. Characterize the nature of news content today in Hindi news channels
- b. Flesh out the representational matrix of gender, class and nation within its montage of narrative and images, and
- c. Understand these discourses within the logic of globalisation or late capitalism in India

Methodology and Chapter Schema

a. Review of Literature

In the Chapter II, I have reviewed and mapped key issues and themes within the scenario of contemporary Indian media, by utilizing writings of academicians and media practitioners. Building upon the insights drawn from this review, I have attempted to develop a broad theoretical framework, locating media within economy, society and culture. This forms the content of Chapter III. For this, I have made use of key theoretical texts, covering both production and consumption of media, with focus on the works produced within the British tradition of cultural studies, much of which has been oriented towards the intellectual tradition of Marx and Gramsci. Alongside I have utilized a range of relevant sociological works.

b. Primary Data Analysis

I have employed the theoretical framework to then analyze my data, which is primarily the prime time broadcast content of the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak for the month of March 2008. I chose this channel as a source because it has managed to sustain popularity since its launch ten years back, and continues to achieve this. The data analysis takes the shape of Chapter IV. Alongside, I have also interviewed five media persons from fields of journalism, advertising and public relations to closely understand the production of content within media. Their narratives help illuminate the television data and also form part of the review of Chapter II. Chapter IV is followed by Chapter V, which concludes the issues and debates raised through the study.

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Chapter II

Perspectives on Contemporary Indian Media

Introduction

This chapter is a review of select writings that trace the transformation within the Indian media scenario, broadly mainstream print and television, following the onset of the processes of globalisation. By globalisation is referred to the specific economic changes that took place in the last two decades with the adoption of the structural adjustment programme in 1991, which was a package for liberalisation of economy, entailing an expansive role of the market, deregulation, privatisation and the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision (Bhaduri and Nayyar 1996). The years since connote a significant rupture with the past, which manifest in also how media has been shaped. The intent of undertaking such a review is to map the broad issues and perspectives on contemporary media as highlighted by scholars, and it becomes the ground on which I build my conceptual framework, and undertake data analysis in the proceeding two chapters. I have utilized in this review not only academic writings but also writings and narratives of practicing journalists, for they contribute keen insights on how their profession has changed in the last many years. I have attempted to structure the review thematically ordering with the many common issues emergent within its scope. The first part focuses on the broad changes within media, as in its production and organisational structure, and thereby qualitative changes in the content, and the second half looks specifically at issues of gender and representation within media. The three key themes within which the chapter has been divided are as follows:

- I. The Media Business
- II. The Business of Censorship
- III. The Production of Gender

I

The Media Business

The argument forming the backbone of the writings presented here is that with economic transformation, the Indian media has undergone a kind of 'revolution' in all its spheres, including the technology that steers it, its size, scale, and reach, and thereby the content and power it communicates. The growth and diversification of the media is indicative of its makeover as a sizeable, profit generating business, which has been propelled by changes in patterns of ownership and structures of sponsorship.

The biggest story of the last 15 years is the phenomenal growth of television, triggered largely by the arrival of Star TV, followed by a host of many other private players in the media market, breaking the monopoly of the government-owned channel Doordarshan (Butcher 2003). These channels reach more than half the population of the country, forming the largest collective of audience in the world. Sardesai (2006) notes that the number of television networks in India is more than that those in the whole of North and South America put together. The 'media in India', however, is not the same as 'Indian media' (Ninan 2006). For while foreign media are here like never before (Star and Sony Entertainment being the major players), the Indian media is also all over the world, such as NDTV and Zee TV, which run channels across Europe and North America (ibid).

The miracle of the Indian media encloses also the growth of the print media. Unlike the scenario in western countries where the advent of television led to a continual dip in the circulation, revenues, and readership of print, in India, the reception and sales of this medium is on the rise. With literacy levels growing, more people are taking to reading the printed word and that too in diverse languages (Ninan 2006). Ninan S (2002, 2004, 2007) highlights how regional language publications are coming into their own. Quoting from the National Readership Surveys 1999, 2002 and 2005, she points a huge jump of rural readership. And in absolute terms the current readership of 200 million means that the print media is available to one out of the five people in the country (quoted in Panneerselvan 2007). Jeffrey (1997, 2006) also reveals

extensive data to suggest that the decade of the 90s has seen a sort of newspaper revolution in the vernacular, and it has occurred in not less than 11 different scripts. He further argues that the demand for newspapers will only grow because there is evidence that exposure to television or any single medium leads to consumption of also the other media. Such an argument perhaps holds for also the growth of online journalism, which is also attracting huge readership, especially in the south (Ravindranath 2006).

The growth of both print and TV media is related to the introduction of digitization technologies, that has led to a fall in costs in both entry level and production, such as low-cost printing presses and high-speed data lines (Ninan 2006). Compared to television, newspaper business is even cheaper and media houses are now able to start multiple editions that focus on regional and district news, thus reaching out to new readers. Smaller newspapers can survive on selling price, and also draw in substantial amount of local advertising since they cover local news (Jeffrey 2006).

This scale of media expansion in both television and print has become possible with the opening up of the economy, where in big corporate money has entered media production, both transforming existing media institutions and facilitating newer ones to flourish, as competitive businesses. The Indian media houses have begun to get listed on the stock exchange and need to submit to the demands of international financial markets (Banerjee 2006). Ninan (2006) reveals figures of how over a dozen big media firms have emerged out of their family 'garb' to get 'publicly quoted', and about half of these are valued at over Rs 1,000 crore each on the stock market, with the largest company, Bennett Coleman, making profits almost a hundred times in the last two decades. This has caused emergence of a new business that is specialized to do just media planning and media buying. 'There is a simultaneous shift of advertising and financial power to even the smaller towns, thanks to growing spending power. The stock market knows what it is doing when it values Jagran Prakashan and HT Media at about the same level' (ibid: 16). Ninan (2004) also

highlights how it is the regional stalwarts, especially Hindi dailies, which are becoming major national players.

The patterns of ownership have changed, with media and its seemingly diverse choices concentrated with only select corporate houses. Sainath (1997) and Bannerjee (2006) emphasise that today there are really less than ten big corporate houses controlling the bulk of circulation of publications in most languages. The scenario of the centralization of information sources is in tune with what is happening across the world. Karnik (1998) highlights that by some estimates, less than a dozen media conglomerates provide (or control) 80 per cent of the information in the world, including almost all the satellite TV/radio broadcasts, terrestrial TV and radio stations, newspapers, magazines or even delivery systems like cable, satellites, optical fibres etc.

The corporatisation of media is visible not only in forms of direct ownership, but also in indirect control through sponsorship. Media houses run largely on revenues generated through advertising, which is on the rise. Sardesai (2006) notes that within a five-span beginning late 90s, there has been almost a 500 per cent expansion in advertising revenues for television channels. Paul (2008), who runs an advertising company, highlights how advertising today constitutes oxygen for TV, as also for radio or print. Since the 90s there are almost 300 TV channels on air in India and 600 or more so are in pipeline, and all of their existence depends on advertising. As with broadcast, print is also dependent on advertising revenues and at the heart of it exists the fact of negligible returns on circulation. Ninan (2006) observes how with multi-edition newspapers and markets, competition has become so fierce such that even a small difference in price has begun to affect consumer choices. This has driven prices to the point where leading newspapers almost get negligible revenue for their publishers and consequently advertising usually accounts for more than 80 per cent of the revenue of almost any English newspaper, and about 50-65 per cent in the case of other languages.

Jesudasan and Prasad (1997) also note that compared to the pre-liberalisation days, when the average revenue from advertising was too modest to allow price-cuts and deploying other such methods of rapid circulation growth, the first five years of the 90s itself, press advertising volume grew three times over, from Rs 800 crore to Rs 2,600 crore. And as Ninan (2002, 2007) emphasises, the fastest growth in circulation and advertisement revenues is happening in fact in the Hindi newspapers, such as publications like Dainik Jagran, Amar Ujala and Dainik Bhaskar, because of their bigger market of readership.

II

The Business of Censorship

In the context of what has been stated above, an important concern to emerge is how corporate ownership and control of media bear on the production of content. Do the proliferating media choices today, as opposed to a limited set in the past signify greater democracy in information? Commenting on these issues, scholars vehemently deny such a supposition. They assert that the commercialization of media has brought about excessive control and censorship in content, as it is being packaged to conform to the profit ethic of free market, focussed solely on the aspirations of the consuming classes, who are the target segment of market-led consumption, censoring in process the larger set of 'masses' from the mediascape. Free market and free speech are antithetical to each other as the ideological understanding of freedom within the regime of market means freedom to choose and consume from its given set of choices, and not the freedom to speak against any oppression and injustice that the market bears on these very masses.

Censoring out the 'Political'

Liberalisation is characterized by a nexus of the market with the state, and the media business being closely implicated in this, censors any information that might be contrary to the interests of these powers. Karnik (1998) asserts how till now, the assumption was that freedom of press was threatened by totalitarian governments or

government ownership control, whereas privately owned newspapers (or radio/TV) were considered a bane for preservation of freedom of the press, but in the current situation, these assumptions have been falsified.

Sainath (1997) maps the change within the Indian media from the time of the freedom struggle to the present. And he says that at the time, a tiny press with much socio-political sensibility played an important role, even within a scenario of pathetic literacy rates, and was able to put the mighty Raj on the defensive. Even after independence a considerable section of the press shared values of social commitment and was seen as one of the 'freest' in the world. The excessive censorship on this press during the emergency was a sign of the kind of challenge it provided to the state. Today, he says that a gigantic Indian press, in a time of relatively much higher literacy rates, is unable to do so, because it is part of the establishment. It serves a narrow social segment, and has been brought to the ground by private interests in the last 15 years. The ties of the establishment and press are so strong that 'it may not require an Emergency to discipline the press.' He highlights how business families that own newspapers have begun to run them as just another unit of the empire to boost its many interests. 'When these families are into a hundred other businesses, their 'outlets' will fall into line with their own larger objectives.' For instance, owners of newspapers and magazines use their media space to lobby for changes in laws that favour them, such as real estate interests (ibid: 58-60).

Tarafdar (2008), features editor in the Financial Express, also draws attention to how most newspapers do not any more carry stories which might be antithetical to the interests of big corporations as 'they are our advertisers and hence our masters, even more than the political masters.' With profit being the motive, newspapers have changed both content and style. For instance, the newspaper Indian Express established itself as 'Journalism of Courage', and carried many investigative stories, but today its own branding has become much slicker, and old values of hard journalism have diluted (ibid). Ghose (1997) also underlines how 'upsetting' politicians or corporate houses, is considered bad journalism today. Journalists are

active participants in these power circles and getting a lead story is often not about investigations but about ‘inspired leaks’. Additionally, journalists are also expected to ‘fix’ things and thus an adversarial relationship with the government can only be problematic. Kumar (2006) observes another model of how political power bears upon television news. He notes how in the South, many rival television news channels are either directly owned by, or openly aligned to political parties, which strongly affects their depiction of what is happening in the region.

The editorial direction and autonomy newspapers and television channels is conditioned indirectly by the influence of advertisers, and the goal of profit. The advertisers begin to dictate what content has to be pushed in and in the same vein, the media houses also generate content that would please the advertiser and bring in more ad revenues (Chaudhuri 2005, Ninan 2006). By consequence, the content produced is also packaged around the axis of advertising; the advertiser becomes the reader.

Jha (2008), a television producer in Aaj Tak notes how in his news channel, the advertising and editorial personnel sit on a table and decide what has to be put on air and there are proper guidelines as to what programmes need to be produced. Seth (2006), director of an advertising company, gives an inside view of what he calls the strengthening of the ‘incestuous relationship’ between advertising and the media, which he asserts is severely undermining the sanctity and independence of the press. He says that today the advertisers have moved from the ‘appeal domain’ to the ‘demand domain’, where they expect better placement of ads, positive coverage and control of the editorial environment. A consequence of this nexus, suggests Ninan (2006) is that there is a new continuum between news and advertisements. The ‘paid news’ and ‘paid editorial’ category is now increasingly being accepted and some newspapers refer to classified ads as ‘news you can use’. Chaudhuri (2005) also underscores on the emerging trend of ‘advertorials’, implying that advertisement are not recognizable in themselves, but merge within what might appear like a feature, news or an editorial. Paul (2008) also explains how advertising makes its presence felt in the media not only through the conventional 30-sec commercial spot, but

increasingly through quasi spaces, which might include ‘brand placement’ in what anchors or celebrities wear, hold, say and do.

Exit of the Editor

The collapse of the boundaries between news and ads is manifest in the collapse of also the functional division between editorial and business departments within media institutions, with the latter gaining much more importance than ever before. Haroon (2006) and Sanghvi (2006) underline how the institution of the professional editor, a person who assumed the status of a ‘moral precept’ within the context of freedom of expression is on the ‘verge of extinction’ in India since the 90s, a clear sign of the death of independent press. They emphasize how earlier it was sought that managerial decision-making took place in environment insulated from possibilities of influencing the news content of newspapers. Though the publishers or managers always influenced upon the choice of an editor, and there were other influences, but what was altogether aspired for was certain sanctity of news, unhampered by commercial considerations. Today, any contradictions appearing from such a dualism have now been removed in the newly emerging institution of editor-managers. ‘The principle of insulation between professional editors and newspaper managements has been wholly rejected in favour of the need for consistency in decision-making, a certain kind of harmony within the social vision of the firm that brings in a competitive edge and optimal utilization of resources’ (ibid: 28). Therefore in the process of selection today for an editor, what is importantly looked for is management skills (Haroon 2006). Seth (2006) also observes how editors in most leading newspapers have now become marketing agents: from the edit rooms they have transformed into ‘space-sellers’. Some of India’s most established newspapers today have editors who are CEOs and vice-versa. And it the blurring of such role-definitions that forms the fertile ground for advertisers to intervene.

Content and Consumption

As a result of this functional and conceptual nexus between advertising and editorial, towards the goal of revenue generation, the content produced is laced with the goal of

enhancing consumption, of one, the media product, which brings in larger share of advertising, and two, and intertwined with it, the commodities that the advertisers sell. The content is therefore packaged around the needs and desires of the consuming classes both in mainstream newspapers and television. Ghose (1997) says that the 'bottom line' in media institutions is that every written or televised line is money spent or wasted, and media products are considered as 'successful' by the kind of readership they can deliver to the advertiser.

Chaudhuri (2005) emphasises how the 'the free market lays a simultaneous focus on 'selling' and a construction of an ideology of consumption tied to individualism, free choice and the good life.' Advertorials promote a content reflecting this language and ideology and include features such as on lifestyle, articles of the rich and famous, fashion industry etc for the use and pleasure of the urban middle classes, which refer indirectly to the commodities that can access to realise these aspirations. Sainath (1997) also draws attention to how journalism today is dominated with specialized reporting beats such as fashion, design, society and even 'eating out'. Likewise, Tarafdar (2008) highlights how in English newspapers, which cater to the upper end of the urban middle class market, the focus is shifting to high-end luxury living. Saxena (2008), editor of the supplement Brunch of the English paper Hindustan Times, says that a realization has entered in, that political and business news is not the only news worthy of attention, and shopping, lifestyle, films, food, health, fitness, spirituality, travel, movie stars and fashion should also be written about.

In essence, the reader is looked at as a consumer. Paul (2008) highlights how the industry looks at an average viewer or reader as a 'wannabe', who is desperate to climb up the aspirational ladder, and therefore the products are sold with an idea to help him/her realise this dream. Saxena (2008) shares a similar view and says that the media industry feels it is performing the role of 'empowering' consumers, and helping them to become more aware, confident, up-market and in control of personal and professional worlds, by giving them information and practical advice on what is new and latest in everything.

Related to these developments is the growth of a sophisticated public relations industry in India such as in the west, which is geared towards the specific aim of boosting the market of a corporate client (Ninan 2006, Nicoll 1997). Misra (2008) a public relations executive, throws light on this industry is in the business of providing a complete image management to a corporate, and it is done chiefly through the use of media. The idea is to push in stories as to how successful the company and its products or services are. This is achieved through building relations with journalists, and obliging them with occasional gifts, who then weave in stories around the product that is to be marketed. Related to this is the task of ensuring that that no negative stories come in the media around the corporate client. They scan the media content daily and if they do spot any such coverage, they make sure to counter that by pushing in positive feeds. Misra cites the example of how few years back certain sections of the media carried out a campaign came against the corporate Cadbury's, when allegedly worms were found in their chocolate bars. The PR company countered this campaign by bringing out alternate facts and figures on the issue, Alongside features were pushed in such as how chocolate is great for health and curing depression. In addition, actor Amitabh Bachchan was also hired to come out and make statements defending the corporate.

Censoring out the 'Poor'

With commercial focus on the interests of the consuming classes of metropolitan India, the coverage of issues related to the poorer sections, and developmental concerns is obliterated from the picture. Sainath (1997) opines how in all the large publications, there is not a single full-time correspondent on the beat of rural poverty or rural development, in a country with the largest numbers of absolute poor in the world. There are also no regular beats on education or labour. Sainath (2005, 2006) remarks that 75 per cent of the country does not make news, whether the rural or the urban poor, and pressing issues such as demolitions and farmer suicides draw no attention compared to fashion shows and sensex jumps and falls. Chakraborty (2005) also draws attention to how the only time the rural India comes into focus is in relation to a tragedy of dramatic nature, albeit only for a flash. In a similar vein,

Trivedi (2006) highlights how it is a challenge today for any journalist wanting to report on the times and lives of people in rural India. 'Television producers do not want to send reporters to the hinterland, to bring pictures of half-naked children suffering from malnutrition. It is so much easier to sell a fashion show than a poor woman walking miles for a pot of water in a drought affected area.' Within the 'news pyramid' of media organizations, the marginalised are at the bottom of the scale (ibid: 42-43).

Ravindranath (2006) and Ghose (1997) also suggest that while post-emergency, there emerged firebrand reporting on issues of environment, gender and rural problems, and thereby the development of investigative and development journalism, the trend today reflects a decline. Today development journalism has often taken form of attention grabbing crusades.

Ninan S (2007) underscores how even Hindi newspapers, once described as bearers of 'protest' journalism, no longer carry stories with a regional or local focus, relevant issues of agriculture, landless labour, migrants, dalits and backward classes, but rather target the upwardly mobile middle class reader. The focus is on '*chatpata*' (spicy) news and they also have their local 'Page 3', where they carry details of local influential people attending parties. Kumar (2006) also highlights how television does not engage with even a strand of the vast Indian reality, and stresses on an urban sensibility aspired to a global city. He particularly looks at the channels in the South, where he says the regionalisation of the electronic media was initially looked at with hope as it provided an alternative to the Hindi-centric fare of Doordarshan. But these hopes have been belied because the content and style of all programming caters to the urban masses, with not a spotlight on the vast regional hinterland.

News as Entertainment

Generating content for enhancing consumption also includes focus on 'entertainment', such as features on celebrities, films, music, and newspapers are devoted to it by way of special features and pages. Entertainment is always high on

popularity and advertisers remain keen to invest in the same. Even on television news channels, entertainment features are on the rise, and news itself is being packaged to convey meanings of excitement by accommodating more programmes on lifestyle, sleaze or hidden camera exposes (Seth 2006, Ravindranath 2006).

Sardesai (2006), a journalist and a TV channel producer, labels this as 'tabloidisation of the medium', which comes out its best when there is war, violence and disaster, images that are visually stunning. He further highlights that what sells for the advertisers today is the three Cs – Cricket, Crime and Cinema. Television rating points (TRPs), a system of gauging popularity of television shows, govern editorial decisions in newsrooms, especially in Hindi news channels, where the competition is much tighter. 'We can make bold claims one day about being a channel above the TRP race, and then the very next will have a Mallika Sherawat smooch all over'. With round the clock news the screen has to be constantly buzzing so as the viewer does not switch channels. This has completely distorted the concept of 'breaking news', or an 'exclusive', with each channel claiming one (ibid: 39-40). Ghosh (1997) also throws light on how the political, investigative and culture reporting takes place in a tabloid format today. 'For a political story to sell it must be sensational, for an investigative story to 'sell', it must blow the lo off some one in a spectacular way, and for the social concern story to grab attention it must be a really sexy case of rape or caste warfare...' (ibid 51).

In this race for popularity, the professional ethics of objectivity and judiciousness that were earlier seen as fundamental to journalism have been cast away. The need to create saleable media products means these virtues are luxuries that few are able to afford (Ghosh 2006). Bhattacharjee (1997) also highlights how the rewards for distorting and dramatizing events are surpassing those for maintaining credibility, and the techniques that promote 'glamorisation and drama' are being encouraged.

Thapar (2006) also highlights on how sensationalism enters news on television. Television reports only show what is captured on camera, and many a times it can be

distorted depending on what the camera perspective is and how images are presented with narration. Balancing can be tricky when journalists are working within tight deadlines, which is more often than not the case. Also news bulletins occasionally ignore what they cannot film or visualize, which is why there is much more news in the papers than on television. Nicoll (1997) maps this trend of the skewed nature of news collection and presentation within Indian newspaper industry. For instance, 'political reporting in times of turbulence is heated and speculative' and business newspapers frequently contain 'exclusives' predicting things that do not happen. But despite many such glaring errors found in newspapers, there are no proper redressal systems. Newspapers have managed to secure for themselves a protected status.

The declining state of journalism is apparent also in the new breed of journalists, most of who are easily lured by the market, and play along its demands. Many who are interested to break ground and report on pertinent issues are constrained within the priorities of their organizations. Varma (1997) traces how with economic restructuring, corporations began to woo their favourite journalists with incentives for putting in an extra word, such as gift coupons and foreign tours. A new community of business journalists flourished, who were the first to enter the five-digit salary league, who introduced credit cards, mobile phones and cars to their fraternity, compromising in this process, journalistic ethics. As a result, today, paid advertising is invasive in business reporting and newspapers. Commenting on such trends in journalism, Ghose (1997) labels the average journalist of today as the 'free market journalist', 'who has come a long way from the time he played a significant role in the independence movement to the becoming 'keyboard punching 'infotainment' artist of the free market decade' (ibid: 49).

Censoring out the Alternatives

With television channels and mainstream newspapers aligned to the interests of the powerful, it would seem the possibilities of hope exist perhaps with the smaller, alternative publications. But what happens to them in the liberalised market? Analysts say that with bigger media corporate houses setting the trends of the kind of content

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described above, the options for all others is to either follow suit or exit the race. They are not 'free to choose' but 'forced to choose' what the free market offers and determines.

Jesudasan and Prasad (1997) trace how with growing competition, advertisers have become selective and invest their money only on publications that reach a larger mass of customers or that have highly specific niche markets. This new target-oriented approach of advertisers has caused a change in how established newspapers transform themselves, and even those newspapers which were long seen anti-establishment have transformed, hiring editors who work within the market logic. He further says that the competition emerging from all the mainline national dailies, which having revamped their content are drawing in an increasing share of advertisements, has forced most publishers to cut cover price to a level where the circulation revenue does not take care of even a fifth of the cost of production. Ninan (2006) also examines how today the company with the biggest newspapers, the largest sales and profits, Bennett Coleman, is usually the one that is setting the trend in content, often 'testing the limits of what is acceptable in polite society'. They have the financial power to start price wars and thereby cut into the market, which impacts the rivals, who either forced to copy or become history.

Muralidharan (2006) takes a historic account of the debate between circulation cost and advertising space and its relation to freedom of speech. He traces the court cases since independence that dealt with these debates. He highlights that post independence, 'freedom was necessarily balanced by a notion of responsibility'. It was understood that commerce need not be contrary to freedom of expression, provided there are enough plural choices for the public. In this context, there came a policy recommendation of 'price-page schedule', which gave a prescribed ratio for advertisement space in newspapers, and required newspapers to increase their selling price with the number of pages printed. This was seen crucial for freedom of the press, and the argument offered in favour of freedom of press was this: 'When a high share of space is allocated to advertisements, it brings in 'substantial revenue', which

enables the newspapers to be sold at 'a price below the cost of production' This means that newspapers which have the capacity of drawing huge revenues would 'squeeze out' newcomers, and would therefore destroy the freedom of expression of others.' However in many court cases subsequently, the highest court opined that the Price-Page Schedule is violating article 19 of the Indian Constitution, as it took away the freedom of the newspaper, to charge whatever price it chose to, and cut into its ability to disseminate news and opinions, as also into its commercial revenues by limiting advertising space. The freedom of the press was referred here as the right of all citizens to speak, publish and express their views, and also the right of the people to read. The court stressed that if advertising is affected, the price of the newspaper will be forced up, and circulation will go down, and with financial losses, it could 'crumble', which would be a loss to the public and freedom of speech.

Muralidharan says that what was dispensed in this kind of argument was that the freedom of expression, involved also the right to access media space. And this requirement can be met only through allowing opportunities to small and medium dailies to grow, as the big ones. The debate between whose freedom, the advertiser or the public, continues to date. And clearly advertisers are winners of the game. 'The scenario today is exactly what was feared in the early debates, 'a large newspaper not being forced to raise prices because it was deprived of advertisement space, but of a newspaper being able to slash prices and drive out competition because it had managed to establish a pre-eminent position in the ad bazaar' (ibid: 20-25).

To conclude, the emergence of media as business post liberalisation and the consequent censorship it entails has posed a serious threat to the ethic of plurality and democracy. The set of choices that become visible are only illusionary as these are being tightly controlled by reins of corporate power and this strongly bears on who gets represented within the mediascape and how. For instance, as seen, the urban middle classes due to their contributive capacity to the project of consumption are privileged in this scenario, and the masses are eclipsed. Much like class, gender is also an organizing principle of society, and is constituted within the realm of self,

family, work place, public sphere and the nation. An important field of engagement for a number of scholars in India is how the new media impinges on the representations of gender in contemporary India and in this regard, they have brought into their sociological gaze diverse media products including news, advertisements and fiction in both print and electronic format. But their focus is intent on women, for it is they who continue to be disadvantaged within patriarchal structures, that articulate with caste, class or race, and fashion themselves with the times. They highlight how media brings representative visibility to only certain kinds of women and their issues, who envelop a specific package of tradition and modernity, in sync with demands of globalisation.

III

The Production of Gender

A significant development of the post 90s media is that large numbers of women are being drawn into it as professionals. As journalists they are able to take up more non-safe and diverse roles (Prasad 1997). They are now making a mark in the 'hard' news areas of politics and economics, which until recently were all male bastions (Joseph and Sharma 1994). Also 'they constitute the central subject/object when it comes to media content and commercial media planning' (Sivadas 2007). The question is whether such developments have made a difference to how women's issues are represented? Perhaps not, as most scholars see it. According to them, compared to the 80s, when the media played a constructive part in highlighting issues raised by the emergent women's movement in India, the scenarios have only become bleaker since the 90s.

Women in News

The focus on women's issues in has gone down considerably within the press. Joseph and Sharma (1994) assert that even though a large number of women are entering media, this has not produced the desired results in terms of better coverage of gender issues. Having researched on media for the last few decades, they find that female journalists today are wary of being labelled as feminists, of being associated with the

women's cause and of even being categorized as 'women journalists'. There is still no legitimate 'women's beat'. Even when a few journalists are interested to cover such issues, they are discouraged. In the 80s, when the women's movement galvanized public consciousness on issues of women's oppression, the press played its part by bringing coverage to many of the pertinent issues such as dowry deaths, rape, sex selective abortion, Muslim women's legal rights and the practice of *sati*. However while the women's movement has moved ahead from focus on atrocities and campaigns to a more complex understanding of gender, the press has been unable to keep pace. It continues to highlight incidents rather than the processes, and has no commitment to probe how women's issues are linked with other structural realities. The coverage of gender issues remains selective and ad-hoc and this trend has worsened from the 90s onwards. With the emergence of a collaborative work culture between editorial and advertising, the press seeks to convey everything in a short, reader friendly format. As a result even when issues are taken up, they receive a fragmented and generalized treatment.

Joseph (2006) highlights a related report of the Global Media Monitoring Project, 2005 on a 2001 research conducted in 76 countries, including India, which reveals that world over women continue to be markedly under-represented in news, comprising only 21 per cent of all news subjects. When women do make the news it is primarily as 'celebrities', 'royalty' etc or as faces among 'ordinary people.' Expert opinion in news such as on 'hard issues' is still overwhelmingly male. News relating to gender disparity is almost non-existent in the overall news agenda. Even when stories of gender-based violence are covered, it is the male understanding that tends to prevail. Banakar et al (1999) voice a similar opinion. In their study of the front page coverage of women's issues in regional newspapers of Karnataka, it came through that stories related to women received less than one per cent of the total front page space, that too mostly related to state developmental programmes and dramatic atrocities. Injustices on women committed by the state such as repression of mass movements, issues of harassment in unorganized work, or female foeticide etc seldom got any coverage.

Gender, Class and Consumption

While altogether women's issues get scant attention in media, scholars point out that even when these issues do get highlighted, they revolve around the stories and lives of women from the privileged classes, which is directly related to the media project of catering to this class and its consumption. They offer insights on how such representations come about. Reflecting on her experience as a working journalist in a leading English television channel, Trivedi (2006) highlights that while reams of newspaper and hours of television programming are devoted to the story of Jessica Lall, a model who was murdered by the son of an influential politician at a bar in Delhi, but no one wants to invest the same energy in reporting the stories of Shahnaz, Medina and Zohrabibi, women from non-metropolitan India who were victims of an apathetic judicial system. Though stories such as of Lall deserve attention, but so do, and perhaps more so, stories of other women who face innumerable injustices in their marginalized locations. Perhaps she says 'the page-three driven media requires only beautiful, glamorous woman (made for television and colour supplements) to wake up to the reality of hostile witnesses and a justice system that is horribly skewed in favour of the rich and powerful'... 'What about the fact that ninety-nine per cent of the dalit women who are raped and tortured get no justice from any court, and why does nobody petition the President or take up their cases with the same ferocity?' (ibid: 43)

Chakroborti (2005) also underscores this argument and says that while media celebrates beauty pageants, it lends no space to the achievements of women from rural India and the caste, class and gender violence they face. The media, she says has almost come to believe that at least for the urban middle class women, liberation has been realised. She cites in this case the excessive media focus on the achievements of Barkha Dutt, a television journalist, who broke new grounds by entering the male dominated field of war reporting during the Kargil war. The coverage of this war, laden with excessive nationalism and patriotism, brought back to force the gendered stereotypes of men and women, 'man as the actor/hero, guarding the borders and women and women as the passive victim, waiting home'. And within the montage of

such depictions, the only woman who seemed to have gained any agency and visibility was this reporter, by way of being there on the war front. As the new woman of globalised India, her presence symbolised women's consent to the war, obliterating in process a huge share of women's voices are against wars.

It is not only news however, which manufactures these representations, but also the genre of advertising, which is more directly devoted to the project of class and consumption. Chakroborti (2005) makes a reading of how advertisements today construct a world of shiny urban India in which women's depictions are attached to motifs of consumption and desire. Women are seen not merely as consumers, but also as active 'desirers and buyers' of goods. What the ads seek to illustrate is that the market has solutions for every situations from careers issues to conjugal and familial conflicts.

Gender, Class and Nation

Chaudhuri (2001, 2005) makes a similar commentary on advertisements but makes a detailed analysis of how and why this representative matrix of class and gender is connected to the political and economic context of globalising nation. She contends that a shift in economy necessarily entails a change in the public discourse, within which historic concepts are invested with new meanings. For instance the mixed economy of the Nehruvian era, post independence placed an emphasis on 'socialism and distributive justice' (notwithstanding the shortcomings of practices) and within its discourses 'freedom' was understood as commitment to political, economic, and social equity for all sections of the people the world over, particularly the dispossessed. The nation was imagined through these very masses. And in this light, austerity was treasured as a principle for all, including for the middle classes. With globalisation marking a shift from producer to consumer capitalism, these notions have stood to be transformed and 'freedom', 'autonomy' and 'choice', are now largely understood to mean the freedom to choose and consume, which exists only for the middle class, and they have in essence come to define the nation. Freedom is thus implicated within the ethos of the free market and in that order has come to valorize

individuality, selfhood, desire and the concomitant disposal of any ethic of collective responsibility towards the larger 'masses'.

Extending the argument further, Chaudhuri (2001) says that gender has always been a social and symbolic resource that has been exploited in the service of nation. For instance the Indian nationalist thought iconised the image of the Hindu 'self-effacing' woman, signifying tradition and culture as against the western influences. But now with the change in the idea of what constitutes nation, a new kind of iconisation of middle class woman (and man) has come into picture, attached to the very ideas of freedom to consume and the pursuit of good life. These imageries and ideas get legitimised within the public sphere through a sustained ideological campaign, and the media and especially advertisements contribute to it significantly. Advertisements should be seen therefore as the 'rhetoric of India's project of globalisation'.

Within the world of ads, gendered concepts are used to refashion the middle class household or the family as a site for increased consumption, especially as there is a generational shift such that old values of saving are being replaced by spending. New images of middle class men and women from the middle class have been carved out, that embody a productive combination of traditional and modern. The normative new Indian woman of today is typically the corporate icon, who is career-driven and lifestyle conscious, but also takes care of the family as a daughter or a mother. Representations of the normative Indian man are also seen, and he is equally desirable, glamorous and successful. There is emphasis for both men and women to be beauty and body conscious, to keep fit, youthful, and all these notions allude to the idea of 'hedonistic living' and 'self-gratification'. However while for men images of high achievers are always at the forefront, for women images of globe trotting corporate leader are combined with images of traditional woman homemaker.

Feminism of 'choice' and 'consumption'

An understanding of the media representations of gender, within the historical context of globalisation, also illuminates the hostility it has towards giving space to feminist

issues, argues Chaudhuri (2000). This is because the feminist movement equates freedom with collective social justice, and liberation from gender, class, caste and other structural inequalities, that poses a direct threat to the discourses of free market. Therefore the media, in order to carry out its deep resistance to political objectives of feminism, has skilfully formulated popular formulations of feminism, emptying it of its political content, and tying it instead to the project of consumption. Since the 90s there is a growing trend within English print media to employ the terms 'feminism' and 'liberation' to signify women's ability to make (consumer) choices and through that the pursuit of selfhood. So the 'feminist' icon is also the corporate woman as idealized in the ads. Within this backdrop, events such as beauty pageants, International women's day sponsored by beauty related corporates are shown in a continuum with the women's movement. Existing alongside is an increased opposition to serious women's questions such as the reservation bill, or basic issues of class equality.

Corresponding to this representation of 'feminism', is a version which claims to be a true (Indian) feminism as against a false (western) one, that is potentially dangerous to dent Indian woman and family. This is to be found more in the middle-class magazines' as also traditional images in ads. A number of factors have conditioned the construction of such feminism, particularly the context of the nationalist struggle, though the most recent influence has been the cultural revival project of the Hindu Right, in whose vision 'women's movement' and 'false (western) feminisms' are the villains responsible for the erosion of the qualities of traditional Indian womanhood. But since the emergence of Hindu right is interwoven with the growth of the market and consumption, the overall attempt is to 'redefine simultaneously a more traditional (read family oriented) and market friendly 'feminism' (ibid).

Gender, Family and Nation

How gendered ideas and 'feminisms' get formulated for the middle class within the mediated space of market and nation, modernity and tradition, and self and family,

has been explored further by scholars in features, fiction and advertisements in 'women's' magazines and television. Chanda (2003) looks at women's magazines and also notes how these carry a notion of a 'feminism of choice', that appropriates only certain aspects of the agenda of women's movement and erases out its larger political objectives. The result of which is subject position of 'New Liberated/Modern Woman' commodified as a selling strategy for conspicuous consumption, that helps reproduce rather be a challenge to the ideological hegemony of patriarchy and capitalism'. She focuses at two of such magazines published in Bengali, aimed at middle and upper middle class 'new' women, which outlay an ensemble of modernity, emancipation, taste, class and status. The write ups construct an aspirational model of a 'complete' and 'successful' woman, who has 'control' of one's life in an uncertain world. The control should be over the choices that global capital and consumerist culture opens up for women, as also over traditional roles which now seem to be acquiring different dimensions. A typical package of a complete woman encompasses beauty care (to keep one's man in control), home care, cooking, child care, along with work, success and cultural and literary inclination. Any ideas that may challenge this perfect construct are kept out of picture, such as how the new liberated middle class life substitutes technology with equality, or how a woman now has a double burden of work to maintain a particular standard of living.

Uberoi (2006) makes an analysis of specifically the fiction content of English women's magazines such as the Women's Era, which are woven around the contradictions of tradition and modernity within the Indian family, especially in the context of the increasing pace of globalisation, where in for men and women, goals of individual autonomy, freedom of choice and self-gratification (desire) come in conflict with values that demands duty or *dharma* towards the family, and via that the nation. Uberoi says that the women's fiction tales explore these very tensions embedded in the 'moral economy' of Indian family, but resolves them by constructing an ideal of gender and family in keeping with the ideal of the Indian nation-state. The stories are largely about love and marital relations in ordinary middle-class families, such as dissonance between a woman's duty towards family

and longing for the husband, but in all the endings, a woman's position of dependence and subordination within the conjugal relation is reinforced. Desire must be subordinated to their responsibility to the family collectivity. 'Compromise' and 'adjustment' are the key to marital happiness, to be made by women, that keeps the patriarchal system intact. Separation or divorce is seen as an improper solution of a marital discord, implying personal failure and worthlessness on the part of women. Such narratives, Uberoi argues are significantly related to globalisation. As India globalises, and as the 'imagined economy' can no longer 'convincingly iconise the nation', the family remains, the sole institution which can signify the unity, uniqueness and moral superiority of Indian culture in a time of change, uncertainty and crisis.

The construction of an ideal middle class family, an emblem of Indian culture, tradition and modernity, and carrying compatible gendered roles, continues to be a staple theme in popular fiction, not just in magazines but also television. Television soaps in private channels portray real tensions that family and marriage system are currently facing and resolve them to reinforce the strength of an Indian family. And this family itself is largely placed within a certain boundaries of religion, caste, culture. Chakroborty (2005) emphasises how the televised images within soaps (and ads) are homogenized and, 'set in a largely upper class urban 'Indian' milieu with no particular regional identity, but 'upper caste, upper class and almost invariably rich'.

Sivadas (2007) also notes how the core structure of the daily soap is packaged around a larger than life Indian (read Hindu) family. The family is first presented as the ideal, which is undermined through a series of conflicts between men and women, often to do with contemporary issues of working women, divorce, extra-marital relationships, sexual harassment, rape and abortion. As the narrative moves, these conflicts are resolved by affirming and dismissing certain traditional and modern values such that while a change comes about, family as an institution remains unchallenged, even though individuals may be transformed in different ways. The family is marketed as a 'dynamic entity' that allows for continuity and change, without much contradiction.

Through the process, gender constructs are reinforced along stereotypical lines. The key characters are mostly females, some of who are repositories of the normative order, who work to restore the core values of the family, and some are the ones who threaten this order. At a superficial level, these serials might seem pro women, because the lead characters are often assertive and 'fighting' for a cause, but the focus remains essentially on their 'responsibilities' rather than her 'rights'. What also comes across is that a woman's place is in the home, with almost per cent of female characters are confined to kitchen, living room, dining room and bedrooms. They enter the professional world only when they have to save their spouses or family from external manipulations. Altogether, while modern situations are deployed in soaps, what remains unchanged is the representation of women within the traditional space of patriarchy.

The question of how the market gets intertwined with tradition to construct gender, and a gendered nation-state has been explored by Rajagopal (1999) in his analysis of contemporary television advertisements. Globalisation he says, accommodates itself to, and is reshaped within given cultural configurations. With the onset of this process, liberalisation, ad makers began to capitalise heavily on the traditional marker of identities, to reach out to a larger section of consumers, deploying largely signs of Hindu culture, such as imagery and symbols of auspiciousness, observance of festival days as occasions for consumption of particular kinds of goods etc. These practices have in effect been shaped by contemporary political processes, the most significant of which is the 'Hinduisation' of the polity. With their affinity with market ideology, advertisements came to regard religious tradition as an acceptable and effective way of communication. As a corollary, he says, the right-wing itself has used advertising and consumer culture to make in-roads at the grassroots and ascend the political stage. It also effectively utilized the medium of TV broadcasting in the 80s to transmit popular religious programming. The factors conditioning the symbolic field are also manifest in the gender representations of ads. Advertisers, Rajagopal says, primarily perceive themselves as 'modernisers' who have to 'uplift' women by giving

them desires and helping them to fulfil these, through consumption. 'The traditional/dowdy woman thus realises she could be beautiful, with the right products'. The older and extended power relations within homes are transformed, privileging obligations to only the patriarchal nuclear family. However all this is achieved with a commitment to 'an idealised upper caste aesthetic' that dominates the advertisers' conception of the middle class. So for instance, while desire and intimacy is legitimized in ads, its portrayal remains coded in upper caste (and thereby upper class) terms.

John (2000) makes a similar observation of how representations of gender and sexuality in ads are cast within dominant upper caste/class ethic, within the context of 'liberalisation' and 'globalisation' of sexual economies, as visible in the 'inundation' of the public spaces with sexual images on posters, billboards, cinema, TV, magazines and newspapers. She argues that the contemporary formulations of female sexuality are at some remove from the more familiar imageries of women's 'commodification' and 'objectification', and women are now shown as active consumers and sexual subjects, what with modelling and fashion becoming a sought after career choice. She particularly points to the ads of Kamasutra (KS) condom, depicting a couple in a state of sexual arousal, that symbolize in many ways a new public 'legitimation' of sexuality in the form of consensual, mutual, safe and private heterosexual pleasure. This is in marked contrast to earlier figures of the government sponsored Nirodh ad, dominant with the motif of the small 'happy family'. 'The KS images have no sign of family, state, or law and could be read as promoting 'untrammled heterosexual lust', a break from the 'regimented' world of Nirodh' (ibid).

But the logic of these new representations, she says can be traced very effectively to consumer capitalism, caste hierarchy and the debate of fertility/contraception in globalised urban India. First, the 'mobilisation of desire' has obvious links with consumer culture, what with proliferation of commodities that promise happiness, sexual fulfillment and transformed relations for middle class men and women, in the

arena of self care, beauty, fashion or home. Second, any pressures that this kind of 'sexualisation' may have on the institution of marriage is regulated by 'representing the class-caste endogamy as the dominant norm within marriage within media spaces'. Third, is the reconfiguring of the fertility/contraception debate within globalisation. For instance, while earlier the condom was related with the poor and the family size control, with liberalisation, when the middle classes have come into their own and are representative of the nation, there is a simultaneous distancing in their lives from those of the poor masses and old ideas. So the condom has been out cast out of its earlier uses to now signify pleasure. But 'it is pleasure for *us* and fertility control/contraception for *them*'.

Conclusion

To encapsulate the key issues highlighted within this review of writings, the onset of liberalisation that has facilitated capital inflows within previously secured territories has captured in its current the mainstream Indian media. What is present before the audience a range of choices in both print and electronic format, but any notion of plurality and democracy that this might allude to is deluding because these are controlled by select corporate houses. Both the emerging media institutions and the old are being organized as corporate structures, entailing changes in patterns of ownership and sponsorship. Being firmly located within the lap of the state and the market, and consequently censor any such content that threatens this regime. The Indian press seems to then have come a long way from the time of the freedom struggle and beyond, when a considerable section of it, free from commercial constraints, took an anti-establishment stance, bringing in its critical gaze, political and economic policy and practice, and how that affected the larger masses of the nation. In contrast, the goal of profit generation that the media corporates are driven by, through generation of ad revenues, has come to be materialised in a healthy nexus of advertising and editorial, which produces content that solely caters to the needs and aspirations of only those who can consume what the advertisers have to offer, privileging thus the urban consuming classes. Concomitantly, eliminated from the text and the screen are 'political' news, representations of the poor and issues

spanning development, equity or justice. What fill the space instead are ‘soft’ features (advertorials) enveloping the ideology of the free market, a package of good living, leisure and consumption, tied around the thread of self-gratification. The ideological project permeates also in representations of gender and feminism. Within news, advertisements and fiction genres, visibility is granted to only men and women of the middle and upper classes, and they are highlighted as ‘consumers’ of the choices that the market offers, in the realm of well-paying jobs, products for the self and household. The detachment from collective concerns is manifest in how feminism gets redefined in the media; as feminism of ‘choice and consumption’, emptied of its political vision rooted in ideas of collective justice. Within this matrix, the only collective that is valorised and protected in the middle class family. Within its representations in ads and fiction genres, any strains it may bear from the privileging of individuality and selfhood, and the current set of transformations, are smoothed out, one through owning ‘products’, for family is an important site of consumption, and two through the agency of women, who are burdened to embody an ideal blend of tradition and modernity, of patriarchy and consumption. The ‘gendered’ and ‘consuming’ middle class family is set largely in the Hindu upper caste/class background, which has a connect with the majoritarian ethic permeating the polity and the market, within the space of globalising India. In essence, who gets ‘visibility’ within the screen space is intrinsically linked to who is obtains ‘visibility’ within the vision of globalisation. It is the relation of the regime with vision and visibility that I explore within the next chapter.

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Chapter III

Materiality, Reality and Representation

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to conceptualise media within a broad theoretical framework, drawing in its fold issues emergent within the previous chapter. As seen, the mass media is essentially linked with economy, not only in how it gets organized, but also in how its representations bear the imprint of the complex interaction of economy, society and culture. With global capitalism, the political economy of industrialized western countries is being implanted here; concomitantly, media practices prevalent there are also being reproduced here, though conditioned within local specificities. In order to understand why and how these transformations are taking shape, one needs to probe into the historical relations of capital within human society. This chapter hopes to articulate these relations, privileging focus on structural formations of gender, class and nation. It does so through the use of the conceptual categories such as property and ideology, as elucidated within the writings of Marx and Engels, and many others who have developed upon it. Even though the classical thinkers wrote at a time when capital and media were not as *spectacular* as today, but their ideas have been luminously relevant for times then and now. For instance, the Communist Manifesto, written more than 150 years ago, offers a prophetic account of how capitalism has an inherent impulse to globalise; it reads: ‘...the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe’ and ‘... the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country’. Given this context, the framework here outlines the interrelationship of materiality, reality and representation and has been organized around the concepts of *Property* and *Vision*. It is thematically divided as follows:

- I. Relations of Property and Vision
- II. Consumption of Property/Vision
- III. Property and Visual Media

I

Relations of Property and Vision

'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes... she took of the fruit there of, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband... And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons...'

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; Genesis

Etymologically speaking, the word vision comes from the Latin *root visio* (Dictionary.com 2008a) and signifies the ability to see, or the sense of sight. Connected to it is the ability to perceive and know. The field of view or vision is in that light the field of knowledge, or through our vision, we possess knowledge. The idea of possession also relates to property. Stemming from the Latin word *proprietas* (Dictionary.com 2008b), the word property means to own, possess or appropriate something. 'Property' also shares etymological relations with propriety (Dictionary.com 2008c), which refers to the quality of being proper, or observing the customs of a polite society.

The relations between property and vision occur not merely in language, but history, for language is 'articulated' in history. How these relations get materialised in myriad forms, becomes the focus of the text within this section.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels trace the historical emergence of private property, class and state, and illuminate how these formations interweave with dominant 'ideas' in society. They illustrate the theory of the materialist conception of history in which the 'production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life' (Marx and Engels 1976: 36). It starts from the premise that 'men must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history' (ibid: 41). For this they need to reproduce their physical existence, through interaction with nature

and through social intercourse, which includes also the propagation of family. The 'mode of production' that comes about at any historical stage is however not merely an activity, but a way of 'expressing their life'. Accompanying these basic historical relations is 'consciousness', of being in the actual life process, of nature, of living society; consciousness is thus a social product. 'It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness' (ibid: 37).

With increased productivity, increasing needs and population, *division of labour* occurs in society, which gradually appears between material and mental labour. It implies the fact that 'intellectual and material activity, enjoyment and labour, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals and the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in negating in its turn the division of labour' (ibid: 45). It is based on the 'natural division of labour in the family', where wife and children are the slaves of the husband, and division of society into 'individual families opposed to one another,' and manifests in the 'unequal distribution of labour and its products (both quantitative and qualitative),' which constitutes *property*. Division of labour and private property are thus identical expressions (ibid: 46). The various stages of development in the division of labour are the many different forms of property.

With the progress of history, as the division of labour became more complex, the forms of property changed, giving rise to corresponding *classes*, with mutually antagonistic interests. Thus, 'in all epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank' (Marx and Engels 1977: 41). The modern society however is the 'epoch of the bourgeoisie', 'the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production (ibid: 40). They are the employers of wage labourers, who are the proletariat, 'a class of labourers who live as long they find work, and who find work so long as their labour increases capital' (ibid: 51). They are 'the slaves of the bourgeois class, bourgeois state, and who are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, over-looker and individual bourgeois manufacturer himself' (ibid: 52).

Individuals of a ruling class assert their supremacy through the form of *state*, in which they represent their 'particular' interests as 'general' interests, disconnected from real individual and common interests (Marx and Engels 1976: 46). The bourgeoisie state then is nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeoisie adopt, to guarantee their property and interests, or to 'manage the whole affairs of the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels 1977: 44). The modern state then corresponds to modern private property.

The legitimacy of this class rests also to a great degree on the control over production of ideas in society. 'The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production... Ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force... The ruling ideas in themselves are nothing more than the dominant material relations grasped as ideas' (Marx and Engels 1976: 59). Further 'each new class which puts itself in place of one ruling before presents its interest as common interest of all members of society, that is expressed in an ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and present them as the only rational, universally valid ones' (ibid: 60). In any historical period therefore, these ideas seem to have an independent existence, dominating lives of men (and women) and appear to be detached from their material source and production and. 'In all ideology, men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura...' (ibid: 36).

Developing upon these ideas, Gramsci (1996) elucidated on how the ruling classes maintained their stability both through a combination of force, using institutions of the state, and 'hegemony', that is dominance through ideologies, using civil society institutions and cultural forms that induce consent of the majority of subaltern, or subordinate groups. 'The historical unity of the ruling classes... concretely results from the organic relation between state or political society and civil society' (ibid: 52).

In the backdrop of this brief and rather simplified description, one can see the complex relations of property and vision. Property constructs a vision, a world view, a representational means within which we 'see' and 'recognise' ourselves, our social relations and the world. The 'vision' of ruling ideologies deludes vision in that what is seen is as reality is not real and what is real is not seen, or rather masterfully inverted or concealed. For 'ideologies tend to disappear into view into the taken for granted world of 'common sense' (Hall 1981: 271), and naturalize and legitimise the ruling order.

Subjects and Objects of Property/Vision

One can say then property *represents* a vision. And this vision is itself implicated within the relations of property. The subjects (owners) of property can actively see, look, visualise and represent. They are thus also the subjects of 'vision' or 'sight'. The propertyless, who produce property as its slaves: the women, the working classes, the blacks, or lower castes are denied the power to see, visualise and represent the world. Instead they are looked at and represented. Just like the property owner casts a satisfied gaze at the property in his possession, he casts a gaze at them, and his gaze embodies power. They are then the objects of 'property', and the objects of 'sight', and cannot meet eyes with the subjects, as visible in the proprieties of stooped bodies, shrunken gaits and the veils. The denial of sight manifests in the objects looking at their own 'self' through the eyes of subjects, and experiencing what Du Bois (1903) described as 'double consciousnesses and Fanon (1961) as the 'second sight'. 'Race', says Fanon, is not inherent to bodies but is added by the careful surveillance by others (ibid). A woman too feels this two-ness, when she continually watches herself from the eyes of men, her self split into two, accommodating both the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* (Berger 1971:46). However the spell of property/vision is such that it transforms 'objects' as 'subjects' (or authors) of vision, through knowledge and recognition, although 'it does not allow them to see or know 'the mechanism of this recognition' (Althusser 1984).

Public/Private; Production/Reproduction

Property engages with vision to also chart out zones of visibility/invisibility, light/darkness. Not only can the objects cannot see and envision, but also they cannot be 'seen' or be 'visible' in the 'public spheres' that the subjects behold. The 'bourgeois public sphere' of the enlightenment period of the west, which Habermas idealizes and hopes to reclaim, and where 'citizens' came together to deliberate on the important issues of society, was 'restricted to the presence of property owning white men and excluded working class, blacks, women and those of other ethnicities' (Marris and Thornham 1996: 15). The caste structure in India, through its social constructions of pollution/purity also actively reproduces these borders.

Just as private property is sought to be hoarded away in private, away from the public gaze, so the 'objects' of private property are also relegated to that space. For it is these very spatial divisions that ensure the production and reproduction of property, through the production of subject object relations. It is within the private, stifling confines of the factory and the home that capital gets generated. Whilst the subjects of property visibly swarm the public spaces, the masses of working labourers are crowded and enslaved into the dark zones of work, such as 'the modern factory, where they are organized like soldiers and placed under command of a hierarchy of officers' (Marx and Engels 1977: 52). The rise of capitalism produced a separation of the workplace from domestic space, accompanied by the notion that women and men are suited to separate spheres and that a woman's place is in the family and home. Marx and Engels (1977) saw women as 'instruments of labour,' whose position in the home was equivalent to the worker outside, with the husband/father in the position of the capitalist exploiter of labour power. Engels (1884) described how homes (families) reproduces the labour power for the factory as women do the work that keeps the male fit and fed enough to work each day, and also produce and rear the next generation of workers (and owners). Family, with the division of labour it inscribes, therefore contributes significantly to the regime of private property.

Gender/Class di/visions

As seen then, the objects of property are wrenched of both 'vision' and 'labor', and both are a definite precondition to each other, for it is this schema of appropriation that ensures that while sharing a world of oppression, the objects, such as women, are unable to 'sight' each other. A bourgeois 'housewife' and her domestic servant have a world of difference in their social positioning, with the servant much more exploited, but there does exist a shared nature of oppression. This is in the fact that women of all classes are exploited both at home in the form of unpaid labour even though forms of work could be multiple and varying (see Walby 1986, 1990; Delphy and Leonard 1992), and experience gendered labour markets when they move outside for 'paid' work, such as getting jobs that are lower paid than men's jobs, casual and perilous (see Hartmann 1990, Mitter 1986, Witz 1990) or those that might involve sexual labour (see Adkins 1995, Robinson 1994). The division of labour then in its socially produced differences of class, caste, race, and nationality, 'divides', as also 'blinds' objects, for if they 'recognise' each other and begin to 'see together', the edifice of this division/property would collapse.

'Seeing' the Body objects

The larger scheme of appropriation of vision and visibility in relation to objects in order that they produce property through their labouring bodies, manifests in them being 'seen' or granted 'visibility' as just that: body-objects that can work tirelessly akin to the order of machines in a factory. Marx and Engels (1977) wrote about the labourers in modern society, who are like a 'commodity' and must sell themselves 'piecemeal' (ibid: 51), whose average wage labour is the minimum quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in 'bare existence' (ibid: 64) and to reproduce their race, and who with the use of machinery have become an 'appendage of the machine' (ibid: 51). They further wrote that for the proletariat, the differences of age and sex have no longer any social validity for all its members are instruments of labour (ibid: 53). This implies that as long as 'bodies' are able to work and be reproduced in minimum investment of capital, they would be seen as useful for capital/property.

Counter posed against the body-objects and controlling them, are the 'subjects' of property, who embody mind, reason and knowledge. The subjects are the masters of machines and bodies, and skilfully manage them to augment production. It is for such reason that, 'a familiar landscape of industrial capitalism includes time-sheet, time-keeper, informers and fines (Harvey 1989: 231). The bodies and sexuality of women have always been sites of control in the service of heterosexuality and reproduction of family (Bryson 2003).

This body/mind dualism has been central to western thought and philosophy, and envelops binaries such as mother(woman) and father(man), matter and form, mortal and immortal, with the mind placed in a position of power or hierarchical superiority over and above body/nature (Grosz 1995). The 'body has been regarded as a source of interference in, and a danger to the operations of reason' (ibid: 47). The relations of mind/body also bring in its comparable frame the binary of public/private between men and women. 'A model based on the concept of private and public spheres across cultures and time shows the boundaries of what is valued and what is not, such that 'throughout societies, what men do is valued above what women do, even if both do the same things in the same places at the same time' (Imray and Middleton 1983: 155). Typically this cleavage manifests in how domestic work is evaluated both in social and material terms as opposed to the intellectual realm of commerce and politics.

Constructing 'visibility' in nature/culture

The objects of property are not only objectified *as* bodies but also often *through* their bodies, or in how these appear in 'vision'. 'Society locates the sign which marks out the dominants from the dominated within the zone of physical traits' (Delphy 1993: 54). In both racial and sexual conceptions, it is the visible signs on bodies, such as the biological differences between men and women's bodies, differences of skin colour and other ethnic markers in race that are spotted in vision and used to objectively categorize them as objects/others (Hall 2007:314). Racial difference for example is

‘seen’ and ‘inscribed’ (Fanon 1967), and in this, a key role is played by different scientific disciplines, including natural history, biology, physiology (Gilroy 1998).

Subjects ‘identify’ these differences and give cultural meanings and significations and thereby ‘naturalise’ property relations. The hierarchies of property are then seen in nature and history, over and across space and time, something immovable as property itself. Subjects of property/vision/knowledge are thus also embodiments of ‘culture’ who act upon nature, and recast it culturally; and in this scheme, the objects of property/vision/body are embodiments of nature who are acted upon.

Feminist theorists have shown how gender is constituted out of ‘sex’, the biological maleness and femaleness of bodies. These bodily differences between women and men may be ‘inescapable’, but ‘in themselves they have no significance’ (Beauvoir 1949), but constructions of femininity and masculinity, while in no way connected to these differences, have been culturally embedded or naturalized within it (Scott 2006, Bock 2006). The division of labour seen between men and women, in which women are represented as inferior and unequal, is seen as natural and functional, even while it exists primarily to the service of property. Feminists term this inequality as patriarchy and illuminate how it reproduces with and within capitalist structures (Delphy 1975, Ehrenreich 1976, Eisenstein 1979), as also with race, caste or religion. It also bears upon for sexuality is also gendered and gender divisions are sustained by normative heterosexuality (Ingraham 1994), which is essential for the reproduction of family and through that property. The ‘natural’ and ‘hierarchical’ difference between ‘men’ and ‘women’ and its socio-cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity have also been produced to construct and constitute the nation, as it is constituted by also race, class, ethnicity; also the nation (state) and its nationalisms itself has reproduced these gendered and familial differences. The nation is typically seen as a ‘family’ with its public/private divisions. Men control/protect/defend the nation, and also the women, in particular their sexuality; women are seen as embodiments of home and hearth, of tradition and national culture’. In many ways the nation is seen as a masculine construct, with assumed heterosexuality (Nagel 1999, Sinha 2006).

Property not only 'sights' visible differences in bodies or nature, but also inscribes in it, through cultural practices that codify appearance or demeanour, according to gender, race or class, often by the order of the state. Property thus also represents propriety. For instance, 'manners' were used in early modern societies to distinguish 'propertied' and thus 'cultured' from classes closer to 'nature', such as in functions of eating, urinating, defecating, spitting or blowing one's nose (Elias 2005). Similarly, (sumptuary) laws were formulated in the same period that regulated and imposed 'recognisability' of social groups in urban life by prescribing or prohibiting certain dresses, such as reserving the wearing of silks and furs to nobles, or the requirement for prostitutes to wear coloured patches, special hats or bells, or prohibition of female servants to wear trains on their robe (Hunt 1966: 66). There were also more coercive forms, such as branding iron imprints in the flesh of criminals and vagabonds in, such as sturdy beggars were branded with 'V' for vagabond on the chest, and an 'S' for a second offence (ibid: 68).

Contesting nature/culture

What can be derived from the discussion above is that private property is based as seen on the centrality of 'vision', of 'visibility' of bodies and bodily differences, and ultimately these differences of nature are made to seem 'real' in culture. What can be seen through the eyes is verifiable and thus related to 'truth'.

In order to contest property, however, theorists struggle to critique not just 'culture', but also 'nature', for it is culture that 'constructs' nature, and not just 'constructs upon' it. 'Nature has a history and is not a passive, lifeless, blank page outside the social' (Butler 1993: 64). Feminists thus wish to question not only gender but also the idea of the 'visible' sex 'difference' itself as given and natural, for sex is also gendered, and is itself the product of society and culture (see Butler 1990, Delphy 1993). 'Just as class struggle seeks to do away with classes, so feminist struggle should aim to do away with sex differences... The social mode of being of men and of women is in no way linked to their nature as males and females nor with the shape of their sex organs' (Delphy 1977, cited in Jackson and Scott 2000: 17) 'We shall

only really be able to think about gender on the day when we can imagine nongender...' (Delphy 1993: 58)

The natural as normal and normalcy as discipline

It becomes important to contest 'nature' or the 'naturalised' constructions around gender, race and class because what is 'natural' is also then considered and codified as 'normal' in society. The knowledge of these 'norms' and 'normative' within modern society, as Foucault (1985) has illustrated, is embedded with power and violence. And this discipline and violence is bound up with vision in a way that while it is always in view, it disappears from view, such that within its overbearing spell, the 'subjects' of vision conform to these norms through their own knowledge.

The modern society is a society of norms, which emerged in the context of development of modern human sciences (Fraser and Greco 2005). The development of anatomico-clinical medicine and of physiology (the science of normal vital functions) was particularly significant in bringing in 'social regulation' and 'secular rationality' based on the normal/abnormal distinction. Not only in medicine but in many other fields, pedagogy, psychology, economics, warfare, or even transportation, the normal/abnormal categorization gradually emerged as important and was manifest in standardization of practice and production across a given national territory (ibid: 17-18).

These norms were then used to recognise, categorise subordinate 'objects'. Bodily norms were produced, and provided the 'objective' standard of reference to determine normality or deviance in a variety of discourses, such as criminology or psychiatry. For instance, Gould (1981) illustrates how the discourses of evolutionary biology and of physical anthropology were utilized to justify the inferior status of black people, such as producing studies that demonstrated a correlation between (increasing) brain size and the progress of European civilization. Similarly Davis (1997) describes how 'normal bodies' were produced through the production of disability as an abnormality

in culture forms, which resulted in the exclusion of the 'disabled', from the standardised productive processes of industrial societies.

The normal/pathological distinction also became manifest in discourses of sexuality, with heterosexuality as the institutionalised norm and homosexuality as deviance as Foucault has described in his 'histories of sexuality'. The binary divide of heterosexuality and homosexuality is interrelated with gender, but also produces inequalities within gender. Thus, while gay men may enjoy certain privileges as men, their status is still considered less than equal and they are often regarded as less than 'real men' and subject to discrimination, ridicule and even violence ((Jackson and Scott 2000: 14). Lesbians are also similarly victimised for departing from normative femininity. Creed (1995) highlights how lesbian women also face such discriminations, and how their bodies are distinguished from the 'normal' bodies of other women through representations such as the lesbian body as active and masculinised, animalistic, narcissistic, in order to evade the kind of threat they offer to patriarchal heterosexual culture. Norms get produced also within heterosexual imaginations. Skeggs (1997) illustrates how in the 18th and 19th century, an 'ideal' of femininity emerged that was explicitly White and middle class and that, importantly, divided sexuality from femininity. Till day, norms such as of femininity, beauty, healthy bodies pervade through cultures and discipline subjects.

How these discourses of normal/abnormal relate to reproduction of property and its subject object relations can be further gathered in Foucault's (1985) account of how power was conceived and exercised within European states, particularly from the late 18th century onwards. His premise is that power relations establish the criteria for what gets to count as knowledge in a given society, and knowledge in turn produce power relations. The modern state has an interest in maintenance and regulation of its citizen 'subjects'; in order to function, properly it needs citizens who work, fight in wars, reproduce, and therefore have capable bodies. The idea of expert knowledge or discourses (and who produces and possesses it) is a fundamental aspect of power relations. Using expert knowledge and its discourses, the state actively manages,

orders, catalogues the body through social hygiene, public health, education, demography, census taking and regulative reproductive practices. The power of the modern state is thus exercised indirectly upon the body, producing 'docile bodies' in order to maintain relations of subordination and this is that Foucault (1977) termed as biopower. Modern power is capable of normalizing bodies or. 'The body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs...' (ibid: 25). The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjective body.

However, the normalizing and disciplining of bodies happens not by a process of coercion, but rather co-operation of citizen subjects, who do their own self-surveillance and self-disciplining. Foucault (1977) says that whereas monarchies and totalitarian political systems function through the overt exercise and display of punishment for the violation of laws, such as public execution, in modern societies power relations are structured to proud citizens who will actively participate in self-regulating behaviour'. This means that citizens willingly obey laws, participate and adhere to dominant social norms and values.

How this is achieved is through the interplay of vision. Property employs 'vision' to create a 'trap of visibility' or 'gaze' such that its 'subjects' watch and regulate themselves according to the norms laid out within it. Foucault uses the figure of Bentham's *Panopticon* as a model of functioning of power; which induces in men and (women) 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility and consciousness that assures the automatic functioning of power (ibid: 201). 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.' (ibid: 202) The systems are in place encourage subjects to self-regulate without any active threat of punishment, by internalising a 'managerial

gaze'. 'With permanent visibility 'each becomes his own jailor' and personifies heightened self-consciousness.'

To conclude the schema depicted by far, the production of property is in a dialectical relation with production of a vision, and each reproduces the other. Property actively constructs a matrix of 'vision' and 'visibility' within which its subject object relations are cast, naturalized and thereby invisibilised. In the historical journey of property, 'bodies' have borne the marks of surveillance/violence, in enslaving work, disciplining norms, sexual violence, corporeal punishment, torture, wars... The preoccupation of property with 'visibility' and 'bodies' has meant that only the violence on and of the bodies gets acknowledged, if it does. The unseen zone of mental oppression and violence that the objects embody is not validated, because it cannot be verified and cannot be true. Also because it immediately brings into view the 'sameness' and thereby 'equality' of all others as humans, who bear similar repertoire of emotions, desires, fears, pains, suffering, and a 'vision' that 'sees it' has the ability to rupture the arbitrary divisions created on and through their bodies.

II

Consumption of Property and Vision

The production and relations of property, as described above, also bears a complex relation with consumption. In his theory of class relations, Marx proposed a dialectical relationship between production and consumption. 'The act of production in all moments also an act of consumption... 'Production requires consumption in as much as consumption requires production and the two are essentially different 'moments' in the circulation of capital' (Marx 1973: 252-53). Like production, consumption is therefore also articulated with vision/gaze. One, in how property/gaze is *consumption*, and two, in how consumption itself is *property/gaze*.

Property/Gaze as Consumption

‘Consumption’ or consuming something is an act of creative destruction, as it involves both the act destroying and obtaining pleasure; the commodity is destroyed to create pleasure for the consumer (Clarke et al 2003: 1). The subjects of property consume objects of property, i.e. their bodies in labour to produce property. The subjects/objects of property are also thus also the subjects/ objects of consumption, i.e., consumers and commodities. In other words, objects/commodities are destroyed (consumed) for the production of pleasure (property); property/consumption is therefore both destructive and pleasurable.

Subjects of property consume the objects also in gaze. In essence, it is through this gaze that pleasurable property/consumption takes form, for gaze in itself is consumption and is both violent and pleasurable. ‘When someone gazes intently at an object, we say that he ‘devours it with his eyes... the eye, or the glance, is a sadistic weapon’ (Fenichel 1954: 326-7). Gaze also induces pleasure; in the unconscious, gaze/sight is eroticised and libidinised, a key agent in the production of sexual pleasure (Lacan as cited in Silverman 1983, Fenichel 1954, Rose 1986).

The violence and pleasure of consumption/gaze come together most conspicuously in a gendered context in which the ‘masculine’ subject (property owner) actively and sexually gazes at/consumes/destroys the ‘feminine’ object (property). Like an attractive display of objects in a department store that are meant to give pleasure to the eyes, women as body-objects are consumed for sexual pleasure, so the idealised imageries of women are the passive, ‘mannequins’ stood in the store or walking on the ramp, devoid of emotions of a human subject. The sexual pleasure that the subjects derive in this gaze/consumption therefore translates in as much as the violence on its objects.

Consumption as Property/Gaze

Linked to how property/gaze translates as consumption, are the ways in which consumption itself translated as property/gaze. As Marx elucidates, an expansion of

the capitalist production is functionally dependent on an expanding sphere of consumption, as the product only obtains its 'last finish' or in fact *becomes* a real product through consumption. 'Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter's material; without it, consumption would lack an object. Consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are the products' (Marx 1973: 252-53).

The need to expand consumption has fashioned the development of what is now known as the consumer society, 'a society where it increasingly *makes sense* to think of all kinds of incongruous activities as instances of *consumption*' (Clarke et al 2003: 27). The birth of the consumer society is associated with the advent of modernity, i.e. the coming of industrialization, mass production and consolidation of population in major urban centres (Fine and Leopold 1990), although some scholars trace its origins prior to the industrial revolution of the 19th century (McKendrick 1982, Appelby 1993). The modern societies of European and North American societies as being the stencil for today's consumer society in other parts of the world, in the current phase of globalisation, which is also termed as consumer capitalism (see Harvey 2005, Clark 2003).

The regime of consumption has been installed far and wide, and according to Bauman (1983) the modern consumer society has become the disciplinary power/gaze (that Foucault describes) and is used as a tool of social control, integration and reproduction of class relations, in short, property. He says that there is a shift from a repressive disciplinary society of early modernity to now when consumption itself acts as a power to buy workers' compliance, to both produce and subject his body. Earlier, unruly elements were brought under control by enclosure in institutional places such as workhouses, prisons, asylums, poorhouses where they were disciplined to work as a punishment, which later paved the way for the factory system. With the emergence of consumerism as a socially sustainable form, and increasing 'embourgeoisment' of a considerable portion of the working population in industrialised countries, the work force works not so much through enforced

discipline, but through the seduction that is on offer in the sphere of consumption (ibid).

The disciplinary gaze of consumption fashions 'subjects' as consumers who willing to consume (and thus produce) commodities through their bodies by an act of their free choice. Their bodies also become a site of consumption as they discipline them these according to prevailing norms of beauty, health or lifestyle. (Baudrillard 1988, Bowlby 1985, Featherstone 1982).

To conclude, the production *and* consumption of property is materialised through the reproduction of subject and object relations, which is bound up with the production and consumption of a vision/gaze, within which these relations get carved out and naturalised. The emergent question however is, whether this representational schema is all blinding? Gramsci's (1996) formulation of dominant 'hegemony' informs us that while it is intended to, it is in fact not. The material and ideological dominance of property is always in challenge from the objects, who *can* 'see through' and thereby resist its meanings. Ideologies, and power, are necessarily in flux and continually contested and negotiated. The ruling classes do not have 'hegemony' but rather it is a condition that they have to constantly to arrive at by reaffirming its power/ideologies in the face of 'counter-hegemonic' forces in society. How their hegemony is realised, or how their hegemonic visions are constructed, this question has been dealt with in the following section.

III

Property and Visual Media

Hegemonic representations/ideologies are constructed through the utilization of systems of representations such as *language* and *images*. The material world only has meaning and can only be 'seen' through these systems of representation. These come together, within the modern period, in visual media and cultures, such as painting, photography, films, television, newspapers and magazines. These media have been

actively used to construct reality, and not just reflect a reality out there. How these media get produced and disseminated and how meanings are materialised within them has been briefly described below, within the scope of the following sub-sections.

- a. 'Means' of Media Production
- b. Production/Texts
- c. Consumption

a. 'Means' of Media Production

The production and circulation of many of these media is largely owned and controlled by 'property', through the market and the state in the form of *mass media*, a group of technologies designed to reach large audiences perceived to have shared interests, typically including print and broadcast media, films, and even audio sources such as radio and records. Unlike individual artists, the work of assembling a newspaper or a broadcast programme for mass consumption requires substantial investment of capital (Marris and Thornham 1996:115) and therefore its control.

The concept of mass, mass media or culture, however, is a contested one. Williams (1961: 20-21) says that masses are always 'other people'; there *are* no masses; there are only 'ways of seeing' people as masses, and this kind of seeing has become characteristic of modern, urban society and has been capitalised for the purposes of political or 'cultural exploitation', or the manipulation and persuasion of a large number of people to act, feel, think, know in certain ways. Adorno and Horkheimer (1975) and Garnham (1990) stress sharply on this idea of the domination and exploitation of the 'masses' by mass culture (as opposed to high culture) to disseminate and reproduce ideologies. In this light, they suggest that mass culture should be redefined as culture industry, in order to exclude the interpretation that 'it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves' (ibid: 98). The 'culture industries' are organized like any other commercial sector of manufacture and consumption, and manufactures 'cultural commodities' according to plan that integrates the consciousness of masses smoothly

within the regime and cycle of capitalist production. 'The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms' (ibid: 99).

Thompson (1988) expresses criticism of how Adorno (1975) conceptualises the products of cultural industry as having a totalising, numbing and dumbing effect on the 'masses', and suggests that 'mass' is not homogenous entity, but comprises individuals with specific socio-historical contexts, who actively interpret the messages given out within the media. However he shares a similar understanding of how mass media is a key ideological agency in modern society, active in the production and diffusion of 'symbols, images, values and ideas', through a repertoire of forms, whose production is mediated by industrial organizations. The cultural messages become products to be sold, which are used to facilitate the sale of other goods. 'Hence the calculations concerning the marketability of the product shape, the character and content of the message produced.' This process involves specific institutional arrangements, which also include relations between broadcasting institutions and state organizations, as the latter are responsible for monitoring output as also circulation so that it doesn't harm or endanger its interests (ibid: 31-33).

The ideological nature of mass communications is however manifest not only in its production/diffusion, but also in the construction of the message in the media products and its reception/appropriation (Thompson 1988: 36-39). Each of these visual media embodies a distinct language of communication, i.e. rules and conventions about how they are organised, as visible in its internal features such as imagery, narrative, style and tone. The messages or meanings produced in the media is coded with and can be interpreted as signs, in the way that all language and communications is, bearing the imprint of social, cultural and historical context in which it is produced and consumed. These media are therefore often approached through semiology, a study of signs and meanings developed by Charles Peirce, Saussure and others, which reads it as a text. 'Semiology's historic and persisting value lies in the way it compels a close regard for how meanings are made by a text, which thereby 'denaturalises; these meanings and highlights their socially produced

character' (Marris and Thornham 1996: 196). The content within the media is however not separable from the technologies or the apparatus that convey them (see McLuhan 1994, Williams 1974). 'The words *form* and *content* do not stand for totally distinct areas of experience. There is no content without a form, and no form which does not shape content' (Burgin 1997: 43). Content such as images from one media can circulate through and be reproduced in other media forms and cultures and this can produce a change in meanings (Benjamin 1968).

The idea that the meanings changes according to 'context' indicates how the meaning is not inherent or self-sufficient in the media text. Hall (2007: 310) says that the meanings rest and are completed in the articulation between the text and the audience, between the viewer and the viewed. The capacity of a text to signify a meaning is realized only in use, when it is received and interpreted. Meaning is embedded thus in the relationship of production and consumption, and it is within this interaction that dominant meanings within a given culture emerge (ibid). When produced, all texts are encoded with dominant meanings, which however do not speak to everyone universally. Just as audiences create meanings from texts, texts also construct audiences. Texts are addressed to an 'ideal' subject among the audience, who is termed as the spectator (Struken and Wright 2001: 72).

Althusser's (1984) concept of 'interpellation' helps to illustrate how viewers are made to recognize themselves and identify with the 'ideal subject' offered by texts, which is through 'ideological recognition'. This process also has a relationship with the unconscious. The psychoanalytic theory developed by Freud and later Lacan, offers knowledge that viewers can have intense relationship with media, because these allow one to articulate unconscious desires through looking, and looking and desire has a direct relation with how humans come to develop as subjects (Gamble 1999, Silverman 1983). The concept of gaze, as given earlier, is derived out of this understanding, as it inscribes the relationship of looking and pleasure (Fenichel 1954).

b. Production/Texts

With the armoury of these ‘means’ of production, how texts and meanings are produced in different visual forms, inscribing relations of property/vision, has been studied at length by scholars. A brief analysis of the same has been attempted here, with focus on photography and television.

‘Capturing’ Property

Images or visuals are central to most forms of mass media, and thus one of the most important representational means for the production and dissemination of ideological visions. The ‘reality’ that an image represents is determined by who is its creator and also who is the subject it addressed to, as visible in its genres, such as paintings and photography. Berger (1977) notes how ‘the art of any period tends to serve the ideological interests of the ruling class’ and is thus a way of ‘seeing’ the world...’ (ibid: 87) He particularly focuses on the ‘images’ within the European renaissance paintings which he says embodied new attitudes to property and exchange. An ever-recurring subject within these paintings was of the nude woman, where she is portrayed as a ‘naked’ object/sight to be seen and judged by the ‘spectator-owners’ in front of the picture, who were mostly men. Describing the picture, Berger says, ‘She is not naked as she is... she is naked as the spectator sees her... nakedness in the eyes of the beholder’ (ibid: 45-63). Everything in the pictures bore the imprint of *his* presence; the pictures were made to appeal to *his* sexuality. Berger characterized these looking relations as one in which ‘men act and women appear’. Men and their ‘property’ was also visible also in another genre of paintings, in the same period, that were portraits of wealthy men in which they stood surrounded by the material objects in their possession. In chorus, there was also the ‘genre’ picture of the propertyless, which depicted ‘low life’, implying that those who worked hard prospered, and the ‘the good-for-nothings deservedly had nothing’. ‘Oil painting celebrated a new kind of wealth... which found its sanction in the supreme buying power of money... it was a celebration of private property... derived from the principle that you are what you have’ (ibid: 83-103)

The reproduction of property/vision also took shape with the invention of photography in Europe in early 19th century, which made possible a rapid production of images. Berger (1977) says '(Colour) photography is to the spectator-buyer what oil paint was to the spectator-owner. Both media use similar, highly tactile means to play upon the spectator's sense of acquiring the *real* thing which the image shows' (ibid: 140). Photography developed in a time when concepts of positivist science were dominant, and a photograph was (is) seen therefore as a much more empirical, true, objective and verifiable representation of reality, than most other media, and these ideas are particularly materialised in forms such as photo-journalism or documentary (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 16). It is however an ideological concept for the capturing of a photograph through the camera lens always involves subjective choice of the 'subject chosen, selection and framing from a range of possible sights, use of lighting, objects or, people (Burgin 1977). 'Manipulation is of the essence of photography; photography would not exist without it' (ibid: 41). Photographs are thus 'no more, and no less, than fragments of ideology...' (Watney 186: 159).

Barthes (1972, 1977) probed into the myth of the 'photographic truth'. An image he said can denote certain apparent truths, providing documentary evidence of objective circumstances. This is its *denotative* meaning and refers to its literal, descriptive meaning. The same photo also has a *connotative* meaning, i.e. more cultural and historical context of the image and its viewers' lived, felt knowledge of those circumstances. He used the term myth to refer to the cultural values and beliefs that are expressed at this level of connotation. Myth allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear to be denotative, and hence literal or natural. Myth are thus like ideologies, through which meanings which are in reality specific to certain groups are made to seem universal and given for a whole society. The material of 'myth' is not only an image, but also language, painting, posters, rituals, objects etc. 'If our society is objectively the privileged field of mythical significations, it is because formally myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society. And just as bourgeois ideology is define by the abandonment of the name 'bourgeois'; myth is constituted by the loss of historical

quality of things: in it things lose the memory that they once were made. 'Myth is therefore... a type of a speech chosen by history... it is de-historicised and de-politicised speech' (ibid 1977: 142)

Photographs, especially in the public domain have always been a bearer of these 'myths' or ideologies, especially as being located within specific discourses or institutions. For instance, the development of photography coincided with the development of the modern nation state, and played an important role in surveillance, regulation, categorization, and thus the functioning of the normal/abnormal discourses which produced 'docile bodies' of 19th century Europe that Foucault describes. Images have been used as a means of controlling populations, such as finger prints for identification, and evidence in criminal justice system (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, Tagg 1987). As an illustration, Sekula (1986) demonstrates how the construction of normality and deviance, and the 'naturalisation' of class differences was achieved through an analysis of photographs, particularly in the context of penal administration and law. The photograph seemed to offer a much more 'objective' and 'truthful' testimony to the reality of the criminal or the pauper than the oral testimonies by these individuals. These were used to map bodies in society along class lines, illustrating the difference between respectable normal bodies, and those of the socially pathological or deviant (ibid). Even today, photography is central to the function of policing and regulation of 'objects', as institutionalised in the 'gaze' of the surveillance cameras.

'Imaging' Property: Advertising

Images are also bound up with production of normative discourses in advertising, the industry that most devotedly realises consumption/gaze and thus property/vision. Advertising has considerable social and economic power within capitalist society, such that 'modern capitalism could not function without it' (Williams 1980: 705). The idea of 'commodity fetishism' developed by Marx (1954) is most closely linked to advertising. A commodity, he said, 'is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another' (ibid: 43).

Commodity fetishism refers to how commodities are emptied of the meaning of their production (how they were produced) and then filled with new meanings in ways that both mystify the product and turn it into a fetish object. In other words, commodities are given meanings that are tied up to the needs and identities of consumers.

There is a debate whether the 'needs' that commodities fulfil are falsely generated in people, who are 'dupes', or whether the consumers are 'sovereign' and their needs are merely identified and channelised by advertising/consumer culture. The answer, say Clarke et al (2003) is perhaps between the two extreme poles. The consumers are neither instilled with 'false needs' nor entirely 'free to choose'. Featherstone (1982: 166) says that consumer culture operates at two broad levels, it 'stimulate needs and desires... and also harnesses and channels genuine bodily needs and desires. What emerges is that whether these needs are 'natural' or 'cultural', they are constantly being culturally reproduced in order to enhance consumption. Williams (1980) says that in response to real human needs, advertising offers the illusory satisfaction by consumption of material goods... an attempt is made, by magic, to associate this consumption with human desires to which it has no real referent. You do not buy an object: you buy social respect, discrimination, health, beauty, success, power to control your environment' (ibid: 707-08). Baudrillard (1981) describes this process as fashioning commodities as signs, encoded with certain meanings which relate to strengthening one's identity and power. Our subjectivities, our worlds are constructed through use of commodities. Advertising makes consumers feel they can gain the qualities of commodities by purchasing it.

The advertising project of producing and mediating needs, desires and identities is achieved and sustained through the production of normative discourses in all spheres such as body, sexuality, lifestyle, family, that are tied to consumption. 'Images' are used to represent these ideals and show those who have not achieved them are incomplete and dissatisfied, whereas those who have (such as celebrities) are happier, enviable and desirable. Berger (1977) talks of how ads use images to project social values and ideologies about what 'good life' is, or life as 'it should be', ideas about

lifestyle, self-image, self-improvement and glamour; advertising is embedded in the language of 'future'. Jhally (1990: 329) says that advertising doesn't always mirror how people are acting, but how they're dreaming'. She highlights that fundamentally advertising tells us that we can become happy, and the key to it is the marketplace.

These normative ideals that advertising produces are tied to securing and reinforcing, and not disturbing the regime of consumption/gaze or property/vision, and therefore reproduce its subject object relations. In many ways commodities and consumer are also reproduced as subject and object. A number of scholars have analyzed how advertisements are racist (see Qualter 1991) and gendered (see Winship 1981, Nixon 1996) producing certain kind of femininities and masculinities in tune with the current order, such as the category of the 'new man' or 'new woman'. The gendered relation is also visible in the subject it addresses. Berger (1977) says within the 'images' of advertising, whose 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male, and the conventions of the 'nude' in which women offers up her femininity to be surveyed are firmly present. Women are thus the ever available commodities to be consumed.

The normative discourses of consumption are therefore particularly dominant on body and sexuality. With circulation of images of the perfect bodies has emerged greater self-consciousness among consumers. Featherstone (1982) says that consumer culture coincides as a culture of narcissism, which has brought a discipline of the self, of the body, in which commodities play an important role. 'Self preservation' is based on the 'preservation of the body' and body is the 'passport' to all that is good in life, achieving and preserving health, youth, beauty, sex. The commodities thus substitute for social relationships, including relationship of self to the self. These kind of images of normative bodies are particularly violent on 'women' who the principle targets of most of the consumer goods. Ideas of normative femininity permeate in the media sphere and focused on body, creating one who is perfect looker and worker, both within and outside home. Baudrillard (1988) says that within consumer culture, body has become an object for salvation, 'one which has taken the function of the soul' and

one has to be devoted it, or else blackmail, repression and persecution may follow. And this regime is particularly directed at women (ibid: 277-78).

The femininity that ads produce are also located within the site of the family, which as Struken and Wright (2001) say is a site most central to advertising, an idealised space where all problems can be solved by commodities. Other than family, ads also reproduce 'belongingness' of consumers to their boundaries of class, community, nation, as also their difference from the 'others' (ibid: 118). But the most important ideological role of ads, says Berger (1977: 149) is to turn consumption into a substitute for democracy. 'The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives) takes the place of significant political choice.' Williams (1980: 708) says the 'magic of advertising' obscures real sources of satisfaction (of human needs) because their discovery would involve radical change in the whole common way of life.'

Visualising property

The 'imaging' of advertising is materialised in not only still images but also moving images and narratives of television ads. However, advertising is ideological in not only how it is internally organized, but also in how it influences the production/texts in other media forms, such as press and television, through what Curran (1981) terms as a 'concealed subsidy system'. As a cultural industry, broadcast television is intrinsically tied to sponsorship. 'Viewers cost for access to TV is limited. So advertisers pay the networks for air time and viewers 'pay' indirectly by watching advertisements and its messages embedded in programmes. The sponsors exert major control over the content and script of its programmes (Struken and Cartwright 2001: 72-73). Williams (1974) considers advertising relationship with television content by considering its form. He suggests that the technical nature of broadcasting as the continuous emission of programming for domestic reception, combined with its placement within a commercial system that aims to maximize audience attention, structures the content in the form of an eternal sequence or segmented flow, which carries a mix and flux of programme types, commercials, promotions and trailers.

How television text bears such representations has been analysed by a range of feminist scholars. They draw from film theory, which sees films as carriers of contemporary cultural 'myths' of gender, class, race, and have addressed the relationship between representation, sexuality, spectatorship and power. Kuhn (1985) says that 'gender is a structuring principle of our social and symbolic worlds' and in this light looks at how male controlled structures of economic and cultural power facilitate particular images and representations of women which are tied to the patriarchal structure of society and to women's individual sense of a gendered identity within that society. One of the most important feminist engagements has been with the notion of the gaze and the spectator subject. Using Lacan's formulations, Metz and Baudry looked at how the 'cinematic apparatus' of a darkened theatre, projector, film and screen, allowed the viewer an overpowering gaze and through that the fulfilment of unconscious desires. Feminist film theorists interested in the power that these images have over viewers have emphasised that the film spectator is not an 'undifferentiated' subject but is already gendered as either male or female (Gamble 1999: 93 -116). Mulvey (1975) was the first to propose that conventions of popular narrative cinema are structured by a patriarchal unconscious, positioning women represented in films as objects of 'male gaze'. In her theory camera is a tool of voyeuristic and sadistic gaze, disempowering those before it. It is the film's hero who advances the story, controlling events, and women, through the erotic gaze. Woman, in contrast, functions as the erotic spectacle, interrupting rather than advancing the narrative.

In the analysis of television also, which comprises three broad genres, advertisements, entertainment and news, scholars have noted how the texts are organized to embody this subject object relationship of looking, with male gaze and female 'to-be looked-at-ness', much like Berger defined as 'men act and women appear'. But more importantly, how like films, television has its own conventions by which camera and the narrative structure is organized as a language to convey hegemonic visions through signs (word, image, text). Fiske (1987) says that the collection of signs are organised through rules and are called 'codes', which has a connection with the

concept of ideology. 'A code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture'. 'The point is that reality is already encoded by codes of our culture.' If this piece of encoded reality is televised, the technical codes (framing, focus, distance, movement (of camera or the lens), camera placing, or angle and lens choice) and representational conventions of the medium (such as narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting) are brought to bear upon it so as to make it transmittable technologically and an appropriate cultural text for its audiences. 'These codes are both deeply embedded in the ideological codes of which they are themselves the bearers. The reading position is the social point at which the mix of televisual, social and ideological codes come together to make coherent, unified sense; in making sense of the programme in this way we are indulging in an ideological practice ourselves, we are maintaining and legitimating the dominant ideology, and our reward for this is the easy pleasure of the recognition of the familiar and of its adequacy. The encoding conventions are not confined to fictional television, but also in news and current affairs programs (ibid: 221-29).

One of the most important textual features to be found in films, television, fiction and news is the 'stereotype', which refers to representation and categorization of people within the frame of certain recognizable features, which are attributed then to the social group they belong to, such as age, gender, occupation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, religious affiliation. It is from stereotype that we get our ideas about social groups, especially the subordinate ones, and a consensus builds around it. Dyer (1993) says that while the representation embodied in a 'stereotype' need not be inherently negative, but mostly it is, as it is determined and implicated in the power that controls the media. 'It is not stereotypes as an aspect of human thought and representation that are wrong but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve (ibid). Klapp (cited in Dyer 1993) distinguishes stereotypes from social types, in respective terms of those who do not belong to society and those who do. Though the social type/stereotype distinction is essentially one of degree, it is a function of relative power of groups in that society to define themselves as central

and rest as 'other' peripheral or 'outcast' (page). For instance, it reinforces patriarchy by constructing men and the norm and women as the 'other' in both history and society.

Stereotypes thus reproduce property relations, and also vision and visibility, for as Dyer (1993: 249-50) says

Stereotypes do not only, in concert with social types, map out the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate behaviour they also insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none. Nowhere is this more clear than with stereotypes dealing with social categories that are invisible and/or fluid. For instance in the case of homosexuals, for unless a person chooses to dress or act in a clearly and culturally defined manner (e.g. working class man's cap, male homosexual limp wrist) or unless one has a trained eye it is impossible to place the person before one... The degree of rigidity and shrillness of a stereotype indicate the degree to which it is an enforced representation that points to a reality whose invisibility and or/fluidity threatens the received definitions of society promoted by those with the bigger sticks (e.g. if woman are not so different from men, why are they subordinated?); if alcoholism is not so easily distinguished from social drinking, can we be so comfortable in our acceptance of the latter and condemnation of the former'?)

In this light, studies have been done to understand how stereotypical representations of gender, class, and race are formulated within television, as also in other media, most conspicuously within its genres of advertising, soap opera, and news. Just as a few examples, Brundson (1981) and Modleski analyzes how soap operas in their gendered narrative structures and frameworks both appeals to and helps to construct the 'femininity' of its audiences, catering to 'real needs' but also distorting them. Likewise, Hall (1981) brings out how amongst other kinds of ideological practices, the media constructs a 'definition' and 'problem' of race, though not in uniformly and conspiratorially mode producing a single racist conception of the world. Often, liberal and humane ideas about 'good relations' also come along. Some of the ways in which racism is elaborated includes occasions where open and favourable coverage is given

to arguments and positions of 'racist' politicians and representations of events and situations which have 'naturalised' racist premises and propositions.

Alongside fiction, television news genre also bears ideological representations and shares a very complex relation with power structures that own and sponsor media. In many ways the making and reading of news is similar to that of fiction, for what we see as news is a collected and subjective process of 'construction' with narrative, of certain selected (and eliminated) events from the endless real life situations occurring every day. Ellis (1982: 238), following on the work of Williams (1974) who described the distinctive flow and segmentation of TV, says that in fact fictional narrative forms such as the soap operas draw its form largely from non-fictional modes, such as news, for 'after all the first true use of the open-ended series format would seem to be the news bulletin, endlessly updating events and never synthesizing them.' Like photography, news does not 'objectively' capture a reality, but manipulates it to fit the vision of property. Clarke et al (1978) highlight how the ideological power of news is materialised in ordering 'disorderly' events which is a process of assigning meaning, and this is done in conjunction with the 'map of meaning' within which our world is already organized and which it is assumed we all share. Therefore often news define significant events, as those which are disruptive or problematic to power structures; within this logic, the working rules of 'impartiality' objectivity and balance operate in interests of powerful in society. Hartley (1992) specifically analyses the textual conventions of a news story, such as the mode of address, camera positioning and movement, narrative structure and highlights how the clarity and explanation offered in news on events rely on the versions of powerful, and on popular discourses and idioms, which are in harmony with the visions of these very people. Golding and Elliott (1979) also say that news is ideology, as it 'manufactured' and not a spontaneous reaction to random events, but shaped and structured according to a range of conventions, institutional practices and assumptions about the audience. They focus on how news provides an 'integrated picture of reality' which legitimates the interests of the powerful in society. This is done by removing two key elements in the world it portrays: social process and social

power. News does not represent change, but focuses on events. Further, it only focuses on power in its political office, not touching either social or economic power. The They further look at what constitutes 'news value', or what gets included and eliminated as news, and illustrate that this notion is based on two factors, one, the availability of the material, and two, perception of the audience within production, and the factors which are important within the determination for inclusion are drama, visual attractiveness, entertainment, importance, size, brevity, negativity, recency, elites and personalities (ibid). News also gets represented with patriarchal power, as the imagined or addressed spectator of the news for whom this package is ordered is masculine. Kranich and Rakow (1991) say that news is a masculine genre and contain look at gendered representations in news and conclude how while women are employed as newsreaders but they speak is masculine. Within news, women not as speaking subjects but signs, representatives of private sphere, as wives, mothers, sisters of protagonists of news stories, often victims of disaster, and rarely if ever appear in their as 'public' figure, other than celebrities

Globalising visions

The idea of 'objective reality' associated with television news representation, because of the perceived objective gaze of the camera, lends it a significant amount of power, even as it 'constructs' and 'orders' reality in accordance with dominant visions, And this power has only expanded considerably within the globalisation period. Within this phase, the production/text of media especially the broadcast media has undergone a dramatic transformation. This has to do with the introduction of new digital technology, and excessive privatisation and centralisation of television production in the hands of select corporations, who are the transnational owners of capital and property, and the impact of mass advertising in the form and content of advertising-subsidized media (Bagdikian 1992). This has only intensified the 'industrialisation of culture' (Garnham 1990). Cunningham et al (1996) highlight the major changes in television cultures of many countries with liberalisation such that privately owned commercial competitors have come to replace state owned system of broadcasting existing previously. At the forefront of these changes is the introduction of satellite

technology, which abolished distance and allowed for the first time the linking of remote territories into new viewing communities, and the most significant innovation has undoubtedly the advent of STAR TV, the pan-Asian satellite service.

This ownership and production of these communication by private interests, says Murdock (1990), is in contradiction with the circulation of a diversity of information and opinion in a democracy in the public interest, destroying the notion of what Habermas describes as the 'public sphere' that included institutions such as the press, outside the domain of household, state and market. One of the models of 'public sphere' was the model of the 'public broadcasting service' that began in Britain in the shape of British Broadcasting Corporation, unconstrained by commercial constraints, which was followed by a few other countries, but has been modified or given up in the last two decades under the influence of private interests (Scannel 1989). Murdock (1990) notes that provided the fact that the 'public sphere' 'largely excluded the working class, women and ethnic minorities' can be remedied, 'the idea of the public culture is worth retaining'. He highlights how the last few years have seen a series of major acquisitions and mergers in the communications industries in Europe, North America and around the world. At the end of the 20th century, ten mega corporations, which are among the largest in the world dominate the global media, with seven of these companies are headquartered in US.

The dominance of America in media production and circulation has led to debates on cultural imperialism or domination. But Cunningham et al (1996) and Tracey (1985) say at least with regard to television, the idea of 'media imperialism' does not accurately portray the international situation today as since the 90s Mexico, Brazil, India, Australia, Hong Kong, Egypt, Taiwan, and India have all flourishing export trades in programmes. Furthermore, in practically all territories of the world, only a minority of the programming viewed on television is of American origin. The media has a complex picture, with global, regional, national, and even local circuits of programme interacting with each other. Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994) writes of how a bi-polar model of globalisation and localization too readily implies either dominance

or balance. A triangular model, with the 'national' inserted, reflects the multiple and deeper tensions and contradictions that constitute the present world order, because 'state' structures and 'national policy making' which is still the crucial level of political, economic and cultural decision-making.

The corporatisation of media may not lead to direct dominance, but does affect freedom of the press in more direct ways. The capacity of mass media to reach so many viewers both nationally and globally gives it significant amount of power, which has been documented for its adverse censorship. Schiller (1991) is critical of the models that valorise diversity, heterogeneity, difference and active audiences and who fail to notice the political and economic relations in media market and counters it by saying that the case cultural dominance in production and distribution is more complete and totalising than ever, especially being led by America. Murdock (1990) also highlights the fact that many of the leading communications companies have interests spanning a range of key media sectors across the major world markets which gives them much control over contemporary cultural life. 'The privately owned media are becoming both more concentrated and more homogenized at a time when a range of new social concerns and movements, around ecological issues, women's rights and racial, regional and religious identities, are emerging in a number of countries. As a consequence, 'there is a growing gap between the number of voices in society and the number heard in the media.' Herman and Chomsky (1988) also share a similar conception and term the influence of the market on the journalism in the developing of a 'propaganda model' that propagates the interests of the nexus between corporate and state power and marginalise the voices of the 'others', through filters as media ownership and profit orientation, the influence of advertising, the role of experts, 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media, and the rhetorical strategy of anti-communism. In other words, media 'manufactures consent' to the existing order. Edwards and Cromwell (2006) also say that the media constitute a propaganda system for the elite interests. The fact that the world is dominated by giant, multinational corporations and also the media is the biggest contradiction on the idea of the free press; the media becomes less a window of the world, but more a painting of a

window on the world. Altogether, in the era of globalisation, become commoditised more than ever, and as Murdock (1990) says it has enabled a blurring of previously understood boundaries between cultural and social realms such as art, news and commodity culture.

The descriptions above sought to bring out how certain hegemonic meanings are dominant in the production/text of mass media. An important question that emerges is whether these hegemonic representations get the response as desired? Are these read in the way they are expected to? And what impact, if any, does the reading have on the audience/viewers? This is being dealt in the following section.

c. Consumption of Visual Media

A number of theorists have worked on this domain of 'reception', looking at ways in which actual viewers respond to texts, capturing thus the other facet of the interaction between reality and representation. One can categorise the perspectives on 'media and consumption' within two broad categories, though encompassing different schools of thought prominent in different periods of time. Sullivan and Jewkes (1997: 173) characterize the historical shift in this field of enquiry, as one that has moved from 'what media does to people' to 'what people do to/with the media'. These two broad approaches have been analyzed below.

Domination/Determination

Althusser's (1984) formulation of 'interpellation' refers to the way we become/are the subject (viewer) that we are addressed as, a process constructed by the ideologies 'that speak to us every day through language and images. His ideas are close to how Adorno and Horkheimer within the Frankfurt tradition conceptualized the audience of cultural industries, a mass, who they said is being forcefully fed and is uncritically accepting the 'consciousness of capitalist accumulation'. In many ways their conceptualisation of audience as 'dupes' is similar to certain early approaches in American tradition of media analysis, that emerged within the school of functionalist

sociology. Here too, media is conceptualised as an all-powerful, manipulative, controlling and corrupting influence that has direct, measurable, palpable 'effects' on humans in their psychological and behavioural realm, such as 'imitation or desensitization to violence' (see Eyesenck and Nias 1978, Halloran 1970). This conceptualisation implied 'individuals as a 'human animal, who can be consciously or inadvertently trained so that certain stimulus inputs will generate certain behavioural inputs' (Marris and Thornham: 422). Both these approaches have been separately critiqued for conceiving media and audience in an overarching dominating/dominated framework, posing viewers as empty receptacles. 'Althusser's ideas have been challenged on the ground that if we are always already defined as subjects and are interpellated to be who we are there is little hope for social change. It does not allow us any agency in our lives' (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 53).

Resistance/Pleasure/Gratification

Such critiques are then close to the other end of the other perspective in media consumption, which suggests that audience, being fragmented along lines of culture and communities may not blanket accept the meanings dominant or hegemonic in texts, but in fact make negotiated and sometimes even oppositional readings (Hall 1980). Morley (1983) suggests how people sharing same the culture might also interpret texts differently based on their class location, respective identities, experiences and knowledge. Audiences as seen as 'active users' of media messages who cannot be viewer in isolation of their social contexts. Meanings of text are created in a complex relationship between producer, viewer, the text and social context.

A number of scholars have highlighted this perspective within their work. For instance, Radway (1987) makes a study of women readers of romance novels and highlights how the mass produced text, which is conservative and conforming to patriarchal ideologies, is often appropriated for resistant meanings and pleasures. Similarly Miller (1992) talks of how an American soap opera, 'The Young and the Restless', is consumed with passion in Trinidad, and its meanings appropriated and

transformed towards strengthening of local identities. Within this approach, many scholars have also challenged the dominant idea of the 'male gaze' saying that spectatorship is also located within historical and cultural contexts and audiences. Dominant spectator positions offered in film texts can be resisted to different ends as in case of black viewers who resist identification with positions offered to black characters in so many films. The gendered spectator relations are not fixed. Viewers can also readily deploy fantasy to occupy 'wrong' gender position. For example women can identify with the male position of mastery, or gaze at men with pleasure and desire. Similarly male gaze can be appropriated for transgressive female looking or for lesbian pleasure. (see Mary Ann Doane 1991, Jackie Stacey 1988, Jane Gaines 1980).

The critique of the idea of 'cultural dupes', 'passive audience' and 'fixed subject positions', and the focus there of on 'polysemy', interpretative and resistance agency of the audiences within the 'politics of consumption', has led many scholars to stretch and collapse the very boundaries of text and audience. Most of them have been influenced by post modern theory, which talks of dissolving of boundaries and multiple interpretations, among other ideas. In their suggestion that all texts are necessarily interpreted differently by different viewers, they have displaced the power that is involved in encoding the text with certain dominant meanings. The focus of such research studies is then solely on the pleasure, entertainment, and leisure that popular culture brings to the differentiated audience and not on its ideological representations (see Gray 1987, Pursehouse 1991, Moores 1993, Fiske 1989, Hobson, Mankekar 1993). As the power (and ideology) of the text (and of its producers) disappears completely, audiences are seen as free to construct their own meanings. Fiske (1989) insists that 'there is a collapse of the hegemonic model... audience are producers of their meanings and pleasures, with equal if not greater power' (ibid: 521) He further says that 'we have collapsed the distinction between 'text' and 'audience... there is no text, there is no audience, there are only the processes of viewing (ibid: 536).

Stevenson (1995), in his critique of such conceptions says that 'Fiske forecloses the possibility of a theory of ideology by reading the popular as a form of resistance... he seems to assume that the capitalist market has a democratizing effect in that it makes widely available a whole range of pleasurable texts... this argument is blind to the fact that class structure erects certain material and symbolic barriers to cultural forms of participation...' (ibid: 242). The demolition of hegemony these perspectives brings them closer then to an important strand of the functionalist tradition in media analysis, the 'uses and gratification' approach, which also refused the one dimensional view of audience as passive, and media as determinist, called for, formulation of an 'active' audience or 'purposive' audience, who they said that derived certain uses and pleasures and gratification from media. In other words, media fulfilled audience needs (see McQuail, Blumler and Brown 1972).

In his critique of such research studies, Elliott (1979) says that 'the argument that use leads to gratification of needs is at best circular... the quest to identify functions for 'society as a whole' or basic underlying human needs must inevitably rule out any consideration of the differential distribution of power and opportunity in society, of the conflict of interests between different groups, and of the development and use of different ideologies to protect them... The idea of an active audience consciously selecting its media fare in order to maximize its gratifications, brings out the ideological ambiguities involved in this supposedly value-free approach' (ibid: 462-467). In a similar vein, Ang (1989: 484-6) says that the idea that the conception that audiences are 'active' cannot simply be equated with the idea that media consumers are 'free or even 'powerful. In other words, 'oppositional meanings is not audience freedom' for power is implicated within practices of media consumption.

Power/Hegemony

Between the two approaches of determination and resistance, of power to the *media* and power to the *audience*, lies the approach, which while recognizing the 'active' agency of the audience, does not displace the 'structure' which enters into how media messages are formulated. Such an approach remains centrally located to an analysis

of the ideological role of the media. Hall's (1980) model of encoding/decoding articulates this position and follows Gramsci's concept of hegemony, that insists on struggle rather than domination. In the context of media, it therefore emphasizes negotiation in challenging meanings which do not benefit interests of producers and media industry, but at the same time does not dislocate power of the producer in manufacturing dominant meanings and interpretations. His model of media accounts for the whole of communicative process not just for the meanings inscribed in texts or their ideological or behavioural 'effects'. He sees the process of meaning operating through three different moments, encoding, text and decoding, in how texts encoded with meaning in its creation or production, and further encoded when they are laced in a given setting or context, and then decoded by viewers in consumption. While Hall maintains that viewers struggle with meanings, transform or override them, but his encoding/decoding circuit however does not conceptualise encoding to having an equivalence or symmetry with the moment of decoding. The texts present to viewers are encoded with clues about dominant meanings, i.e., there is always a 'preferred meaning' encoded in media texts. Hall (cited in Marris and Thornham 1996: 11) says:

I don't want a model of a circuit which has no power in it. I don't want a model which is determinist, but I don't want a model without determination. And therefore I don't think audiences are in the same positions of power with those who signify the world to them. And preferred reading is simply a way of saying if you have control of the apparatus of signifying the world, if you're in control of the media, you own it, you write the texts – to some extent it has a determining shape.

How do preferred readings of a text shape the subjectivities of the audience? Hall (2007: 301-13) says that focus on the relationship of the text with audience was concentrated earlier on studying behavioural 'effects'. But it is a positivistic and reductionist reading of the meaning formation process. Meanings have a complicated relationship to practices and conduct, and embed normative discourses.

The meanings and interpretations that the audiences derive are used and 'lived' subjectively, influencing from the inside – not always in manifest and conscious ways. 'Effects' cannot be reductively limited to the behavioural level. Meanings have all sorts of 'effects,' from the construction of knowledge to the subjection of the subject to the meaning offered. If they have an influence on 'behaviour' it is more likely to be indirectly because knowledge is always implicated in power and power implies limits on what can be seen and shown, thought and said. Their broader cultural 'effects' have to be seen in terms of how meaningful discourses construct what is held to be 'normative', which of course regulates conduct, but in ways which cannot be reduced to or empirically measured as a behavioural impulse... In other words, 'if meanings 'compel', it is not because they lead automatically to an acting out of their imperatives in behaviour, but because, in the course of forming our subjectivities – of making us 'subjects' of our actions – they 'subject' us to their normative regulation... They are rather the discursive 'conditions of existence' of meaningful action or enunciation.'

In Conclusion

It is drawing from Hall's approach as stated above that this study seeks to examine the 'normative discourses' being produced by Television, more specifically Aaj Tak, within the space of the next chapter. The discourses of the 'normative,' which the texts are impregnated with, are important to conceptualise and grasp because as mentioned previously, the idea of the 'normative' is directly implicated with how power is exercised on 'subjects', in the framework described by Foucault (1985). Discourse is a way of talking about, a way of representing knowledge about a subject at a particular historical moment and denote how power systems define how things are understood and spoken about (and by implication represented in media). Discourses have thus a play with vision in how they make different 'facts' and 'subjects' 'visible' in different historical periods. This connects to the reproduction of property for even when the objects 'see through,' their social position determines whether their vision gets to count as knowledge in a given time and society, and thereby determines 'resistance' to the dominant schema of property/vision.

Chapter IV

Production of the News Commodity

The case of Aaj Tak

‘The bourgeois... creates a world after its own image’

- *Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto*

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the ‘production’ of news in Indian television in the context of late capitalism. Utilising the theoretical concepts and framework developed in the previous chapter, an attempt has been made to analyze the nature of news and advertising content broadcast on the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak, in the month in March 2008, but focusing on the prime time, to capture the ‘segmented flow’ of television, as Williams (1974) describes it. As seen within the theory illustrated by Hall (1980), any endeavour to understand media draws within its scope an analysis of its three articulated moments or processes: production, text and consumption. Here, the focus is placed on the study of the media ‘text’, and through that the intentions of production have been explicated. An effort is being made to highlight the discourses embedded in production/text, with emphasis on how normative constructions of gender, class and nation are materialised within it, and it is being done by taking into consideration ‘what is being said and shown and to whom’, i.e. the text-spectator relationship. The analysis is preceded by a theoretical structure that locates television and its productive processes within the space of ‘consumption’, which has come to define and permeate all spheres of our reality and representation, within the globalising cities and nation. The three thematic sections in which the analysis is divided are as follows:

- I. Spaces of Consumption
- II. Television and Consumption
- III. Aaj Tak: Its commodities and consuming subject

I

I

Space of Consumption

Globalisation or global capitalism, as stated, is based on the centrality of consumption, and is thus characterised with the spread of consumerism within spaces that were hitherto unconsumed. As Marx's theory on capitalism elucidates, 'the command over spaces/geography (and time) is the crucial element in any search for profit (Harvey 1989: 226). The process of capitalist accumulation occurs through the transformation of space and through production of distinctive 'spatial structures'. The need for a constantly widening sphere of circulation entails the 'tendency to create a world market', or an expanding and intensifying geographical scale (Harvey 2001: 237-66)

The historical journey of consumerism has enclosed the production of *specific places and spaces* geared towards the expansion of consumption. 'Consumption is necessarily related to geography in the way in which it transforms space and place, and in how places and spaces are themselves being consumed...' (Clark et al 2003: 79). And in this geography of consumption, the production of the urban space or the *city* has been the most important development.

Production and consumption of/in the city

'Capitalism is characterized not only by a perpetual striving to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e., to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, but also to annihilate this space with time.' (Harvey 2001: 245). This involves the necessary creation of a geographical landscape, a spatial structure within which capital can circulate without the limits of profit within socially-necessary turnover time. Here 'annihilation of space by time is accomplished by a rational location of activities with respect to each other so as to minimize the costs of movement...' (ibid). In other words, 'spaces within which production and consumption, supply and demand (for commodities and labour power), production and realization, class

struggle and accumulation, culture and lifestyle hang together in some kind of structural coherence within a totality of productive force and social relations' (Harvey 2001: 329). The urban space or the city is what bears this structural coherence. The urban process implies the creation of a whole physical landscape for purposes of production, circulation, exchange and consumption' (Harvey 1985: 6). Cities become in effect the 'workshops of capitalist production' (Harvey 2001: 245)

The Spectacle of Consumption/ City

The association between urbanism and consumerism has thus been long-standing and has intensified since the 19th century, with the coming of the modern cities of Western Europe and America. The visual spectacle of everyday life in western societies which Debord (1994) writes about, was also chiefly constituted within the city space, as it inscribed new practices, patterns and discourses of consumption. The paramount feature of consumption in the city was the department store, and its ornamental display of commodities for the seduction of potential consumers on the stroll. The city, with its array of stores and advertisements, can then itself be imagined as a spectacular department store, seducing one and all.

City/Consumption as Spectacle/ Surveillance

As argued by Bauman (1983), consumption is the disciplinary gaze of modern society, which while reproducing the subject object relations of property, fashions objects as 'subjects', as free consumers. Consumption and its gaze thus bears both a spectacle and surveillance that seduces, as also polices subjects.

According to Schivelbusch (1988), the spectacle and surveillance in the city/ department store as a modern space of consumption was fundamentally produced through the use of light. He highlights how 'spectacles of light' were part of the festive culture of the baroque period and lit up the celebrations held at night in the cities of 18th century Europe, which led to the conception of urban 'night life' as we know it today. From the late 18th century onwards, the seductive light spilled out into the streets of European capital cities, and eventually spread through the shopping

arcades and department stores. Later, colourful and aesthetic display of shop signs appeared inside the shop. The shops, in order to attract a greater number of potential buyers, now used lights, glass and mirrors in its interiors which lent a sparkling glow to the commodities. The western cities were filled with thus an enchanting light of festivity and seduction (ibid).

However, Schivelbusch says, the regime of light thrown open produced not only seduction but also a harsh light of surveillance. Simultaneous to this 'lighting of festivity' was a 'lighting of order'. The police conquered and controlled the night by installing street lighting, used for extension of working day, as well as suppression of deviant behaviour. Within the shop stores also, notes Abelson (1992), light, glass and mirrors was deployed both as a means of inviting consumer desire, and as a means of surveillance to curb shoplifters/thieves, acting as 'silent and unnoticed detectives'. One such instrument was the 'two-way mirror' that was in fact a one-way surveillance window. It is still in use within the police forces.

'Subjects' of Seduction/ Surveillance

The regime of seduction/ surveillance embodied in the light/gaze of consumption within the department store/city primarily existed to secure the enchantment and 'night life' of the bourgeoisie, who were the 'subjects' of seduction/consumption. 'To enjoy oneself while working people slept was a social privilege... the later one began the day (and ended it), the higher was one's social rank' (Schivelbusch 1988: 88). This new order of the day and night marked a social chasm between the leisured classes and the working population. It was from these very populations, the vagabonds, the dangerous classes that the bourgeoisie had to be secured, and 'light' materialised this instrumental goal. 'Commercial light is to police light what bourgeoisie society is to the state. As the state, in its appropriately named 'night-watchman' function, guarantees the security that bourgeois society needs to pursue its business interests, so public lighting creates the framework of security within which commercial lighting can unfold...' (ibid). In short, property/vision or

consumption/gaze fleshed out in the 'light' guarded the property owners from the property less.

Property and vision consummated most seductively, I argue, in the motif of the shop window. This was a large plate-glass display window invented in the mid 18th century, through which people outside could cast a look at the commodities inside, and which made the commodities look brighter and more attractive through the use of artificial light Schivelbusch (1988) posits this illuminated window as 'a stage, the street as theatre and the passers-by as audience within the scene of the big-city night-life' (ibid). The deluding vision of property being such that while the audience at-large was permitted to look through the window and consume the commodities in sight, but only those who were in possession of property could actually cross to the other side and possess/consume the commodities in materiality. If by an act of impropriety, the objects of property were consumed by the spectacle and thus the desire to consume, they were targeted as 'subjects' of surveillance and booked for theft. It is in this light that as Schwartz (1989) shows, while shoplifting by working-class women and men was criminalised severely, the same act of impulsive theft by middle class women consumers, who often comprised the store's clientele, was in turn medicalised as 'kleptomania'.

The shop window can thus be imagined as border separating classes. Its surface could also be imagined as a mirror, in which while everyone can peep in, but the reflection and representation offered in return is only of the consuming classes, and this image provides them with what Bowlby (1985) calls 'narcissistic identification'. The shop window, the department store, the city, existing as spaces of consumption, produce and constitute each other to reproduces class relations and thus property/consumption.

II

Television and Consumption

In globalised India, where reproduction of property/vision, and property/ visual media is essentially tied to consumption, I posit television also as a space of consumption

and draw its analogy to the city/ department store. Television constitutes the symbolic or the representational space of this city/department store, laying out an array of commodities for the consumption of consumer/audience. We could imagine the television screen then as the shop window and the gaze/light of consumption as the light of the camera, which much like the still camera invented in the 19th century, structures seduction and surveillance, such that the commodities are to be consumed by and 'represent' only certain classes/consumers/audience.

City/ Nation and Television in the Globalised India

As mentioned in the previous chapter, late capitalism in India as in other countries of the developing world is characteristic to a market and services based economy (Harvey 2005). And such an economy, argues Harvey (2001), what is privileged is an urban centric growth. Within the capitalist mode of production, urban space is most accomplished geographical space towards the pursuit of profit (ibid). These spaces are thus being produced and consumed to also the currents demands of capitalism. Cities across the developing countries are increasingly being restructured as 'global cities' (Sassen 1994, 2001) or 'world cities' (Friedman and Wolf 1982) to facilitate the flow of global capital, based on the models of the modern cities of the developed west. 'The reorganisation of the world markets has expanded the consumption functions of urban economies, creating new jobs and new spaces of consumption' (Zukin 1998:129).

Even in India, with the adoption of the liberalisation package, bigger and smaller cities are being reconfigured as world-class cities. The change is fundamentally characterised by a shift from industrial manufacturing to service dominated urban economy, transforming the city from a 'home to an estate' (Roy 2004). It is being proliferated with big, shiny malls, department stores, commercial and housing complexes for the urban middle and upper classes. The city is not only emerging as a space of and for consumption but also as space to be being consumed, through the

promotion of tourism, to make possible what Urry (1990) terms as the 'collective tourist gaze'.

The spectacle of consumption in/of the city is accomplished and accompanied by surveillance of (dangerous) classes who are undesirable and unprofitable to consumption. Cities in India are experiencing what Smith (2002) and many others term as 'gentrification', which portends a large-scale displacement of working class residents from urban centers, and building instead a new landscape comprising complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure. 'While the new metropolis is globally connected, it is frequently locally disconnected from large sections of its population who are functionally unnecessary and are often seen to be socially or politically disruptive' (Chatterjee 2003: 181). They are being removed by the state, with support from the consuming classes, in the pretext of being encroachers on the 'city space' and on planks such as 'beautification', 'development' or 'environmentalism' (Baviskar 2002, Ramanathan 2005 and Fernandes 2004). The bourgeois city of late capitalism is producing thus 'citizens' and 'populations' (Chatterjee 2003).

The new gentrified city and its consuming classes/citizens, valorised as the centerpiece of the Indian economy, is itself based on the invisibilisation of the rural masses/populations, as it is their material resources and labour that are being extracted to service and sustain this city. As Sainath (2004) points out, there is an absurd pattern to the growth in the number of weight loss clinics in the city to the decline in the food grain intake of the rural population. The nation is thus being consumed to make the city/economy of consumption. And in that order, in both reality and representation, the city of consumption is the 'imagined' nation.

Within this backdrop, television in globalised India is also the representational space of the gentrified city/nation, carrying seductive representations of its 'consuming subjects', and eliminating in view 'subjects of surveillance'. For the consuming classes of urban India, television has come to define the leisure of 'night life'.

Schivelbusch (1988: 90) highlights that 'as the boulevard at night developed in the 19th century... it looked like an interior out of doors.... always festively illuminated... the whole thing resembled a drawing-room'. In a shift of representation, the television sets in the drawing rooms of contemporary urban Indian homes now brings the spectacular new city indoors.

The 'gendered' subjects of the city/television

It is not only class however, but also gender that is a structuring principle in the making of 'subjects of seduction and surveillance' in the city/television. Men and women within the consuming classes tend to share a different relationship with consumption with these spaces.

Speaking about the consuming spectacle of the 19th century modern city and its consumers, Baudelaire described the nature of a flaneur, a man who strolled the streets as an observer, never quite engaging with his surroundings but taking an interest in them, casting a gaze on its displays; Frerdberg says that the flaneurs were mostly men, because respectable women were not allowed to stroll alone on the modern street (as cited in Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 196) Women's encounter with the department store and shopping came much later, though their engagement was much more intense. Bowlby (1985) notes that 'as the proportion and volume of goods sold in stores rather than produced in home increased, it was women, rather than men, who tended to have the job of purchasing them... shopping was both a responsibility and a new feminine leisure activity' (ibid: 168). 'It follows that the organized effort of 'producers' to sell to 'consumers', to a large measure took the form of a masculine appeal to women... and fitted into the available ideological paradigm of seduction of women by men, in which women are addressed as yielding objects to the powerful male subject (ibid). Schwartz (1989) notes how the archetypal department store was a feast for the senses, the eyes and the hands, with most things lay open to view and to touch (ibid: 173) and Abelson also considers (1992: 205) how department stores were fitted with mirrors, as a 'bait to bring her to the store and a toy to entertain her while she was there'.

Even today, middle class women are identified as chief targets of seduction by the advertising industry. Feminists have noted how this belief that consumers are easily duped and inculcated with 'false needs' carries a significant gender bias, given that it is women who are associated most often with consumption (Clarke et al 2003:14)

Women were seen thus as a more vulnerable 'subjects of seduction', who often were so consumed by desire that they became also the 'subjects of surveillance'. It is these seductive department stores however which became the site for a new class of shoplifting, and the shoplifters were mostly middle class women, who were unable to prevent themselves from stealing these spectacular commodities. 'By the 1870s there was widespread moral panic in Europe and America about department store kleptomania' (Schwartz 1989). The women thus became the chief object of surveillance through the use of same mirrors and display windows, used also as security apparatuses. Yet, as Abelson (1992) notes, in the struggle between the two regimes, seduction took precedence over protection.

The gendered nature of the relationship women and men share with consumption in the city/department store is also similarly underscored in their relationship with television as watching subjects, and it is in that order the content within it is organized. Women are seen as the prime targets of television advertising for a large range of household products. Also, television fare is typically seen as divided into 'genres' for women and men, and the former largely comprises homely entertainment and thereby considered less serious, just as shopping, which feminists have highlighted is primarily seen as leisure and less as a routinised boring chore. Women are seen to be more passionately and emotionally engaged with what they watch. One of most popular genre being the family soaps, and as Joyrich (1990) notes it is not without reason these are then often labelled as 'weepies'.

On the other hand are the men, who just as the flaneur are considered to be less emotional, and thereby more discerning in their engagement with content, not to be

easily swayed in by the manipulations of fictional dramas. The 'knowledge bearing' men, in contrast to the 'pleasure seeking' women, are more often associated with much more serious and pertinent content covering 'political news, sports and business', fields that also constitute the classic 'public sphere' as opposed to the familial (Marris and Thornham 1996: 331). As Kranich and Rakow (1991) note, news is a masculine 'genre'.

To conclude, gender and class are mutually constituted in the constitution of the 'subjects' of seduction and surveillance in the department store/city/television.

III

Aaj Tak: Its commodities and the consuming subject

In the backdrop of the theoretical sketch described above as also in the previous chapter, I analyse in this section the content of Aaj Tak covering both news and advertisements (30 sec ad spots). In some parts, I have substantiated my analysis with Hindi expressions used in the voice over, which I have translated in the referencing.

Spaces of consumption are in essence also spaces of advertising that create both the demand for, as also deliver commodities to the consumers. Bowlby (1985:89) writes of the shop windows as 'glasses-in-stage on which an advertising show was presented.' Indian Television (and its shop window screen), is also a space for consumption/advertising and this proposition is concretely realized in the fact that it is being run solely on revenues of advertising, as argued by many scholars. This is also true for Aaj Tak, says Jha (2008), an executive producer on the channel. 'There is so much competition that each of the channels is vying to attract as much ad revenue as possible. In a typical half an hour programme on the channel, the advert/news ratio on Aaj Tak is 17/13 min'.

As also highlighted previously, the demand for higher revenues translates into advertisers' control over its content. 'News features' are to be 'advertised/sold' in order to maximize consumption/profit, and therefore these translate into a 'commodity'. The underlying intention of the owners/advertisers is that the commodity should be consumed by a larger share of the consumer audience. The question therefore is how does the production and consumption of such a commodity come about in the goal of expanding profit? And why is it fashioned and sold in the way it is? In order to locate the answers, one has to bring into view the relation between the commodity and the consumer, because production (and hence consumption), not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.

In popular parlance, the term 'consumption' denotes not only the meeting of basic needs vital for physical survival, but those which make life much more enjoyable (Clarke et al 2003:2) The modern consumer society is hedonistic and driven around the need to derive 'pleasure' (Campbell 1987) and 'comfort' (Taylor 1996). One of the most important need that consumption fulfils, as argued earlier is of strengthening sexuality and subjectivity of the consuming subject, especially through the body (Featherstone 1982, Baudrillard 1988). Therefore the pleasure that is sought is essentially connected identity. Bourdieu (1986) emphasises how consumption and taste reveals and reinforces one's class location and status, and thus reproduces class hierarchies. In short, the pleasure of consumption serves to directly enhance one's gender as well as class identity.

The idea of commodity fetishism implies how these commodities become fetish objects, in order to secure the regime of property/vision or consumption/gaze. By consequence, the pleasure and identity that a consumer acquires through consumption also has to strengthen and not question this regime and its subject object relations. A 'fetishized commodity is therefore an advert of its regime. News also exists as a fetishized commodity, as an advert of consumption, and it is therefore within this logic that lines between news and advertisement are increasingly being blurred. News

and advert exist therefore as one kind of 'commodity', which refer to, represent and reproduce the world of material commodities, and therefore contributes directly to consumption. In one sense, they also become the 'depoliticized speech' as Barthes (1972) conceptualised it.

In order to enhance consumption of this commodity, the news/advert is being reconstituted as entertainment, as that is what delivers both 'pleasure' and thereby 'identity' to the consuming audience. As would be seen in the following sections, it is within and through 'entertainment' that the camera/gaze organizes both spectacle and surveillance.

Altogether, in the production of Aaj Tak, the analogies go as thus. Commodity: news: advert: entertainment. Together the package seals the world of consumption, and also hangs together on its tautology, because the advertisers/capitalists justify entertainment content on the ground that this is what is sold/saleable/satisfying to the consumer, as judged from the TRPs.

Jha (2008) highlights how in Aaj Tak, like all Hindi channels, the fight essentially is to get more TRPs, which comes through entertainment content. 'So if a rival channel is broadcasting a show which is high on this scale, I also have to immediately put together something on similar lines around the same time, even if it means refurbishing old tapes. The race for ad revenues means I would show anything that sells. Which is why as Aaj Tak claims one of the highest TRPs in India. The advertisers pay us Rs 5000/- per sec whereas they pay Rs 2000/- per sec to a channel like Sahara' (ibid).

The Commodity form: News/Entertainment

What is the form news/entertainment content that sells? Jha (2008) speaks on behalf of the Hindi news channels, and as Sardesai (2006) puts it, the trilogy that drives it is cinema, cricket and crime. 'On our channel, even during prime time, i.e. 6- 11 PM, we have shows related to sports, preview of music and dance shows on other channels, comedy shows, and also cinema gossip. The rest of the day is dominated by

astrology, crime or any such 'special' stories with attractive visual content. The hard news and political content is definitely out. Such news dominates prime time only if something significant has happened, such as the death of Benazir Bhutto or bomb blasts. Every morning and evening, we have an editorial meeting and if within 4-12 PM, something important doesn't happen, we play our regular feature programmes.'

In my analysis of the channel content, this pattern of news features was clearly visible. The three entertainment segments Cinema, Cricket and Crime, did form the body of the 'news', along with 'wrestling' star Khali. Below is a sample of only the headlines for five alternate days, which are indicative of what is 'important news'.

March 14 8 PM

- Sonia inaugurates a new airport in Hyderabad
- Harbhajan Singh unfit; would not play in the first test against South Africa
- A model's top slips in a fashion show in Delhi
- Aamir Khan cuts his birthday cake; does not reveal when he would cut his hair
- Delhiites get a gift before Holi; Supreme Court grants permission to construct three-storey houses

March 16 8 PM

- Rahul goes to Ittawaha to soothe the nerves of Dalits
- Gilcrist says 'I am not a saint' and 'I respect Harbhajan and team India'
- Dhoni spends a full day in a Mumbai home to shoot an advert
- In Delhi, stars grace the ramp; Celina, Soha and Shruti Hasan catwalk in a fashion show
- Radha's village Varsat celebrates 'Lathmar' Holi

March 18 8.30 PM

- Sanjay Dutt's marriage with Manyata in question
- Verdict in Shivani murder after nine years; RK Sharma and four other accused to be convicted on March 30
- In UP, people protest over rape and murder; burn a mobile tower
- Soha (Ali Khan) in trouble; accused of possessing an illegal gun
- Katrina visits the Khwaja shrine in Ajmer Sharif with Salman's sister

March 20 8.30 PM

- Board with Dhoni to keep Dravid and Ganguly out
- Another round of investigation against Laloo for excess income
- Shivani's murderers would be convicted on Monday
- Health Minister Ramadoss targets Bengal CM on cigarette consumption
- Braj celebrates Holi. Kanha's city is colored with Gulal

March 22 7 PM

- On the occasion of Holi, Shahrukh's Mannat becomes a party place
- Laloo also celebrates 'Kurti tearing' Holi and sings Jogira sa ra ra ra
- Sonia plays Holi at 10 Janpath; and Vajpayee celebrates with kids
- On the day, all ill-feeling goes, Raj Thackeray's party men celebrate Holi with Bhojpuris
- And team India also celebrates. They get a Gulal welcome in Chennai

The following data highlights the schedule shows on the channel on four random days, between 6-10 PM

March 14

6.30	PM	Coverage of Wills Fashion week
7.30	PM	Feature on Cricket
8.00	PM	Feature: Love ka Sixer
8.30	PM	Feature on Khali
9.00	PM	News of the day

March 15

6.30	PM	Feature on Rakhi Sawant
7.00	PM	Story: Kahani Crorepati Bahu ki
7.30	PM	Feature on Cricket
8.00	PM	Feature on Khali
8.30	PM	Comedy show
9.00	PM	Movie Masala
9.30	PM	Feature on Khali
10.00	PM	Coverage of India today conclave

March 18

6.30	PM	Show on Sanjay Dutt's marriage
7.00	PM	Feature on cricket
8.00	PM	Story: 'Item girl' Sherlyn Chopra
8.30	PM	Comedy by Raju Srivastava

9.00 PM Movie Masala and cricket news
9.30 PM Feature: Car crazy cricketer
10.00 PM News of the day
10.30 PM Feature on Khali
11.00 PM Feature: India today conclave

March 23

8.00 PM Talk Show: Seedhi Baat
8.30 PM Comedy by Raju Srivastava
9.00 PM Political News
9.30 PM Feature on Khali
10.00 PM Feature: Dilli mein Bhukamp
10.30 PM Feature on Raju Srivastava and Rakhi Sawant
11.00 PM Crime feature: Dilli Ki Aunty

The Consumers: 'Subjects' of 'Seduction and surveillance' in Television

The spectacle and surveillance of 'news/entertainment' is inscribed in both the subjective choice of what is chosen to be represented (and not represented) as also in how it is represented, and the camera and the narration together organize this choice. This has a direct relation with who are the imagined 'subjects consumers' of its consumption, for whose pleasure, self-identification and subjectivity this content is being patched together.

Bowlby (1985: 170) says the 'the notion of image is useful for thinking about consumer form of subjectivity, a visual word related to the myth of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection in the pool.' 'Consumer culture transforms the narcissistic mirror into a shop window, the glass which reflects an idealized image of the consumer who stands before it, in the form of the model she could buy or become, through the possession of commodities.' She further says that in the modern society, the image is present in other forms, different from the simple reflexive mirror relationship of self and self-image. For example, the photographic mediums, as system of representation, enable society to see its own image reflected or refracted back.

The shop window and photographic medium combine within the space of television, through the camera and screen. And the people who are able to find a narcissistic identification with the commodities (news/entertainment) displayed and delivered within it are the urban consuming classes/citizens of the gentrified city. This is visible even in Aaj Tak. The focus of news stories on the channel was largely on urban India and middle classes, alongside entertainment features, which, as shown, consumed a greater proportion of broadcast space. The turbulations of the sensex were updated on a daily basis. Stories specifically related to Delhi and Mumbai which might not have significance for the larger audience, such as news on traffic jam, rains, road accidents, relaxation in building by-laws, increasing prices of land. A Sunday story talked of the probability of a huge earthquake to strike in North India, and focused on the kind of capital losses it could bring to the capital city Delhi. Tourism was also a major focus. In the crime story of Scarlett, a foreigner who was found murdered in Goa, the spotlight was largely on how the security apparatus in the state has tarnished its image as a tourist destination, and also of 'incredible India'. Another story highlighting sexual harassment of a Russian woman by a taxi driver stated how such incidents spoil the image of the city, commenting 'ek machli sare talab ko kharab kar deti hai'.⁴ The other crime stories were also largely related to middle class men and women, including crimes of passion by 'lovers' in cities, the murder case of Shivani Bhatnagar, harassment of a call centre worker on road, murder of a middle class couple, and middle class 'aunties' soliciting services of male prostitutes etc.

In comparison to the urban 'citizens', the 'populations' were mostly kept out of camera focus. The only time they figured in, as has been highlighted by scholars, is in the case of a tragedy, which either is too big that it cannot be ignored, or has been captured somehow on camera and has a visual appeal. So typically the kind of stories where 'ordinary' people were visible included bomb blasts, such as in Lal Chauk in Kashmir, stories on 'Sarabjit ko bachao'⁵, an Indian prisoner in Pakistan, building collapse in a locality in East Delhi in which some people got buried, fire accident in a

⁴ One fish spoils the whole pond.

⁵ Save Sarabjit!

building in Mumbai, protests by villagers in Uttar Pradesh on an land issue, during which they burnt down some government property.

One exception to the rule in showcasing populations were stories related to children, many who were lost, trapped, abused, beaten and belonged to poor and lower middle class families. For instance, the channel focused on a poor couple looking for their lost son in Mumbai, and even called them to the studio and featured his photos to help trace him. The channel also gave full-day live coverage to rescue operation of a three year old baby trapped in a 40 ft hole near Agra, led by the Army. Through the day the anchors appealed the audience to send in prayers for the safety of the child, and played soulful music. The focus on children, often showered with words such as ‘bezuban⁶’ and ‘masoom⁷’, perhaps helps the channel fulfil its social responsibility quotient, and is also perhaps related to how Uberoi (2006) puts it in her analysis of the imagination of childhood in calendar art images. She says the ideals of nationhood have always been constructed through childhood. The child is therefore seen as closer to god, an instrument of continuity of the family and society; as the embodiment of the future citizen and also as a consumer of neo-liberal times.

In order to not threaten the world of consumption, the mechanism of surveillance is active in keeping stories with ‘political’ content out. Hard news and analysis was seen only in big stories, such as the murder of ex Delhi Police Commissioner or other stunning incidents ‘crime’ or occasional statements by politicians of a controversial nature. Any other stories on pertinent issues were also not seen. Jha (2008) says that the channel is careful about not showing something which would antagonize big corporates or industrialists such as Ambani or Ness Wadia, Godrej etc. ‘If there is any news coming in, which is controversial, i.e. it affects some biggie then I need to consult my editor on whether to put it in.’

⁶ Speechless

⁷ Innocent

Getting ready for India?

Not only news but also the 30-sec ad spots carry the 'representations' of the globalised, gentrified city/nation and its urban consuming classes. The government sponsored ad for service tax proudly declares 'Badal raha hai bharat... badal raha hai vyappar... badal rahe hain sapne, armaan aur pehchaan'⁸. Accompanying the voiceover are images of girls with graduate coats, air planes, subways, flyovers, high capacity buses, industrial production etc. The economy is changing and all are happy with it.

In the prospering economy, 'no dream is too big', declares *JP Group*, and to fulfil that, it would produce 500 MW of electricity by 2016. It would light up the city, as the spectacular images inform, and one could perhaps wonder whether the new city is New Delhi or New York, with posh high rises, sub ways, intricate expressways and flyovers, wide, clean roads and beautiful houses and internet cafes, minus any trace of poverty and dirt. And where would the resource come from? An inserted image tells us, from the lucid flowing waters of huge dams in the countryside...

Ultratech cement captures the urban change with a poetic mood. A man dressed in a suit, perhaps an engineer, architect or real estate broker walks through the city and reflects on the changing scapes. The narrative goes 'Har badalte aaj mein maine kal ko dekha hai... Gaon se shehar, shehar se desh aur desh se jahan ko judte dekha hai...'⁹ In the backdrop, images change and collapse into each other; roads into flyovers, an old house into a brand new one, a house into an industry, a shop into an internet café. The global city is just around the corner, and would be as beautiful as Singapore, as *Berger paints* tells us, and on its smooth, wide roads, one could go for long drives, perhaps in the smooth *Hyundai Verna*.

Within the new economy, business flourishes, provided one has the capitalist spirit of entrepreneurship and works hard. With *India Bulls* on the side, one can not only own

⁸ India is changing, so is its economy, so are dreams and identities...

⁹ I have seen tomorrow in every change of today. I have seen villages transformed as cities, nation connect to the world...

a car but a company that manufactures car, and be the envy object of the friend who still rides a scooter. And owing to this new economic ethic, in the coming years, India is to become the hottest destination for people from the developed world, *GMR Solutions* tells us. As the many ads depict, soon they would be all learning to adopt and celebrate all that we cherish as 'Indian'; Japanese learning Hindi, 'French learning to eat chilly, Spanish learning to dance Bollywood style. Not only would the westerners yearning to flock here but the Indian youngsters known for their enthusiasm for the west would be 'Getting ready to stay back in India', as shown in an ad where a young boy comes home dancing because his U.S. visa got rejected. In the light of all that is to come, the GMR group poses the tag question to the 'developed' world, 'Getting Ready for India?' and expects a yes for they are busy 'Making India ready'. The globalising economy makes everyone pleased and proud of their transforming nation. With *Airtel*, *Nokia* and Shahrukh Khan, this nationalism touches its emotional peak, as the Anthem plays in the background.

'Aap kyun ho santushth, thoda aur wish karo?'¹⁰

The ad for *Dish TV* (set top box) pleads with its consumer families to discard old stuff and old ways of living, with the line '*Aap kyun ho santushth, thoda aur wish karo*', which is in essence becomes the maxim of what upwardly mobile middle class families need to do. They should consume more, because it would bring them satisfaction and leisure, because they can afford to, and because the world is moving in that direction. The global family does not believe in delaying gratification. It likes to spend now and for good, even if it means less of saving, for in fact saving happens in spending, tells the *Future credit card*. Likewise, purchase of *Haier AC* comes with the promise to reduce the electricity to half. A typical household of such a family would be big, with posh interiors, containing flat TVs, ACs, Internet, laptops, washing machines and the like as seen in the ads for *Acer*, *Airtel*, *Samsung*, or even *Jeevanprash*.

¹⁰ Why are you satisfied? Wish for more...

As seen within the previous chapter, family is a key site of reproduction of property/consumption. Given this logic, the ads depict that the global family of consumption is comfortable, happy and together. The joy of owning *TATA Sky* with round the clock TV and entertainment has the grandparents, father, mother and three children catapulting hand in hand around the house, in woods, in the swimming pool, living the tagline, ‘TATA sky families rahen always khush’¹¹. The *MTNL phone and broadband* ad shows the family members sitting together in the space of a large living room, with each occupied in a leisure activity, surfing the internet, watching television, or talking on the phone. Perhaps, products do get family members closer, as each one with their own thing do not really have to talk to each other. Leisure is necessary and once a while of course the family also gets to take a holiday together, on the hills and beside the sea, drink wine and even play violin as the *Haier* ad depicts. One better take leisure seriously for as the *UTV* ads suggests, a son could also be debarred from his share of property, for not bringing his father a good movie to watch on his birthday.

Aap, Main aur Bagpiper!¹²

The spectacle and surveillance of news/entertainment/advert has a bearing on only not the representations of class but also gender. And this is again related to if and how the ideal ‘spectator subject’ is gendered, i.e. for whose pleasure (pleasurable gaze) and thereby identity is the content being delivered.

Even while news, as stated, is typically a masculine genre, the recasting of news as entertainment brings forth the assumption that the spectator subject would also be imagined as female. But this is not so. As would be seen in the analysis that follow, the ideal subject of the channel is very much a male, and it is for his gaze/consumption, that the news/entertainment commodity is being fashioned. The producer and the consumer are both masculine figures talking to each other. The regime of the camera, along with the voice over, constructs the world of cinema,

¹¹ TATA sky families are always happy!

¹² You, me and Bagpiper!

sports, and crime for his pleasure; it strengthens his masculine subjectivity, located within the cultural ethos of middle class.

The questions that follow are how this masculine subjectivity is formed through news/entertainment and why this relationship is relevant to consumption, and these would be dealt in the following sections through an analysis of three key content segments: cinema, crime and sports.

When Cinema courts Cricket!

One of the most popular entertainment content on Aaj Tak are the special shows that feature the lives of celebrities from Bollywood and Cricket. Both industries are highly prominent on the scale of popularity, and thus sponsorship, and increasingly share a healthy synergy with the commencement of the Indian Premier League cricket series. The shows both capitalised and contributed to this synergy. The style of the shows was informal commentary laid over images, substantiated with the bytes of celebrities concerned. A major focus was on showcasing potential or actual heterosexual love relationships among celebrities within Bollywood, or between female actresses and male cricketers. A few of the shows that were repeatedly featured during the month included 'Movie Masala', 'Love ka Sixer', 'Cricket ki Mahima', 'Masala Maza Dhamaka', 'King ka Jalwa', 'Kareena ko Ghamand', 'Kareena ka Kanta', 'Glamour Ki Race' etc.

Cinema and cricket stars, exist as ultimate signs of success, glamour and liberation. Langer (1981) writes on how for the audience 'stars' combine the exceptional with the ordinary, the ideal with the everyday. The audience sees them as icons, as embodiments of certain values, and there is also a desire on their part to know them as real 'people' (ibid). It is in this context that a whole field in journalism operates to give in-depth features about their lives. Aaj Tak also operates as a circulation machinery for the same.

The star system is gendered in a variety of ways, conspicuously in the wage structure, but it was most visible here in the context of how lives, relationships and careers of female and male celebrities were characterized and discussed, signifying discourses on 'normative' career men and women in liberalized India, as Consider three examples.

Two most prominently featured Bollywood actresses on the channel were Kareena Kapoor and Deepika Padhukone. Kapoor was featured in the backdrop of her recent break off with long time partner, film actor Shahid Kapoor, following which she entered into a relationship with actor Saif Ali Khan. Padhukone was discussed in the context of how she moved into brief relationships with cricket stars Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh, though finally settling with actor Ranbir Kapoor. The stories that covered them had a critical view on these women, and saw them as 'dumping men' to rise up the career ladder. The sympathy lay with men, and Padhukone was especially criticized for not choosing to be with just any men but 'our' men, the cricketing heroes of the nation.

One show, 'Kareena ka Kanta' showed how many people have been bitten bitter by her antics. With sad music playing in the backdrop, it featured Khan's previous girlfriend, 'jinki Saif ke sath sukun ki zindagi khatam ho gayi¹³', Kapur, 'jinke sath jeene marne ki kasame khayi aur phir chod diya¹⁴'. The channel sympathized with all three but most for Kapur, because 'bindaas bala ne pehle dil diya lekin baad mein dard ke rishte mein badal gaya... apne girte career graph ko uthane ke liye Saif ka daman tham liya hai'.¹⁵

The show 'Kareena ko Ghamand'¹⁶ expressed this frustration more intensely, and commented on how she is moving in the seventh heaven and thinks she is 'number one' after the success of her latest film, not realising fortunes change every Friday.

¹³ Whose peaceful life with Saif came to an end

¹⁴ Kapur, with whom she made promises to live and die together, and left him...

¹⁵ The 'fun-loving' girl first gave him her heart and left him wounded... she moved with Saif to lift her slumping career graph

¹⁶ Kareena is arrogant

The voiceover warned her, 'Mohtarma hosh mein aayo aur zameen pe chalna seekho'¹⁷. And addressed the audience, 'Koi yeh pooche ki Shahid ko isi kamyabi ke liye choda hai to unki bolti band ho jati hai'¹⁸

Women, however successful, should have only partial emotional or sexual agency, in both withdrawing from and entering in relationships. And they thus must not things that are against the wishes of their 'male' counterpart. If they do, then they should be prepared to pay the price for it. A story on actress Katrina Kaif and actor Salmaan Khan, both in a relationship, talked of how Khan slapped Kaif publically in a restaurant in Mumbai. The voiceover almost seemed to compliment Khan for keeping her in check because apparently without his knowledge she had been sharing a close relationship with her male colleague actor and friend Akshay Kumar. It mocked, 'agar aisa karenge to chanta to lagna hi hai.'¹⁹

Serious relationships not culminating into marriage is not done. And so are short term courtships that do not develop into serious relationships. Padhukone was also severely criticized for 'dining and dating' with Dhoni and Singh and then moving on. 'Pehle Yuvraj, Phir Dhoni, ab Ranbir ko sawariya bana liya'²⁰, the voiceover commented on her 'rang badalna'²¹, and 'aakh michauli khelna'²². It sympathized with the cricketers and their 'unrequited' love, and said 'Yuvraj aur Dhoni husan ki bewafai ki aag mein jhulas raha hain'²³. It also recalled how another actress Kim Sharma had left Singh even though she was seen with him regularly in discos, and even though, despite her outgoing nature, his mother had approved of her as a prospective *bahu*.

Taking example from her case, there were stories that featured how all the actresses are stealing (our) the cricketers' hearts and then leaving them. The voice over addressed the 'brother' cricketers and asked them to not be shy and proceed with the

¹⁷ Madam, get back your senses, and learn to walk on the ground...

¹⁸ When somebody asks if she left Shahid for *this* very success, she is left dumbfounded...

¹⁹ If she behaves like this, a slap is sure to come...

²⁰ First Dhoni, then Yuvraj and now she has befriended Ranbir

²¹ Changing colours

²² Playing hide and seek

²³ Yuvraj and Dhoni are burning in the fire of beauty and betrayal!

proposing. But it also cautioned them when required. For instance in the story 'Salman se panga mat lena'²⁴, cricketer Ishan Sharma was told not declare his love for Kaif'. The song playing in background echoed Khan's sentiments 'Is kanya ko hath na lagana'²⁵. 'My property should not be touched.'

Meanwhile, the channel tracked all movement of Padhukone with boyfriend Kapoor, as to how he followed her to a shoot and stayed in the same hotel. 'Breaking news' and 'exclusive' on prime time 9 PM showed photographs and gave all possible details on when both of them were captured with Aaj Tak hidden camera as they came out of a restaurant in Mumbai. Since Kapoor's aunt was also in the frame, the narrating voice wondered if marriage was finally around the corner.

With or without career, marriage remains the most important 'career' for women. In the show *Seedhi Baat*, Prabhu Chawla, Managing Editor of the Channel, asked actresses Preity Zinta 'bahut hua career wareer... ab yeh bataye shadi kab kar rahi hain'²⁶. Another show was featured on actress Isha Deol and stated how her mother is frantically looking for a boy, and declared 'ladki jawan ho gayi hai'²⁷, analyzing in detail her value in the marriage market. It is within this vein that one of the shows commented how actresses, Aishwarya Rai, Madhuri Dixit and Kajol were a happier lot compared to 'single' ones, because they got married in the right age, with the right (successful) men, even if it meant a sacrifice to their career.

The 'ideal' career woman therefore should be a 'bahu' at heart, even if she has to play a 'babe' in her profession, though sometimes contradictions can emerge. 'Bahu ya babe'²⁸ was also the title of a feature on television actresses who play demure Bahus in serials during day time and in the night dance and party. The camera captured these celebrities in a disco and the voiceover mocked as to how these women leave their traditional sarees to wear 'revealing dresses', in essence leaving their traditional roles

²⁴ Don't mess up with Salman!

²⁵ Do not touch this girl!

²⁶ Ok, enough with your career etc, now tell me when are you planning to get married?

²⁷ The girl is of a 'marriageable' age

²⁸ Daughter-in-law or Babe

to enjoy themselves. It said 'ghar ki lakshmi sexy dance kar rahi hain' aur zindagi ke maze loot rahi hain'²⁹ and wondered whether this is the 'Kahani har bahurani ki?!'³⁰

'Ordinary' Women

These prescriptions and proscriptions on sexuality and marriage, echoing the 'middle class patriarchal order', were not only meant for celebrities but also for 'ordinary women', who were covered only under crime related stories. Any threat to this order must be clearly spelled out in the public domain.

The crime feature 'Dilli Ki Aunty' punctured the message right in when it described how 'middle class aunties' in Delhi are increasingly, like their higher class counterparts, soliciting the services of male prostitutes 'Gigolos', and that too not only individually but in also group occasions such as kitty parties. The show carried a dramatised version depicting a few 'aunties', clad in sarees and jeans feeling up a boy performing a strip dance. It commented on the perversion of the sacred middle class womanhood as to how 'inko high class auraton ki lat inko bhi lag gayi hain'³¹, and how 'yeh pati ka paisa udati hain'³², 'pati se ub gayi hain'³³. It further used hidden camera to find out the links of this trade and concluded how the new found passion among these women is leading to the exploitation of young innocent men.

When 'Bahus' and 'Aunties' face violence

How does the patriarchal gaze of the channel respond when women face abuse and violence? The response if any is fragmented. The women featured are mostly from the middle class, as highlighted in the first chapter.

For instance, the murder case of Shivani Bhatnagar, a journalist was highlighted in detail, in the event of the announcement of conviction of the high-profile accused, IPS officer, R K Sharma, though the spotlight was on accounts of their 'affair' before

²⁹ How this traditional daughter-in-law is dancing sexily and enjoying life

³⁰ The story of all daughter-in-laws

³¹ These women have also been corrupted by the values typical of high-class women

³² They blow off their *husband's* money

³³ They are bored of their husbands

things got sour. The story of Priya, an NRI, English speaking bahu of a rich hotelier in Pune who faced sexual abuse and violence from both her husband and father-in-law was highlighted and followed up for a few days, titled 'Kahani crorepati gharane ki'³⁴. Initially she was also called to the studio to talk about what had happened with her. The anchor sympathised with her story though the frequent breaks could barely flesh out any details. A few days later the stories featured only the accused, the father in law, who talked of his 'parivar ki mushkilen', declaring that the bahu was maligning them only to elicit money. The story disappeared from the channel on the note how 'parivaron mein rishton ki maryada paar ho rahi hai'³⁵.

The channel had no space for women from poorer sections who face violence. Only one story was featured titled, 'Pati ki pitai'³⁶ which showed a man being beaten up on the streets by three women, all of whom were his wives who were enraged at finding out how their husband had duped them by marrying them at the same time, and was now planning to marry a fourth one. The channel reinforced the public/private boundaries and commented how domestic issues such as these should be resolved in home, saying 'Rishte jab sadak par aate hain to unki soorat kitn kharab hoti hia iski misaal aaj Tirupati shehar mein dekhne ko mili.'³⁷ The sympathy was clearly with the man and it stated how the wives 'En mauke par mahilaycn pahuch gayi, na mauka dekha na waqt bus pati ko peetna shuru kar diya.'³⁸ The story disturbed the patriarchal order and was hence important to broadcast.

Itemized Bodies, Item Girls and Comedy Items

Semiotics explains how words and images exist as signs embodying social meanings. It is in this context that the word 'item' most closely signifies the ideological package represented in Aaj Tak. Not a mere coincidence, it is also a word often uttered in its narration. The entire channel is segmented as items, mostly half an hour features,

³⁴ The story of a billionaire family

³⁵ How the limits and sanctity of relationships within families is being crossed

³⁶ The Beating of a husband

³⁷ When domestic relationships come on the road, how ugly their form and appearance can be, this was witnessed today in Tirupathi

³⁸ Reached in the last moment and without bothering about time and place, anything started to thrash him up

which are further partitioned into smaller items around the ad. The camera and voice over present 'serious' stories in an itemized, fragmented way, with no follow up and these also left half way in order to allow breaks or more exciting features, such as those featuring 'item girls' (and not item boys) and those based on comedy items, presented by male comedians who often comment on these very item girls. There are also items such as music performances that the channel hosts in celebration of a win by Indian cricket team or by Khali, the most successful Indian wrestler.

The itemized production of the channel is most clearly visible in how the camera captures and produces itemized bodies of 'women' celebrities. It focuses in, pans up and down, zooms in and stays on their body parts: the breasts, the legs, the torso, the face, each piece available separately for masculine gaze/ consumption. The images of women's bodies are flashed and repeated on the screen every few seconds within the space of a single story. In contrast, film and cricket stars are viewed full bodied, often with women, cars and bikes on their side. Many of the shows refer to how 'item girls' have got their body (parts) groomed through cosmetic surgery. The gaze of the camera is then not very different from the cosmetic surgeon in the production of fragmented bodies. As Balsamo (1992: 693) writes, 'cosmetic surgery serves as an ideological site for the examination of the technological reproduction of the gendered body. In its encounters with the cosmetic surgeon and the discourse of cosmetic surgery, the female body becomes an object of heightened personal surveillance; this scrutiny results in an internalized image of a fractured, fragmented body'

In a story on a fashion show in Delhi in which the top of a German model fell off her shoulder while walking on the ramp, showing her one breast, the image was repeated continuously for two hours on the channel. Alongside, images of another model, who had faced a similar situation last year was repeated alongside and the story read 'fashion shows ki durghatna'³⁹. Any other such issue that provided the possibility of displaying women's bodies were furnished as stories. For instance, in the Scarlett murder incident, stories were produced on the Goa Tourism and sex industry, which

³⁹ Mishaps at fashion shows

had lengthy scenes of women tourists in swim wear on its beaches, with celebratory music in the background.

Consumption of women's bodies remains thus important for the channels, and is part of which McNiar (2002) terms as 'pornographication of the mainstream or the sexualisation of the public sphere'. Jha (2008) notes how Aaj Tak showcases even absurd stories connected to the theme. He says, 'One of the recent stories showed a satellite photograph of Mars, where the shadow being formed on it was in the shape of a naked woman, and we had experts and astrologers commenting on that. Another example is the controversial kiss between actors Richard Gere and Shilpa Shetty which we played for days together including a non stop 17 min slot.'

The best possible medium, however, to showcase bodies is to feature 'item girls', celebrities who typically perform to seductive songs in films, with bodies often more exposed than lead actresses. A number of shows were regularly produced around them, carrying their old and new film-based songs. Any of their live dance performances across India and on television were also covered, in stories such as Mahima ka Tadka⁴⁰, Item ki Jung⁴¹, Race mein pichdi Sameera⁴² etc. The most popular 'item girl' on the show was however Rakhi Sawant, who is popular for her bold dances and controversial statements and acts, laden with sexual innuendos. She is a home grown celebrity on the channel. A number of shows specially featured on her 'Main Rakhi Sawant Banana Chahti Hoon'⁴³, King ke Jalwa⁴⁴, Bindaas Rakhi Ka Andaz⁴⁵, Yeh Jodi Junta Janti Hai⁴⁶ etc, with she featuring in most of their shows. What these shows allowed the channel was the opportunity to telecast clips of her song, especially one from her latest film, which had close ups of her body covered in a bikini top and skirt. On an average, the clip appeared at least 50 times in a day in different stories. The channel thus sold her body to sell her as also sold her to sell her

⁴⁰ Mahima's spice

⁴¹ Item war

⁴² Sameera left behind in Race

⁴³ I wish to be like Rakhi Sawant

⁴⁴ The king's magic

⁴⁵ The style of fun-loving Rakhi

⁴⁶ The audience knows this pair

body. The end result, as Jha (2008) says, 'her popularity is soaring and she has become 'hot' on the TRPs'. Anything related to her is an instant hit.

Jha also talked about how to keep up the popularity, a number of shows are constructed around her, in which she participates as an actress. 'On Valentine's Day, we carried a story all day long, in which she was shown slapping her boyfriend due to an ongoing fight between them, when he, along with our camera persons, went to her house with Valentine flowers. This was a drama they both performed, for our publicity as also their own.' As seen within the broadcast content, even on the April Fools day, the channel got the director of her upcoming film to 'fool' her by saying her dance number has been dropped. For a length of 10 mins, she 'enacted' a reaction of shock and anger, and abused her male co-stars, all for the pleasure for the audience and the TRPs. In order to keep her publicity alive, the channel also sometimes showcased stories which traced her journey from an unknown performer in small towns to Bollywood, showering compliments on her success.

While Rakhi Sawant and other item girls are profitable for sexual gaze/consumption for the channel, they can also mean a loss to the normative patriarchal order because of their sexualised agency, because they look back into the gaze that consumes them. Many of them openly admit to exposing bodies to gain publicity, and question the double standards of society (men) such that most of them want the likes of such girls in their bed, but not in the bedroom of their home, wish for them as girlfriends (babes) but not as wives (bahus). To counter any disturbance or challenge that these women pose to the order, the channel (like the entire media) cast them also as objects of humour and satire. All the shows on Sawant speak in a tone that mocks her for her impropriety, signifying limits to what women should not be.

This is done not only through voice over in the stories, but also through comedy items performed by male comedian celebrities. Comedy is one of the most potent sources of reinforcing stereotypes in gender, class and race, and thus subject object relations. And stand up comedy which is a new and successful genre on Indian television, is

being masterfully deployed to that purpose. Jokes on ‘wives’, ‘women’ and ‘item girls’ are always a huge hit, and express in a sense ideas of normative femininity in the particular socio-cultural context. Jokes are commonly made on two item girls, Rakhi Sawant and Mallika Sherawat and both are cast as ‘loose’ women, loud-mouthed and sexually out of control. One of the most popular comedians is Raju Srivastava, who is a staple on the channel, with almost daily shows that feature him. He has a host of hit ‘items’ that compare them with ‘normal’ women, referring to how they women regularly dump men, are hungry for publicity and eager to shed clothes at a call. Sawant and Srivastava are thus the two most popular celebrities ‘manufactured’ on Aaj Tak, the latter as the guardian of *masculine order*, countering the former *feminine disorder*.

Item girls are subjects of sexuality, clearly more than celebrity actresses and models, so they have to be put to their place. The idealised feminine (sexual) object is the model on the ramp, whose face, even in the event of her top being slipped, showed no betrayal of emotion or embarrassment. She walked unfazed, dead pan, to finish her round, her body and abandoned agency offering ultimate pleasure to the watchful gaze of sexual guardians. Conversely however, it is the women sexual ‘subjects’ who are most relished within the patriarchal gaze/consumption because in that context, the destruction and violence this gaze bears on them, their bodies, disappears. In the particular case of item girls, and even actresses, the argument goes; they have not been forced to but have ‘chosen’ to be in the glamour industry, and to expose their bodies, so why have a problem if men watch, joke, enjoy. The implication being that since they have on their own accord chosen to cross the normative order, they deserve any flak they might get. It is in this light that the exposed body of the ‘mute’ model becomes an issue and telecast as a ‘durgatna’⁴⁷ with her breast faded in the image, in marked contrast to the endless repeats of images of Sawant’s upper body through the day, minus any such qualifiers.

⁴⁷ Tragedy

The tragedy of the objectification of women's bodies within the patriarchal gaze of the channel is reflective of the larger patriarchal domination and subordination embodied in consumption/gaze. The objectification however disappears from view because it casts women as 'subjects' who internalize its 'norms of femininity' and 'see' it (as they are made to) as a means to their own liberation. The spectacle and surveillance of normative femininity is most centrally located on woman's body and sexuality in contemporary patriarchal regime. Bartky (1997: 94-108) extends Foucault's analysis to understand how modernization of patriarchal domination has produced, disciplined and normalized the feminine body. She says while older forms of domination are eroding and women have been given certain freedoms in norms and spheres related to behaviour, movement, marriage, work, space, but newer forms are emerging and consolidating which are tied to regulating women's presumed heterosexuality and appearance. She identifies three disciplinary practices, those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and configuration, those that demand a specific repertoire of gestures and postures, and movements, often constricted, and those directed towards display of this body as an ornamented surface. However she says that the disciplinary power that inscribes this femininity seems everywhere and it is nowhere, and creates the impression that the production of femininity is either voluntary or natural.

'A subjected feminine body becomes so connected to producing self and subjectivity ... can give the individual a certain sense of mastery as well as a secure sense of identity.... The patriarchal discipline is therefore internalized in the structure of the self and seen as natural and unquestioned, almost as though, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women; they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Femininity as a spectacle is something in which virtually every woman is required to participate... a woman who monitors herself umpteen times a day in mirror... is an inmate of panopticon, a self policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance... which is an obedience to patriarchy... whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or to excite...' (ibid).

A number of feminists have analyzed how dominant norms of beauty, health, youth circulate in the media which make them both objects and subjects of consumption (see Diamond 1985, Wykes and Gunter 2005, Jeffreys 2005). When women compare their body and others with media representation of the 'perfect body', they participate in their own objectification, and see themselves with the potential to become 'better' or 'more desirable' objects. Body is seen as an object which must be cleaned up, stylized, coloured, cut, groomed, made up, and fit into current 'ideal', which not only takes mental and physical space and time, but importantly make them consume a number of expensive products and techniques. Cosmetic surgery is one such exercise, in which as Balsomo (1992) says 'the body becomes the vehicle of confession; it is the site at which women, consciously or not, accept the meanings that circulate in popular culture about ideal beauty and in comparison, devalue the material body. The female body comes to serve in other words, as a site of inscription, a billboard for the dominant cultural meanings.' The culture of self-discipline, where women as subjects must constantly 'police' their bodies is fully compatible with current need for women's wage labour, such as in the services sector, the cult of youth and fitness and need for late capitalism to maintain high levels of consumption. Therefore the contemporary culture of patriarchy and capitalism represents and links 'consumption' as a sign of women's liberation, a goal for female happiness and self-worth. Johnson (cited in Heywood 2005) says that Capitalism organizes women's desires around consumer practices, 'so that joy is translated into dishwashing detergent and another pair of shoes... this desire is thus paradoxically yoked to a disciplined work ethic in the service of accumulating capital.'

Media, as a space of consumption, and therefore a bearer of capitalist patriarchal ideology also promote these ideas of consumption led liberation, and presents it as a substitute and progress over feminism. It is fashioned as post feminism, which is a backlash and negation of the gains of feminism (Gamble 1999, Modleski 1991). In such an ideology, feminism is equated with 'victim feminism' which they say casts women as only helpless victims of violence and economic inequality, and is opposed to beauty, desire, fashion, aesthetics, heterosexuality, men, sex, love and romance etc.

Postfeminism seeks to reclaim practices related to all these domains, which are in essence tied up with consumption practices, and in doing so bring in 'power feminism' or 'girl power', as defined by scholars such as Denefeld, Wolf, Roiphe, whose goal for women subjects is to be claim individual power, and be equal and aggressive as men. Women are therefore repositioned as consumers rather than activists. It also brings men under the fold of consumption and the equalization takes place in how men today are also under pressure to conform to norms of appearance, with specialized beauty products and services, and how their bodies are being represented as delightful objects for the 'female gaze'.

The Indian media also endorses ideas of post feminism, as argued by Chaudhuri (2000). It forms the hidden script in what is narrated by Saxena (2008), editor of the Brunch Sunday magazine. She says, 'I have a politically incorrect take on gender. Though like anybody I am all for equal rights for women, but a lot of stuff fed to us by these feminists is basically 'crap'. Just to elucidate, they object to this thing of beauty contests in the pretext of commodification of women. I do not understand it because frankly all the women who participate do on their own accord and not because they are dragged or kicked into it. These women know that if they want a career in showbiz or glamour, then modelling is the way. And if this means wearing a bikini and walking the ramp, so be it. Today in fact there are similar pageants for guys, where they also are being asked to look good, wax and wear briefs. There is nothing wrong with it. Feminists say that we should not look attractive to guys. Now which woman doesn't want to be attractive to the opposite sex? Similarly, they pass value judgments on Rakhi Sawant dancing in less clothes or Vijay Malaya, owner of Kingfisher industries, having a calendar with girls in beach wear. I simply don't have any patience for this kind of gender issues'. Celebrities also endorse the post feminist position when Preity Zinta, an actress declares on a chat show, *Seedhi Baat* on Aaj Tak. 'I am not a feminist, though I do my bit for female feoticide etc. When in regard to her engagement with the Indian Premium League, the anchor comments that she seems to have chosen a cricket team that seems bold like her, she answers that while

she is happy to have done that but she just hopes that ‘cricketers khele to ladkiyon ki tarah na khele. Solid khele’⁴⁸.

Agreeing with how Douglas (1996) articulates it, there is enough reason to say that ‘consumption’ is to a great extent liberating for women and they all deserve a relief from the drudgery that they have been toiled in for ages, and liberation does include freedom to buy, wear and do what they want. The issue however is that consumption and liberation for middle class women and men itself is based on the oppression/violence of the larger set of workers who can barely subsist. Consumption brings pleasure and violence, and solidifies the regime of property/vision, and it is for this reason that feminism which critiques and challenges this regime is eliminated from view in the media.

The culture of consumption expressed in ideas of post feminism does not eliminate patriarchal oppression but in fact reproduces it, adding layers of violence. As feminists highlight, the norms of consumption being unattainable, most women fail in compliance, resulting in not only physical hazards, such as eating disorders, as also and mental disorders such as shame, worthlessness, feeling of inferiority, loss of intimacy, discrimination and sanctions (Jeffreys 2005). And because the discipline and conformity is manifest as ‘voluntary’, they are blamed for whatever consequences that may occur. The violence of the regime is most violently manifest in cases of sexual assault, such as often those who faced it are blamed for having invited it, on pretense of their appearance or acts, in essence, their subjecthood.

Aaj Tak, in its middle class patriarchal gaze also exemplifies such representations. This was evidently manifest in how they constructed the story of Scarlett, a foreigner who came as a tourist in Goa but was raped and murdered, allegedly by her boyfriend. The details of the story were discussed for days together, though the tone and the focus was on judging the girl, as to how, while in her teens, she was already into drugs and alcohol, had multiple sex partners and had even undergone an

⁴⁸ I only hope the cricketers do not play like women. They should play solid.

abortion. Further, that her mother knew of her lifestyle but had let her 'loose' and was herself holidaying in other parts of the country. The suggestion being that with such 'indulgent behaviour' and 'family values', the girl was completely responsible for the violence she had borne. The only time the alleged boyfriend was featured was when he denied his involvement it and made statements as to how the girl was sharing a physical relationship simultaneously with several men. What was implied within the story was also how such a 'self-inviting' crime on the part of the girl had unnecessarily put the state and tourism in bad light.

To briefly sum up, the news channel orders the content for a masculine subject, and thereby represents discourses of normative men and women, that personify values of a middle class patriarchal order as it interacts with capitalist consumption. The representations are however not uniform and homogenous within media space its but vary according to the genre and its 'target audience'. For instance in advertisements, representations of men and women promoting products of family are different from how they are seen in products meant for youngsters.

It is significant to state here then that an analysis of the almost 85 advertisements shown on the channel during the month revealed that the commodities largely been sold on the channel are what would be typically seen as belonging to the male domain or popularly seen as for male consumption. So what was visibly not seen were ads for household products such as refrigerators, washing machines, washing powders, kitchenware, grocery and eating products, women's beauty and personal care products such as soaps, shampoos, crèmes etc. Instead there were soaps, fairness cremes and clothing for men, as also bikes, cars, laptops, batteries, liquor (soda), and an equal number for business and investment options with male protagonists. There were also products for family consumption as has been highlighted in previous sections.

Men and Women in Global families

In the ads shown on the channel which featured families, the earning figure was primarily the man. They are mostly the corporate executives who work in offices in high rise complexes (Tata Salt, Ultra Tech Cement) or the entrepreneurs who have enough options in the market to expand and make it big, such as *SBI loans*, *Indian Bulls business loans*. When they work hard in office, they are given due rewards such as promising promotions (LIC market plus).

The 'Corporate Men' are caring at home, and share warm relations with the wife, parents and children, and are concerned about everyone's comfort. The men are also romantic, and willing to take the wife on a holiday (Haier A/C). In order to secure the future of the family, the men not only work hard to earn more but also know how to save and invest intelligently, and in such matters of finance, saving and insurance, the wives are completely ignorant. The men are thus the owners and keepers of property.

The men save through their life for the benefit of the family, often sacrificing in this process their own comfort and happiness. For the *Max New Life Insurance*, the man is shown compromising at various points of life and the voiceover says 'Kitne saal sangarsh kiya apno ke liye, apni zimmedariyon ke liye'⁴⁹. In one instance his boss humiliates him and he wishes to leave the job but just then the image of his pregnant wife beckons him. Now, having got the pension plans in his older days, he dives in a pool to the amusement of his wife and the voice over urges him 'ab koi samjhuta nahin, ab to apne liye jiyo yaar'⁵⁰!

The *AXA Life Insurance* shows the husband planning and buying new products for the family (children) to the complete obliviousness of the wife, and every time something new comes home, she is left surprised and asks him, 'hamare liye?'⁵¹, to which he replies that he is doing all this for the children, but also taking an insurance so they can also be self-reliant in their old age. In a similar representation, the ad for the

⁴⁹ How many years have you struggled, for your people, for your responsibilities?

⁵⁰ Buddy, no more compromise now... at least now you must live for your own self!

⁵¹ For us?

HDFC Standard Life Insurance shows a middle aged couple, and a young daughter who comes back home upset about the lack of funds for her studies in the U.S. On this occasion, her dad surprises her by saying, ‘koi hai job arson se apke liya paiso ka intezam kar raha hai’⁵² and it turns out it is him. She hugs him with joy and in that moment the mother joins in.

In matters of taxation also, the men are the ‘knowers’. The government ad on ‘service tax’ shows a middle aged couple in a posh home, where in the man is seen in a rush on the breakfast table. When the wife enquires, he replies he has to go to file his service tax. Unaware of why this needs to be done, she asks him ‘Kisiliye’⁵³, to which the husband explains in the tone of a caring schoolteacher ‘desh ki pragati ke liye’⁵⁴ elaborating on how cities and infrastructure get built because we pay the tax. Men thus not only care for home but also the world and ‘public’ at large, true citizens, compared to the women who are confined in their own narrow and private world (views). While the men do so much of work outside, women make sure they stay healthy. A wife gives her husband a pinch of Tata Salt (with less sodium that controls blood pressure) so he stays calm amidst all the work tension; another keeps the house and toilet germ free with the Dormex cleaner. A mother gives his married son a spoon of Jeevanprash, as he returns from the gym.

As seen from the representations, even while overall the male dominance is retained, men in the family ads are not characteristically ‘macho’ or ‘masculine’, and their relations with the female members show warmth and concern. Paul (2008), head of an advertising company, brings his own insights on these shifting discourses on ‘men’ from the perspective of ad-making. ‘These days in middle class households, there is a big shift of authority towards women, and they are key partners in decision making, not only on issues such as spacing of children, which school the children should go to, or what to buy, but also on concerns such as housing loans and insurance, that is conventionally not their terrain. So we bring in these aspects when making ads. Like

⁵² There *is* someone who has been arranging money for you...

⁵³ Why?

⁵⁴ For nation’s development

our 'Jeete Raho'⁵⁵ ad campaign on *ICICI Life Insurance* shows a woman pulling up her husband for not acting in time for insurance. This was not possible to show earlier. One of our most successful campaigns was on TVS whirlpool washing machine with the tag 'mummy ka magic chalega kya', where the other is seen as the problem solver. She enjoys more space in all arenas and the man is willing to hand it over to her. Earlier the ads showed women waiting for men's appreciation. If she got a detergent to clean, she would seek his approval if the floor is clean. Today we do not show such stuff. Women are much in control, efficient, multi tasker, modern thinker. However we also cannot show women running the men down, rebuking them, making the men feel less important, or stupid. Also it is important that she is also concerned about the way she looks, to incorporate is an element of style and desirability in. 'So even the whirlpool ad shows a housewife, who is in comfortable, yet stylish clothes, with smart cut trousers and sleeveless top.

However Paul adds that while the sexual element is important, it can never be over played. For instance, there was recently a huge controversy on the ad of Amul Macho men's underwear which shows a sari-clad women washing the underwear in a dhobi ghat and indulging in sexual fantasies. It provoked a lot of anger. While 'female gaze' is definitely in, but this one had it played out in a very upfront mode and it punctured the traditional woman stereotype sharply, because women in saris never discuss sexual fantasies. Such directness is never the cool thing to do. Although, what is interesting to note that we happened to preview that ad to a young lot and they found it cool and fun, and did not find anything out of the box or bold. This I think is because they have been brought up on this grammar of sexuality.'

He further says that the notion of how modern the woman is also depends on the product being marketed. For example, for cosmetics now, we have the new woman in the boardroom. Similarly, ad of scooties for women has young career girls as role models. However Indian culture and tradition is retained when she utters the line 'Making papa proud.' So even having while having a career and a vehicle is a

⁵⁵ Bless you

symbol of power and progress, somewhere it is about the man. We did not need the line to be inserted in the U.S. However here we need to so as to bring the emotional connect women are looking for.'

What emerges from the discussion above is while in the emerging representational space of television, there exerts a certain kind of patriarchal order, and in that the scheme of family, marriage and private property is not disturbed, there is also a certain kind of loosening of its norms especially within the site of the middle class family, and that men are willing to allow 'space' and 'freedom' to women, who have now to themselves a varied set of choices within the world of consumption. This brings forth the assumption that there is a certain kind of feminisation of the public order or of masculinity itself.

Such assumptions, which today form part of popular discourses, I argue, are misleading. While relations between men and women are changing, and women in the middle class have a greater control over their life, masculinity, and its socially unequal form, patriarchy, has not faded away, but has only reproduced in much more benign forms within the family, which has a direct connection in how it is imagined as a site of production and consumption in late capitalism.

The scope of this study does not allow one to probe 'reality' outside the screen, but only that within it. So one can see how the ordering gaze on television (news channels) itself is highly masculinised, and perhaps any such fears of the contagion of feminisation are countered by reinforcing hegemonic forms of masculinity, which dominate the screen space. Connell (1999a: 37-39) writes of how in multicultural societies, there are varying definitions and enactments of masculinity and these plural masculinities exist in definite relations of hierarchy and exclusion. But there is generally a hegemonic form of masculinity, most honoured or desired in a particular context. 'Hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of the practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women, and are constructed against

subordinated and marginalised masculinities, such as homosexuals or working class'. He further says that media bears representations of this hegemonic masculinity.

Notwithstanding the softer versions seen in family ads, representations of the hegemonic form of masculinity, embodied in heterosexual men of consuming classes, remains central to all Aaj Tak programming, as seen in cinema and crime segments. This representation is also visible in the ads. 'Speed', 'efficiency', 'power', 'strength', 'performance' – these are the adjectives that hegemonic masculinity personifies and this is what defines the bikes and jeeps that men must possess in order to be more masculine. Men have a relationship of knowledge and control perhaps with all other technology such as engine oils, tyres, radial, batteries or laptops. Most of the ads of vehicles and hi-tech technology featured sturdy and successful men, mostly cricket and film stars. Additionally, the news feature on the channel 'Car Crazy Cricketer' highlighted as to what kind of powerful vehicles, each of the member of the Indian cricket team possessed, in addition to the shows on the 'women' (actresses) they were 'eying' to possess. Hegemonic masculinity however is materialised most significantly in possessing women, which in the consumption regime could be done by just spraying a deodorant such as the *Axe effect*. The men gaze at and caress their women just as they do to their more feminine cars. Other sources of vigour and masculinity come from consumption of tobacco (and its varieties) and liquor, most of which also featured celebrities, also riding bikes and jeeps. Speaking about such representations, Paul (2008) said that ad makers work actively to enhance men's masculinity. 'A man also has this constant need for supporting his masculinity. It might include alcohol or the sexy, fashionable women he dreams about. The portrayal should always show him in a sense of command and control. He should feel the boss.'

Within Aaj Tak programming, sports emerged as the most privileged medium for portraying and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity in its vehement forms. Messner (2000) writes that 'sports as a practice and institution is intimately tied with masculinity within which men construct and affirm their separation from, and

domination, over women... sports in industrialising societies developed as a male preserve separate from women's spheres of life. It is a modern bastion of patriarchal power, and its key ideological outcome has been to create the illusion that masculinity naturally belongs to (ironed) male bodies and femininity to female bodies, and that these binary categories of male/masculinity and female/femininity are naturally and categorically different' (ibid: 314-15). Dworkin and Wachs (2000) highlight sport and mass media have enjoyed a mutually beneficial or 'symbiotic' relationship.

Within sports, national cricket dominated the coverage, with daily and special shows focusing on all its developments, ongoing series, planned series, team selection etc. Cricket news was also part of all headlines of the day. Within the month of March, there were many big occasions for cricket, but the most important was the 'historic' win against Australia. For days together, the channel showcased celebrations across the country and invited performers in the studio to present songs and poetry in praise of 'team India'. Alongside cricket, what really captured and invaded the screen was Khali, the 'wrestling star of India', who is known as The Great Khali, and who the channel refers to as 'Khali Mahabali'⁵⁶.

The spectacle of the 'ultimate' masculine man

Khali, who has been perhaps introduced to the larger media audience by Aaj Tak, got at least 2-3 hours of coverage every day of the month, with repeat shows. Some of which included: Khali ke Dav⁵⁷, Champions Ko Harayo Hhali⁵⁸, Terminator Ki Rah Par Chala Khali⁵⁹, Ek Khali Dus Hasinayen⁶⁰, Khali Mahabli Ka Mahayudh⁶¹, Khali ne liya Ken se badla⁶², Mahabali ka ⁶³Mahamukabala, Khali aur Khoon⁶⁴ and Bimar Hai Khali⁶⁵. Khali, says the channel is the only wrestling star India has produced who

⁵⁶ Khali, the strongest

⁵⁷ Khali's moves

⁵⁸ Beat the Champions, Khali!

⁵⁹ Khali walks on the footsteps of Terminator

⁶⁰ One Khali, ten beautiful women

⁶¹ The Great War of the Great Khali

⁶² Khali takes vengeance with Ken

⁶³ Superman's super championship

⁶⁴ Khali and Blood

⁶⁵ Khali is unwell

they say has the capacity to beat any opponent in the world, with his strength of a tiger (images of a tiger enmeshed with his). The language and imagery used to describe him utilizes solely on superlatives of power, such as balashali, yoddha, khunkhar, and a montage of violent images of his feats filled the screen, repeated endlessly. Aaj Tak talks of how he is the superhero, the superman, the ultimate masculine figure to be walking on earth now, with a height of 7 ft 3 inch, 152 kgs, chest of 63 inch. Because of this built, women are crazy for him and the voice over says 'Aisa kasa badan dekh kar to Japan se Las Vegas tak hasinayon ka dil bekabu ho jata hai'⁶⁶ and that is because Khali 'Mahabali hai, kamyab hai, mashhoor hai, daulatmand bhi hai... to bhala unke aas paas kyun na mandarayengi hasinaye.'⁶⁷

Khali can thus 'possess' any woman and can beat any opponent in the world, including the champions like the Undertaker, with moves that the most men in the wrestling ring cannot match, such as Khali Bomb, Vice Grip, Brain chop, Big Boot, Head Butt, Short Arm Clothesline, Back Elbow Strike, Spin Kick, Leg Drop, Delayed Scoop Slam etc. The moves are so violent and sharp that Khali 'Dushman ko dhool chatata hai'⁶⁸, 'tabah karta hai'⁶⁹, 'khopri masal deta hai'⁷⁰.

Connell (1987: 61) says 'the winning of hegemony (masculinity) often involves the creation of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures, such as film characters played by Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne and Sylvester Stallone. Or real models may be publicized who are so remote from everyday achievement that they have the effect of an unattainable ideal, like the boxer Muhammad Ali. 'The public face of hegemonic masculinity (as seen in these images) is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men willing to support. 'Few are Bogarts or Stallones, many collaborate in sustaining those images' (ibid). In the same vein, Joyrich (1990) argues that the characteristics

⁶⁶ Looking at such a body, women from Japan to Las Vegas feel butterflies in their stomach

⁶⁷ And this is because he is super strongest, successful, popular, rich... why wouldn't the beauties be around him?

⁶⁸ Khali makes the opponent lick the ground

⁶⁹ Destroys him

⁷⁰ Bursts his head

of television in postmodern imagination is also what get identified as feminine, such as fluidity, proximity, surface and emotional excess and a television viewer is typically feminine in popular imagination. But this appropriation of markers of the feminine by television and postmodern critics, she says, does not lead to the dissolution of gendered binaries: in fact, 'the very rupture of traditional modes of thought provokes a panicked attempt to create new divisions rather than working to dispel our society's need for oppositions... the feminine textuality of television obscures crucial gender differences. The first of these is the split between production and consumption, in which men control the former and women are positioned within the latter. The second is television's own response to the threat of 'feminization' by the construction within which much of its output of 'a violent hypermasculinity... which show masculinity to be a matter of spectacle and display, as also characterised by neutralisation or absence of women and a violent excess which is masculinity's defense against the 'contagion of feminization'

Khali embodies both the fantasy figure of western superheroes, and the spectacle of violent hypermasculinity, compensating for any feminization that may occur within the space of Aaj Tak. And this is perhaps symptomatic of the masculinisation of the larger sphere itself, and how it feeds into making a 'strong' nation.

As described, nation as an imagined community is gendered. Nagel (1999: 401) describes, what many have characterized, the extensive nature of links between nationalism, patriotism, militarism, imperialism and masculinity. 'By definition, nationalism is political and closely linked to the state and its institutions. Like the military, most state institutions have been historically dominated by men. It is therefore no surprise that the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism. Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another, and the modern form of western masculinity emerged at about the same time and place as modern nationalism ... the national state is essentially a masculine institution.' Sinha (2006) also says that the nation is seen as a heterosexual masculine construct, so for instance nationalist

movements often involve ‘reasserting masculinity and reclaiming male honour, and moments of nationalist fervour frequently centre around a remasculinisation of national culture’

Sport, Masculinity and violence interweave closely to produce such nationalisms, to assert national strength vs the ‘others’. As an illustration, in the cricket victory against Australia, the singers that Aaj Tak called in the studio highlighted how the team had taken revenge of the racist attack of Australians on Indian player Harbhajan Singh. They sang in praise of the Indian team, ‘Tumne hai raunda, tumne hai kuchla, tumhi ko aaya hai lena badla ... who the badbole, unko guman tha, unse jo jeete koi kab kahan tha, magar aaj hain who sar ko jhukaye, nikal ke zamin par guman aa gaya hai’⁷¹ Meanwhile the captions on the bottom read, Kangaruon ko humne neecha dikhaya⁷², Kangaruyon ko humne kar diya dher⁷³. Racism was thus a useful tool to reinforce masculinised nationalistic conceptions. This was also visible in the depiction of Khali, who the channel repeated has not got his due as the ‘world’s strongest wrestler’ only because of racism by white men. The channel regularly featured shows which said ‘dhokhe se harta hai khali’⁷⁴, kept a track on all his upcoming shows and boosted him before by saying ‘Champions ko harayo khali’⁷⁵.

Both the strong cricketing heroes and Khali then became symptomatic of consolidating the masculine power of the ‘Indian’ nation, and which is why the channel describes them, they are the ‘surmas’ and ranvirs’, i.e. warriors of the nation. And this masculinity and nationalism is itself linked to the masculine order of the global order itself. As Connell (1999b: 71-85) shows how the world gender order is unquestionably patriarchal, in the sense that it privileges men over women... there is a patriarchal dividend for men arising from unequal wages, unequal labour force participation, and a highly unequal structure of ownership as well as cultural and

⁷¹ You have killed, and you have destroyed, only you have known how to take revenge... they were loud-mouthed. they were conceited, there were not many who could defeat them... but today they are standing in shame, their pride has fallen on the ground...

⁷² We have shown them down, the Kangaroos!

⁷³ We have knocked the Kangaroos out!

⁷⁴ Khali is cheated into loosing

⁷⁵ Go beat the champions, Khali!

sexual privileging. He further says that masculinities are shaped by global forces, in the way that particular institutions become dominant in world society and the patterns of masculinity embedded in them may become global standards, which lead to the production of a hegemonic masculinity on a world scale that embodies, organises and legitimises men's domination in the gender order as a whole.

To conclude, this chapter sought to bring out how television as a space of consumption and advertising, fashions both news and adverts as commodities, existing for the pleasure/entertainment of modern hedonists, the middle classes of the gentrified city/nation. However, the channel speaks to not this class as a whole but a 'male consumer/spectator'. The regime of the camera, along with the voice over address 'him' and lays out for his desire, cinema, cricket and crime (among others) whose content constructs and reinforces his masculinity. The ordering gaze of this masculine subject embodies patriarchy and consumption in order to fashion normative feminine 'subjects'. And this masculine order is tied up to the project of constructing a 'strong', 'masculinised' nation in a globalising world.

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Conclusion

This study was an effort to give an intent eye and ear to the Hindi news channels in India and thereby gather what is being communicated through its high-pitched montages. Given the limitation of the study, the focus here was placed on the analysis of the media 'text', and through that an effort was made to unearth the intentions of production. As argued in Chapter III, it is in production that preferred meanings are encoded, that feed into the construction of certain 'normative discourses'. The idea of the normative is intricately tied with power structures, determining who would be visible and heard within a given regime. What formed the larger question in the backdrop was what is the relationship between what we see 'represented' within a mass media space such as television, and what we perceive as reality. It emerged that 'representation' in such media does not reflect a reality out there, but in fact actively constructs it; much as the reality that we 'see' and 'encounter' outside the screen is a representation constructed by those who have been historically dominant within the scheme of property relations, and its socio-structural constructs of class, gender, caste, race, caste, or nationality. The production of the media text is therefore not a discreet enterprise in itself, but intertwined with and produced within the productive processes of society itself.

How this relationship is materialised was explored within the space of Chapter III. The production of property is dialectically in relation to the production of a certain kind of an overarching vision/gaze in which its complicated grid of subject object relations 'appear' natural and functional through history and culture. This is the production of ideology, which bewitches our vision in presenting an inverted reality, where the 'particular' is represented as the 'general' and masquerades as common sense. This vision is implicated within property relations, such that subjects of property are also the subjects of vision/gaze who can actively look, visualise and represent, and the objects of property, the propertyless, who are its slaves, the women, the working class, the lower castes, the blacks, who are looked/gazed at, visualised and represented. The regime of property/vision is reproduced through 'invisiblising'

the objects, who labour within the dark *private* spheres; by consequence the only visibility they are given is as 'bodies', that can work tirelessly as machines. They are also visibilised *through* their bodies because it is often the visible and 'natural' differences on the body which are used to then culturally categorise them as others, as seen in the historic journey of sex to gender. What seems as natural in ideology also circulates as norms and normative within culture, such discourses around ideal bodies and sexuality, which are essentially bound up with reproducing property relations. The norm has a disciplining and surveillance effect, in that it produces 'subjects' who self comply and self regulate their bodies and selves, and their objectification seems to disappear from view. Property and its vision is thus also embodies a gaze.

Within the regime of private property, production also enters into a dialectical relation with consumption, such that an expansion of production becomes functionally dependent on an expanding sphere of consumption. The subjects and objects of property are also then the subjects and objects of consumption, i.e. consumers and commodities respectively. Consumption carries both pleasure and destruction, in how the commodity is destroyed to create pleasure for the consumer. In that sense, the objects/commodities are also destroyed (consumed) for the production of pleasure (property). As argued in Chapter IV, the need to continually augment consumption has fashioned the development of 'consumer societies, chiefly constituted in the spectacular and enchanting cities of the west, with an array of department stores, displays for advertising. In the contemporary society, consumption has increasingly come to permeate the material and symbolic realm, and has in effect become the disciplinary gaze in society, for the worker complies to his/her 'own' consumption in order to access the seductive rewards that commodities offer. He or she becomes the consuming 'subject', who by the act of free choice disciplines his/her self and life according to prevailing norms of consumption. The regime of consumption/gaze or property/vision embodies thus both pleasure and destruction, both spectacle and surveillance, that together reproduce the subject object relations.

The matrix of vision, visibility, gaze that property lays out, within which these relations are cast and naturalized is however not all blinding, but always contested and in flux. In order to secure and propagate its hegemonic visions/ideologies in the face of counter-hegemonic forces, property utilizes representational systems of language and images, which come together in forms of visual media and cultures such as art, photography, film, theatre, print and television. Media or the symbolic realm has always been an important apparatus to circulate 'reality'.

How this takes place concretely brings one to the analysis of the 'political economy' of the media. The production of many of these media, most importantly, broadcast television and print, requires substantial investment of capital and is thus organized and controlled as cultural industries within the state and market. Media texts therefore become cultural commodities that are employed to produce profit/property. In other words, a media text, through its semiotic, gets encoded with beliefs, ideas and meanings, or normative discourses around class, race, caste or gender, where the normative is connected to reinforcing and not disturbing the schema of production and consumption. Television media is also constituted within the contemporaneous relations of property.

As argued in Chapter II and IV, late capitalism is characterized by a centrality of consumption, where in the market economy of the western societies is being reproduced in the developing countries, including India. Alongside, models of media organization, content and packaging prevalent there are also being installed here, which has had a direct bearing on how television media, and in particular news is being constituted. As such, world over, media production (hardware and software) is becoming concentrated in the hands of few industrial/communication conglomerates. Here also, with the adoption of the globalisation policies and the emergence of the satellite technology, private television channels have invaded the broadcast space, which are owned by big corporate groups and run solely on advertising revenues. Advertisements have been the most important resource through which consumption is materialised. Its control means that the content of news and other programming also

reinforces the regime. News as a fetishized commodity exists as an advert of consumption, and within this logic that lines between the two 'genres' on the news channel, news and advertisements, are increasingly being blurred. They are being packaged as commodities, a referent to and referent of the larger, material world of commodities. In essence, television in India as elsewhere is being transformed as a space of consumption, embodying both spectacle and surveillance. The gaze of the camera is part of the gaze of consumption itself, which seduces and polices respectively, to secure the seductive, private worlds of a few, from the larger majority, who are consumed to produce these very seducing commodities. In the current order, they are being eliminated from physical and social geographies of cities, and the new gentrified city has in effect come to represent the nation. Television in India is also the representational space of the gentrified city and nation. The television screen, like the shop window of a large department store in such a city, is a border separating classes, through which while all can look in and desire, but only some can cross over, and possess the commodities on display. This is visible also in also the represented realities of the reconstituted genre of news.

In the new manner of a 'drag' performance, news has cast away its known 'semiotic' It has reappeared as an entertainment spectacle, with key embellishments as cricket, crime and cinema, and as seen in the analysis of Chapter IV, it is within the all blinding and all consuming spell of this spectacle that surveillance is being materialised. As argued, commodities enter into a relation with consumers by seeking to strengthen their identity and subjectivity. So it is only the urban consuming classes who can identify their reflection and representation in the news commodity; the image and sound are effectively purged of the 'others'. The ideal consuming subject however is not undifferentiated, but masculine, and it is largely for his sexual subjectivity that the spectacle and surveillance is being structured. The camera embodies not just consumption but also patriarchy, and it is this social partnership within the current order that the channel reproduces in its discourses of normative femininity. As seen, these norms apply to the women 'celebrities' as much as 'ordinary women' in coverage of stories of cinema and crime, and frame an ideal

combination of family, marriage, career, beautiful body and controlled sexuality. Anything that may threaten the normative middle class gendered order is surveyed out by evasion or rejection. And it is within this logic, what is also clearly kept out of representation is the political project of feminism that seeks to challenge the regime of property and consumption that subordinates women. Instead media appropriates its language to fashion a 'feminism' that speaks of a normative consuming 'subject', and her freedom and choice in consumption, and this subjecthood is most essentially related to women's bodies and sexuality. The fashioning of subjecthood is manifest of the current order of consumption in which the objectification disappears, for women internalise a patriarchal panopticon, and on their accord seek to fit the normative femininity, disciplining their bodies and sexuality for the gaze/consumption of the men. The women come to thus consume and be consumed equally and forcefully.

Within the space of Aaj Tak, women's bodies are the key site of spectacle, gaze and consumption, captured and fragmented for the pleasure of the masculine figure, both within and outside the screen. Masculinity thus remains the ordering gaze and its hegemonic constructions are most vehemently represented in sportsmen. However the unrelenting gaze, hunger and violence of masculinity that the channel signifies is perhaps best personified in the figure of Khali himself, who is the ultimate hero of destructive power. The concluding sections of Chapter IV explore how such hegemonic masculine constructions relate to the construct of building a strong 'nation' in the globalised world. How such a process shapes up and what are its contours, this is perhaps one of the many pertinent areas of enquiry, among others that can be taken forward from this preliminary study of mainstream television text.

So how does one characterise television news, and through that the media itself? Perhaps one doesn't need to look scrounge for newer words, for the word that still comes closest to defining and describing it, despite its fatigued usage, is *violence* itself. Its significations and semiotic boundaries need to be expanded, so as to challenge the dominant meanings and conceptions that it is wrapped in, such as the quality of being physical and disruptive. Violence carries a whole repertoire of significations

and forms, but one of the worst imageries of violence that human society is capable of and fears most, is cannibalistic, where humans consume humans, and all that was preserved hitherto as human is sacrificed at the altar of hunger or greed. It is the imagination and metaphoric imagery that draws from this comes closest to both experiencing and describing the goriness seen in Hindi television news today, where living bodies and dead are consumed for a display of the marketplace.

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Misra, Garima, Senior Executive, *Ogilvey and Mather*, Public Relations Firm in Delhi

Paul, Debashis, Vice President, *McCann Erickson*, Advertising Company based in Delhi

Saxena, Poonam, Editor, *Brunch. The Sunday Magazine of the Hindustan Times*, an English Newspaper in Delhi

Tarafdar, Suman, Associate Editor, Features, *Financial Express*, Economic Daily of the Indian Express Group, Delhi

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