Südasien-Chronik - South Asia Chronicle 11/2021, pp. 141-166 © Südasien-Seminar der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin ISBN: 978-3-86004-348-6

Writing *Khush Khabar*: Hindi Newspapers in Neoliberal 21st-Century India[1]

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KEYWORDS: MEDIA, HINDI, PUBLIC, CULTURE, GLOBALISATION, INDIA

In the last decade of twentieth century, the Indian economy formally embraced the process of privatisation and liberalisation which began in 1991, heralding the contemporary phase of globalisation. The mixed economy, which was based on self-reliance and import substitution in the planning era, was opened to foreign investment, finance and trade. These economic reforms have changed the nature of capitalism and the nation-state and had a profound impact on Indian society and culture. Technology and economic change, which came with globalisation, have also transformed the media business, accompanied by an increase in literacy, expanding purchasing power and a volatile political situation in the Hindi belt (Bhaduri & Nayar 1996; Jeffrey 2000; Ninan 2007; Das 2013). Amid these changes, the media has emerged as an important site of ideological production and public discourse.

In contrast to the US, UK and Germany, where circulation figures for print publications are on the decline and the 21st century slogan is 'Internet first,' the Indian print media industry has been growing steadily. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) report for 2017, despite competition from television, radio and the digital medium, the average number of copies of print media publications in India went up by 23.7 million between

2006 and 2016. Most importantly, Indian languages have propelled this growth, in particular the Hindi press, which was the fastest to grow, at the CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 8.76 per cent, during the period 2006-2016, while the English-language press grew during the same period by just 2.8 per cent.[2]

Against this backdrop, the relationship between the neoliberal phase of globalisation and Hindi newspapers is intriguing and open to different interpretations. Hindi newspapers have an identity of their own and have emerged as market leaders, leaving behind the dominance of the 'elite' and 'national' English newspapers. Using global technologies such as computers, the Internet, fax, cell phones, etc., the Hindi press has expanded its reach into the small towns and mofussil locations away from metropolitan centers, thus reinventing and in the process transforming the existing post-colonial public sphere.[3]

In the same decade, during the 1990s, there were significant churnings in the socio-political cauldron of north India, which led to the emergence of Hindu nationalism based on Hindutva ideology and political participation of lower castes/class based on the ideology of social justice.[4] With the interplay of these twin political projects, which came to be known in the popular media as *Mandir* and *Mandal* respectively, the influence of Hindi newspapers among the ruling elite of Indian democracy has also increased. At the same time, the Hindi press internalised the changes induced by the burgeoning market and consumerist ethos of corporate capitalism in the liberalised economy, changing the culture of news production, dissemination and 'definition.' The question, however, is what have been the characteristics of this process of change? What were the paths it followed? In other words, what have been the prominent journalistic practices and features of the Hindi press in this globalising, neo-liberal nation-state? Did it lead to the vernacularisation of Indian democracy or to the refeudalisation of the Hindi public sphere?[5] In this paper, I map and analyse the contours of these developments in the contemporary Hindi public sphere in the 21st century.

Global technology and advertising

To use a Hindi word, globalisation can be equated with a *kankhajura* (an insect having many legs), which has affected the entire gamut of mankind. When media guru Marshall McLuhan (1964) formulated the concept of a 'global village,' the information revolution was still a distant dream. Through 'time-space distanciation', globalisation has brought people closer

to each other, created new spaces where they can interact and participate in debate and discourse (Giddens 1990). However, after two and half decades of globalisation processes, there is renewed debate about the kind of economic policies it promoted and the nationalist politics it has generated around the world.

Although global technologies of communication such as the telegraph came to India only with the British Empire, because English was the language of colonial power, technological benefits and advertisements were largely accrued to the English-language press.[6] The Hindi press, which came into being 50 years after the establishment of the first English newspaper—James Augustus Hickey's *Bengal Gazette* was published on 29 January 1780, while Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla's *Oodunta Martand* (The Rising Sun), a Hindi weekly came into being on 30 May 1826—remained a poor cousin of the English press even after Independence in 1947. This partly explains the limited reach and the elitist perceptions of the Hindi press until capitalism and emerging markets in the hinterland changed it completely. Even though Hindi was recognised as an official language by the Constituent Assembly in 1950, it lacked the confidence to set the agenda and influence the powers that be in comparison with the English press. A noted Hindi journalist, Ambika Prasad Vajpayee, remarked in 1953:

> Advertisement is the life-line of a newspaper. Lack of nutrition makes Indians look feeble, without sparkle; likewise, most of Hindi newspapers are dull in their outlook. Low rate of literacy, less purchasing power and lack of interest in reading news among people from the Hindi belt are reasons why not a single newspaper has reached a readership of 50 thousand. (my translation)[7]

However, it's also true that before the liberalisation of the 1990s most companies didn't take out advertisements in regional language newspapers because of a language ideology that positioned English as a language of social mobility and the language of political and educated elites who had higher spending power.[8]

The Hindi press remained in a poor condition in the decades that followed. Once the internal emergency (1975-77) and press censorship imposed by Indira Gandhi's regime were lifted, Hindi newspapers surpassed the readership of the English press for the first time in 1979, a situation that has remained unchanged since then. In his seminal work, Robin Jeffery referred to this exceptional growth in regional media as 'India's newspaper revolution'. (Jeffrey 2000) One must not forget, at the same time, that

when a 40-year-old Rajiv Gandhi became the youngest Prime Minister of India in 1984, making India a 'technologically advanced nation' and 'taking it into the 21st century' were among the top priorities on his agenda. As Atul Kohli has noted, 'whereas Indira Gandhi's growing embrace of big business was increasingly straining her commitment to socialism, Rajiv Gandhi dropped the pretense of socialism altogether and openly committed his government to a new "liberal" beginning".'[9]

India saw steadily increase in literacy in the Hindi belt after independence, but the explosive growth of Hindi newspapers among newly literate people didn't come until the extraordinary rise of advertisement revenues, fueled by neoliberal globalisation which allowed newspapers like *Dainik Bhaskar* to slash their prices. Furthermore, newly independent India set literacy rates as one of its primary goals for national development. The success of these state-guided literacy programs paved the way for the rising newspaper readership in Hindi, as neoliberal globalisation led to rising middle class incomes in the Hindi belt, and new technologies and changes in advertisement revenue allowed publishers to bring out newspapers at ever lower cost to consumers.

The readership of Hindi newspapers was growing, as demonstrated by circulation figures, but Hindi newspapers were published without any colour page; the quality of newsprint was poor and news presentation was unattractive, dull and prosaic. There were 8 to 10 broadsheet pages and once a week a 'four-page' supplement was published on Sunday (*Ravivari).* In the late 1980s and 1990s, the impact of global technologies on the socio–political sphere and its culture-specific role came to the fore. The information revolution significantly changed the form of Hindi newspapers. The hot metal technology and letterpress printing was replaced with offset printing. Desktop Publishing made page designing—composing, the use of graphics and photographs—relatively easy. By the end of the 1980s, software programs too were developed in the Devanagari script.

The increased inflow of advertisements further transformed the Hindi mediascape in north India. The pages of Hindi newspapers drastically increased to 14-28, while 'four-page' supplements started coming out regularly on topics such as education, property, health, life-style, etc. Furthermore, increased print spaces have goaded the Hindi press into covering issues like LGBT and climate change. The transformed newspapers had glossy pages, more supplements, more photos, graphics, illustrations, colour, design and visuals that made them more 'reader friendly.' As Barnhurst and Nerone have underlined in their study of US newspapers,

'Form includes the things that are traditionally labeled layout and design and typography; but it also includes habits of illustration, genres of reportage, and schemes of departmentalisation.' (Barnhurst & Nerone 2001) On the front pages the use of 'flyers' and 'boxes' increased drastically and there was no longer a compulsion to divide the page into eight columns. In the 1980s, 'pressure cookers,' 'utensils', *bidi--pan masala* (tobacco), etc. would feature in the ear panel, while in the 21st century we invariably find that Bollywood and Hollywood stars, cricketers and other celebrities dominate their ear panels and mastheads.

At the same time, computers, mobile phones, faxes, etc., have opened up new vistas for Hindi journalism to flourish in the liberalised economy of India. Facsimile transmission via satellite and the Internet made it possible for newspapers to be published from various regional centres. *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhashkar*, *Amar Ujala*, *Rajasthan Patrika*, *Hindustan*, etc., made inroads into the remote parts of the Hindi heartland, thanks to these newfound technologies.[10] Hindi dailies have become truly global, reaching out even to the diaspora community through their digital presence on the Internet in the form of e-papers and websites, while nevertheless retaining their regional and local flavour through strategies of regionalisation and localisation.

Digital technologies have significantly affected the work culture both inside and outside the Hindi newsrooms. Now reporters file their copy on their personal computer/laptops directly from the fields, which are retrieved by the desk for final printing. This is in stark contrast to the situation in 1986, when Rajendra Mathur, editor of the *Nav Bharat Times*, noted the difficulties which Hindi journalists had to face while reporting, as opposed to their colleagues who worked in English:

> Because Nav Bharat Times is published in Devanagari script, there is a problem. However, in seven-eight years a day will come when a reporter can type his story from Harare or Timbuktu and Delhi's photo-composing room will get its print ready copy […] In English it's already possible.[11] (My translation)

Fifteen years later, all computers in the Hindi newspapers' offices/bureaus were linked through a main server. The desks of editors were no longer cluttered with pieces of papers, which had been the norm earlier. In the 21st century, basic computer literacy has become a sine qua non condition for a Hindi journalist. This is also evident from the fact that to be a print journalist, at least in urban centres or in the state capital, a degree or diploma in mass media is a pre-requisite. During my time as a student of

Hindi journalism at India's premier media institute, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication New Delhi, in 2001-02, a simple task like typing in the Devanagari script on the computer was part of the course curriculum and all the lecturers and journalists emphasised the need to acquire technological skills. However, when I went to do my internship at the New Delhi office of *Jansatta,* in April 2002, many journalists and editors preferred to work on paper, despite the availability of computers in the newsroom. By contrast, the Dainik Bhaskar and Dainik Jagran bureau offices in Delhi were fully computerised and journalists preferred to work on their desktop computers. One explanation for this was that in the Jansatta office journalists were mostly over 40 years of age and preferred to do things in their old ways, while in the Dainik Bhaskar and Dainik Jagran bureau offices most of the journalists were in their 20s and more enthusiastic towards new technologies which enhanced their productivity and gave their work a modern outlook. It also took a while for new technologies to be incorporated into the old set up.

We find a similar situation when we look at the newsroom of online news websites where technological know-how is crucial and the average age of working journalists is 30 years. Here it is important to highlight the relationship that developed between Hindi newspapers and their online websites in the wake of technological advancement. They started their online news production at the dawn of the new millennium, but they came on their own at the beginning of the second decade of 21st century. Prabhash Jha, Deputy Editor of the Nav Bharat Times website, who has been associated with their website since 2007, pointed out that,

> There is no separate team of reporters working for Nav Bharat Times website. We have to rely on the journalists from Nav Bharat Times newspaper although we have a separate team for our online desk. While for the newspaper there are around 160-170 journalists, we have 65 people for website.[12]

This holds true for almost all Hindi online newspaper websites. However, with the penetration of Internet enabled by mobile phones in India, the number of Hindi Internet users is fast increasing and it is currently estimated at over 60 million. By 2021, it is estimated that 38 per cent of Internet users will be in Hindi.[13] This has led to a shift in emphasis in the Hindi media industry to digital forms of news production. Hindi newspapers may grow in the coming years; production, dissemination and consumption of news will be more mobile based with the emergence of new-generation technologies like 3G and 4G and the availability of Internet data at a cheaper

price.

With this shift comes an increasing difference between print and online content in Hindi newspapers. Rather than complementing each other, they are poles apart as they cater to different publics. Online news values are dictated by 'clickbait (hit)' and 'shareability' on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, rather than subscription and newsstand sales. Nor is this limited to Indian news media. In 2001, the BBC supplemented their radio service with a BBC Hindi online service which commands great respect in the Hindi heartland and among the Hindi-speaking diaspora. However, in recent years BBC Hindi news website too has started producing 'soft porn' in the guise of news stories.[14]

Advertising has always been crucial for the health of any newspaper, but as far as the Hindi press was concerned it was largely bereft of advertisements. In the pre-Independence era, nationalist ethos and missionary zeal prohibited the publication of advertisements in Hindi newspapers. Most Hindi editors, like Madan Mohan Malviya (*Abhyuday*), Ganesh Shankar Vidyaarthi (*Pratap*) and Baburao Vishnu Paradkar (*Aaj*), etc., were freedom fighters and they perceived their labour as service to the motherland, thus following Mahatma Gandhi's dictum:

> Journalism to be useful and serviceable to the country will take its definite place only when it becomes unselfish and when it devotes its best for the service of the country, and whatever happens to the editors or to the journal itself, editors would express the views of the country irrespective of consequences.[15]

In other words, journalism was perceived to be a mission, not a profession. After independence, in the socialist state of the Nehruvian era, advertisements were largely coming from government organisations of which the larger chunk always went to the English press. In the 1980s, newspaper proprietors were goaded on by the emerging markets in the small towns and propelled by advertisements they started publishing multiple editions of these newspapers from regional centres. With increased circulation, Hindi newspapers became a vehicle to sell consumer goods and services to the aspirational middle class residing in these small towns, which had remained untapped for long. This practice soon altered the relationship between the editorial board and the advertising department of the Hindi press. Commenting on the relationship between advertisements and Indian-language newspapers, Robin Jeffrey has pointed out that,

> The technology may have provided the catalyst, but from it flowed various other developments. Newspapers changed their management structures and the way in which they approached the sale of both advertisements and newspapers themselves. (Jeffrey 2010:180)

In the 1980s, the Nav Bharat Times and other Hindi newspapers would largely get advertisements of consumer goods like oil, watches, ceiling fans, television sets, vocational training courses, contraceptives, lottery tickets, etc., on their first pages, while in the first decade of 21st century we see the advertisements pertaining to banking services, cosmetics, weight loss clinics, cars, travel, health insurances, computer training, real estate, etc. Take for example this advertisement, which was published in the Nav Bharat Times in English:

> Mahindra Group Company. Countless holiday experience for the next 25 years and a free digital camera to capture them all. Your club Mahindra gives your family a 7-night holiday every year for 25 years. Holiday at 14 of our resorts in India and abroad or access 3,7000 RCI affiliated resorts across the world. Membership now available at easy EMI's of Rs 2790 for 36 months.[16]

While there is continuity in the advertisements of goods, nowadays many advertisements featured in the pages of newspapers pertain to life-style and service sectors targeting the middle class, which has benefitted from neoliberal economic policies.[17] In order to reach the masses, newspaper proprietors decided to make their content local, dividing it into 'up market' and 'down market' news and targeting different socio-economic groups. Newspaper editors in turn changed the language to suit the emerging middle class and to fulfill the demands of their prospective readers and the market.

Localisation and language

During the Hindi renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the main goal of nationalist leaders and writers was to establish the supremacy of Hindi/Nagri over Urdu.[18] The modern Hindi language (*Khari Boli*) used in the Hindi public sphere, in the pre-Independence era and post-Independence until the 1980s, was consciously constructed to be Sanskritised and de-Persianised. The shared common language, Hindustani, was discarded in favour of Sanskritised Hindi. *Aaj* (1920), published from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh (UP), became the first popular newspaper to widen the Hindi public sphere in pre-Independent north India. The editors emphasised the use of words derived from Sanskrit, which had an upper caste/class bias. Such

words, including *marg* (road)*, aasamyik* (untimely)*, pratidin* (everyday)*, maran* (death)*, ekangi* (one-sided), would often feature on the front pages, instead of their common spoken counterparts: *rasta, wewaqt, roz, maut, ektarfa*, respectively.[19] Common Hindustani, which leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had advocated, became relegated to the pages of history. These puritan attitudes toward language impeded the growth of newspapers. However, at the end of 20th century, when Hindi newspapers forayed into the remote parts of the Hindi belt to reach the masses, the language it used changed considerably. In fact, this process had started in the 1980s, when Prabhash Joshi re-launched Jansatta (1983), Delhi, and Rajendra Mathur joined as the editor of Nav Bharat Times (1982), Delhi. Instead of Sanskritised Hindi, they promoted writing in colloquial and simple Hindustani, which was conducive to mass communication. As Prabhash Joshi pointed out, 'searching people's concerns and emotions, through our intervention, Hindi newspaper's language became informal and straight. For that we used dialects and folk literature.'[20] (My translation)

If we look at Jansatta, we find that reporting used words like *loot-khasuat* (despoilment)*, gutbaji* (cliquish)*, sattebaji* (betting)*, satoriya* (broker)*, inkai (Congressmen), apiliye panchat* (Appellate Tribunal)*, atomi sandhi (*atomic treaty)*, aalakaman (*high command)*, agwa* (kindnap), all of which reflect ordinary speech. Similarly, the editors of *Nav Bharat Times* didn't hesitate to use words which came from Urdu-Persian traditions like *Istipha* (resignation), *giraftar* (arrest), *naubat* (situation), *zabardast* (forcefully), *khilaf* (against), *qatilana* (murderous), *muhim* (campaign), *tahat (*according) which are common in everyday speech. Certainly, during this period, Hindi newspapers acquired a new language of prose and a distinct identity, as they started using simple, crisp and conversational language.

As this evolution continued, however, journalists and editors began to draw their innovation not only from everyday speech, but from the language of advertising through which newspapers sought to reach the new aspiring middle class. Take, for example, some of the front-page headlines of the *Nav Bharat Times*:

***Nav Bharat Times*, 27 February 2005**

- Gaddi ja di ye chlanga maar di, kadi dig na jaaye [Train is speeding fast, it may go off the track]
- Kaisa hota hai world class railway station [World class railway station]

- Laloo ki rail ne toda safety ka red signal [Laloo's rail breaks the red signal]

***Nav Bharat Times*, 28 February 2005**

- Samose mein kam pada aaloo, khichdi pakni chalu
- One two ka four four two ka one[21]
- Guru gud rah gaya, Munda chini ho gaya [Munda ahead in race, Soren suffers]
- NDA wa UPA do-do hat ko taiyaar *[NDA and UPA are ready to fight]*
- Haryana mein Chautala ko chot, Congress ko *Vote [Chautala suffers in Haryana, Congress gets vote]*

***Nav Bharat Times*, 4 December 2017**

- Dilli ke smog ne kiya cricket ko bold [Cricket match cancelled due to Delhi smog]
- Antivirus laga kar AAP ka version 2 banayenge: Kumar Vishwas [Kumar Vishwas: Will make AAP Version 2 using antivirus]
- Shehjad ke bahane Modi ka Congress par hamla [Modi endorses Shehzad's allegation, targets Congress]

***Nav Bharat Times*, 5 December 2017**

- 'Rahul Congress ke darling hain' [Rahul is Congress' darling]
- 'Aurangzeb raj unhe mubarak' [They should be happy with Aurangzeb Raj]
- NGT ne poocha, pradhushan itna tha tho match karaya hi kyon? [NGT asked, when there was so much pollution why did they allow match to take place?]

These headlines are picked up randomly from two different samples, but they represent good examples of the language that is being used in recent years.[22] We can safely say that the language, which is prominently used for advertising jingles, for example, *yehi hai right choice baby*, an advertisement for soft drink Pepsi, to woo the aspiring middle-class consumers, has become the template for Hindi newspapers.

In these examples, we see the intention to make even hard news, like political elections in Indian states and the rail budget, light and entertaining. Hinglish (a mix of Hindi and English), which is used predominately by the middle classes who have migrated from villages to the small towns or metros, has come to take over Hindustani which was the most commonly used language for Hindi newspapers in the 1980s and 1990s.[23]

In 2005, the Nav Bharat Times published an advertisement titled *aapki*

baat, aapki bhasha, aapka paper [your news, your language, your paper] in which it advocated the use of language which people can understand easily without consulting a dictionary and is in fashion.[24] Soon, its leading rival in New Delhi, *Hindustan*, started a similar campaign, under the slogan *Hindustan badal raha hai* [Hindustan is changing]. In the Hindi public sphere, Nav Bharat Times heralded the transformation in the media industry, while the *Times of India* pioneered the change in content and language of the English media. It started experimenting and inventing a new language, which is satirical, idiomatic and similar to the bulletins broadcast by satellite news television channels. The goal is no longer text that is simple, crisp, objective and easy to fathom, but language that is enticing, attention grabbing and memorable. While Hinglish has enabled Hindi newspapers to expand their markets and captured the imagination of consumers, this idiomatic style threatens to halt Hindi's ability to become a serious contender as a language of serious public discourse, which is primarily dominated by English. Historically, Hindi has not been a language of knowledge production in either the natural sciences or social and behavioural sciences; most knowledge production still happens in English. With the rise in mass circulation, Hindi newspapers are now in a position to play a positive role changing this situation. Moreover, Hinglish has emerged as a prominent feature of language construction in neo-liberal India, but it is not the language of the masses, including of women, dalits, adivasis and first-time readers.

Infotainment and commercialisation: vernacularisation or refeudalisation?

Commercialisation has come to play a big role in the dissemination and production of news in the Hindi heartland. Samir Jain, Vice-Chairman of the Times group under which Nav Bharat Times is published, declared to *The New Yorker* in 2012 that 'we are not in the newspaper business, we are in the advertising business.'[25] In the late 1980s, only the Times group had started describing their newspapers as a product. As this perception of the newspaper as a commodity and the emphasis on advertising profits spread, it changed the outlook towards citizens and consumers, which altered the relationship between editorial boards and managerial departments. Now almost every newspaper has a 'brand manager', who is instrumental in deciding the contents of the newspaper, besides taking control of the recruitment of journalists and looking after the functioning of the newspaper business.

In the preceding decades, Hindi newspapers were known by their respective editor's name. Today the role of editors is marginalised. All leading Hindi journalists talk about the diminishing role of editors and the takeover by marketing departments. As the doyen of Hindi journalism, Prabhash Joshi, put it, 'journalism in this country had always been a very serious affair but with the diminishing role of editors it has become pure business in the last ten years.'[26]

In a sample of Nav Bharat Times, Delhi edition, where I analysed 44 newspapers from 1986 and 46 newspapers from 2005, I found that the newspaper placed a strong emphasis on infotainment. By infotainment I mean, firstly, that there is a shift away from political and investigative news to film, sports, crime and 'feel good' news, and secondly, a shift in styles toward creative, entertaining and interesting prose.[27] In earlier periods, politics used to occupy the front pages of Hindi dailies; now, cricket, film and economic news make headlines. This expansion of content has not stretched to offer more coverage of the social, economic and political struggles of dalits and adivasis; the silence on these issues is the same as it has been for two decades. Rather the definition of 'news' has changed, as newspapers have reduced their focus on hard news, in order not 'to disturb' their readers in the morning and to 'give readers what they want.' In the wake of the new economic policies and structural changes, newspapers placed an extra emphasis on celebrating economic success with 'good news—khush khabar' and encouraging the consumerist aspirations of the rising middle class.

In addition to the good news trend, there has emerged a 'new business model' for newsgathering and production in the political sphere. In the Indian parliamentary elections of 2009, many Hindi dailies sold their front-page spaces to politicians for a fixed price (called paid news!) and published it as news items. The Press Council of India (2010) found two Hindi newspapers, *Amar Ujala* and *Dainik Jagran*, guilty of publishing paid news during the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections of 2007, in favour of a candidate.[28] The 'paid news' phenomenon was only the latest in a series of changes in the ways newspapers commodified news coverage. As early as 2003, the Times group started a business initiative known as 'Medianet' in order 'to give enhanced benefits to advertorial sponsors without breaching the boundary wall between advertising and content.'[29] However, this business unit initiated paid content or selling news to the political parties, celebrities and people at large without informing its readers whether it was 'paid content' or 'news.' Similarly, in 2004, the Times Group came up with

another innovative initiative known as the Times Private Treaties, a process of bartering advertisement for equity in the business advertising in their pages. In 2010, the group renamed it as 'Brand Capital.' According to the CEO Ravi Dhariwal,

> As the business evolves and continues to grow at a rapid pace, it was imperative to align the brand name with the core business of providing advertising capital to enterprising India and set us apart from the many namesakes that have made private treaties generic.[30]

In time, this unholy nexus between 'brand capital' and English press has also percolated down to the language media. Dainik Bhaskar and *Jagran Prakashan* are now following the Times model of journalism.[31] It is common knowledge among political parties and journalists alike that favorable content is being sold for a price and in particular at times of elections—be it national, regional or panchayat—and produced in the garb of hard news, subverting the bedrock of democracy. In a personal communication, Prabhash Joshi narrated the following incident:

> In 2005-2006, I along with Ajit Bhattacharjea [former editor of the *Indian Express*], went to Tilonia in Rajasthan. I saw an advertisement for Reliance Mobile was splashed across the back page of Dainik Bhaskar, declaring that one could speak to anyone, anywhere in the country, for a rupee [*ab desh mein kahin bhi 1 ruppay mein baat ki ja sakti hai*]. Surprisingly, the same advertisement was published on the front page, in the same edition of the newspaper, as the news lead. Next day, the local editor of the newspaper came to meet me. He told me, "The advertisement came to us on the condition that we would provide them editorial support."[32]

Clearly, corporate interests and the market are controlling not only the paid ad but the spaces around advertisement as well. As mentioned above, Hindi newspapers are imitating the practices of English newspapers as far as 'business ethics' are concerned. How these practices shape the coverage of news can also be discerned from another example. When Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim was convicted for rape by a court in Panchkula, Haryana, on 26 August 2017, the violence that followed received wall-to-wall media coverage. The event dominated the newspaper headlines the next morning, 27 August 2017. But the difference in the choice of words in the reports in the Hindi press and the slant they took offered an insight into the market interests prevalent in the Hindi newspaper industry, as the following examples demonstrate:

- *Dainik Jagran*: Dera Pramukh Doshi qarar, bhari hinsa mein 32 mare [Dera chief found guilty, 32 dead in massive violence]
- *Hindustan*: Baba doshi sabit, chelon ne hinsa failai [Baba found guilty, followers engaged in violence]
- *Jansatta*: Aag ke hawale panchkula, 30 mare [Panchkula on fire, 30 dead]
- *Nav Bharat Times: Dera Samartahk bhadke, kai jagah hinsa* [Dera followers agitated, violence at many places]
- *Dainik Bhaskar*: Ram Rahim Doshi, samrthakon ka tandav [Ram Rahim guilty, followers go on rampage]

Some Hindi papers seemed almost reverential towards the rape convict. Strikingly, the biggest Hindi daily published in the National Capital Region, Nav Bharat Times, refrained from using the word '*balatkar*,' or rape, in their headlines. The word was also conspicuously absent from the front page. The tone of the Hindi newspapers was particularly surprising, considering that it was a Hindi journalist, Ram Chander Chhatrapati, who first exposed the rapes and sexual harassment faced by Ram Rahim's female devotees by publishing an anonymous letter about this in 2002 in his evening paper, *Poora Sach*. He was shot dead later that year, allegedly in retaliation for this act. Ram Rahim is an accused in the murder case and the hearing in this case is in the final stage.

Although Hindi newspapers have been giving space to news and analysis related to women since the 1980s, sparking a new discourse around women's rights, there is still a patriarchal bias in reporting rape. In fact, the choice of language in Hindi newspapers more often than not seems to almost celebrate rape by using phrases like *'pushti ho gayi* [rape is confirmed],' '*hawas ki shikar ban gayi* [victim of lust]' '*balatkar ke record toot gaye* [new record in the rape case]' and words like '*pidita*' for victim and '*dabang*' for the culprit. The former term is typically used to refer to accident victims, while the latter describes someone who fearlessly does what they want in spite of laws and social mores, and often has positive connotations.[33]

As discussed above, the coverage of the Ram Rahim case is a reflection of the impulse evident in the Hindi newspaper industry over the past two decades to deliver 'khush khabar' or good news. Newspapers try to avoid publishing reports that could disturb or offend their readers even if the news has to do with heinous crimes like rape. With the expanding reach of Hindi newspapers, their influence among the ruling class has also increased. However, the internal structures of Hindi newspapers have not changed much. There are still only a handful of women journalists in influential

positions, which is reflected in the way Hindi newspapers set their agendas and cover the news.[34]

Hindutva, regional politics and Hindi press

In the critically acclaimed Hindi movie, *Peepli Live*, Rakesh, a Hindi journalist, breaks the story of the poor, debt-ridden farmer Natha's intended suicide to the 'national media.' As news media from major networks swoop in to cover the story, Rakesh is killed, but his death goes unmourn and unnoticed. Rakesh's demise is an allegory of the sad state of affairs in the Hindi press when we look at the journalists working at the grassroots level. Hindi newspapers work with networks of stringers based in district towns and qasbahs. Such stringers, known as *10 takia patrakar* [one who is paid Rs 10 per story], cover local issues and people's concerns and in turn become the voice of voiceless. As Sevanti Ninan argues, 'Localisation of coverage by the print media expanded the existing public sphere at the district level, and then reinvented it unconsciously through its segmentation of editions.' (Ninan 2007: 26)

The vast network of stringers helped to widen and transform the Hindi public sphere where new political actors from the grassroots emerge and influence urban politics. Furthermore, in these pages local grievances are represented, some of which may appear trivial, such as the theft of a buffalo or the falling of a tree. In a sense, these stringers connect the local with the regional and the national. In addition to reporting, stringers always also play the dual role of advertising agents, garnering advertisements from the local businessmen, traders, political leaders when a story about them or their community is going to run. However, without any support, either from the management of the papers or the state, they always bear the brunt of the powers that be.

What is it that makes regional media more vulnerable than the all-powerful elite English media? The proliferation and reach of language media is the main reason for its vulnerability. This is evident from the fact that of the ten most read dailies, five are Hindi language ones, while the other positions are occupied by Malayalam, Tamil and Marathi publications—all regional language newspapers. The *Times of India* is the only English newspaper that features in the top ten list. In 1954, there was only one Indian language newspaper in ten top dailies (Rajgopal 2009: 15). This holds true when we look at the reach of regional satellite news channels too. With their left-liberal slant, while the English media has been popular among the elite, in the last two decades, key media outlets have made

inroads into the regional languages, which have largely become the language of the regional power and elite. In the same decade regional leaders (satraps) like Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mayawati, Akhilesh Yadav, Shiv Raj Singh Chouhan, Ashok Ghelot, prefer to speak in Hindi. They care less about English media but are very particular what Hindi media write about them.

Political parties are aware of the influence and reach of the regional language media because cultural and political phrases and imagery are best reflected in the native language (*desh bhasha*). With few exceptions, political forces have always tried to use these media outlets for political mobilisation and have often been successful in influencing their constituents. For this reason alone, one day after the first phase of the UP election ended in February 2017, the *Dainik Jagran* group published exit poll results showing that the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) was marching ahead in the state even though this was in violation of the code of conduct.[35] Similarly, Dainik Bhaskar (2017) came up with hoardings which openly supported the BJP and demonised the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh. In the 1980s, the 'Hinduisation of the Hindi press' began vigorously and intensified in the 1990s with the rise of Hindutva forces in the political firmament.[36] It has been well documented that during communal flare-ups, regional media mostly sided with the communal forces. With the Narendra Modi government coming to power in 2014, Hindutva forces are once again using the regional language press quite successfully for political mobilisation; it helps them set their agenda, be it a debate on nationalism or the beef ban.

When a fearless journalist like Ram Chander Chhatrapati emerges on the scene, his/her voice strikes a chord with the public at large—and is deeply feared by right-wing Hindu nationalist forces. While the power of the regional media has grown manifold, the attempts to silence journalists have also risen in the world's largest democracy. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ 2016), since 1992, at least 40 journalists have been killed in India, of which 27 were murdered in direct retaliation for their reports. Most of them were from the regional language media. Sadly, there has been no conviction and it is no wonder then that India ranks 136 among 180 countries when it comes to press freedom.[37]

Shrinking space of the international and the absence of the subaltern

With the globalisation of the media market, in less than a decade there has been a phenomenal growth of 24-hour private satellite news channels, broadcasting news in different languages. All of a sudden news programs have become very popular with television channels. Almost all major electronic channels in India have at least one news channel which broadcasts news along with other popular programs. In 1998, India's first private 24-hour news channel, Zee India TV, which was also the first 24-hour news channel in Hindi, came into existence. While in 1991 there was only one state-controlled channel (Doordarshan), in 2017, 387 private satellite television channels are broadcasting news and current affairs programs in Hindi and different regional languages. Competition between these news channels and the Hindi press is not just about 'breaking news,' but also about wooing the advertisers and their potential consumers/target audiences.

Nalin Mehta has rightly noted in his studies on the growth of satellite private news channels in India in the 1990s that this has created new 'publics' and news channels have 'altered the political matrix' of the country. There is substance in Mehta's thesis that the exponential growth of news channels has created new publics and have alerted politics and identity formation in India more generally. However, if we look at Hindi news channels as a whole, we see that in the guise of news actually they are primarily offering four Cs—Cricket, Crime, Cinema and Celebrity. As Mehta has noted, 'Indian cricket and Indian television are locked in a symbiotic relationship that illustrates the complex nature of globalisation.' (Mehta 2008: 229) Whenever there is a cricket match in India or India is playing with other nations abroad, the news channels' prime stories revolve only around cricket. Cricket is prominently displayed on the front page in Hindi dailies too. Cricket has become a cultural symbol in modern India, but the nexus between globalisation, cricket and media in India is yet to be explored in depth. At one level, satellite news channels complement the Hindi press, while at another competition between these news channels and the Hindi press is obvious in the strategies they employ in order to attract advertisers. Nowadays, news channels largely influence Hindi newspapers in setting their agenda.

Localisation has made newspapers a household good, but perhaps more conspicuous in contemporary India is the shrinking space of international news from the Hindi papers. Earlier, guided by Nehruvian socialism and

non-aligned movement, Hindi papers prominently wrote stories about international developments, which even made it into the front-page headlines. By contrast, nowadays we seldom find this type of stories published, except in times of terror attacks or India-Pakistan conflicts. Moreover, no Hindi paper has foreign correspondents anywhere. Vijay Rana, a former Radio Editor based in the UK, *BBC Hindi services* has pointed out that,

> After I left the BBC I thought I would be regularly writing for Hindi newspapers. I had many editor friends and they often asked me to write for them. Many of these Hindi newspapers were doing better than English papers and yet the Hindiwallahs will not pay more than Rs 1000 (£10). An English magazine paid me £120 for English article and its Hindi version paid me on $15. So, having spent most of my life in Hindi journalism, I very reluctantly moved on to English journalism.[38]

Surely, cash-rich Hindi newspapers management is shy to invest in human resources. In addition, although there is no overt discrimination in recruitment, there has always been a minuscule presence of dalits, adivasiss and minorities in the newsrooms in the 1980s and 1990s. This continues to be the case even in the 21st century. Rajesh Arya, a senior sub-editor associated with Jansatta, New Delhi, pointed out that,

> Discrimination may not be visible in metros but certainly it's manifest in small towns. In Jansatta, New Delhi main office, in editorial department out of 44 people two are dalits, four are from other backward classes, while there is total absence from tribal and minority section of the society. In March 2017, I was called for an interview at Dainik Jagran, Gorakhpur, my hometown, where I want to shift to take care of my old parents. To my utter shock, the resident editor, Umesh Shukla, didn't ask me anything related to my job but he did enquire about my caste. Although he offered me a job, I felt humiliated and thought I may have to face discrimination in the future for being a Dalit.[39] (My translation)

Conclusion

While many commentators celebrate the expansion of the Hindi public sphere, journalists invariably term this growth as 'an unreal discourse.'[40] In the late 1980s, as a school going boy growing up in a remote village in north Bihar, I would occasionally see the newspapers late in the evening. They did not feature anything from my part of the world. Being away from the urban center and due to impracticable roads, newspapers never arrived

early in the morning. However, after two decades newspapers reach villages in north Bihar on time, while I can easily access news concerning my part of the world on the Internet from metropolitan New Delhi, which was unthinkable before. The presence of e-paper on the internet and proliferation of online media have certainly added new readers and 'prosumers' to the existing print culture. Moreover, with regionalisation and localisation, people on the margins, away from the centre, acquired a voice and a network to participate in the political discourse. At the same time, infotainment, commercialisation and 'business ethics' in the guise of paid news is refeudalising the public sphere. We seldom find critiques of financial capital on the pages of Hindi newspapers. Rather, they are proponents of global capitalism in contemporary India and legitimise it, while Hindi newspaper's own legitimacy is in doubt. Although Hindi news is more accessible than ever before, to say that one has read it in the newspaper—*Akhbar mein padha hai*—is no longer a common refrain for attesting to the truth in the Hindi belt.

Endnotes

[1] An earlier version of this paper, titled 'Impact of Global Technologies on Hindi Journalism: A Case Study of Nav Bharat Times, Delhi', was presented at the conference on 'Media, Policies, Cultures and Futures in the Asia Pacific Region' at the Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, on 27-29 November 2006 and later at the University of Westminster, London, on 13 September 2011 and at the South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany, on 18 June 2013. Prof. Mark Allen Peterson and Dr. Amelia Bonea provided valuable comments. My journalist friends shared their experiences with me. While I benefited from their comments and feedback, I alone am responsible for the content of the paper.

[2] See Audit Bureau of Circulations. 2017. Press release: Print media is growing: 2.37 Crore copies added in the last 10 years. 8 May, http://www.auditbureau.org/news/view/53 [retrieved 28.11.17].

[3] In this paper, I use the terms Hindi press and newspapers interchangeably.

[4] See for example the works of David Ludden. 2008. *Making India Hindu*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2003. *India's silent revolution*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

[5] Lucia Michelutti. 2008. *The vernacularisation of democracy*. New Delhi: Routledge, p. 204. In her study of the north Indian city of Mathura, in particular the social and cultural practices of Yadavs/Ahirs, Micheluti mentions the process of vernacularisation of Indian democracy. Although she does not dwell upon the role of the Hindi press in this process, she notes in passing that, 'Local newspapers advertised the regional meeting and the MYS (Mathura Yadav Sammelan) organised three informal gatherings in Ahir Para to organise the trip to Kanpur. These meetings were reported in the local newspapers *Amar Ujala*, *Aj* and *Dainik Jagran*. This is an example of how vernacular media are heavily used by the local Yadav caste associations and how important printing material is in placing the Yadav community in the public arena.' Furthermore, she also defines the vernacularisation of democratic politics as 'The process

through which ideas and practices of democracy become embedded in particular cultural and social practices, and in turn become entrenched in the consciousness of ordinary people ', p. 217. Taberez Ahmed Neyazi. 2011. Politics after vernacularisation: Hindi media and Indian democracy. *Economic and Political Weekly,* 5 Mar., pp. 75-82. Neyazi has further elaborated upon 'vernacularisation and the role of Hindi press in the deepening of Indian democracy.' As he points out, 'The expansion of Hindi newspapers into the hinterland, though directly motivated by profit generation, also helped in creating a space for marginalised groups to raise their grievances in the public arena. As English newspapers have largely been concentrated in urban areas, and television is mostly national and regional, the local space, which remained unrepresented, was appropriated by Hindi newspapers.' See also Ursula Rao. 2010. *News as culture*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, pp. 84f.: 'Through local pages and by supporting the making of news networks, Indian newspapers offer institutionalised "social capital" for democratic circulation. It is the door to a "parallel" universe of connections and influences. The desire to become connected, and the reality of having to work through relations, turns newspapers into a local organ. Newspapers achieve what Berger (2000) has called the democratic participatory role.' Jürgen Habermas. 1989. *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 206. Habermas writes about the refeudalisation that occurs as the commercial interests of powerful corporations dominate the media market and usurp the rational-critical function of the public sphere. He writes about the transformation of public sphere: 'Before the expanded public sphere the transactions themselves are stylised into a show. Publicity loses its critical function in favor of a staged display; even arguments are transmuted into symbols to which again one can not respond by arguing but only by identifying with them.' I am using 'refeudalisation', in the Indian context, to mean manipulation of the mass media through 'paid news' and *'Khush khabar* (good news)' and thus subverting the 'rational-critical' space in the participatory democracy. Here a reader is perceived as a consumer of the (mass) product rather than a (public) citizen.

[6] For more on the role of telegraphy in news gathering and transformation of public sphere in colonial India see Amelia Bonea. 2016. *The news of Empire*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, and Michael Mann. 2017. *Wiring the nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

[7] Ambika Prasad Vajpayee. 1953. *Samachar Patron ka Itihas*. Benaras: Gyanmandal Limited.

[8] Mark Allen Peterson has dwelt upon this aspect in his unpublished dissertation thesis, *Writing the Indian Story: Press, Politics and Symbolic Power in India*. Providence: Brown University, 1996.

[9] Atul Kohli. 2006. Politics of economic growth in India, 1980-2005. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2006, pp. 1251-9. Seperately, Rajendra Mathur, editor of *Nav Bhaart Times*, had noted in his editorial of 1 Jan 1986: 'Bharat ka kaam ab Nehru yug ki abodhta se nahi chal sakta aur Indira Gandhi yug ki chaturai se bhi nahi. Jahan tak vichardhara ka sawal hai samajvad par aadharit misrit arthvyavystha ka ek lamba chakra desh poora kar chuka hai aur 1980 ke baad wah ek naya rasta khoj raha hai.' [India's work cannot be done with Nehru era's naivety nor will Indira Gandhi's cleverness help. As far as the question of ideology is concerned, the country has gone through the long spell of socialism-based mixed economy and after 1980 is searching for a new way out.] [My translation].

[10] Hindi is being widely spoken, read and understood in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi. Hindi newspapers are being published from northeastern states and the southern part of India too.

[11] *Nav Bharat Times* is a sister publication of The *Times of India* group, the largest media group in India. It is a daily morning broadsheet newspaper published since 1947. It is currently published from Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow. *Nav Bharat Times*, 14 September 1986.

[12] Personal communication, 17 February 2018.

[13] Ananya Bhattacharya. 2017. India's internet users have more faith in concent that's not in English. *Quartz India*, 2 May,

https://qz.com/972844/indias-internet-users-have-more-faith-in-content-thats-not-in-english-study-says/ [retrieved 29.03.21].

Also see Robin Jeffrey & Assa Doron. 2013. *Cellphone* nation. Gurgoan: Hachette India.

[14] On 26 February 2018, there were at least 14 news stories concerning popular Bollywood actor Sridevi's death and her life in various forms on its home page! Contrary to its guidelines, like other websites, it did not bother to verify the news and was speculating about the cause of death. In one of its reports, *'Kya Sridevi ko pehle se khatra tha'* (Was Sridevi in danger for long), it even went on to speculate that her daughters too would have to be careful in the future as cardiac problems were now part of their family history! The investigation into the cause of death in Dubai revealed that it was a case of accidental drowning. My analysis suggests that the BBC has separate ethics for its English and Hindi audiences when it comes to news coverage. According to its guidelines, 'When a material change is made to an item of content, the change should normally be indicated to users unless, for example, there are legal or editorial reasons not to do so.' However, the BBC Hindi website never informs its readers about additions or deletions to the main story, if there be any. Moreover, stories which deal with crime and sex, such as 'S*ex video par mahila ki khudkushi*' [Woman commits suicide over sex video] published on 16 September 2016, 'V*iral sex video ne tabah ki uski zindgi*' [Viral sex video has ruined her life] published on 13 February 2017, '*Koi train men sex worker banne ke like pooche tho kya karen*' [If someone asks you to be a sex worker, what you should do] published on 20 April 2018, appear almost daily.

[15]Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 26, pp. 370f., https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/cwmg_volume_thumbview/MjY=#page/400/mode/2up [retrieved 05.02.17]. See Isabel Hofmeyr. 2013. *Gandhi's printing press*. London: Harvard University Press), on Gandhi's experiments with lack of advertising and how he eventually had to feature some form of it.

[16] *Nav Bharat Times*, 11 June 2005.

[17] On the relationship which emerged during globalisation between gender and advertisements, see Maitrayee Cahudhuri. 2017. *Refashioning India: gender, media, and a transformed public discourse.* Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan, pp. 83-129.

[18] More on Hindi-Urdu debate in the late 19th and early 20th century North India, see Alok Rai. 2001. *Hindi nationalism*. London: Sangam books; Veer Bharat Talwar. 2002. *Rassakashi*. Delhi: Saransh Prakashan; Francesca Orsini. 2002. *The Hindi public sphere, 1920-40*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, and Vasudha Dalmia. 2005. *The nationalisation of Hindu tradition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

[19] *Aaj*, 22 September 1947 and 24 September 1947.

[20] Personal interview, 15 June 2008.

[21] Both headlines are difficult to translate. They pertain to the union budget, but do not specifically mention the budget. Rather than informing readers about the news of the day, their main purpose is to amuse and entertain.

[22] For more see my book *Hindi Mein Samachar* [News in Hindi]. Ghaziabad: Antika Prakashan, 2013.

[23] *Nav Bharat Times,* 27 February 2005 and *Nav Bharat Times*, 28 February 2005.

[24] *Nav Bharat Times*, 6 August 2005.

[25] Ken Auletta. 2012. Why India's newspaper industry is thriving. *The New Yorker*, 1 Oct., https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/08/citizens-jain [retrieved 29.03.21].

[26] Personal Interview, 15 June 2008.

[27] For more on infotainment, see Ursula Rao. 2011. *News as culture*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, pp. 143-99.

[28] J. Balaji. 2016. 'Paid news' claims first political scalp as EC disqualifies MLA. *The Hindu*, 2 Aug., http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/paid-news-claims-first-political-scalp-as-ec-disqualifies-mla/article2556366.ece [retrieved 29.03.21].

[29] Medianet: innovative content, integrated offering. 2003. *Times of India,* 4 Mar., https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Medianet-Innovative-content-integrated-offering/articleshow/39286961.cms [retrieved 29.03.21].

[30] ToI rebrands private treaties biz. 2013. *Business Standard*, 21. Jan., http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/toi-rebrands-private-treaties-biz-110101600006_1.html [retrieved 29.03.21].

[31] Archna Shukla. 2008. Should private treaties be made public to newspaper readers? *Mint*, 15 Jan., http://www.livemint.com/Companies/kVh5CLOMwo02BWqLODiL9M/Should-private-treaties-be-made-public-to-newspaper-readers.html [retrieved 29.03.21].

[32] Personal communication, 15 June 2008.

[33] '*Dabang'* is even the title of a Hindi film in which it describes the heroes dashing and audacious character.

[34] For more on the presence of women journalists and power relation in the Indian newsroom, the role of gender in deciding news beat coverage etc., see Paromita Pain's essay in this issue.

[35] Violating Election Commission ban, Dainik Jagran runs 'exit poll' showing BJP ahead. 2017. *The Wire*, 13 Feb., https://thewire.in/107973/dainik-jagran-exit-poll-uttar-pradesh-ec-defiance/ [retrieved 29.03.21].

[36] See Arvind Das. 2013. Communal agenda and Hindi press in a globalising India. In: Detlef Briesen, Sigrid Baringhorst & Arvind Das, eds. *Religion, politics and media: German and Indian perspectives*. New Delhi: Palm Leaf Publications, pp. 123-33.

[37] https://cpj.org/reports/CPJ-India-PDF-Done.pdf [retrieved 08.09.17].

[38] Personal communication, 2 November 2017.

[39] Personal communication, 21 December 2017. According to a 2006 survey jointly conducted by Yogendra Yadav, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Anil Chamaria, a freelance journalist, and Jitendra Kumar from the Media Study Group, 'Hindu upper caste men dominate the media. They are about eight per cent of India's population but among the key decision-makers of the national media, their share is as high as 71 per cent.' See Upper caste dominate national media, says survey in Delhi. 2012. *The Hindu*, 22 Mar., http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/upper-castes-dominate-national-media-says-survey-in-delhi/article3115113.ece [retrieved 29.03.21].

[40] Mrinal Pandey, former editor of *Hindustan* daily writes, 'with such humongous growth the Hindi media seem perilously close to entering the Habermasian third phase of refeudalisation.' On this topic, see 'Hindi media and an unreal discourse', *The Hindu*, 18 November 2009. Pushya Mitra (2017), a Patna-based senior journalist associated with *Prabhat Khabar*, in a personal communication discusses the degeneration of the public sphere. According to him, 'more than business interests, in Bihar, the state and government control Hindi media through advertisements.' Similarly, Mukesh Kejariwal (2017), Chief of the Delhi Bureau of *Rajasthan Patrika,* also points out in a personal communication that 'now

proprietors are more concerned about events, conclaves and hobnobbing with political elites than focusing on content. They feel happy to get closer to establishment than to their readers.'

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