

The Patkai Tales: An interpenetration of the folk/ tribal/ avant-garde

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Abstract

In the history of modernism, inventing a modern art that is exclusive and one which privileges the speaking subjects of the metropolis has been the normative trend. Here in this exclusive list that includes folk, tribal, popular, other minorities, little tradition and subaltern groups, another category can be added which is a terrain of the under-privileged locations with regard to geo-political domination and economic emancipation welding no hegemonic power in cultural dynamics. However, within such locations too some artists such as Debananda Ulup are seen engaged in symbolic mediation of their existential predicament tethered to the experience of modernity and its associated polemics, the post-colonial-peripheral-tribal which can be seen as an interpenetrative realm of the folk, 'tribal' and the avant-garde.

Keywords: Modernity, Modern Indian Art, Folk, Tribal, Myth.

I

Construction of the Modern Indian Art and the periphery of the Nation's Imagination

Any deliberation on the contemporary/ contemporary art in India inevitably leads to a critical probing about the 'modern' since the contemporary art practices are historical consequences of a cultural departure from the traditional artistic discourse ushering a unique phenomenon called 'Modern Indian art' at the advent of 20th century. The term 'Modern', though highly equivocal, commonly refers to a cluster of international movements and trends in the arts and literature pertaining to a specific periodization within the given historical context. Beyond this rudimentary labelling, however, there is little agreement about the meaning and scope of the term and hence, it jeopardizes any claim for a homogenous wholeness or status as a monolithic entity. Rather the semantic structure of modern can be described as a fuzzy set of meaning horizons determinable functionally and contextually clustered in dynamic hierarchies by degrees of salience. The tendency of upholding a logically intentional definition of modern with an official checklist of necessary and sufficient conditions for all modernist trends to articulate an organic model proves to be too positivistic on the one hand. On the other hand, the logically, extensional definition concerned with the periodization-oriented approach that attempts to define modern simply by enumeration or descriptions of various conventionally associated issues tends to be too relativistic. Both these models make no



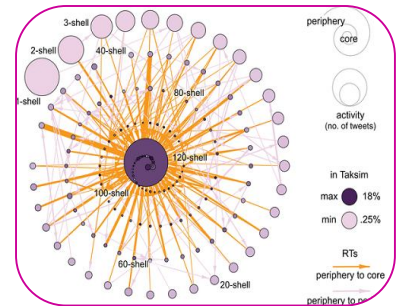
MEDIA REACHES THE PERIPHERY: STUDYING MEDIA HABITS OF ETHNIC SOCIETIES IN ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The rural as the emerging market place poses challenges to the mass media sector. In under-developed economies the task of creating audiences gets more complicated and challenging. Mass media is a means which caters to a large audience with homogenous fare wherein all audiences are presumed to have the same taste. But this creates a tension of images and sounds, varied audience but similar choices. This paper aims at examining the situation of a rural audience which is bombarded with images and sounds made for an audience keeping in mind a different society with its own set of norms and culture. How this rural community comes to terms with such programming and their ways of appropriating such ideas although alien to them. How the rural people chose one medium over another and the circumstances that influence their choices, whether it be age, gender, or social status. The past two decades has seen a huge influx of media messages reaching the extreme corners of the Indian sub-continent. Communities which were thus far removed from receiving media messages came under the purview of mass media. Ethnic communities started to receive messages that were inconsistent with ideas and values that they held so dear. Thus these ethnic communities faced situations which were brought on by the advent of new technologies and such remote societies were not untouched by them. Younger generations were the one who adapted to mass media early and along with it other sociological changes started taking place in the lives of these communities.



KEYWORDS: Mass Media, Ethnic Community, Rural society, Media Messages

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly media saturated world where audience are bombarded with innumerable signals at every moment whether be it the cell phone in our hands or the graphic board in the side walk, or the advertising panel in an airport, processing media signals has become a challenge. It is during these times that media researchers are excited to lay their hands on communities who are yet to be fully media dependent. This paper locates its study on two distinct villages in Assam, India where media is still a new phenomenon especially traditional electronic media forms such as television. There have been a lot of historical studies on the role of media on rural societies. I have mentioned a few in the following paragraphs.

Media can perform various functions in promoting consciousness for development. Broadly media can help contributed in three areas- economic, social and political, which will in turns make our society cohesive and better organized (Mathur, 2006). Today media is now split into two powerful segments, the print media and the electronic media. There is a rural and urban area divide in the print media as well. The complaint that rural areas which cover 80 per cent of the population get hardly 25 per cent of the coverage in the media is undoubtedly true. (Prabhu, 1995)

Exploring Selfhood through Performance in *The Danish Girl*

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Abstract

The Danish Girl presents the life history of a transgender person in early twentieth century Denmark and is remarkable for its use of visual codes to broach important questions on human subjectivity. The article probes deep into the social structure that frames subjectivity and questions the very idea of the symbolic. It looks at how the filmmaker makes use of cinematic elements as well as various codes and tropes provided to him by psychoanalysis, to critique the conventional understanding of phallic power. Grounded on the established domains of gender theorization, the article is therefore an interpretative analysis of the film that attempts to subvert these very discourses that frame our understanding of gender performance.

Keywords

Subjectivity, feminine, performance, symbolic, transgender

Introduction

Films have been a powerful means of critiquing repressive social norms that stand in the way of self-realization. While some filmmakers have chosen to fight the crusade more dramatically, there are others who have preferred subtler means. Tom Hooper's *The Danish Girl* belongs to the latter category (Bevan & Hooper, 2015). The film has been critically acclaimed for its creation of the characters of the protagonists, Gerda and Einar. These two characters and their life-changing experiences tell us a story of human sexuality from a perspective that has rarely been used in mainstream films. What makes the analysis of the text significant from a film studies perspective is the way this story of human sexuality, extending beyond heterosexual normativity, has been told. However, any attempt to critically assess the cinematic techniques used by the filmmaker to explore the tabooed topic of transsexuality requires that we briefly consider the psychoanalytic and Butlerian ideas of subjectivity.

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ARGUING FOR A MEDIA LAW: THE RELEVANCE OF CABLE

CHANNELS IN CREATION OF 'LOCAL' IN ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

I forward the idea of the existence of local cable channels, a distinct media which beams programmes in the local language, on topics that are relevant and belongs to the local area. The 'local' which has lost out in the mainstream media gains importance here, infact the local becomes the site for production of 'culture'. But the existence of such local cable channels which is popular almost all over the country exists by virtue of legal loopholes in the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act 1995. The importance of these channels broadcasted over a limited area cannot be discounted as I show with the help of two case studies in my paper. These channels act as essentially selling points for the networks, catering to customer requests and also programming which are uniquely local. These spawn a large number of such channels in every small or big town so much so that their exact numbers can hardly be predicted.

Thus, I argue the case for legalizing the role of local cable channels in creation of an alternate reality, a role which essentially the 'mainstream' has failed to deliver in the course of the last few decades. It is the space left vacant by National and regional media that is essentially covered by local cable channels and it becomes imperative to safeguard this very important democratic tool by proper legal framework.

KEYWORDS: *Media, Local Cable Channels, Law, Cable & Network*

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INTRODUCTION

Assam witnessed a boom in its media sector in 1990's with language newspapers leading the way. The decade before that the press in Assam had played an active role in the nationalist agitation that took place in Assam. This sudden explosion of the regional press played an important role in the creation of an informed public sphere. The media explosion of the 1990s, commonly going under the shorthand 'globalization', was not without a history, but was marked by a certain concentration of both media forms and temporal acceleration. Consider this: within a few years India saw satellite cable television growing from just a handful to a total of 80 channels, and the growth of other media in the form of cassettes, CDs, VCDs, MP3s, and DVDs. Media ownership was extremely diverse (Sundaram, 2005: 56).

In this paper I analyze the role of local cable channels (henceforth lcc's) in the context of Assam, and what makes the idea of a local press in a globalized world where ideas of culture are increasingly changing with shift in centers of production. For obvious reasons the idea of the local is often constructed on administrative or cartographic definitions of areas. "Lack of clear, shared definitions does not, however, prevent people from being attached to their region of residence" (Aldridge, 2007: 11). Whereas ideas such as multi-national, trans-national, nation states or international organizations are constructed as global ideas, the 'local' struggles for a definitive area.



FOOD CULTURE: A SPACE FOR CREATIVITY, PROTEST AND NEGOTIATION

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the use of food to signify ritual purity or exclusiveness and separateness in the Boro community rituals. This study examines the process of transition of a traditional performance namely, Kherai of the Bodos of Assam. It explains how an ethnic group engages itself in conserving, through creation and recreation, a traditional performance that faces the threat of extinction. In the process, the study also looks into the processes and strategies deployed by the community members towards making of a performance through ritual sacrifices, ritual dances, ritual food and feast etc. The unique, incorporative nature of eating (assimilating) and offering to god makes food an important social symbol. Relationships between a group and its gods, as well as between members of the community, are manifested in events of food sharing and exchange. This cooking of food also represents their human ability to transform nature. There is transformation by nature also. The uncooked food is transformation by nature. Within the domain of the cooked, two common processes, roasting and boiling are discussed.

Key words: Sacrificial Food, Kherai, food habit, Jumai

The need to eat (essential for human biological survival) provides many opportunities for communication and creativity. Eating events are fraught with rules of precedence and deference as well as etiquette. The individual groups communicate their civility and separate themselves from other class groups. Food becomes a gift or an offering or becomes sacred entity through association with the supernatural. The theme culture focuses on the fact that humans create culture as a way of making sense of their social and physical worlds. This also focuses on the relationship of individuals to other that inhabit their social world. At the same time it also helps individuals consider how their identity was formed and how it influences their attitude and beliefs.

The term food habits or food culture or food ways to describe the manner in which humans use food, including everything from how it is chosen, acquired and distributed to who prepares, serves and eats it. The significance of the food habits process is that it is unique to human beings. It is interesting
