

VIDEOSCAPE

A NEWSLETTER TO SHARE VIEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN MOVEMENTS

January 1994 - For Private Circulation Only

OPINION

Civil Society and the Right to Freedom of Expression

Freedom of thought and expression are the two most important achievements of human civilisation. Some of the most complex and difficult struggles of human history have been fought over the rights of freedom of thought and expression.

The concept of freedom of thought and expression is not an abstract construct, it integrates within it the idea of free humans. Social, gender, racial and national freedom form the foundation of this concept. It is precisely for this reason that the first task of all dictators is to try to restrict the freedom of expression. History has proven many times over that all dictators, ranging from religious fundamentalists and heads of military juntas to apartheid governments, are uniform in their efforts to curtail and control the freedom of thought and expression. This in turn takes its toll on related freedoms of social, gender, racial and national expression. This explains why often their first attack is on cultural and media groups working with issues relevant to common people.

The last few years have witnessed a rise in fundamentalism in the Indian sub-continent. In Pakistan, journalists were targeted by the Muslim fundamentalists; recently in Bangladesh, a young feminist novelist, Taslima Nasreen, suffered the ire of Muslim fundamentalists who have condemned her to death. Nasreen's 'crime' was her novel, set in the times of the riots that followed the demolition of Babri Masjid, in which she depicts the plight of a Hindu family. In India, too, the Hindu fundamentalists have been consistently targeting the freedom of expression: banning Shabana Azmi and A.K. Hangal, attacking Vijay Tendulkar and Nikhil Wagle are part of the same pattern.

The BJP, VHP, Shiv Sena and their allies are determined to form a state that will kill all pluralistic ideas. They perceive all differing opinions as a threat. Hence the ruthless march to drown dissent, especially those voices that are raising it for a better, equal and just society. So obviously Habib Tanvir's play, *Jamadarni*, must be stoned. It happened on 22nd August, 1993. Ironically, this play has been doing the rounds since 1936 and addresses the issues of inequality and casteism. VHP & Co find that these sentiments insult "Hinduism" (!) Similarly Anand Patwardhan's film on the dispute around

the Babri Masjid must be stopped for it tells the truth, and hence challenges the concocted history. But the most cunning attack in recent times was by the BJP against SAHMAT. (In that respect BJP is far more sophisticated than VHP, Shiv Sena & Co.)

From 13-15 August 1993 SAHMAT organised a programme, *Muktanaad*, at Ayodhya in which singers, artists and dramatists from all over India performed for the cause of communal harmony. Arjun Singh, the HRD minister, along with his ministry took an active role to make the programme a success. One part of the programme was an exhibition on Ramayana as depicted by regional folklores, Buddhist and Jain literature and that from South East Asia. One of the panels included a version from Buddhist Jatakas where Sita is referred to as Ram's sister. BJP vehemently attacked *Muktanaad* and campaigned against this exhibition. They denounced all other versions of Ramayana and claimed their "own" version as the only legitimate one. Subsequently when the exhibition was put up at Teen Murti Bhawan, the Delhi Administration banned the exhibition and registered criminal charges against the key organisers.

One may raise serious questions about *Muktanaad*; including that of involving the Congress-I, who have yet to absolve themselves from the Sikh riots of 1984, or prove their secular credentials. But the BJP's reaction has revealed dangerous trends. They have clearly demonstrated their audacity and ability to manipulate history, thus preventing all debates and pluralistic views in society.

BJP's set-back in the recent assembly polls may have evoked a sigh of relief, but this relief could be only momentary if we are unable to gauge the undercurrents or relate to the on-going changes taking place in the social and political area. The need of the hour today is to establish greater dialogue. Communication and exchange of views among ourselves is necessary in order to play an effective and decisive role against forces that attempt to thwart free expression and obstruct healthy development of human society.

This newsletter is a small step to initiate dialogue among ourselves. It can only grow with your active support and guidance.

New Technologies and the Democratization of Audiovisual Communication

The impact, implications and appropriation of new technologies of communication.

International Symposium

February 9 to 12, 1994, New Delhi

Organized by:

VIDEAZIMUT and CENDIT at Jamia Hamdard Convention Centre, New Delhi - 110 062.

The Symposium

An opportunity for independent producers, NGOs and activists engaged in the democratization of communication and society to examine the global and local impact of new communication technology and work out strategies for resistance and appropriation. In addition to participatory/plenary sessions there will be focussed discussions, demonstrations, screenings, exhibitions and experimentation to provide a complete forum for media activists from around the world to exchange ideas, experiences, techniques and addresses. The symposium will attract a rich mix of participants from the South and North who share an agenda to keep communication democratic and people oriented.

Why?

New technologies are rapidly being developed that will profoundly change the context in which audiovisual communications work. Direct broadcast satellites, high definition TV, fibre optics, the merging of television, telephones, cable and computers into a "digital highway", and other technologies currently being developed by major transnational corporations will soon replace the current communication infrastructure.

People working in alternative and progressive audiovisual communication will be presented with great challenges and opportunities by these new technologies. Maintaining and widening the public communication space that has been gained so far and opening more public communication space not controlled by private commercial interests will require us to be prepared and seize the initiative. We need to know the shape of things to come so that we can explore strategies to intervene in their development and use them to maximize the space of democratic communication.

It will allow us to :

- Learn about the new technologies that are being developed.
- Explore existing and potential alternative and creative uses at the local, national, regional and international levels of technologies of today and tomorrow.
- Identify strategies and tactics for the appropriation of new technologies by independent professional, semi-professional and community producers so as to consolidate and expand the space available for democratic communication.
- Encourage alliances and common strategies between groups from the North and the South to maximize the opportunities and minimize the threats of new communication technologies.

For registration details contact CENDIT

FILMS ON COMMUNALISM

1. **Kya Hua is Shahr Ko/**
What Happened to this City
On the 1985. Hyderabad Riots
English/Hindi 52 mins Year 1985
Film by: **Deepa Dhanraj & Navroze Contractor**
Source: 158 St. Marks Road, Bangalore
2. **In Memory of Friends**
Examines Bhagat Singh's vision of secularism in the context of the Punjab Problem.
English/Hindi 60 mins Year 1990
Film by: **Anand Patwardhan**
Source: P.O.Box No. 5216,
Dadar (E) Bombay - 400 014
VHS Price: Rs.500 - Institutions
Rs.350 - Individuals
3. **Dharm Yuddh**
Follows the trail of the Babri Masjid Action Committee leadership through the towns and villages of UP during the initial build up of the Babri Masjid controversy.
Hindi 53 mins Year 1989
Film by: **Rahul Roy & Saba Diwan**
Source: Rahul & Saba
A 19 Gulmohar Park
New Delhi 49
VHS Price: Rs 350
4. **Nasoor**
Story of the city of Meerut caught in a vortex of communal riots. It examines the post-riot communal processes which lead to further violence and hatred.
Hindi 74 min. Year 1991
Film by: **Rahul Roy & Saba Diwan**
Source: Same as 3
VHS Price: Rs 350
5. **Kiska Dharm, Kiska Desh**
Today Nationalism is being equated with Hinduism and the building of the Ram Temple with the creation of "Ram Rajya". The documentary asks: what is Ram Rajya and who is it for.
Hindi 55 mins Year 1992
Film by: **Media Storm**
Source: F2 Tara Aptt, Alaknanda
New Delhi - 110019
VHS Price: Rs 500
6. **In Secular India**
On the controversy surrounding the Muslim women (Protection of Right of Divorce) Act 1986
English/Hindi 50 mins Year 1986
Film by: **Media Storm**
Source: Same as 5
7. **From the Burning Embers**
Taking off from the incident of Sati by Roop Kanwar at Deorala, Rajasthan, the Film investigates the rise in Hindu fundamentalism.
English/Hindi 36 mins Year 1988
Film by: **Media Storm**
Source: Same as 5
8. **Ram Ke Naam**
In the Name of God
How religion has been used for political & financial gain in the Ram Janambhumi - Babri Masjid conflict
Hindi/English 90 mins Year 1992
Film by: **Anand Patwardhan**
Source: See(2)
VHS Price: Rs.500 - Institutions
Rs.350 - Individuals
9. **Yateem Lahu**
On the constant use of communalism to marginalise the working class
Hindi 45..mins Year 1992
Film by: **Avinash Deshpande**
Source: CENDIT
D-1, Soami Nagar,
New Delhi - 110017
VHS Price: Rs 250
10. **Chena Shahar, Achena Samay**
On riots in Calcutta after demolitions of Babri Masjid
Bengali 27 min Year 1993
Film by: **Najesh Afroze & Gautam Bose**
Source: CAMP, 15 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
VHS Price: Rs.250
11. **Bombay, Ek Rakta Yatra**
Bombay's Blood Yatra
The film traces the origin of Bombay riots of December and January 1993, that took place after the demolition of the Babri Masjid.
English/Hindi 60 mins Year 1993
Film by: **Suma Jasson**
12. **I Live in Behrampada**
Mera Ghar Behrampada
See box for review
English/Hindi 46 min Year 1993
Film by: **Madhushree Dutta**
Source: Majlis
Above Shop #20, New Shopping Centre,
Government Colony, Bandra East,
Bombay - 400 051
VHS Price: Rs 400 - Institutions
Rs.250 - individuals

Review

I Live In Beharmpada

Karl Mannheim in "*Ideology and Utopia*" while defining 'ideology' states ".... There is implicit in the word 'ideology' the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscure the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it." Interestingly, Madhushree Dutta in her film 'I live in Behrampada' presents a telling example of a fascist ideology at work.

The story of Behrampada - the reality of its residents and their history - is a condition that most inhabitants of Bombay did obscure to themselves, and to the outside world. The brutal killings in Behrampada by the police and by the crowds instigated by the Shiv Sena are justified by an ideology that on the one hand demonizes and criminalizes the Muslim residents, and, on the other, completely denies all evidence that shows the falsifications of the right-wing discourse in Bombay.

Behrampada is not an atypical slum of Bombay. Its original residents filled in a swamp on which they built their hutments. They made a living in various jobs in the sprawling metropolis. Although the majority of the residents of Behrampada are Muslim, it is now surrounded by a housing colony consisting of LIG & MIG flats occupied by middle-class Hindus.

In the second phase of the Bombay riots Behrampada was attacked by the police and by Shiv Sena goons. It resulted in the loss of dozens of lives and the destruction of about 50 dwellings. Dutta shot her film immediately after this and interviewed a number of people both from Behrampada and the surrounding flats.

The middle class of the housing colony are convinced that Behrampada is full of criminals (they can't walk past there at night). Although they admit it wasn't like this earlier and cannot cite any incidents to support their claim either. They are also convinced, as was most of Bombay, that there was a rifle factory in Behrampada. (This belief is fuelled, by newspapers like *Navkaal* and Shiv Sena's *Saamna*). That they are convinced of this even after the riots, following which the police had found not a factory but one dilapidated gun, shows their utter conviction in the criminal status of Behrampada.

Possibly the most telling interviews are of a bunch of women and girls living in the housing colony. They are completely convinced that the huts were set on fire by the residents of Behrampada themselves - they were trying to throw fire bombs on others but managed to drop them on themselves and their neighbours. They speak with an honesty and candour which we, the viewers, can see for ourselves, that underscores the power of the ideology that prevents them from recognizing the single truth that there were Shiv Sena members in their own buildings who were throwing fire-bombs on the huts in Behrampada. For me this is the most significant achievement of the documentary made by Madhushree Dutta.

In other regards as also in an overall sense the film is excellent. Whether it be the clear narrative format that the director has followed or the excellent camera work and editing, the interviews with a wide cross-section of people or the moving narration of how a young Muslim man, Abbas, had lost his life trying to save a Ganesh temple, the depiction of the demands and pressures on this small piece of land for 'development' and 'progress', or the police considering Muslim men gathering for their Friday prayers in a mosque as potentially dangerous and opening fire on them, the film leaves behind many impressions on the viewer. It is an important documentation and depiction of the forces that have caused, and possibly will continue to cause, communal violence not just in Bombay but in the entire country.

Reviewed by Rahul De who teaches Business Management at the Western Illinois University, USA

Video in the Grassroots

Today India is witnessing a rapid growth in the field of electronic media. In particular the Satellite TV channels are mushrooming at a fantastic pace. Begun successfully by STAR TV, many foreign and Indian channels followed, including Doordarshan.

Unfortunately, despite the proliferation of these channels, the content of all the channels remain strangely similar. They spread consumerism, low grade entertainment and highly class biased information that has little or nothing to do with the life of the common man.

Parallel to this trend, however, there exists in India the development of an encouraging trend; that of committed, independent film-makers and groups, who are producing films on issues related to the common man. Unfortunately, these persons and groups are severely handicapped by the lack of financial resources and distributing channels.

Simultaneously, grass root organisations although aware and concerned about the growing onslaught of the electronic media, lack information about developments in the field of alternate media. Many groups have acquired video playback units and are in the process of collecting relevant material but are unable to, or not in a position to, evolve a long term perspective about how to use them or even how the centralised, electronic onslaught can be combated.

To understand the real situation in the grass roots, we developed a programme to visit such groups in different parts of the country with a collection of films in order to :-

- a) assess how the alternate media was being used in the field.
- b) find out what was the long term perspective of such alternate use of video.

The program was planned as a 5 day workshops. To begin with, we chose six groups, which varied from women's group, cultural groups, activists groups and church-based organisations. They were:-

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mahila Samakhya | Banda, U.P. |
| 2. Samarthan | Thane, Maharashtra |
| 3. Goa Desc | Maspusa, Goa |
| 4. IDEAS | Madurai, Tamil Nadu |
| 5. Irada | Ranchi, Bihar |
| 6. Tehreek | Saharanpur, U.P. |

In the 5 days, we showed various kinds of films, from issue-based documentaries to television productions and feature films. Every film was discussed in detail to understand its content and political ideology; along with, to see how these films could be used by the grass root groups to generate political awareness in their work area.

The response was extremely encouraging. A definite process of development was perceived through these 5 days. Initially groups were unable to understand and visualise the utility of viewing films for 5 days. But we found it was possible within these few days to transform the passive viewer to a discriminating, alert and analytical audience. By the end, not only were they able to view films critically, but also pick-up a few films to use in their areas. Also, people could visualise the scope and importance of using video in a methodical manner. Some common programmes that emerged from the workshops were:-

- i) Collection of film, ii) Translation of films into local languages, iii) Sharing of films with as many groups as possible, iv) To initiate a process of building a network of such groups

Finally, the workshops proved conclusively that in order to use video for the cause of people, alternate methods of producing, popularising, distributing and utilising will have to be developed. Traditional methods of beaming out from a centralised system that decides the content, will have to change. Alongwith the alternate methods, the impetus for change has to emerge from the grassroots.

-By Ranjan De & Sujit Ghosh

A Window onto the world

In 1992, Rumania's new democracy gave the country's first independent TV station, Timisoare TV, a rather unwelcome Christmas present: The station was informed that it must close. Timisoare TV was not only critical of the old communist regime. The new democracy was also put under the critical magnifying-glass.

Timisoare TV came into existence in the turbulent days of December 1989, just prior to Ceaucescu's fall. At this time, the first video recordings were made from hotel windows with amateur cameras concealed under jackets. Pictures of demonstrators being shot, victims in gory close-ups and practise in running with the camera all went into the making of the first Rumanian film about the fall of Communism, short four days before it all started in Bucharest. This film was Timisoare TV's opening broadcast. It was a station with a tailwind from the start. Deserters from Ceaucescu's army stood watch at the primitive studios against communist attacks. And the four million viewers followed it all.

"People watched our broadcasts. We were different to traditional television. Our technical quality may have been poor, but the viewers only knew the official TV. So they wanted something new. Until we appeared, it was only possible to see two hour television an evening, the year round. Ceaucescu was in the picture 80% of the time. The rest of the time he was being talked about", explained Andrei Burdusa is one of the founders of Timisoare TV.

The difference was that Timisoare TV brought news of the murder of political opponents by the security police, Securitate. For the first time people got confirmation, through the media of the truth

about Ceaucescu's dictatorial regime.

"Under Ceaucescu, we had lived as if in a dark room without windows. Timisoare TV opened a window onto the world. Besides purely political programmes, we made art videos and made some attempts at experimental film", says Andrei Burdusa.

The station attracted politically active artists and philosophers. In their programmes, they did not just make do with showing Ceaucescu's method of government. The new government also came in for criticism.

No media-legislation

In most of the country's media, the election campaign for the local elections in 1991 was unanimously positive towards the new government which had taken over from Ceaucescu. But in Timisoare, and a couple of other towns, the opposition's candidates found a voice. So when the governing party lost the local election in Timisoare, controls on the station were tightened.

The government took legal steps against the staff. Timisoare TV's bank account was closed on the grounds that, as long as the station was not legal, they could not have a bank account.

As yet, there was no media-legislation and therefore no legal TV stations in the country. Shortly afterwards, the government formed the National Audiovisual Council. The council's task was to decide which stations should be entitled to a broadcasting-permit. One of the main requirements for obtaining a permit was that one should produce on's broadcasts locally.

Timisoare TV did this, but nevertheless, the station received a gloomy Christmas greeting,

VIDEAZIMUT

An International coalition for audiovisual for development and democracy.

Communication is a right of peoples, of communities and of individuals. Communication is a fundamental activity of human beings, individually and in society. It is essential to democratic life at all levels, as it is to any process of development. The right to communicate is seriously undermined by the workings as well as the structures and dominant models of communications systems. Inequality of access to the means of production and dissemination exist between the North and the South but also within each country, in the North as well as in the South.

Videazimut, a coalition founded in 1990, brings together people from the world of independent and alternative video and television from every continent. Together, its members act to promote the democratization of communication. They aim to broaden the participation by communities and movements from South and North in sound and image production.

In an age when new communications technologies, in particular video and television, lend themselves to democratization on a technical level, the coalition aims to promote:

1. greater access to these means on the part of marginalised communities;
2. liberty of expression in the production of images and messages;
3. greater access to the means of dissemination of voices and images on the national and international levels.

The coalition carries out its activities internationally with the following goals:

- * to defend democracy in communication as a fundamental human right through the transformation of communication practices in video and television at the local, national and international levels;
- * to promote the democratic practice of communication through public awareness campaigns, training, production, coproduction, exchange and distribution of video works;
- * to facilitate individual and collective access to the mediums of video and television and to communication for development;
- * to support indigenous production in all countries as well as the international recognition and dissemination of those productions;
- * to carry out policy analysis and advocacy and to organize campaigns to effect concrete changes to further the democratization of communication.

The coalition understands communication to be a vehicle for the expression of the social project of a collectivity, and a vehicle for developing solidarity and mutual respect between and amongst collectivities. The coalition considers itself to be part of an international movement towards the creation of a pluralist network of self-determined voices.

For further information contact :-CENDIT,

precisely three years after it had been formed; the staff got the message to close down.

The same happened for three of the country's other stations, which had criticised the government.

"Our TV station came into existence at a time when nobody was really in power. The state was weak and we were allowed to broadcast. When the state became strong again, we were closed down," ascertains Andrei Burdusa bitterly. He believes that the '89 revolution in Rumania was in reality a coup-d'etat.

There is, however, one station in Timisoare that has a broadcasting permit. The station has no production equipment. CNN is on the schedule 22 hours a day.

Report from ZEBRA NEWS, July '93.

For further information contact:

Zebra; Elmegade 5, 1. . DK-2200 Copenhagen, Denmark.

Or, Andrei Burdusa, Televiziunea Timisoare-1 S.R.L. Bd. Mihai Viteazul nr. 1/b, R-1900 Timisoara, Romania)

DISCUSSION

K.P. Sasi in conversation with Gargi Sen.

Born on the 14th of March, 1958, Sasi has made 9 documentaries since the start of his film-making career in 1982 which have been widely screened. Notable amongst these are 'We who make History' (1984), 'Living in Fear' (1986), 'In the name of Medicine' (1987) and 'A Valley refuses to die' (1990). His first feature film, *Ilayum Mullum*, was released in 1993. He is currently working on a film on pesticides.

How do you see the role of media in movement?

I think there are two ways of looking at it. As media activist, there are certain moments where you feel you want to make a direct intervention or bring about immediate change through media action - stop a dam or a nuclear plant etc. - where media action often can be successful to create an immediate, impact. But that does not necessarily work in all situations. On the contrary, I feel it is much more meaningful to look at media as something which creates a space for action.

Are you talking from experience when you say it does'nt always work in direct action?

Initially we did believe in direct action. In our campaigns with "In the Name of Medicine", the film became a part of the movement. We had films, painting exhibitions, pamphlets, signature campaigns, discussions, talk - all of which were a part of the whole process. The film would initiate more and more people into the process. We used to have 5 to 7 screenings in a day. We got tremendous support! It generated so much energy! We soon crossed the line of media action and stepped on to drug action.

But our group was small and had people whose interests, talents and aspirations varied. We could not absorb all the energy generated by the campaign. There was no possibility to prolong or sustain the process. That created frustration. Slowly one realised that it was not that which was really needed. Perhaps it was more important to create space for action so that more people could act.

By the time we came to Narmada, we got a better understanding. We felt we did not have to take the issue on our shoulders. There were many people who were already fighting. We only needed to facilitate them. In other words we do not change a policy through video screening but involve a lot of people to act.

Also, there are many areas that a film maker has to look after that an activist would find difficult. Say, a task like distribution - to make sure that people all over get cassettes. For Narmada, we took that as one of the main tasks. Our own screenings were limited, but we put more energy to see to it that more and more people could use the film, perhaps more effectively than us, without our presence. In a way, the campaign was wider and decentralised.

How many films of Narmada have you distributed?

We have sold around 250 to 300. Around 500 we have distributed in a subsidised price -- around 750 copies we have circulated on our own. That, of course, should be multiplied several times as people must have made copies without our knowledge. That happens a lot. Often they screen very bad copies. People even translate the films on their own. Recently somebody made a French version of Narmada. It also gets telecast without our knowledge.

But isn't that unfair if it is telecast?

You have to accept that you don't have any control over what you make. The medium itself is like that.

How would you then define the role of the film maker? Ideally, you say that the film maker creates a film for space for action. But in the Drug film you worked on the film as an insider - to initiate action. Again in Narmada you were an outsider....

Initially that was the process and it was a big problem. Like in IRE, we had complete control of everything during the making of the film. After that action started. Screening started. 2 demonstrations took place in Kerala after the screenings. Then I found myself giving directions to the demonstrations, creating slogans, shouting slogans, writing the banners, everything. I thought it was all my responsibility. It was a painful experience to realise that your role is media and people's action has a totally different logic in itself, and it is beyond my capacity. So, at best we can do is to create space for action and when action starts it takes place.

But how do you make a film which is true to the movement, the issue?

I think it is our own sensitivity and it is basically within us. When you talk to a person -- whether a radical intellectual or someone who has worked on an issue, or a tribal who is facing the issue -- you will draw out more from one person if you are sensitive to the issue. This gets more and more sharpened as you go along.

My sensitivity initially was very bad. I came with all those radical ideas from JNU, but not enough sensitivity. Then in the last 10 years I interviewed probably hundreds of people all over. Some were used in my films and there were many who were not used.

That was a real learning process - you meet so many people, many of them active in the field with a lot of wisdom and commitment. Its not just a video camera you place in front of them, but beyond that, you get involved with the person, his ideas and his commitment which transforms you completely. It changes your sensitivity. You are sensitised, you sensitise many others, who in turn sensitise you further.

What do you think is the role of a video activist?

It could be in various levels. I get a kick out of making films. I also get a kick out of screening it but I have difficulty in screening films over a long period of time. After sometime I get saturated. But Satish (my colleague) gets more energy in screening and through screenings he can really drive people, give more energy to people and be part of the people. He can motivate groups. It has happened through our campaigns that after screenings new groups had emerged or existing groups became stronger. Groups that were not active became active. We will probably have to channelise our energies -- sometimes making, sometimes campaigning, sometimes distributing and sometimes even training. I would say its a definite action if you can train someone to make a film on Jharkhand - like you did.

Video as a medium has many advantages. It can travel easily, it can take the experience of one place to many other places etc., but do you think a video movement can be developed, say on the lines of the theatre movement?

I think it has. It is a very powerful medium. In mass movements you have leaders representing people's voice. But when you record people directly talking about their own issues, that is a very powerful representation.

Quite often movements get educated through video. Leaders get educated. They may have been working in the field for a long time, but they may not have looked into the issue as you have. If video activists are sensitive they can really give new dimension to the movements and strengthen them.

Though technology takes away the group spirit of theatre, the tradition created by video is much more long-lasting. Badal Sarker created a tradition with theatre. But if you talk to a youngster today, he does'nt know what kind of a tradition that was. But if you create a tradition with video, even after 10 years people can watch it. Recently we came across a group in Bangalore who are still using the fisher people's film regularly. That must be 10 years old.

What are the main problems facing independent film makers?

First of all you don't have any money to make films. Secondly, there is no distribution network. Also, many are yet to realize the potential of video and hence don't have it as a priority. You can tackle all this -- we have been tackling all this at an individual level. But you cannot go on struggling like this. After a point this in itself becomes a task and you end up losing all other sensitivities. I think this needs to be tackled in an organised manner. I don't see why we cannot mobilise resources through distribution in this country itself. This country has thousands of NGOs who are looking for material. It only needs some initiative in organising meetings with activists, film makers, users specifically on this issue so that broader networks emerge. The problem is that it has never taken place. Its probably our own problem that we have not taken the initiative.

What do you feel about other film makers working with issues?

I think we have a very good team of alternate film makers in India. Initially when I started seeing alternate films, there was only Anand and Tapan. Now there are so many people involved in alternate films and many of them are doing interesting work. That way there is a lot of scope. Only distribution of such films needs to be strengthened.

Why a feature film?

When we began with video, all over Kerala people asked "why video?" Everyone at that time said slide programmes were more effective. People could not accept that video could be used like this. Today we face the same question about feature films. But I find a lot of potential in it. And the impact is no doubt several times more than a documentary. It is much easier for people to identify with a story, a character or a situation than with information. We also have story telling in our culture. That way a story is much more powerful. Also, if you can explore other creative forms like music, the message reaches faster. If you want to reach out to the bulk of masses, create a wider space, then feature films are more effective. Documentaries, in that sense, are limited.

Are you going to use the feature film the same way as your documentaries?

Yes, the same. I never thought of any other way...for creating space. Moreover, personally, if you give me a choice between a documentary and a feature film, I would much rather watch the feature film....(laughs).

Editors : Gargi Sen

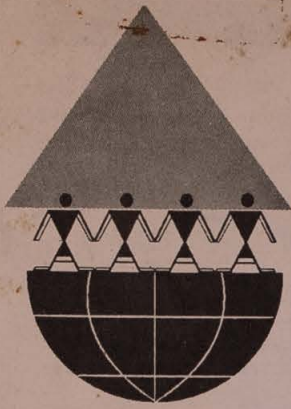
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VIDEOSCOPE

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DISCU DEMOCRACY AND

Democracy demands information, communication and access to information and the struggle to make information available to all is the process by which social institutions become democratic. This is an inevitable process. Hence the medium of information dissemination occupies an important position in democratic society. The recent growth of modern electronic medium has created a hullabaloo by churning out massive volumes of information. This phenomenon is being hailed as the second industrial revolution, and alongwith, the present times is being called 'the age of information'.

But the question that arises is whether information exists only in order to inform? In the world today nine crore persons are afflicted by TB a third of whom will die soon; and condoms is the only weapon available to fight AIDS, - is there a need to classify these two information on the basis of priorities? Is it correct to call the phenomenon 'informative' when the information about the prevention methodology is broadcasted without going into the social and political reasons behind the spread of AIDS?

It can be said that the importance of information does not lie in the quantity of it but in the quality i.e. what society requires is not volumes of information but relevant and appropriate information. Information can become relevant through the participation of people, and dialogue is the only way to ensure that participation.

These days a great deal of emphasis is being laid on information and broadcasting while the role of dialogue is being negated. This should be a cause for worry. Information without dialogue is not only meaningless but tends to be dangerous. It is in this context that the recent spread and development of electronic media must be viewed.

In the last decade the Indian government has encouraged private and foreign institutions in the sector of information and broadcasting. Alongside, they have increased the number of channels on the state owned electronic broadcast systems. But these channels are neither enhancing the general democratic process nor are they creating awareness about the problems and lifestyles of the common man. The ultimate aim of all channels, whether state owned, private or foreign is to create a passive, receptive audience for the advertisers and thereby create the 'consumer'. This kind of market orientation of media turns information into a commodity, a state that is dangerous for democratic institutions.

Today the Government has surrendered to the needs of the elite for economic advancement. In this situation it is imperative to initiate a process that will link information to the lives of common people, and strengthen the process of using information for democratisation and social change. It also becomes the responsibility of all sensitive and intelligent people to be a part of this process.

It is a difficult task to activate a process whereby relevant information is selected and taken to the common people, but this challenge has to be met. This is the only way to hasten the process of democratisation and the formation of an egalitarian society. ◀▶

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Dear Reader,

We are sending you the second issue of Videoscope. For a long time now we have felt the need for a newsletter which will help to exchange information about films and media work amongst film-makers, activists and other concerned people. We have also needed a forum for discussing ideas, issues and concerns. Hence Videoscope.

But to make Videoscope a truly meaningful experience your participation is of vital importance. Only if you send us news, articles, information or even write to us about issues of concern, share with us your experience; can we make Videoscope richer.

We also look forward to your criticism and suggestion for improving the content and design of the newsletter.

-Ed

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UN PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

9. Niyogi Zinda Hai

Compiled from existing footage one year after the killing of Shanker Guha Niyogi the film looks at the continuing struggle and the spirit of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha.
Hindi 60 mins 1992
Film by: Gargi Sen, Ranjan De, Sujit Ghosh
Source: CENDIT

10. Ballad Of Builders

The film presents the problems of the construction workers and their struggle to get the Bill drafted by the unions, implemented.
English/Hindi/Tamil 60 mins 1993
Film By: Gargi Sen
Source: Magic Lantern Foundation

11. Sasandiri

The film takes a look into the Jharkhand problem and presents the point of view of the people of the area.
Hindi 37 mins 1993
Film By: Sriprakash, Tariq Hassan, Tazbiul Haq
Source: CENDIT

12. Chilika

The film presents the struggle of people of Chilika and the conflict between them and the modern aqua-culture lobbies.
English/Hindi 31 mins 1994
Film By: Avinash Deshpande
Source: CENDIT

13. Patent Pending

The film unfolds the confrontation between two world views - that of the traditional Third World farmer and of the Transnational Corporation trading in seeds.
English mins 1994
Film by: Meera Dewan
Source: NAVDANYA
A 60 Hauz Khas
New Delhi 110016
VHS Price: Rs 400

14. Kiski Raksha

Review follows
Hindi 52 mins 1994
Film by: Sriprakash
Source: CENDIT

2. Voices from Baliapal

The film documents the struggle of the people of Baliapal, Orissa, against the Government's plan to convert their rich, fertile land and sea into a missile test range.
English; 43 mins; 1987
Film by: Vasudha Joshi & Ranjan Palit
Source: Vector Films
189 Sarat Bose Road,
Calcutta - 7000 29

3. Because of Our Rights

The focus of the film is the struggle by the people of Ghad, Saharanpur, to establish their traditional rights on the forest resources and the questions of conservation, protection and resource utilisation.
English/Hindi; 49 mins; 1989
Film by: Gargi Sen, Ranjan De, Sujit Ghosh
Source: Magic Lantern Foundation
J-1881 Chittaranjan Park
New Delhi 110019
VHS Price: Grass root groups - Rs 500;
NGO - Rs 1000
Institutions - Rs 3000

4 Valli's Story

An account of the left led struggle for land and wages in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.
English 29 min 1988
Film By: Sanjiv Shah
Source: CENDIT
D I Soami Nagar
New Delhi 110017
VHS Price: Rs 300

5 A Valley Refuses To Die

The film projects the protests of the people of Narmada valley against the Narmada Valley Project also characterised as the biggest disaster in the world.
English/ Hindi/ Gujrati 43 mins 1990
Film by: K.P. Sasi
Source: Alternate Communication Forum

6. The Campaign Begins

The film documents a march on the theme of "Save Water, Save Life" that was organised in 1989 across the country.
English 37 mins 1990
Film by: K.P. Sasi
Source: Alternate Communication Forum

7. Follow The Rainbow

The film is an intimate revelation of the process by which thousands of tribals of South Bihar have raised their voices against the plans to dam the Subarnarekha river.
English/ Hindi 52 mins 1991
By: Vasudha Joshi & Ranjan Palit
Source: Vector Films

8. Manibelli

The film documents the resistance against eviction by the people of Manibelli which is one of the first villages that will be submerged by the Sardar Sarovar Dam.
Hindi 43 mins 1992
Film by: Anurag Singh
Source: CENDIT

R E V I E W

Agitated tribals revolt. The voice of protest rises from 245 villages of Chhotanagpur, Bihar, resenting forced displacement from ancestral homeland. In tattered clothes, barefoot and weaponless, tribal children, the young and the aged stood united against the Indian Army, preventing it from using their motherland as a 'Firing Range'.

Directed by Sriprakash, this film documents the events as they occurred between October '93 and March '94 in Netarhat, Mahuadar, Daltongunj, Ranchi and Jokipokar.

For the past forty years the tribals here have been leaving behind their homes and taking their family and livestock to the jungle every odd day because the Government had allocated the area as a firing range. The aged, the infant and the sick were forced to evacuate as shells exploded in their fields and their dwellings.

The tribals have considered this regular disturbance as a personal sacrifice, and individual contribution to National progress. But when they were told that their ancestral property will be forcefully taken and used as a permanent practice range for the Army, they obviously protested.

Under the guise of 'development', large areas of forest, pasture and agricultural land continues to be destroyed with total disregard for human and animal suffering. Invariably such development projects benefit the richer of the rich while dispossessing the poorer of the poor.

The tribal way of life revolves around the forest. When a forest dweller is separated from his ancestral land, he is separated from his only means of survival. Ill-planned and inappropriate rehabilitation reduces them to marginal day-wage labourers.

Reports of social uprising against such models of development are not new in India. The Ukai and Narmada dams, the Narora nuclear power plants, the Singroli thermal power plant the list seems endless.

The film is simple and direct, with no special effects or gimmicks to distract the audience. No voice over or personal interpretations bias the viewer. Visual details of the tribal life style, their homes, farms, rituals, hopes and aspirations are cleverly woven through the film. The Kuruk folk song is significant to the theme of the film: "Oh you Nagpurias, where are you going? Away from your kingdom? Away from your motherland!"

Kiski Raksha is a documentary which voices the opinion of the poor Indian tribals living on the edge of survival and threatened with extinction.

◀■▶ Reviewed by Nitin Donde

(Nitin Donde is a film maker and a computer animator based in Delhi.)

With virtually no platform or movement for short and documentary film makers in India, the **Biennial Bombay International Film Festival** for short, documentaries and animation films since 1990 is a welcome and exciting event.

One cannot say that short and documentary film movement in India is totally dead as there are always few young film makers who somehow manage to organise their own resources to make what they want to make. But after the first or second work, with their sources and zeal depleted, one has to wait for the arrival of new young film makers.

In a context like this BIFF simply stands out as a significant event as it not only makes possible for short and documentary film makers in India to come together, it also provides an opportunity to see some of the best of short, documentaries and animation films. (This year there were over a 500 entries.) The festival also gives a chance to meet film makers from other parts of the world whose fate is similar to their Indian counterparts. In addition to these, BIFF gives the cash awards of Rs. 12 lakhs in six different categories.

Harisadhan Dasgupta, a pioneer of documentaries in India, was honoured in the festival and made a bold speech during the inaugural ceremony lashing out at Doordarshan and Government of India for doing nothing to support documentary film makers. Once again the demand was reiterated in the festival that good documentaries should be shown on Doordarshan on a prime slot and documentary film producers should be paid decent remuneration for the telecast. The minister present said that not only would he take note of this demand but he also declared that with more Doordarshan channels coming up, Films Division and NFDC are going to make video documentaries and NFDC may even sponsor documentaries.

In this third BIFF '94, a new addition was **Video Vista** section. This section is supposed to give a glimpse of the best of shorts and documentaries made in our country in professional video format. Nearly 80 videos were shown in this BIFF '94. Video Vista section was non-competitive in nature. As rightly demanded by many film makers, videos also should be included in competitive section. Many major short film festivals including Tokyo film and video festival treat professional video format on par with film format. From next festival, we hope, at least there are independent cash awards for video shorts and documentaries. Such awards definitely would encourage video film making as a movement as already many NGOs (Non Government Organisations) are effectively using video medium for

developmental and environmental issues.

Organisation : Though the festival is meant for seven days, in effect it is only for five days as the first and last days are exclusively allotted for opening and concluding ceremonies. It was quite a tedious job to select films from over 500 lot which were being shown in six different categories. In all sections many films were either mediocre or below mediocre. Even in competition section which lasted more than 40 hours viewing had many mediocre entries. May be selection of films is rather loose and free due to the fact that this festival is only three innings old. In the coming years not only restricting the number of entries also ensuring the quality of entries would definitely make this festival more exciting and prestigious. In this festival quite a few documentaries were more than two hours or three hours long. Too many long documentaries also definitely upset the mood of the festival.

Award Winners : In the land of deaf (France), directed by **Nicolas Philibert** won a golden conch and Rs. 2.5 lakhs for the best non-fiction film in the over 40 minutes category. A profound work on the deaf people whose language is sign language. They dream, think and communicate in only sign language. This film's great appeal lies in its strong emotional approach.

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media (Canada) directed by **Peter Wintonic & Marc Achbar** is the second best film in the non-fiction category. This much talked about 168 minute long film explores the political life and times of the controversial author, linguist and radical philosopher, Noam Chomsky.

Other award winners are Indian entry Moksha directed by **Punkaj Butalia**, Home Sweet Home directed by **Joost Wieman** of Netherland and marvelous animation film Monalisa Descending a Staircase by **Joan Cratz**, US entry.

The international jury has rightly decided not to give any award for the one minute animation on AIDS. There were 10 entries in this category, all Indian. All the entries had mediocre craft and very poor concept. Invariably all entries had only one message - "use condoms", as if nothing more to say on AIDS. All animations on AIDS were made within the period of two months after festival committee announced the subject for one minute animation competition. This is too short a time for any animator to think and work. One minute duration may be extended and subject should be announced well in advance. ◀▶▶

- M. Sivakumar,
(M. Sivakumar is a film maker based in Madras)

41st National Film Festival: Non-Feature Section

The juries for the non-feature film and best writing on cinema presented a report to the Minister for I & B, Mr. K P Singh Deo, in which they recommended that documentaries produced on the video format should also be brought within the purview of the National Awards. Another suggestion was that of increasing the prize money to Rs 50,000 which at present is Rs 15,000. Chairpersons of the respective juries were Mr. K. Bikram Singh and Mr. Khalid Mohammed.

Some of the award winners are :-

Best Non-Feature Film **Maihar Raag**, a candid and spontaneous portrayal of the decay of our heritage, as it is engulfed by commercialism. Director: **Anurag Bhattacharjee**

Best First Film **Bazaar Sitaram**, a delicate and sensitive portrayal of the culture, traditions and milieu of old Delhi as a personalised experience. Director: **Neena Gupta**

Best Anthropological Film **Ladakh - Life Along The Indus**, a visually enchanting depiction of the life patterns of the people living along the river Indus. Director: **Bappa Ray**

Best Biographical Film **Colours of Absence**, a beautifully crafted and successful presentation of the biography of an artist through his work. Director: **Arun Khopkar**

Best Film on Social Issues **The Women Betrayed**, a critical presentation of the phenomenon of witches and witch-hunting, provoked by forces within and outside, which is symbolic of the exploitation of a tribal community. Director: **Sehjo Singh**

Best Exploration Film **The Splendour of Garhwal and Roopkund**, imaginatively told and poetically picturised exploration of Garhwal and Roopkund. Director: **Victor Banerjee**

Best Investigative Film **Benefit for Whom at Whose Cost?**, well researched and detailed investigation of the fears and tribulations of the people living under the looming shadow of a long-delayed multi-purpose hydel project. Director: **Dinesh Lakhnarpal**

Best Animation Film **Chetak**, brings alive the legendary horse in a charming manner. Director & Animator: **V. G. Samant**

Best Short Fiction Film **Sunday**, takes a total holiday from logic and inhibitions and creates a most entertaining and humorous fantasy which, with all its improbabilities, succeeds in casting a spell on the audience. Director: **Pankaj Advani**

Special Jury Award

Murli Nair (**Tragedy of an Indian Farmer**) for transcreating a well known and touching Malayalam poem into celluloid poetry with great sensitivity and economy.

Mahesh T. P. (**Death of a Prodigal Son**) for an interesting exploration of the stream of consciousness of a dying man in a restrained and stylised student film.

Best Cinematography : **Piyush Shah** (Moksha)

Best Audiography : **Indrajit Neogi** (Maihar Raag)

Best Editing : **Rajesh Parmar** (Colours of Absence)

Best Music Direction : **Rajat Dholakia** (Sunday)

Democratic Television at the Service of the Citizen is Possible.

"In the face of electronic colonialism imposed by the large multinational communication corporations, it is possible to re-appropriate new communication technologies to put them at the service of building a democratic society at the local and international level. It is therefore imperative that independent producers create and multiply alternative media networks that preserve national identities, give voice to the silent, express cultural diversity, support the environmental struggle and reinforce popular participation in the democratic development process."

This is an appropriate summary of the conclusions of the international symposium on **New Technologies and Democratisation of Audiovisual Communication**, held in New Delhi in February. Organized by Videazimut the international non-governmental organization for the defense of the right to communicate, and its local member CENDIT, the symposium was attended by around 250 participants from about 30 countries from all continents.

American Soaps Invade India

The conclusions were widely noted in the Indian press and electronic media. The declarations couldn't have been more timely because, at the same time, Rupert Murdoch, one of the media giants and new owner of STAR TV, was meeting government officials and representatives of Indian private enterprise. STAR TV, which broadcasts from Hong Kong to a territory from China to Pakistan containing more than 3.5 billion people, is an important subject of debate in India. Re-broadcast by local cable operators, the network reaches, in English, to the farthest corners of the country with programming that includes the music channel MTV (now STAR Music), a sports channel, the BBC World News Service, and American soap operas ("the rubbish of Western TV", according to one journalist), while offering only one channel in Hindi, the main language of the country which, however, is spoken by only 16% of the population.

Who were the participants in this symposium who intend to create

an alternative to the champions of globalisation and homogenisation? A mixture of practitioners, researchers and non-governmental organisations that use new audio-visual and computer communication technologies.

Many of these new TV players are far from being marginal. Some, such as the Australian aboriginal organisation CAAMA and Deep Dish TV in the United States, already use satellites on a continental level. Others are setting up local and regional television stations seen by hundreds of thousands of people in Latin America, Europe (including Russia), in southern Africa. They are inventing new production and distribution methods in Brazil, Taiwan, and elsewhere. Above all they are experimenting with program content which responds to the information, training and entertainment needs of the populations of their own countries.

A three fields of activity were identified to establish a common agenda: research on new technologies; training; and telecommunication legislation at the national and international level.

A Different Television

The presence of representatives of computer communication networks in the United States and Australia served to underline the convergence of these technologies with the audio-visual world and to highlight the potential of this type of democratic network. The conference participants also benefitted from numerous technical demonstrations (from multi-media to videophone transmissions) which showed that it is possible to put new technologies at the service of a different type of television and a different model of development. There were also presentations of and debates about projects to establish international alternative satellite television, including one being headed by a non-governmental organisation.

Such a gathering, the fourth of its kind organised by Videazimut, is proof that an alternative to the market order is possible in the world of audio-visual communications.

◀▶ - ALAIN AMBROSI

(Alain Ambrosi is the vice-president of Videazimut and is involved with media education and distribution in the South countries.)

Where we are today - in the field of audio-visual communication, is the big question that was tackled at the International Symposium held in February 1994, organised by Videazimut in collaboration with CENDIT, attended by participants from 30 countries.

R E P O R T

The first attempt of the Symposium was to identify strategies and tactics for the appropriation of new technologies by independent producers, NGOs and activists. While many new communication technologies are already in use in Northern countries, they are only technologies of tomorrow for many Southern countries. The Symposium was thus a meeting ground for the first time for like minded people from North and South. All through the four days concurrent sessions, film screenings the plenary sessions and small discussion groups continued simultaneously.

David Nostbakken from WETV, Canada, called TV "the harbinger of electronic colonialism", where it is coming to be recognized as the great legitimiser of the day. That the TV is a powerful medium for the alternative audio-visual communication field, is a point that was greatly agreed upon. Chris Lee, from National Indigenous Media Association of Australia, pointed out, 'remember, power flows two ways; we have to make sure we control our information, communications, and in doing so our destiny'.

The Symposium brought forward the important questions of what will be the challenges for the democratisation of audio-visual communication within and between nations? What is the role of local TV or what is the *modus operandi* of northern and southern countries? What initiatives can be taken to bridge the gaps of power control and regulations that presently exist in the International Communication arena.

Participants got an opportunity to watch video films ranging from Torrest Strait to Palestine. Some of the films were a rude awakening for they projected a struggle that was not yet known or seen.

The symposium allowed for intimate inter-personal exchange between over 250 participants with rich and varied experience. Opening up possibilities for future co-operation and networking, it helped to launch the otherwise localised stature of the alternative media to a global arena.

◀▶ - GAURI BANERJEE

(Gauri Bannerjee works with CENDIT)

DECLARATION

New Delhi Symposium on New Technologies & the Democratisation of Audio-Visual Communication

New Delhi, 12 February 1994

E X C E R P T S

We believe in the pressing need for global democracy, not a global supermarket, and affirm our unity in support of the following:

1. All peoples and individuals shall have the right to communicate freely, to utilise the tools of communication and to inform themselves and others.

2. Airwaves and satellite paths are a global peoples resource to be administered equitably, with a significant portion devoted to serving the public interest and for community use.

3. We oppose the militarisation of space and the exploitation of space for corporate interests. Any exploitation of airwaves transmission channels and earth orbits should be subject to public levy to be used to support local community expression, facilitate non-commercial information exchange, and to contribute to equitable distribution of information technologies.

4. Communication and information technologies must be used to facilitate participatory democracy and the development of civil society, not to limit democratic rights.

5. Information systems exhibit great potential for real popular participation and should be organised according to the principles of decentralisation in order to nurture and sustain cultural diversity and humanitarian values. Individuals are not born consumers; information is not a commodity, but rather a utility to be shared. The Symposium brought many people who have been creatively using new technologies from the simple video camera to computer networks and satellite transmissions to enhance democratic participation. Such examples show that it is possible and necessary to appropriate and liberate technology to defend ecological struggles, to empower the disenfranchised, to express cultural diversity, and to strengthen popular participation in genuinely democratic processes. ◀▶

For further details contact
CENDIT, or VIDEAZIMUT

YET ANOTHER DISPLACEMENT?

The people of Gumla and Palamu districts of South Bihar are up in arms against the proposal of the Government to form the Pilot Project Netarhat Field Firing Range. The project is aimed at acquiring land from the tribal dominated area for field firing and artillery practice range for the 23rd Artillery Brigade of the Indian Army. Under this project, more than 2 lakh people from more than 245 villages are going to be displaced.

There are no other communities which have been as adversely affected by development projects as the tribal communities of India and even amongst them the worst affected are the tribals of Chhotanagpur. For the tribals of Chhotanagpur, such problems began with colonial rule but it's during the post independence period that the problem has assumed increasingly serious proportion. During this period Chhotanagpur, and its adjoining areas saw massive expansion of mining, industries, hydel and other projects. They symbolised national pride and progress for the rest of the country's population, but for the tribals of this region they were symbols of degradation, destitution and death

because benefits arising out of these did not reach them.

The Government has gone about the entire exercise in a secretive manner. There has been no effort to either consult or inform the tribals and their neighbours about plans to expand the firing range by depopulating the villages. Instead, the state Government of Bihar and the Defence Ministry have quietly worked hand in hand to secretly prepare the grounds for the eviction of the tribals and other local communities. Naturally, the panic stricken people have rallied together to resist the occupation of their lands by the Army. They have formed the JAN SANGHARSH SAMITI with its office at Chormunda on the Netarhat plateau and many other satellite samitis in Chhotanagpur region and different parts of the country to mobilise public opinion against the project and save their ancestral homes, villages, land, forest & river. ◀▶

For further details contact:-
Central Jan Sangharsh Samiti,
Chormunda, P.O. Netarhat,
District Palamu, Bihar 822119

Dr. Cecil Khakha,
202 C Arjun Nagar, New Delhi 110029

THE INDIA CAMPAIGN ON TOURISM ISSUES

Un-planned and un-controlled tourism, with a strong emphasis on luxury hotels and related infrastructure, is affecting various parts of the country. Besides the glaring example of Goa, environmental and socio-cultural impact are being reported from the coastal areas of States such as Kerala, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Orissa. Tourism is also making insidious inroads into forest areas, sanctuaries and tribal communities. More recently the Central Government under its liberalisation programme has taken up tourism as a major foreign exchange earner and many State Governments are being urged to draw up Tourism Master Plans . . .

Over the past six years Jagrut Goenkaranchi Fouz (JGF) in its local struggle in Goa against destructive tourism, has been questioning the Government's lopsided anti-people tourism policy and its national and international ramifications. During this time they

have had many requests for information and support from individuals and organisations from various States in the country, regarding the impact of tourism in their local areas.

In response to the emerging situation of tourism expansion in the country, JGF convened a national campaign to focus on the impact of tourism and to promote national and state level action programmes. The India Campaign On Tourism Issues (ICTI) aims at getting activists, community and sectoral organisation, NGOs, academics etc. to address tourism issues both at the state and national level.

JGF launched the campaign on 29th April '94 to coincide with the observance of the **World No Golf Day** and to highlight the struggle of the people of Goa against the Government supported Golf tourism resort projects. ◀▶

For further information contact:-
The Co-ordinator, ICTI, Post Bag
13, Mapusa, Goa 403507

The following are available with CENDIT

Publications

1 *Seeing And Showing Ourselves*

By: Maria Protz, 96 Pages, 1992
Published by: CENDIT, New Delhi
Price: Rs 50

The role of technology in development is currently being debated extensively, and small format video tape is one of the technologies that is being debated. The questions that come up are: What technologies are appropriate for development? Are all technologies equally "appropriate" for everybody: men, women and children? What should be done to ensure equal access? What aspects are involved in using video in a village situation?

Seeing and Showing Ourselves is a guide for using the small format video tape as participatory tool, in a village situation, for development

2 *The Other Picture*

220 Pages, 1993
Published by: CENDIT, New Delhi
Price Rs 50

For several years CENDIT has been building up a data base of audio-visual material suitable for use by developmental groups, activists and educational institutions. The focus has been on alternative materials and issues. The Other Picture is a product of the data base.

Classified under broad subject heads of culture, development, education, environment, health, social movements, women and international, this resource also lists technical information, credits, synopsis and source of each entry. Mainstream programmes made and distributed by Government agencies, international organisation and foreign embassies have generally been excluded.

3 *Film Video and TV Productions - A survey of the Netherlands and other major markets in the European union.*

By: Leonard M. Henny & Ad den Toom, 165 pages
Published By: CBI Netherlands, 1994,
Price Rs 50

This aims to give film makers and distributors from South countries some insight into the Dutch and European audio-visual market.

ASIAN MEDIA ALTERNATIVE

AMA (Asian Media Alternatives) is a group of video-maker committed to the promotion of alternative video in Asia. It is a forum to exchange ideas, experiences, materials and plan joint strategies on issues of common concerns. AMA proposes to co-operate in the production and distribution of video programmes which portray the socio-political, developmental and environmental issues, common to Asian countries - and which are frequently overlooked by the mainstream media. Initially its activities focus on developing a database of alternative Asian video tapes compiling a programme of video tapes from the regions for circulation among member-countries. A film on 'Water containing footage contributed by the members will be compiled. The film will try and integrate different issues and perspectives relating to conservation and management of water resources in the regions.

Membership of AMA is open to Asian independent video-film makers and NGOs working in the field of communication. Non-Asian active alternative groups or individuals or networks sharing AMAs concerns may become associate members.

AMA is structured around country co-ordinators from the initial funding members and a co-ordinating body of three members representing East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia. The co-ordinating Secretariat is based in Malaysia.

For further information contact :

K. P. Sasi,
ALCOM, A-11 Green Park Extn,
New Delhi - 110016

D E C L A R A T I O N

AMA (Asian Media Alternatives) declares the formation of a group of video makers committed to the promotion of alternate video in Asia.

AMA will endeavour to co-operate in the production of video programmes which portray the socio-political, developmental and environmental issues, common to all our countries ... and which are frequently overlooked by the mainstream media.

AMA will also attempt to catalogue and distribute videos to interested organisations in all our countries, in order to share concerns and reach wider audiences.

AMA will also publish a newsletter on a regular basis, which will feature news and accounts of alternate video work being carried out in the region.

We intend to organize regular meetings of Asian video makers, to exchange ideas and discuss relevant issues. Through this venture AMA hopes to meet the urgent need to promote social awareness and political development in all our countries, through the use of video film. The following are the member countries of AMA: Bangladesh Hong Kong India Indonesia Japan Korea Malaysia Pakistan Sri Lanka Taiwan ◀■▶

Video

Dissent in RGB or the New Commucation Technologies are Democratic

By Partha Sarkar, 27 mins, U-matic Hi-Band, English, 1994, Price: Rs 300
Source: CENDIT

Using interviews and statements recorded during the international symposium on New Technologies and the Democratisation of Audio-visual communication, the video asserts that the new technologies being developed will rapidly change the context in which audio-visual communication takes place. 'Quoting' from examples of democratic communication, the video shows how media activists and community producers are using images and sounds in a different way so as to keep communication democratic and people-oriented. A nascent global movement for democratic communication is clearly under way and the video reports on how the symposium allowed participants to share experiences and work out some concrete strategies so that this movement could be strengthened. ◀■▶

With his recent purchase of Star TV, media-king Rupert Murdoch has taken an important step in the battle to control the pictures on Asia's TV screens. Murdoch has paid \$525 million in cash and stock for a 64% stake in Star TV, Asia's first and biggest satellite broadcaster. Star TV is Murdoch's ticket to China, Indonesia and India, where the market is gradually expanding after many years of state-controlled TV. At the moment, Star's five channels are broadcasting to 45 million people in Asia and the Middle East. In all, two thirds of the world's population - about 3 billion people - live within Star's broadcasting region.

As incomes within this region rise, the cities of Asia are fast becoming a chain of sequentially exploding fire-crackers, demanding more and more consumer goods. But Murdoch is not in the market alone.

STAR v. TVB

This purchase foreshadows a media-war, of dimensions hitherto unprecedented in this part of the world, between the two rival groups: namely Star, and a consortium led by TVB, Hong Kong's leading broadcaster and the world's biggest producer of Chinese-language programmes.

In Pakistan, one of the more conservative of Star's current markets, protests are being heard from among orthodox Muslim against the menu of soap-operas and pop-videos.

In India, the Minister of Information K P Singh Deo is taking a stand against Star TV: "What we are facing could be described as a cultural invasion", he has pronounced to *The Washington Post*.

Two million households have the possibility of watching Star TV via cable. It supplies the small towns in the innermost rural districts with dated, long-running American TV-series' and ensures that Indians receive direct transmission of cricket matches. In August, the Indian government opened five new channels to compete with Star TV.

But it is in China that Star TV is probably meeting the greatest difficulties. Until now, the station has only broadcast news in Chinese, which thus only reaches a small, well-educated minority. But if the broadcasts start being transmitted in English, Star might run into difficulties. Since the 8th of October the Chinese government has banned satellites except for use at hotels and among foreigners.

"We see China as an extremely important market, but we realize that it demands cooperation with the authorities to run an operation of this kind in China. After all, it is their country", comments Star's technical director to *The Washington Post*.

Currently, Star's five channels - BBC News, Prime Sports, MTV Asia (now called VTV) and English and Mandarin entertainment - are broadcast free of charge to anyone with a satellite dish; Star's revenues come from advertising. Star now plans to launch four 'paying' TV-channels by October. The competition, TVB, known in Hong Kong as the "gang of five" is made up of a handful of Western firms. They pose a direct threat to Star's programming: CNN for news, ESPN (owned by North American ABC) for sport, HBO (a unit of Time Warner) for movies and Australia's AUSTV for English-language shows. On 22nd July, 1993 the consortium announced that it had agreed to pay around \$250 million to lease satellite capacity to expand its distribution.

Star has had a head start. It has established a brand-name as well as securing more, and further-reaching, satellite capacity than its rivals. However, Star's advantage will not necessarily last indefinitely. Its lead has rested mainly on its control of a large amount of satellite capacity. Its initial strategy was to secure as great a capacity as possible in order to gain leverage over programmers and to lock out rival distributors. But nearly a dozen regional satellites are due to be launched in the next two years:

digital-compression technology will expand the number of channels that can be squeezed on to them. Any strategy based on satellite scarcity is doomed to fail.

Cable TV

So too is Star's other means of controlling the skies. Star's people argue that the satellite which carries the best programming will be the one viewers will want to aim their dishes at. But as in other parts of the world, the future of satellite TV in Asia will not depend on individual dishes but on cable-TV. There are already hundreds of ramshackle systems throughout the region. The upgrading of these into proper networks is proceeding in places like Singapore and Taiwan; India and China will not be far behind. These cable-systems will be able to pull signals from all satellites.

Western Programmers

Both Star and TVB are scrambling desperately to woo Western programmers. Star has signed up America's NBC, Britain's Pearson and Japan's Mitsui to create its new business channel; most of America's top movie studio's will supply its film channel and Disney is being pursued for its family channel. TVB may soon be joined by Discovery, a North American documentary channel, and Nine Network Australia. More Western firms are on the way.

Yet it is far from clear if any of these Western programmers hold the key to fat profits in Asia. So far, local programming is proving far more important, especially in China. But with the purchase of Star, Murdoch has, if nothing else, reassumed his role as the aggressive founder of a Media empire.

Star TV is popular in many Asiatic countries. Millions of viewers tune in every day to the Hong Kong based media-empire's programmes. Meanwhile Star TV is less popular with the governments of these same Asiatic land. ◀■▶

Steffen Knudsen, *Zebra News*, November '93

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OPINION

Interview with Mediastorm by Gargi Sen & Ranjan De

Shohini Ghosh, Sabina Gadioke, Sabeena Kidwai, Ranjani Mazumdar, Shikha Jhingan, and Charu Gargi have been friends since college. Articulate and fun, their experience ranges from writing papers to making issue based documentaries. Their films include *In Secular India* (1986), *From The Burning Embers* (1988) and *Kiska Dharm Kiska Desh* (1992). Charu Gargi was out of town during this interview.

Q : How did you start?

SABINA : We were class-mates and we decided to make a film on the Muslim Women's Bill. As women, we felt strongly about the issue and we reacted to it in a particular way. That was how Mediastorm began.

Q : Why did you continue to function as a group?

SHOHINI : It helps if you have a group. We keep in touch and we're also very good friends. We discuss things and exchange ideas. And that's very important. I think we have learnt a lot from each other. And we've had various individual experiences also.

SHIKHA : All of us also do independent work. Three of us are teaching in Jamia (MCRC, Jamia Millia Islamia) and some of us are free lancing. We give each other a lot of support. We also discuss issues amongst ourselves and keep in touch with other groups.

SHOHINI : I don't know what it would have been like if we were only doing Mediastorm work. We might have got on each others nerves. Constantly taking collective decisions may not be a very good idea. But in a situation where we are already fragmented, doing our own things all the time, it's a disciplining activity to be in a collective. So even the process by which you come to a decision is going to be entirely different, the perspectives are different. We enrich each other, by doing independent work, and come together for certain projects.

Q : What has been the positive aspects of working as a collective?

RANJANI : Mediastorm means much more to us than just making a few documentaries.

SHOHINI : It gives us space.

SABEENA : Right, to do something different.

SHOHINI : It's not very easy for people who want to have an alternative space whether to make different kinds of films or have alternatives practices. It can become very hard on individuals who are trying to do that.

And for me it has been very good to be a part of a group.

SHIKHA : We can also take up a more ambitious project because there are so many of us.

Then there are issues you don't want to take up on your own. So I think a collective really helps with that.

SABEENA : In terms of the technical work we don't need anybody from outside, we are completely self-sufficient.

RANJANI : And I must say that we as a collective have always got a lot of support from different people.

SHIKHA : You know people have done free music for us, they have sung for us, Safdar wrote songs for us because we are a collective.

SHOHINI : And somehow we have never got into that competitive frame of mind. That really helps. It's really wonderful to have friends, who are not competing with you, who are not your rivals, and who will help you.

SABINA : We also have that relationship with some other people outside of Mediastorm. We do try and make sure that we don't compete with each other.

RANJANI : And I think that's very important for film making. You have to have these ground rules.

Q : What do you think are the advantages and the disadvantages of being an all-women's team?

RANJANI : It is empowering for us and also to prove to the world that we can function on our own. We are self sufficient.

There is a lot of sexism in this field. While working in different places we face the same problems everywhere as women.

SHOHINI : We face this problem with camera persons, editors... Gender awareness has played a major role in developing this collective.

RANJANI : Even today somebody asked Sabina, "you are so small how can you handle the camera"? This starts the 'invisibility' game. People assume that women can't do camera work. Sabina in fact does not get any professional assignment as a camera person only because she's a woman!

Q : What do you feel about the representation of women?

SABINA : We do talk a lot about representation. We are not only concerned with the representation of women, we are also concerned with the way other marginalised groups are looked at.

SHIKHA : We make sure not to objectify the people we are shooting.

RANJANI : Another thing that's important for us is the art of documentary film making along with the content of the film.

The form of the documentary film should be given equal importance, particularly when activists are making the film.

Q : You're talking about the craft of film-making?

RANJANI : Yes. We've all come to this position today that it's a very political effort to try and be reflexive about the way you make films.

SHOHINI : We do make an effort to be technically competent also, to strike a balance. On the one hand you have this technical perfection of video, and on the other hand you have this shoddy activists identification - because we are activists we're going to have tape drop-outs, we're going to have bleached out shots and that is how we are going to prove that we are grass roots. I think that should not be glorified.

SABINA : We don't want to be slotted into that marginal group 'ke women hai to technically incompetent hai'. We want to be technically proficient as well.

Q : One last question. I do believe that we are seeing the beginning of a video movement.....

SHOHINI : We've been seeing that for the last 10 years.

Q : Where do you think this is going?

SHOHINI : To ZEE I think. (Laughter)... No actually, you see, the situation is a little depressing.

Q : Along with that is the fact that today we have this invasion of satellite channels. Where do you see space for yourself?

SHIKHA : We never had the space even when there were no satellite and now there are satellites I don't think it's going to...

SHOHINI : I think the satellite is an excuse. For instance, by now ten batches have graduated from Jamia.

You can count on your fingers how many people have gone in for an alternative kind of film making. And that was much before the satellite invasion came. The other thing is that it also opens up possibilities, like the kind of stuff that Shashi Kumar is doing.

RANJANI : The future of cable is actually the regional media, and everyone knows that, including the wicked don Murdoch.

Q : Do you see the alternate media becoming a force where it intervenes, it appropriates, it changes?

RANJANI : That will depend on the political situation.

SHOHINI : We don't have to pose a challenge because I don't think we will be able to do that. But to have an effective parallel network would be a good thing. ◀■▶