Remote Control Nationalism: Media politics in Guyana[1]

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Remote controlled nationalism evokes the notion of an elite ideology beamed to an eagerly awaiting public through the television screen. Whilst this conjures up a sense of the passive audience what matters here is the place of television in the political landscape, and the ways in which this facilitates new Indian subjectivities. In Guyana in the past decade television has become a contested site which has been used, manipulated and accessed as a means of creating a whole new public domain in which Indianness is circulated. This paper will focus on state control of television, the relations between Indian media and the construction of Indian identity in Guyana. I will explore the meaning of Indian media in depth later, but for present purposes it symbolizes a collective visual aesthetic that adheres to local Indo-Guyanese sensibilities that are informed by Hindi film culture. The aim is to look at the political conditions in which television apparatus was developed, institutionalized, and now articulates a national Indian imagination.

Indian arrival

Since 1838 the strategies of British Colonialism thrived on maintaining the differences between the newly arrived Indian indentures and African ex-slaves. The intention was to foster two opposing workforces and to maintain a cheap labour force. Africans looked down on Indians as scabs depressing wages to the point that free labor was at the mercy of the planter class. Indenture was devastating for Africans as this contested the very notion of emancipation. Relations between these two ethnic majorities were grounded in an animosity that diverted their frustrations from the real antagonists - colonial rule and the planter class. This meant that cordial relations were actively undermined while hostility was openly encouraged in order to police and limit resistance. The outcome saw both groups adopting and internalizing these stereotypes whilst adding their own perceived differences. Both groups

were, as Naipaul states : "Like monkeys pleading for evolution, each claiming to be whiter that the other" (Naipaul 1962).

Competing workforces were further separated, geographically, through a rural/urban dichotomy. Relegated to the countryside from their introduction, East Indians were alienated further from participating in the development of a democratic society. The abolition of indenture in 1920 did not see a mass return to India. Rather, many chose to stay since access to land, work and social networks had by now given them security. By the 1930's the largely sugar dominated Indian sector started to organize themselves into unions to resist the monopoly on wages and working conditions. The 1940's saw Cheddi Jagan enter the political arena and in 1953 his party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), won elections with a majority. This success was short lived as Great Britain (with the help of America) suspended the constitution for fear of communism. The proceeding years saw many restrictions imposed on the PPP despite their consistent re-elections in 1957 and 1961.

Reluctant to relinquish their power the colonial authorities thwarted Guyana's road to independence and created political turmoil. This climate proved opportune for Forbes Burnham who left the PPP and became leader of the opposition, the People's National Congress (PNC), which came to power in 1964. In 1966 the Duke of Kent handed over the constitutional instruments to Burnham, thus giving the people of Guyana their independence. The 1960's saw the rise of the Burnham era as he worked to cement racial politics as opposed to class based ideology as the cohesive force for Guyana's nationalism. Utilizing pre-existing animosities and backed by Afro-Guyanese supporters he therefore secured what would become a dictatorial rule. The PNC solidified Georgetown as the base for Afro-Guyanese and filled civil and governmental positions with party loyalists. This emphasized an already existing polarization of Urban/African, rural/Indian and agricultural/manufacturer separation.

The fact that Indians were positioned in the countryside (literally out of sight) allowed the PNC to publicly represent Indo-Guyanese as inferior. They achieved this at a political level through a manipulation of PNC fears that the PPP were Marxist-communist. At a cultural level the Afro-Guyanese continued the colonial ideology of superiority over Indian cultural attributes. The effects of this are symbolized in the denial of Indian identity amongst urban and Christian Indians through name, dress and religious changes - in the hope of social mobility.

What I want to build through this brief historical overview is a picture of Indian alienation from the capital that allowed for the construction of two public spheres. One dominated by an Afro-Guyanese capital and the other a rural Indian one. The geography, memory, and invention of ethnic identities are located differently and distinctively such that they always reproduce two narratives, two imaginations and a dual cultural, political and historical sphere.

Burnham's media vision

During Burnham's reign the capital had the full support of the state apparatus that allowed for the production of appropriate discourses to maintain their control. During the PNC rule from 1966 to 1992 the regime controlled the only source of local visual dissemination through the Guyana Information Service (GIS). The GIS produced short films intended to function as vehicles for propaganda in order to parade the achievements of the dictator. These films portrayed Burnham's local and international follies, served to consolidate a Pan-Africanist vision, and were accompanied by the national anthem before all cinema screenings. They functioned to unify Africans while simultaneously excluding Indians visually from the process of nation building.

Why then did Burnham's dictatorship not fully exploit the possibilities of media technology? Why not a Government television channel? Why not ban

Hindi films to further the project of local production? What transpires are the frictions between state control and bourgeois ownership over the means of production.

The history of television began in the late 1970's. The minister of culture of the time, Deryck Bernard offered this insight into Burnham's' intentions:

> [Burnham] did have a plan to implement an infrastructure in which television would operate. However, the speed of technological advancement of television and video amongst the middle classes soon superseded that of going to the cinema. Television was not introduced by the Government, (surprisingly given its nationalist drive and strict control over imported goods,) but by the bourgeoisie.

Here the state is trying to grapple with the introduction of a new medium that it has not controlled. Until the mid 80's television existed in conjunction with the VCR and videos imported for entertainment only. It was not till 1985 that channel 28 shortly followed by channel 7 arose with the capability of importing American programs into most middle class homes. Television, video, and satellite programs projected through the two existing stations had given birth to a small but powerful media industry/economy relatively untouched by the PNC. The main reason for this unabated development was simple - these media brokers were staunch PNC supporters. Implementing legislation would encroach on these valuable supporters and have detrimental effects for the government. These stations served to provide the Afro-Guyanese with a notion of the nation with an absence of the Indian counterpart. In 1985 the PNC recognized the possibilities offered through television and took steps by setting up a government channel. Video equipment arrived on 1st August; Japanese funded, German equipment was opened on the 4th and on the 6th Burnham died. That equipment was first used to film his funeral, after which Burnham's vision for PNC television ended.

28 years of PNC visual and print domination did much to situate the Indian in derogatory positions in an Afro public imagination. In fact, during PNC rule much was done to sustain the legacy of African support and this became woven into national conceptions of popular and official culture. The use of intimidation, rigging of votes, banning of imported goods required for Hindu practice (like flour for offerings), were just some of the strategies implemented to maintain the political rule. The perceived difference between Indians and Africans cemented an incompatible and irreversible unification that maintains their cultural separation.

Political climate change

The PPP was propelled to power in 1992 with the first free elections since their ousting in 1953. An Indo-Guyanese party in power with a police and army primarily of Afro-Guyanese makes for an immensely sensitive situation. The symbolism of Cheddi Jagan's return from political isolation was highly significant. It offered Guyana's fragile ethnic history a rare moment of a unified trajectory, but this possibility ended with his death in 1997. Whilst this secured his legacy in Guyanese history it opened a vacuum in political leadership. Jagans' rise to power was characterized by working class and cross-ethnic alliances whilst the ensuing political climate displaced class in favor of a cultural discourse played out through the politics of representation.

From the outset the PPP employed the media to fashion a political vision. This was achieved only in part since the current media was in the hands of the opposition. Implementing change at this stage (naturally enough) simply involved displacing the old structures with new ones. What followed in this process were a series of changes
introduced by the state aimed at controlling the growth of private media stations.

The first major change came when C.N. Sharma was granted license to transmit. This is significant as he was the first to air Hindi films on television

and is single-handedly responsible for the production of local Indian programs. In 1994 the state channel Guyana Television (GTV) was formed. The National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU) is responsible for processing license applications, and the Advisory Committee of Broadcasting (ACB) monitors content for religious or ethnic hatred. Both were established in 2000 and in addition an excess of fifteen privately owned television stations were granted transmission rights. In a relatively short period of time a state controlled network was organized, functioning and reaching the nation. GTV, however, is the only channel whose transmission frequency reaches all.

The political shift in the uses of media is based on access and economically viable technology. However, the political drive to secure an infrastructure to `monitor' and control private expansion indicates the state's awareness of the possibilities of this medium. How the technology is controlled and used reflects fundamental changes in relations to the dissemination of ideas and the politics of representation, one which the PPP has capitalized on. With the institutions in place to secure democratic media functionality, the NFMU and ACB, the PPP can represent `freely' with the capability to infringe on those channels that may mis-represent issues.

The apparatus may reflect normal national institutional requirements but there is one major difference. The government does not want to implement the necessary legislation that would introduce a more substantial broadcasting bill that would cripple, or at least halt, piracy as the main source for program schedules. As a frank politician observed :

… the other TV channels do a lot of work for the PPP in covert ways. This is done not by open pledges to vote for the PPP but by the proliferation of Indian programs of all kinds that help daily to reaffirm Indian identity. The state channel GTV achieves a fine balance of not being pro-Indian or pro-African. It peddles a middle ground representation that aims to please both ethnic groups in seeking not to privilege one over the other (Dale Bisnanht, Minister of Labour, Human Resources and Social Security, 2003).

GTV makes a conscious effort to show not more that one Indian movie a week; in contrast to other channels which show them twice a day. Hindu cultural events are not prioritized and the day begins with Christian prayer, not a Hindu one. Piracy motivates the Government channel to present its broadcast as educational and within the confines of the law. This allows other broadcasting to peddle a vision that is primarily pirated yet perpetuates ideals suitable to Indian interests. The following section is based on an analysis of content and representations as disseminated through television sets in Guyana.

Television effect

Common sentiments on television amongst non-Indians are reflected in comments such as, `Oh turn on the television and there is only Indian stuff, singing, dancing and a whole set of stupidness, I wish we had cable, you know, more choice'. This statement reflects growing concerns over a bombardment of Indian visuals that seem to cater solely to an Indian audience. Alternatively, the Indo-Guyanese are delighted with this new deluge of Indian visuals beamed into the comfort of their homes. These opposing views, whilst grounded and entrenched in histories of distrust and animosity, require specific attention to avoid merely transposing past assumptions onto the televisual effect.

Television stations also represent political affiliations. Since 1992 the Indo-Guyanese have had access to a growing media economy that provides a variety of programs that did not exist prior to the coming to power of the PPP: programs that depict the president visiting Hindu temples or himself being visited by Swamis from India, school events, local cricket matches, cultural events or live broadcasts of religious ceremonies - they circulate Indian interests of a public. A vast amount of local programming focuses on a discourse of collective cohesion that operates at the level of culture. It does this through notions of celebrating `our' culture and keeping it alive. These Indian representations present a subject as a member of society in Guyana

that serves many purposes. A strong example of this visual reproduction of an Indian ideal that facilitates empowerment is revealed in an interview with CN Sharma, the founder of the Indian aesthetic. He offered this analysis:

> In the 1980's I tried to capitalize on the market and get air time on channels 28/9. But these were Portuguese and African owned and neither was interested in Indian interests. The government channel was not started then. They felt that Indian films are not important - why should they, not only because of their political views but also their bias and total ignorance of Indian culture - being in the capital there is a lack and outright marginalization of Indian culture - except of course the cinema which the government would not infringe on due to good entertainment tax collected. It was a joke and they (television stations) focused on North American culture.

Sharma proceeded to show clips from a pilot program called `Sharma's Vision'. This consisted of Indian men and women dancing in the botanical gardens with Hindi film music dubbed over it. He explains that these were his first attempts to rectify the lack of Indian representation on television and promote Indian culture. Today his television schedule reflects that aim: two Hindi films daily, a plethora of local programs like 'Inspirational Time', 'Bhakti Bhajans', 'Voice of Hinduism', 'Indian Cultural Time', 'Local Indian Performance', etc.

Sharma's position has three aspects. First, he presents the difficulties of getting Indian programs aired during PNC rule that reflect the positioning of Indian culture in a predominantly Afro-Guyanese environment. Second, programs are a direct attempt to produce Indian culture and cater to Indian needs. This, Sharma believes, is achieved through straightforward transmission of images perpetuating Indian visuals that fill the historical dearth of such representations. Sharma's television format works well, so much so it has become the model for many subsequent channels. Finally, the packaging of Indian ideological tenets gained through the experience of

Indian films produces a Hindi cinema-based Indian identity. All combined produce an Indian aesthetic and a visual literacy for the Indo-Guyanese that is decidedly different. The ability to see local productions - talk, dancing, singing and religious shows - in addition to the imported Hindi films, privileges and validates an Indian experience. This is important since these representations exist and circulate publicly, and are easily accessible.

The regulatory bodies (NFMU and ACB) are designed to detect and penalize any channels that incite political or racial violence. Television stations rarely breach this code. Broadcasters use a culturally relativist position to peddle a discourse that creates a space through which to critique the other. Programs like 'Support Your Own', carrying historical political connotations of *Apanjaat* - a political slogan of the 1960's meaning vote for your own - is decisive in attracting its desired audience. Indian and African cultural interests are situated within a framework of supporting your own. The current proliferation of television stations aligned to political orientations highlights an interesting transition in the politicalization of culture, to which I now turn.

Cultural politics

The equation is simple: Indian media = Indian culture= PPP= Indian identity. Both Government and private channels, through an ethnic visual schedule, champion the implication that culture simply acts by itself. As confidence grows in perpetuating positive Indian representations so too the potential to undermine them. These threats come not from the PNC, although many Indians would assert this, but from groups such as the political party, Rise Organize and Rebuild (ROAR) and its affiliated cultural arm, Guyana Heritage Indian Association (GHIA).

One of ROAR's more ambitious suggestions was to carve up Guyana into two states - Africans for Georgetown and Berbice for Indians. The failure of this idea called for a new emphasis, and GHIA turned to the discourse of culture, and conservative notions of authenticity and purity, whilst ROAR pursues

more traditional political avenues. GHIA's focus is on manipulating the fears of Indians about the Afro-Guyanese, relayed through a critique of the Government's neglect to stand up to `them'. GHIA achieves this by exacerbating pre-existing notions of difference between ethnic groups. Although much of Guyanese relations are seen through, understood or legitimated through race, there are shared cultural practices.

Spaces like carnival, music shows, street parades and Diwali, what Vijay Prashad has termed `polycultural practice', offer moments of collectivity (2001:79). Prashad highlights the long historical cross-cultural involvement between Africans and Indians to question notions of cultural purity and isolation between these two groups. There is no doubt that cross-cultural appreciation and acknowledgment exist and here I have in mind the urban space of nightclubs or rural wedding houses. Whilst the possibilities of `polycultural practice' are evident, there is a danger of concluding too quickly that these are signs of a 'melting-pot' mentality. Culture, here, has all the tenents of play and celebration that hide sinister social and political undercurrents. The exchanges between participants conceal the deep undercurrents of resentment and distrust between groups. Once in the privacy of their own homes, people's true colors show.

These shared cultural events are packaged as national characteristics of a Guyanese heritage and GHIA are contesting this with their versions of purity and correct codes of behavior. A cultural call of withdrawal to Indians from carnivals whilst promoting their own `Day of Dignity', setting up Indian cricket leagues, and calling for Indian dress to be worn by Indians are just a few of the projects they have. Their intention is to situate the Indo-Guyanese in spaces where the other is erased and Indian morality and authenticity can be secured. An excerpt from their monthly newsletter reveals the way in which a selective nostalgia is evoked to generate their vision.

> Look at any photograph of our fore parents who came to Guyana… and you see people who, even in their direst poverty, bore themselves with

dignity, with izzat. Their heads were held high, their backs, erect. They were people worthy of honor. They were not ashamed of hard work and honest labor as they set out to create a better life…. We have retained some of the values that they brought from India, but we have also lost much…. It is one of men who let their children, wives and homes be attacked without ever, in ten months, lifting a finger to defend or protect them. It is one of whole communities cowering behind the skirts of a weak Government, and of a people who say that karmic destiny is being fulfilled for all who are robbed, raped, and killed. We have lost the jahaji spirit, that of brother helping brother as our fore parents did in their voyage across the kala pani… (Januaray : 2003).

This extract is punctuated with key tropes of historical, political and cultural significance. Put another way the hard working Indian is neglected by their `own' government, whilst being attacked by Afro-Guyanese. Hinduism provides contentment through an understanding of their 'karmic destiny', just as their ancestors relied on religion during the middle passage. The passive Indian presented here holds particular currency, as it enables a reinvention of an Indian self that denies the counter narrative of resistance and collaboration. GHIA's solidarity through selective history is suggestively used here and the contradictions overlooked. GHIA have not gripped the imagination of all which suggests Indians are aware of the danger of such organizations. However, the lack of public opposition to these groups reveals a silent approval. Perhaps of greater concern is the government's creation of its own cultural arm, the Indian Heritage Organization (IHO). This highlights the use of culture to articulate a political discourse and begs the question - in whose interest is difference being defined?

These cultural organizations are positioned as attachments to, yet debased from the realities of state politics. This highlights a distinction that blurs, even momentarily erases, politics for the sake of culture (Rajadhyaksha 2004:126). They undermine the role of the Ministry of Culture as one serving the nation. Right wing cultural fundamentalism, of Hindu persuasion, is

challenging an already fragile ethnic equilibrium. For example, GHIA's cultural mela competes with the IHO's and each tries to find ways to promote Indian culture. This results in limited investments of an Indian identity since both are obsessed with retrospective constructions that conflict with present realities. GHIA cannot be silenced through oppositional combat, as intended by the introduction of the IHO, because it only reproduces the discourse of insiderism and never changes the grounds of articulation.

The government, with its friends and channels in position, can reinforce its continued legitimacy through the collective celebration of Indianness at the level of culture. The PNC's refusal for dialogue with the government, their constant threat of protest, disruption, and violence of the political process helps to facilitate unity on both sides. Black protest is seen as laziness to work, which in turn reproduces the hard working Indian ethic. Here again Indian history is negated and displaced onto Africans and hides the fact that Indians too have a history of protest and violence. The processes of othering and disavowal are rife; rum consumption, suicide, and domestic violence are rampant amongst Indian communities, qualities that are conveniently erased when discussing Indianness and suitably transposed onto Afro-Guyanese.

Culture here has all the pitfalls of being constructed as static, bounded, and traditional. Culture has clearly taken the lead in the resuscitation of the concept of nation and, to a certain extent, is synonymous with the state. The government's investment in culture absolves the state from the very real threats that it imposes as an institution of legitimation on individuals. Cultural nationalism serves to masquerade the real politics of unemployment, corruption and racial tension. Culture becomes a very convenient vehicle for the state to invest nationalistic concerns. Television provides a public common language evoked through the slogan `Supporting Your Own/We Culture'. Notions of Indian identity are offered through a visible standard that is reduced to simplistic one-dimensional traits unlike the imported Hindi films that serve as a sacred text and offer an idealized untouched `mother India'. Local programs express local Indian attitudes that empower many to discuss

issues as never before. Indian identity is constructed within representations not "as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (Hall 1993, in Desai 2004:35). Cultural politics, played out through the visual and made accessible for the illiterate, is discussed in everyday ways. This is not to suggest that the audiences are passive recipients but that culture works differently from the political. It gives the individual agency and a speaking position, already formed by larger discourses, be they party politics or cultural organizations.

The systematic alienation of Indian identity is now challenged visually through a national televisual apparatus. Years of portrayal of 'the backward cane field coolie' is slowly giving way to more positive representations. The effort gains more weight when one considers the government's regard for the older delight of the people, the cinema.

Cinema speak

I have frequently encountered the statement `how can cinema compete with the showing of Indian films on television, which we get for free' . The neglect and effective demise of the cinema industry is well known. During the process of institutionalizing television the cinema industry was intentionally abandoned and left to capital's bad brother - piracy. The present government line is that the cinema owners need to develop, diversify and negotiate with American distributors to help tackle the problems of piracy. Although the Government recognizes the social and cultural importance of the activity of the cinema, "piracy", an official said, "is part of the third world, it's how we survive".

Two cinema owners recall the current President saying that `cinema belongs to bottle lamp days'. For them this was a direct attack on cinema and a call to television as the new sign of social aspiration. He continued "this points to

an underlying fear of East Indians to go out - a fear of being robbed by Blacks - a feeling promoted by cultural organizations through publications like 'Indians Betrayed: Black on Indian Violence, Government Denial and Inaction'". The Government's position openly promotes the safety of television viewing. Hence communities are broken down into households encouraged to stay in and tune in, a fear firmly heightened by the rise in armed robbery that is presented as black crime on Indian villages. The neglect of cinema plays on the fear of coming out, and of going to the cinema being linked with being attacked. Blacks, the cinema proprietor said, "walked late at night and were happy to be out - Indians stay in". A fearful Indian community, locked in self-exile, but fulfilled in their visual aesthetics works well. A political motivation in keeping their voting pockets scared but secure in their visual habitus - living through the screen. Cultural display in the public domain is different from that in the home that becomes a place for the reenactment of culture, a site of production of family values (Prashad 2000:121). Could the neglect of cinema by government be linked to a discourse of fear, an unofficial curfew whereby viewers meet in the required allocated cultural time after dark?

Since the 1940's Indian films have served as a social memory bank to inform local practice and cultural values, whilst serving as a counter discourse to the PNC cultural hegemony. Cinema fueled the hunger, desires and fantasies of the Indo-Guyanese that has now been displaced by television. To have the films, stars and related programs in their private spaces, is comforting. As one viewer indicated, "it gives us an idea of what it would be like to live in a place without blacks". This gives an insight into the specificity that Indian film has in Guyana as one erasing the subjectivity of the Afro-Guyanese. Hindi films, literally, provide an imaginary world marked by the absence of a community perceived as the root of their problems. Home viewing delivers Indian issues to mediate and reproduce the conservative values of gender divisions, female piety, respect, kin relations, dress codes, etc (not far from GHIA's perspective). Whilst the Indo-Guyanese recognize that these are

ideals of aspiration and are seldom reached, they still serve to demarcate 'correct' codes of behavior. Indo-Guyanese relay these ideals, the very stereotypes that Afro-Guyanese hold and project onto them. This comes to the fore in the contestation between the old and new Indian movies, but that is a different topic.

The death of cinema is clearly a result of political nonchalance and outright failure to enforce policies that would allow cinema to operate in a regulated manner. It is not uncommon for a film to be shown on television the night before or on the very same night. Piracy is not about illegal television stations, but piracy of content. Pirated material is bootlegged into DVDs - Indian soap operas, documentaries and cultural shows, the very visual ingredients that Indians thrive on. It has provided a variety of local productions that have taken a life of their own and has produced a host of local celebrities. To restrict these flows through legislation is not in the interest of the current government at all. If legislation was enforced to curtail pirated material what would the absence of Indian programs signify?

Piracy serves as an unofficial law for television programming that includes hijacking satellite films, showing DVD's and advertising using an array of other people's logos. "We in Guyana have developed the right to steel and to justify theft. Creating double values of wanting the cinema and the pirated films but not paying the price for quality. We made backwardness an art. Imitate and not initiate", Henrico Woolford of Channel Seven Corporation (2003) warily said. Piracy permeates all aspects of life and is not only slowly killing local forms of production - drama, songs, documentaries -But instigates and promotes all sorts of theft. With no intellectual property rights everything and anything is appropriated; everyone has access to it, makes it, and shares it - a truly democratic situation.

The shift from cinema to television is an integral part of producing a distinctively localized aesthetic that constantly reminds and reproduces the `good Indian code'. This visual Indian nexus is carved out paradoxically in

the visual absence of blackness. The tendency of media dogma to negate issues that may question these idyllic representations of Indian cuture helps maintain the ideal devoid of any critique of its political limitations. The haze of racism stifles any possibility of a discourse that would emphasize similarities through class or historical struggles.

Conclusion

The political and historical developments of media and the proliferation of Indian programs in Guyana have highlighted the importance of representation through politics. At a local level it informs and reaffirms discourses around Indian identity and at the national secures PPP empowerment. This tangible yet lucid thing called culture at the fore of these re-representations and debates functions in a subtle manner.Celebrating Indian culture is synonymous with political loyalty. Whilst the cultural organizations are problematic, their goals overlap within a general ethos of African alienation to secure Indian rule.

The television offers a new space through which Indianness is questioned, negotiated, and re-articulated. A national Indian imagination, although a contested terrain, provides confidence through a televisual cultural hegemony of an Indian aesthetic that offers new modes of subjectivity. Post-1992 television raises many issues that were confined to locality of the community (i.e. Georgetown was still far away) through the exchanges of watching and talking that TV warrants. These verbal exchanges are part of the processes of negotiating local knowledge, sustaining social norms and constructing an Indian insiderism.

Visibility has engendered an awareness that translates and articulates an Indian self. This process reaffirms that the boundaries between reality and image are blurred. Lives on screen don't differ from those off screen as a young Indian pointedly explained "I like Indian films because I am Indian, it is as though the stories are taken from our lives". As Manas Ray's work on

indentured Indians in Fiji reiterates, "…living in the realities of Fiji and participating in the life of Bollywood is not a case of split existence, since such a split is postulated on a divide between the real and the imagined, something that Bollywood disavows" (2004:162). Hindi films are far more than their consumption in the confined spaces of living rooms or cinemas. It is in fact an entire network of separate but inter-related domains that make up an Indian cultural life where participants evoke its `entire cultural ecology', an ecology that is well worked and wielded through the media in Guyana.

The cultural specificities of the Indo-Guyanese experience often negate their contribution to Guyanese society. The government sees the media as an appropriate tool to construct sustainable solidarities to transcend past historical, political and cultural inequalities. This has forced the Indo-Guyanese to `mobilize' selective identities in order to guarantee and maintain certain boundaries. Although this may serve the identity politics of the Indian community, it creates a cultural impasse, one that does more to reproduce the differences between these two ethnic groups than it does to transcend them.

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