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□ Juluri, Vamsee:

Becoming a Global Audience: Longing and Belonging in Indian Music Television.

New York, Peter Lang Publishing (2003). ISBN 0-8204-5579-2 (pbk), pp. 155

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A Review by Shehina Fazal

This clearly written book is a necessary post-colonial response to the issues concerning globalisation and in particular that of Indian Music on television. Rooted in political economy and audience reception analysis, Juluri provides an elegant evaluation of the changing television scenario in India. The stage is lucidly captured in the following paragraph at the beginning of the book:

Music television is perceived by its viewers as offering them a world that represents them in every way; as family members, friends, citizens and Indians facing the eyes of the rest of the world. This offer, though, has semiotic costs and social consequences: the images and stories of music television around which audiences see themselves as Indians may be accurately characterised as a form of self-orientalism, a process in which Indian music television exoticises everything it can find in India, creating an illusory world in which everything feels like it is still India, but appears as if someone else was looking at it. (2)

This pattern of constructing images of India as if ‘someone else was looking at it’ also applies to the vast amount of television content available on numerous channels in the country. The explosion in television channels over the last 10 years has resulted in a wide variety of content formats for the Indian audience who were, until the early 1990s, used to two channels from the public service broadcaster – Doordarshan. In a decade, the television map of India has been transformed and this book is a timely intervention in the understanding of the relationship between Indian audiences and music television channels.

Juluri’s book looks at three main themes concerning music television and audiences in India which revolve around the issue of *knowing how* to watch: the first theme concerns the issue of knowing of how to watch music television, the second knowing how to watch countdown programmes, the third is that of knowing how to watch nationalistic music videos, and how audiences might negotiate between the three.

Setting out the debates concerning globalisation and audience studies, Juluri points to the limitations of postmodernism because of the way it shut out theoretical positions from non-Western perspectives and he argues that those engaged in critical audience studies tend to provide a somewhat incomplete picture of the actual world of global audiences. In contrast, Juluri presents the results of his study of music television audiences in India, providing a much needed empirical contribution to the understanding of global audiences.

The first chapter of the book offers a very clear description of the development of the Indian music industry and the way that it has followed the film industry. Juluri also examines how, in the contemporary context of economic liberalisation, both the state television and private television channels place their emphasis on the economic value of audiences. This is a far cry from the original public service vision for television, which was conceived of as part of the nationhood project.

In the second chapter, Juluri provides an analysis of the main features of music television reception that emerged from his study, focusing on one genre, the music countdown show, which has proliferated since the advent of satellite and cable television in the country. Juluri's reason for choosing the 'global' genre within the context of globalisation in a specific country, is that it calls for a somewhat sophisticated understanding of the audience. For instance, most of the countdown shows in India actually originated as hits from Indian films, and the Indian countdown show achieved much higher ratings than Western music countdowns. The growth of music-based channels has occurred due to their comparatively low production costs and the wide audience appeal of these programmes. At the time when the study was conducted, there were 32 Indian music countdown shows, broadcast on the increasing number of channels.

The fieldwork for Juluri's research was conducted in the city of Hyderabad where the participants were shown segments of the countdown shows. The responses via in-depth interviews from the participants indicate that they are familiar with the conventions of contemporary music television and are able to negotiate around these in the process that Juluri describes as 'normalisation'. The case of the VJs (Disc Jockeys on channel V) illustrates this clearly. The young middle-class respondents in Juluri's study stated that they wanted the VJs to be themselves and not to 'overact'. The demands for authenticity placed upon VJs are not made of the musicians performing on the shows and could be described as the 'new' way of watching music television by the young Indian audience. Juluri provides many other instances of this process of normalisation.

In the third chapter of the book, Juluri draws the conclusion that within the context of liberalisation, television may appear to have become accessible to the working class in India through appearances on countdown shows, however, the reality is somewhat different in a society where class and caste and patterns of privilege are played out in everyday life.

The fourth chapter looks at the investment made by the participants of the study in the music video 'Made in India'. The video 'Made in India' was the most successful Indian pop album at the time the study was conducted and has a fairy tale setting whereby the protagonist who has travelled the world now wants to settle down. She turns down suitors from different parts of the globe and instead choose an Indian man. The reception of the song by respondents in terms of the meanings made of the lyrics indicates that it is seen as a representation of their emotional values which are articulated around the matters of national pride. Juluri compares this to the lyrics of the song itself which do not engage

with notions of Indian cultural supremacy, but simply place it among the many competitors in the global market.

When the participants were questioned about the meaning of globalisation, the middle class respondents 'characterised globalisation as India-Indian people, Indian culture, Indian media, Indian products, Indian services – going out into the world, and the world-stage as it were (94). However, Juluri offers a critique of the meanings participants in this study attached to being part of the global audience and comments that Indian audiences may see themselves as in global terms, and yet there are few representations of India in Western music videos. Juluri points out that the current and curious trend among Indian media producers in representing India is to construct images that are construed to be watched outside India, whereas, in reality they are only seen by the Indian audience. This is the form of 'self-orientalism' referred to at the beginning of the review.

In the final chapter, Juluri makes a succinct argument for 'another globality' in the reception of music television, which recognizes the role of 'emotions' and 'relationships' in the understanding of global audiences. The changes that are occurring on the Indian television map cannot be characterised as 'cultural imperialism' in its original form. Juluri rightly proposes that there are more complex issues to do with the political realities of India's relationship with the West that should be included in the discussions of globalisation in India.

This book is a welcome and a much needed contribution that engages with the post colonialist approach to global audiences and proposes a change in focus of the existing paradigms in audience studies.

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