

Television, memory, and history: ‘Informal knowledge’ of Doordarshan on the Internet¹

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Abstract:

This article explores people’s memories of India’s state-run television, Doordarshan in the 1980s; a decade which witnessed rapid expansion of the television network and the emergence of a wide range of programs such as drama, classical and film-based music, historical, mythological, and fictional narratives, soap operas, sitcoms, serials, etc. Indeed, it is not unusual for people to have memories of their first encounters with television, the particular experiences of watching ‘favorite’ programs, remembering advertisements, jingles, parts of programs, television personalities, etc. The article foregrounds people’s memories of the everyday experiences, and knowledge of television paying heed to the argument of Darian-Smith and Turnbull (2012:1) that, ‘... the everyday ‘informal knowledge’ about television and its technology as experienced by those who are watching it has been displaced by the ‘formal knowledge’ of those equipped with the appropriate fashionable theory to analyze it.’ To this end, the article examines the ways in which people remember and reminisce about television, recuperate their familial, social, and cultural contexts of their viewing habits and practices, which although constructed around individual identity reveal a more collective intersection of culture and history.

Keywords: television, history, memories, nostalgia, domestic, audience, viewing practices, publics, informal knowledge

In a 2016 blogpost, psychologist Sadaf Vidha noted that nostalgia for India’s state-run television, Doordarshan has been on the increase on the internet.² Sadaf ruminates on the role of nostalgia in activating memory networks, the generation of positive and negative associations and perturbation leading to a certain ‘stuckness’ in the past. She ends her blogpost by advertising a therapeutic cure for nostalgia. In a more recent *Economic Times* news article, Shepali Bhatt (2019) offers further commentary on nostalgia afflicting Indians

who grew up in the 1980s, a period when Doordarshan began airing regular programming,³ and on attempts by Doordarshan to tap into the economic value of nostalgia to fend-off Netflix's popularity. Indeed, nostalgia for television is not unique to India, but a global phenomenon, attracting the attention of scholars who probe the interplay of television, nostalgia, and memory. To this end, my study adds to existing body of scholarly literature concerning the complex interplay between/across nostalgia and memory.

This article explores people's memories of India's state-run television, Doordarshan (in Hindi, Distant Vision) in the 1980s; a decade which witnessed rapid expansion of the television network and the emergence of a wide range of programs such as drama, classical and film-based music, historical, mythological, and fictional narratives, soap operas, sitcoms, serials, etc.⁴ While scholarly studies have examined Doordarshan through a combination of institutional, policy, and reception analysis, probing into the ideologies of gender, nation, class, citizenship, etc. in the formation of audiences, people's recollections and memories of Doordarshan remain unexplored (Mitra, 1994; Gupta, 1998; Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 2001; Butcher, 2003; Kumar, 2006). Besides being a timely topic of research in view of the rapid increase in people's recollection and memories of television on the internet, the phenomenon itself provides insights into how people themselves remember and reminisce on their experiences of Doordarshan, in particular the arrival of the medium, the formation of viewing habits and practices, and in re-envisioning themselves as audiences.

This article does not explore nostalgia for Doordarshan, rather, pursues the topic of Doordarshan memories with an awareness that making a conceptual and cellular distinction between nostalgia and memories points to a slippery slope. To this end, I conceive memories under the broader rubric of representations of past, and nostalgia as a longing for the past. Furthermore, I argue that nostalgia cannot be conceived as an 'affliction' reduced to melancholic, sentimental, and reactionary feelings about the past, as do popular media and some scholarly accounts.⁵ According to Pickering and Keightley (2006: 925) such negative associations have resulted in a homogenized understanding of audiences lacking in agency and participation. What is needed, then, is a recognition and understanding of how people use nostalgia and memories in 'critically negotiating mediated representations of the past' into narratives that straddle the individual and collective dimensions. Thus, people's memories of television, their viewing habits and practices, although constructed around individual identity reveal a more collective intersection of culture and history.

The article is organized in four sections. Section one is a critical discussion of recent work on television, memory, and history, pointing both to their potential contributions and limitations in examining people's individual and collective memories. To this end, I argue that Halbwachs and Ricoeur's respective work on memory, history, and narrative, offer productive analytic insights in studying the interplay of individual and collective memories. In sections two and three, I examine people's recollections and reflections of Doordarshan in online news reports and featured newspaper articles, blogs, vlogs, and YouTube. In section four, I discuss the significance of memory, history, and culture in interpreting

television, and offer critical remarks on how people's remembering and reminiscing offers insights into their constitution as audience, viewers, and public.

I. Television, Memory, and History

While longstanding suspicion towards television has persisted in scholarly literature, recent accounts of the medium have examined the medium's mnemonic properties in the ideological construction of the past, thus bringing history, and subsequently memory to the forefront of the debates. An emerging body of scholarly work on television memories have studied people's early encounters with television, the recollections and experiences of the arrival of the medium, the familial context of viewing, memories of their favorite programs, television personalities, etc. through oral interviews and ethnographies. Beginning with Tim O'Sullivan's (1991) pioneering study on people's recollections of their viewing experiences in Britain, this substantial and growing scholarly work has examined other national and cultural contexts from Australia, Israel, Italy, France, Russia, Hungary, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, etc. providing rich analytic and conceptual resources to pursue cross-cultural similarities and differences in audience histories and memories.⁶

Recent studies have explored people's television memories on the internet, particularly focusing on how digital and social media resources enable people to archive their informal knowledge about television, engage in online conversations and reflections with others (Hagedoorn, 2017). A crucial aspect of people's recollections of their experiences with television whether rendered via oral interviews, focused groups, and ethnographies, or reflections and conversations with others on the internet offer rich and vivid accounts of the significance and influence of television in their lives and the familial and cultural contexts of viewing. In studying television memories on the internet, however, we notice overlaps between individual and collective memories in the form of diaries and narrative accounts of viewing experiences, the ongoing conversation and sharing of televisual memories through the practices of uploading still images, short video clips, tagging these with their commentaries, annotating, and remixing content, thereby creating a digital collage of multimodal materials on blogs and YouTube, and other social networking sites.

While scholars have offered several models and conceptions of memory ranging from private or public memory, communicative or cultural memory, and social memory (Kuhn, 1995; Radstone, 2000; Kansteiner, 2002; van Dijck, 2004; van Dijck, 2007) in exploring the dialectic between individual memory and collective memory, I draw on Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Halbwachs's respective work on the phenomenology of individual memory and the sociology of collective memory to develop an analytic perspective.⁷ Halbwachs (1992/1925), in his seminal work on collective memory, proposed individual memories are underpinned by 'social frameworks of memories' of collectivities such as religion, nation, family, class, etc. Halbwachs (1992: 43) had argued that 'no remembering is possible outside the frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.' According to Ricoeur (2003), the intersections between individual and collective memory can be apprehended via a person's narrative identity. Furthermore, with regards to the

relations between memory, history, and identity, Ricoeur (2003: 84–85) had argued that ‘it is through narrative function that memory is incorporated in the formation of identity’ both at the individual and collective level, thereby linking these to history and historical experience (see Radstone, 2000; Leichter, 2012; Weedon and Jordan, 2012).

This article does not treat people’s memories as objective and accurate accounts of the past; rather, memories are mediated by individual experiences, familial contexts, cultures and histories. My concern is to explore the *how* and *what* of television memories, focusing on the interplay between phenomenological aspects of individual memories and sociological characteristics of collective memories. The notion of collective memory is not to be viewed as an aggregate of individual psychologies; it is a reconstruction, inflected and shaped by power relations and ideologies of community, nation, class, generation, gender, religion, etc. I do not pursue the power dynamics underpinning people’s Doordarshan memories on the internet, however, what is obvious are the middle class backgrounds of the people who are involved in writing, tagging, uploading, commenting and annotating multimedia materials on the web.

Darian-Smith and Turnbull (2012:1) have argued that people’s ‘informal knowledge’ of television constitutes a crucial site for understanding television memories. They note that, ‘... the everyday “informal knowledge” about television and its technology as experienced by those who are watching it has been displaced by the ‘formal knowledge’ of those equipped with the appropriate fashionable theory to analyze it.’ I examine people’s informal knowledge of Doordarshan, the ways in which they remember and reminisce about medium, recuperate the familial, social, and cultural contexts of their viewing habits and practices. To this end, this article will pursue the following specific questions: what do people remember, and why? How do they reconstitute themselves as viewers and audiences? How does television shape and connect individual and collective memories? The analysis in sections two and three is situated in terms of five overlapping themes that emerged in people’s memories of television: 1) childhood, 2) acquiring television set, 3) spatiotemporal dynamics of viewing, and 4) television programs, newsreaders and characters, and 5) televised events, commercials, and short videos. It should be noted that a few themes are similar to what scholars found in their studies of television memories in different national settings. These studies, however, do not directly explore the dual influences of childhood and television. This article examines the arrival of television in children’s lives, especially significant in their growing up. In the Indian context, the online reflections and recollections of television situate it in terms of their childhoods with television being increasingly referred to as an ‘object’ and an ‘artifact’, in some instances, as a para-social and sentient being.

The first and second themes overlap in people’s memories of television. To illustrate and contextualize the third theme, spatial and temporal dynamics of memories, I refer to the writings of Paddy Scannell (1998; 2004) and Roger Silverstone (1993;1994) on the ‘ordinariness’, and temporal organization of broadcasting in terms of program schedules, standardized program formats, and the viewing contexts of television in the domestic

spaces of the household. The fourth and fifth themes display similarities and differences in the ways in which people remember television centered on programs, especially various program genres, episodes and segments of the programs, advertisements, jingles, signature tunes, program openings and closings, presenters, television personalities and actors, etc. Indeed, people's recollections and reminiscences of television do not remain at the level of individual psychologies, rather, they are routed through a broad set of familial, social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape their individual and collective memories.

The themes identified in my sample are similar to what other scholars have explored in different national and cultural settings. This indicates that people's memories of television are organized around a set of similar interests and concerns that bind their experiences of the medium. For instance, TV as a box, furniture, an integral part of the living room, the domestic interior, etc.; the concomitant realignment of domestic space and time effected by program schedules, formats, aesthetics that organize television viewing habits and practices. These similarities in people's memories of television indicate how the medium was gradually incorporated into the audience life-worlds. The recollections and memories of television, however, are underpinned by particular histories and trajectories of media institutions, presence of prior modes of national-popular entertainment, and 'social frameworks' in particular national settings.

As we begin to contextualize people's memories of television, the differences in the Indian case, however, reveal a more pronounced reconfiguration of spatiotemporal dynamics effected by Doordarshan's arrival which coincided with larger political and economic shifts underway; that is, the expansion of television itself as a form of governmental intervention in expanding its power in the face of the rising regional political formations and parties beginning in late 1970s.⁸ In addition, the economic liberalization policies of mid-1980s, precipitated the gradual spread of consumerist and market-based programming. Indeed, the evocative recollections of advertising jingles and commercial sensibilities produced on Doordarshan reveal the attractions of the 'newness' of the consumerist aesthetic in Indian homes. A detailed investigation of these issues is outside the purview of the article.

In 2009, India's state-run television, Doordarshan, celebrated its 50-year anniversary by airing several old programs. The commemoration of Doordarshan was widely covered in the print media in the form of news stories and featured articles that included interviews with advertising executives, television, and film personalities.⁹ I selected several of these news articles and feature stories for analysis. In addition, people remembered Doordarshan on the Internet – hundreds of blogs, thousands of Facebook pages, Twitter, and YouTube collections. I do not study the Facebook pages and Twitter posts; instead, I selected a representative sample of blogs and YouTube collections to pursue a focused analysis. A detailed exploration of the online 'archives' of people's memories of Doordarshan is outside the scope of my article due to the daunting nature of the online materials.¹⁰ I utilized the Google and YouTube searches and gathered a sample of top 200 blogs and vlogs. Through a careful parsing of the online digital materials, I identified common themes and patterns that

centered on childhood memories of the arrival of regular television programming in the 1980s.

Through an exhaustive review of online materials, I selected 50 blogs and 10 vlogs for analysis. While the blogs were in English, the blogs and vlogs were geographically located in different Indian cities: New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad broadly representing multilingual contexts: Telugu, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi, etc. In addition, the names of the bloggers in several instances are suggestive of their urban middle class identities. Even though the blogs and vlogs referred to television memories, there were numerous references to nostalgia, with memories and nostalgia used interchangeably.

The digital media practices such as blogging, hyperlinking, tagging, vlogging, and incorporation of text, artwork, images, etc., are producing new ways in which television memories are produced and shared across platforms. Although the online recollections and reflections do not constitute people's life stories, they may be considered as narratives of specific moments of their lives. The television memories on blogs and YouTube organized as digital collage of forms such as diary narratives, clips of television programs, personalities, advertisements, jingles, etc., point to a subtle shift from *memory as representation* involving the processes of recall and retention to *memory as mediation* characterized by appropriation and production of the past through media technologies (Hoskins, 2003; van Dijck, 2004).¹¹ In the following section, I analyze how people remember television in terms of the questions outlined above, and organize my discussion in terms of the five main themes outlined above.

II. Doordarshan Memories in News Reports and Feature Stories

I begin with extracts from the print and online newspaper stories to point out how television functioned in people's childhood memories. A news story in the *Indian Express* newspaper begins with a query thus: 'Plasma may have replaced the old time black-and-white television and the numerous channels to surf may have increased big time but is it possible to forget the golden era of our very own Doordarshan?'¹² According to the sportsperson, Prasad Purandhare, 'the advertisements of Lijjat papad is still vivid in my memory and I remember imitating the voice (qarram qarram) while eating the papads. With hundreds of channels, we still have so much that we miss today; that one channels gave us more than we wanted in that era. I can still hum the Doordarshan signature tune to perfection.'¹³ For Charu Deshmukh, a software developer, 'jungle, jungle baat chali hai pata chala hai' – this is the first song that I learnt by heart, thanks to Doordarshan. I still remember the animation song, 'Ek titli anek titliya' which combined fun and education.'¹⁴

An article in the newspaper *DNA India* featured interviews with several media professionals on their television memories. A common motif in people's memories of television in news reports and featured stories as well as blogs centered on regional programming such as literary-based serials, sit-coms, and regional movies broadcast on the

main network as well as on local Doordarshan. For Anuradha Sengupta, feature editor at the CNBC-TV18:

If you were a child like I was in the 80s, then Doordarshan was your window to the world... I still remember my grandfather expecting complete silence at 9:00 pm, because we had to watch the national news! ... The regional, subtitled movies on Sunday afternoons brought to the fore different languages and cultures that make India. I remember *Chinamrao*, *Shvetambari*, *Wade Chirebandi* – some of the serials and theatre adaptations on the regional service – which imbibed in us the knowledge, respect, and affection for the Marathi language, its literature and culture. To all fascist and violent regional parties – guys, this is easier and more effective way to protect the ‘Marathi manoos’ than victimizing vulnerable newcomers. Doordarshan, with all its flaws, helped create the audio-visual context to who I am today. Pity, it didn’t stay relevant to me and I still miss it and those simple times.¹⁵

While the above reflections note to the popularity of Doordarshan programs based on regional languages and literatures, regional and vernacular language movies, they also point to the persistence of multilingual tastes of televisual audiences in Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil, and Telugu, and Urdu languages. Whether Doordarshan was truly interested in the development of multilingual television network is a moot point, since the network as a state-run media became embroiled in the exercise of promoting governmental ideologies. What is significant, despite the governmental control of the medium, was the persistence of multilingual programming that drew on regional, national, as well as international literature evocative in people’s memories.¹⁶

For Anand Krishnan, account director, MediaVest Worldwide, the shifts in the spatiotemporal dynamics of the 1980s, are contextualized in terms of the arrival of Doordarshan as a media object, a cultural form, and a symbolic resource thus:

There is something unique to about the generation of Indians born in the 70s or early 80s... Almost all of us were born into households that had no telephone, hadn’t heard of a computer, and wouldn’t have imagined in our wildest dreams about the phenomena called the Internet ... largely born into households with no TV, graduating slowly into a black-and-white TV set and then to color set, watching fictional shows on Doordarshan before slowly ‘progressing’ to watch shows based on ‘reality’ on newer, more aggressive channels.¹⁷

For Titus Upputuru, executive creative director, Dentsu Marcom:

As soon as the black and grey bars popped up on the screen accompanied by a shrieking sharp electronic sound, mamma, pappa, and the grandmother would settle down on the sofa with laced arms. Soon the black and grey bars would be replaced by a simple digital clock and the countdown would begin – 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5...The excitement was palpable as knees would bend, spines would straighten and bodies would bent forward. And as the clock showed zero, magical tune would begin with an animation that is still the most poetic one till date. Two inverted comma marks would turn round and round a sphere until they become small and embraced the sphere in a tight, motherly hug. The letters 'Doordarshan' would appeared on the sphere and then the Ranga Rang (colorful) programme would begin.¹⁸

Indeed, the fascination and the vivid accounts of Doordarshan's rotating logo and the color bars have remained etched in people's memories of the medium, triggering a range of happy memories, the sense of anticipation, curiosity, and wonder described through several different metaphors in numerous blogs, sometimes standing in a metonymic relation in their encounter with the new medium, other times acquiring an amalgam of characteristics rendered in terms of visual and gestalt effects (to be discussed later).

III. Refigurations of Memories on the Internet: Blogs, Vlogs, and YouTube

In addition to the print and online news articles and reports, the figurations and refashioning of Doordarshan memories become more vivid and detailed in the hundreds of blogs and YouTube collections on the Internet. Digital recollecting, remembering, and reminiscing are rendered in interactive formats, combining writing, pictures, illustrations, audio, video, etc. into a collage of forms. For instance, people provide a catalogue of programs aired of Doordarshan in the 1980s, identifying their 'favorite' programs, upload specific episodes and segments, the signature tunes, advertising, jingles, etc.; writing brief summaries of the programs along with their own commentaries, information on television personalities, bits of trivia mixed with descriptions of their daily viewing contexts and practices. Although most people identified their blogs as nostalgic remembering, what can be discerned here are complex layers of memories. The mixing of auto-reminiscing, biographical sketches and individual memories points to a dynamic constellation of communicative modalities, the inter-connected nature of speech and writing. Edward Casey (1987: 119), noted that people remember in multiple, plural ways, and the past invoked through the interplay of speech and writing is oriented '...in the form of intrapersonal self-address, as essentially *interpersonal* tendency towards discourse-with-another, albeit another part of one's self.'

In the following extracts from blogs and YouTube collections we notice that people's individual memories of Doordarshan rendered as biographical sketches of their childhoods, the influences of programs and program schedules on their daily/weekly viewing habits, and

the time and place of their televisual experiences, but acquire a communal and cultural dimension, pointing to their passage from individual to collective memories and back, linking individual, familial, communal, and social contexts. In his blog, 'Dust on my Shoes. Inside the Idiot Box of Memories', Neelesh Misra, Mumbai-based author Bollywood script and lyrics writer, notes that Doordarshan was crucial to his growing up years in Lucknow and Nainital, shaping his childhood and individual identity like millions of others of his generation. The following extract from his blog captures the curiosity and wonder of a child's encounter with television:

A massive click. I would switch on the thick cylindrical silver knob of the Uptron Urvashi TV set, encased in a wooden cabinet. Vertical vibgyor colour bands would show up, and then, suddenly, the rotating Doordarshan logo that seemed to us like two huge kajus hugging a rasgulla in the centre. Sublime pre-24x7 moment. The moment my brother and I would have waited for the whole day, killing time to prepare ourselves to open the rolling wooden shutter on the TV cabinet.¹⁹

The sense of anticipation and excitement in Misra's account of his childhood encounter with their first television set, and the description of Doordarshan's rotating logo in terms of kajus and rasgulla²⁰ is suggestive of how television functions as a transitional-evocative object, mediating 'the blurry line between self and other.' As we begin to explore the blog further, we notice that Misra's recollecting and reminiscing about Doordarshan, while anchored in his childhood, extends into his youth and adult years revealing how Misra's mnemonic imagination of Doordarshan moves beyond the childhood liminal space of self and the other, pointing to an identity-formation that can be grasped in terms of Ricoeur's idea of narrative identity, especially the interplay of *idem* and *ipse* identities.

Misra's account renders palpable how Doordarshan's program genres and schedules reconfigured his and his family's everyday viewing practices; describing these in specific detail, he points to the televisual literary and cultural influences that shaped his adolescent life., and his subsequent work as a lyricist of Hindi commercial cinema. Referring to the rise of the multichannel television in the 1990s, and Doordarshan's decline, Misra invokes the nostalgic mode of lament, a sense of loss, and returns to his childhood: 'Doordarshan has remained to me what my small town is – the faraway, tiny island of memory that has so many personal stories wrapped around where I often take refuge when the past seems more comforting than the present.'²¹ Further, in a similar vein, he continues, 'I miss Doordarshan of my childhood. I miss my nani (grandmother). I miss the guavas she cut and sprinkled with the spicy "buknu" powder ... I miss the trips to the messy chaotic lanes of Aminabad. I am a stranger to Doordarshan ad those cobwebs of lanes now. But I intend to reclaim my memories someday. It was just an intermission.'²²

Annie Zaidi, an author in her blog, 'Doordarshan, nostalgia and the lack of answers', begins her recollections by referring to another blogger Charu's comments on

Doordarshan's generation of the 1980s, Zaidi says that she is indulging in nostalgia to think about Doordarshan and her childhood:

Back to the time when television was Doordarshan. And vice versa. The logo slowly forms itself in my mind – the oval lines, the tangentially curvy edges, the Hindi alphabets forming themselves.' The screen coming alive in the afternoon, but before that the sharp, whining sound of the vertical colourful lines in the screen, as I switched the television set on. And immediately turned the volume down to zero – I wasn't allowed more than an hour a day initially.... I remember watching regional movies – Tamil, Malayalam, Assamese, Punjabi – on Sunday afternoons. Some of these were award-winning. I also remember that once cable television came in, I didn't get a chance to watch such moves again.²³

Zaidi's formative memories of Doordarshan, described in terms of the gestalt effect of television's rotating logo, the colored lines on the screen, and the assembling of the Hindi alphabets cannot be reduced to the nostalgic mode of remembering, for it carries in itself generative and productive traces of her childhood encounter with television. Indeed, people's memories of Doordarshan, the specific encounters with television – as a box, a piece of furniture, an object – are situated in the spatial and temporal contexts of shared viewing, first in the neighbors' home, and later in their own homes. The recollecting and remembering of childhood televisual experiences point to a significant degree of overlap between and across people's individual and collective memories which can be discerned from similar program preferences and viewing habits.



Image: Graffiti on the Wall. Thank you Doordarshan. Source: Garima Sharma, RadicalEye Photos, via Flickr (with permission to use)

The brief analysis of Neelesh Misra and Annie Zaidi's blogs revealed that the Doordarshan logo, montage and signature tune was emblematic of their entry into the world of television. Indeed, for most people, Doordarshan's rotating logo and the signature tune has a special affective resonance serving as an index for their mnemonic uses of television. Another indication of the importance of Doordarshan logo can be gauged from the recent plans by Prasar Bharati, the governmental corporation that oversees Doordarshan, to change the logo led to a resurgence of discussions in support of the old iconic logo. According to Indrani Sen, Indian viewers became nostalgic about the iconic logo and Twitter exploded with requests for not changing it.²⁴ What reasons explain the persistence for Doordarshan memories, especially the logo and the signature tune, on people? Is this just a question of brand loyalty and/or underlying sociocultural contexts? In the hundreds of blogs and YouTube collections, people invoked a sense of history, tradition, and collective memories that have become congealed in the Doordarshan logo and the signature tune.

The almost, sudden 'domestication' of television in the India in the 1980s, offered people for the first-time new ways of watching and experiencing television, thereby realigning the contexts of family leisure and entertainment. Furthermore, what is significant about the first-person narratives and biographical accounts of television memories sketched on blogs and YouTube collections is the generation and production of 'informal knowledge' of audience/viewer experiences of television; the individual-collective memories of television available on the Internet can be considered as people's 'construction' of television history, thus offering substantial insights into the popular interpretations of the triad television, memory, and history. Darian-Smith and Turnbull (2012), following John Hartley's work, suggest that it would be worthwhile to examine people's memories of television as constituting both a history of 'me' as the individual level, and a history of 'us' as the level of group, family, or nation. The extracts from blogs and YouTube collections point to the similarities and overlaps between people's individual memories of television, the affective and emotional registers through which television is remembered, connecting the childhood years with televisual programs and personalities, and the ways on which history of 'me' and 'us' is structured around family and nation.

But whenever you talk of Doordarshan one thing that flashes in my mind are the weekend programs on Sundays ... Doordarshan has got so many memories of mine and I am sure yours as well attached with it ... The way we cherish our memories with those serials I don't think we can get the same nostalgic feel with the serials and programs of the current lot, except a few. I would love to hear yours. Please feel free to share yours.²⁵

A blog about recalling the "Good times" we grew up watching as a child in the 70s through early 90s on Doordarshan national channel ... I am just glad to express my personal views and opinions along with our Blogger fans who

send us amazing Fan mails about few Shows and Sitcoms aired on retro Doordarshan.²⁶

A common thematic of the above four blogs pertains to how television programs, and the specific genres constituted people's childhood years. individual memories invoked family and nation in terms of an overlap between a history of 'me' and 'us' organized by program preferences and viewer experiences that become more pronounced in the following blogs. Concomitant with this, Doordarshan era of the 1980s is distinguished from the current multichannel environment dominated by private television networks and an excess of programming.

Remember the good old days of pre-satellite era? The doordarshan dominated era? The logo changing channels, what is it? We had only one channel, Doordarshan. Although boring most of the times; I miss some good non-commercial short films that Doordarshan used to telecast. Satellite TV channels these days are too commercialized and can't afford to waste even a second of air time for something that's good but non-profitable.²⁷

I was surfing through television channels lying on bed, and soon I noticed that I was doing nothing but going from 0 to 54 (that is the only number of channels I have on my television) ... I thought better it was to switch off the television and continue reading a book, long due – *One Hundred years of Solitude* [Gabriel Garcia Marquez novel]. My reading was short-lived as well; I thought of switching my television again, but then there is nothing to watch. Really? ... Has this all-time entertainer idiot-box turned into a dumb piece of scrap? I mean yes, there was once a time, when I used to run to watch particular program leaving back playing cricket or not worrying much about how crowded the train was. Ahhh! yes that was the time of Doordarshan – a single channel then (80s & 90s), which entertained, educated, informed, and served special feast of program on the weekends, especially Sunday ... I still cherish those memories of yesteryears – watching Doordarshan and its programs; memories which are shared by all people who were children when Ek-Anek used to be interruption their favorite programs.²⁸

An interesting aspect of the blogs and YouTube collections pertained to the thousands of comments from a number of viewers who shared similar memories of Doordarshan in terms of snippets of childhood moments watching specific programs, reminiscing about their families, places, and other 'fond moments' that constituted their televisual experiences, comparing Doordarshan program with the burgeoning programming on private networks, etc. At a general level, while most comments pointed out that reading the specific blogs

served as a 'trigger' for their own memories of Doordarshan, a characteristic feature of the comments sections was the creation of 'online affinity spaces' through which people shared information on Doordarshan ranging from programs, televisual events, advertisements, cartoons, jingles, television actors, actresses, newsreaders, personalities, etc.²⁹ There are feisty discussions that range from the popularity of Hindu television serials such as *Ramayan* (1987-88) and *Mahabharat* (1988-90) that appealed to people from different religious backgrounds. Apart from identifying their 'favorite' programs and personalities, the online affinity spaces generated a rich repertoire of conversations and dialogues, a veritable informal 'archive' constituting a history of television based on people's memories and experiences.

Just saw a Doordarshan special titled 'The Golden Trail, DD@50: Special Feature on the Golden Jubilee of Doordarshan', complete with rare footage and interviews, all celebrating the event. I was wallowing in the plain mushy nostalgia. The presentation was plain and simple, had it been one of those private channel affair things would have been equally typical – loud and jazzy and glossy and yet empty. Just this one time 'typical Doordarshan' was in fact strangely joyful. I would actually shell out money to buy stuff from Doordarshan archive. And I am sure many others would like to do that. People running Doordarshan should do something about it. Make the archive more accessible. There's even a view that projects funded by public money should be in the public domain. Maybe that's too much to ask in India.³⁰

The extract from Vivek Razdan's blog above points to the pleasures of watching Doordarshan in the 1980s, and contrasts the quality of Doordarshan's programs with current programming on private television networks. For Razdan, Doordarshan was 'strangely joyful', and the private channels as 'loud, jazzy and glossy and yet empty.' The comparison between Doordarshan of 1980s with the current private television programming is widely discussed in numerous blogs and YouTube collections. In addition, the online archiving of Doordarshan programs and the construction of an accessible repository of program materials shared across multiple platforms is another characteristic feature of blogs and YouTube collections. As the extract from Razdan's blog suggests, Doordarshan's archives are invaluable for public memory.³¹

Overall, people's recollections of their encounters with television during the 1980s centered on television's mediation of their childhoods, the realignment of their everyday habits and routines to television schedules and programs, the emergence of new familial and social contexts of viewing, and their constitution as television 'audience.' All of these point to the entwinement of multiple temporalities: the everyday time of clocks, the lived time of the humans, and television's own temporalities (Scannell, 1996a).

IV. Concluding Remarks

Ricoeur's philosophical explorations of the connections between history and memory, I have argued and demonstrated, provide a deeper understanding of television – as a mediated 'symbolic form' (Thompson, 1995) – and opens up fresh insights into the play of power, narrative, affect, temporality on memory and history (Ricoeur, 2003; Hartley, 2008; Darian-Smith and Turnbull, 2012). According to Ricoeur, if history is about the 'what was' of the past, memory is related to history in the sense that it entails a reconstruction of the past. The questions, therefore, for Ricoeur is not that history is an accurate representation of the 'what was' of the past, rather, it is 'history as a mediating amalgam of trace and figurative language that brings us the meaning of the past' (Crowley, 2009: 7).

The analysis revealed the particular ways in which people appropriated and interpreted televisual memories by reconceiving moments and experiences of their past into narratives that suggest broad similarities across individual and collective memories. An interesting characteristic related to how remembering television meant remembering *with* television, reminiscing about histories of people, places, events, etc. To this end, two main issues emerge from the inter-connections between/across television, memory, and history. First, the significance of people's recollections and remembering about television offers an alternate history of the medium distinct from the 'official' and 'scholarly' historical accounts (Spigel, 1992; Hartley, 2008) as always in historical study we can treat data/documents as factual descriptions of what was, or as expressions of the culture of the time and group. Second, the internet and the emergence of digital media forms has created a transmedial and virtual environments for the storage, retrieval, and sharing of memories, thereby 'transform[ing] what was once "collective memory" into "connective memory"' (Hoskins, 2009: 149).³²

The television memories on blogs and YouTube structured around middle class, upper caste imagination of nation and family. For most people watching Doordarshan in the 1980s connected them to their childhood years, the moments of the past 'reactivated' through their associations with family, neighbors, places, and events. What is remembered is television as an object, cultural form, symbolic resource, an audiovisual world of unfolding characters, plots, narratives, stories, etc. across temporal and spatial contexts. The happy memories of Doordarshan, therefore, dominant in people's imaginations are also similar to global instances of how arrival of the medium has mediated people's lifeworlds. What is significant, then, about Doordarshan memories? Scholarly literature in media and memory studies noted that the links between memory and media are not straightforward, rather, people's individual memories are shaped by social and cultural forces (van Dijck, 2004). In the context of this study, Doordarshan memories from 1980s, are likewise shaped by the familial contexts and lifeworlds, spatiotemporal dynamics, the intersections of social and cultural forces, etc.

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Notes:

¹ For a critical account of how 'the politics of memory' underpins people's remembering – and forgetting – of politics, events, places, and so on, in relation to Doordarshan's representations and coverage of sociopolitical issues such as conflicts in the Northeast, Punjab, and Kashmir that marked the decade of the 1980s, see Asthana (2019).

² Sadaf, Vidha (2016) Doordarshan and the psychological value of nostalgia, accessed, December 15, 2018, <http://blog.typeathought.com/doordarshan-value-nostalgia/>

³ Bhatt, Shephali (2019) In the age of Netflix, can Doordarshan leverage nostalgia? <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/in-the-age-of-netflix-can-doordarshan-leverage-nostalgia/articleshow/67919384.cms?from=mdr>

⁴ Doordarshan went through major changes under what has been called, in the official language, *The Special Expansion Plan for TV*, an important state initiative in (re)organizing television during the 1980s. During the eighties, state-run television had a single "national" terrestrial network. In the post-1991 period, which has seen the growth of multiple television networks, private television networks started broadcasts using satellite communication, the government expanded the range of programming by setting up four new channels through the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) system.

⁵ The 'Memory Studies' collective has examined the productive dimensions of nostalgia, and its relationship with memory. Svetlana Boym (2002) differentiates between two forms of nostalgia, a reflective and a restorative nostalgia, where the restorative nostalgia is characterized as productive one connecting the personal with the collective and national modes of remembering.

⁶ The emerging body of scholarly work on television, nostalgia, memory, and history offers perceptive analytic insights into how we might reconceive television studies in relation to televisual history, audiences and publics. Among others, see O' Sullivan, 1991; Foot, 1999; Bourdon, 2003; Dhoest, 2007; Kortti and Mähönen, 2009; Keightley, 2011; Bourdon and Kligler-Vilenchik, 2011; Darian-Smith and Turnbull, 2012; Niemeyer, 2014; Mihelj, 2016; Imre, 2016. For a splendid discussion of cross-cultural, comparative discourses of televisual audiences and publics, see Butsch and Livingstone (2013), and for a more comprehensive global history of televisual (film and digital) audiences, Butsch (2019).

⁷ Ricoeur's work on memory is expansive and does not just deal exclusively with individual memory; rather, operates at philosophical and phenomenological levels, connecting history, memory, and narrative. Similarly, Halbwachs's major works on the sociology of memory and the collective memory are complex, and misleadingly titled as collective memory in English. I thank the anonymous reviewer for the Halbwachs point.

⁸ The governmental expansion of power through the illegal proclamation of 'Internal Emergency' in the country during 1975-77, precipitated these subsequent transformations.

⁹ Although the 50-year anniversary in 2009 provided a context for remembering and reminiscing about Doordarshan, numerous blogs and YouTube collections pre-date by several years.

¹⁰ A Google search for 'Doordarshan nostalgia' yielded over 70,700, and almost four times the number for 'Doordarshan memories.' Most of these in the form of a combination of blogs and vlogs; a similarly search on YouTube resulted in thousands of video clips. There are several dedicated pages filled with commentaries, video clips, and conversations on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social networking sites.

¹¹ With the increasing presence of digital media technologies and convergence, scholars have explored the characteristic features of 'old' and 'new' media in terms of 'remediation' and 'convergence culture' that has implications for history and memory. Garde-Hansen et al (2009: 8) note that 'unlike history, which has been traditionally promoted and defended by the written word, memory has projected itself in multiple media and formats over the last few centuries: as script, audio, images, artefacts, sculpture, artwork and architecture to name a few. This is not to say that history is not currently embracing and engaging with other ways of distributing itself: film, television and websites for example, but rather that history is delivering itself technologies that befit memory-making. The shift away from the dominance of the logos toward more participatory systems of representation is one that lends itself particularly well to theories of memory within a culture of convergence of digital media.'

¹² <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/life-begins-at-50/517996/0>

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report_dd-days-that-were_1294090-all

¹⁶ Asthana (2019)

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ <http://rovingwriter.blogspot.com/2009/01/inside-idiot-box-of-memory.html>

²⁰ The Hindi word *kaju* refers to cashews and *rasgulla* is an Indian dessert, a ball of cottage cheese cooked in syrup.

²¹ ibid

²² *ibid*

²³ <http://knownturf.blogspot.com/2005/08/doordarshan-nostalgia-and-lack-of.html>

²⁴ <http://www.mxmindia.com/2017/08/rebranding-doordarshan/>; for background and context on the plans to change the logo, see <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/meet-the-nid-student-who-made-the-doordarshan-symbol-soon-to-be-history/story-owFlcYbSZe5OfmWlet7GiO.html>; <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/dd-plans-to-change-its-logo-launches-design-contest/article19359270.ece>

²⁵ <http://tanushriguchhait.blogspot.com/2009/09/doordarshan-turns-50.html>

²⁶ <https://oldidiotbox.blogspot.com>

²⁷ <http://www.ambimama.com/2006/03/30/childhood-memories-ek-aur-anek-doordarshan-videos/>

²⁸ <https://amolsviews.blogspot.com/2008/12/times-of-dd-down-memory-lane.html>

²⁹ An online affinity space, according to James Paul Gee, is an informal place, spaces based on common endeavor and interests of people irrespective of people's sociocultural backgrounds where conversations occur, knowledge is exchanged, shared, and distributed. Some common online examples of affinity spaces include gaming environments, fan sites, chat rooms, etc. I draw upon this idea of online affinity space to situate Doordarshan blogs and YouTube collections, especially the comments sections where common endeavors and interests take place. See Gee (2005) for a discussion of affinity spaces.

³⁰ <http://8ate.blogspot.com/2009/09/50-years-of-doordarshan.html>

³¹ Razdan's blog itself is an interesting amalgam of Doordarshan materials, found objects, artifacts, materials, and trivia from popular culture. See, <http://8ate.blogspot.com/?view=mosaic>

³² Some recent efforts by state broadcasters with regards to television memories blends both the archiving and airing of old programs ('nostalgic programming'), and soliciting people to share and upload content. For instance, BBC MemoryShare, Spain's broadcaster TVE-50, European Union's Videoactive and EUSCREEN. Television scholars from Australia have created an electronic resource for archiving of people's television memories. See Gutiérrez Lozano (2013) and Turnbull (2012). Hoskins (2009) refers to the 'mediatization' of memory in terms of two phases: the first one, associated with the institution of television, and a second, inter-connected with television, yet distinctive due to the emergence of the web and digital technologies. See also, Garde-Hansen et al (2009) on how digital media is reshaping television memories.