Arvind Rajagopal (ed.), *The Indian Public Sphere: Readings in Media History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009. xx + 338 pp. Tables, figures, plates, notes, appendix, bibliography. ₹750 (hardback).
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As Arvind Rajagopal points out in his introduction, the existing literature on the idea of the 'public sphere' is vast. The term is most often associated with Jurgen Habermas whose arguments, while important, cannot be accepted without extensive revision. More than the answers he offers, the questions that Habermas asked remain interesting: What is the connection between forms of communication and their socio-political contexts? What kinds of participation in the public sphere are possible? Whose interests does it represent? This anthology of essays is held together by an attempt to engage with these questions.

The anthology presents 17 essays (including the editor's introduction) dealing broadly with various chapters of media and communications history. The book is divided into four parts, each of which comprises four essays each. The four parts are respectively titled, 'Formation of a Colonial Public Sphere', 'The National Popular', 'National Development and Mediatic Infrastructure' and 'Emergent Orders: Localization, Consumerism, Digital Culture'.

The section titled 'Formation of a Colonial Public Sphere' includes three well known essays by Ranajit Guha, C.A. Bayly and Christopher Pinney which deal with dense networks of indigenous communication through which news, information and rumour travelled. At a time when large sections of the population could neither read nor write, these communication networks could galvanise populations during campaigns and social movements. As Rajagopal writes: 'At the nodes of these networks were traditional figures, including astrologers, clerks, doctors, peddlers, pundits, sadhus, and travelling performers who interacted with literacy-aware circles that could reach far and wide' (p. 6). The control of the colonial state over these channels of communication was complicated, even compromised, through their reliance on indigenous authorities who helped intercept and interpret the content and form of these modes.

Rajagopal writes in the Preface that the project has been 'undertaken principally as a volume for students, selecting articles that straddle the historical transition from colonial to post-independence periods and over time' (p. xiii). This particular section is bound to be instructive for students

of media in India. Rarely do our communication and media studies syllabi include discussions about networks of communication in the colonial period. This is perhaps because the thick accounts that have been produced by scholars, like those whose essays have been included in this section, are not considered to be part of what is conventionally understood to be the domain of 'communication studies'. While the essays by Guha, Pinney and Bayly are widely read and quoted by historians, sociologists, cultural theorists and others, they are rarely found in the communications syllabi of any Indian university. By bringing these essays into a volume on media history, Rajagopal makes an important interdisciplinary move.

The second cluster of essays under the title of 'The National Popular' is less cohesive. While the essays by Charu Gupta (Redefining Obscenity and Aesthetics in Print) and Francesca Orsini (The Hindi Political Sphere) deal with early 20th century debates and developments, the two essays by Purnima Mankekar (Women-Oriented Narratives and the Indian Woman) and Aniket Jaaware (Who is it that is Singing? Shot-Music-Speech) deal with the popular culture of the late 20th century. Mankekar's essay is about Doordarshan's women oriented serials in the 1980s while Aniket Jawaare's essay is on Bombay film songs. If there is any logic to this clustering, then it is neither self-evident nor explained in the Introduction. Moreover, Jawaare's weak essay sits awkwardly with the strongly researched and coherently argued essays by Gupta, Orsini and Mankekar.

As the book moves towards the post-liberalisation period, the reading becomes less and less satisfactory. While several of the essays in the section titled 'Emergent Orders: Localization, Consumerism, Digital Culture' are individually relevant and insightful, they collectively fail to address the questions and concerns that a student living in the contemporary media ecology might have. Two of the most useful essays in this section are written by William Mazzarella (Close Distance: Constructing the Indian Consumer) and Sevanti Ninan (Local News Gatherers). The reason why this section fails to work is because the media scenario of the post-liberalisation period stands dramatically transformed (and transforming), raising radically new questions. Against these key transformations, the essays presented in this section are likely to appear dated and simplistic. For example, K. Gopinath's essay titled 'Internet in India' may well appear redundant to a net savvy generation for whom the limits and possibilities of the virtual world are way beyond the pitch of this essay.

Globalisation has transformed the definition and reach of the media while reconfiguring what we may understand by *The Indian Public Sphere* since users and consumers now include diasporic communities across a virtually borderless world. Today, a student no longer studies the media but inhabits a densely interconnected and mediatised world where old and new forms of communications continually collide. A multiplication of screens across which media images travel and the tactile pleasures inaugurated by gaming and virtual worlds challenge classical notions of the public. Even television news and entertainment—now no longer available through only 'real time' but at anytime through video streaming—have spawned viewing cultures that were alien to us in the 1990s. The scholar and practitioner is confronted with new legal, social and ethical challenges around censorship, surveillance, interactive publicness, protection of privacy, pirate cultures, intellectual property and what Ravi Sundaram calls the 'culture of the copy'. This demands that we make a paradigm shift in the way we begin to understand the media.

In the Preface, the editor writes that 'preparing a volume of essays on so broad a topic as the public sphere, covering both the colonial and post-colonial periods is a perilous task' (p. xiii). The task is certainly not easy but the challenges are endemic to the scope of this project. Since the anthology has a strong early section, one expected the rest of the book to be equally sturdy. Arriving some two decades after the liberalisation of the media, the contemporary period in the anthology needed to be addressed with greater imagination.

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Martin Gaenszle and Jorg Gengnagel (eds), *Visualizing Space in Banaras: Images, Maps, and the Practice of Representation.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008. 358 pp. Figures, plates, notes, references, index. ₹750 (hardback).

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The book is thematically divided into four sections and has 14 articles. The first section is titled 'Sacred Topography'. The first three articles seem to fall within the Orientalist framework as they tend to reify Banaras'