

## Nationalizing 'the global': media images, cultural politics and the middle class in India

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The paradigm of globalization has, in recent years, sought to explain the shifting relationship between the local, national and global realms of culture, politics and the economy in the post-Cold War, post-Gulf War system of international relations. A central feature of this paradigm of globalization lies in an emphasis on the transition in the role and future of the modern nation-state (Featherstone, 1990; King, 1997). If the rise of nationalisms in response to European colonialism produced modes of intellectual enquiry which sought to explain the success and endurance of the nation form (Anderson, 1983), recent research has increasingly shifted towards analyses which seek to interrogate the failures (Chatterji, 1993) and decline of the nation-state (Appadurai, 1996). In this article, my aim is to shift the terms of this debate from the question of how the nation is being reformed through processes of globalization to the question of how the production of 'the global' occurs through the nationalist imagination. The foundation for such a shift rests on a paradoxical assumption of territoriality which marks contemporary discussions of globalization. Scholars have argued that globalization is marked by processes of deterritorialization which transcend or destabilize the territorial boundaries of the modern nation-state (Appadurai, 1996; Guehenno, 1995; Habermas, 1998; Omae, 1995). However; such arguments are often implicitly based on a geographic imagination which assumes that 'the global' (or geographically speaking, the globe) encompasses 'the national' (the territorially bounded nation-state). Globalization, then, by definition must be marked by cultural, economic and political processes which transcend the nation and provide the foundation for the possibility of a 'post-national' (Appadurai, 1996: 159) era. Such an

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*Media, Culture & Society* © 2000 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), Vol. 22: 611–628  
[0163-4437(200009)22:5:611–628;014713]

approach forecloses an interrogation of the 'discourse of globality', as Roland Robertson has put it, 'the shifting and contested terms in which the world-as-a-whole is "defined"' (1997: 88).

A study of the cultural politics of globalization in India presents a striking example of the ways in which 'globality' is invented through the deployment of nationalist narratives. Globalization in contemporary India has unfolded in the context of specific economic conditions associated with the 'new economic policies' of liberalization initiated in the 1990s. This process of liberalization, which began in the 1980s, has undergone a striking shift, marked by an increase in the pace and in an appearance of public acceptance of India's transition to an 'open' free market economy. Both television and print media images increasingly contribute to the reproduction of a hegemonic political culture, one that has discarded the last remnants of a state-dominated planned economy. Media images produce a vision of the Indian nation based on an idealized depiction of the urban middle classes and new patterns of commodity consumption. Such representations become a critical site in which the politics of economic liberalization are negotiated through the articulation of a new relationship between the national and the global. An analysis of this process calls into question three central components of the post-national thesis of the globalization paradigm.<sup>1</sup> First, I demonstrate that the imagined form of the 'global' is itself produced through cultural signs and symbols that rest on the deployment of nationalist narratives. Second, media representations increasingly depict India's shifting relationship with the world economy through images of a productive hybrid relation between the national and the global. Hybridity, a social category which has been represented as a central marker of transnationalism (Bhabha, 1994), provides a means for a reworking of the national imagination in response to movements of economic and cultural capital. My aim in this analysis is not to provide a psychoanalytical or deconstructive analysis of individual images but to analyze the ways in which images weave together the symbolic fabric of a hegemonic political culture in liberalizing India. Finally, I argue that globalization in India led to a form of reterritorialization which centers around middle-class women's roles. The territorial anxieties of the post-colonial nation-state produce a link between the protection of the borders of the nation and the preservation of gendered social codes. The analysis draws on nine months of fieldwork, which I conducted in Bombay in 1996 and 1998. The fieldwork included the documentation of public representations in the print and television media, 25 formal interviews with representatives in the advertising industry and journalists and editors in the print media and 50 interviews with individuals documenting the actual experiences and responses of the middle classes to the effects of economic reform and ethnographic observations.<sup>2</sup>

**Exhibiting 'the global': commodity aesthetics, transnational capital and the nationalist imagination**

The specific material conditions of globalization in India, manifested in policies of economic liberalization, have produced a national political culture which increasingly centers on a culture of consumption. Images of the consumption of newly available commodities serve as signifiers that assimilate globalization to the Indian nation-state. Consider the shift in national political culture from the early years of the Nehru regime in the 1950s to the contemporary moment of liberalization in India. The early decades of economic policy in post-independence India were focused on the development of large scale industrial units; the emphasis of economic development was on production in heavy industries rather than on the production of consumer oriented commodities. Such policies were linked to a specific image of a modernizing Indian nation, one in which large scale dams and steel and power plants 'were the spectacular facades, luxurious in their very austerity, upon which the nation watched expectantly as the image of its future was projected' (Khilnani, 1997: 62). Meanwhile, these icons of modern industrial development were linked to a political culture which was constituted by public discourses on the need for the advancement of the rural poor. Political rhetoric ranging from the speeches of politicians to popular films such as *Mother India* produced linkages between modernist ideologies of development, the reduction of poverty and the Indian nation; the urban middle classes were relatively invisible in this visual political culture. This vision of the Indian nation has undergone a striking shift in the context of contemporary globalization. The accelerated economic reform process which has been unfolding in India in the 1990s has brought to the forefront an intensified manifestation of the image of the Indian nation which Rajiv Gandhi imagined through his policies and rhetoric of liberalization in the second half of the 1980s. Rajiv Gandhi's vision substantially rested on the role of the middle classes. His vision was encapsulated in concrete economic policies that began to loosen up import regulations in order to allow an expansion of consumer goods (such as automobiles and washing machines), that could cater to middle- and upper-middle-class tastes; even his vision for village development included the slogan 'A computer for every village'. As one media representative put it, the middle classes were

Rajiv Gandhi's people, at home in a new political climate, happy with the new political jargon, relieved that the Government no longer tries to tax everyone in the name of the poor, enamoured of a prime minister who understands the importance of colour TV. (Ninan, 1985: 71)

This image was translated into concrete economic practices that produced a sharp rise in the production levels in import intensive industries in the

automobile and electronics sectors. If the tenets of Nehruvian development could be captured by symbols of dams and mass based factories, the markers of Gandhi's India shifted to the possibility of commodities that would tap into the tastes and consumption practices of the urban middle classes. This possibility has, to a large extent, been realized in the 1990s. As Rajiv Gandhi envisioned, the commodities available through multinational and Indian corporations signify the production of a national cultural standard associated with the urban middle and upper classes. There has in recent years been a transition in India which has centered upon two parallel trends (Kothari, 1993). On the one hand there has been a shift in public political discourses away from a focus on poverty reduction as a central objective of state policy and economic development. Meanwhile, there has been a growing public culture of consumption on the other. As the editor of a print magazine argued,

In the 1960s and 70s this whole bit of accumulation of wealth was still suffering from a Gandhian hangover. Even though there were a whole lot of families who were wealthy all over India in the North and South if you noticed all their lifestyles were very low key. They were not exhibitionist or they were not into the whole consumer culture. Now I see that changed completely. . . . You want to spend on your lifestyle. You want your cellphone. You want your second holiday home which earlier as I said people would feel that sense of guilt – that in a nation like this a kind of vulgar exhibition of wealth is contradictory to Indian values. I think now consumerism has become an Indian value.<sup>3</sup>

Such visual signs of wealth represent the new symbols of national progress in India. In my interviews with individuals from various segments of the middle class, these consistently pointed to the new choice of commodities as a central indicator of the benefits of economic liberalization. Thus, even though these interviews were conducted during an economic recession in 1998, individuals indicated, for instance, that they at least no longer had to depend on relatives abroad to provide them with access to various foreign commodities. The notion of 'abroad' in middle-class discourses operates as a sign of a desire for class-based privilege. Prior to liberalization, goods 'from abroad' were primarily accessible to the upper classes who had the financial means to travel and import goods or to individuals who migrated or had relatives residing in areas such as the Gulf countries or the advanced industrialized countries. An absence of access to such goods thus represented significant limits on the material prosperity of the Indian middle class. Hence, the notion that 'abroad is now in India', as one individual put it, signifies the potential realization of middle-class aspirations of consumption, one that can now take place within India's borders. The availability of such commodities has thus become inextricably linked with a middle-class image of a new liberalizing India. This transition in political culture in contemporary India signifies the ways in which the Indian nation has been re-imagined in the context of globalization.

Visual representations of newly available commodities provide a lens through which we can view the ways in which meanings attached to such commodities weave together narratives of nationhood and development with the production of middle-class identity. If the historical emergence of modern nationalism has been linked to the rise of what Benedict Anderson has called 'print capitalism', the imagination of the nation in the more recent historical past is inextricably bound to capitalist technologies of vision.<sup>4</sup> In interviews which I conducted with leading advertising agencies in Bombay, representatives described a clearly defined creative strategy to 'Indianize' representations of newly available commodities. As the Vice-President of one company describing initial marketing miscalculations of multinational companies put it,

They [multinationals] presumed that if you said Nike it meant something. Levi's means nothing to the middle class. You've got to build value for them. After you've done your number crunching and understood how many people have the money to buy you can't just say 'Look folks I'm here'. That's the first mistake they've all made. Now if you follow advertising you'll find they've Indianized themselves. . . . The classic example is between Coke and Pepsi. Coke came in and said 'We are here'. Pepsi just took Sachin Tendulkar [India's leading cricket player] and said 'We've always been here. And that's without saying it. We understand you.' It's fairly clear who is winning in the market.<sup>5</sup>

This strategy of nationalizing foreign products has become increasingly dominant within the advertising industry. On one level, transparent examples range from advertising strategies that use well-known nationalist songs, popular commercial film actors and the sponsorship of cultural and sporting events that evoke strong national support. At another level, specific campaigns invoke nationalist narratives through more subtle signs.<sup>6</sup> Such narratives borrow from older, historically specific meanings that present a fusion between national tradition and global capitalism.

Consider a series of advertisements for air-conditioning units produced by Carrier Aircon Ltd. The advertisement covers a two-page spread which represents a 'before and after' sequence. In one such advertisement, the first page depicts an old sadhu lying on a bed of nails. The shot is photographed outdoors; the bed of nails is placed on the ground next to a wall with faded paint and torn posters of a Hindi film. The second page depicts the sadhu lying on a bed covered with a thick printed quilt in a bedroom. The discolored wall of the first image has been replaced by a lemon colored wall of a bedroom, a lamp, a plant and a few well-polished pieces of wooden furniture framing the bed. The sunlight which beats down on the sadhu in the first picture is now filtered through the sloping windows of the bedroom.

The image presents us with a striking representation of the interminable contrast between the modern and the traditional which has permeated

ideologies of development. By depicting a sadhu, the advertisement invokes well-established Orientalist images which associate India with holy men, exotic religious practices and poverty. This image, simultaneously representing backwardness and poverty, can, however, be rescued by the luxury consumer item, in this case the air-conditioning unit. Moreover, this transformation of the outer material conditions can take place without displacing the inner spiritual essence of India which the sadhu represents. In both photographs the sadhu is depicted in exactly the same position, reclining with his eyes shut. The image provides a visual embodiment of the ways in which the emergence of Indian national identity rested on the preservation of a protected inner sphere of tradition that could confront and ultimately accept Western standards of progress and development (Chatterji, 1990). The core of Indian tradition, the image suggests, can be retained even as the material context of that tradition is modernized and improved. Meanwhile a small caption in fine print below the photos reminds us 'Carrier air conditioning can also be experienced in outer space, keeping astronauts comfortably protected in space flights.' This form of consumer technology holds the further promise of continued progress and development beyond the stationary position of the sadhu. Thus, the image suggests that technological progress and material wealth will not disrupt the stability of a Hindu-Indian national identity.<sup>7</sup>

This example is not an exceptional case but an instance of strategies in business management theory and practices which consciously attempt to align marketing strategies with specific national and local cultural conditions. Multinational companies consistently attempt to associate their products with signifiers of the Indian nation, for instance through sponsorship of the Indian Olympic team in the 1996 Olympics or through more subtle references to specifically Indian conditions such as the monsoon season. Businesses have also increasingly attempted to consciously address social criticisms of the negative cultural effects of multinational products. For instance, MTV in India hired a marketing research group in Bombay to assess the impact of MTV on youth groups and determined that there were no negative consequences for youth attitudes to 'Indian and family' norms (Vasavi, 1996: 25).<sup>8</sup> Marketing strategies which now commonly involve the sponsorship of cultural events and the deployment of culturally specific symbols are constitutive of systemic shifts in business practices.

Such strategies demonstrate that the production of meanings of the global occurs through the idiom of the nation. Moreover, this depiction of the local and the national does not attempt to mask or disguise the transnational organization of production relations. Rather the effect is one which produces a fetishization of hybridity – the ability of multinational capital to combine the national and the global within a singular narrative of commodity fetishism. As one advertisement for a refrigerator puts it,

'Every inch of the BPL Frost-free speaks of international technology. With an Indian accent.' Meanwhile, the illustration presents a photograph of a woman – half-Japanese, half-Indian in her appearance, clothing and make up. Her hair and make up are done in traditional Japanese style yet she wears a dot on her forehead and is dressed in a sari. The gendered form of this image appears to attempt to transform her hybridity into a non-threatening and alluring form. This nationalization of the commodity deliberately retains a mark of foreign-ness as a sign that the new Indian nation has moved away from the older ideologies of state protection that largely kept foreign capital and commodities outside its borders.

The hybridized conjuncture between the global and the national also characterizes representations of Indian capital. However, while transnational capital represents itself as acceptable and integral to the boundaries of the Indian nation, Indian companies underline their capacity to effectively confront the global. One prominent Indian corporation, for instance, presented its 60-year history in a 25-page advertisement in a major news magazine. The series begins with references to its beginnings as a cotton textiles company in the 1930s, images of cotton spools which are transformed into images of jeans while the caption alludes to a potential 33-million-dollar market for clothes within India. The advertisement goes on to note 'And a fair chunk of that will come out of the pockets of middle and lower middle income groups.' The series of images explicitly provides references to the Indian middle classes vividly captured in one series of photographs of a large group of men and women standing outdoors. The caption begins, 'There's More Wealth on This Page Than the Country's Top Corporates Put Together'. The text then goes on to read, '200 million cash rich consumers make India's middle class. Their annual spending power rivals that of many western countries. They save and invest more than the people of any other nation.' The series of images then moves to photographs which merge the cities of New York, London and Paris with the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower in the forefront of each. The image, with the caption 'You're Looking at the View From Our Ahmedabad Office', refers to the corporate group's overseas global activities. This extensive series of images captures the implications of a distinctive repertoire of advertising images which cast commodities produced by Indian companies into the process of globalization while asserting that it is the very Indianness of the commodity or the company which allows it to confront the global (a sign coded by the major metropolitan cities in the West).

In the series of images I have described above, the corporate group makes explicit linkages between its products, the middle classes which signify the wealth of the Indian nation and the global. In the case of transnational capital images analyzed, the global must be incorporated

within the national, an accent that serves to improve on what is still firmly Indian. However, in this case Indian capital provides the means of access to and success over the global, a process which once again is not in danger of displacing what is Indian. It is the purchasing power of Indian middle-class consumers that can compete with and outdo the Western consumer; it is an office firmly rooted in Ahmedabad which can provide a panoramic view of New York, London and Paris. If for transnational capital the hybridity of the national and global eases the anxieties of the reach of the global into India, visual representations of Indian capital center more on the effectiveness of India's reach outward. Images of various Indian companies make references to their ability to compete in the global market; as one advertisement puts it, 'We have given India what it had always deserved – recognition.' The relevance of this narrative is not limited to newly available foreign commodities but even includes images marketing products as varied as toothbrushes and gasoline.

Consider, for instance, one final image which serves as a reminder of an older model of the nation-state which continues to lurk behind or along with these configurations of the national and global. An advertisement for the Ambassador car depicts two policemen with guns standing high above a road where eight white Ambassador cars are parked. The police, clearly a symbol of the state, represent a particular mixture of layers of state power – military force, surveillance and security; the male officers inscribe the subtext of a masculine narrative which marks the boundaries of state power. The white Ambassadors represent the cars used by politicians and government officials.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, below the image the caption states 'Congratulating the enduring success of India's democracy'. At the corner of the advertisement is a separate caption which reads 'HM Ambassador It's Always There'. The image links the consumer commodity, the automobile, with the power and endurance of the Indian nation-state: endurance which is linked to the tradition of liberal democracy and the empty automobiles of the absent government officials and power which is always backed by the surveillance and force of the military. An interpretation of this image suggests that what we have is a clear vision of the hegemony of capitalist liberal democracy. The consent associated with the democratic tradition is always backed by the threat of coercion, here embodied in the figure of the armed police. Yet the underlying narrative of this nation-state is marked by the almost hidden sign of the commodity form. Hence, it is the neutral commodity form, the series of white Ambassadors, which can stand in for the tradition of Indian democracy. The policemen then survey the landscape not just in order to protect the enduring success of democracy but to protect the association of democracy with this sign of commodity protection. Thus, the linkages between commodity, nation and state are once again preserved.



In my reading of this array of advertisements as visual cultural texts, I have argued that the meanings which circulate through such depictions of various commodities mediate narratives of 'the national' and 'the global'. In the process, this contest begins to transform the image of the Indian nation form. The aesthetic of the commodity does not merely serve as a passive reflector of wider social and cultural processes but instead becomes a central site in which the Indian nation is re-imagined. The result is that the language of the nation in this process begins to borrow its aesthetic expression from the world of the commodity (Haug, 1986). A striking visual example of this process can be found in a series of *Times of India* advertisements which present the success of the *Times of India* by measuring its genealogy against specific manifestations of transnational capital. One such advertisement depicts an elderly middle-class man standing outdoors reading the *Times of India*. In the backdrop are shops with large signs for Pepsi. The caption at the top of the image reads: 'Pepsi, born 1896. *Times of India*, born 1838'. Another similar ad presents a young, upper-class man seated near his car underneath a sign for Shell engine oils. The caption above reads 'Shell, born 1897. The *Times of India*, born 1838'. In both cases, the caption below the images reads 'The *Times of India*: One of the World's Big Ideas'. These visual representations demonstrate that an icon of the Indian nation-state, one of the oldest English language newspapers in the country begins to represent its own history in relation to the history of particular symbols of transnational capital. The nation is thus imagined not just through the conventional sites and symbols of nationalism such as war memorials or independence day celebrations (Anderson, 1983) but through the aesthetic of the commodity form.

The nation form in India has been undergoing a transformation as it is aestheticized through newly available commodities. In this process, the desire for the nation, like the desire for the commodity, becomes linked to the aesthetic promise of use-value (Haug, 1986: 17). The markers of the progress of the Indian nation no longer rest on the mass-based factories of the Nehruvian vision or the physical labor of grassroots self-reliance that marked Gandhi's conception of village development. There is a significant shift in the ways in which the material progress of the Indian nation must now be measured. Such progress can now no longer be limited to the desire for the physical quantity of production but must confront the quality of the commodities. Hence, it is an aestheticized vision of the Indian nation-state rather than a transnational cultural identity which attempts to manage India's integration into the global economy. This redefinition of the Indian nation centers around the role of the middle classes and, as I will demonstrate, the articulation of a new cultural standard associated with a hegemonic urban middle-class lifestyle.

### Hybridity, the middle classes and the urban public sphere

The invention of a hybridized form of globality, one produced through the nationalist imagination in liberalizing India, has been centrally linked to the production of public images of the urban middle classes. Consider the following vision of the 'new rich' (Robison and Goodman, 1996) in India, the apparent beneficiaries of economic reform:

Middle Class . . . but millionaires . . . they usually talk of buying farm houses, retiring from jobs and spending the rest of their days with beer mugs in their hands. You look at them and see men who are just a few years on the either side of 30 and dismiss them as brash young men with extravagant pipe dreams. Until you realise they aren't kidding. Meet the new millionaires. Middle class millionaires. (Rai, 1997: 50)

This introduction to an article on middle-class professionals who have been transformed into millionaires because of company stock option schemes captures the creation of a dream which the urban middle classes must aspire to in globalizing India. The image is reproduced in a wide array of public cultural forms such as advertisements, publications in the print media (including new publications such as glossy supplements to mainstream newspapers and consumer oriented magazines) and television programming. The urban middle classes are, in effect, the central agents in this revisioning of the Indian nation. Images of mobility associated with automobiles and cellular phones serve to create a standard of progress to which the urban middle classes can and should aspire. For instance, the publishers of *India Today*, one of the leading English news magazines in India launched a new publication, *India Today Plus* which mirrors this distinctive era of consumption. The magazine (printed on thick glossy paper – an aesthetic quality which distinguishes it from other popular and news magazines) has already presented a 'buyers guide' to home gyms, cellular phones and cars. The edition is clearly targeted at an upper-class, English speaking audience (the quarterly magazine costs Rs75.00 – a regular magazine would cost no more than Rs15) and appears engaged in the production of the boundaries of the cultural standard for a globalized elite. The distinction of this standard is underlined by stories and satirical commentary on the proliferation of cell phones in Bombay as the mark of urban elite culture, citing incidents of phones ringing in movie theaters and grocery stores, upper-class teenagers carrying cellphones and status competition over models of cellphones (Chandra and Agarwal, 1996).<sup>10</sup> As one representative of the creative department of an advertising agency put it,

We have two distinct groups. One is the yuppie, and the other is the puppie, the panjabi urban professional, basically the second-generation businessman-trader. The businessman-trader whose businesses are booming. If you look across [the street] over here you see all these camera shops. The guy who sold me this lens

he's not got a very large shop. He'll be making 50 times what I make. This is bought in cash. It's smuggled into the country. There's no paper tracing this. It's a cash payment. He's got more money than I can ever dream of having. This is his father's business. His father they are *goris* [caste group], they are traditional people, he is young, he's hep, coming back to the point exposure to television, exposure to Western lifestyle. Where does he get his aspirations from? These people lack, let me use the word 'class' [*sic*]. The people who set the trends the people who set the values are the educated middle class. They give a brand respectability. They make a brand a thing to be seen with.<sup>11</sup>

This delineation of linkages between middle-class respectability and commodity consumption was echoed in interviews I conducted with journalists and advertisers in the print media. Consider the success of a new English language consumer magazine, whose readership increased from approximately 29,000 to over 93,000 readers in 1998–9, its first year of publication, despite the effects of a national economic recession. The magazine, which provides advice to middle-class individuals investing in new commodities as well as in newly available financial products, marks the new standard of the liberalizing middle class. As one writer for the magazine argued, 'we are dream merchants basically . . . we are writing to a middle class that cannot easily afford these things but who'd like to.'<sup>12</sup>

The transformation of the public world of the urban middle classes also extends into the realm of television media.<sup>13</sup> The availability of satellite television which has provided an alternative to state programming on the Doordarshan channel has led to the proliferation of both American television shows as well as the production of Indian versions of American shows such as game shows, talk shows and music videos. New talk shows, for instance, specifically target a middle-class audience and address a range of issues such as the cultural effects of consumerism, changing youth attitudes, problems of small investors and changing gender roles. As with the case of visual images in the print media, these new forums are not merely imitations of Western shows. For instance, programs targeted specifically at the middle class are often characterized by a hybridized language which combines Hindi and English.<sup>14</sup> This mixture, termed 'Hinglish' by the popular media, combines Hindi and English in different television shows. The use of English words by non-English speakers is in itself, of course, not a new phenomenon since it stems from the colonial legacies of the Indian nation-state. However, the scope of this particular form of hybridity in the formation of 'Hinglish' is much wider than the use of a few words, a distinction that transforms it from a cross-class to a specifically middle-class phenomenon. On one level, such linguistic practices involve the use of English words within sentences spoken in Hindi. Meanwhile, on another level, entire programs often shift back and forth between English and Hindi (a talk show host may begin by speaking in English and then switch to Hindi or vice versa).

Hybridity in this context does not transcend but is intricately connected to processes of capital formation within the boundaries of the modern nation-state. The presumed subversive potential of hybridity and diaspora rests on an identification between a cultural form of hybridity and the crossing of territorial national boundaries (Bhabha, 1994). Such an identification does not interrogate the ideological and material conditions that constitute the production of conceptions of hybridity. In such conceptions while the nation-state is conceptualized as an ideological form rather than an empirical sociological fact, hybridity is often constructed as a given social location which transcends the material conditions and territorial boundaries of the nation-state. On the contrary, hybridity in contemporary urban India is inextricably linked to the class-based cosmopolitanism of the urban middle classes.

### **Reterritorializing the nation: gender, sexuality and the national body politic**

The media images of the urban middle classes analyzed above outline the contours of a new bourgeois public sphere, for it is the urban middle classes which are delineated as the consumers not just of the newly available commodities in liberalizing India but also of the new India produced through the meanings attached to these commodities. Central to this vision is the reproduction of gendered narratives which can manage the disruptions which lie beneath the sanitized images of the comfort and satisfaction of the middle classes. Such images constitute part of the technologies of visions which begin to define the aesthetic and cultural standards of what count as ideal individual, family and community sociocultural practices in liberalizing India. The mediation between the national and the global unfolds through the reworking and reproduction of particular meanings and identities of gender. If cellular phones and pagers denote status symbols they are also cast as the tools to keep families together, or as the text of one ad reads, 'If you were told that a pager ties you down, well, it does bind your family together.' A central category of images which dominate the print media attempts to associate domestic commodities such as automobiles and refrigerators with gendered images of the middle class. In particular, such images often invoke ideologies of domesticity and family order. For instance a series of automobile advertisements 'Man, Woman and Child and Car' reproduce a sense of stability that may quell the anxieties of forms of cultural, social and economic disorder associated with economic liberalization. Such images implicitly invoke older messages of state family planning rhetoric which have promoted smaller, nuclear families. In particular, the image invokes associations with a central state advertising campaign that depicted the ideal modern Indian

family with a father, mother and daughter through a sparse sketch of the heads of the three family members, a visual image that has been a national symbol of the family planning program in the post-independence period. However, the austere warnings about the ills of large families which characterized earlier state-sponsored advertisements now give way to an association between an idealized tranquility of the nuclear family with status and material comfort. Meanwhile, the four members of the state-sponsored family model (man, woman, son and daughter) have been replaced by man, woman, child and car. In this vision of the modern Indian family, the commodity once again while seeming to displace the nation in fact reworks and underlines older ideological narratives which have been deployed by the nation-state.

The gendered imagination of a national future in India unfolds through a set of contradictory politics. The media have been characterized by images of 'the new Indian woman', one who 'must attend her national identity as well as her modernity; she is Indian as well as new' (Rajan, 1993: 132). 'The New Indian Woman', as the publicity release for a contemporary women's magazine puts it, is 'the tough as nails career woman who finds it easy to indulge in the occasional superstition. Her outlook is global, but her values would make her grandma proud.' As the publisher of this women's magazine argued,

... our values remain, they don't leave a certain framework which is still the Indian value system. . . . I think we respect that and we function and address women within that framework. Of course she's urban, she's contemporary, she travels . . . but that framework still exists.<sup>15</sup>

Images of the 'new Indian woman' attempt to negotiate the contradictions inherent in the politics of globalization. Gender, in this context, serves as the socio-symbolic site which attempts to manage the destabilizing contradictions which globalization produces in the Indian nation. The inter-meshing of nationalist narratives with images of global economic and cultural flows rest in uneasy tension with global configurations of power. Nationalized constructions of foreign commodities rest alongside an intensified economic dependence on foreign capital investment in India. Such systemic hierarchies, which potentially unsettle the boundaries of the nation, then serve to transform the cultural politics of globalization into the potential threat of Westernization. The lure of hybridity in this context holds within it the dangers of impurity. The potential disruption is managed through a remapping of the nation's boundaries through a politics of gender which centers around conflicts over the preservation of the purity of women (Fernandes, 1997b; McClintock, 1995). Such a process points to the limitations of a geographic conception of globalization which identifies processes of deterritorialization with the movement of people and commodities across the territorial units of nation-states and contrasts it with an

approach which conceptualizes globalization in terms of the 'changing forms of the spatial organization of social relations' (Massey, 1994: 168). Contemporary globalization, in effect, allows for the reterritorialization of the nation through forms of socio-spatial reorganization which occur within the nation-state rather than merely at its official territorial borders and reproduce internal social inequalities such as gender, class and ethnicity (Fernandes, 1997a).

Consider the events following the 1996 national elections in India when the Bharatiya Janata Party one of the central opposition parties and proponents of a form of economic nationalism (*swadeshi*) was asked to form a government.<sup>16</sup> During this initial tenure in government, the party whose anti-consumerism election slogan on the new economic policies had been 'computer chips not potato chips', appointed a finance minister well known for his pro-liberalization policies in a critical move signaling that the BJP would not reverse the existing direction of economic reforms initiated by the previous Congress party government.<sup>17</sup> However, during the BJP's rule, the central force of the government's anti-reform rhetoric was concentrated on the cultural sphere, particularly in relation to the sites of television and advertising. The focus on 'obscenity' and calls for increased censorship of film and media images have constituted a significant component of the BJP's political rhetoric and activities. During the BJP's early stint in power in 1996, for instance, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Sushma Swaraj, launched a series of attacks on supposed sexualized representations in the media. These ranged from advertisements for contraception, which she directed were not to be aired during times when young children might view television, to a television advertisement which depicted a woman with a billowing skirt (modeled on the well-known Marilyn Monroe scene), to Swaraj's reported comments that Doordarshan (state television) announcers needed to refrain from wearing revealing clothes during newscasts. These incidents are exemplary of how the BJP has displaced such resistance to the new economic policies of liberalization from the realm of concrete economic policy to a confrontation with a gendered cultural politics of globalization (Fernandes, 2000). Nationalist resistance in the form of the BJP's *swadeshi* platform was concentrated on the supposed contamination of the purity of 'Indian culture', embodied in this context by the potential threat to the purity of women's sexuality.

Such events are not merely deviant occurrences of conservative political parties but represent instances of a wider set of processes associated with the politics of globalization in India. Widespread protests over the 'Miss World' contest held in Bangalore were framed through a set of gendered nationalist discourses. Organizations from a wide ideological spectrum ranging from women's wings of the Communist Party of India to the Bharatiya Janata Party protested against the pageant on the grounds that it

represented a threat to the Indian nation; while the BJP depicted this threat as an assault on Indian national culture and womanhood, organizations from the ideological left argued that the contest encouraged the entry of foreign capital into the country (Oza, 1998). The threat to the purity of women's sexuality represents a central trope which places ideologically disparate instances of cultural critique of globalization within a shared discursive space. Such a politics of purity thus emerges as a means for the management of the disruptions which arise from a hybridized construction of the national and the global as India continues its accelerated integration into the global capitalist-cultural economy.

## Conclusion

I have argued that the social and cultural disruptions stemming from India's new economic policies of liberalization are being negotiated through the delineation of a new relationship between the national and the global. Media representations depict India's shifting relationship with the world economy through images of a productive hybrid relation between the national and the global. Meanwhile, tensions stemming from the possibility that globalizing forces may overwhelm the Indian nation are displaced on to the terrain of a gendered politics. Visions of globalization are produced through the nationalist imagination in a process which calls into question the presumed withering away of the nation-state according to the post-national thesis of globalization.

## Notes

I am grateful to Benedict Anderson, Caridad Souza and Arvind Rajagopal for comments on an earlier version of this article. Thanks go to Lloyd Rudolph for pointing me to an analysis of Rajiv Gandhi's policies. The framing of the argument benefited from Bob Goldman's comments at the Association for Asian Studies, 1998. I am grateful to Rupal Oza and Susanne Rudolph for much support. Fieldwork for this article was conducted with the support of an American Institute for Indian Studies Senior Research Fellowship, 1995–6 and by an American Council of Learned Societies/Social Science Research Council award, 1998–9.

1. A focus on the media is particularly salient as the post-national thesis of globalization in the postcolonial context has focused in large part on the role of imagination through sites such as the media and 'travelling' cultural forms (Appadurai, 1996). I thus focus on media images rather than on more self-evident sites of nationalist narratives in India – for instance, in the context of the nuclear blasts or anti-Pakistan sentiment in the context of the Karghil conflict in Kashmir. For a critique of liberal and marxist versions of the post-national thesis of globalization see Smith (1995).

2. I am concerned with new hegemonic representations of the liberalizing Indian nation. This does not preclude resistance to such representations. An analysis of actual responses to such hegemonic images is beyond the limitations of space in this article and is addressed in my forthcoming book (Fernandes, forthcoming).

3. Interview with author, 17 September 1998.

4. Such processes are also significant in the case of the television industry. In state-owned television (Doordarshan) in 1992 four of the top five advertisers were multinational corporations (accounting for 21 percent of total advertising revenue). However, the expenditure share of the advertising industry is still highest in the print media (67 percent for print media and 20 percent for television in 1992). See Bhatt (1994).

5. Interview with author, 2 September 1998.

6. In the decade since Rajiv Gandhi's early policies of liberalization, the number of television sets had grown from 3.63 million in 1984 to 27.8 million at the end of 1990. See Dubey (1992).

7. For a discussion of the relationship between the media and the Hindutva movement see Rajagopal (in press).

8. Such concerns are also reflected in a study sponsored by the Indian advertising industry in order to assess (and disprove) the potential negative effects of advertising. See National Council of Applied Economic Research, Indian Society of Advertisers (1992).

9. Note also that the Ambassador is a symbol of early protectionist economic policies as it was historically the main domestically produced automobile. Rajiv Gandhi's early liberalization policies enabled the production of a new multinational production of the Maruti automobile. The Maruti continues to serve as a cultural signifier of urban upper-middle-class consumer culture.

10. It has been estimated that by March 1996 Delhi would have 75–100,000 cellphone subscribers while Bombay would have 130,000 subscribers. See Chandra and Agarwal (1996).

11. Interview with author, 3 September 1998.

12. Interview with author, 6 October 1998.

13. India is estimated to have 21 million cable TV connections, a figure which does not take into account community-owned televisions, which are common in working-class and rural areas.

14. Note also that Indian channels have been more successful than satellite channels that air mainly English language programs. The music channel 'V' which airs mainly Hindi songs has been more successful than MTV leading MTV to Indianize (Agarwal, 1996). Star TV has also shifted from primarily English programs to popular Hindi films.

15. Interview with author, 17 September 1998.

16. The election results failed to produce a clear parliamentary victory for the leading national political parties and the President asked the Bharatiya Janata Party, now the single largest party in parliament, to form a government and test its majority in parliament within two weeks. The BJP-led government failed to gain enough allies to prove a majority and the government only lasted 12 days. However, the subsequent national elections returned the BJP to power in 1998–9 as the leading party of a new coalition government.

17. This also characterized the 1998–9 and the current BJP-led government. The government shifted away from a policy of *swadeshi* and made assurances that foreign investors would not be affected. Note also that the Hindutva movement in general and the BJP party are not a homogeneous unit and comprise both pro- and anti-economic reform wings.



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