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NEOLIBERALISM AND THE INDIAN VERNACULAR PRESS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSES AMONG KANNADA JOURNALISTS

Santhosh Chandrashekar

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**NEOLIBERALISM AND THE INDIAN VERNACULAR PRESS:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF NEOLIBERAL
DISCOURSES AMONG KANNADA JOURNALISTS**

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Communication**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all my friends and journalists who, at great peril to their life and limb and resisting temptations to join the neoliberal economy, continue to practice good old journalism and stand up for social justice.

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Many people have helped me complete this thesis and the names that follow are, at best, only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. First, I thank my mother, R. Rangamma, for affording me a life that she could never live. Her sacrifices—emotional as well as material—have helped me accomplish this thesis. She continues to be central to my life with her unconditional love ever nourishing my existence. Thank you, amma, for everything. My father, S. Chandrashekar, has been a great source of support and thanks are due to him. Thanks are also due to my brother, Prashanth, who has done more good to me than he can possibly imagine.

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ABSTRACT

The discourses of neoliberalism among journalists working for two Kannada newspapers were examined using critical discourse analysis. Seventeen journalists were interviewed with regard to their experiences pertaining to the changing role of Kannada newspapers, news values, and working conditions of journalists after 1991 when India liberalized its economy. The journalists' responses were analyzed for themes to illuminate their understandings of the impact of economic liberalization on Kannada newspapers. The analysis of the responses demonstrated that while journalists from both the newspapers were acutely aware of the changes caused by neoliberal economic restructuring, they normalized such changes. Very rarely did they articulate oppositional discourses that challenged neoliberalism.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The turn to market-oriented economics since the 1970s—first in developed countries and then in the rest of the world—has had profound effects on the socio-political life of people (Harvey, 2007; Kim, 2004). These trends, termed neoliberalism, reference a broad array of changes, including expansion of markets and flow of capital across geographical boundaries, loosening of welfare reforms and labor rigidities, widening of income disparities, and the service sector emerging as the central component of contemporary economies.

India's tryst with neoliberalism began when the country witnessed a balance-of-payment crisis in 1991. The cost of financing external debt, soaring oil prices due to the Gulf War, and falling remittances from the Middle East forced the authorities to approach the International Monetary Fund twice in July 1991 for stand-by arrangements and to devalue the rupee (Wilson & Keim, 2006, p. 30). July 1991 marked a watershed moment in the history of India as the country officially renounced its socialist isolation and started a spree of market-friendly reforms (Upadhyaya, 2000, p. 106). India became integrated into the global economic order by removing restrictions on capital inflows and regulations on domestic industries, liberalization of interest rates, and making the exchange rate more flexible (Pentecost & Moore, 2006, pp. 488-489). As a result, trade as a percentage of the GDP doubled since 1991. One of the foci of liberalization as it unfolded in India was increasing private ownership and competition (Arun & Turner, 2002, p. 438). The stage for the entry of transnational corporations was set in the mid-

1980s with the government dismantling the industrial licensing practices (Patibandla, 2002, p. 95).

The influx of foreign capital brought with it new players and new tensions. Jenkins (2003) observed how international players such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund faced problems in removing resistance to market-oriented reforms. Although markets were being embedded at the institutional level, they encountered resistance at the level of ideology. Jenkins (2003) observed:

It is therefore not surprising that the neo-liberal market as a political idea had still failed to acquire legitimacy within the ideological environment of 1990s India. Through a decade of reforms, neo-liberalism's reluctant vanguard had relied on institutional loopholes, faux-populist gimmicks and a good deal of 'political skill.' They had not found an idiom through which to 'normalize', through political discourse, the market orientation of policy. (p. 594)

In this context, the media were to provide one of the means to normalize the market orientation of policy. The media had to reform themselves institutionally as well as ideologically. Institutionally, they became part of the neoliberal process by cultivating a corporate organizational structure that would support their business orientation. Ideologically, they participated in normalizing markets by producing messages that devalued alternatives to neoliberalism and emphasized the latter's indispensability. These objectives of the media also coincided with the imperative of creating consumers who could be packaged for advertisers. This, however, does not mean that the Indian media were free of conflicts of interest before the country transitioned to the neoliberal model.

The media in post-Independence India have had a pro-establishment history as they mostly operated within a capitalist structure and were owned by families with other business interests (Jeffrey, 2000). But their tryst with neoliberalism not only entangled media institutions with new relations of power and dominance but also made them a prominent player in the expansion of the neoliberal order.

The transition to neoliberal economic policies around the world altered the structure of media organizations, had profound influence on newsroom and editorial policies, and heightened the tension between profit and ethics. For scholars investigating this trend, the fundamental contradiction between ethics and profits has undermined the critical role of media in democracies (Bagdikian, 2004; Breshnan, 2003; Jim, 2007; Kellner, 2004; McChesney, 2000; McManus, 1994). Generally, research on the neoliberal restructuring of media organizations has overlooked how media workers such as journalists participate in the production and reproduction of neoliberal ideas.

This study examines the impact of neoliberal restructuring of India's economy on the organizational structure, editorial values, and professional practices of journalists employed by two vernacular¹ newspapers in India: *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka*. Both newspapers are published in Kannada, a prominent Indian language spoken by over 40 million people in the southern state of Karnataka in India. It is also Karnataka's official state language. *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka* are mainstream newspapers

¹ I use the term "vernacular press" to refer to Indian language newspapers. Although the term is ideologically laden and is a colonial construction that "others" Indian languages, I prefer vernacular press as it emphasizes the language component vis-à-vis terms such as "regional press," which may also include English language newspapers with a limited circulation within a certain geographical boundary.

recognized state-wide. *Prajavani*—the newspaper of record in Karnataka—tends to be associated with the southern part of the state while *Samyukta Karnataka* mainly caters to the people of north Karnataka. Both newspapers have editions published from major cities in Karnataka.

Prajavani and *Samyukta Karnataka* witnessed many changes after India transitioned to the market economy. From starting new editions and color editions and launching additional supplements to overhauling the editorial section, the two newspapers introduced several changes over the past decade to keep pace with the market trends and to attract more readers to increase their advertising revenue. This study explores how journalists working for these two newspapers understand the impact of neoliberalism on the professional practices, editorial values, and organizational structure of Kannada newspapers. It also investigates how journalists discursively articulate neoliberalism. Specifically, this study poses the following questions:

- 1) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on their working conditions?
- 2) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the news values of Kannada journalism?
- 3) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the role of newspapers in society?
- 4) How do these understandings reproduce or challenge the ideology of neoliberalism?

This study makes several contributions to the field of media studies. Although numerous studies have looked into the changing roles and responsibilities of the media in the era of market-driven news production, rarely do they address the issue of how journalists—the nucleus of any media organization—produce or reproduce neoliberal ideas. While it is largely true that a switch to neoliberal policies means that the proprietor of a media organization has steadily accumulated more decision-making powers at the expense of the editorial staff and tends to stray into the editorial domain, often deliberately, it is also beyond contention that journalists continue to be indispensable actors in media organizations who retain considerable clout in deciding the news product that ultimately emerges out of their organizations. In this sense, it is important to understand how journalists are socialized into accepting the changing priorities of their employers and how they internalize (or resist) dominant ideologies in their discursive practices.

Another contribution of this study is the focus on the Indian vernacular print media—a neglected entity compared to its well-researched English counterpart. Scholars continue to ignore the Indian vernacular print media, which have grown tremendously in the past three decades owing to gains made in literacy. This growth has also been nurtured by technological innovation and other advancements that have facilitated media expansion. Yet, attention is rarely paid to the vernacular press; rather scholars tend to generalize the findings derived from research on the English press. The Indian vernacular print media has a milieu of its own, which is often dissimilar from that of the English print media. This study intends to disrupt the privileges accorded by researchers to the

English media by exploring the particular dynamics of the vernacular print media. I hope that this study will inspire more researchers to investigate the dynamics of the vernacular print media and throw light on the developments that it has witnessed in the past decade.

Chapter two will examine neoliberalism as ideology and discourse in the context of economic restructuring. It begins with a discussion of hegemony and ideology as central theoretical concepts before delving into the theories about the role of the media as an ideological apparatus and how media workers articulate dominant ideologies, specifically neoliberalism. This study is also informed by media sociology as a framework that allows for the examination of how media workers are socialized into dominant ideologies. The discussion of the historical development of the Indian media will also be presented in this chapter. Chapter three will present the methodological procedures that will guide the collection and interpretation of research data. Chapter four presents the analysis of the interview texts. Chapter five will conclude this study by discussing the important findings.

Summary

The media are not only vehicles for dominant ideologies but are shaped by the same ideologies they help disseminate. Understanding this interconnection provides critical insights into the role of the media in modern societies. Neoliberalism had profound effects on the professional values and working conditions of Indian journalists. This study explores the impact of a dominant ideology on various facets of the Kannada print media by centering the experiences of journalists.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The proliferation of neoliberalism as a reigning economic orthodoxy across the world raises important questions about how its acceptance was achieved among not just states and other elite actors but the masses whose interests are not necessarily best served by neoliberalism (Hall, 1988). It also calls for an examination of the role of the media in constructing neoliberalism as an uncontested economic reality and worldview in our times. Journalists have been central to this process, and it is important to illuminate their role as ideological actors to understand the ascendancy of neoliberalism.

I draw on ideology and Gramsci's pivotal concept—hegemony—to understand the processes through which neoliberalism is instituted as the dominant ideology. This chapter begins with a discussion of ideology, hegemony, and discourse before turning to explore the status of the media in modern societies and their role as vehicles of dominant ideologies. Since the central premise of my study is that hegemony is cultivated discursively, I centralize the media as a primary discursive space where struggles over hegemony are waged in modern societies. The second section discusses literature on the effects of market-driven journalism and maps the processes through which journalists are socialized within dominant ideologies as a necessary step toward understanding their role with regard to the media's complicity in normalizing dominant ideologies. The third section discusses neoliberalism—particularly its discursive constructions—to outline the various strategies used to normalize neoliberalism. Explored in this section are also neoliberal discursive strategies and how their deployment rearranges the ideological terrain. The last section is a historical account of the development of the Indian media,

which is vital to understand the changes occurring in the media after the liberalization of the Indian economy.

Hegemony and Discourse

Any discussion of hegemony should rightfully have as its starting point ideology and the social actors involved in its production. As Terry Eagleton (1994) has cautioned us, it is important to ponder the distinction between the two concepts before one begins to map the field of ideology, as the two terms are often used interchangeably. Hegemony, he noted, is the process through which the governing power secures adherence to its rule through a calculated use of consent and coercion (pp. 195-96). Hegemony, according to him, can be discriminated into its ideological, cultural, economic, social, and political components with ideology specifically referring to how power struggles are fought at the level of signification (p. 196). Ideology, then, is merely one of the components of hegemony. In addition, Eagleton noted that ideology can be imposed forcefully.

Scholars working within (and outside) the Marxist paradigm have tried to understand the role of ideology in securing the hegemony of the ruling class. Thompson (1990) traced four stages in the evolution of the study of ideology that ascribe varying degrees of importance to it in sustaining relations of power. The term ideology was coined by Destutt de Tracy, who conceived it as a scientific study of ideas (Thompson, 1990, p. 29). Ideology was a project to defend the ideals of the Enlightenment against the growing social and political upheavals of its time. However, it was under Marx that the concept gained a critical edge. Marx deployed different conceptions of ideology at different times. The polemical conception, his earliest one, looked at ideology as largely a

negative force as it criticized ideology as a theoretical doctrine which overestimated the importance of ideas by ignoring the real conditions of social-historical life. Marx later revised this view and proposed the epiphenomenal conception of ideology wherein he defined ideology as a “system of ideas which expresses the interests of the dominant class but which represents class relations in an illusory form” (Thompson, 1990, p. 37). This conception of Marx, Thompson has observed, regarded ideology as a derivative of the economic conditions and the class relations of power. However, although ideologies serve the dominant interests, they portray class relations in an illusory form that upholds the interests of the dominant group. Marx’s third conception of ideology—latent—portrays ideology as sustaining existing relations of domination by orienting individuals toward the past rather than the future, “or towards images and ideals which conceal class relations and detract from the collective pursuit of social change” (p. 41). Under this conception of ideology, images and ideals have considerable autonomy from the economic base and they materialize in symbols and values which serve as a fetter on people’s ambition to effect social change. Against these three definitions of ideology, the sociology of knowledge paradigm, a quasi-Marxist intervention in the study of ideology, rids ideology of its negative essence by neutralizing the concept in various ways, mainly owing to increasing criticism against the epiphenomenal conception of ideology. Thompson observed that under the sociology of knowledge paradigm, all ideologies are articulations of highly specific social positions, and this shortcoming can be overcome only through a “total” conception of ideology which accounts for all strands of social thoughts.

Against the latter sociological conception, Thompson (1990) has proposed a return to the critical conceptions of ideology as reflected in the polemical, epiphenomenal, and latent conceptions of ideology posited at different times by Marx. Critical conceptions of ideology, according to him, retain the essence of ideology as largely a negative force but differ on the criteria upon which they imply a negative character. Thompson coined these bases as the criteria of negativity (p. 54). He has advocated that the critical conception of ideology should analyze ideology by “studying the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (p. 56). The emphasis under such a conception of ideology is to privilege the study of symbolic forms as the medium to understand the working of ideology rather than a return to the relations of production as determining ideology.

Likewise, Žižek (1994) has proposed three axes of ideology around which all notions of ideology can be situated—ideology as a complex of ideas, ideology in its externality (the materiality of ideology as embodied in specific institutions), and the “spontaneous” ideology at work at the heart of social reality itself (p. 9). These axes are consonant with the three conceptions of ideology as outlined by Thompson. The three axes also indicate different stages in the evolutionary trajectory of ideology.

This study draws on the work of Thompson (1990) to define ideology as an articulation of the interests of dominant social formations. In this sense, ideology is an active configuration of material and non-material interests that works toward maximizing adherence and minimizing resistance to certain dominant ideas and institutes them as

common sense. In addition, it is posited that an ideology necessarily conveys a group interest, although its subjects are ultimately individuals.

The effects of ideology under capitalism are varied and diverse; it not only shifts attention from the sphere of production to that of exchange, but also imposes an imaginary unity on groups while displacing the actual unity. Hall (1977) has identified three general ideological effects under capitalism. The first effect is that of masking and displacing whereby the exploitative nature of the capitalist system is concealed or repressed. The second effect is that of fragmentation or separation which fractures the unity of the different spheres of the state and disperses them into the theory of the separation of powers. This fragmentation is also understood to happen at another level—that of the class—whereby the unity of groups are fragmented and the individual occupies the position of being the favored locus of action. The third effect of ideology, according to Hall, is that it imposes an imaginary unity on units by displacing the real unity. Along with these three crucial functions, Hall has posited another important function that ideology is called upon to perform, particularly in modern capitalist societies, that of securing legitimacy and winning consent for dominant representations (pp. 337-338).

Hegemony and Discourse

Securing legitimacy and winning consent reside at the heart of the concept of hegemony proposed by Gramsci (1971) in his seminal work, *Prison Notebooks*, which engages the question of how dominant groups secure the adherence of the masses toward ideas of interest. A key insight of Gramsci is that the consolidation of power by any social group should be preceded by hegemonic activity that transforms a contested terrain in

favor of the dominant group (p. 57). In other words, capitalism needs to perpetuate conditions of social reproduction necessary for its existence, and it is these conditions that the process of hegemony seeks to normalize.

According to Gramsci, the relationship between the state and the economy is mediated by a host of institutions which constitute the civil society. For him, hegemony exists when a historical bloc or coalition of ruling sectors is not only able to coerce other groups into identifying with its interests but also to exert a social authority and leadership over those groups and over the “social formation as a whole” (Hall, 1977, p. 332). Hence, hegemony is not just the power to dominate but to lead. According to Gramsci, hegemony is a combination of the use of force and consent. In capitalist societies, though, the balance shifts decisively toward the latter, which makes ideology indispensable to the task of achieving hegemony. Hegemonic activities, then, cannot be limited to the economic sphere or the sphere of production alone but are to be realized in the spheres of the superstructure, including the arena of the state and civil society.

The postulation of hegemony, as transacted in a terrain other than the economic domain, marks a radical break in Marxist theorizing of ideology as it refutes the “determination-by-the-base-in-the-last-instance” thesis and bestows considerable autonomy on the superstructure. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) have argued that hegemonic activities are not determined by the economic sphere as the latter fails to fulfill three conditions that would be necessary for it to play the role of constituting the subjects of hegemonic practices (p. 76). First, the laws governing the economic sphere should be strictly endogenous and exclude all indeterminacy resulting from the political and other

external interventions. Second, the homogeneity of social agents constituted at the economic level must result from the very laws that govern the economic sphere. In other words, any fragmentation of the social structure should be reducible to intervening economic factors. Third, the position of social agents in relations of production should endow them with historical interests so that the presence of such agents at other social levels must be ultimately explained on the basis of economic interests. Arguing for the impossibility of the economic sphere to meet these three conditions, the authors maintain that these conditions correspond to three unsustainable theses of Marxism: that the endogenous laws of the economy correspond to the neutrality of the productive forces; the condition of the unity of social agents at the economic level coincide with the homogenization and impoverishment of the working class; and the working class have a fundamental interest in working toward socialism (p. 78).

Hegemony is, then, constituted in a terrain other than the sphere of the economy. Two conditions have to be met for the hegemonic process to be set in motion: The presence of antagonistic forces trying to establish themselves as the dominant force and the instability of the frontiers that separate them (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 136). These two criteria need to be met as hegemony is tentative at best and has to be constantly reified against rival claims to represent reality. According to Laclau and Mouffe, Gramsci's conception of hegemony and ideology departs from the critical conception of ideology in favor of a positive (material) perspective. For Gramsci, political subjects are not classes but complex "collective wills," and hegemonic articulations may be independent of class locations (p. 67). Laclau and Mouffe use this reading of Gramsci to

rescue the issue of agency in radical-democratic politics “in an epoch where class essentialism has given way to the pluralist demands of the ‘new social movements’—feminism, anti-racism, lesbian and gay rights, ecology, peace, etc” (Barrett, 1994, p. 247).

Although this study acknowledges the central role that ideology plays in consolidating the hegemony of dominant social formations in contemporary societies, an enlarged role for the economy is sought to understand the calculated use of force and coercion in constituting hegemony. Williams (1979; cited in Stevenson, 2002, p. 17) has argued that any hegemonic formation comprises three cultural processes—traditions, institutions, and formations. While traditions could refer to ideas or the ideological component of hegemony, institutions are material social entities, such as the mass media, which serve as sites of cultural production and dissemination. However, these sites of cultural production are controlled by actors with access to various capitals, including economic resources. In this backdrop, it is argued that production of ideology is deeply influenced by entitlement or ownership of economic resources.

Gramsci’s conception of hegemony has analytical utility in explaining the spread of neoliberalism—first in the West and then elsewhere in the world—since 1960. This study is primarily concerned with the ideological component of neoliberal hegemony. Neoliberalism is generally associated with two important developments: the fragmentation of class-based political paradigms of the industrial era, which has had the effect of blurring the traditional boundaries between the Right and the Left (Mouffe, 2005, p. 66), and the increasing role of discourse as a constituting element of ideology

accompanied by the rise of mass communications as a principal terrain of hegemony formation (Laclau, 2007; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Thompson, 1990).

Neoliberalism has effectively displaced the centrality of the traditional terrain of class-based struggles and fixed positionalities and replaced it with discourse. Discourse here should be understood in light of the growing importance of language in contemporary societies. Therefore, it is not incidental that neoliberal economies are increasingly being positioned as knowledge economies, which means that knowledge is produced and assimilated in the form of discourses (Fairclough, 2001, p. 229).

Laclau (2007) has defined discourse as not just speech acts or texts but any complex of elements in which relationships play the constitutive role (p. 68). Discourse is conceived as being dynamic and discursive elements are continually being rearranged by social actors to be articulated to different discursive situations, with the relationship between the elements constituting the centrality of the process. Fairclough (2001) has defined discourse as “diverse representations of social life which are inherently positioned—differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent social life in different ways, as different discourses” (p. 235). Although this definition concedes that discourses are diverse representations and, thereby, dynamic in their constitution, it maintains that the social actors who articulate particular discourses have fixed or, at least, identifiable positionalities within the social terrain. This view links discourses to specific ideological functions as discourses vie to dominate a field constituted by other (rival) discourses.

An epistemological difference between the poststructuralist conception of discourse (as represented by Laclau) and a structuralist conception is that the former

rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices and makes ideology strictly discursive whereas the latter insists that discourse as a social force is dialectically related to other ideological aspects that may be extra-discursive (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 278). Discourse is looked at as merely constituting one of the many terrains on which the battle for hegemony is being fought.

Drawing upon Fairclough's notion of discourse, this study posits that discourse is a crucial terrain to understand the working of neoliberalism. While firmly affirming the existence of extra-discursive components of ideology, this study recognizes the important role of the discursive constitution of neoliberalism, particularly in modern capitalist societies, as indispensable in understanding the way in which neoliberalism secures hegemony.

Hegemony Formation and Mass Media

The mass media play an indispensable role in the process of securing consent in capitalist societies. The media are not only primary channels of communication but also sites of meaning production and exchange where symbolic forms and ideas are brought to life and transacted across the social terrain. Modern societies, with attendant fragmentation and dispersion of social life, depend on the mass media to achieve an "imaginary unity." In addition to these functions, mass media play an important role in representing the world for those who live in it, as a result of which they get embedded in the process of self-formation. This institutes the mass media as vital to the construction of identities. The intersection of mass media and ideology has resulted in what Thompson (1990) calls the "mediatization of modern culture," which makes mass media a primary

site of ideological activity as they exercise critical influence on the cultural and intellectual spheres (p. 3). Although mass media are not the only sites of ideology production, they vastly enhance the reach of ideas across time and space, thereby exposing huge swathes of population to those ideas (Thompson, 1990, p. 266). This centralizes the role of the mass media in hegemony formation.

The mass media are a major vehicle through which the exploitative nature of capitalism is concealed or misrepresented. They are also seminal in the process of fragmentation and separation as the mass media are a technology of individualization as well as collectivization (Rose, 1999, p. 82). In other words, they can, at the same time, address audiences as individuals as well as members of social collectives. This ability of the media coincides with the tendency of capitalism to promote individualism even as it tirelessly tries to enforce an imaginary unity to prevent social fragmentation. The media serve another important function in modern capitalist formations as they become the primary channels through which individuals are exposed to ideas. Individuals' conception of the world is derived from an interaction between practical ideas and received ideas, the former referring to subjective ideas formed in reaction to daily experiences and the latter accumulated through social exchange between different actors (Cheal, 1979, p. 110). Often, received ideas reshape practical ideas into new forms and experiences in a manner that are consistent with dominant ideologies. The media, by being carriers of the ideas received by individuals, exercise an enormous influence in locating experience within the dominant norms.

This process is best realized in the media's growing colonization of the process of subject formation. Thompson (1995) identifies four ways in which the media negatively affect the process of subject formation (p. 213). The media, by embedding select messages in particular locales, create conditions for the mediated intrusion of ideological messages into the routines of everyday life. Second, the growing commercialization of the media has an adverse impact over the process of self-formation even as the media become central to the reflexive organization of the self. Third, the media may cause a rather disorienting effect by causing a "symbolic overload" on subjects by exposing them to multiple products and messages (p. 216). Lastly, the development of the mass media results in "mediated quasi-interaction." This may culminate in a situation where the self may become excessively absorbed in the mediated quasi-interaction rather than actively process the symbolic materials acquired through such an interaction (p. 218).

One of the central assumptions of this study is that an important condition that media have to meet in order to reproduce dominant ideologies in the process of individual and collective subject formation is the cultivation of a journalistic workforce that actively embraces dominant ideologies. If mass media today can be likened to the role ascribed by Gramsci to the Catholic church—that of setting cultural policy (p. 342)—journalists can be compared to the priests in their role in proliferating dominant ideologies. Although the media are a contested terrain, unlike the Catholic church hierarchy where conflictuality is contained, journalists still undergo newsroom socialization as a part of which they are exposed and familiarized with dominant ideologies. The process through which journalists encounter and internalize dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism are

central to the process of subject-formation of journalists. But it is necessary to preface this process with an understanding of the changes that neoliberalism has caused within media organizations as it provides the context against which the roles of journalists in a neoliberal setting can be made intelligible. The next section outlines the impact of neoliberalism on the media after which the process of journalistic subject-formation will be mapped by tracing how media workers are socialized into dominant ideologies.

Neoliberal Restructuring and the Media

Many scholars have tried to understand the effects of a neoliberal market economy on the social functions of the media. While some of them have looked at its impact on the organizational structure of the media and the changing patterns of ownership under a neoliberal dispensation as causing concentration of media ownership and cross-media holdings, others have looked at how the trend toward deregulation and hypercommercialism have altered the democratic orientation of the media and moved them away from their social-responsibility functions, resulting in a crisis of the public sphere.

The profit orientation of the media, particularly of news organizations, has been a historical issue that has been raised frequently in capitalist democracies. Tebbel (1966), for instance, drew attention to the dilemma of the publisher whose primary concern is safeguarding his (sic) business interest (p. 79). He noted that though the media are beset with many functions in a democracy, they were always under pressure to maintain a healthy profit margin. This fundamental contradiction between ethics and profit that plagues the media has aggravated with the transition to a market-oriented model of news

production. McManus (1994) observed that journalism oriented toward the market was likely to have four social impacts: consumers were likely to learn less from the news, they may be misled, news sources may become more manipulative, and the audience may become more apathetic about politics (pp. 184-197). Likewise, McChesney (2000) and Badgikian (2004), who investigated the consequences of increasing concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few corporate organizations, are pessimistic about its effects on democracy and dissent. Along these lines, Kellner (2004) argued that media deregulation and the rise of neoliberal policies have been detrimental to democracy in the U.S. At the societal level, they have resulted in the transformation of the media into tools in the hands of political conservatives and corporate interests. With regard to its impact on journalism, Kellner is of the opinion that neoliberalism has meant that:

“The media have been increasingly organized on a business model, and competition between proliferating commercialized media has provided an impetus to replacing news with entertainment, to generate a tabloidization of news, and to pursue profits and sensationalism rather than public enlightenment and democracy.” (p. 31)

The transition to a market economy has produced fairly consistent results around the world, including an increase in entertainment content as compared to news, an orientation toward profit maximization, and the avoidance of issues that may bring the media in confrontation with the establishment. At the institutional level, it has resulted in the concentration of ownership, which has resulted in media monopolies. Bresnahan (2003), who compared the market-based media democratization model that gained

prominence in Chile in the '90s with the public-sphere model proposed by media theorists such as McChesney, concluded that the adoption of the former had resulted in a decline in media diversity. She observed that though journalists no longer faced any threat to their life as under Pinochet's dictatorship, the dramatic decline in media diversity in the '90s signifies the failure to support the media's openness to all sectors of civil society through public policy (p. 39).

Bresnahan's findings have been echoed by other studies that have looked into the impact of neoliberalism on the media. Jin (2007), who studied the impact of neoliberal globalization on television, concluded that the world television system had grown rapidly in the past two decades. He noted that this had become possible through the adoption of neoliberal policies, which included media deregulation and reduced state intervention in communication affairs (p. 180). Other important outcomes of the neoliberal period, according to Jin, are the rise of megaglobal communication companies, privatization of existing broadcasting companies, relaxation of foreign ownership restriction, corporate investment in technologies such as cable TV and satellite broadcasting, and transnationalization of advertizing and its convergence with communication industries to promote cultural products and consumer goods (p. 183). He observed that these features were not exclusive to Western countries but took place in Latin American as well as Asian countries (p. 192).

Although these studies have documented the changes in media industries at the institutional level, the analysis of the impact of neoliberal policies on journalistic practices continues to be a blindspot. More specifically, few studies have looked into how

journalists make sense of the changes taking place in their organizations, and how neoliberalism as an ideology is articulated by working journalists. Instead, existing studies tend to prioritize media institutions at the cost of sidelining the experiences of journalists. While one can infer that wide-ranging changes in the communication industries should have influenced the way journalism is practiced on a day-to-day basis, this aspect has not been studied from the perspective of journalists.

Journalists and Subject-Formation: Insights from Media Sociology

Journalists are important to the process of inscribing dominant ideologies into media products. They render ideological services that secure the domination of the ruling ideology (Bourdieu, 1998). But journalistic adherence to dominant ideologies is itself the culmination of an elaborate process in which personal preferences, newsroom routines, organizational hierarchies, professional values, and the capitalist order in which media organizations are located synchronize to expose individuals to dominant ideologies.

Williams (2003) has observed that research involving media organizations and media workers can be placed into three different levels. The first level focuses on the individual media worker and his or her preferences, the social and cultural factors that shape these preferences, and the professional (dominant) ideologies that are followed in the newsroom. The second level deals with organizational structures and routines and their influences on media practitioners and their work. Here, the focus is on the role assigned by organizations to media workers and how the latter meet the goals set up by the organizations. The third level looks into the interaction between media organizations and the wider sociocultural and political environment in which they operate (p. 97).

Along these lines, Ramaprasad (2006) has observed that all forces that ultimately influence news content can be placed into five categories: personal, media routines, organizational, extra media, and ideological (p. 1).

Personal and Professional Values

Although there is no agreement over the degree of influence media workers exert over news production, there can be no dispute that personal influences on media workers shape the final product in whose creation journalists are implicated. There are two views on how this is accomplished. While the first view highlights the role of media workers' personal background, experiences, and attitudes in shaping media content, the second view maintains that to the extent a group shares a particular idea, that idea stands a higher chance of being reflected in the news content that the group produces (Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney, & Wise, 2006, pp. 73-74). Grossberg *et al.* argued that the attitudes and values of journalists are shaped by professional or occupational values (derived from the group) and those that are societal, which pertain to their view of the world. Journalists also embed certain ideologies in the mass media through their role as gatekeepers who manage different "gates" through which ideas have to pass to become "news" or "media worthy."

The term "gatekeeping" was first introduced by David Manning White (1955) in a landmark study in which he argued that some news workers, who were strategically placed in what he termed as "gates" in media organizations, controlled the content. Williams (2003) defines gatekeeping: "a story is transmitted from one 'gatekeeper' after

another in the chain of communication' each of whom opens gates to let some stories through and closes them to others" (p. 101).

In his study, White (1955) enlisted the services of a news editor of a morning newspaper to keep a record of why he chose some stories and discarded others. During the week, the editor received 12,000 inches of news material from three news services, one-tenth of which appeared in the newspapers. In selecting from reports on the same event, 640 of the 910 reasons cited dealt with lack of space, and 172 involved waiting for additional information. Of the 423 reasons provided for rejecting reports of the same event, the majority involved stylistic issues. White concluded that the editor's choices revealed "how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the gatekeeper's' own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of news really is" (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 646). Though White has been accused of overemphasizing the role of the gatekeepers at the cost of underestimating how institutional factors such as the "gates" themselves are structured, it has remained a widely used concept in media studies. Another criticism targeted at White is that not all gatekeepers enjoy equal influence in making decisions about the news content. The arriving content is screened by "boundary role gatekeepers," who then pass it on to "internal gatekeepers." The surviving message is then sent back to the boundary role gatekeepers for final shaping, selection, and transmission to the audience or another media organization (Shoemaker, 2002, p. 254). Therefore, selection criteria are not just a matter of personal preferences but are rooted in organizational routines that shape the decisions adopted by the gatekeepers. Some scholars have also argued that no one

gatekeeper is capable of deciding the news content in large media organizations immersed in complex media structures.

Even though changing organizational circumstances have altered the role of journalists, some dynamics have remained constant. Prominent among them is the continued status of media workers as actors who exercise direct influence in selecting news content and, thereby, enable the reach of ideologies across time and space. While the use of information and communication technologies have afforded organizations more control over journalists, the latter continue to occupy a key position in determining which news stories are considered for publication. It can also be argued that the autonomy of journalists is nonetheless mediated by organizational control and mechanisms. Media workers have elaborate codes of ethics and are bound by notions of professionalism, which predispose journalists to be more open to some ideologies over others. Some scholars believe that ethical standards are, at best, “goals more than habits” (Reinardy & Moore, 2007, p. 163). They argue that ethics are referenced only for the occasional investigative story rather than the everyday article. Reinardy and Moore’s study (2007) revealed that students enrolled in introductory journalism courses had stronger notions of ethics compared to graduating students. Graduating students seem to have been affected by their exposure to the newsroom culture through internships. This points to a move away from journalism that is concerned with social responsibility toward a focus on profits. Arguably, this is a necessary feature of newsrooms constituted under the neoliberal social formation, as the ethical responsibilities of journalism are displaced by the more pressing issue of profit.

Professional journalistic values are another mechanism through which select ideologies find currency in the mass media. Objectivity—a much prized journalistic value in the newsroom—is of particular relevance here as one cannot miss the similarity it shares with neoliberalism, which positions itself as post-ideological and therefore as non-ideological (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 35). Schudson (2001) has argued that objectivity is the chief occupational value of American journalism. He defined it as “at once a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing” (p. 149). Journalists use objectivity as a professional identity marker and to ward off criticism about their news sense, “almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits” (Tuchman, 1972, p. 660).

Tuchman identified four strategic procedures that help journalists claim objectivity. They include presentation of conflicting possibilities, by which different sides of a story are included in the article; presentation of supporting evidence that lends credence to a story; judicious (and strategic) use of quotation marks whereby statements are attributed to a source rather than the journalist; and structuring information in an appropriate sequence in news stories (such as the use of the inverted-pyramid style). In addition, a fifth procedure that can make a story objective is the use of facts.

Objectivity is one of the traits of professionalism that journalists have adopted. Breed (1955) has observed that professional norms are of two types: technical norms that deal with news gathering, writing, and editing, and ethical norms that deal with media workers’ commitment to their readers and to their profession by referencing such principles as impartiality, accuracy, fairplay, and the like. However, such distinctions can

hardly be sustained in the day-to-day practice of journalism. Whereas the economy of words in an article can be strictly classified as a technical norm, ideals such as objectivity guide writing as well as overlap with the territory of ethical norms.

Additionally, the valorization of the journalistic profession by media workers assists in conveying the professionalism of media work to the general public. For example, journalists often use the death of a scribe, particularly the deceased scribe's professionalism, as an occasion to convey the importance of journalism to society (Aldridge, 1998). Further, notions of professionalism and the values that one has to adopt to become a part of this profession serve other functions as well. The discourse of professionalism serves as a mechanism of self-discipline or helps "control from a distance," as the discourse is constructed and used by both managers and journalists (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003, p. 549). Professionalism is a prominent trope in journalistic discourses about journalists and the values they internalize as a precondition to claim the label of "profession" shapes news content.

The adoption of objectivity as the most prominent occupational value by American journalists has ensured its adoption by journalists in other countries as well, particularly those in the global South. Josephi (2007) has argued that the American model of objectivity is by far the best known professional model worldwide, even though it hardly serves as a model for imitation (p. 302). But this has not prevented countries rooted in different communitarian traditions from adopting objectivity and other Enlightenment-inspired values. The U.S. media expansion and diffusion of educational

and training programs for journalists everywhere seem to be the major contributing factor toward the adoption of Western journalistic values.

Organizational Structure and Values

The influence of personal values, journalistic ethics, and professional ideologies on news content is also mediated through the organizational routines and structures in which journalists are placed. Although journalists bring their personal values and professional ideologies to bear upon their output, they can rarely produce content that is not consistent with their organization's policy. Journalists have to operate within predetermined structures of organizational hierarchy where editors are placed above reporters and, hence, get to "decide" the news content. On the other hand, editors are accountable to representatives of the media corporation, who influence content in their own way. Moreover, adhering to the organizational policy helps journalists to advance within the organization whereas violating organizational expectations may earn approbation, stagnation in terms of career advancement, and eventual loss of the job.

Breed (1955) observed that every newspaper has an editorial policy, whether it admits to it or not (p. 327). Journalists adhere to this policy through an elaborate organizational process called newsroom socialization. He added that a reporter is never told what this policy is, but rather "learns to anticipate what is expected out of him to earn rewards and avoid punishments" (p. 328). Reporters soon come to identify their organization's policy through practices such as closely reading their newspapers to identify what content stands a better chance of getting published, making inferences when they (or their colleagues) get reprimanded for reporting a particular story, listening to

newsroom gossip about interests (and pet peeves) of news executives, covering news conferences involving senior-level executives and reporters, studying house newsletters, observing the news executive meet various leaders, and hearing the news executive voice an opinion (p. 329).

Breed also identified six factors that help organizations to promote policy conformity. They include the publisher exercising institutional authority and sanctions such as demotion against intransigent staffers who fail to obey the organizational policy. Fostering feelings of obligation and esteem that journalists feel toward their superiors prevents them from producing actions that undermine the policy or bring them into confrontation with the organizational hierarchy. Mobility aspirations enhances the job promotion chances of those who adhere to organizational expectations while absence of conflicting group interests is another important factor that promote policy conformity. For instance, the American Newspaper Guild, a labor organization where journalists in unionized work sites hold membership, does not interfere with internal matters such as policy. In effect, journalists are more prone to organize around class issues such as wages and working condition rather than status issues of professional control (Boyd-Barrett, 1970, p. 184). The pleasant nature of the activity whereby hierarchy is temporarily demolished as even senior executives sit with reporters in planning the next day's edition also contributes to quell dissent. Lastly, news becoming a value is an important factor as journalists are rewarded for getting news and not for analyzing it, which minimizes the chance of a confrontation with the organization's policy. This encourages reporters to

break news rather than preoccupy themselves with issues of ethics or professionalism (Breed, 1955, pp. 330-331).

Gans (2004) outlined how journalists—who are placed in bureaucratic commercial organizations and are also members of a profession—process whatever becomes available to them from sources to produce news content. He noted that story selectors, such as editors within an organization, are akin to “buyers” (p. 90). The “sellers,” or reporters, have to pitch in their ideas to the buyers so it can be accepted for publication or broadcasting by the organization. For this to happen, the “sellers” have to meet several criteria. Gans noted that the selling involves several rounds where each person in charge has to sell it to the next person in the hierarchy. He also looked into the specific influence of hierarchy in news organizations and its impact on the final output, noting that although corporate and news executives are at the top of the organizational hierarchy and have unlimited power in selecting or vetoing stories, they tend not to interfere on a day-to-day basis (p. 94).

These executives play four roles within a news organization. They exert power over journalists through budget and personnel-related decisions—such as promotions and wage increases—and they are in charge of protecting the commercial and political interests of the firms. As such, they are also in charge of the organizational policy apparatus and communicating it down the hierarchical chain. They hold frequent meetings with top news producers to keep themselves abreast of the story selection process and to make the necessary interventions (2004, p. 95). Under them are top editors and producers who head journalistic bureaucracies and have the “final say” with regard to

news content (p. 97). Gans noted that the power of top editors and producers is further secured by the fact that they do not have to explain their decisions, which shrouds them in mystery. Their power is also enhanced by the elaborate division of labor evidenced in news organizations and by the organizational-wide pressure for conformity (p. 98). To this, Matejko (1970) added that journalists accorded three kinds of authority to editors: “professional authority (as journalists), administrative authority (as bosses), and personal authority (as colleagues)” (p. 173).

Top editors and producers are followed in the hierarchical chain by senior editors whom Gans likened to foremen or forewomen (p. 97). Senior editors meet the expectations of the top editors and producers and also protect the interests of the sections they represent. At the bottom of the hierarchy are journalists who are directly involved in story production. Gans argued that though journalists may appear to be under everybody else in an organization, they have considerable countervailing power through which they can determine the final shape of news content to some extent (p. 100). Gans maintained that the final story is often a compromise between various forces that act upon the organization, including the pressures that the sources and the audience exert (p. 89). Gans noted that the final output is more likely to be audience-related as top producers and editors, who represent audience interest, also have the most power in an organization. This, according to him, accounts for the fact that journalists who follow audience preferences are at the top of the hierarchy.

There may be variations in media organizational set up which may impact news content differently. Warner (1970), for instance, argued that TV news is subject to more

organizational control than newspapers (p. 158). But like modern corporate organizations, most media entities are adopting organizational structures that are compatible with the technology-intensive processes of news production and profit maximization, including centralization of editorial control. Gans (2004) argued that the exigencies of news determined the organizational structure of news organizations than vice versa. Although this view may be largely true, it is important to explore how journalists within media organizations reproduce ideologies in an era of centralized editorial control.

It is important to understand the influences that journalists are exposed to in their day-to-day routines for they are a part of what transforms them into vital ideological actors. Many of these influences are structural and serve predefined ends such as the embedding of dominant ideologies in media products. This process makes journalists, in their role as producers of media content, targets of an elaborate process of newsroom socialization that has as its end the formation of a subject who is moulded in the cast of neoliberalism and, hence, already invested in its defense. It is important to explore in this context how traditional channels of socialization are inflected with new messages and how the journalists exposed to them internalize or resist such ideologies. The next section looks at neoliberalism as the leading ideology of our times and the discourse(s) deployed to normalize it among different social actors.

Mapping Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is sustained by many forces and actors who operate at different levels. These include identifiable economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank that, in collaboration with local elites, enforce an

economic policy premised on finance, insurance, and real estate (Fitch, 1996, quoted in Lee, 2004, p. 168). Included also are ideological actors who normalize neoliberalism by using various strategies. A key component of this strategy is the use of mass media toward removing resistance to neoliberalism and to disconnect neoliberalism from the efforts that have gone into establishing its hegemony.

This section first explores neoliberalism in its materiality as a functionalist economic paradigm that engenders far-reaching changes in society. Explored in this section are the various interpretations of neoliberalism—from its positioning as a wholly economic policy to understanding neoliberalism as a technology of governance. The section then turns to *neoliberalism* as an ideological formulation and the social and cultural components that constitute it, with a special emphasis on language. Lastly, I look at neoliberalism as a discourse to understand how it is articulated together with non-discursive elements to constitute neoliberalism as an ideology.

Neoliberalism as Economic Policy

Neoliberalism has emerged as a leading economic orthodoxy only since the 1970s, but its theoretical roots go far back in time. Austrian philosophers Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) and Friedrich von Hayek are acknowledged as the fathers of the free-market ideology that has mutated into neoliberalism today (Barry, 1984, p. 33). A core assumption of this economic philosophy, known as the Austrian perspective, is that institutions that are the product of human design or plan cannot be the subject of theoretical explanation but merely historical description. Yet systems such as markets, money, law and language, which are produced not owing to human design but by the

interaction of many individuals, are likely to be better than those that emerge from the deliberative actions of a designing mind (Barry, 1984, p. 39). This way, the Austrian school believed in insulating markets and other economic systems from the intervention of outside forces to guarantee their autonomy from state intervention. This demanded the institutionalization of two important political ideals—human dignity and individual freedom—as the central values of civilization (Harvey, 2007, p. 5).

Liberalism is characterized by many schools of thought that articulated different roles for the market within society. While classical liberalism or laissez-faire liberalism advocated unregulated markets that would operate outside state control, Keynes advocated the philosophy of embedded liberalism which referred to the compromise reached between market forces and welfare economics that characterized the World War II international economic order (Kirshner, 1999, p. 314). Keynes believed that microeconomic questions, such as what is produced and how it is distributed, should be best left to market forces (Kirshner, 1999, p. 319). However, he was concerned with issues pertaining to the macroeconomy and saw a minimal role for the state in managing those issues. However, despite the differences over the role of the market within society, advocates of liberalism believed in the centrality of the markets in safeguarding individual liberty.

Burchell (1996) has argued that one of the important ways in which neoliberalism varies from liberalism is in its insistence that the rational principle of limiting governmental activity should “be determined by reference to *artificially* arranged or constrained forms of the free, entrepreneurial, and competitive conduct of economic-

rational individuals” (pp. 23-24). This makes the individual the locus of action under neoliberal regimes. The individual is then invested with an artificial rationality that dialectically embeds her as a rational actor within the market and positions her as a justifiable force that acts to limit the governing nature of governments.

Neoliberalism is generally associated with a transformation of the nation-state accompanied by a scaling down of its welfare functions (Hall, 1988); an increase in the autonomy of markets; widening of income inequality (Stroper, 2001); enhanced capital flows across space and time enabled by the removal of territorial and spatial constraints; and removal of labor rigidities that is perceived as tying down capital (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2001). In addition, neoliberalism is widely believed to displace attention from the process of production by centralizing consumption. This gives rise to consumerism—the “cultural cousin” of neoliberalism—as people increasingly define themselves through the process of consumption (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 4). As a political philosophy, neoliberalism assigns more power to the market than the state in distributing resources (Ong, 2006, p. 14). Crucial to this understanding of neoliberalism is the configuration of the relationship between the state and markets, with scholars taking varied positions on the subject, from proclaiming the demise of the state to highlighting the changing relationship between the state and the markets (O’ Riain, 2000).

More closely tied to the reconfiguration of the state under neoliberalism is the issue of governance or the process of transforming individuals into rational economic subjects. It is important to take into account neoliberalism as a technology of governance

as it provides valuable insights into the conditions under which neoliberalism forges itself into an ideology.

Governance, used in this context, is the process through which actors, through nature, problems, techniques, and objects, place themselves under the guidance of others or seek to place other actors, organizations, institutions, and entities under their control (Rose, 1999, p. 16). Thus, one can argue that the construction of subjectivities is realized through the use of an array of technologies that assist the management of scattered microcenters as the constitutional, judicial, and fiscal powers of the state are brought to bear upon the economic lives of the people (Rose, 1999, p. 18).

This process assumes a paradoxical quality under neo-liberalism as one witnesses the de-governmentalization of the state (owing to the welfare retreat of the state) while governmentalization, per se, is on the rise as the management of populations erupting on the brink of a social crisis becomes an ever-pressing task (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996, p. 11). But governmentalization under neoliberal regimes has to meet four conditions: (1) engender a new relationship between government and knowledge; (2) a specification of the subjects of rule as active in their own government; (3) appeal to the authority of expertise; and (4) accommodate a continuous questioning of the activity of rule (Rose, 1996, pp. 44-47). This invests neoliberalism in the project of hegemony formation.

Neoliberalism as Ideology: A Discursive Approach

The extent to which terms such as “globalization,” “flexibility,” “markets,” “multiculturalism,” “finance,” “employability,” and “mobility” have entered the everyday lexicon testifies to the existence of neoliberalism as at once an economic reality and an

ideology that is normalized through its invocation in everyday discourse (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001). Drawing upon the premise that language offers an “immediate way” of grasping ideology (Holborow, 2007, p. 53), this work conceives of neoliberalism as a material reality and an ideology centered on the power of discourse as the relationships among social formations are rearranged to suit market imperatives. Neoliberalism as a hegemonic project sets for itself the task of procuring mass adhesion, because of which neoliberalism has to be enacted discursively. This ties neoliberalism to discourse as its technological posturing produces claims to scientific credibility. This technologization of the discourse of neoliberalism serves two purposes—organizes a discursive terrain where “non-scientific” criticisms of neoliberalism, particularly those emerging from the social sciences, are delegitimized, and institutes neoliberalism as a post-ideological phenomenon detached from its ideological constituents.

Fairclough (2001) defines technologization of discourse as “the systematic institutional integration of research on language; design and redesign of language practices; and training of institutional personnel in these practices” (p. 232).

Technologization of discourse, he observed, is an aspect of the enhanced reflexivity of social life. Technologization of discourse under neoliberal regimes also coincides with two key transformations under new capitalism—the growing importance of language (Fairclough, 2002) and the rising importance of immaterial production (Hardt & Negri, 2004). Language increasingly becomes central to new capitalism as it positions itself as “knowledge-based” (Fairclough, 2002, p. 163). As knowledge can only be produced, circulated, and consumed as discourses, language becomes seminal to the sustenance of

neoliberalism. This leads to the transformation of the economy into a “semeiocracy” (de Certeau, 1984, p. XXI). On the other hand, neoliberal discourse takes a decisive turn as immaterial products, including information, ideas, and knowledge, become central to the neoliberal economy with primary production becoming invisible and dispersed across space (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 65). At the same time, immaterial production is realized only through cooperation, collaboration, and communication (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 147), which opens new communicative possibilities that implicate neoliberalism in new terrains of hegemony formation. These developments also lead to the commodification of semiosis and discourses, which are subject to calculability and the logic of the market. Such discourses are then “dialectically materialized,” inculcated, and enacted by different actors (Fairclough, 2002, p. 165).

Neoliberal discourses depend on a variety of linguistic manipulations, contextual designs, and a plurality of discursive forms for their efficiency. van Dijk has argued that the link between ideologies and discourse are mediated by social cognitions such as attitudes, opinions, and knowledge, and personal cognitions (Schaffner & Kelly-Holmes, 1996, p. 4). In addition, neoliberal discourses are marked by tremendous reflexivity and the ability to respond to a host of critiques emerging from different quarters.

As actors to whom neoliberalism is to be made acceptable occupy varied positionalities within society, neoliberal discourses are characterized by rhetorical inventiveness, flexibility, and openness so as to coincide with the field of experience of each individual actor. Following Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001), this work argues that neoliberal ideology constrains the field of discourses to binaries whereby the dominant

articulation is reduced to two mutually exclusive choices—the state vs. market, individuals vs. society, efficiency vs. bureaucracy, responsibility vs. welfare, and the like. This “pitting-of-the-binaries” leaves little room for maneuvering as the ideological choices are already limited. Reducing the ideological field to binaries also excludes alternatives that might be grounded in a social or non-economic critique of neoliberalism.

Neoliberal discourses have also been categorized by Phelan (2007) into transparent neoliberal and euphemized neoliberal discourses that illuminate the positionalities of actors enacting the discourses of neoliberalism. Transparent neoliberal discourses make themselves explicit by firmly establishing borders with that which they are not. Euphemized neoliberal discourses reject any kind of ideological posturing for a third way or partnership discourses that displace the problematic of the political (or ideological) into the moral registry. This way, euphemized neoliberal discourses not only seek to distinguish themselves from discourses that seek to undermine the new capitalism but also from transparent neoliberal discourses that are presumed to walk into the same trap that other ideologies are already in.

Transparent neoliberal discourses may tend to emanate from institutional actors who occupy positions within the economic sphere, whereas euphemized neoliberal discourses can be traced back to agents who serve as arbitrators of discourses—agents who are invested with the social authority (such as the media) to consecrate discourses that societies can then admit for consideration. However, such categorizations only have analytical utility, and neoliberal actors can draw upon both transparent as well as

euphemized discourses in the exercise of neoliberal hegemony, which underscores the rhetorical inventiveness of neoliberal discourses.

An important strategy that transparent neoliberal discourses deploy is the use of binaries. Under this formulation, the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference engage in interplay as they are invoked to constitute the ideological field (Phelan, 2007, p. 31). A logic of equivalence refers to stabilizing the signifying associations between different discursive elements, whereas the logic of difference is the logic of differentiation whereby the “different” is exaggerated and foregrounded as that which cannot be reconciled. This fractures the ideological field into two exclusive categories that could mask the synergy that exists between the subfields. The logic of equivalence and the logic of difference also attribute a false coherence to the categories under contestation, as if the main struggle was *between* the categories and not *within* them. This helps foreclose the possibility of excavating the differences that the categories pose within themselves.

Transparent neoliberal discourses find a fertile terrain in the apparent “failure” of the old form of governance in insulating people from social insecurities (Mongardini, 1980, p. 310). This is conflated with the failure of the welfare state owing to widespread fiscal irresponsibility. A return to private entrepreneurship is then posited as the solution that can uplift people from the abyss. At the international level, the critique of the welfare state extends to the developmental model, which is held guilty of engendering apathy among people and retarding the progress of markets. The solution then is monetary discipline and a gradual downsizing of the state with regard to its welfare functions. The

binary formulation is again deployed—the individual steadily displaces collective entities as the locus of action with the community invoked occasionally only as a medium of governance.

If transparent neoliberal discourses discern a strict separation between the state and the market (and the individual and the collective), euphemized neoliberal discourses desist from such antagonisms. Euphemized neoliberal discourses try to contain antagonisms or at least decenter them at the discursive level. This is achieved by rescaling the ideological terrain which transforms the rules of engagement. Ideology (which is broadly that which becomes associated with the state, government, welfare, development . . .) is pitted against that which the natural adversaries of government—i.e. the people—have: commonsense. Through this masterstroke, neoliberalism has found in commonsense that which can be a counterweight to ideology. For it has not only pitted commonsense against ideology but also their respective agents—the state and the people. It is in this movement that the euphemized neoliberal discourses, unlike their transparent counterpart, establishes itself as post-ideological and as on the side of those that it purportedly serves best.

Phelan (2007) identified five rhetorical strategies implicit in euphemized neoliberal discourse in his analysis of the coverage of the “Irish economic success story” in Irish newspapers. They included: (1) social partnership as empty signifier; (2) the spectre of the ‘bad old days’; (3) the pre-emption of critique; (4) the non-ideological posture; and (5) neoliberalism as a threatened or minority discourse (p. 36). Each of these strategies disavows an explicit ideological stand or a direct confrontation with that which

it seeks to oppose. Rather, it displaces the conflict into a neutral terrain where the discursive confrontation is transacted on its own terms. Also, each of the strategies prefigures the discursive space in ways that make the operation of an (explicit) ideology difficult. Ideology premised on the normative is dislodged to make way for a discourse that privileges efficiency. In other words, ideology is excluded for a general passage into a third way of non-confrontational engagement where the field has already been harnessed to benefit the post-ideological.

Most studies theorizing neoliberalism as a discourse (or set of discourses) have used media texts to uncover the discursive strategies that establish the hegemony of neoliberalism. In contrast, this study privileges everyday conversations as primary sites where the discursive hegemony of neoliberalism is articulated. By investigating the ways in which journalists articulate neoliberalism, this study not only commits to an investigation of the role of journalists as active agents of neoliberalism but also seeks to identify discursive strategies that may then be replicated in the larger mediatized discourses about neoliberalism. While it is not the purpose of this study to inquire whether such discursive strategies indeed filtered into mediatized texts, it, nevertheless, opens possibilities for such investigations in further studies.

Historical Background of the Print Media in India

The Indian media and entertainment industry is today worth approximately \$11 billion and is expanding at an annual rate of 18 percent (FICCI-Price Waterhouse Coopers Report, quoted in Kumar, 2008, p. 22). However, the contemporary media

scenario—one marked by proliferation and profits—is more reflective of the growth achieved by the Indian media in the past 15 years. In the post-Independence era, Indian media's expansion can be traced through two periods: From 1947 to 1977, when the media, chiefly the print media, was largely controlled by the state and operated in an atmosphere characterized by family-owned newspapers and regulated markets; and from 1977 onward, when they slowly moved away from a national and socialist orientation and started adopting a business-like attitude and leaned toward professionalization. This trend became more pronounced in the post-1991 period and led to a rapid expansion of the media sector, particularly television, resulting in the commercialization of the media. Although technological advancements and a growth in consumerism have driven media expansion in the post-1991 period, the resulting commercialization has raised pertinent questions about the role of the media in a democracy.

Between 1947 and 1977

The Indian state adopted a socialist policy from 1947 to 1977 that encouraged industrialization and sought to weld the country into a coherent entity (Khilnani, 1998). Although the Indian government respected the freedom of the press and maintained a policy of non-intervention in day-to-day functioning of the press, it, nonetheless, believed that the print media should serve the national interests and the press' social-responsibility functions should override the profit motive. On its part, the print media lacked a critical outlook and for the most part supported the Indian government led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (Sonwalker, 2002, p. 824).

The government controlled the print media through direct as well as indirect measures. Directly, it enacted legislations to curtail the freedom of the press. The Newspapers (Price and Page) Act of 1956 is emblematic of the intervention of the state in matters related to the press. The legislation, which was enacted to ostensibly protect the interests of small newspapers, prohibited newspapers from increasing the number of pages without increasing the price proportionately (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 55). Similarly, the Civil Defence Act of 1962 and The Defence of India Act of 1971 prevented newspapers from publishing content considered inimical to the nation's security. The government also controlled the availability of newsprint through the Newsprint Control Order of 1962 (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 30). Under this law, publishers were expected to submit a newsprint request to the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), authenticated by a chartered accountant as proof of circulation. Even if a publisher managed to get the RNI to approve a big quota, only 30 percent of it could be imported. The remainder had to be bought from state-owned newsprint producers such as Nepa Mills, which sold poor quality newsprint. This also resulted in allegations that an illegal trade of newsprint existed between small and big newspapers with the former claiming inflated circulation figures to procure more newsprint, which they would then resell to the big newspapers (Jeffrey, 2000).

During this period, few developments—technical or otherwise—occurred in the media sector. In the early 1950s, there were 41 English dailies compared to 288 newspapers published in various Indian languages (Press Commission, 1954, cited in Jeffrey, 2000). Newspapers were mainly family enterprises (Ram-Chandran, 2002, p.

174). Another important characteristic of the print media during this period was the superior status that English language newspapers enjoyed over the vernacular print media (Stahlberg, 2002, p. 33), a situation that remains largely intact. Although the vernacular print media have gained some lost territory in the past 15 years with their popularity growing among advertisers, English newspapers continue to hold sway on the national imagination. During this time, the vernacular newspapers predominantly led a listless existence, which was not very different from the press at large.

The most acrimonious face-off between the press and the Indian government occurred between 1975 and 1977 when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed a 19-month Emergency that led to suspension of civil rights and censorship of the press. At the time, the government initiated a crackdown on the press through various measures, including the detainment of 253 journalists, the expulsion of seven foreign correspondents, and the dissolution of the Press Council (Nayar, 1987; cited in Sonwalker, 2002, p. 825). Apart from newspapers, the wire services were also controlled by the government (Jablons, 1978, p. 33).

After 1977

The newspaper sector grew phenomenally after 1977. As Stahlberg (2003) observed, both the number of newspapers published as well as the total circulation of dailies increased tremendously after the 1970s, with vernacular newspapers leading the growth in the sector (p. 32). The number of dailies increased by five times between 1976 and 1996; while the RNI recorded 875 newspapers in 1976, the number had increased to 4,453 by 1996 (Jeffrey, 2000, p. 48). Even in 1995, the press continued to command

almost half of the total advertising revenue of 46,290 million rupees with the rest being divided among the other media. By 2005, the print media's share of the advertising revenue had come down to 49 percent of the 162,680 million rupees allocated for that year, with television gaining at the expense of the print sector (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 21). It is interesting to note that although the print sector's share of the advertising revenue decreased considerably from 1995 to 2005, an increase in the advertising outlay offset the losses the print sector could have potentially suffered. Many factors shaped the growth of newspapers in India. Notably, the growth in the newspaper sector was primarily led by vernacular newspapers both in terms of circulation as well as the number of newspapers. Hence, it is pertinent to look at the factors that aided their expansion.

Jeffrey (2000) has challenged scholars who foreground technological developments, particularly advancements in printing technology, to explain the growth in the media sector. To the contrary, he argued that political participation and growth of literacy powered the increase in readership:

Crude measures from the rest of India support a hypothesis that, in making people into newspapers readers, literacy and political participation precede raw purchasing power and advanced printing technology. The fastest growth rates in newspaper circulation between 1971 and 1991 were in states which showed the strongest *growth rates of literacy*, not of per capita economic growth. (p. 32)

An increase in literacy resulted in growing political participation, which created a natural hunger for news in the urban as well as rural landscapes of India. While only 18 percent of the country was literate in 1951, the census carried out in 1991 reported that

the literacy rate had increased to 52 percent (Census report; cited in Jeffrey, 2000, p. 29). This produced an enormous market for the media. The National Readership Studies 2006 (NRS 2006) survey reported that the print sector (newspapers and magazines combined) had added six million new readers in a span of just one year. Further, it added that the reach of the press had stabilized in urban as well as rural India at 45 percent and 19 percent, respectively. Although the press had a wider reach in urban areas rather than rural areas, the readers in rural areas (110 million) roughly equaled the number of urban areas (112 million).

Jeffrey (2000) identified the advancements in printing technology and the rise of capitalism as two other significant factors that fuelled the growth of the press. With regard to printing technology, he observed that two printing innovations—computer typesetting and offset printing—arrived in India to maximize the potential of the vernacular press (p. 38). These two developments aided the press in the areas of composition and color printing. Along with these two developments came the computer modem, which enabled newspapers to open more editions:

Just as computer typesetting and offset presses liberated Indian scripts, the computer modem, which allowed the transmission of “print” along telephone lines, overcame distance. A personal computer and modem made it possible to send a story hundreds of miles in a few seconds and to have it arrive in a form quickly turned into print on paper—print in Indian language scripts. (Jeffrey, 2000, p. 44)

Another factor that coincided with the advancements in printing technology was the rise of capitalism, which further strengthened the growth of the print media. The policy of economic liberalization that began in 1991 had started bearing fruit by the mid-1990s, and this became evident through the astronomical rise in the international advertising outlay (Ninan, 2007, p. 13). The media's increasing revenue resulted from a proportionate rise in advertising expenditure. The total advertising expenditure, which was below 1000 crore rupees in 1989, increased five-fold over by 1997-98 (A&M annual reports; cited in Jeffrey, 2000, p. 59).

Though advertising has powered the growth of the Indian print media particularly after 1995, important questions are being raised on how it has impacted journalism as it is believed that media growth was achieved at the expense of quality and distribution (Kumar, 2008, p. 22). For instance, Ram (2000) has argued that the four functions of the Indian media—credible-informational, critical-adversarial, educational, and agenda-building—had become subservient to the “manufacture of consent” role as the media, particularly in the '90s, reinvented themselves as profit-oriented entities. The Indian media's new-found prosperity has also given rise to many problems as entertainment and commercialization have prevailed over the social responsibility of the press. The neoliberal turn of the Indian economy has replaced the “more-readers- more-ads” formula that drove media expansion with “more-rich-readers-more-ads” principle. As a result, the media tend to prioritize the concerns of a middle class that has accumulated more buying power than other sections of the population. This has led both the English and Indian

language media to cultivate the interests of the middle class more than that of any other classes, and thus follows a decline in its critical functions (Stahlberg, 2002, p. 19).

The Kannada Print Media

The Kannada print media have an illustrious history that features much in common with the Indian media. Printing in Kannada began after German missionaries introduced the technology in 1812 in an attempt to publish religious literature in the native languages (Krishnamurti, 2006, p. 433). Kannada newspapers grew at a phenomenal rate because of the anti-colonial freedom struggle. They became vehicles of nationalist thought and ideology, and their main slogan was “a unified Karnataka; an independent India” (Krishnamurti, 2006, p. 432). In addition, they became a training ground for nationalists who went on to become prominent politicians, persons of letters, and statepersons. Once the goal of independence was realized in 1947, Kannada newspapers transformed into the collective voice of the people by stressing the need to create a unified Karnataka state that would be constituted by bringing together all areas inhabited by Kannada-speaking people.

Although the Kannada print media consist of a variety of periodicals, fortnightlies, and weeklies, it is, nonetheless, the daily newspapers that define Kannada journalism.

The first Kannada newspaper, *Kannada Samachara*, was published by German missionaries in Bellary in 1812 (Krishnamurti, 2006, p. 435). Since then, many newspapers were started primarily by industrialists supporting the freedom struggle in a bid to counter the British rule in the country. Some of the publications that started to aid the freedom struggle included *Karnataka Prakashika*, *Karnataka Kesari*, *Savinudi*,

Okkaligara Patrike, *Suryodaya Prakashika*, *Samyukta Karnataka*, and *Vruttanta Patrike*. Most of them, eventually, stopped publication owing to financial hardship or were banned by the government. A few newspapers were founded during or after 1947, and they coincided with the birth of linguistic nationalism, particularly in South India, as the Indian Federation sought to reorganize the country into administrative units known as states that would have jurisdiction over different linguistic groups. *Udayavani* and *Prajavani* were the most prominent post-Independence Kannada newspapers.

Samyukta Karnataka. *Samyukta Karnataka* began as a weekly in the northern district of Belgaum in 1929 (Dani, 1990, p. 65). An organization called “Karnataka Prakashana Mandali” was set up to oversee the publication, with Belavidutta Rao as its president and Balavantarao Dattar, Narayanrao Joshi, and Keshavrao Gokhale as its members. Soon, they were arrested by the British for taking part in the freedom struggle. After being released from prison, they revived the publication on April 27, 1933, this time as a daily. Seshacharya Giryacharya Katti, a Belgaum-based lawyer, became its first editor (Dani, 1990, p. 65). In 1934, Mohare Hanumanth Rao became its editor, and the newspaper increased its circulation as well as stature under him. In 1937, the newspaper started publishing from Hubli in North Karnataka, which has since remained its headquarters. *Samyukta Karnataka* started publishing from Bangalore—the state capital—in January 26, 1959, to become the first Kannada newspaper to bring out two editions simultaneously. Despite technological and financial constraints, *Samyukta Karnataka* sought to provide timely news to its readers. The proximity of North Karnataka to the erstwhile Bombay Presidency proved to be an advantage as the newspaper started

requisitioning news two times a day from Mumbai through telegraph lines (Karnataka Patrika Itihasa, 1999, p. 62). It steadily grew in strength in North Karnataka by acquiring a number of small publications, prominent among them *Kannadiga*, *Karnataka Mitra*, and *Prarthane*.

Samyukta Karnataka's ownership passed on to different publishing houses. At one point, the litigation over the newspaper's ownership led the government to intervene and assume the newspaper's publication. Though the newspaper succeeded in North Karnataka, it failed to take off in South Karnataka, despite its publication from Bangalore. Since the late 1990s, the newspaper has adopted several measures to increase circulation, including the launch of multi editions and color editions and the printing of color supplements in a bid to increase its readership. However, *Samyukta Karnataka* continues to be perceived as a daily newspaper primarily aimed at North Karnataka—a branding which it has struggled to unmake.

Prajavani. *Prajavani* was preceded by its English cousin, *Deccan Herald*, in 1948. After national independence, the need arose for a newspaper that would address the changing needs of readers. Industrialist K.N. Guruswamy started the The Printers (Mysore) Pvt. Ltd. with some assistance from other industrialists and local businesses. The first edition of *Prajavani* was published on October 15, 1948 (Poornima, 1990, p. 30). B. Puttaswamaiah served as its first editor after which T.S. Ramachandra Rao, better known as T.S.R., became its editor in 1950 and served in that position until 1977. During his leadership, the newspaper became the unrivaled leader of Kannada journalism.

Two factors helped the newspaper become the highest circulated daily until *Vijaya Karnataka*, a newspaper started by a transport baron, displaced it as the leading daily in 1996. Its publication from Bangalore, the state capital, made *Prajavani* a much sought after newspaper for the government in power. In addition, it had relatively easy access to capital, which allowed it to experiment with technology. For instance, *Prajavani* became the first Kannada newspaper to bring out a color edition. It also became the first Kannada newspaper to adopt photo composing. The newspaper also adopted fascimille technology on November 1, 1989, which allowed it to launch multiple editions simultaneously (Poornima, 1990, p. 32).

The newspaper also computerized more rapidly than other newspapers. Moreover, it constantly shared staff members and resources with *Deccan Herald*, which gave the newspaper a unique perspective unavailable to other Kannada newspapers. *Prajavani* started its online edition on February 27, 1998 (Karnataka Patrika Itihasa, 1999, p. 29). Currently, *Prajavani* issues an edition from each of the 27 districts in Karnataka. Though it has been displaced by *Vijaya Karnataka* as the highest circulated daily, *Prajavani* continues to be the newspaper of record in Karnataka and has been held in high esteem for its responsible reporting.

The Electronic Media

If the print media enjoy credibility and are considered a primary influence on public opinion, the electronic media have drawn flak primarily for emphasizing entertainment. Apart from achieving an accelerated growth rate in a short period of time, the electronic media have steadily increased their share of advertising revenue. Television

particularly grew at such a rapid pace that the decade-and-a-half from 1991 to 2006 in India is said to belong to television and the Internet (Ninan, 2007, p. 13; Thussu, 2007, p. 593). Although the Internet grew rapidly, its users continue to be limited to urban India. Radio, on the other hand, continued to languish until the government decided to open new frequencies to private players, and the broadcast industry came into its own.

Television

The growth of television in India is a rags-to-riches story that originated with the government-sponsored Doordarshan. The central government, which established Doordarshan when television came to India in 1959, shunned entertainment in favor of rural educational programming and nation-building (Fursich & Shrikhande, 2005, p. 8). Catering to its urban viewers was always a pressure that the state-owned entity found hard to deal with. It began airing commercials in 1976 and started accepting sponsored programs in the early 1980s, setting the stage for the commercialization of television. Satellite television transformed television into a household reality in India. The Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay installed a satellite dish on its roof during the Gulf War in 1991 to tap into CNN's signal (Crabtree & Malhotra, 2000, p. 369). Satellite TV further penetrated India after Satellite TV for Asian Region (STAR-TV) was established in Hong Kong. The channel started beaming five channels that were available to urban viewers. With economic liberalization gaining ground, India adopted an open-sky policy in the early 1990s that allowed foreign television channels to transmit via satellite (Govindaraju, 1999, p. 107). Immediately, private broadcasters started uplinking from India by buying uplink time from the Indian government. By 1992, for a small monthly subscription fee,

1.2 million homes in India had access to cable and satellite television mainly through cable operators (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 62).

STAR-TV also heralded the trend of “tabloid televisions” in India, which has been replicated by most commercial channels, including Doordarshan. Thussu (2007) identified broad themes in STAR News coverage, which can be discerned across the broadcast media. They include prioritization of neoliberal news, increased emphasis on Bollywood (Hindi film industry) news, coverage of cricket, more time toward metropolitan news, highlighting sensational and crime-related news, and less coverage afforded to foreign news. While television has come to dominate the media sector, it has also been accused of causing a steady erosion of responsible journalism by encouraging entertainment over news. One only needs to look at cable and satellite television penetration over the years to gauge the popularity of the medium. The National Readership Survey of 2006 concluded that 112 million homes with 230 million viewers across India had access to television. Of them, 68 million or 61 percent of TV-owning households had access to satellite television. Another important finding of the study was that 64 million homes had a color television set. The number of channels available to viewers has also increased dramatically with subscribers in some metropolitan cities having access to over 100 channels.

As television offers unprecedented reach to literate and illiterate audiences, advertisers have started to consider it seriously in their media campaigns. Television garnered 74,170.5 million rupees in advertising revenue in 2005. Apart from this, the subscription fee also helps commercial channels maintain a profitable bottomline. This

may be one of the reasons why commercial channels top the chart as the highest revenue grossers. In 2004-05, Zee Telefilms earned 13.6 billion rupees in profit with Star India and SET India following it with 13 billion rupees and 10 billion rupees, respectively. Doordarshan was fourth with a revenue of 6.65 billion rupees (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 63).

Although television was a latecomer in India, it altered the nation's mediascape beyond recognition. However, researchers have primarily studied its effects over the culture and lifestyles of Indians while paying little attention to its role in influencing other media, mainly the print media. Some researchers argue that the rapid penetration of satellite TV made the print media wary to begin with, particularly after television started attracting the highest share of advertising revenue. Yet, television seems to have helped the print media grow by engendering a hunger for news in the people. Ninan (2007) observed that in the Hindi heartland, "print was a post-television phenomenon" (p. 18). She argued that TV succeeded in fuelling curiosity among viewers who then looked forward to the next day's newspaper. At least in the short run, television appears to have helped the print media grow even as it siphoned off revenue and positioned itself as a model for the commercialization of media.

The Internet

Along with cable and satellite television, the internet grew rapidly in the 1990s. Even though most internet users continue to be concentrated in urban areas, causing a digital divide that the country is vigorously trying to bridge, it has occupied a prime place in India's media explosion. This is evident if one looks at the increase in the number of

people using the internet over the past 10 years. In 1998, 1.4 million people accessed the Internet; the number rose to 42 million by 2007 (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/in.htm>). This placed India in the fourth position after the U.S., China, and Japan with respect to the number of internet users (Chandrashekar, 2006).

The internet's growth in India is led by two factors: the ability of the Internet to integrate different media and to produce online revenue at an increasing rate over the years. The Internet is today part of the expansion plan of all major media organizations, which have an online presence. All major media entities have websites on which content is made available, mostly free of cost. This has resulted in a steady increase in online readership/viewership for media organizations but has also brought additional revenue in its wake. In 2005, the Internet business revenue in India totalled 22 billion rupees (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 204). Of this, only one billion rupees came from advertising while a major share (17 billion rupees) came from access alone. Many of the revenue-grossing websites such as Indiatimes.com integrate mobile telephony, television, films, newspaper, and the Internet to offer a wide range of services to website users. In addition, websites run by media organizations also earn a part of their revenue through e-commerce and classifieds.

Radio

It is difficult to track the growth of radio in India partly because the government continued to control it even in the 1990s and also because little research exists with regard to the number of listeners and the revenue radio earned. However, it can be argued that radio has emerged as a growing medium since 2000 when the government, for the

first time, invited bids to issue 108 private radio licences to run FM (Frequency Modulation) stations. The government had expected to raise 800 million rupees through the auction, but realized a revenue of 3.86 billion rupees after private media companies overbid for the licences (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 173). In July 2005, the government announced a new radio policy by auctioning 338 licenses for FM stations (Kumar, 2008, p. 25). This initiated a second round of radio privatization that has resulted in the erosion of the monopoly of the state-run All India Radio (AIR) over broadcasting.

Radio—the first electronic medium in India—suffered from the colonial legacy. Independent India inherited AIR in 1947 from the British colonizers and little was done to change its orientation or structure. As a consequence, AIR continued to be a vehicle of the government with little independence or autonomy (Jeffrey, 2006). With television growing phenomenally, radio was ignored by the government and existed as a poor cousin of television. Although the invention of the transistor made radio a mass medium with immense developmental potential, AIR failed to exploit it and radio's potential remained untapped. It was the entry of private players that brought about the belated boom in the radio sector in India. Five national players in radio have emerged as primary beneficiaries of the government's privatization drive: Kalanithi Maran's South Asia FM and Kal Radio, Anil Ambani's Adlab Films, the Bennett, Coleman & Company-owned Radio Mirchi and India Value Fund-Music Broadcast owned Radio City (Kholi-Khandekar, 2006, p. 167). Additionally, a host of small private players are also driving the second phase of radio expansion. Also, AIR continues to be a prominent player, particularly in rural areas.

These developments have brought about an increase in the number of listeners. According to the National Readership Survey of 2006, 27 percent of the population listens to radio, with new listeners of FM radio providing the new growth. The 76 million listeners that FM radio stations had in 2005 increased to 119 million listeners in 2006, registering a 55 percent increase in the number of listeners in just one year (<http://www.hindu.com/nic/nrs.htm>). In addition, the government approved a community radio policy in 2006 that is expected to help the democratization of the medium.

Summary

This chapter began by mapping the various interpretations of ideology and the relationship between ideology and hegemony before considering the ideological functions of the media. It then investigated the ideological process of subject formation in relation to journalists by examining the various influences that journalists are subjected to within and outside organizations. The next section probed neoliberalism in its materiality and as an ideology, indexing some of the strategies discernable in its discursive manifestations. The last section traced the evolution of the Indian media to understand the historical forces that have shaped the media.

This study posits that hegemony is primarily a discursive activity transacted in a sphere other than the economic. Following Thompson's thesis of the mediatization of modern culture and Hall's assertion that the media are called upon to perform ideological tasks in modern societies, it is argued that the media are deeply enmeshed in hegemony formation. This process intensifies in the context of neoliberalism, owing to its reliance on language and symbols to position itself as knowledge-driven. While this study accepts

these propositions, its utility is in decentering media texts by centering on journalists to investigate how they perceive neoliberalism and its effects on the media. While researchers acknowledge that the media are a key space where the discursive construction of neoliberalism comes into full play, they have a tendency to focus disproportionately on media texts rather than the way journalists, who are instrumental in creating media texts, make sense of neoliberalism. The media's collaboration in producing the ideology of neoliberalism through textual practices has thus been uncritically accepted as sufficient proof of the complicity of journalists in the process. This study submits this proposition to scrutiny.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the methodological framework of this study. First, I posit critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) as methodology to analyze the neoliberal discourses. Second, I describe in detail the specific research methods and concepts employed in this study to analyze the discourses. Finally, I outline the research design and procedures to be followed in the investigation.

Critical discourse analysis is used as a methodology to illuminate the discursive components of social formations. Studies that analyze discourses have six traditions to draw upon: conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis and critical linguistics, Bakhtinian research, and Foucauldian research (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001, p. 6). Although these traditions may overlap, they have different epistemological groundings and have led researchers to elucidate different aspects of the relation between language and social relations.

As discussed earlier, neoliberal discourses are articulated through several rhetorical strategies. This study, which focusses on identifying textual strategies deployed by journalists, makes theoretical connections with critical discourse analysis and offers tools to understand the phenomenon in question. More specifically, I propose to use critical discourse analysis to understand how neoliberal discourses are produced and articulated by journalists working for two Kannada newspapers. CDA will be used to identify themes to illuminate how neoliberal discourses are produced and operationalized through textual strategies.

CDA as Method

Language is increasingly becoming critical in securing the hegemony of neoliberalism as it is through language that neoliberalism is discursively produced, reified, and contested. The objective of this study is to understand the nature of neoliberal discourses in an attempt to make their role intelligible in bringing about the acceptance of neoliberalism in society. Neoliberal ideology is constantly articulated and (re)produced in everyday interactions. This process, in turn, entrenches neoliberalism in the public commonsense. An examination of neoliberal discourses helps identify the various processes that are mobilized to normalize a neoliberal ideology and harmonize it with social expectations.

A core epistemological belief of CDA is that discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations among different social groups (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). Discourse is seen by CDA as strengthening existing relations of power and social hierarchy. However, CDA maintains the crucial distinction that power is both discursive as well as extra-discursive. In this regard, it enlists the concept of ideology to explain the subjugation of one social group by another (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). Although CDA is interested in the role of discourse in reinforcing relations of power, it underscores the need to understand the function of discourse within the context of both discursive and extra-discursive social practices. In other words, CDA envisages a dialectical relationship between discourse and extra-discursive elements as mutually constituting social practices. It is in this context that Fairclough (1995) has defined CDA:

By ‘critical’ discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony . . . (pp. 132-133)

Four concepts are integral to CDA: critique, power, history, and ideology (Wodak, 2007, p. 208). While the term critical is understood as having a distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, making the political stand of the CDA practitioner explicit, and having a focus on self-reflection as scholars, power refers to the ways in which language articulates the existing social hierarchy based on its use by different social actors.

Scholars identifying with the CDA paradigm point out that rarely is text produced by an individual. Rather, power is negotiated within texts, which transforms texts into sites of struggle over meaning. The notion of history is critical to CDA as texts and discursive practices are placed in their historical contexts. All discourses are conceived as vehicles of the ideologies that they articulate. It is in this context that CDA aims to demystify discourses by deciphering the ideologies informing such discourses (Wodak, 2007, p. 208).

CDA posits that every instance of language usage is a communicative event that comprises three dimensions: it is a text, a discursive practice, and a social practice (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 68). Texts are categorized into spoken texts and written texts, though spoken texts are used for analysis as written texts after transcription (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). Fairclough (2003) has argued that texts are multifunctional in that they assist three major types of meaning: action, representation, or identification (p. 27). Action, representation, and identification may be evident in small parts of texts or in whole texts.

Although texts contain some inherent meaning, they are the product of a process of textual production. The process of textual production (and consumption) constitutes discourse practices, which refers to the whole process of social interaction that is indispensable to produce a text (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). This process includes the process of production as well as the process of interpretation of a text(s). Although texts may contain some traces of the production process and some cues to understand the interpretation process, a strictly textual analysis misses the social context which constituted the production and interpretation of the text.

The third level of analysis in CDA takes into account social practices that provide the context for the articulation of a text. No account of the production and interpretation of a text can ignore the ways in which the two processes are socially determined (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). Social practices are defined as articulations of different types of social elements associated with particular areas of social life (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25). Social practices also articulate discourse together with non-discoursal social elements.

This three-tiered analysis allows for an investigation of the dialectical relationship between the discursive and non-discursive elements of neoliberal ideology. This study will analyze interview transcripts, which will serve as texts, to identify dominant themes in the discourses of journalists. Themes can be theoretically understood as recurring or interesting and important ideas in the discourse(s) employed by journalists to articulate neoliberalism.

Research Design

This study examines how journalists working in two Kannada newspapers articulate the neoliberal discourse. The purpose of this study is two-fold: to understand how journalists make sense of the effects of economic liberalization on the structure of Kannada newspapers, and to outline the prominent themes evident in the discursive practices pertaining to neoliberalism as employed by journalists.

CDA will be used as the methodological framework to analyze neoliberal discourses as produced by journalists. Many reasons inform this methodological choice. First, CDA provides for an analysis of language that takes into account its social construction. It also seeks to unmask the use of language to reinforce social inequalities and unequal power relations within society. Second, CDA is well-suited for textual analysis as it makes available to researchers various tools to deconstruct discourse to isolate various themes and rhetorical strategies that constitute the discourse. Third, CDA sees discourse as being articulated with other non-discursive social elements to form the whole of social practices. This is consistent with the core epistemological position of this

study that neoliberalism should be understood as simultaneously comprised of discursive and non-discursive elements that act together to secure the hegemony of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology of contemporary social formations.

This study aimed to outline the themes and rhetorical strategies that comprised the neoliberal discourse as articulated by journalists. Owen (1984) argued for reconceptualizing themes as more than a set of cognitive schemes. Rather, he posited themes as a limited range of interpretations that are used to conceptualize developments and happenings (p. 274). He noted that themes had three criteria: (1) recurrence, (2) repetition, and (3) forcefulness (p. 275). While recurrence referred to the same meaning constituted by different wordings, repetition meant the reiteration of key words, phrases, or sentences (p. 276). Forcefulness, according to Owens, exemplified dramatic pauses and vocal inflection.

Following Owen's argument, this study conceives of themes as interesting and important ideas that repeat/recurr in the neoliberal discourses. These ideas were articulated by respondents from both newspapers in responses to different questions that investigated the impact of neoliberalism on Kannada newspapers. In keeping with the tradition of CDA, transcripts of recorded interviews served as texts for the purpose of the study (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 3).

Interviews featured a total of 17 interviewees, including eight journalists from *Prajavani* and seven journalists from *Samyukta Karnataka*, and two from other Kannada newspapers who had formerly served in at least one of the two newspapers under study. Two journalists interviewed retired recently after serving one of the newspapers for over

35 years. All the journalists were selected based on two conditions: they had served in one of the two newspapers for at least 18 years, which would help them draw comparisons between the Kannada print media in the pre- and post-liberalization era, and the second condition being that they occupied positions in the middle rung of the journalistic hierarchy, which placed them in close proximity to the management. By middle rung, I mean designations that included senior reporter, chief reporter, city editor, senior correspondent, and principal correspondent in the reporting bureau and senior editor, chief editor, associate editor, assistant editor, and news editor in the newsroom. This placed them in a vantage position wherein they could be “productively reflexive” about the impact of neoliberalism on Kannada print (and electronic) journalism.

My own stint as a working journalist for five years in Bangalore helped me in identifying and enlisting the support of my interviewees. Although I had worked for the English print media, I knew a number of Kannada journalists, and this helped me in gaining access to my interviewees. Moreover, I did not know any of my interviewees personally, although I had heard about them from various colleagues. Kannada journalists, whom I knew, were instrumental in helping me gain access to the interviewees.

All interviews were conducted in July 2007. Most interviews occurred at the newspaper offices; they were conducted whenever the interviewees managed to make some time in their work schedule. The average length of the interviews was 50 minutes with the longest interview being 117 minutes and the shortest 28 minutes. Three interviews were conducted in Hubli where Samyukta Karnataka is headquartered while

all other interviews were conducted in Bangalore. The pre-interview process typically involved me showing up at the office of the journalists and explaining my project. I would then request them for an interview, which was usually granted. This would be followed by scheduling an interview at a time convenient to the interviewee.

I explained to my interviewees the IRB clearance process and procured their signatures on consent forms before beginning the interviews. The interviews were comprised of open-ended questions,² and the order of questioning was modified to suit the interviews. Open-ended questions outside of the original protocol were used based on the context and the relevance of the questions. All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder, and the interviewees were informed in advance about the recording of the interviews. However, the recorder was placed in a position to make it less conspicuous.

All the respondents were enthusiastic in taking part in the interviews. Most of them were curious about how a study involving Kannada newspapers would benefit an American university. However, they were also happy to see me come back to study the Kannada press. They interpreted this work as my commitment to the journalist community in India, and were happy to participate in a study that would document changes in the Indian media. This sense of goodwill vastly helped me complete the interviews. Another aspect that also helped me in the process was that most journalists saw me as an insider owing to my stint as a working journalist in Bangalore for five years. This seems to have convinced them to be forthcoming in the interviews as they

thought “I already knew the state of journalism as it has unfolded.”³ This helped me elicit more information during the interviews.

Summary

Critical discourse analysis offers an important way of comprehending how discourses are constructed and enacted by different social actors. This chapter outlined the methodological framework for this study. It started by positing CDA as a methodology followed by a brief discussion of some of the core epistemological beliefs of CDA, particularly as they pertain to this study. The next section described the research design of this study in detail, including data collection and analysis methods.

² See appendix for the list of questions.

³ Stated by a respondent during an interview.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

This study posed four questions pertaining to the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991 and its impact on Kannada journalism: 1) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on their working conditions? 2) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the news values of Kannada journalism? 3) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the role of newspapers in society? 4) How do such understandings reproduce or challenge the ideology of neoliberalism?

This chapter will present the analysis of interview texts to discuss the themes that emerged in the responses of journalists to make intelligible the respondents' understanding of the effects of economic liberalization on Kannada journalism. Themes will be identified under the first three questions that articulate the journalists' responses to the impact of economic liberalization on their working conditions, news values of Kannada journalism, and the role of newspapers in society. The fourth question will be addressed by looking at how journalists, by drawing upon specific privileged, normalized, or oppositional discourses, reproduce or challenge the ideology of neoliberalism.

Working Conditions of Kannada Journalists

Two themes emerged in response to the question that sought to investigate the impact of economic liberalization on the working conditions of Kannada journalists. Each of the themes, namely (1) centrality of new technologies with ambiguity about their role in the newsroom and (2) rationalizing the tension between enhanced salary but shrinking

job security, appeared in some form or other in the responses of all journalists, although the interviewees took different positions when articulating these themes.

Theme 1: Centrality of Technology With Ambiguity About Its Role in Newsroom

Journalists working for both *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka* agreed that advancements in technology were the key change that took place in Kannada newspapers after economic liberalization took effect in 1991. In response to a question about the impact of economic liberalization on Kannada journalism, a journalist working for *Prajavani* explained that rapid technological advancement was the major effect experienced by Kannada journalists:

Firstly technological, I should say . . . earlier, there was a different kind of technology. Computers came and their use increased. Initially, there was some resistance (to use of computers) as there was some fear about computerization . . . (that computers may lead to) loss of jobs . . . you know proofreaders and other people we had come to rely upon . . . we thought they would lose their job. But with people using computers regularly, that resistance disappeared. We don't have that situation now. Technology . . . technology is the main issue with economic liberalization.

Another journalist working for the same newspaper put forth a similar view that “after (19)91, basically technology started to improve. Hand composing had just begun . . . for the first time Kannada journalism opened itself to technology, that is my opinion.”

The interviewee's colleague endorsed this statement and noted, “The technological

changes that have occurred in the past 15 years . . . over the past one-and-a-half decade . . . is mind-boggling. The changes far exceed our imagination . . . ”

In the same vein, a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* added that technology had helped Kannada newspapers attain a national stature: “Technology . . . it helped Kannada journalism gain stature at the national level . . . we became equal to newspapers at the national level because of technology. Quality (of newspapers) improved.” Another journalist working for the same newspaper went to the extent of calling the period after 1991, the “age of development” for Kannada newspapers mainly owing to technology:

After (19)91, computerization, offset printing . . . all these things became a reality. Then modem came . . . earlier there was DTP (desk top publishing), a teleprinter . . . but modem replaced them. So, one can conclusively say that the period after (19)91 was the age of development for Kannada newspapers.

While there was consensus among the respondents that technological advancements were indeed the most visible effect of economic liberalization and a majority of them seemed to agree that Kannada journalism improved as a result, a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* called attention to how technology may have served the interests of newspaper managements more than that of journalists. The journalist observed that the effects of technological developments were far more complicated than just being purely beneficial:

Investment definitely increased because of the introduction of new technology. So, newspapers (further) became slaves of capitalists.

I remember . . . in '30s or round about that time, there was a daily (news)paper called *Vijaya* in Dharwad. At that time, starting a newspaper was quite an adventure. Hosakeri Annachaar was its editor. He used to print (the newspaper) himself. Soon, the demand for the (news)paper increased . . . the circulation went above 200 (copies a day). He decided not to print more than 200 copies a day . . . he printed a line (in his newspaper) that said: 'please don't ask for more copies . . . we can't publish more . . . '

Today, you can't go individual . . . it (newspaper) has to be corporatized . . . investment, you see. Whenever it's about investment, newspapers become profit-oriented . . .

The consensus over recognizing advancements in technology as the key defining factor of Kannada journalism after 1991 gave way to disagreements among journalists when asked about how technological advancements, particularly computerization, had impacted their working conditions. While journalists largely agreed that improvements in printing technology had made their respective newspapers attractive to readers, their opinions differed over the specific impact of computerization and the Internet on the working conditions of journalists. The responses ranged from wholehearted approval of the computerization of newsrooms to laments about computerization increasing the workload for journalists.

With regard to Kannada newspapers starting color editions after 1991, most journalists noted that this was a direct result of enhanced competition, particularly from 24-hour news channels and the evolution of the internet as a source of news. A journalist

from *Prajavani* argued that competition was the primary reason for Kannada newspapers to start color editions. The journalist added:

See, competition again. If other newspapers are bringing out color editions you will also have to do so. Even the electronic media's influence can be seen here. Electronic media is certainly stronger. From the context of news, electronic media has advantage over print media. But the advantage that print media has is its credible . . . (people think) 'if I can't read it today I can read it tomorrow.' So when you have that advantage why don't you use it? Who will read a black-and-white newspaper? No one. So naturally I will use technology. It also helps me (in dealing) with competition.

Another journalist from the same newspaper agreed that starting color editions had helped make the newspaper attractive to readers. However, the journalist also noted that because of color editions, there was an overemphasis on visual content at the cost of text:

I also think this (starting color editions) had an advantage as it probably made newspapers more appealing . But in the process of giving more attention to visual appeal probably the content became diluted . . . the thinking that it is enough to just publish a photograph of an event (rather than report it) started taking roots.

In addition to acknowledging the impact of color editions in promoting visual appeal, journalists also agreed that color editions attracted more ads and hence increased the revenue for newspapers. A journalist from *Prajavani* said:

This (color edition) was a result of the advancements in printing technology. There was also the introduction of offset printing (which enabled color editions).

Many newspapers started having all their pages in color since it would attract readers and would be more appealing to them, though it also meant (the ability to carry) color ads and more revenue.

Another journalist working for the same newspaper noted that though color editions had brought more revenue to the newspaper, they had also resulted in better packaging of news: “Also, if you take the ad in the main newspaper, it is only around quarter of a page. The rest of the page would be (comprised of) news and photos . . . ads are not the only reason (that we went color).”

While journalists working for *Prajavani* largely agreed that introducing color editions had helped make their newspaper attractive, their counterparts at *Samyukta Karnataka* were more critical about the impact of color printing on the news values of Kannada journalism. A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* observed that newspapers had started to violate the 60:40 rule by opening up more space for ad than editorial content:

According to the Price-Page schedule, we’re not supposed to have more than 40 percent of the space (on each page) allocated for advertisements. But these days, it’s (ads are) hardly ever less than 50 percent. It is as if newspapers are donating space for news. If newspapers give 60 percent to 70 percent space for ads with less than 30 percent for news, that again being cut-down if the newspaper is under pressure, what you will see is two columns of news stories and six columns of ads

Another journalist also expressed concern over how color editions had resulted in more space being allocated for ads. The journalist observed that after 1991, while

introducing a color edition had become possible because of technological developments, the ensuing market economy had liberated the productivity of entrepreneurs, who now depended on the media to advertise their product in order to prevail over their competitors. This development, the journalist remarked, had created immense pressure on newspapers to allocate more ad space at the cost of shrinking editorial space. When asked if an increase in the number of pages could offset the loss of space to advertisements, he categorically added that this was not the case. The explanation provided by the journalist also offers a rudimentary exposure to newspaper economics:

. . . then, the equation reversed . . . newspapers started allocating 60 percent of their space for ads and 40 percent for editorials. The problem is such that we can do little to deal with it . . . we can't ask for more newsprint to print additional pages (to create more news space) as it will increase the cost of production. There are all these problems . . .

Also, there is cost of production calculation (that newspapers are concerned with) . . . that the number of pages won't exceed a certain number irrespective of the ads. Ramnath Goenka started this (way of calculation) in his *Indian Express* newspaper . . . it is basically the proposition that you will not increase the number of pages beyond a particular number and keep your ad-news content proportion at 40:60. So, your income will not increase based on your circulation . . . let's say if you print 50:50 ratio of ads and news content at the rate of 50,000 copies a day. Even if you increase this number to 100,000 copies, your revenue will be the same. Your income from ads will remain the same . . . but your cost of

production increases if you increase the copies you print every day from 50,000 to 100,000.

So, while journalists largely agreed that introducing color editions had helped them embellish the newspaper to attract more readers, such positions were shadowed by concerns over the increasing space allocations made to advertisements at the cost of news content. While the *Prajavani* journalist was more concerned about photographs claiming more newspaper space than text, journalists working for *Samyukta Karnataka* were concerned about advertisements colonizing space. Either way, a minority of the respondents were mindful of how technological developments (in this case, color printing) could have far-reaching consequences on Kannada journalism.

However, the ambiguity regarding the role of technology in Kannada journalism clearly came to the fore when journalists were asked about how computerization of newsrooms, which occurred after 1991, had impacted working conditions in Kannada newspapers. While some journalists saw the computerization of newsrooms as an inevitable development and a boon to the Kannada journalist, others drew attention to the increased workload of journalists after computerization had taken effect. They also lamented that computerization had made journalism “technical” with journalists spending more time in front of their computers rather than being outside looking for stories.

A journalist from *Prajavani* noted that computers helped carry timely news and that all taluk-level reporters⁴ of *Prajavani* had computers and digital cameras. “So, an

⁴ Districts are divided into taluks, which are further divided into hoblis for administrative convenience.

event that happens in a small town in Bidar, which is 800 km away (from Bangalore), is reported in the next day's newspapers." Another journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* said computers helped save time:

We finish (work) by 8 (p.m.) . . . because of computerization a lot of time gets saved . . . proofreading is easy . . . they (subeditors or editors) see the copy once and give it a headline. Earlier, after I wrote (a story), (I would) send it to composing after a proofreader read it . . . then second correction . . . then it would come back . . . then again it had to be read. Such a long process has become compact . . . within seconds we get the Hubli edition, Davangere edition, Gulbarga edition, Belgaum edition . . . we get everything .

The journalist's colleague expressed a similar view and said the use of computers had made newspapers attractive. The respondent added:

Kannada newspapers contain more information than ever before . . . they have become more attractive. The layout is more attractive . . . this is mainly because of computers. Earlier, you did not know that you could use tables (infographics) or a cartoon so easily . . . computers have made this possible.

However, a majority of the journalists noted that computers had increased their workload. A journalist working for Prajavani provided a clear picture of how journalistic workload had increased as a result of computerization:

Earlier, there was a process . . . I used to write (a story) . . . write with a pen, I mean. Then, someone would take it to a DTP operator, who would feed it into the computer. Then, he would print the story, which would be handed over to the

proofreader. Once the proofreader would be done proofreading, the copy would go back to the DTP operator who would make the corrections. Then, the final copy would be printed and handed over to the page-makers, who would make the page. This would, in turn, be taken to the typesetters . . . this process included at least 10 people. Today, a journalist is doing all the work of the 10 people, including the attender, the DTP operator, the proofreader, page-maker, and others.

Respondents also expressed concern about how computerization had made journalists who lacked computer skills dispensable. They were also concerned about journalism being reduced to a technical skill with the accompanying loss of creativity. A journalist from *Prajavani* revealed that an acquaintance, who worked for a different newspaper, had become alienated because the person lacked computer skills. Another journalist working for *Prajavani*, although appreciative of the computerization of newsrooms, added that computers had made journalism technical:

But the main tragedy is human interface. Earlier, you would sit in a group . . . discuss a copy . . . think about what headline you should give. That practice does not exist anymore. Absolutely no human interface, we have all become machines. So, the process of newspaper production has become more mechanical than creative work.

A respondent remarked that computerization had led to health problems: “I have to work on the computer for at least 10 hours . . . this leads to a lot of health-related issues. I work for a long time on the computer and this has lead to backache, eye problems . . .”

This ambiguity over the impact of computerization on journalists extended to the nature of the internet and its effects on Kannada journalism. While most journalists believed that the internet had exposed Kannada journalists to new avenues of information, others were concerned about Kannada journalists relying excessively on the Web rather than their personal contacts for information.

A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* noted that the internet was not only a source of interesting information but liberated Kannada journalists from spatio-temporal constraints as they could access information from around the world in a timely manner.

The respondent added:

The Internet can be the source of very interesting information . . . even PTI⁵ may miss a few things, but the internet will not. I was online the other day. Osama Bin Laden's son, who is 26 years (old), has married a woman who is 56 years old. I don't think anybody in our newspaper knew about this. We immediately took notice of this and carried it (in our edition). This is clearly because of the internet. We have started getting more information, interesting information . . .

Another journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* observed that journalists turned to the internet in times of crisis. The journalist went on to illustrate this position with an example:

⁵ Press Trust of India, a news agency that a majority of the Indian newspapers subscribe to.

Veerappan⁶ died at midnight . . . the library was closed and we didn't have time (to get background information on him). We searched the (inter)net . . . whatever we found on him, we just took it and put it (in the newspaper). Who knew Veerappan would die this way? This is (an example of) how the internet has become so handy for us . . . and it opens us to new things . . . so many things . . . why shouldn't we let our readers know all these things? We didn't know these things at all . . . it's wonderful . . . and we can show it to people.

While most journalists were clearly in favor of using the internet to meet informational needs, a journalist working for *Prajavani* was concerned about how the internet had caused journalists to devote more time to work on the computer than to “be in the field” to collect stories. The journalist observed: “Reporters are today very dependent on TV . . . on internet . . . to spot breaking news and other news stories . . . they are not very interested in local institutions.”

However, another journalist from *Prajavani* argued that the introduction of the internet had negligible impact on the way journalists went about their daily tasks. Rather, a newspaper's policy, the journalist argued, determined how the internet would impact Kannada journalism:

But that is more of a policy issue. Just because I or someone will go online, it does not mean that a newspaper's policy is going to change . . . that is left to managements, respective managements. Slowly it (the internet) may have some

⁶ Veerappan was a forest brigand who operated in the forests of South India. He was killed in a police operation.

impact . . . maybe in the way we present news. But I don't think it has a major impact on day-to-day journalism.

In sum, while most journalists recognized technological improvements as the defining feature of their work routines in the post-liberalization era—with one journalist even calling the period after 1991 as the “age of development” for Kannada journalism—such an understanding soon gave way to ambiguity and concerns over the impact of color printing on Kannada news values, though consensus prevailed that color editions had helped attract more readers.

Intense disagreements prevailed when journalists were questioned about the impact of computerization on their working conditions, with the responses reflecting varied positions from the defense of computerization to personal accounts of how computerization had increased the workload manifold. With regard to the use of the internet, the journalists working for the two newspapers agreed that it had benefitted them as it had enhanced their access to a variety of information. Only a few respondents expressed the fear that it had confined reporters to the newsroom and, thereby, contributed to their alienation from local institutions.

Theme 2: Rationalizing Tension Between Enhanced Salaries but Shrinking Job Security

Another effect of economic liberalization that journalists identified as having a significant impact on their working conditions was an increase in their salaries. Although the respondents were unanimous in their opinion that journalist salaries had increased after 1991, albeit moderately, a majority of the journalists opposed the introduction of the contract system or the practice of hiring journalists on contract rather than a permanent

basis. This opposition to the contract system, which is performance-based, is interesting considering that both *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka* continue to hire journalists on a permanent basis.

When asked about their opinion on the salaries offered to Kannada journalists, a *Prajavani* journalist noted that the salaries had gone up. The journalist said, “Yes . . . salaries have increased . . . the salary scales are better than earlier times. Apart from the wage board recommendations, now, in our organization, special increments, perks are given . . . so some changes have occurred, in this respect.” Another journalist working for the same newspaper endorsed this viewpoint and added that “as far as salaries are concerned, they are as per the (working journalists) wage board. However, nobody has bothered about revising wage board scales . . . recently a wage board was constituted. We are still expecting its verdict.” A similar view was expressed by a *Samyukta Karnataka* journalist who said it was only after 1991 that Kannada journalists had started getting salaries exceeding Rs. 10,000 (\$200, approx.).⁷ The journalist said:

What I wanted to say was even when it comes to financial security . . . after (19)91, our financial (job) security started getting more importance . . . it’s only after (1991) that journalists started feeling that they can earn in the thousands . . . a salary of more than Rs. 10,000 became possible only in *Janavahini*’s⁸ times.

This unanimity in recognizing the increase in salaries was followed by an admission that although salaries had increased, they were still inadequate compared to

⁷ At the currency conversion rate of \$1=Rs. 50

journalistic output and productivity. A journalist working for *Prajavani* captured this sentiment clearly:

Talking about salaries . . . earlier, when I joined as a journalist, our pay was equal to those of college lecturers. I resigned from my teaching job (to join journalism) . . . Rs. 850 was my basic (salary as a lecturer), and my new job matched that salary. But now, what has happened is that my colleagues who continued to teach have started getting more salary after the UGC⁹ pay scales (were implemented) . . . and the amount of work they do is less compared to us. But if you look at it that way . . . I still feel we are somewhere low paid. I mean if you take the amount of work (we put in), the pay is not satisfactory.

The respondent observed that although salaries had gone up, journalists working for English language newspapers, including journalists with relatively little experience, continued to command much more remuneration than senior Kannada journalists.

Another grouse that journalists had about the increase in salaries was that it was a recent phenomenon, which had resulted in some of the relatively new entrants to the profession commanding the same salary that senior journalists did. A *Prajavani* journalist, who maintained that journalist salaries had definitely increased after 1991, was disgruntled that the increase had been too quick and too indiscrete, causing heartburn among senior journalists. Drawing upon a personal example, he said: “A young woman who was working with us (*Prajavani*) for two years quit the job here and went to *The Times of*

⁸ Janavahini was a Kannada newspaper which folded up in **2000** within three years after it started operations.

India (Kannada) . . . her salary is around Rs. 25,000 . . . a person with just two years experience is getting Rs. 25,000 but those with 15 years experience, like me, are now getting around Rs. 25,000.”

Accounts of salary increases and their effects on the morale of journalists were followed by evaluations of the contract system of hiring journalists, a relatively recent phenomenon among Kannada newspapers. While two journalists, one each from *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka*, defended the contract system, the responses of other journalists varied from a cautious endorsement of the contract system to its rejection for having induced job insecurity among journalists.

A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* maintained that the contract system would eventually become a reality that journalists would have to contend with. He said:

You will have to think about it in terms of economics . . . take any profession, for that matter, not just journalism . . . things have changed. If I start telling you how things were in 1962, you may not listen or just get bored . . . we need to move on. If not, we will become obsolete.

When asked if this meant that he supported the contract system, the same journalist added:

In a sense, it has been good . . . it makes sure that only people who can survive the rigors of a profession will stay in that profession. In a sense, it is a nice way to get rid of the slackers . . . people who do not want to work but enjoy the benefits. The

⁹ University Grants Commission, which oversees the administration of universities in India.

contract system makes sure that you are on your toes . . . it makes sure that people are productive.

If the journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* saw the contract system as a wake-up call for journalists who were “slackers,” a journalist from *Prajavani*, although critical of the contract system, minimized its effects on journalists. The respondent remarked that while the contract system did cause apprehension among some journalists, the concomitant increase in salary safeguarded journalists against job insecurity.

He (the journalist) may not be having job security . . . but that apart, if he is intelligent, he can make his life secure by investing . . . a person with 15 years experience, like me, will get Rs. 25,000 as salary . . . but those with five to 10 years experience, working on a three-year contract, will get around Rs. 12,000 (at our newspaper).

But there (*Vijaya Karnataka* or *The Times of India-Kannada*) the same journalist will get around Rs. 25,000. So, if he is smart, he will invest a part of his money . . . he would earn the salary that I am earning after 15 years within three years.

Claims of “slackers” not surviving the ordeal or those with financial foresight not being affected by the contract system were, however, viewpoints expressed only by a minority of the respondents. Most journalists were critical of the effects of the contract system on the morale and performance of their colleagues. A journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* observed:

The contract system (of hiring journalists) has started now. I don't think it is very prevalent among Kannada newspapers, but it is the norm with English

newspapers. A journalist is given a total of Rs. 30,000 (in salary a month) . . . that person will not be given a bonus . . . he is eligible for one casual leave a month and gets no earned leave. The only compensation is extra money . . . instead of paying Rs. 18,000 (a month), the journalist is paid Rs. 30,000.

The journalist added that the contract system had induced job insecurity as well as disruptions in the newsroom as journalists were sure to quit jobs if offered better salaries by other media organizations. This trend, the journalist added, had increased after 1991, particularly with the media explosion witnessed in Karnataka.

The other thing about contract system is that you will be retained only if you meet expectations. Otherwise, you will be fired. Job security, naturally, does not exist anymore . . . because you are not a permanent employee. With the earlier system, you would be promoted periodically . . . even if that did not happen, you would never lose your job. But with contract system . . . of course, your salary has gone up. But job security is not good. That is a reality today.

A journalist from *Prajavani*, who expressed a similar viewpoint, observed that the contract system had opened up a lot of opportunities while inducing job insecurity among journalists. However, despite the merits of the contract system, the journalist added that those working for Kannada newspapers were yet to benefit in the same way that journalists working for English language newspapers had benefitted from the contract system:

In terms of opportunity . . . the number of people who quit (jobs) has increased. Earlier, *Prajavani* was considered a final destination (in terms of job security).

But now, people have even started leaving (*Prajavani*) for greener pastures. But insecurity has increased. People who are ready to take risk are leaving. Lot of TV channels are also coming up. So, there are many opportunities for youngsters. If they are competent many opportunities exist (for them). But compared to English journalism, I still feel we are far behind.

Another journalist working for *Prajavani* observed that increases in the salaries and other changes in the working conditions of journalists had to be seen in the context of the reduced bargaining power of labor in the post-economic liberalization era. The journalist stated that although salaries had increased, job insecurity had become a permanent feature of the journalistic profession. In addition, the respondent articulated the viewpoint expressed by other journalists that those in the employment of Kannada newspapers were yet to receive the same benefits afforded to those working for English newspapers.

Only one respondent—a journalist working for *Prajavani*—argued that newspaper owners stood to benefit financially from the contract system, even though they had started to offer more salaries to journalists. The journalist noted that the increase in salaries had to be seen against the backdrop of the increase in the workload of journalists. This description of how newspapers were making profits even as they were offering more salaries to journalists illustrates this point:

Whatever salary was given to 10 people . . . lets imagine they (the management) were spending Rs. 10,000 on the salary of the 10 people. They increased the salary of a journalist from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000 while, at the same time, asking him to

do 10 people's job. The journalists were initially very happy . . . their salary had doubled. But the owners (of newspapers) had, at the same time, saved Rs. 8,000. Of that Rs. 8,000 that they saved, they invested Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 6,000 on technology . . . this, in turn, contributed toward increasing their profits.

The journalist added that the increase in salary did not compensate for the concomitant increase in the standard of living. Drawing upon the increase in the price of food commodities, he said: "Someone who was getting Rs. 1,000 then is getting Rs. 2,000 now. But the price of rice, which was Rs. 3 a kilogram then, is Rs. 23 now. So, the increase in salary has been offset (by other increases)."

Although journalists were unanimous about the increase in salaries, disagreements prevailed over the effects of the contract system with most respondents being critical of the new hiring process. While journalists working for *Samyukta Karnataka* cited job insecurity as their primary reason for opposing the contract system, journalists working for *Prajavani*, though critical of the system, nevertheless maintained that they were clearly at a disadvantage under any system when compared to journalists working for the English media. This sensitivity to the disparity in salaries of English and Kannada newspaper journalists could be attributed to the fact that journalists working for *Prajavani* interacted on a daily basis with journalists from *Deccan Herald*, a sister publication of the same group that owns *Prajavani*. The offices of both *Deccan Herald* and *Prajavani* are housed in the same premises with journalists from the newspapers sharing resources on a daily basis. This may have exposed *Prajavani* journalists to the

fact that their counterparts in *Deccan Herald* were drawing higher salaries than themselves.

Changing News Values of Kannada Newspapers

Three themes were evident in the responses of journalists when asked about the impact of economic liberalization on the news values of Kannada dailies. These themes, including (1) increased economic news as a natural consequence of liberalization, (2) readers' demands driving increase in entertainment-oriented content, and (3) shrinking editorial control as the space of contestation, were articulated by journalists at various points in the interviews. While journalists from the two newspapers agreed that there had been an increase in coverage of economic issues and entertainment-oriented content (although they gave different reasons for the same), disagreement prevailed when asked about editorial independence in the post-liberalization era.

Theme 1: Increased Economic News as a Natural Consequence of Liberalization

All the respondents were of the opinion that economic content in Kannada newspapers had visibly increased in the post-1991 period owing to various factors. A journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* noted that before 1991, only English newspapers had columns dedicated to business coverage. However, after economic liberalization, Kannada newspapers were forced to adopt this practice:

Before '91, what used to happen is that English newspapers would have columns dedicated to business . . . they would cover business news. But nobody would publish detailed facts and figures; nobody would publish how much profit a particular bank made or did not make . . . that trend just did not exist.

(After 1991) That kind of coverage increased . . . there was a huge increase in the number of articles on economic issues. After (19)91, particularly in the past 15-16 years (this trend has increased).

Even in small newspapers, economic coverage vastly increased . . . because of this, even common people started understanding how the economic system functioned . . . they got a better idea of how things worked. This was mainly because the media made this understanding possible.

A journalist from *Prajavani*, who expressed a similar view, observed that business journalism had become particularly visible after 1991. The journalist noted that this had not only meant affording more coverage of commerce in the mainsheet but that newspapers had also started separate business supplements to carry in-depth reports on the economy and the business sector:

Earlier, to the best of my knowledge, the commerce page only carried news about national shares and stocks. Only *Udayavani* would have a one-page business page . . . later even we started offering more business news, particularly news on shares and stocks. Suddenly, there were a lot of developments, including a stock market boom . . . mutual funds came and other changes happened, so even we started publishing business news in *Prajavani*.

Initially, we would only give a report on crop prices and share prices but later we also started publishing reports in English in Kannada paper because there was a good readership for it. Finally this led to the publishing of a business supplement

once a week. In other words, financial journalism gained prominence even in Kannada journalism.

Another respondent working for the same newspaper noted that after 1991, the pressure to expand business coverage increased. Explaining the reasons that led to the evolution of *Vanijya Prabha*, *Prajavani*'s business supplement, the journalist said: "How much (business news) can you accommodate on pages 8 or 9? You have to include analysis (pertaining to business news). You have to satiate the readers' thirst (for business news). So, we started *Vanijya Prabha*." A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* echoed the views of the journalist from *Prajavani* and claimed that the increase in economic activities after 1991 had put pressure on Kannada newspapers to expand their business coverage.

While most respondents agreed that business coverage in Kannada newspapers had increased after 1991, they saw this as a natural consequence of the rise of the private sector. However, a journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* noted that this development had resulted in advertisement executives increasingly demanding editorial favors for placing ads in newspapers:

Instead of PROs¹⁰ coming with press releases about their company expansion or such things, ad people started coming over. The difference was PROs had limited demands . . . they just wanted to make sure that news pertaining to their organization was covered in the newspaper or, if their chairman delivered a

¹⁰ Public relations officer

speech, they wanted to make sure that his photo appeared (in the newspaper) . . . they (PROs) would be very happy if newspapers meet such demands.

But with globalization, economic activities gained prominence . . . even Kannada newspapers have started keeping aside more than one page for commerce-related news.

Instead of PROs, ad agency executives started coming (to the newsroom) . . . I have seen this trend increase in the last 8-10 years. Now, what is happening is that companies make a deal with ad agencies. They say: ‘We will release our ad through your agency. But get us two-column coverage (or) three-column coverage with a photograph (in the newspapers).’ They (companies) started insisting on this (as a precondition to release ads). This started only after globalization.

This respondent insisted that the increase in business coverage should not be seen as an innocent development post-liberalization, but should be understood as the result of market pressure on newspapers to adopt certain changes. Another journalist from the same newspaper observed that an additional factor had caused Kannada newspapers to increase their business coverage. The respondent said economic liberalization had opened up new avenues of finance to newspapers, including favorable response from banks to requests of loans, which had caused an ideological shift among newspapers toward coverage of business activities. This development, the journalist said, was also responsible for the increase in business coverage among Kannada newspapers.

All respondents noted that business coverage had increased in Kannada newspapers after 1991 and saw it mainly as a corollary effect of the economy. However,

only two respondents, both from *Samyukta Karnataka*, differed in the way they understood Kannada newspapers' showing more interest in business coverage. While one respondent attributed it to direct market pressure, the other explained it as having been caused by an ideological shift among Kannada newspapers because of easy access to finance.

Theme 2: Readers' Demands Driving Increase in Entertainment-Oriented Content

All respondents observed that Kannada newspapers had started giving more importance to entertainment-oriented content after 1991, although they varied on whether this had occurred at the cost of ignoring information. A journalist working for *Prajavani* argued that there was no doubt Kannada newspapers had started giving more importance to entertainment-related content after 1991. Holding readers partly responsible for this change, the journalist claimed that the fact that India had accepted the market economy had contributed to newspapers paying more attention to entertainment rather than news. The journalist said, "This is because even people prefer such content . . . we should realize that since we have accepted market economy, people, when they go home, look through newspapers or (watch) TV to see what they can buy . . . as a result, (hard) content has definitely been hit."

Another journalist from the same newspaper invoked the growing usage of the word "infotainment" to explain the rising preference for entertainment content among newspapers. Although conceding that newspapers had started paying more attention to entertainment, the journalist maintained that day-to-day journalism was a struggle for striking a balance between entertainment and information.

Like they say, infotainment . . . that concept is very rampant. Not just in the vernacular press, but throughout the media . . . infotainment is the most preferred term.

This is not a new concept. We had it earlier, too. But it has become dominant now. But we always try to package it (news), to balance it. We don't want to abandon seriousness (news). We use visual appeal for entertainment and to attract readers. But we are definitely doing the balancing act.

As if to prove the journalist's point, a respondent working for *Prajavani* used the word "infotainment" to convey that *Prajavani* was equally committed to the ideals of good journalism without sacrificing entertainment. The journalist maintained that all Kannada newspapers—with the exception of *The Times of India* (Kannada), which the journalist saw as being excessively centered around entertainment—continued to be information-oriented, although "entertainment content has increased."

I think there is a mix. I don't think we are ignoring anything. We are packaging whatever we were traditionally giving in a more attractive manner. I mean infotainment culture is surely catching up. But I don't think that has happened in the mainsheet. We have made our news presentation more attractive. I don't think that has affected news. But, we have started giving entertainment news.

A majority of the journalists who claimed that entertainment content had increased in Kannada newspapers attributed it to changing news preferences and tastes among readers. The response of a journalist from *Prajavani* encapsulates this viewpoint: "They (readers) prefer reading entertainment-related material or something very light . . .

they don't want to read any news that is heavy on their minds. Naturally, entertainment-related news has increased in newspapers.”

When pressed to explain why journalists believed that readers' news preferences had changed, the respondents at best cited vague surveys purportedly conducted by the circulation department or commonsensical understanding about readers that prevailed among journalists. While no one had ever seen a survey about changing readers' tastes sponsored by their newspapers, the respondents remained adamant in their conviction that the readers' news preferences had indeed changed. A respondent from *Prajavani* best illustrated this point. When asked why the view that readers' news preferences had changed was rampant among journalists, the respondent said:

I seriously do not know . . . I honestly do not know. This is a commonsense-based perception. Who has the time? Even readers will tell you that they don't have time for lengthy stories. If someone delivers a 1-hour-long speech, can you write an equivalent report? Lots of stories are there . . . lots of interesting stories are there. Do you know why newspapers need human-interest stories? But before that let me talk about another important development . . . politics has gone to the inside pages. Politics does not enjoy the importance that it once did. Consumerism is occupying the place that politics quit. (News)Papers are becoming very consumerist. There is a kind of reluctance to afford more coverage to politics . . . erosion of values in politics is also a reason for this. They (politicians) have become corrupt, hopeless . . . and another tragedy is that there are no ideals in society.

There is a need to give something else to readers. So, politics has taken the backseat. That is one impact. Also, consumerism has gained in importance. There is a preference for soft stories, and the rural-urban divide has increased. I don't know if these developments are good or bad. But they have happened for sure.

However, another respondent from *Prajavani* argued that newspapers were using entertainment content to strengthen the market economy. Noting that Kannada newspapers were using the pretext that "readers' news preference had changed" to tacitly promote consumerism, the journalist said: "In order to sell a product . . . assuming (that) no one would (want to) read news about farmers' suicide, we are distancing ourselves from our social responsibility."

All respondents from *Prajavani*, with the exception of one journalist, maintained that the increase in entertainment content was caused by changes in readers' news preferences. Their counterparts at *Samyukta Karnataka* also conceded that entertainment content had increased in Kannada newspapers. A respondent working for the newspaper said that Kannada newspapers were gravitating toward entertainment so alarmingly that some newspapers had even instructed their journalists to write about serious matters in a "light-hearted manner" to make news attractive to readers. The journalist said: "There is an emphasis toward writing everything in a light-hearted manner . . . an impact of this is trivialization. Because of this, maybe the credibility of newspaper has been hit."

Another journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* maintained that the lack of entertainment-oriented content had limited the growth of the newspaper. The journalist said:

Why do you think people other than politicians and those living in north Karnataka with interest in politics, do not read our newspaper? They (journalists) fill it with politics . . . there's (just) no light reading . . . there's no light reading material at all in our newspaper.

Some respondents also felt that increased entertainment content had played a major role in adding young people to the ranks of readers. And considering that youth were a group targeted by most advertisers, the respondents felt that having them as readers had helped Kannada newspapers gain more revenue. A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* noted that Kannada newspapers had started affording more space to cover “cultural events.” When pressed to explain the point further, the journalist maintained that newspapers had started paying more attention to cultural events that occurred in their surroundings. This, the journalist said, had increased entertainment content in Kannada newspapers.

Journalists from *Prajavani* used the changing news preferences among readers to explain the increase in entertainment content. They argued that the increase in entertainment-oriented content had not occurred at the cost of information, and maintained that their newspaper was working toward achieving a balance between entertainment and information, although “entertainment (content) has definitely increased.” Their counterparts at *Samyukta Karnataka*, who agreed that entertainment content in Kannada newspapers had increased, attributed various causes for this development such as economic liberalization, although they agreed that the primary reason was that readers' tastes had changed.

Theme 3: Shrinking Editorial Freedom as the Space of Contestation

All respondents expressed concern in varying degrees over the effects of economic liberalization on editorial freedom in Kannada newspapers. The responses also varied over the precise nature of the effects on editorial freedom after 1991. While some respondents expressed alarm that editorial freedom had been greatly curtailed post-1991 owing to growing commercial pressures on the media, others cited different reasons to contend that such developments did not affect their respective newspapers. Yet other respondents, while admitting that commercial pressures on the media had negatively affected editorial freedom, normalized it as inevitable and did not see it as having a major impact on the content as such.

A journalist working for *Prajavani* said two key changes that took place in newspapers after 1991 were that owners of newspapers had increasingly started to play the role of editors and the advertising department within newspapers had started to increase its influence within the organization. This, the journalist noted, had resulted in editorial powers shifting away from the newsroom:

What has happened is that in many places the owners (of newspapers) are now the editors. This was not the case earlier . . . the editor was always recruited. But now owners are editors. Naturally, editorial powers have shifted . . . they (the owners) have a say in editorial policies. The advertising section has also increased its influence . . . they are calling the shots through the proprietors. I think this has probably happened in all newspapers. The other thing that has happened is owners becoming editors . . .

The journalist said newspaper owners had started taking a keen interest in the day-to-day affairs of newspapers and sometimes even suggested on which page a particular story should be published. This concern was also expressed by a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka*, who maintained that “proprietorials started appearing in the place of editorials.” The journalist added that the ad section had started “calling the shots” and had steadily “replaced the editor.” A journalist working for *Prajavani* added that even though owners dictating editorial policy was not a new development, the current environment was different: “Not only liberalization . . . this was the case earlier also . . . they (proprietors) would decide to some extent . . . but now it is completely in their hands. We (journalists) cannot decide anything.”

Most respondents admitted that commercial pressures had increased after 1991, although they were quick to add that their newspaper had withstood such pressure. The response of a journalist from *Prajavani* is emblematic of this perspective:

Sometimes, corporate houses try to dictate the content of the newspaper because they are businesses and when they give an ad to the newspaper they feel news which would harm their business (interests) should not be published. But normally, we don't yield to their pressure.

The use of the word “normally” in the above response by the journalist indicates that there are exceptions to when such requests by corporate houses are entertained. Another response in the same vein came from a journalist who initially maintained that *Prajavani* did not succumb to pressure from corporate houses. However, the journalist

admitted that, occasionally, the newspaper did entertain certain requests from corporate houses and went on to rationalize such practices as common among all newspapers.

In our agriculture supplement we have not carried a single article on fertilizers.

We only have articles on natural farming. We have not carried a single article on seeds sold by multinational companies. That way our supplements are very independent and never compromise (on editorial freedom).

In *Metro*¹¹, once in a while, we have an article (advertorial) when a product is launched . . . we have an article in the commerce supplement (pertaining to a product). But every newspaper does that, right?

A unique perspective was expressed by a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka*, who said that after 1991, journalists had started “thinking like circulation people.” The respondent alluded to an ideological shift among media workers and said journalists were increasingly concerned with impressing the management.

A reporter from Hoskote¹² will call us and ask us to carry a news item with two photographs. How can we do it . . . one news item and two photographs? But he (reporter) will say this is the most important news item there and carrying it (in the newspaper) will increase circulation. More circulation will attract advertisements, which will increase revenue for our organization.

¹¹ A city-oriented supplement published by *Prajavani*.

¹² A town close to Bangalore.

But we in the editorial (section) cannot think this way . . . but even journalists have started thinking like circulation people . . . that is something that has started happening only now.

Another journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* used the framework of morality and ethics to articulate the dilemma that journalists faced when dealing with requests that went against their integrity. The journalist noted that along with ad department intrusions into the newsroom came ethical dilemma for journalists: “Someone from the ad department will tell us to write a feature about Big Bazaar¹³ because they have placed a full-page ad. I should abandon my ethics, my morality . . . I should be ready to write the feature.” Probed further, the journalist said the amount of interference by the ad department in editorial affairs was alarming, and there was pressure on journalists to fall in line. However, the respondent, echoing the perspective expressed by some journalists from *Prajavani*, said *Samyukta Karnataka* had been sheltered from commercial pressures to a considerable extent mainly because it was one of the three newspapers in the country that was owned by a trust and not by individual owners. This, the journalist felt, had helped *Samyukta Karnataka* safeguard its editorial integrity.

It is interesting to note that while journalists working for both newspapers agreed that economic liberalization had affected the exercise of editorial freedom, only those employed by *Prajavani* complained of increased interference from owners in editorial affairs. In addition, they maintained that commercial pressures of various kinds, including those emanating from the ad department, operated through the owners. In contrast, those

working for *Samyukta Karnataka* argued that they were “somewhat sheltered” from commercial pressures as their newspaper did not have individual owners, although they agreed that commercial pressures had increased after 1991 and resulted in the erosion of editorial freedom.

Changing Role of Kannada Newspapers

Journalists interviewed as part of the study believed that the role of Kannada newspapers had changed after economic liberalization took effect in India. Two themes— (1) More than providing news, newspapers cater to the interests of readers; and (2) Normalizing newspapers as a commodity/business under the imperatives of the market— were evident in the responses of journalists when talking about how newspapers had adapted to the changing economic and social circumstances after 1991. Of all the themes, those that emerged in response to the changing role of newspapers drew extensively from the neoliberal discourse.

Theme 1: More Than Providing News, Newspapers Cater to the Interests of Readers

One of the ways in which journalists acknowledged the changing role of newspapers in society was by drawing attention to the expanding repertoire of coverage in newspapers. All respondents underscored the declining importance of political coverage and maintained that newspapers had started to cater to the diverse needs of audiences by enhancing the breadth of their coverage. This was most clearly articulated with regard to newspapers bringing out a variety of supplements aimed at different segments of the

¹³ A private retail firm.

readership. In other words, “newspapers are more than newspapers,” as a respondent put it.

Such a perspective was clearly articulated by a journalist working for *Prajavani* who likened newspapers to an “encyclopedia.” The journalist said:

Probably, newspapers can be considered as modern encyclopedia as they are a key source of knowledge. They cover various topics such as religion, sports, commerce and so on. Moreover, newspapers have introduced various reader-friendly methods and interactive approaches such as providing readers a platform to express their views or opinions.

Another journalist said *Prajavani* had to start several supplements to satisfy different readers’ interests. The journalist, who insisted that improvements in printing technology and availability of capital had allowed newspapers to experiment with content, added that this had helped newspapers to meet the needs of different sectors of the population who had otherwise been ignored in the past.

Saptahika Puravani, which comes out every Sunday, has a literary touch (to it).

We then started *Karnataka Darshana* for development stories. Business . . . there are newspapers exclusively meant for business (news). We have nothing. How much (business news) can you accommodate on page 8 or 9? You have to include analysis (pertaining to business news) . . . you have to satiate the readers’ thirst (for business news). So, we started *Vanijya Prabha*. We never had anything for women. So we started *Bhumika*. Nothing on health, let’s do something (about it) .

. . . nothing on agriculture (which is) a major sector . . . let's do something (about it) . . . we wanted to include different kinds of content to cater to different needs. You can't do all this within the limitations of the daily (mainsheet). You need to give different kinds of information to readers . . . information in the form of news, features, analysis . . . to do that you need extra space . . . hence, more supplements (were started).

But a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* disputed this view and noted that competition had forced newspapers to cater to different interests in a bid to attract more readers. Maintaining that competition had caused newspapers to enhance their coverage the journalist, however, claimed that readers were the ultimate beneficiaries of this process.

It is all because of competition . . . because there is fear that if we do not offer a particular supplement our rival (newspaper) is offering, then readers may be unhappy.

(Because of this the thinking took shape that) we should give more to our readers than just news . . . because we are not just a newspaper . . . we are a newspaper which informs, educates, and entertains. We are not just a newspaper anymore. Earlier, a newspaper was only a newspaper . . . you only gave hard news. Now, that has changed. It is about informing (the readers) . . . education about a government Act or something of that nature . . . and entertainment. See, if you observe Kannada newspapers, you realize that everyday there is some news about Kannada cinema . . . not just on Fridays.

Other journalists also articulated the perspective that competition had caused newspapers to diversify their content, which had ultimately benefitted the readers. A *Prajavani* journalist categorically stated that though the market economy was at the genesis of new supplements, the new supplements *per se* were a good development. “Well, it was the market economy (that led to newspapers starting new supplements) . . . but I would also say this was a good development. Bringing out more supplements is a good development,” the journalist said. Another journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* observed that many factors, including readers’ interests, had converged to cause Kannada newspapers to expand their coverage.

Ads, public relations . . . everything included . . . even readers’ interests . . .

When we started *Sindhoora*, a supplement, we felt why shouldn’t we start a health supplement? Why not a women’s supplement? The response we got was amazing.

A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* noted that supplements, while catering to the needs of readers, were also supported by advertisers who wanted to publicize their products through them. This, the journalist argued, was the primary reason that had prompted newspapers to start new supplements as well as increase the range of their coverage. Diversified content was only a corollary effect of the ensuing developments, the journalist argued.

Two journalists from *Prajavani* contested such accounts of diversified content benefitting readers. A journalist, who disputed the quality of the diversified content, said newspapers had started publishing frivolous content using the pretext that they were catering to varied interests.

But what about quality? The standard story for a supplement is . . . if you got to Cauvery Emporium on M.G. Road, you will see Lambani women preparing handicrafts . . . our supplements are full of such stories. They take up rural culture and commodify it. This is only a tactic (for newspapers) to increase their readership. There is no emotional content there.

Another journalist from the same newspaper, who expressed a similar perspective, said supplements—which had started as creative avenues of journalism—had been co-opted into serving the market. The journalist expressed alarm that even “trivial stories” had started gaining prominence in mainstream newspapers. Highlighting the increase in sensational news content, particularly sex scandals, the journalist maintained that such coverage had become common in most newspapers. “But maybe things have also changed with HIV and AIDS . . . maybe we need to offer more coverage pertaining to sex-related issues. But the content may not be very educative but rather titillating,” the journalist added.

Closely tied to the shifting role of newspapers was the changing perception among journalists of the newspaper reader. Respondents envisioned the average reader as a middle-class male residing in an urban setting and discrete in his consumption. They repeatedly framed the post-1991 newspaper reader as demanding, intelligent, and making informed choices about the newspapers he subscribed to. Newspaper readers were predominantly described as discrete consumers with none of the respondents alluding to them as citizens involved in political processes.

A *Prajavani* journalist claimed that after 1991, the level of awareness among readers had heightened and they had started to demand information that was relevant to them. With economic liberalization, awareness and curiosity increased among readers and newspapers were catering to those needs, the journalist said and added that a related development was that newspapers had started “seeing readers as consumers” owing to pressure from advertisers who wanted to reach “youngsters specifically” to enhance the sales of their products. This, the journalist said, had resulted in newspapers treating their readers as consumers.

The dominant perception of the reader as a middle-class male highlights an interesting contradiction. While journalists claimed that diversifying content had helped newspapers to reach out to different strata of the population, the dominant perception of the reader as male, urban, and middle class confines the focus of newspapers to a particular segment of the population comprised of people with higher purchasing power. Thus, although newspapers were interested in boosting their circulation by catering to readers with different demographic profiles, their focus remained clearly on urban readers. This dilemma was expressed by a *Prajavani* journalist:

The way we present news to a city reader has changed. But the way we cater to the needs of rural readers has not. If a farmer dies somewhere, if there is a fertilizer crisis, our biggest dilemma is whether such news is really important for our city readers . . . whether we should carry it in the city edition. Our newspapers are becoming city-oriented.

Journalists from *Samyukta Karnataka* and *Prajavani* maintained that Kannada newspapers had diversified their content. However, the nature and objectives that inform the diversification of content remain questionable, as evidenced in the responses of journalists from *Prajavani*. Although Kannada newspapers have started paying attention to readers residing in rural areas, their emphasis clearly is on urban readers. This raises questions about the nature of journalism and the critical role that market plays in determining the content.

Theme 2: Newspapers as a Commodity/Business under Imperatives of the Market

The commoditization of newspapers under the market economy was a recurring theme in the responses of journalists during the course of the interviews. While most journalists were critical of the negative influence of the market on newspapers, nonetheless they agreed that newspapers had turned into a business or a “mere commodity.” Two journalists, one each from *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka*, naturalized this development as an unavoidable eventuality and even defended it as a necessary adaptation to survive in the market economy. The latter is frequently used in the neoliberal discourse as a frame of reference when describing the commoditization of newspapers.

Although journalists’ opinions on the consequences of the commoditization of newspapers varied, they seemed to have resolved that newspapers were no more immune to market pressure. The response of a journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka* encapsulates this perspective:

Talking about its (economic liberalization) effects on the media . . . see, the media is an industry. Although one may argue that the media is an industry or not . . . it has pretty much been resolved that the media is an industry. So, whatever is the form of ownership—trust or individual ownership—profit is the main motive. Nobody will bring out a newspaper without profit. So, since profit is the main issue, newspaper is a business.

This framing of newspapers as an industry is based on the assumption that profit determines the existence of newspapers in the final instance. It also sets certain conditions—in this case, profitability—which need to be met for newspapers to continue to serve society. The truth of this proposition is beyond contention, and all respondents seem to have come to terms with the inevitability of newspapers turning into businesses. The differences in the responses, then, are limited to the effects of the commoditization of newspapers.

A journalist working for *Prajavani* noted that after liberalization of the economy, “everything became market-driven.” This, the journalist added, had contributed to the changing role of newspapers. However, the respondent underscored that *Prajavani* had “retained its traditional approach but is also responding to the needs of the market along with keeping some of the fundamental values of journalism dating back to the pre-independence period.” Nonetheless, the journalists agreed that newspapers were relatively more responsive to markets now than they were before 1991. A journalist working for the same newspaper said, “You have to remember that a newspaper or commercial cinema falls under the category of buyers’ market and not sellers’ market.”

Another *Prajavani* journalist observed that prior to 1991, newspapers were owned by groups that had other business interests. Newspapers were never the mainstay of such groups but only helped them in accumulating political capital and to press for specific policy changes. However, that trend had changed after 1991 as newspapers had become profitable ventures. According to the journalist:

So, earlier, if you were to own a newspaper, you needed to have something else that would be your main source of income . . . just like the (*Malayalam*) *Manorama* group owned rubber industries, *Matrubhoomi* owned KTC¹⁴, the liquor industry here (owns *Prajavani* and *Deccan Herald*) . . . even the Santhalia group (owned *The Indian Express*) had other industries . . . so, that was how it was earlier.

But today, that is not the case . . . newspapers themselves have become profitable industries. They have become commercialized.

The transformation of newspapers into an industry and a profitable business venture is in no small measure due to the liberalization of the Indian economy. The implementation of neoliberal policies not only resulted in increased ad revenue for Kannada newspapers but also elevated newspapers into an industry for the first time. This opened access to finance by banks and other financial institutions as well as allowed for limited Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from overseas venture capitalists. A journalist working for *Samyukta Karnataka*, who drew attention to these developments, argued that after 1991, newspapers had started getting loans on relatively flexible terms, which had

helped them expand their infrastructure. The journalist observed that “earlier, it was very difficult to get capital if you wanted to expand a newspaper. But after (19)91, even newspapers were considered an industry . . . banks, private financiers started extending loans to newspapers.” This, the journalist remarked, had exerted pressure on newspapers to increase their profits, which had acted as a catalyst in the commoditization of newspapers. This perspective was also expressed by another journalist working for the same newspaper.

While the aforementioned respondents drew attention to the increased availability of finance as contributing to the commoditization of newspapers, others mainly blamed competition as being responsible for turning newspapers into a business. A *Prajavani* journalist linked the commoditization of newspapers to the fact that they “have become a consumer good or product” because of competition. The journalist maintained that because of the pressing need to remain profitable, newspapers were forced to perceive themselves as a “consumer product” and act accordingly by internalizing the market logic. The respondent expressed resignation to the fact that newspapers had become a commodity.

Another *Prajavani* journalist, however, was critical of the profit orientation of newspapers. The journalist was concerned that ideological issues and social concerns had taken a backseat as newspapers had started to prioritize profits.

Due to (liberalization), we had to compete at a global level. So, one can probably put it this way: ‘After independence, newspapers transformed into business

¹⁴ Kerala Transport Corporation, a private transport agency.

entities and liberalization provided a platform for it.’ So, in the process of transforming into an industry or business, journalism started deviating from its ideology and purpose . . . newspapers had become mere consumer products . . . ideologies or social concern were lost (in the process).

This viewpoint was evident in the responses of other journalists, who noted that increasing market pressure had reduced newspapers to commodities. A journalist from *Samyukta Karnataka* maintained that “commercialization played a major role in controlling newspapers. It controls newspapers’ economy itself.” This, according to the journalist, had resulted in erosion of journalistic values and led to newspapers adopting the market logic. Another journalist from the same newspaper said the commoditization of newspapers had blunted the critical faculties of journalists: “Journalists are discouraged from asking critical questions . . . when someone violates this rule, he (*sic*) is basically told not to ask questions but to just write what he has been asked to write. This happens frequently.”

Speaking in a different context, a journalist working for *Prajavani* highlighted the intense competition among newspapers and how this had transformed them into a business rather than an intellectual enterprise. However, the journalist defended this development and maintained that it was natural for newspapers to turn into businesses. Responding to a question about the expansion of mainstream Kannada newspapers leading to the closure of district newspapers, the journalist drew upon the neoliberal discourse of survival and noted that newspapers had to become aggressive to survive:

“See, you are in a business. You have to finish (off) your rivals. Whoever is fit will survive . . . if you are not fit you are destroyed. That’s all.”

Journalists from *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka* did not demonstrate any difference in their belief that newspapers would eventually be run based on a business model. Although they were divided over the consequences of the commoditization of newspapers with a majority of them being critical of newspapers being reduced to a “mere commodity,” all of them articulated the opinion, either directly or indirectly, that the operation of newspapers based on business logic was unavoidable. All respondents seemed to have accepted this proposition with some even defending it by framing competition among newspapers as a logical outcome of the adoption of this business logic. While criticisms against the commercialization of newspapers were evident, its eventuality was rarely contested by the respondents.

The Neoliberal Discourse

The respondents took varying positions on issues plaguing Kannada newspapers. They expressed a keen awareness of the situation that Kannada newspapers found themselves in after 1991. In addition, they provided insights into how economic liberalization had impacted Kannada journalism, specifically *Prajavani* and *Samyukta Karnataka*. In their responses, the journalists articulated and, at various points, undermined elements of the neoliberal discourse. While the neoliberal ideology framed the journalists’ understanding of their changing working conditions (Question 1) and the changing role of newspapers in society (Question 3), their responses with regard to the

changing news values of Kannada newspapers (Question 2) called the neoliberal ideology into question.

Notions of “inevitability” and “natural consequence” overwhelmingly characterized the responses of journalists when making sense of the developments in Kannada newspapers after 1991. While the respondents noted that not all changes that occurred after liberalization were in the interests of Kannada newspapers they, nonetheless, maintained that the changes were inevitable and had to be accepted as a natural consequence of India’s transition to an open economy. Although a majority of the respondents were critical of neoliberal policies and its impact on Kannada newspapers, their criticisms did not question the terms of the debate that had been set in place. This was evident when journalists discussed the role of technology in Kannada newspapers. While the respondents held different views on the impact of technology on journalists, news values, and the role of newspapers in society, the centrality of technology as the framework to understand the changes that occurred in Kannada newspapers in the post-neoliberal period remained beyond contention. Only one respondent—a journalist from *Prajavani*—emphasized the link between technology and capital and insisted that technological changes should be understood as directly related to the commoditization of Kannada newspapers. Otherwise, the uncritical view of the role of technology in shaping Kannada newspapers remained the primary lens through which the respondents perceived the changes occurring in Kannada newspapers, despite differing over its impact on various facets of Kannada journalism.

Scholars have drawn attention to the centrality of technology under neoliberal regimes against the context of the growing importance (or visibility) of immaterial production (Hardt & Negri, 2004). In addition, the technologization of discourse (Fairclough, 2001) is another important characteristic of neoliberal societies as language and technology intersect to reinforce the centrality of technology in social life. This was evident in the interviews as the respondents used words such as “infotainment” and “advertorials,” the former a hybridization of information and entertainment and the latter a blend of editorials and advertising, to explain the changing news values in Kannada newspapers. Although the respondents were at times critical of these practices, particularly advertorials, the fact that these terms have become part of the journalistic lexicon demonstrates the commonsense approach to the hypercommercialism of news media under the neoliberal regime.

At the same time, the respondents tended to minimize the importance of political coverage, as evident in the interviews. They repeatedly emphasized the growing “fatigue” among readers towards politics as a reason to justify the changing news values of Kannada newspapers. The growing preference for entertainment over “hard news,” and the reconfiguration of the political as synonymous with governance and civic issues, understood as the management of populations, at the expense of collective political organization and the State reflect the influence of the neoliberal discourses in shaping the political sensibility of journalists. The respondents also reconfigured social responsibility to mean catering to the needs of a specific reader demographic that is of interest to the

advertisers. In addition, journalists used the concept of “infotainment” in a manner that filled the void created by the absence of public affairs coverage.

While one may justify this change in journalistic preferences (and changing definitions of the political) as a reaction to the predominance of coverage centered on government and political parties in Kannada newspapers in the pre-neoliberal period, it is important to question the role of the market economy in causing this change in perception. In other words, why did journalists not feel relevant to account for “readers’ fatigue” in the pre-neoliberal era? What is leading this change in perception regarding news content that ought to be a part of Kannada newspapers?

The answer is to be found, arguably, in the de-ideologyzing effect of the market economy on the political. An important characteristic of the neoliberal discourse is to sever the link between ideology and politics by constituting a discursive terrain that is ideologically unconstrained. This is tied to the larger project of refiguring politics as centered on governance, which gains importance because of the pressing need to manage populations even as the de-governmentalization of the state is underway (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996). Such a development engenders hostility or indifference towards the political, which was reflected in the responses of the journalists. Most of the respondents confessed to the growing importance of entertainment-oriented content and repudiated the political (in the form of political coverage) by claiming that readers no longer attached importance to political news. Only a few respondents, particularly from *Samyukta Karnataka*, lamented the declining importance of political coverage with the majority supporting this change as being in the interest of the readers.

Closely tied to the repudiation of the political was the remarkable absence of words such as “ideology” and “social responsibility” in the interviews. Clearly, these words have fallen out of usage as new words such as “infotainment,” “computerization,” “policy,” “logic of the market,” and “profit” have found their way into the vocabulary of journalists. Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) have called attention to how words such as “flexibility,” “multiculturalism,” “finance,” “mobility,” etc. have become a part of common vocabulary. These words have gained currency at the cost of other words that are falling into disuse. Except a journalist from *Prajavani* who lamented that newspapers were delinking themselves from their once explicit ideological function of representing the interests of political groups, none of the participants expressed remorse for or lamented the loss of Kannada newspapers’ political character. The four functions of the Indian media identified by Ram (2000)—credible-informational, critical-adversarial, educational, and agenda-building—were a conspicuous absence in the responses of journalists. The respondents did not allude to the fact that the purported post-ideological character of the newspapers was itself a curious restaging of the ideological (in terms to the hostility toward anything that questioned the market economy), albeit in a different manner.

The absence of reference to social responsibility of the media, which was considered a major point of reflexivity for the Kannada newspaper journalists, points to the new thinking about newspapers and their role in society that has taken root among journalists. Although one can argue that newspapers have historically been capitalist enterprises with profit as their main motive, the concept of social responsibility, which

pressured newspapers to take account of social oppression and bring it to the attention of the political classes, does not mean the same anymore. Rather, journalists seem to have reconfigured a new notion of social responsibility that is based on catering to the interests of (urban, male) readers. One is forced to ask what then are the commitments of a newspaper towards the non-readers or those excluded from the sphere of consumption in the market economy?

Journalists used the transparent neoliberal discourse (Phelan, 2007) in articulating the market approach to journalism in which readers were imagined as consumers and Kannada newspaper's changing role as a commodity/business was normalized. Although journalists compared the changing role of newspapers before and after economic liberalization and lamented the rapid changes that had occurred after 1991, the market orientation of newspapers was generally accepted as inevitable with all respondents reconciled to such an eventuality. In addition, some of the respondents defended the commercialization of newspapers and the business logic that was increasingly dictating the operation of newspapers. Although a majority of the respondents expressed concern that newspapers had become commercialized and commoditized after 1991, they also normalized the profit orientation as essential to survive the competition among newspapers.

The articulation of the business needs of newspapers in the responses of journalists points to their sensitization to the corporatist model of journalism. It is interesting to note that journalists have started to think about the profitability of their newspaper organizations, a job traditionally reserved for the management. Increased

profit margins of newspapers have boosted the salaries of journalists, although the appreciation in salaries has come at an enormous cost (such as increase in workload), as the respondents themselves admit. However, the ideological gap between management and the newsroom seem to be closing as journalists increasingly become concerned with the profitability of their respective organization.

Another explicit use of the neoliberal discourse can be discerned in how journalists used meritocracy in making sense of the changing working conditions in Kannada newspapers. Although the respondents repeatedly cited job insecurity as a neoliberal development, they maintained that salaries and job opportunities had also increased. Journalists took recourse to social Darwinism in rationalizing the increasing job insecurity that they faced. Respondents from both newspapers agreed that job insecurity was a cause for concern. However, they did not propose permanent employment and other benefits as the solution but maintained that those who had journalistic skills would be handsomely rewarded by the job market and would be able to retain their jobs while the “slackers” (as described by a journalist) would have to leave. The remorse for loss of secure employment was juxtaposed with the compensatory increase in salaries and mobility (at least for some journalists), which was not possible in the past. In addition, journalists also referred to the increase in media jobs in a way so as to minimize the insecurities created by the neoliberal regime. This discourse upheld the rationality of the market in addressing the disharmony caused by job insecurity by creating more jobs with enhanced salaries, although they may induce the same insecurity. This thinking is consistent with the perception of newspapers being a

commodity/business. As a part of this logic, journalism transforms into another profession submitting itself to the market manipulation of labor and its bargaining power.

There were comparatively fewer instances of journalists articulating a discourse that critiqued the market economy and undermined the neoliberal discourse. An oppositional discourse was evident in the responses of journalists with regard to the impact of neoliberal policies on the news values of Kannada newspapers. Such a discourse was usually expressed as nostalgia for the past (pre-1991) when newspapers enjoyed more freedom from commercial control, despite facing a different set of problems. Journalists drew parallels between the role of newspapers in society before 1991 and after the implementation of neoliberal policies to evolve a critique of the current state of newspapers and news values. This temporal comparison evident in the responses of journalists brought forth constant tension over the changing news values, which proves that the hegemony of the neoliberal discourse is transient at best.

The responses of journalists to questions pertaining to editorial freedom articulated a significant challenge to the neoliberal ideology. A majority of the journalists from both newspapers admitted that editorial freedom was shrinking in response to growing commercial pressures on Kannada newspapers. They clearly saw the hand of the market in curtailing editorial freedom as they made frequent allusions to the growing powers of their respective advertisement departments as well as the increasing interference from newspaper owners in the editorial functions of the newspapers. However, journalists from *Prajavani* as well as *Samyukta Karnataka* maintained that their respective newspaper was protected (to some extent) from such changes with

journalists from *Samyukta Karnataka* citing the ownership of their newspaper by a trust as proof of their comparative insulation from market pressures. The journalists were critical of the turn toward entertainment among Kannada newspapers, although relatively a higher number of respondents defended the development by citing changes in readers' interests. In addition, the growing prominence of economic news, although noted by some journalists, was seen as a natural consequence of the growth of the economy with the respondents failing to critique newspapers for catering to the interests of the markets. In effect, journalists articulated an oppositional discourse only when faced with the issue of shrinking editorial freedom. Otherwise, despite some journalists raising objections to the entertainment orientation of Kannada newspapers, elements of neoliberal discourses were used to center the readers' interests to normalize such a change.

Summary

Many common themes were evident in the responses of journalists to questions on the impact of economic liberalization on Kannada journalism. The respondents drew upon several elements of neoliberal discourses as they sought to make sense of the changes that has affected Kannada newspapers. Technology was predominantly used to frame the changes that occurred in Kannada newspapers after 1991. Also evident was the use of terms such as “infotainment” and “advertorial” with other terms such as “ideology,” “citizen,” and “social responsibility” rarely invoked by the journalists. In addition, the reader and the market were centered as the most important actors that shaped the content of newspapers. While journalists were critical of the changing news values of Kannada newspapers, particularly shrinking editorial freedom, other changes such as the

entertainment orientation of Kannada newspapers and the increase in economic news were rationalized by the respondents.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

All dominant ideologies have a discursive component that works toward securing their hegemonic position and neoliberal ideology is no exception. Neoliberal ideology is a material force that positions market interests as synonymous with all sectors of society. At the same time, it has a strong discursive component that aims to normalize the neoliberal ideology among different social actors. This study posed four questions aimed at understanding how journalists made sense of the neoliberal restructuring of the Indian economy and its impact on Kannada journalism: (1) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on their working conditions? (2) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the news values of Kannada journalism? (3) How do journalists understand the impact of economic liberalization on the role of newspapers in society? (4) How do such understandings reproduce or challenge the ideology of neoliberalism?

This study originated in the backdrop of neoliberal restructuring of the Indian economy as the context to study the changes that occurred in two Kannada newspapers—*Samyukta Karnataka* and *Prajavani*—as evidenced by the journalists working for them. It examined neoliberal ideology as a discursive formation as articulated in the responses of journalists to three questions that sought to illuminate their understanding of their changing working conditions, changing news values, and the role of Kannada newspapers after economic liberalization came into force in India after 1991.

Chapter 1 began with a brief introduction to the restructuring of the Indian economy in 1991 to provide the context to understand the changes witnessed in the Indian

media. Chapter 2 examined different conceptions of ideology, hegemony, and discourse before turning to investigate the role of the media in hegemony formation. This was followed by an examination of journalist subject formation using media sociology after which neoliberalism was explored as a functionalist economic paradigm as well as a discourse. The last section provided a brief historical overview of the development of the media in India. Chapter 3 proposed critical discourse analysis as the methodology to explore the discursive practices, particularly themes, which were evident in the responses of journalists who talked about the various changes that occurred in Kannada newspapers after 1991. The research design, including the data collection method, was also explained in this chapter. Chapter 4 analyzed the interview texts to identify themes that recurred in the responses of journalists when asked to talk about the changes that had occurred in Kannada newspapers.

Different themes were evident in response to the three questions posed to the journalists. Two themes—(1) centrality of new technologies with ambiguity about their role in the newsroom and (2) rationalizing the tension between enhanced salaries but shrinking job security—emerged in the responses pertaining to the changing working conditions that journalists experienced after 1991. While talking about how news values had changed in Kannada newspapers after economic restructuring, three themes—(1) increased economic news as a natural consequence of liberalization, (2) readers' demand driving increase in entertainment-oriented content, and (3) shrinking editorial freedom as the space of contestation—were frequently expressed by journalists. The last question, which explored how journalists understood the changing role of newspapers after 1991,

brought forth two themes: (1) more than providing news, newspapers cater to the interests of readers and (2) normalizing newspapers as a commodity/business under the imperatives of the market.

Journalists articulated the neoliberal discourse more vividly in response to the first (changing working conditions) and the third questions (changing news values). The neoliberal discourse framed their responses when they talked about the change in working conditions that they experienced after 1991. In addition, the market was valorized and its centrality was affirmed when journalists talked about the changing role of newspapers in society. Although journalists articulated an oppositional discourse when expressing their views about the changing news values, particularly the subordination of editorial control to the commercial interests of the newspaper, they drew upon neoliberal discourses when talking about the increase in economic content in Kannada newspapers and the growing orientation toward entertainment content.

Journalists from *Samyukta Karnataka* and *Prajavani* did not demonstrate any notable difference in their understanding of the effects of economic liberalization on Kannada newspapers. *Samyukta Karnataka* journalists were relatively conservative in their appreciation of the changes that occurred in Kannada newspapers after 1991. However, they nevertheless rationalized the changes as inevitable just as their counterparts in *Prajavani*. But despite articulating some criticism about the changes that had occurred in Kannada newspapers, *Prajavani* journalists were more resolved to accept the situation as inevitable. The only difference evident in the responses of journalists working for the two newspapers was that *Samyukta Karnataka* journalists frequently

alluded to their ownership structure to emphasize that they faced less pressure in carrying out their day-to-day journalistic duties. *Samyukta Karnataka* is owned by Lokashikshana Trust, a cooperative body (as opposed to individual or family ownership as is the norm among Indian newspapers), which may have shielded journalists from facing some of the commercial pressures directly. On the other hand, *Prajavani* journalists saw the interference from their owners as infringing upon their editorial freedom and listed it as one of the major threats to editorial integrity.

This study demonstrated how neoliberal discourses, despite being contested at times, have become part of the Kannada journalistic commonsense. Barring a few exceptions, journalists articulated elements of neoliberal discourses while making sense of the changes that occurred in Kannada newspapers. Most studies exploring the different manifestations of the neoliberal discourses have preoccupied themselves with media texts at the cost of ignoring their producers. In contrast, this study centered journalists as primary actors in a bid to understand how they analyze the changes that have occurred in Kannada newspapers in the last two decades.

Despite the growing encroachment of their editorial freedom, journalists are important actors who are intimately involved in the creation of news and non-news content. This makes them critical ideological actors who are placed at a vantage position to influence social discourse and public opinion. Understanding how they articulate or resist the neoliberal discourse is critical as it allows one to identify discursive strategies that may find their way into the larger mediatized discourse on neoliberalism. This study, which is a small step in this direction, looked at how journalists socialized into dominant

ideologies reproduce them in talking about their everyday experiences. In addition, by concentrating on Kannada journalists, this study seeks to center the experiences of a minority group that has evaded scholarly attention.

Limitations and Implications for Future Study

This study has been an immense learning experience and has helped me put into context some of the changes that I saw from close quarters. While this study offers insights into how the neoliberal discourse is materialized in the responses of journalists, limitations persist. First, this study looked at the experiences of journalists working for two Kannada newspapers, *Samyukta Karnataka* and *Prajavani*. Both the newspapers are well established and have cultivated a readership of their own. The experiences of journalists working for these newspapers may significantly vary from those working for smaller taluk and district-level newspapers or even those working for state-level newspapers with low circulation. Future studies should take account of this discrepancy. One way of overcoming this limitation is by enhancing the sample to include journalists working for different newspapers. Interviewing more number of journalists has the potential to bring forth different opinions.

All the journalists I interviewed worked in the head offices of their respective newspapers or in the state capital, Bangalore. While most of the respondents have been district and taluk correspondents at some point of their career, their experience articulates a reality as experienced by journalists based in Bangalore (and Hubli, in the case of *Samyukta Karnataka*). Including journalists working in rural areas and mofussil centers in

the study would have offered an interesting perspective on how the neoliberal discourse is articulated in different geospatial settings and to different audiences.

I believe that my stint as a former journalist for an English newspaper in Bangalore has opened more doors than it closed. However, this may have also resulted in the respondents believing in my ability to infer so as to not share information in its entirety. Most respondents believed that I already knew the context and had lived the experience, and so there was no need for them to elaborate “a few things.” This way, I may have lost some of the context needed to understand the complexities that have shaped the changes in Kannada newspapers in the past two decades.

Additionally, this study does not account for the experiences of Indian English newspaper journalists. Comparing their experience with those of Kannada newspaper journalists may yield interesting insights into how the articulation of the neoliberal discourse is intricately tied to the political economy of the English and the vernacular press. Despite resolving that the changing news values and role of newspapers were inevitable, Kannada newspaper journalists were critical of the changes. It would be interesting to see if their counterparts employed in English newspapers repeat this phenomenon or chart a different path in making sense of the market economy on the media.

Summary

Neoliberal discourses are an important way through which neoliberal ideology finds legitimation in society. These discourses are marked by flexibility and inventiveness as they rearrange themselves according to different situations. Understanding the nature

of such discourses constitutes the first step towards exposing the neoliberal ideology.

This study, which is a small step in this regard, looked at how journalists working for two Kannada newspapers articulated various elements of neoliberal discourses. More research is clearly needed to understand the nature of such discourses better.

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APPENDIX

Open-ended interview questions posed to Kannada journalists

- 1) What influence did the liberalization of the Indian economy have on Kannada newspapers?
- 2) How did the changes in English newspapers after liberalization of the Indian economy affect Kannada newspapers?
- 3) How impact did the proliferation of satellite TV in India have on Kannada newspapers?
- 4) Did Kannada newspapers attract more advertisements after the liberalization of the economy?
- 5) Why did mainstream Kannada newspapers start more editions at the district and taluk level (after liberalization)?
- 6) Kannada newspapers went color after liberalization. What pressures forced Kannada newspapers go color?
- 7) Kannada newspapers started bringing out more supplements after liberalization. Why?
- 8) A big impact of liberalization on Kannada newspapers was the onset of “price wars.” What caused this development?
- 9) There is an allegation that after liberalization, Kannada newspapers have started giving more importance to entertainment at the cost of information. Is this true? Please comment.

- 10) Did computerization and technical developments after liberalization influence journalistic practices? Please comment.
- 11) Do you think liberalization has brought about a change in the salaries and working conditions of journalists? If so, in what way? Please comment.
- 12) A big change we observe in Kannada journalism after liberalization is the rise of tabloid journalism. Did this influence mainstream Kannada journalism in any way? Please comment.
- 13) Did the above factors influence news values of Kannada newspapers? If so, how?
- 14) What is your opinion about the future of Kannada journalism?
- 15) Do you have anything else to add?