

Placing the diaspora in the frame, a case study of Zee TV's Raj Britannia documentary series.

Current affairs programme archives produced by British Journalists for Zee TV, a transnational broadcaster have been studied to better understand journalism practice. The analysis evaluates the role journalists at Zee TV played in advocating, empowering and educating the diaspora in the run up to the General Election in 1997. The analysis reveals that while Zee TV journalists applied advocacy practices to encourage the viewer to be politically strategic in voting, the tone of programmes mimic mainstream media deficit discourses. This suggests ethnic media may on occasions perform contradictory roles, advocate for their audience and also apply deficit models in a reflection of dominant news ideologies.

Key Words : Advocacy Journalism, Diaspora, Objectivity, Journalism, Audience

Introduction

This paper studies news practices in an ethnic newsroom and evaluates the role journalists played in advocating, empowering and educating the diaspora. Zee TV, is a satellite television service, aimed at the British Asian diaspora. It is India's first ever satellite channel, established in October 1992 as a private television station, and arrived in the UK in 1995 as one of the first subscription services for minority audiences. Specifically, the analysis concentrates upon a locally British produced political documentary, Raj Britannia broadcast in the run up to the 1997 General Election. Uniquely, Zee TV funded a newsroom in London in the 1990s and recruited British Asian journalists to produce news and current affairs content in English language, specifically about British Asian communities as part of its localisation strategy. The news service closed in the early 2000's. Zee TV continues to broadcast but is no longer considered to be influential as it was in 1997. It is best described as ethnic media within the UK media ecosystem because content is beamed from India, including soap operas, entertainment and news. This mode of communication is described by Richards and French (2000) as re-locating Indian culture.

Ethnic media exist globally, and many national Governments rely upon them to convey information that is essential or for assimilation purposes. This type of media can offer marginalised groups corrective or compensative means of self-expression and identity especially if they are routinely excluded or misrepresented by the national mainstream media. The Raj Britannia series alongside a daily news programme, were produced in London enabling content to centre issues of identity, race, belonging for a British Asian viewer. Zee TV no longer produces bespoke European or British programming, this type of content acknowledges that audiences operate in 'transnational spaces', for example they identify with a specific

community in the UK and align with the diaspora globally and in South Asia (Aujla-Sidhu, 2021). The Raj Britannia programme funded by a transnational broadcaster operating beyond its own borders makes it unique. Ethnic media are often understood as counterhegemonic media, seeking to offer a portrayal of their communities, their concerns and alternative narrative to the dominant news culture that privileges western viewpoints at the expense of marginalised voices. Mainstream media representations exclude ethnic communities, women and communicate messages in frames essentially define what is “normal, acceptable,” for audiences who have little personal interaction with different communities, these representations can be taken as a factual depiction of reality (Fleras, 2011: 5).

The analysis finds that Zee journalists applied advocacy journalism practice to motivate their audience to politically engage. Interestingly, the underlying message that the diaspora needs to politically engage, mimicked the mainstream media. But some of the raw material, particularly the vox pops with ordinary voters, demonstrate there is a strong understanding of political issues among the electorate. In addition, it illuminates how the diaspora navigated their identity and sense of self in an evolving cultural, social and political environment. This paper illuminates the practice of journalism within a now defunct ethnic media newsroom and shows how ethnic journalists both mimic mainstream media messages and offer counter narratives in complex and contradictory ways. The analysis finds that ethnic media both advocate for their audience and apply deficit models in a reflection of dominant news ideologies .

The Zee TV archive was donated to De Montfort University by former Zee TV journalist/presenter Anita Anand. Anand now at the BBC, was Zee TV Europe’s Head of News and Current affairs between 1995 and 2004. The collection comprised of 1500 BetaSP tapes, can be viewed at Special Collections at De Montfort University. The collection includes current affairs programme The Big Debate, the Raj Britannia series that chronicles the political perspectives of the Asian community in 1997 (the focus of this paper), interviews with Asian celebrities and businesspeople for The A-List and footage filmed for Behind the Headlines. The author received funding from De Montfort University to digitise parts the Raj Britannia series which allows it to be preserved for research and historical nostalgic viewing.

The 1997 UK election resulted in a landslide victory for the Labour party. 17 programmes, plus raw (un-edited) interviews with key politicians from the period, including Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, British Asian MPs; Nirj Deva and Piara Khabra, and interviews with ordinary Asian voters were studied. They were analysed by applying both visual semiotic and language analysis.

Advocacy journalism practices and British Asian diaspora

In the 1990s UK media regulations were amended to foster competition and increase choice for audiences. Zee TV is one of India's largest television news networks, since 2004, it has been known as Zee Media Corporation Limited and offers 14 channels in 8 languages in India. This paper uses the term Zee TV as it was known in 1997 and situates the study during that time frame.

Ethnic media play facilitate the coming together of imagined communities through information and contributing to the maintenance of culture and identity through representation, language and nostalgia. Zee TV in 1997 was distinct from other transnational satellite television services because it produced content in London and *Your Zindagi* and *Euro Zindagi* in Europe. Enabling it to articulate a European Asian identity, a representation that not being offered by national broadcasters. Dudrah (2005: 43) notes that the Zee's European programming worked to "counteract the racist and exotic caricatures of South Asian lives towards more eclectic compositions of South Asian identities in and of Western Europe. Studies of national broadcasters and their media about content have questioned if specific minority content provides corrective representation to minority audiences? Simon Cottle's (1997) work interviewed minority producers working in the BBC and in satellite television services. This was one of the first studies to understand the contribution of minority specific television programmes and relatedly minority ethnic staff within the BBC. Cottle (1997) questioned the future of ethnic content and explored the idea of creating content for marginalised audiences within mainstream content. Since the 1990s both Channel 4 and the BBC have adopted an overtly commercial and populist approach to programme production. Critics have labelled this as commoditising or mainstreaming minority programming (Saha 2018; Malik, 2013).

In the 1990s minority audiences were varyingly excluded and included within news and programming, frequently articulated within narratives including asylum seekers, gun crime, and the war on terror and stereotypical representations of race (Malik, 2008, Torres, 2005, Hesmondhalgh and Saha, 2013). There is limited research on news and current affairs produced by minority journalists, there has been a greater emphasis upon mainstream news and its representation of minority communities (for exceptions see Author XX, Husband 2005, Yu and Matsaganis, 2019). Van Dijk's (1988; 2012) work is especially relevant, he found normative working practices in newspaper newsrooms resulted in minority communities, leaders and spokespersons being denied opportunities to speak from a position of about their

communities; “rather, they are typically considered biased sources, whereas (white) politicians, police officers, lawyers, scholars, or organisations tend to be seen as “independent” or “expert” and hence as reliable sources” (van Dijk, 2012: 20). This means discourse renders invisible communities, voices and experiences and offers a selective portrayal. Journalists habitually include individuals in powerful roles to validate their stories and the dominant discourse in society, they are labelled as ‘primary definers’ of events and topics (Hall et al, 1978). The practice enables problematic and reductive stereotyped framing in news. Stuart Hall et al. (1978) have set out how the process of ‘making’ news involves journalists selecting facts, quotes or events and ordering them into socially constructed set of categories and values based upon the journalists’ personal frameworks, and news organisations news values. Meaning groups and viewpoints considered niche, unimportant, or less powerful are excluded from media discourse or presented in racialised frames (Hall, 1978). Fleras (2011) argues that newsrooms norms that foreground Eurocentric conventions are invasive in shaping the selection, construction, and presentation of news articulates distorted frames of migrants and minorities. Moreover, the consequence of monocultural coverage means there is little interrogation by journalists of what is actually taking place. It is imperative to recognise discussions about representation, inclusion and exclusion of minority groups are political issues and tied to wider societal issues and debates. Studies continue to highlight racialised news framing of minority communities in frames where they are cast as being a problem or creating problems:

They continue to be rendered invisible except in contexts of crisis or conflict, in the process reinforcing their precarious status as the “other” within. This framing of racialised diversity around a conflict/problem/negativity nexus is neither intentional nor personal. To the contrary, the unintended yet logical consequences of largely one-sided misrepresentations are systemically biasing by virtue of drawing negative attention to diversities and difference. (Fleras, 2011: 230)

Entman’s (1990) examined local television news in the USA and revealed that while historically racist attitudes are no longer acceptable, in part due to commercial imperatives pertaining to audience demographics, over 70 per cent of stories about Black communities were categorised as crime or politics. Entman (1990) describes this as ‘modern racism’ in which structural inequalities and ethnocentrism work together to reproduce a veiled form of anti-blackness. Television news offers constructed meanings to audiences because it symbolises events, moments, or news frames to audiences, and it is a social construction of those events by media organizations (Schlesinger, 1987). The majority scholarship on news and race is largely U.S centric. Malik’s (2008, 2012, 2013) research about British television demonstrates the

existence of a complex and contradictory relationship between the notion of multiculturalism (prevalent in Britain in 1990s) and creative diversity or simply 'diversity'. She notes that Britain privileges some Asian communities over others, Punjabi culture "depicted as high-energy, colorful, fun(ny), and convivial, typified by bhangra (Indian folk) dancing, dhol (drum) music, and Bollywood film routines," whereas Muslim communities are presented through the lens of difference (Malik 2012: 513). Georgiou (1995) points out that the relationship between satellite television services and universal mainstream media is multifaceted; diasporic services offer a form of particularism for their communities while also imitating mainstream media aspirations and discourses.

Mainstream professional news, is defined as news produced by white journalists, includes predominantly white communities and is targeted at everyone (Alamo-Pastrana and Hoynes, 2020). News media play an important role in opinion formation and influence popular culture. Individuals possessing social capital can access media platforms meaning their values are predominantly reflected which results in news grounded in whiteness and dominant ideologies (Alamo-Pastrano and Moyes, 2020; Fleras, 2011). The invisibility of professional journalism's whiteness verses the overt visibility of journalists of colour requires further critical attention. Saha's (2018) work has demonstrated that the changes to internal institutional cultural policies concentrate upon new knowledge or innovation and ignore racial inequalities, injustice, lived experiences and racism to concentrate upon a version of diversity in which race is just one aspect. A broad stance on diversity has negative impact upon minority audiences because it obscures the structural inequalities minority communities continue to face.

Western professional journalism practice emphasises objectivity, detachment and using authority figures for the purpose of 'truth'. It has been critiqued for the reproduction of dominant ideologies pertaining to race and ethnicity. Ethnic/diasporic media are viewed as being different because they tend to advocate on behalf of their audience meaning journalism can privilege ideology as opposed to balanced coverage (Fleras, 2011). This also means they are considered to be 'inferior' precisely because they are not impartial (Husband 2005). Moreover, **Husband (2005: 463) argues that ethnic journalists are denied a claim to professional journalistic identity, one that "implicitly defines a system of accountability: namely, accountability to fellow professionals" because their identity (race or faith) is used to delegitimise their claim to be 'professional'. Historically, accountability has referred to the commitment to hold the government accountable for their actions. However, Schmidt (2024) sets out that journalists have sought to broaden what "accountability" means in that they not only want to hold people in power accountable but**

also power structures. This would broaden the mission of accountability journalism in the sense of “making systemic injustice visible” (Schmidt, 2024: 560)

News organisations in large parts of the global south practice advocacy journalism as the defacto model. There is no singular definition of advocacy journalism, it is widely considered to be news reporting with an agenda or ideological campaigning and is viewed as having a subjective approach to news production, contrasting with western models of journalism (Christians et al, 2009). Scholars have recognised journalistic advocacy is distinct from the democratic function of news acting as the fourth estate whereby attention is drawn to social issues or political misconduct from a neutral and objective perspective (Hanitzsch et al. 2016). Advocacy can involve journalists embracing an active, interventionist or assertive tone, giving a voice to a specific ideological position or acting as a political mouthpiece. Janowitz (1975) describes journalists as an advocate when they take on the role of agent or change casts themselves as a spokesperson for audiences who lack a voice or are seen to be disadvantaged in society. Wallack (1994) defines advocacy as journalism that enables communities to shape public debate, policy and influence those in power. In this way the journalism bridges the power gap identified by Stuart Hall et al (2013). Advocacy journalism highlights social issues and causes at expense of other stories, and it may amplify the voices of individuals and communities who are disenfranchised or marginalised. The content centres people experiences and perspectives and thus can be critical, suggestive or strongly advocate a stance on a subject. It is routinely practiced by opinion writers, alternative, activists or citizen journalists who seek to push an issue or cause. Van Dijk (2012) notes that opinionated media discourse shapes and influences people’s views, prejudices and stereotypes. Aspects of advocacy journalism can appear in subtle ways as a result of selective routines in journalism which lead to some voices and issues being included, ignored or promoted more strongly than others (Fisher, 2016). This is noticeable in the UK press which is partisan in its nature and does offer opinion. Political talk shows are another example where opinion and analysis of politics is shared.

Hanitzsch et al. (2016) cross national study found that interventionist journalistic practice is more likely to occur when individuals work for private organisations within the contexts of limited political freedom. Their study of 21 countries concludes journalists and their work is shaped by news organisations and deeply rooted within perceptions of cultural and social values. They found less evidence to substantiate their hypothesis that political interest is positively associated with interventionism journalism. The advocacy approach contradicts standardised ways of working in the west that seek to present the truth from a neutral point of

view to allow the audience to determine their own views. However, Identifying the truth is not a scientific process. Loyn (2005) argues that objectivity is an essential tool that supports journalists to seek the truth and accuracy. He identifies that holding shared cultural assumption audiences make the task of reporting easier for journalists, and recognises that assumptions do need to be critiqued. The shared sense of reality identified by Loyn can experienced in different ways for marginalised audience. Objectivity is criticised for the lack of transparency which enabled subjectivity and power structures to be hidden and its failure to identify social inequality (Schmidt, 2024: Fleras, 2011). The consequence is that media discourse appears to “natural and normal rather than constructed and contested” (Fleras, 2011 : iv)

Advocacy journalism is often conflated with other models such as peace journalism or constructive journalism. Waisbord (2008) has pointed out an important distinction between the notion of an individual journalist as an advocate, which allows them to promote their political or personal interests and the idea of ‘civic’ advocacy journalism. The latter pushes to mobilise the public to achieve social change and propose or seek solutions to problems. While advocacy journalism has the potential to offer a democratic participatory model of news, some endeavours fail because they simply assume the presence of communities equates participation of communities (Sinha, 2023). The distinction between speaking for a community and enabling a community to speak for itself is important. Vos (2018) reminds us that advocacy journalism is woven into the identity of the journalist and their practice and suggests the strict separation of facts is either impossible or undesirable. He describes a ‘Newsplus’ model of advocacy which offers views and analysis to help the audience make sense of an issue. Both the civic advocacy approach and Newsplus approach are evident within the programmes analysed and aligns with Zee TV’s aims in the 1990s (Fazel, 2007). Often ethnic news media tend to emphasise their political advocacy role (Ross, 2017). Fleras (2011) has warned that ethnic media is often idealised for serving marginalised audiences, taking on a political mouthpiece role for their audiences and creating a sense community consensus. This elucidates that media organisations are businesses and generate profit through subscription or other monetary models. Ross (2017) cautions us to consider how we theorise ethnic media and suggests a need to mitigate the emphasis on what is different about ethnic media and look at commonalities with mainstream news.

The analysis concentrates on how Zee TV journalists ‘do journalism and is structured into 3 sections: the practice of including viewpoints, the practice of holding power to account

and critically examining the role of objectivity and advocacy (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). The research questions are

1. what do the Raj Britannia programmes tell us about journalism practice at Zee TV?
2. How did Zee TV empower the Asian diaspora and encourage political participation?

Method

The Raj Britannia archives allows the examination of how Zee TV 'did' journalism, what questions were asked, how interviewees were framed, how individual episodes were constructed and how issues were presented to the viewer. A limitation of this study is the inability to offer reception analysis of the programmes.

32 video BETA format tapes were digitised to allow viewing of raw interviews and vox pop footage recorded by Zee TV journalists in 1997. 17 Raj Britannia programmes were viewed. While newsrooms maintain archives to allow staff to use material in programme production there has been less focus in the last few decades on preserving this content for cultural historical or genealogical resources for the audiences they serve (Domínguez-Delgado et al., 2017). Raw interviews and programmes were viewed and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Television news studies often apply semiotic and language analysis (Manchin and Jarwarski, 2006). Within semiotic analysis signs can be anything that communicates or contributes to meaning; therefore, general footage and graphics were studied alongside the questions and responses given in interviews. Video footage within news shows unfolding events and enables the viewer to bear witness with an implicit understanding that the content is mediated. Models of visual communication set out two ways in which the audience make sense of news footage – first how it is anchored by the language used or the signs from the visuals which enable the viewer to interpret what is being shown and communicated through the voice overs and interview clips (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Inclusion of diverse voices from the diaspora

The programmes situated ordinary Asian voters in the news frame. This supported the examination of not only their political perspectives and issues of concern but also matters pertaining to identity and belonging. Uniquely the series showcases regional and faith-based differences among the diaspora. In 1997 the mainstream message was that ethnic voters as a homogenous mass were less likely to engage in politics. Moreover, media discourse

concentrated upon ethnic candidates' differences in terms of gender or race (Runderkamp et al 2022). The Raj Britannia programmes were broadcast daily in two parts from 17 March 1997 to the eve of the election on Wednesday 30th April 1997. The title credits depicted a Monopoly board graphic featuring images from 36 constituencies identified by Zee TV as having the potential to swing the outcome. The credit music signified Asian culture through use of the dhol instrument. The graphics and presentation in front of a green screen was basic and indicates the limited resources a transnational ethnic media newsroom had in 1997. The title of the documentary is revealing, the phrase 'Raj' means rule or kingdom in Hindi. Relatedly, 'British Raj' is a common phrase to describe the period of British Empire rule in India, until 1947. The title is activist in its nature suggesting the diasporic viewer can be an agent of change.

Some of the advantages of having access to some of raw footage includes the inclusion of the journalists talking off camera to the interviewees and the re-recording of key questions by presenter Anita Anand and the interviewees. The raw footage included occasions where the female reporters spoon fed vox pop interviewees so that their responses become self-contained soundbytes. While it is a common practice to explain to contributors the need to paraphrase the question into the response, some of the interviewees struggled to articulate their views clearly in English, because it was their second language, which meant the reporters formulated their words. Furthermore, the vox pop questions were somewhat polemic, with questions such as 'who will you vote for?' followed by 'Is there anything I can say to change your mind?' This question secured little useable material as the response was often negative. Some of the expert interviews were recorded by more junior reporters and their lack of knowledge is obvious by the application of uniform questions which sound uninformed for example in an expert interview about the political system in UK where the reporter repeatedly asks the interviewee to summarise how it works. They also appear to ignore journalism interview techniques which suggest listening to the interviewees and formulating questions in response to what they say.

Oddly for advocacy journalism the Raj Britannia series offered limited airtime to ordinary Asian voters. Their voices are heard in a vox populi in most episodes, whereby they outlined how a range of issues impacted their lives.

I would say Newham east London is a deprived area and less fortunate you will find is ethnic minority in this area. Great need for young people in this area, like schools, further education and more facilities for children. Instead of wondering around there should be better facilities to play. (Raj Britannia, Programme 15 Banglatown, 30/4/97)

This area has concentration of Asian voters and although Britain as a whole is said not to be racist there is racialism everywhere. Asians as a whole feel worse of in getting

employment. Some people do not feel they get their share of their rights as citizens, and I think Labour will focus on those points. (Raj Britannia, Programme 15 Banglatown, 30/4/97)

The absence of ordinary voices is particularly striking in terms of the editorial decision making. Civic advocacy or news plus (Vos 2018) practices prominently disseminate a diverse range of voices and perspectives. Therefore it is a pity that ordinary voices are restricted making this style appear somewhat transactional. Greater airtime is given to politicians, national and local, spokespersons or activist organisations working on behalf of Asian communities. For example, in Programme 8 The Black Country 23/03/97 filmed in Sandwell, Dudley the viewer hears from Jatinder Kaur from Awaz Women's centre that the local Asian community is disengaged from politics.

People in Wolverhampton, certainly the Asian community are not politically informed or aware. Several reasons partly because education not taken place, and also people at a local level are just trying to meet their immediate needs to get involved but it's a vicious circle a catch 22 unless you get involved you can't change or have recourse to services they need. (Raj Britannia 'The Black country', 23/03/97)

This episode features interviewees from Asian groups, councils and showcases Punjabi music, dancers, alongside imagery of industry and manufacturing. This works to bring to the fore the history of the region. It is feasible that contributors such as Kaur were not regularly given space in mainstream programmes, so Zee TV offered an important platform for them to share their views. Some of the interviewees feel disconnected from the target audience who were largely working and middle-class Asian families. For example, Programme 2 and 3 explain the political system through elite interviewees, such as Lords, political scientists, and historians. Moreover, the formal use of English in the voiceover script works to offer a highbrow tone. Anand states "in this programme we will be talking the very cream of Asian society" (Programme 2 Politics made easy, 17/03/97). This raises the question how well the series resonated with ordinary audiences? Meanwhile other parts of the voiceover feel patronising, "Do you know exactly how much power lies in your hands?" (Programme 2, Politics made easy 17/03/97). The underlying motive it seems is to educate the audience inferring Zee journalists thought the diaspora was not informed. The Reithian values inform and educate seem to underpin the entire series with one additional goal, to empower the audience. **Traditionally public service broadcasting emphasises citizenship on part of the audience and democracy (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017).**

The different episodes are assembled so that they concentrate upon a number of marginal constituencies which in 1997 had large ethnic populations. Specifically, 36

constituencies are highlighted where a potential change could occur if Asian communities voted strategically. This list was released and published in the British press, in an effort on part of Zee to influence and shape mainstream discourse pertaining to ethnic voters (see fig 1). The message from each episode is simple, if Asian voters in these constituencies vote collectively, they have the power to swing the outcome. It is inferred in the 'off the record' footage that Zee TV enlisted political or data specialists to identify the constituencies. It is important to note they do not tell the viewers how to vote, or outline their political leanings, instead they encourage the viewer to be strategic to secure the representation they desire. The individual episodes in the constituencies explain the swing needed between political parties and signpost the MPs. The programmes advocate that the viewer ought to vote and contribute to broader society while also keeping their diasporic particularity (Geourgiou 2005). The series demonstrates clearly how ethnic journalists can use community-based news to connect audiences with wider society. The archives also allow the observation of how the socialisation and interaction of Zee TV journalists within their specific community of practice.

Fig 1

The regional diversity of Britain is depicted through the footage of the landscape and key urban areas for British Asians presented in the different episodes, industry and manufacturing and numerous cultural signifiers combined with music and bhangra and Tabla music. The material is edited with interviews that offer an insight into the multiple heritage and histories of Asian communities in the UK. Significant places of worship for the various communities feature prominently. In one episode the contradicting views of religious leaders from the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim faiths are juxtaposed. The Hindu leader is filmed at the Hindu Cultural Centre in London states education is important for their community, a religious discrimination policy is important to Muslim communities and the Sikh community leader calls for protection of religious needs. This episode also fails to include ordinary voters voices which is striking given that the episode is framed as exploring differences among viewers and relies upon faith leaders to speak on behalf of their community.

The ordinary voters' perspectives in the regions reveal religious and economic demarcations in the South Asian communities. This is formally acknowledged in the voiceover.

Far from being a homogenous entity the Asian community is made up of diverse and fiercely proud groups. Indians make up the biggest percentage in Britain followed by Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. We found during the filming for this series

people from different geographical origins or indeed different cultural and religious beliefs have different political leanings. (Raj Britannia 'the Story so far', 3/4/97)

However, the raw vox populi footage shows the Zee TV journalists infer interviewees are in fact homogenous, and all belong to the same overarching 'Asian community'. Examples from the raw footage includes the manner in which questions are framed, "What issues important to you as an Asian businessman? Do you think there are enough Asian MPs?" This has the effect of depersonalising different views and perspectives. From the raw footage available for the study, 33 people were approached and filmed in constituencies including Newham, Ilford and Barking and Edmonton Green and Hayes and Harlington and Ealing Southall. The journalists quizzed voters about their knowledge of Asian MPs in the House of Commons. An edited version of the vox appears in programme 2. Approximately half of participants from the raw footage exhibited some awareness of the number of Asian MPs, their constituency, or their names. This individual explain why Asian MPs are required:

I think they would make a lot of difference, at least that way Asian needs would be looked after. I don't believe there are a lot of people looking after Asian needs, there isn't a lot of people who know what going in Asian families or Asian business there is nobody you can turn to and if there more Asian MPs we would probably go to them they can help us. (Raw vox Tooting 1997)

Most of the vox pop respondents appeared to envisage Asian MP as being male and a common expectation was, they would better understand and thus, naturally help their fellow community. Respondent 6, highlight that 'Asian problems, Asian MPS will know about it he can explain to Government" (Raw Vox Manor Park 1997). However, this notion is contradicted in the programme by Labour MP Keith Vaz:

Of course, one is if of a certain ethnic origin, but I am not in parliament because I am there to represent a section of the community, I represent people. I fought an election, four elections in total and it would be quite wrong for anyone elected to British parliament to act on behalf of just one section of it. (Raj Britannia 'Three in the house' 1st April 1997)

Vaz makes an important point that a politician's role is to serve all communities, but he sounds aloof and disconnected to ordinary voters. Editorially it is interesting this quote is included, whereas MP Deva for Brentford and Isleworth expressing a similar viewpoint in his raw interview is excluded. From the audience point of view they are learning that the elected Asian ministers do not view representing Asian voters is their key priority or motivation.

The viewer is frequently reminded in the voiceovers that “if the House of Commons was to be truly representative then 18 Asian MPs were required” (Raj Britannia ‘Politics made easy’, 17/03/97). The inference being that ethnic MPs would better represent Asian communities and this would be fairer. It is important to ask who is advocating the political system is unfair? Zee TV? The voters? politicians and elites involved in national or local politics? The presenters use phrases such as ‘we’ and ‘our’ in the voiceover to align themselves with the audience. y appear to be motivated by a desire to campaign, advocate, and educate the audience on the collective power of their vote.

Holding individuals to account

Within journalism there is a dominant consensus that journalists hold people in power to account and thus in interviews with those in powerful roles ought to be adversarial and objective. The raw footage shows Anand is friendly and confident in the company of the various politicians she interviews. On camera she appears detached and formal in her tone of questioning. There is some critical questioning by Anand, but it does not go far enough. For example, it is evident in the raw interviews she was trying to find out if Asian voters have different needs from majority population – this angle fails to come across in the final programmes.

Anita Anand, There have been studies that Asians have Asian worries do you find that to be true? No I don’t think that the majority of the people who live in this country, particularly in a constituency like mine which has a multi-cultural character that people think about their life in this country. They are more concerned about the issues that are closer to their life rather than to talk about issues which have nothing to do with their daily life in this country. They have a causal interest in those issues. (raw interview MP, Piara Khabra, 1997)

The interviewee MP Piara Khabra displays a nuanced understanding of Asians as an overarching community. However, she moves onto a different question following the answer, “do people worry about New Labour?” and this response is not used in the programmes. Anand also poses similar questions to Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown suggesting the political parties viewed the Asian electorate as a vote bank. The vote bank is notion that describes a group of loyal voters from a single community who can be relied upon to vote in a particular way. There is no firm evidence that Asian voters in 1997 voted in this way.

Anand Do you know what the Asian electorate want? My view is that the Asian community want a strong and prosperous Britain, they want a tolerant Britain, they want a civilized Britain, an educated Britain, they want an enterprising Britain and, in those senses, exactly the same as everyone else wants and to treat them as a special case that needs to be dealt with differently, ghettoised in terms of politics I find patronising and offensive. (Ashdown, 1997)

Ashdown indicates he is critical of both Labour and Conservative parties and how they try to appeal to Asian voters through transactional appearances with the communities or through incentivising the need for different treatment or policies. The manner in which the parties targeted the diaspora for votes are acknowledged in the voiceover in Programme 3 The Asian Equation (18/3/97), “You can’t have missed the images of John Major being garlanded and tilaked¹¹ at mosques and mundirs up and down the country.” Political leaders try to woo voters by participating in worship and cultural practices such as wearing a bindi to demonstrate they are inclusive and accepting of new cultures and heritages as part of election campaigning. Articles in the UK press also described how the leaders were “courting” Asian voters and that the Conservatives were not perceived to be “Asian friendly” (Abrams 1997; Bevins 1997).

Anand also tries to interrogate the fielding of 40 prospective Asian electoral candidates. At first glance this appears to be a respectable figure, but the questioning and voiceover recognises many ethnic candidates were in unwinnable seats pitted against another ethnic candidate, for example, in Bradford West and Bethnal Green and Bow. A reoccurring question voiced by Anand is ‘ethnic MPS can only represent ethnic constituencies?’ An interview with Simon Wooley, from Operation Black Vote is highly critical of this:

They have put forward a lot more candidates we are encouraged but when you scratch the surface you see that is a sham 90% of these candidates are in absolutely unwinnable seats. That is an absolute insult we see the political parties using our communities as cannon fodder. Worse still some of these candidates are in high profile seats and they can claim theres this Asian and Black face, but they are in unwinnable seats it’s not what democracy is about. (Raj Britannia, Programme 18, The story so far, 1997)

Wooley’s point of view supports the line of questioning utilised by Anand and links to the practice of advocacy journalism that seeks to expose structural problems in society. The raw interview with Wooley reveals he highly critical. She does pose questions such as “Is there something inherently wrong in the selection process that is barring our people from hustings?”

¹ Tilak - is a tradition in Hindu culture and serves to indicate spiritual connection, mark of devotion, cultural adherence, and protection against negative energies. Additionally, Tilak is a unique identifier of religious sects and communities

But critically she does not press to find the solution or place responsibility for the action. The use of our works to place Anand with the audience. This is where minority newsrooms diverge from mainstream newsrooms because the journalists can identify and associate themselves with their audience. As a production method this helps the viewer to feel a sense of belonging to the media outlet. However, ethnic media and ethnic media professionals are also perceived to be less credible, and less 'professional' because they do this.

It is evident the political parties considered Zee TV in 1997 as a means to access ethnic voters in the election campaign. The then Prime Minister, John Major, Liberal Democrat Leader, Paddy Ashdown and Labour leader Tony Blair all filmed interviews with the broadcaster. The mainstream press acknowledged the interviews on Zee TV, and described the channel as being "influential" amongst its target audience (Frean, 1997). The Times also noted that the political parties created special election broadcasts specifically for Asian voters that featured endorsements from successful Asian businessmen, to be aired on Zee TV (Frean, 1997). Furthermore, the article also states that 1 in 3 Asian households subscribed to Zee in 1997 and 70% of those households consumed no other television channels. This shows mainstream media worked with Zee TV to support audiences to actively engage in civic activity of voting.

The message presented to the audience by Zee is more nuanced than the mainstream message of non-engagement. Anand critiqued the assumption minority communities support the Labour Party but does infer the viewer requires tutoring in English political system, thereby applying a deficit tone. In the programmes, Labour MP, Keith Vaz warns the Labour party "should not be complacent" over support from the Asian community (Raj Britannia the Story so far, 3.04.97). In contrast his peer, Labour MP Piara Khabra outlined how British Asians were ideologically aligned with Labour, implying their ongoing support

Labour party has been getting the support of the Asian community for more than 25 years. Labour party did not use any magic to mesmerize, it was support which was natural support coming from the ethnic minority communities in this country from those who have got the experience like me. (Raj Britannia 'the Story so far', 3/04/97).

Khabra positions his personal lived experiences as indicative of all Asian voters. He is filmed in his living room making the viewer feel special that they are invited into his personal and private space. Greater airtime in this episode is given to the Conservative MP Nirj Deva who offers the perspective that ideologically the Asian communities align with Conservative Party values.

Natural Tory voters in terms of the values they hold ... by the very fact we came here we have brought with us a genetic pool of people who are constantly seeking to improve themselves. (Raj Britannia, 'The Story so far', 3 April 1997).

Deva is presented as wealthy, elite and distant from the diaspora. He dismisses in the raw interview that he represents an ethnic constituency.

No. I do not represent an Asian constituency. I have 80 thousand constituents in Brentford Chiswick, Isleworth, and Hounslow. I have got about 18 thousand Asian constituents out of 80 thousand. I am the first and I want you to make a note of it, I am the first non-white person of either party to be elected in an area where the majority of the people were not non-white. (Nirj Deva, raw interview, 1997)

This response is not included in the final programmes. It suggests Deva is proud of not representing a 'minority' specific constituency. By offering viewpoints from the three main political parties in the different episodes Zee journalists offer a political balance, something which is important under UK media regulation pertaining to election rules to ensure impartiality requirementsⁱⁱ. Within contemporary politics in the UK the Asian community votes along class lines similar to the majority population, a huge proportion does support The Conservative party. This was not as evident in 1997.

Conclusion

It is significant the Raj Britannia series seriously questioned how the political parties fielded ethnic candidates and if the system was unfair to ethnic candidates. Therefore, there is some evidence that Zee TV journalists are advocating on behalf of the viewer but problematically they situate the diaspora as requiring support help to better understand democracy and politics. The analysis demonstrates that Zee journalists adopted a mix of civic and news plus advocacy approaches that seek to showcase existing problems in society and offer context and evaluation. However, Zee TV journalists also mimic mainstream 'professional' journalism practices such as using elite or powerful social actors to inform the story for authority at the expense ordinary voices. It is also possible to see they did not practice journalism as their counterparts in India and their practice differs to mainstream news in the UK. The journalists were aspiring to produce high quality journalism that informed, empowered and challenged political powers and thus they were employing the watchdog or monitorial role in journalism with some advocating for their audience (Christians 2009). This type of study is important because it illuminates journalism practice and avoids essentialising ethnic media as simply

supporting the maintenance of culture or offering a counter hegemonic perspective. This study contributes to television and journalism studies by shedding light on how ethnic journalists in a transnational newsroom tried to shape the mainstream media agenda in 1997. In today's media climate it seems very unlikely for a transnational news outlet to have an influential role in the media ecosystem. The archives demonstrate ethnic media can play an active role, though, not always obvious role in contributing to national debate. The Raj Britannia series is contradictory, it sustains the mainstream media discourse that ethnic voters do not engage in voting and encourages participation through education. The continued engagement of satellite television among diasporic audiences globally shows how mainstream and minority media co-exist serving their audience different needs in terms of identity. Georgiou (2005) suggests this coexistence is more about continuity between the particular and the universal than about competition.

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ⁱ Tilak - is a tradition in Hindu culture and serves to indicate spiritual connection, mark of devotion, cultural adherence, and protection against negative energies. Additionally, Tilak is a unique identifier of religious sects and communities

ⁱⁱ Ofcom Broadcast Standards Code. Section 6: Elections and referendums
special impartiality requirements and other legislation that must be applied at the time of elections and referendums.