

Studies in South Asian Film and Media



ISSN 1756-4921 | Online ISSN 1756-493X
2 issues per volume | First published in 2009

Special Issue on Media Studies and the Contemporary

Guest Editor - Jenson Joseph

Independent Scholar/Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow, Humboldt University Berlin.

The Concern

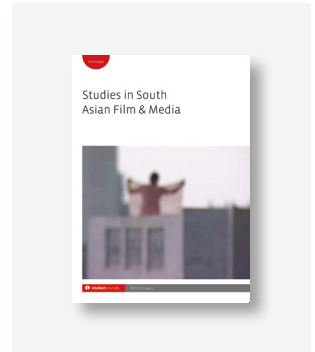
'2019 elections will be fought on mobile phones, says Prime Minister Narendra Modi'.

India Today, 31 March 2017.¹

'Data is information; will dictate history in the future, says PM Modi'. *Business Standard*, 16 November 2021.²

Consider these news headlines from contemporary India. From an academic point of view, they are clearly indicative of the fact that while our scholarship continues to struggle to evaluate the effects and possibilities of the recent transformations in media cultures and popular media practices, the conservative forces seem to be faster on the uptake. Such a context has made it inevitable that any attempt to derive a comprehensive understanding about the contemporary times must engage with the domain of media as a critical, if not as the most crucial, factor. It is true that alert scholarship in humanities and social sciences has always taken into account the role that media plays in constituting any modern phenomenon it sets out to study. Yet, it was possible for researchers until recently to hold on to the distinction between social events closer to reality, in which the role of media was considered to be marginal at best, and the media events which would unfold on popular media platforms, alienated from reality. Sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists would study the first category of the real events, while media researchers were to specialize in analysing the simulated media events and their fictional dimension. Today, it has become impossible to hold on to such distinctions between the real and the simulated, the organic and the mediated. All events today – economic, political, cultural – unfold as media events, at a distance from what we have come to take for granted as the tangible material terrain of reality.

Media scholars should have found this backdrop as an opportune moment to assert the indispensability of their domain expertise. However, for historical reasons, media studies in India remains a yet-to-be-constituted discipline because – or as a result of which – 'the media', 'the mediatic', and 'the middle' have remained gravely under-theorized themes in its discursive domain as well as in scholarship in general. There are historical reasons for this. For example, there were good reasons why the media and communication departments in Indian universities until recently have expended theoretical energies almost exclusively on questions around democratization of media – as a matter closely related to the expansion of democratic rights to more and more people. This preoccupation has, however, resulted in an inadequate exploration of the essence of media as such, in favour of the more predominant approach which we could call, 'the media plus x' approach: 'media and democracy', 'media and development', 'media and representation', 'media and empowerment', and so on.



Lead Editor

Aarti Wani
Symbiosis College of Arts and
Commerce, India
aaj.safm@gmail.com

Co-editor & Book Reviews Editor

Jyotsna Kapur
Southern Illinois
University, USA
jkapur@siu.edu

Assistant Editor

Namrata Sathe
Southern Illinois
University, USA
n.sathe@siu.edu

CALL FOR
PAPERS

1 <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/social-media-2019-general-elections-prime-minister-narendra-modi-968774-2017-03-31>.

2 https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/data-will-dictate-history-pm-modi-121111600404_1.html.

To order this journal online visit our website: www.intellectbooks.com

f @IntellectBooks

@IntellectBooks

intellectbooks

Intellect Books

Consequently, the discipline is now at a loss for frameworks that will help us understand the transformed historical conditions of the present when the democratization and expansion of media have become the very tools through which power tightens its grip even on domains and sections previously excluded from the mainstream. If the earlier academic agendas in media studies emerged in response to given historical predicaments, the present context demands that media studies engage with the theme of media and mediation more rigorously and urgently.

This appeal to revive media studies comes also in a context when, due to the indisputable centrality of media to all domains of contemporary life, the discipline must take up the historical responsibility of generating theoretical clarity about the political conditions we inhabit today, in contrast to the scenario until recently when media studies, film studies and cultural studies could rely on the clarity of concepts and frameworks that social sciences disciplines and political theories would offer us. The challenge before any attempt to make sense of the contemporary and imagine a desirable future is the fact that we must generate political clarity in and through our discourse, because the categories, distinctions and frameworks we have come to take for granted as foundational to our political existence have mostly been rendered redundant. In other words, media studies must evolve as a good vantage point from where the contemporary can be theorized and made sense of effectively. The decision to dedicate an issue of SAFM specially to media studies stems from these considerations.

We invite essays from all domains of humanities and social sciences interested in taking up the theme of today's media infrastructure as central to researching contemporary social-cultural-political phenomena, with a focus on South Asia. This can include engagements with topics related to today's media infrastructure and cultures, like the internet, digital media, live television, simulation, coding/programming, gaming, technological mediation, immediacy, data, information, image, and so on. Essays can also be about the recent and ongoing changes in domains previously defined by the distinctions between the private and the public, materiality and immateriality, work and play, data and information, freedom/autonomy and ideology, organic/natural and machinic/artificial, and so on — changes which must be studied in relation to today's media structures. Essays that engage with media studies as a discipline and its concerns will be especially welcome.

Topics for papers may include but are not limited to the following:

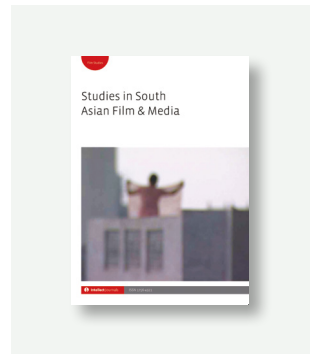
- Digital media cultures/the internet
- New media/publicity/the private
- Data/image/information
- Representation/mediation/immediacy/the middle
- Television/liveness/reality/simulation/transparency
- The mob/the viral content
- Contemporary cinema cultures
- Work/labour/home/reproduction

Dates and Deadlines

Abstracts of 400–500 words along with author bio should be emailed to jenzenjosef@gmail.com by **30 January 2022**. In addition to critical essays of 6000–8000 words, we also welcome reviews of books related to the focus areas of the issue.

The deadline for the first draft is **15 July 2022**. All contributions will be peer-reviewed and the final submission will be due by **31 October 2022**.

All copyrights are to be cleared by the authors. Guidelines to the Intellect house-style are available at <https://www.intellectbooks.com/asset/1414/house-style-guide-5th-ed-2021-n.pdf>.



Lead Editor

Aarti Wani
Symbiosis College of Arts and
Commerce, India
aa.j.safm@gmail.com

Co-editor & Book

Reviews Editor

Jyotsna Kapur
Southern Illinois
University, USA
jkapur@siu.edu

Assistant Editor

Namrata Sathe
Southern Illinois
University, USA
n.sathe@siu.edu

CALL FOR
PAPERS

To order this journal online visit our website: www.intellectbooks.com

f @IntellectBooks

@IntellectBooks

intellectbooks

Intellect Books