

Marginal Freedoms: Journalism, Participation and
Moral Multiplicity in Odisha, India

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Deb and Steve Martineau, and to the memory of my grandmother, Gladys Martineau.

Acknowledgements

At the end of a long and fascinating interview with a prominent journalist in Bhubaneswar, he stood up and asked me, in his elegant English, “but tell me seriously: you can’t possibly have learned anything in your study of Odisha’s journalists. Has this been worth the effort at all? Isn’t this just a waste of your time?” This question has stuck with me, resonating in different ways throughout the writing of this dissertation. What does anthropological research need to do in order to be worthwhile? How do we judge its value? Under the influence of this question, this dissertation has turned to consider some of the many ways we humans evaluate the worth of our own and others’ actions. Though I will not name him here, I thank this journalist for asking a question that I might not have asked otherwise.

The clearest worth of this dissertation to me has been the selfish pleasure of interacting with so many people I admire and respect throughout its production. Due to an Institutional Review Board [IRB] approved research protocol designed to protect research participants, I am unable to thank by name most of the journalists and media producers who hosted me, talked to me, tolerated me, welcomed me, ferried me around, and sometimes befriended me in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, and Delhi. The journalist whom I call Prakash was obviously

a major influence on my research, and I value his friendship as much as I do his intellectual and pragmatic contributions. I especially thank the management and staff at the *Sambad*, *Dharitri*, *Samaja*, *Odisha Bhaskar*, *Telegraph*, *New Indian Express*, and *Samadrusti* for their hospitality. Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, Tathagata Satpathy, and Sudhir Pattnaik granted me informational interviews about their publications that did not include personal information, and I am grateful to be able to thank them directly for their help. There is a long list of others to whom I am grateful that is inscribed on the inside of my head. It is my hope that, if they ever were to read it, these people—who have been more interlocutors than informants—would recognize themselves in the text that follows without feeling that others would also recognize them. Because Odisha’s media world is so small and densely networked, in order to achieve the IRB-required anonymity, in addition to changing participants’ names, I have obscured identities by altering personal details and descriptions and by substituting biographical events when I could do so without effectively changing the resulting sociological context. My goal has been to write in ways that would do no harm to any of the people I write about, while also representing accurately their perspectives as best I understood them.

This project follows on nearly 20 years of being fascinated with Odisha. For introducing me to Odishan culture in the first place, I thank Odissi dancer and Hindustani vocalist Smt. Sangeeta Kar of Midland, Michigan, and her family. These days I am remembering with great fondness Sangeeta’s mother, the Odia novelist Bina Mohapatra of Cuttack, who died recently. I will always remember her contagious laugh as well as her generosity and kindness during my first stay in Odisha; surely it was one of the reasons I returned. The dissertation research would

not have been sited in Odisha if not for the support of my former dance teacher in Bhubaneswar, Smt. Sujata Mohapatra, and her husband, Guru Ratikanta Mohapatra. During my dance studies with them and the late Padmavibhusan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra in 1999-2000, they patiently instructed me how to move, dress, eat, and speak like a student of Odissi dance, and that knowledge undergirds this study. Despite those good natured efforts, I am grateful to Sujata-apa for noticing, early on in my dance training, that that all signs pointed to me preferring a life of reading and writing to drilling dance steps.

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the afternoons spent pretending we were elephants. I look forward to the day that the girls read this themselves and tell me, again, how very wrong I am.

For a project this long in the making, the general list of influential people grows too long to do it justice. A few people stand out nonetheless, and top among them is my advisor, Webb Keane. My gratitude to him is greater than words, both for his support and for his scholarly example. Thomas Trautmann exudes the rare scholarly combination of friendliness and perspicuity, and working with him is always a joy. Matthew Hull offered redirection that I did not want but needed, as well as patience, good humor, and insight. Aswin Punathambekar, who came to this project too late for my liking, has already helped me see its future directions with new eyes. I thank my dissertation committee for their patience and encouragement.

While living in Michigan I had the pleasure of learning from a remarkable set of scholars, both faculty and students. The influences of Gillian Feeley-Harnik and Judith Irvine cannot be overstated. This text has also been significantly influenced by suggestions from Gayle Rubin, David Akin, Danilyn Rutherford, Don Brenneis, Thomas Blom Hansen, Chaise LaDousa, and Nancy Munn. For their intellectual friendship and feedback during years of research and writing, I thank Elana Buch, Celina Callahan-Kapoor, Christie Davis, Nishita Trisal, Katy Overstreet, John Marlovits, Gretchen Bakke, Jake Culbertson, Mara Greene, Barbara Curda and her family, Kimbra Smith, and Bregje Van Eekelen. I am grateful to all of the caregivers who supported this work, including Cindy Lauren and my mother-in-law, Melanie Wolf. A heartfelt thanks to my OWL writing group: Cyrus, J, HM, Sajji, Stef, Tamar, Janelle, EZ, VW, WK and AK.

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Finally, I thank my family. My parents, Deb and Steve Martineau supported me and this project for years, often in the hardest way—by pretending it didn't exist. That the daughter of speech pathologist and a lawyer would study the intersection of language and law makes their influence plain. My paternal grandmother, Gladys Martineau, did not live to see this project finished, but she would have been proud. I dedicate these efforts to them. I thank my sister, Jane, for always helping me better approximate what I actually want to say. None of this project would exist without the profound support of Matthew Wolf-Meyer, who took over childcare, household chores, and popular culture updates while I wrote and rewrote, essentially putting his own writing on hold for over two years. He also discussed every idea with me, often several times, even when he wanted to sleep. For making it all worth the effort, I thank him and our son, Felix.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BJD	Biju Janata Dal (political party)
BJP	Bharata Janata Dal (political party)
CP	Communist Party (political party)
EML	Eastern Media Limited
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
INC	Indian National Congress (political party)
INR	Indian Rupee
IPC	Indian Penal Code
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUFP	Media Unity for Free Press
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak
RTI	Right to Information
SOPS	Servants of the People Society

Note on Language and Pronunciation

The research on which this dissertation is based took place in Odia and English. Odia is a language used by more than 32 million people¹ on India's eastern coast, largely overlapping with the Indian state of Odisha. It is an Indo-Aryan language that shares many features with Bengali, Assamese, Nepali, Sinhala, Hindi and other North Indian languages. Odia is written in a unique abiguda script that follows similar phonemic distinctions to Devanagari, making the adoption of the orthographic conventions of Sanskrit common in English scholarly texts about Odia.

Following this practice, this text uses standard orientalist conventions to transcribe Odia words.

Use of Sanskrit conventions for Odia is, however, complicated by unique pronunciation features, many of which are illustrated by orthographic inconsistencies across local uses of Roman script. The schwa, the mid-central vowel common throughout North and Western India, is not found in Odia; instead Odia has the phonetic value [ɔ], a low-mid back rounded vowel which is produced by rounding the mouth and moving the tongue back. Unlike other Indo-Aryan languages, this vowel is usually not deleted at the end of words nor in middle syllables. This

¹ 33,017,446 claim Odia as a mother tongue according to the 2001 Census of India; the number who speak Odia but do not include it as a mother tongue is undoubtedly higher. This number includes dialectal variations.

unique inherent vowel has led to the oscillation, in local English spelling of names and Odia words, between the Roman letter “a” and “o”, even though the phonetic values [ɔ] and [o] are usually distinct phonemically and orthographically in Odia (see Dash 1983). For example, a very common last name in Odisha is spelled Mahapatra, Mohapatra, and less often Mohapatro; these variations indicate variations in English orthography rather than confusion about pronunciation. Similar variations occur in the Romanization of several other Odia characters. Romanized Odia frequently oscillates between “r” and “d” thanks to variations in the use of English to represent Odia’s phonemic and orthographic distinctions between flap and plosive retroflex. Coastal Odia’s sibilants have largely converged in a slightly retroflexed dental “s”, resulting in local variations between “s” and “sh” in Roman script. Odia has a retroflex lateral flap that most North Indian languages do not that is colloquially romanized as “l” even though speakers clearly distinguish between the retroflex lateral and the dental lateral.

I have adjusted the conventions slightly in order better approximate to Odia pronunciation and orthography. For the low-mid back rounded vowel, I write *a* instead of *ɔ* because it occupies the same phonemic location. Thus, rather than spelling the Odia *ghɔrɔ* (“house”), I write *ghara*. Odia has a character for an historically palatal approximant [j] that is in some cases now indistinguishable from the palatal voiced stop; Odia orthography appends the palatal semivowel character to indicate its pronunciation as [dʒ] but I follow local transcription convention and do not distinguish between the homophones (Saloman 2007). I have adopted the convention *l̥*, often used for a vowel in Sanskrit, for the Odia retroflex lateral flap. These are summarized below.²

² For general account of Odia phonetics in relationship to other Indo-Aryan languages, see Masica (1993).

CONSONANTS³

	voiceless stops	aspirated stops	voiced stops	voiced aspirated stops	nasal stops	approximants	sibilants	aspirants
velars	କ / ka	ଖ / kha	ଗ / ga	ଘ / gha	ଙ / ṅ			ହ / ha
palatals	ଚ / ca	ଛ / cha	ଜ / ja	ଝ / jha	ଞ / ṅ	ଝ / ya, ଞ / ja	ଶ / śa	
retroflexes	ଟ / ṭa	ଠ / ṭha	ଡ / ḍa	ଢ / ḍha	ଣ / ṇa	ଳ / ḷa	ଷ / ṣa	
dentals	ତ / ta	ଥ / tha	ଦ / da	ଧ / dha	ନ / na	ଲ / la, ର / ra	ସ / sa	
labials	ପ / pa	ଫ / pha	ବ / ba	ଭ / bha	ମ / ma	ବ / ba, wa		

VOWELS

ଅ	ଆ	ଇ	ଈ	ଉ	ଊ	ଋ	ୠ	ଏ	ଐ	ଓ	ଔ	ଌ	ୡ	ଃ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	e	ai	o	au	ṁ	ṡ	ḥ
<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>														
diphthongs												nasals		

Grammatically, Odia is close to its Indo-Aryan brethren, with exceptions. A few of these may be useful for readers to know. Odia does not distinguish grammatical gender, though male/female distinctions are semantic features. Personal pronouns distinguish between

³ I follow traditional Indo-Aryan phonetic categories for describing these consonants (Saloman 2007). Actual pronunciation varies geographically, socially, with phonetic environment, and across individuals.

human/non-human (Ray 2003) as well as the three-tier status/intimacy distinctions common across Indo-Aryan. The second person plural pronoun distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive (of the addressee); I indicate this in the text only if the distinction is socially significant.

English as it is spoken and written in Odisha is also a local language to degrees that vary across educational status, class, and person. In addition to largely following Odia phonemic patterns, Odishan English also routinely drops articles as well as gender distinctions on the pronoun. Odishan English also adopts local styles of emphasis, intonation and timing. Pragmatics are distinctly local; for example, as in Odia, a visitor will say “I am coming” when they are preparing to go. The question of the degree to which these variations are signs of competence rather than signs of linguistic system is far from neutral, though growing scholarship on world Englishes suggests linguistic differentiation is in play.

English orthography of Odia words is an active social concern in Odisha. According to the transliteration scheme adopted here, the local pronunciation of the state and the language are Oḍiṣā and Oḍiā. In order to better approximate local pronunciation, in 2012 the Odisha State Legislative Assembly voted to officially change the English (and Hindi) orthography of Orissa and Oriya to, respectively, Odisha and Odia. Though the greater part of my research preceded this change, I have adopted the new standard throughout this text, restricting the old form to quotes and the names of institutions. However, to avoid confusion, I have used “Odisha” for government departments. Given local ethnic diversity and language politics, I describe someone from the state of Odisha as Odishan in place of the popular adjectival use of Odia.

Introduction

Moral multiplicity has been reported as a problem around the world for at least the last century. It has been discussed in the language of modernism, individualism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, westernization, and globalization. Some have seen it as the loss of identity, the destruction of meaning, and the rending of the social fabric into a million separate threads. Others have heralded it as the end of oppressive regimes that rely on their own morality's naturalness, or god-giveness, thus liberating all individuals to seek their own good. Yet others, many anthropologists among them, have sought a middle path, seeing in moral multiplicity contests for control, the loss of lifeways and indigenous knowledge, and rationalizations for exploitation, as well as opportunities for self- and community-making, the generation of new forms of imagination, and the possibility of justice. Many of these latter scholars have brought attention to how even the narratives of what happens in the face of moral multiplicity are deeply embedded in moral assumptions, showing how such narratives are themselves involved in contests for dominance. But now it is the second decade of the twenty-first century and we have been in this state of disruption—things haven't been as they were—for as long as any living person can remember. Long enough, indeed, that there are now long-established traditions (some

claiming to be Traditions, others to be radically new inventions) to help people figure out how to deal with all of these different ways of evaluating their lives and what their lives are for. In describing the lives of a group of journalists in Bhubaneswar, the capital of India's eastern state of Odisha, this dissertation explores journalism as one methodological tradition managing moral multiplicity in the world, even as journalists themselves manage such multiplicity in their own lives.

The prominence of moral multiplicity in the lives of this group of Indian journalists became palpable during a surprising encounter with an “informant” during my research—an informant whose transition to “good friend” began in that very moment. The surprising moment was at the end of my second conversation with Prakash. We were saying goodbye. I was resting against the metal grated door that stood at the entry to my Bhubaneswar home, ready to close it and attach the padlock. It was late enough that the residential neighborhood was quiet, the evening shoppers all back home, and the single flickering street light hummed along with the mosquitoes. Prakash had already put on his black leather dress shoes and had slung his leather briefcase over his shoulder; he had his full motorcycle helmet in his hands, poised to put it on. But, caught by the end of our conversation, Prakash stayed just outside the door, on the walkway to the tall metal gate that stood between the house and the lane. He made no move toward the road. After we talked of planning our next meeting, instead of turning away, he surprised me with a series of revelations.

For over two hours we had been sitting inside my guesthouse talking about his professional history, in the unfurnished great room downstairs frequently trafficked by all of the guest house

residents. It was public space when it wasn't being used by one of the resident dancers for rehearsals, and it was much cooler in the monsoon humidity than the furnished and well-lit sitting room upstairs. So we had sat at the square wooden table on two molded plastic chairs and drank tea in the dark, and then we had continued to sit long after the tea was finished, collaborating in his life story. I asked clarifying questions, and I nodded, but mostly he talked. Prakash has a strong sociological imagination, and he grasped immediately that a regular person's biography might be interesting to people on the other side of the world. Our work together was concentrated and engrossing, and we were both exhausted and dazed as we stood at the gate.

Born in the mid-1970s, Prakash was a middle son of a middle son, raised in a multigenerational "joint" family in a village outside of Berhampur in southern Odisha, the eastern coastal state of India that is the focus of this dissertation. He had been educated in Berhampur until he went to college in Delhi, having qualified for a prestigious engineering program that would have put him in the perfect position for contributing to his family and finding a wife. Without the responsibilities of an elder son, he had been free to pursue the lucrative career of his choice. But in Delhi he discovered a love for activism. He had seen the writer-activist P. Sainath speak in the late 1990s and it had "lit" in him a desire for to be a writer, to bring "the people's struggles to light." After working with some activists in Delhi and trying unsuccessfully to get a regular reporting job in one of the Delhi offices of the English-language newspapers, he moved home to Odisha, to Bhubaneswar. Many of his siblings and paternal cousins, who had been raised as siblings in the same household, lived in Bhubaneswar, and he

had stayed with them periodically over the years since leaving Delhi. At the time of our second conversation, he was staying in the front room of the rented flat of one of his married paternal cousins, where he helped with her infant son at nights and then tried to write after everyone else had gone to sleep.

Back in Bhubaneswar, he completed college and then did an MA in Journalism from Utkal University, the state university. He spent several years building a reputation as a freelancer, developing specializations in development topics and human rights issues, and publishing with progressive, English-language online magazines. “I’m a development journalist,” he had explained to me. “No, no, that’s not right. Really I’m a people’s journalist.” He had developed good “contacts” and had a solid local reputation; he counted some of Odisha’s most prominent journalists and editors among his mentors. But he could barely make enough money to eat and he was rarely able to help with rent. So a couple of years before we met, he had taken a position in the local office of an international NGO. Bhubaneswar had been overrun with international governmental and non-governmental organizations since a “Super Cyclone” in 1999, including UNESCO, the International Red Cross, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development [DFID], as well as numerous NGOs funded by the Ford Foundation. A job in a development organization is a solid middle-class career choice in Bhubaneswar and I had already met several Journalism MAs who had taken that route, so to me it seemed like a smart choice. But Prakash found it frustrating. Most of the work in the NGOs where he had worked had been oriented toward procuring more money, so even when he believed in the organization’s mission, he found most of the organization’s efforts going into self-preservation rather than working for

the people. His current service was rewarding enough because it involved traveling for weeks at a time in western and southern Odisha to give training workshops to local representatives. Out of this, he was finally getting to know Odisha's poorest districts, home to many of contemporary India's worst famines and water-borne epidemics, as well as home to indigenous groups' battles against resource extraction and a growing Maoist insurgency. He was finally getting to know the real Odisha. He thought he would stay in that job for a while and keep applying to reporter positions in the Bhubaneswar bureaus of national English dailies like *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*.

Against this orderly backdrop of professional aspirations and realistic compromises, Prakash's parting revelations were complicated and confusing, tumbling out around us on the doorstep in no clear order over the next hour. He started by revealing that he was feeling a lot of pressure from his family to get married. They had been meeting girls but he had not liked any of them, and he felt shame about that because his marriage was so important to his paternal kin. He had been unmarriageable as a freelancer, but now a girl's father might accept him, though there was concern that he still needed another 15000 Rupees a month to make a father ultimately agree. But that was over half of his current salary and was unlikely unless he got a position in an English daily. He also revealed that he had not actually returned to Bhubaneswar for professional reasons, but because one of his cousin-sisters (a female paternal cousin) was being abused by her husband and the family needed him to intervene. He had been trying to manage that relationship for years, and still was, and he worried about it. He told me that he would have to travel soon to look at another potential husband for another cousin-sister, and that there was conflict in the

family about that match, a conflict that he had been trying to assuage because it was a match his cousin-sister greatly desired. He also confessed me that he had a female friend, part of a group of good friends, who had decided that she was in love with Prakash and she was pressuring him to marry by talking directly to members of his family. She had been sending him SMS-messages throughout the evening. Now some of his family members were putting pressure on him to accept this girl, this old friend of his, but he already knew her well enough to judge that they did not share the same values. “And also there’s another thing,” he admitted quietly, dropping his eyes to his feet, “I just can’t find her pretty.” And then he finally came to the final story, something, he said, that no one else in his life knew about. He was already in love with a woman. She lived in Bangalore, she was brilliant, she had a wildly successful career, and she had said she didn’t love him.

I responded with acceptance and sympathy, which I guessed was what he sought, even though I had no idea what was the culturally appropriate thing to say. I felt like we had jumped the ethnographic ship, and now we were swimming in the vast sea of friendship, which was located somewhere off the map between the United States and India, where my knowledge about being a confidante might or might not suffice. It was obvious to me at the time that he was telling me all of this precisely because I was an outsider, a married foreign woman who spoke conversational Odia but had no kinship ties to Odisha, who respected and understood his family’s expectations as well as valued his professional ideals, but lived outside of both. But as I adopted a style of listening and responding that I would have used with good friends in Ann Arbor, I wondered what I was doing, and what the results would be. I said that I had also felt

unrequited love in the past, and that it is a very common occurrence. He asked me to tell him what he could say or do to make her change her mind, and I told him gently what I saw as the hard truth, which was that she probably wouldn't change her mind. "Love isn't like a Hindi film," I warned, "you can't harass someone into it." I counseled him to move on. "It does get easier," I promised him as I closed the outside gate behind him, fitting the key into the rusted lock and waving goodbye through the iron bars.

I was right about the unrequited love. It did get easier, and eventually Prakash moved on. Unfortunately nothing else has gotten easier for Prakash in the intervening years. He is still moving frequently between jobs in Bhubaneswar, still frustrated that he can't make a living doing what he considers his work, and he still isn't married even as he faces 40. His mother, he tells me, has given up on him. That's a relief because she no longer pressures him to meet girls, but he also feels deep shame that he has disappointed his family. He has continued to apply for positions in the national English dailies—he has been shortlisted for several over the years—but with decreasing enthusiasm; meanwhile he works for an NGO and freelances, continuing to cover the people's issues to which he has committed his life. For a while Prakash took a reporter position in one of the Odia language dailies that was expanding its online presence, and I was hopeful that it would be a good fit. However, as I describe in in Chapters 3 and 4, he left that position in anger, explaining to me that the newspaper management had been unethically motivated by profit at the cost of news quality and fair employee treatment. He complained emphatically about their "characteristically Odia" unprofessionalism.

Throughout our friendship, Prakash has called his misfortune the working of fate, *bhāgya*. There is a well-known story in Odisha that says that God writes your fate on your forehead when you are born, and it is common to hear people comment that it “isn’t written” when something good doesn’t come to pass, such as a marriage, birth, or job. Respect for *bhāgya* is a routine component of marriage arrangements, as both fiancé/e selection and event scheduling are likely to be planned in consultation with astrologers, those who have the expertise to read fate in the heavenly bodies. As his friend and occasional confidante, I have seen *bhāgya* play a very useful role in Prakash’s life, preserving himself and everyone else from blame for his misfortune. He rarely takes a lack of success personally, and he continues to work hard without discouragement. But after winning a prestigious, national-level writing fellowship still didn’t result in one of his desired English media positions, Prakash reminded me of a back-up plan he had first described to me that night in 2009. He said his only real hope is to study abroad. If he studies for an advanced degree abroad, he said, then he is sure to find both a good job and a wife upon his return home.

That night on the walkway outside of the house, Prakash’s difficulty deciding whether to stay or go mimed his experience of being pulled in different directions in his life. Choosing his own course of action was constantly challenged by his desire to fulfill expectations that seemed to him to contradict each other. His desire to do what he saw as ethical and worthwhile journalistic work seemed to contradict his desire to satisfy his family’s expectations for his marriage: the ideal journalistic work demanded sacrifice and dedication to the downtrodden while his family demanded constant attention and compromising. His desire to pursue an elite career in English-language media seemed to contradict his desire to fulfill obligations to family

members, for it would literally take him too far away to help with relationship management, even as it seemed the only way to afford a marriage. Falling in love, Prakash was pulled between his desire to satisfy his family's expectations of family and a desire to "follow his heart"—a conflict that the Hindi film industry has celebrated for decades. In his pursuit of journalism as a career, he felt a conflict between his desire for professional stability and recognition and his commitment to a particular form of advocacy journalism "for the people." He wanted the advantages of a well-paying and secure profession, but he did not want to make the ethical compromises that the positions available to him seemed to require. As he experienced each of these desires to meet expectations associated with particular social relations (his mother, paternal cousins, his professional associates, his would-be lover, the downtrodden of Odisha, himself), he drew on a series of moral and cultural representations of how he should live that he experienced as compelling, intersubjectively shared understandings about the world. The challenge or dilemma arose, for Prakash, out of his experience of the irresolvability of these shared understandings.

This conversation with Prakash serves as a touchstone throughout the dissertation for making sense of the conversations with Odisha's other journalists and news production workers. Prakash offered a close-up look at his emotional experiences that others did not share with me, but many other aspects resonate with the following observations of Bhubaneswar's "media *duniya*" or world. Like Prakash, Bhubaneswar's journalists displayed concern with many different understandings of what is good, right, or obligatory. Juxtapositions between commercialism and advocacy, between local belonging and global access, between the

responsibilities of freedom and the responsibilities of social life, echo across the discussions of journalistic practice that this dissertation recounts. The media firms and organizations that publish Odisha's newspapers and employ their journalists also struggle to address moral multiplicity. They can be called to account for any number of obligations, and their efforts to draw in new readers and to keep existing readers draw on multiple and often contrasting understandings of journalism's professional values and social value.

This dissertation examines these journalists' and media producers' ethical concerns as cultural phenomena that have emerged as people have lived through history. Odisha's experience of this history is distinctive, and Odisha's journalists are distinct from other Indians and other journalists as a result. At the same time, as self-identifying journalists in a global profession with a robust set of portable methods and reflexive discourses about itself, Odisha's journalists are in some ways quite like journalists elsewhere: they publish, broadcast, write, photograph, edit, and report. The colloquial Odia verb for what journalists do is *bahara kariba*, to put out, and that is a good description of what journalists do everywhere. But what they should put out, and how, for whom, and why, even what it means to be *bahara* or out—the answers to these questions are far from global. This dissertation explores how the ways of not only answering but even asking these questions is a historically shaped cultural⁴ project that can tell an interesting story about life in Bhubaneswar in the early twentieth century, as well as show us something about living with multiple morality more generally.

⁴ I use "culture" here to distinguish journalists' practices from three potential assumptions: first, that what journalists do in their work is entirely ruled by intention and rational choice; second, that what journalists do is fully individual; and, third, that what journalists do is entirely structured by abstract forces such as "the market" or "political structure." I understand culture as a process of semiotic mediation that is thoroughly social and material (Mertz 1985; Keane 2003).

Framing the Study of Journalists' Ethics in Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Figure 1. The state of Odisha and its major cities.

Odisha is a state on India's eastern coast along the Bay of Bengal (Figure 1). It comprises the coastal flood plains and low, interior mountains that lie between Bengal and Jharkhand in the north, Andhra Pradesh in the south, and Chhattisgarh in the west. It became a state in 1936 when the colonial government, after about a half-century of local print-mediated activism valorizing and cultivating modern Odia, united Odia-speaking regions that had previously been separated across several administrative units. It was the first of India's "linguistic states." The state capital is Bhubaneswar, and while it is now an energetic city of about a million, up until ten years ago it was still considered a sleepy town. The city was designed and built during the period of India's independence from Britain in 1947, and was one of a set of planned modern cities for the new nation-state. Set to the north of an old temple town of the same name, which it has now absorbed as a neighborhood, new Bhubaneswar replaced the old, cramped and frequently flooded capital

at Cuttack—now Bhubaneswar’s “twin city” at a half hour distance by highway—with a rationally organized, spacious and secular capital meant to embody the virtues of both the new nation and Odisha’s imagined place within it.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for first the British and then the postcolonial nation-state, Odisha was considered one of India’s most “backward” regions: not only was the peasantry poor, illiterate, and “a garden of idolatry and superstition” (Laurie 1850), but the western hills were populated by ethnically and linguistically distinct “primeval tribes” (Hunter 1872, 4). Odisha’s greatest claim to colonial fame was as the home of Lord Jagannatha of Puri. Mispronounced as “juggernaut”, the annual *ratha jātra* or chariot festival was misreported across the empire as a ritual in which devotees threw themselves to their deaths under the wheels of the god’s chariot. This starkly contrasted with Indian perceptions of Jagannatha-Puri as one of the four *tirthas* or sacred points of India; rather than backward, Puri was the seat of God.

From Independence through the early 2000s, in addition to its religious site, Odisha was best known for its poverty, punctuated by an occasional starvation death or destructive storm. Though Odisha’s “backwardness” has been demonstrably a product of the British administration’s systematic dismantling of local industry and governance (Ahuja 2007, 2009; D’Souza 2006) and ongoing geopolitical inequalities in the independent nation-state (Banik 2007), Odisha’s poverty has been consistently narrated as either a product of “native character” or—thanks to its cyclones, floods, mountains, and droughts—as geographical and climatic destiny. After Independence, the developmentalist state sought to change Odisha’s fortune

through planned projects like the Hirakud Dam and the development of the steel industry through a German partnership that built the northwestern town of Rourkela. Yet cases of rural starvation, farmer suicides and cholera epidemics continue to dominate national perceptions of the state. As I write this, Odisha's Chief Minister is continuing a three-year campaign seeking "special category status" for the state from the central government, which would provide additional national-level funds to the state for addressing natural calamities and poverty (Debabrata Mohanty, "Citing Delhi's Power Troubles, Orissa CM Seeks Special Status," *IndianExpress.com*, June 17, 2014).

Over the last fifteen years, the capital city has rapidly transformed from a sleepy administrative headquarters to a bustling center of education and consumption, reflexively epitomizing the post-liberalization transformations in India as a whole. But rather than the service and software economy booms that dominate stories of India's liberalization, Bhubaneswar's growth has relied on mineral extraction. As a home to large percentages of India's minerals—the state's Department of Steel and Mines claims "28% iron ore⁵, 24% coal, 59% bauxite, and 98% chromite of India's total deposits" (Odisha 2010)—Odisha has become the center of international mining interests, even as many of the ethnically and linguistically distinct "tribal" or adivasi (locally, *ādibāsi*) areas continue to depend on subsistence agriculture. Following a Hurricane Katrina-like cyclone in 1999, Bhubaneswar has become the regional headquarters for international aid organizations like Red Cross International, UNICEF, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development [DFID], and Aide et Action

⁵ In a heading on the same webpage, the Government claims that Odisha has "more than 35% of the country's iron ore resources."

International. Courted by the national and state governments' programs to increase foreign direct investment, international mining conglomerates like Vedanta-Sterlite, Posco, and Rio Tinto, as well national and regional players, have sought to mine iron ore, bauxite, and coal—Rio Tinto's website describes Odisha as one of the "key underdeveloped iron ore regions of the world" (RioTinto 2012).

Odisha's new political economy has not emerged harmoniously. Odisha's mineral-rich sites are overwhelmingly the ancestral homes of both adivasi and non-adivasis, creating a desperate conflict about land-rights and rehabilitation (Mishra 2010). National and regional political parties take different and also shifting positions with regard to these conflicts, leading to a diversity of discourses about them. While facing routine state repression, local mining-opposition movements have cultivated national and international support (Kumar 2013, 2014). As in other parts of eastern hilly, eastern India, Odisha has also seen a recent growth of a Maoist militia movement called Naxalism in the western regions of the state; while this movement is popularly explained as the disaffection of Odisha's most marginal people through unequal industrialization, it has also polarized state relationships to adivasis, who are increasingly treated as actual or potential terrorists (Chakrabarty and Kujur 2010; Kujur, 2006 #2950 on militarization in adivasi regions, see Sundar 2006; Shah 2013; Shah and Pettigrew 2009).

In the 1950s, Manchester-trained social anthropologist Frederick Bailey conducted village research in what is now Kandhamal district, becoming increasingly interested in the impact of India's ongoing political change on village culture. Bailey then turned his attention to the political process itself, studying the electoral process and Odisha's new state legislators. The

resulting work is a valuable history of the emergence of political conflicts that have grown increasingly violent since, as well as an account of moral multiplicity—though he does not call it that. Bailey argues that Odisha in the 1950s was experiencing conflicts rooted in Odisha’s dual organization as both a “simple” and a “complex” society; according to Bailey, different “patterns of relationships” produced political conflicts (Bailey 1963, 220). In his analysis, simple societies are dominated by multiplex ties, which are formed when the same small set of people interact across all social institutions, and complex societies are dominated by specialized (“single-interest”) ties formed when individuals interact with different sets of people across different institutions. In Odisha, he argues, the relational pattern of simple societies dominates (thanks to the persistence of “traditional society”) while the “representative institutions”—parliament, elections, and others intrinsic to Odisha’s new democracy—are built on the assumption of single-interest relational patterns. The coexistence of these two social patterns among Odishan political actors produces what, for Bailey, is the defining characteristic of Odishan political culture: its elitism. He writes:

They know one another socially; they are drawn from a limited number of castes; and many of them are kinsmen. I do not mean that everyone in the arena of elite politics knows everyone else, still less that they can all trace links of kinship. But I do mean that the links of kinship, and of personal face-to-face acquaintances are so numerous that they must be taken into account if we are going to understand the behavior of the contestants in elite politics. Political conflict or cooperation is only one among many ways in which these people interact with one another. (Bailey, 229)

Thus, for Bailey, Odishan public life shortly after Independence was characterized by its attempt to straddle traditional and modern political institutions. While I do not follow Bailey’s categorization of types of societies into simple and complex, I propose that we can usefully read

his analysis of politics as an account of moral multiplicity: the elites that Bailey describes lived with multiple ways of constructing and evaluating relationships. Like Bailey, I see this as the experience of living in the midst of rapid change. However, where the relationship between interpersonal ethics follows directly from the kind of social order in Bailey's account, in my account this relationship between interpersonal ethics and social order is something to discover.

Bailey's work helps explain why the ethical concerns of Bhubaneswar's journalists would be of potentially broad interest: the ethical concerns of journalists are at the intersection of political social worlds and the rest of the state, and the work of journalists not only helps shape that relationship but helps determine the categories through which those different social groups are understood. In the mid-century, during Bailey's research, Odisha's newspapers were run by politicians, and often founded by them for explicitly political purposes. The same elite who fought the British and then ran the democratic government were the same men who ran the press. Bailey argues that the ties between the men and families within this elite were strong and multiplex, while their ties to village social organization were relatively weak. Similarly, mid-century newspapers circulated narrowly—circulations were low and newspapers predominately circulated among the relatively small society of the literate urban political elite.

But this is clearly no longer the case. In 2010, combined readership of Odisha's top-three newspapers—*Sambad*, *Dharitri*, and the *Samaja*—was over 4.4 million⁶ (Nitin Pandey, "IRS Q3, 2010," exchange4media.com, Dec 10, 2010) and their numbers rise with the ongoing jumps in

⁶ This number is the sum of readership according to the Indian Readership Survey [IRS] of 2010 Q3; it is neither the number of newspaper readers nor a circulation figure, but rather the estimated number of times that one of Odisha's top three dailies is read per day. The readers of different newspapers likely overlap making the number of actual newspaper readers much smaller. The IRS and its Odishan critics are discussed in Chapter 2.

literacy rates across the state. These newspapers are not only profitable, they increasingly mirror India's major newspapers in organizational structure and marketing. With this has come the rapid growth of media production as an industry. As there are no numbers on the "media sector" in Odisha, we can see this growth best in the mid-2000s explosion of mass media and journalism training institutes in Bhubaneswar: at least six training programs were established between 2003–9. Newspapers and their owning organizations each employ hundreds now, and most employees are not elite (though they are predominately from higher castes). The result is that local newspapers offer some of the best Odia-language employment, not just for media professionals but also for local business and marketing graduates.

As in the rest of contemporary India, contemporary Odisha enjoys a robust, multilingual mass media, comprised of national media in English and Hindi, regional media in Telegu and Bengali, and state-level media in Odia. Cable television stations, newspapers and magazines, films theatres, portable media devices, and the internet provide the opportunity to access any nationally circulating media. In addition to the vast and diverse texts in circulation, Odisha is also home to its own media production, which I found Odisha's residents largely preferred to the national media between the years 2007-2010. Media production in Odisha is largely devoted to either Odia-language or English-language media in a variety of formats. Bhubaneswar itself is home to a large number of daily, weekly, and monthly print publications as well as, as of 2010, a rapidly growing number of local privately owned cable television stations, an Odia-language film industry that produces several feature films a year, a small Odia-language music industry, and a growing set of FM radio stations. As of 2010, the internet was largely accessed through a

growing small-scale industry of internet cafes, but the national telephone service, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited [BSNL], and the locally based cable company Ortel both provided high speed internet to businesses and to upper middle class or class-aspirational homes. Mobile phones and services are widely and affordably available through a variety of private companies, and it is routine for even low-income (“Below-Poverty Line”) households to have a mobile phone⁷; media producers themselves usually have several.

The first decade of the twentieth century has witnessed tremendous financial growth in India’s overall media and entertainment sector. In 2005, revenues for the entire sector were estimated at over 420 billion INR or over 9 billion USD (Kohli-Khandekar 2006, 16). In 2011, revenues reached over 805 billion INR (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2013, 8). While the strongest segment of the industry is television broadcasting, print has held its place as the second highest revenue-generating segment of the industry throughout the last decade. At the national level, media and entertainment sector growth continues to be about 15% a year (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2013) despite overall slowing in economic growth.

Though it long wandered an independent path, in the last twenty years Odisha’s media industry has come to share many features recognizable from both national and other regional media industries, especially the explosion of a profitable newspaper industry and the cable television industry. The latter deserves a study of its own in Odisha that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The growth of the newspaper industry is the primary context of this study. The

⁷ In 2012, India’s Telephone Regulatory Authority released figures that showed rural Odisha’s mobile phone use at 32% of the population; the urban distribution was 208%, reflecting the tendency to own multiple phone lines. (Lelin Kumar Mallick, “Tring, Tring... Odisha Ahead—State Leaves Metros Behind,” *TelegraphIndia.com*, Jan 17, 2012).

explosion of the profitable Indian press was the focus of Robin Jeffrey's (2000) capacious and influential book, *India's Newspaper Revolution*. In it, Jeffrey argues that demographic shifts, growth of literacy, and new technologies have transformed India's newspapers into a profit machines. The present research builds on Jeffrey's work in order to ask different questions. To put it oversimply, while Jeffrey's work seeks to explain the causes of newspaper growth, I seek to describe the cultural changes that have accompanied newspaper growth in Odisha.

Despite this growth, newspapers in Odisha are still overwhelmingly associated with politicians, and many of these politicians are the same families that composed the state's elite in 1959. Nor has the newspaper market been fully monopolized by Odisha's top-three profitable firms. There is a second tier of newspapers, and a third and fourth tier as well—and these are only the Odia-language newspapers. Over the last ten years a set of English-language national newspapers have begun publishing Odishan editions in Bhubaneswar, as well as a local edition of a Hindi-language national paper. At one of Odisha's newsstands, the owner counted sixteen Odia-language dailies.

And so there is commercialism at work Odisha's newspapers, and a democratic commitment to the power of publicity, but there is also something else—or many other things. There are styles of advocacy that harken to local political-linguistic movements of the nineteenth century; there is Gandhian activism; there are appeals to “traditional” understandings of service or *sebā*; there are neoliberal constructions of entrepreneurialism; there are appeals to the Hindu family as the locus of ethical action; and there are calls to purify journalism of its “characteristically Odia” unprofessionalism. And though the newspapers may be run by and

associated with longstanding elite political families, the daily grind of production and circulation involves a large number of people working together to reach an even larger number of people across a remarkably diverse state.

But like Odisha's changed political economy, the transformation of publicity in Odisha is also not harmonious. It has been met with suspicions of motives and interests, suspicions which often take the form of concern with the signs of sociality. People look for signs that a person is *sidhā*, being straight, or *saralā*, being frank or honest. This quality is akin to American ideas about transparency, especially the idea that a person's motives should be transparent. This can also be described in the conversational adjective *kholākholi* or open; when speaking Indian English in Odisha (or "Odia-English" as one elite Bhubaneswar resident called it dismissively), people use the term "sincere" and "straight" to evaluate others positively. Thus, rather than arguing the merits of industrialization as a source of the state's progress, people wonder "why is he arguing for this? Whose interests does he really represent?" Out of this has emerged a form of social hermeneutics that is watchful for signs—signs of who is talking on whose behalf, whose interest is being represented, and whether or not people are acting ethically.

Moral Multiplicity and Participation Ethics

I use the words morality and ethics relatively interchangeably in this dissertation. Though some contemporary anthropologists promote an analytical distinction between moral philosophy and practical virtue (Faubion 2011), I have found that it creates more problems than it solves for

describing the social world of journalism, not least because “ethics” itself has specific professional meanings (“journalistic ethics”) that blend easily into the casual connotations of the term. Here, morality and ethics can be roughly defined as the forms of local evaluation and feeling through which people understand the quality of their place in the world in relationship to social others, and what they must do about it—in short, I use these terms to describe how people make sense of their regard for other people (Rumsey 2010)⁸.

In talking about moral *multiplicity*, I mean a situation in which there are many different ways of making sense of people’s regard for each other. In Odisha, attempts to establish a dominant morality by either local or nonlocal actors has been constantly interrupted by the complexity of the postcolonial situation, including local political competition, the constant remaking of nationalism, economic dependency and liberalization, and powerful social movements across the political spectrum. Residents are faced with reconciling the co-presence of multiple ideals of the moral person and the good life with the fact that most moral ideals assert their own morality in contrast with the morality of other ideals. Such conflicts between moral discourses in Odisha have themselves been long entrenched through first colonial institutions and then the developmentalist state’s efforts at promoting political and cultural modernity.

Yet the situation I explore in this dissertation is not one of straight-out conflict, though there are straight-out and sometimes violent conflicts in the region. Instead, among journalists and media professionals, moral multiplicity is relatively civil. What characterizes the situation

⁸ This apparently limited definition expands to include many kinds of human activity when we accept, as in Mauss’ (2000 [1950]) account of the gift, that much of human behavior that seems to be about other things, such as economy, is deeply invested in people’s regard for each other and thus also for themselves (Keane 2010).

more than outright conflict or battles for dominance, or more than, at the other end of the spectrum, respectful plurality or distant disdain, is the sheer possibility that people will be held responsible for actions that have been reframed in a morally negative light—even actions that seemed to the actor to be ethical at the time in the immediate situation. Of concern is not so much that there is moral conflict but the possibility that other people could use those moral conflicts, such as a long established opposition between modern public life and the Indian family, to make you seem immoral or unethical when you were not seeing your own actions that way at all. As we saw in Prakash’s own account, such interpersonal judgments can be deeply internalized, causing a person to feel great internal conflict at the same time that they feel socially vulnerable.

Thus Bhubaneswar’s moral multiplicity is full of friction, even when it is not full of outright conflict, because the interpersonal performances of ethical stances in such a context opens people to the risk that they will be interpreted negatively by others, or even by themselves. This is the challenge that Odisha’s journalists are navigating when they self-censor their writing about communal violence by merely reproducing official quotes, or when they do not speak up about an unprofessional work assignment that causes them great personal hardship. It explains why everyone involved in these situations—the newswriters and the readers, the employees and the employers—can assert with force that such situations are shameful, but then go on to reproduce them. Restraint, self-monitoring, and especially acting in ways inscrutable or indeterminate enough so as to preserve plausible deniability: these are the methods for acting so that you cannot be held responsible for something that you did not (mean to) do. It is precisely

that risk of responsibility that is the danger to be managed on the shifting grounds of moral multiplicity.

In this dissertation, as I analyze morality and ethics in the constant interplay of interpreting and producing what I call participation. Following Erving Goffman (1981), I use the term participation to emphasize the relationality at issue in Odisha's journalists and media workers' moral actions. In my study, this term takes the role of what in other studies of morality might be played by subjectivity; I do not use the term subjectivity because its focus on self-making makes it difficult to focus on the vectors of interpersonal interaction that matter in ethical evaluations in Odisha. Similar to Michael Callon's discussion of participation as enrollment in his study of scallops (Callon 1986), histories of institutions and moral interpretations enroll Odisha's residents in networks of action, like professional journalism, even as the those same people also act on those networks.

The idea of the public sphere dominates understandings of participation in discussions of media and publication in contemporary scholarship. Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1989 [1962]) proposed the public sphere to describe a social form that arose in northern Europe in the eighteenth century that was distinct from the state. The public sphere was emergent through rational debate in salons and eventually in the publication of periodicals, and it came to embody the reasonable collective will of politically engaged bourgeois citizens who were able, in Habermas' account, to overcome the limits of class through argument structure and critical reason. For Habermas, the critical capacity of the public sphere was compromised by commercialism, but even Habermas' later accounts of political communication rely on the force

of critical, rational conversation. While strongly criticized for ignoring social inequality (Fraser 1990) and for privileging critical rationality (Foucault 1996), the idea of the public sphere has been resilient in the field. In this text, rather than as an analytical term, I treat the public sphere as a description of a communicative ideology that envisions journalists and newspapers as actors in a bourgeois arena of discourse that values communicative transparency; this same ideology underlies many Indian assumptions about representative democracy and the role of the press, such as the popular understanding of the press as the “Fourth Estate.” Two revisions of the concept of the public sphere, Michael Warner’s theory of multiple “counter publics” (Warner 2002, 2002) and Arvind Rajagopal’s linguistically “split public” (Rajagopal 2001) both destabilize the singularity of Habermas’ public. Warner’s focuses on forms of belonging and recognition emergent around self-enunciated political and identity projects, often explicitly in contrast to the dominant public sphere. Rajagopal’s focuses on the institutional inequalities of linguistic competency in multilingual postcolonial states and how language differences creates “splits” between social groups emergent with different aesthetics and political-economic positions.

Among Bhubaneswari journalists, I instead focus on the part of the public sphere that Habermas presumed and that, though opening the space for plural publics, the critical revisions to the concept of the public do not fully address: local multiplicity and contest in the ethics of communication itself. Specifically, I investigate a pattern of reckoning with the communications of oneself and others in Bhubaneswar that draws on longstanding theories of action in Indian philosophical and religious traditions as well as modern theories of democratic representation. It

is the question: who addresses whom on whose behalf, and to what end? This structure of participation is a consistent concern of Odisha's journalists' ethical evaluations and self-presentations, even if there is not necessarily agreement about how to answer that question or what that answer means.

What I am calling the organization or structure of participation among Bhubaneswar's journalists relies on sociolinguistic categories of participant roles and addressivity associated, respectively, with the work of Erving Goffman and Mikhail Bakhtin. Goffman's analysis of speaking situations proposed categories for analytically distinguishing the social positions that people inhabit vis-à-vis their relationship to an utterance, breaking down the duality of speaker-hearer into numerous "participant roles" (Goffman 1981). Goffman decomposed the speaker category into three parts: the Author (who determines or creates the utterance), the Animator (who performs the utterance), and the Principal (who is responsible for the utterance). His decomposition of the hearer category hinged on the distinction between ratified (acknowledged participation) and unratified (unacknowledged/unrecognized participation) with regard to an utterance, leading to the inclusion within reception of eavesdroppers, overhearers, and addressed and unaddressed (but ratified) hearers. Later sociolinguists sought to develop a matrix of features through which all possible forms of participating in an utterance could be distinguished. Without taking on the full analytical goals of this sociolinguistic decompositional approach, the question of Goffman's participant roles—"how do people relate to each other vis-à-vis this utterance"—can help recognize ethnographic similarities across both the forms through which journalists themselves reckon with the ethics of journalism, as well as the forms through which journalism's

value is publicly performed. Most importantly, as Judith Irvine argues in her analysis of Senegalese griot wedding performances, this process of distinguishing among participant roles—of articulating the relationships between people in terms of their relationships to an utterance or a text—is not merely an analyst’s exercise. What Irvine calls the “mapping problem”, the “process by which participation structures are constructed, imagined, and socially distributed” (Irvine 1996, 136), is itself a central concern for participants themselves.

Turning attention to the participants’ own concerns with participation can point to some challenges of analytically training our attention on the participant roles themselves. While, in Bhubaneswar, sometimes participants are concerned with defining participation roles, drawing on semantic categories like “author” (*lekhak* in Odia) that have both industry-specific and legally assigned meanings, at other times participants are concerned less with the determination of a role itself than of those things implicated in a particular *way* of inhabiting a role. As Irvine points out, the problem of participant roles is also determining “an utterance’s conversational ‘reach,’ backward and forward; the interpretive frameworks on which participants draw; the social personae whose voices are echoed, commented upon, or responded to; [and] whether participants acknowledge that they are engaged in a joint conversational activity at all” (Irvine 1996, 135). In the case of Bhubaneswari journalism, the ethical question for journalists often rests on what else they are doing when they inhabit the role that Goffman calls Animator: how do they construct or signal their relationship to the people *on whose behalf* they are writing?; how do they signal *to whom* they are writing?; how do they signal *the purpose* of their writing, especially when the purpose involves yet another person, a target? For the watchers of journalists (who are often

journalists themselves), these signals can be constructed explicitly in discourse, through generic conventions (Hanks 1996), and through other sorts of contextual information such as a journalist's prior publications (intertextually) or known social affiliations. Nor are these ethical questions confined to journalistic writing; they also structure self-presentations more generally.

For thinking about how journalists both construct and evaluate the relationships enacted or signaled in a moment of role performance, I find it useful to look to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who identified how the reporting of speech in novels and styles of narration interrupt the attribution of discourse to a single authorial voice. This happens both by reaching backward for the voices of those who have already spoken, but also forward in time, incorporating the potential voices of those who have yet to speak.⁹ We can see this with addressivity, a concept Bakhtin defined simply as the “quality of being directed to someone” (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson 1986, 95), which points our attention to how discourse echoes not only with those who have already spoken but also those who might be the eventual readers of a text; in Bakhtin's words, potential recipients “have furrowed the utterance from within” (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson 1986, 99). In Bhubaneswar, constructions and evaluations of journalistic ethics frame the journalists in relationship to both of these vectors, the spoken for and the spoken to.

Michael Lempert, in his use of addressivity in the analysis of US political discourse as well as in exiled Tibetan Buddhist debates, shows the many ways that the orientation to others as a certain form of hearer/reader can be signaled, including through speaker deictics, terms of

⁹ I mean this temporality only in relationship to a particular utterance or text—the responder, of course, may also have spoken previously. The broadcasting or scaling-up of relationships vis-à-vis a specific text (in which the temporality is actual) to relationships vis-a-vis an entire genre or run of a publication (in which temporality is conventionalized) is itself a specific historical process.

address, cross-turn parallelism, gesture and body orientation (for citations in the sociolinguistic literature, see Lempert 2011). Yet addressivity need not specify a single person; there may be a “superaddressee” (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson 1986, 126) who may be present despite having not been directly signaled. Describing the superaddressee, Lempert writes that it “haunts the interaction as a virtual spectator, like an abstract overhearing ‘public,’ or a ‘collective consumer witnessing our wants and choices’ (Warner 1993: 242), or, indeed, a constituency” (Lempert 2009: 228). For the ethnographer, the concept of addressivity not only points to the implied reader of response theory but also to the ways that participants themselves care about implied readers—how the implied readers are not merely an effect but also a cause of communication. Lempert’s discussion of US political candidates shows how addressivity figures into participants’ own concerns. He describes how candidates’ discourse and self-presentations are read by expert political commentators (in talk shows, websites, magazines, etc.) for signs of candidates (actual) loyalties.

[W]e may speak of an “implied voter”—a superaddressee whom Message mavens recover through critical readings of candidate text. In our electoral politics, these preoccupations with addressivity are part of a politics of recognition (Taylor 1994, Silverstein 2003:83–85), where identities, like demographic categories of identity, deserve and hence vie for equal recognition in the self-consciously multicultural nation-state. Political communication requires “recognizing” and thereby establishing co-membership with some segment of this diversity at the exclusion of others. At a second-order of construal, regularities of address serve as a sanctioned criterion for distinguishing politicians in the relational field of candidates. Normatively at least, a candidate’s recognition of (and hence alignment to) constituencies is diagrammed by his or her position on The Issues, so that Issue-watching offers clues as to who the candidate is really “for.” (Lempert 2011, 191-3)

In the diagramming Lempert describes, alignment to a constituency is mapped exactly onto socially-salient positions with regard to potential legislation. For example, the US Republican Party's stance on immigration poses challenges for Republican candidates' ability to attract Hispanic votes—not only because immigration is an issue that actually matters to Hispanic voters but also because a certain stance on immigration has become an identifying sign of alignment with Hispanic voters. To take a stand on an issue performs a relationship to a constituency. In evaluations and performances of ethical journalism in Bhubaneswar, similar interpretive assumptions are in play in the interpretation of journalism and news publications. As we will see, a series of alignments between the journalist and his others—those whom journalists address, those on whose behalf they write, and those whom they target (write about, write against)—are generally considered by journalists to be embodied within (and hence readable from) semiotic features of publications, article texts, professional careers, commercial interactions, sponsorships, friendships, and social location and self-presentations.

I propose that, in Bhubaneswar, journalists participation ethics have emerged, not only as a result of democratic modes of political representation, but also from local understandings of ethical action that have a much deeper local history. Among these is an analysis of ethical action as karma that is well known as one of the central teachings of Indian religious and philosophical schools that conditions the components of action and the sorts of questions that people have of others' actions.¹⁰ In contemporary Odisha, karma can mean several things. Karma is a category

¹⁰ Early philosophical debates among both orthodox and unorthodox schools led to analytically elaborate distinctions between kinds of actions, motivations, means, and results, from the proponents of *Purva-Mimamsika* who interpreted Vedic sacrifices (Das 1983) and the Vedantans to the Buddhists, Jains, and

describing how one's current actions are determining of one's future conditions, and how one's current conditions have been inherited from past actions, and thus karma shapes how one continues through cycles of rebirths and for how long. To say that something is one's karma can mean something similar to *bhagya* or fate—it is out of one's own control. Yet karma can also mean action or deed, something that requires the individual's agency, and the term can be easily modified to distinguish between positive and negative actions (*dushkarma*). The basic structure of karma is tripartite: an action, its determining conditions, and its effects called its fruits (*phala*). Current conditions, including the cycle of rebirth, are seen as the fruits of past karma. It is sometimes opposed to and sometimes seen as a component of *dharma*,¹¹ a philosophy of moral duty according to social identity, linked with caste- and kin-assigned ritual duties. Where *dharma* might be seen as immutable and assigned to the individual based on birth, karma, despite being continuous from past lives, is also continuously remade through acts that affect oneself and others (for a detailed discussion of karma in domestic settings in Bhubaneswar, see Menon 2013).

It is this latter aspect of karma that is relevant to understanding participant templates of ethical action, for it is through the working of karma that actions affecting others have cosmological implications. Helping (or hurting) others creates positive or negative *karma* for the actor, thus contributing to or preventing the actor's liberation from rebirth; moreover, in more philosophical theories of karma, the good deeds to other humans are framed as sacrifices

Ajivikas who used many of the same concepts but rejected the Vedas (Thapar 1981). Religious historians have found strong evidence that these contacts influenced the development of the theory of karma.

¹¹ In my experience, though, Odia-speakers often referred to their sense of duty through identity with the term *jāti*, which connotes their difference or kind vis-a-vis other kinds of people.

performed to God. In contemporary Bhubaneswar, the most well-known exposition of this philosophy of action is the *Bhagavad Gita*, the portion of the *Mahabharata* in which Arjuna balks at fighting a war against his kin and Krishna convinces him to fight by revealing the nature of the universe and himself as God. The *Bhagavad Gita* and its lessons about *karma* are favorite topics of discussion on popular TV religious programs, such as Baba Ramdev and the televised Odia discourses of Srimad Sarathi Deva. One popular interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Vivekananda's short book *Karma Yoga* (1886), has been influential across twentieth century religious innovations, and it circulates widely throughout India in cheap translations and sales in railway bookshops. Vivekananda's commentary advises that the soul seeking release from the bondage of rebirth "work incessantly" but "give up all fruits of the work, be unattached to them": "Let us do good because it is good to do good; he who does good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down, says the Karma Yogi [one who seeks liberation through ethical action]" (Vivekananda 1886, 86).

The *Bhagavad Gita*'s metaphor for this ideal form of disinterested or unattached *karma* is that of devotional sacrifice, the *yajña*. According to Indologist Angelika Malinar, the role of sacrifice in the *Gita*'s theory of karma seeks to address the basic problem of disinterested action—its purpose—and in doing so it historically reframes all subsequent accounts of *karma*.

She writes:

The reinterpretation of sacrifice as the purpose of ascetic activity has great impact on subsequent arguments, since the model and idiom of sacrifice will be used in other passages on yoga and in the theistic chapters to come. It amounts to what Biardeau (1976:129) calls a 'generalisation of the notion of sacrifice', which means not only that karmayoga is defined as a ritual act, but that each and every act can now be defined as a sacrifice. This interpretation results in upgrading

svadharmā, one's social duty, in two regards. First, social duties can be equated with sacrificial action. Secondly, they can be removed from the realm of (negative) karmic retribution. (Malinar 2007: 84)¹²

The generalization of ideal ethical action on the model of sacrifice provides an underlying participation ethics to everyday duties, as well as to highly-valued acts of generosity and compassion. For example, Vivekananda's prose repeatedly returns to the duties among kin to care for each other. A mother who labors in the care of her son should not do so, he says, so that the son will return that care, but because it is her duty—her *dharma*. Similarly, the building of hospitals and schools benefits the destitute, but if one acts generously in order to receive the fruits of that generosity, even such generosity will impede the path to spiritual liberation. The effort of such disinterested actions is then addressed not only to the son or the destitute but also to the ultimate addressee, God. In Vedic sacrifices or *yajña*, a highborn Brahmin priest performs rituals on the behalf of non-Brahmin sponsors in order for the fruits of the sacrifice to come to the sponsor rather than to himself. Similarly, the Karma Yogi performs actions in daily life without desire for the fruits of his own beneficial actions. The participant structure here involves an actor—the Karma Yogi or the sacrificer—who acts for the benefit of others while ultimately addressing the action to a third party, God.¹³

¹² This is echoed in Vivekananda's *Karma Yoga* as well: "Any action that you do for yourself will bring its effect to bear upon you. If it is a good action, you will have to take the good effect, and if bad, you will have to take the bad effect; but any action that is not done for your own sake, whatever it be, will have no effect on you" (Vivekananda 1886: Ch. 6).

¹³ Both the *Bhagavad Gita* and Vivekananda are largely theistic, though it is worth noting that not all or perhaps not even the historically dominant theories of sacrifice rely on theism, as in the first century CE orthodox interpretations of Purva-Mimamsa. With the rise of devotional cults in the middle ages, however, most ethical action, both including sacrifice and on the model of sacrifice, became interpretable in relationship to divinity. While relevant especially to discussions of *karma*, sacrifice is not the only

It may seem like a stretch to suggest that contemporary journalists in Bhubaneswar, who spend more time thinking about the speed in which webpages load on their smartphones than on the metaphysical work of throwing coconuts into a fire, are influenced by very ancient structures of sacrificial action and perhaps less old but equally refined theories of karma. I have described karma in detail because it conditions the terms through which Bhubaneswar’s journalists understand the ethics of social action. Journalists are attentive to the fruits of actions, but they are concerned primarily about intention; yet this version of intention is not Christian Protestant (though Vivekananda’s own work can be seen as participating in Hinduism’s colonial reformation). This model of ethical action cosmologically values explicitly social action—and social intention—over self-interested action.

Autonomy and Embeddedness in Comparative Journalism Ethics

The distinctive character of Odishan journalists’ concerns with their deep and constant embeddedness in relationships to others is clearly seen in comparison with foreign correspondents, a very different kind of journalist. In his study of foreign news, Ulf Hannerz (2004) describes a sensibility of cosmopolitanism (“cultural cosmopolitanism”) that refers “to an awareness and appreciation of diversity in modes of thought, ways of life, and human products and to the development of skills in handling such diversity” (21). Rejecting the opposition between patriotism, as belonging somewhere, and cosmopolitanism, as the experience of

model for devotional action, as relations of romantic love and parental love also dominate devotional cults.

belonging nowhere, Hannerz suggests that there can be comfort and warmth in the mass mediated experience of “being, or becoming, at home in the world” (23). While Hannerz sees media texts themselves embodying cultural cosmopolitanism simply by juxtaposing news from many different places, he is also sensitive to the ability of media texts to work in many ways—such as reinforcing global inequalities and racial prejudices (Hannerz 2004, 122-136). Similarly, American coverage of El Salvador’s civil war “both legitimated and obfuscated” U.S. foreign policy (Pedelty 1995, 169), and Soviet international coverage sought to record ““contemporary humanity”” in a way that found evidence of the socialist (Soviet) project in the world (Wolfe 2005, 48-61). The overlap between the ideological accomplishments of news representations and forms of affective belonging they enable may result in especially troubling social forms.

Journalists’ experiences of belonging are also mass-mediated, but perhaps more powerful are the related mediations of discursively produced professional identities (Zelizer 1993) situationally experienced through concrete forms of work and career trajectories (Hannerz 2004, 83; see also Pedelty 1995). This is especially apparent in Hannerz’ accounts of journalists who write the foreign news in places far from home, whose moral comportments are shaped by whether they have long term or short-term placements, for these career trajectories change their experience of their social world and the degree to which they must engage fully with other ways of being. The sense of journalistic professional identity is robust enough among Hannerz’s foreign correspondents that they experience conflicts between moral expectations primarily as external pressures without affective pull. Foreign correspondents must appease local governments, comport themselves well enough so as to get people to talk to them, and maintain

local sources of information, yet they do not seem to imagine themselves as vulnerable to these alternative expectations—save the problem of their actual physical survival (Pedelty 1995). To the contrary, the professional identification as journalists, coincident with the foreign correspondent social world of international hotels, bars, press clubs, and collaborative reporting, seems to serve as mediating insulation from the moral expectations of others. Being distant from their own news organizations, some foreign correspondents express feeling moral autonomy even from their own editors and publishers (Hannerz 2004, 149; also Pedelty 1995, 152). The flip side of this professional autonomy is a popular perception that journalists’ professional opportunities are likely to trump all of their other moral considerations, including who they might hurt or whether they might be able to ease the suffering of those on whom they report. Professional moral autonomy—being free of the moral claims of others—can be interpreted as anti-social or, at its worst, inhuman.

Certain historically-determined professional ideologies enable such experiences of autonomy. Foremost among these ideologies is objectivity. Developed as an ideal of knowledge production during the nineteenth century (Daston and Galison 2007), objectivity became a dominant journalistic standard in the United States in the mid-twentieth century (Schudson 1981). Characterized ideally by a reliance on “facts” and an absence of “bias” and “emotion”, objectivity has had implications for what is selected as news (sometimes called “news values,” see Hall et al. 1978, 182), for research methods, and for normative textual techniques (Tuchman 1972). Socialization to these practices and values produces journalists’ embodied experiences of news, their skills (Zelizer 2007) and “gut feelings” (Schultz 2007). Objectivity has also had

important implications beyond the tasks of news production (see also Staab 1990). In his ethnography of war correspondents in 1990, Mark Pedelty found that journalists themselves directly connected their commitment to objectivity to their role in Salvadoran social relationships: “The U.S. correspondent sees his primary duty as that of *not* becoming located and *not* having an ideological perspective—objectivity as absence” (Pedelty 1995, 172). Pedelty and many of the non-American journalists he encountered in El Salvador found this adherence to objectivity itself ideological, naturalizing centrist-right political views and the “global spread of consumer capitalism” (179). In other words, even as objectivity promulgated a feeling of being autonomous and valuing autonomy, it obscured the ways that objective journalists were actually embedded in unmarked political, economic, and social relations. By contrast, in Odisha, journalists are concerned with asserting particular forms of embeddedness as part of their ethical constructions, even as, increasingly, autonomy appears as a potentially attractive though far off horizon.

On this Research: Studying Sideways Among Journalists in Bhubaneswar

Ulf Hannerz (Hannerz 2004) has proposed that the anthropological studies of journalists constitute “studying sideways,” a term that cites Laura Nader’s call a generation ago for anthropologists to start studying the cultures of elites by “studying up” (Nader 1972). Hannerz draws attention to the similarities between the social positions of university-employed academics and journalists, especially foreign correspondents: both have strong professional identities, both

usually come from a creative-managerial class, and both have access to elite institutions without themselves being among an economic elite. In the case of cultural anthropologists, the similarities go further: like journalists, anthropologists observe and describe the social world, documenting it through quite similar narrative methods (and similar technologies) for specific kinds of audiences. Both of these aspects of studying sideways do and do not apply to my research among Bhubaneswar's journalists.

My research could be called studying sideways only according to a statistical mean. While there were a few in Bhubaneswar who hailed me as a peer, Prakash the most prominent among them in this dissertation, most of my interactions involved some form of differential hierarchy that affected my research practices. Hierarchy is prevalent across India, though it does not follow Dumont's systematic explanation of everything through caste. Just as I describe moral multiplicity throughout this text, social hierarchies too were multiple and not always commensurable, and I was variously placed as a foreigner, (post-)graduate student, white woman, woman, American, alone in Odisha, married (and toward the end, pregnant), and as a visitor accustomed to Odia styles of self-comportment. To make myself more recognizable, I usually explained that I had first studied Odissi dance in Bhubaneswar (in 1999-2000) and had then returned for research thanks to my love for Odishan culture. Thanks to this earlier experience, I was also quite familiar with traditional Odia hierarchies as embodied in caste prohibitions or ritual signs of respect; however, since few outside of the dance world expected me to know these things, my familiarity could make them uncomfortable. My communicative

competence was also variably received: I may have been proficient but I was not artful in the ways valued by journalists. Throughout, I was treated with the respect accorded to guests.

As I describe in Chapter 5, gender was the primary factor affecting my movement around the city and the state as well as the time I spent at offices. There are a few, a growing number, of female journalists in Bhubaneswar's English-language newsrooms, but I did not meet a single female reporter among the Odia-language newsrooms. In the newsroom, I largely worked the schedule of the women who were there, which meant day shifts, even though most of the dominant news and press production occurred in the middle of the night. Despite ongoing efforts to get myself invited on a trip to a site of rural news-making (the site of Vedanta or Posco protests, post-riot Kandhamal) with journalists, I was never invited and it was clear to me at the time that the presence of a white woman on the trip—the only woman—was unappealing. Instead, I was invited when some newspaper office administrators, who were women, travelled to the southern Odishan city of Berhampur. As a result, my understandings of journalistic practices outside of Bhubaneswar are based on others' reports. Shadowing journalists on a daily basis similarly proved uncomfortable for everyone. I addressed some of these concerns about gender by hiring a local (male) research assistant to sit in (overwhelmingly male) teashops and to visit with (male) journalists during routine socializing at teashops, out of which emerged detailed notes on gossip and reading practices that have contributed significantly to my background knowledge. These experiences contributed to the direction my research took, away from the technical side of newspaper reporting and toward the ethical aspects of the media world,

that is, away from a detailed account of what people do and toward an account of what people make of what they do.

Pre-research, I had developed my research plan on the classic model of participant observation ethnography adjusted for city life. Since there was no journalist village in which to take up residence, I planned to spend everyday in their offices. Like other anthropologists seeking to conduct research in media production sites, finding the opportunity to observe in a newsroom proved more difficult than I had anticipated¹⁴ and it was only after I spent over 7 months in Odisha, in 2007, that I became familiar enough to a well-connected person that he was willing to introduce me to one of the managers at one of Odisha's top newsrooms, which I refer to by the pseudonym *Surya* ("Sun") for the reasons I describe below. When I returned to Bhubaneswar in 2009, I met with this manager, the friend-of-a-friend, who was an acclaimed Odia author and journalist as well as a top-level manager who had helped shape the news organization's profitability. He advised me on the procedures for gaining permission to visit the newspaper's offices.

Part of this procedure involved an interview with the Managing Director of the firm, at which I formally requested permission to observe daily news production at the offices of one of Bhubaneswar's top three newspapers. After waiting in the air-conditioned outer office with the

¹⁴ This difficulty was not unique to Odisha. Indeed, ultimately I may have had an easier time there. In 2008, facing an unknown period of time without a research visa, I sought ethnographic sites in the United States. My requests to conduct participant-observation in newsrooms around the San Francisco Bay Area were uniformly turned down, not unlike the difficulties that other anthropologists have reported among busy media producers. I received the best explanation from the Managing Editor of the San Jose Mercury News, who explained that his newsroom employees were already doing too much work for too little pay, and he felt that he could not ethically ask them to add any more activities to their workday (such as talk to an anthropologist). It was a fair point, and one that I was lucky did not occur to Bhubaneswar's editors.

director's personal assistant, whom I later came to know well, I was shown into the director's office. It was a large room with a large rectangular glass table bisecting the room to the right of the doorway. Opposite the door was a large window—the only window through which came natural light in the whole building—but it was largely obscured by heavy curtains. The director sat behind the desk on a cushioned, swiveling desk chair. He was either listening intently to another man speak or dozing, his eyes half-closed over his hands, which were folded on the spacious desk in the valley between neatly organized folders. The floor of the room was marble. The thin man who had waved me inside gestured to an open chair across the desk from the director. I had the formal letter, my CV, a letter of recommendation from one of my American professors, my research visa documents, and the Institutional Review Board [IRB] materials in my hand. The letter had been vetted by the helpful manager. I had dressed in an Odishan hand-loomed sari with the socially appropriate bangles.

Our conversation took place in Odia. I followed my well-rehearsed explanation of my research interest in the recent history of Odia-language journalism with another well-rehearsed explanation of my particular research activities—namely my desire to record daily conversations and interviews with staff—as well as the IRB and its protocol requiring that I receive written permission for any recording activities. During my monologue, while “*Sār*” (Sir) rested as before with his eyes half-closed, I took out the document and showed exactly where I would need him to sign so that I could conduct the recordings I had described in the cover letter. He put out his hand for the papers, took them and put them on the desk. He raised each page to look over the one beneath. He looked at me, cleared his throat, and then told me the story of the newspaper.

Concluding his story about fifteen minutes later, he said that I could come to the office for three months, on a daily basis, and arrange all of the details with the mediating manager. “Okay,” he said, sitting back. He was indicating to me that it was time for me to leave. I hesitated, then stood, and then I gestured again at the papers and tried to construct the most polite sentence imaginable to indicate that I truly did need him to sign the paper, ending by getting right to the point, in Odia: “your signature on the papers are necessary for my work.” He nodded his head to the side. Then he said, “Ask [the manager] if you need any help with your research.” One of two men who had been standing behind me the whole time, workers whom everyone called “peons,” opened the door for me while the director turned his attention to papers on his desk. Though I later asked the manager to look into the IRB documents, I never saw them again, and judged it only fair to consider that I had been denied permission to record in the newsroom. Recognizing that I was hosted with some ambivalence, and also that the very dense world of media producers in Odisha makes information about news production practices the focus of gossip, I have used a pseudonym to locate my observations here and in Odisha’s other newsrooms. This comes at the cost of historical evidence, for, as I argue throughout this dissertation, both the similarities and the differences across Odisha’s media world are historically significant. Yet, ultimately, I believe it to be in the best interests of everyone involved.

The majority of my research involved watching and talking with people in newsrooms, shops, streets, homes, and at public events. I conducted 32 in-depth, biographical interviews with media producers in Bhubaneswar, five of whom were extended over numerous meetings and developed into ongoing relationships outside of any office. This inner circle consisted of three

men and two women; four mid-career, one senior; four journalists, one desk worker; four had been employed in locally-owned media, and one in nationally-owned media. It is largely thanks to this inner circle that I have come to understand Odisha's journalism world intimately from different perspectives. I conducted about 60 more short, biographical interviews in the midst of other activities, which involved me casually posing questions about the journalists' origins (birthplace, schooling, parents' occupations) and professional history, the answers to which I would write down as soon as I could. These interviews were about 80% male and overwhelmingly higher caste (though I did not specifically ask about caste due to its social sensitivity, so this is largely taken from assumptions about names); when my Odia skills were not sufficient to the particular communicative context, I relied on others present to help me communicate. Though most of these short interviews took place in Odia, I largely took notes in English save the occasional phrase. I collected and photographed about ten months of local newspapers (numbering between 6 and 9 newspapers everyday, depending on the month) and had several months of them indexed by a research assistant. In addition to the data related to my specific research questions, I paid close attention to the sensory and affective landscapes of daily life in Bhubaneswar.

Within the newsrooms themselves, I was an observer. At the main newsroom where I conducted research, I was trained on Odia typing and did some typing work, but it was minor and short-lived. It was short-lived in part because shortly after learning, I was asked to stop sitting in the newsroom itself, and spent about two weeks sitting in a different office. Though I was not given a straightforward explanation, I guessed at the time that I was asking too many

questions of people's activities. When I returned to the newsroom, I asked less questions. The unfortunate result of this is that I have less quotable explanations on specific activities. For my descriptions of newsroom practice, I checked my impressions with journalists I knew from outside of that particular newsroom; this resulted in better comparative understandings, but also less detailed case studies of how texts move around.

Since the 1980s, anthropologists have questioned the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the form of fieldwork that I had hoped this research to result from. George Marcus' (Marcus 1995) call for "multi-sited ethnography" epitomized a growing interest in how a new globalized world would call for novel temporal and spatial bracketing of research questions and thus research sites. The internet and new communication technologies has further altered how people conduct research, especially the kinds of boundaries on the time and space of the fieldsite. This question itself spurred the anthropology of journalism, such as in Hannerz's account of journalists as a set of experts who are explicitly concerned with the bracketing of time and space in a globalized world. Despite this, much dissertation research in cultural anthropology continues to reproduce the old model of a year or longer in one place. For reasons beyond my control, my research was broken up into smaller portions between 2007 (January to May, July to December), 2009 (August to December), and 2010 (August to December). The disadvantage of this was the loss of re-entry time, the labor to re-activate relationships, and the growing expenses of rent and transportation. There have also been advantages. First, journalists began to assume that I would continue to be a presence in Bhubaneswar—several times journalists' recognitions of me from earlier trips served as an ice-breaker, and by my fourth trip most people assumed I

lived in Bhubaneswar full time and had been simply busy. Second, coming and going was a very recognizable mode for journalists, who are often “out of station” themselves or know professionals who are. Finally, as I write this, I have been following local events and news stories for over seven years, which gives me a long perspective on the trajectory of politics and the annual news cycle.

Methodologies for newsroom study have been the focus of recent scholarship, and my experiences offer some useful points of comparison for methodological development. Geert Jacobs, Colleen Cotter, and their European colleagues in the NewsTalk&Text Research Group have called for a unification of research on news production with “the textual, discourse-based, or language-based dimension of the media” through attention to the role of “linguistic resources” and “text trajectories” (NT&T et al. 2011, 1847). In focusing here on the moral and social dimensions of text trajectories in Odishan newsrooms, I build on their research as well as suggest some potential difficulties for the cross-cultural challenges of their suggested program, which they themselves note “is deeply embedded in the authors’ western media environments” (NT&T et al. 2011, 1844). Specifically, the NewsText&Talk Research Group advocates for the use of computer monitoring of keystrokes to follow writing practices in detail. This method presumes a local comfort with total transparency in newswriting and other newsroom practices. In my research, as I describe below, obscurity and transparency are themselves important socio-semiotic resources. The suspicions Odishan journalists live among affected my own research, as demonstrated in my difficulty getting signed permission to record newsroom talk. The obscurity

in my own research—the lack of transcripts—suggests that our methods must attend to how their uses rely on shared semiotic ideologies in research sites.

Aside from the limitations of the research that I have described, there is one major limitation to this text that is a function of the topic itself. The focus on journalism, newspapers, and the press in Odisha has effectively focused this work on the lives of upper caste men in coastal Odisha. This has a series of implications. First, despite agreeing with Biswamoy Pati's (1993) critique of upper caste perspective of narratives of the Odishan nationalist movement, this text largely perpetuates such narratives. Describing the actions of newspaper producers unfortunately reproduces existing historical narratives because they too have focused on newspaper producers—though generally without much discussion of the media itself—because the newspaper producers and the most powerful leaders were the same men. This imbalance is equally true in my descriptions of contemporary Odisha: focusing on dominant daily newspapers has been at the expense of attention to marginal or subaltern social movements and identities, which are numerous and rich in Odisha. When my focus is news writers, and there are few women or low-caste or Muslim news writers, my research reproduces the research site's own exclusions. As a result, rather than diversifying the historical record or representing the lives of politically marginalized groups, I hope to contribute to the denaturalization of dominant narratives by turning careful attention to the social and cultural formation of such elite worlds.

The Organization of this Dissertation

Thus study of moral multiplicity among Bhubaneswar's journalists consists of six chapters, in addition to this Introduction and a Conclusion. The first two chapters are broadly contextualizing. Chapter 1 describes the main ethical frames through which newspapers are evaluated in Bhubaneswar through a description of the dominant newspapers and the recent history of Odishan politics. Chapter 2 describes the organization of news production itself as a social practice, including a description of the regulating institutions, the organization of daily work, and the sociology of newspaper employees. In addition to context, both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 lay out the main problematics of the dissertation, which is how people construct ethical understandings of journalistic activity. In Chapter 1, I explore how such ethical constructions of newspapers are not effective as brands thanks to the newspapers' social investments, which are themselves often haunted by concerns about corruption and "vested interests." In Chapter 2, I explore how writing itself is conditioned, not just by journalists' ethics, but by the several dominant ethics and their positive and negative valuations. These chapters focus on understandings of newspaper producers.

Chapter 3 and 4 are predominately historical. Chapter 3 recounts the colonial history of journalism in Odisha, which continues to echo in contemporary journalists' ethical understandings. Chapter 4 looks in detail at the role of courts in the independent republic, using a focus on semiotic offense to understand postcolonial constructions of publicity. These two middle chapters together depict the historical shaping of Odishan journalism and its relationship

to society, especially the importance of journalism and the free press for the self-understanding of the nation and the region as liberal and modern.

Chapter 5 and 6 are predominately ethnographic. Chapter 5 explores the ethics of employee relations in newspapers through the frames of professionalism and family, which are morally potent thanks especially to their colonial history, and which shape not only the structure of work but also the role that newspapers play in society. Chapter 6 draws on observations and a detailed conversation with one journalist, Prakash, to propose that contact-sociality is a dominant ethic of social relating for journalists and others in Bhubaneswar, which allows them to negotiate the plural ethical landscape of Bhubaneswar, but which also provokes doubts about intentions and interests. Both of these final chapters explore sociality, and the role of journalists in society, as a reflexive concern.

Chapter I

Ethical Journalism in Bhubaneswar



Figure 2. A *Sambad* cartoon celebrates 25 years of publishing.

On October 4, 2009, the Odia-language newspaper *Sambad* ran a front-page cartoon (Figure 2) celebrating its expansion into television news on the day of its twenty-fifth or “Silver Jubilee”

anniversary. The cartoon presents a warrior in ancient, silver-filigreed¹⁵ armor, holding a tall bladed weapon in one hand and a box with the sun shining from it in the other. Drawn in the style of the local *patta-chitra* paintings, the warrior himself resembled a minor deity, especially in the symbolic importance of the objects held, as he might be portrayed in one of the locally produced dance-dramas of the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. In the warrior's right hand, the tall weapon consisted of a stylus or pen with a newspaper blade—the *Sambad* staff-head prominent on its edge; the box in the warrior's left hand, shining with the sun, was a television. The caption read:

*Sambāda rajata jayantīre shubhe
'Kanaka Sambāda' nāda
Sambāda sahita Kanaka Sambāda
māge āji āshīrbāda.....
karibā pāiṇ ki yuddha.....
mātrubhumi mātrubhāsāra surakshā
durnīti dānaba badha.....*

The Silver Jubilee of *Sambad*, at its summit,
Trumpets the emergence of *Kanaka-Sambad*
And the two together beg blessings.....
to surge ahead in the battle.....
To extinguish corruption, the demon,
to protect the motherland and the mothertongue.....¹⁶

Created by *Sambad* cartoonist Kishore Rath, this cartoon richly fuses several understandings of Bhubaneswar's local press, exemplifying how different understandings of media and language, even when developed out of very different intellectual and historical genealogies, can converge in affectively powerful representations.

¹⁵ Silver filigree ornaments are a traditional craft of coastal Odisha.

¹⁶ Translation by veteran Odishan journalist Subhas Chandra Pattanayak. This translation captures the formality and grandness of the Sanskritic vocabulary.

The style of the illustration and the language evoke Odisha's local "classical" arts—palm-leaf manuscripts and paintings, silver filigree, and Odissi dance theater—each traditions that have come to represent Odisha's valued cultural distinctiveness. But rather than depicting a conflict between tradition and modernity, Rath elegantly adopts skillful citational practices to bring Odisha's most iconic old media together with print and broadcast technologies—all as equally valuable tools in the battle "to protect the motherland and the mothertongue." Unlike the posters or praise-poems addressing Tamil as a mother goddess (Ramaswamy 1997), this cartoon of devotion depicts not Mother Odia herself, but her devotee. But who is this warrior, who holds the newspaper in the right hand and the television in the left? It may be Eastern Media Limited [EML] personified, the overarching company that owns both newspaper and cable news ventures, or perhaps the proprietor of EML and politician, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik. It may be the journalist, using both the pen and the camera to vanquish corruption. Or, it may be the Odia reader himself, now armed with the insights of both the newspaper and the 24-hour cable news channel.

This ambiguity carries into the text, which does not address the reader directly but rather describes the actions of the two weapons, leaving open the identity of the warrior—the weapons' animating force—to whomever will adopt that role. This image of the warrior fighting for the mother tongue and motherland, by representing the warrior rather than the mother tongue herself, fuses the project of linguistic and regional identity with the ethical projects of exposing corruption and advocating for the Odia people. It is in the act of wielding the pen-weapon and the television, which perhaps resembles best Vishnu's *Sudarshana Chakra* (literally the "wheel

of auspicious vision”) against corruption (*durnīti*) that constitutes the devotion to the mothertongue, and it is also that act that constitutes the warrior as a devotee. The warrior personifies the ethical press.

Not only does this cartoon skillfully collage the imagery of Odishan culture and contemporary media, it also brings together multiple strains of highly valued ethical journalism in Odisha. In this chapter, I develop portraits of several forms that contemporary ethical journalism takes in Odisha, exploring constructions of ethics at the level of publications, organizations, and individual’s self-orientations. I do not, in this chapter, address the historical trajectories of these ethical modes—the cultural elaborations and historical contexts of these ethical frames are the focus of following chapters. The goal of this chapter is to provide a basic orientation to the ethical possibilities of the press in Bhubaneswar.

As in the above newspaper cartoon, at the center of each of these understandings of ethical journalism that I describe in this chapter is a question about the relationships between all of the people involved as figured through their relationships to the act/s of journalism. Specifically, each ethical position that I describe in this chapter is concerned with the relationship between journalists and various, culturally-determined others, and specifically whether newspaper personnel and journalists are acting for, with, against, or on behalf of various kinds of people, and who those people are. In this chapter I focus primarily on the constructions of reception roles, despite my interest in the intersections of both production and reception roles. For example, in the above cartoon, the battle that is being waged against corruption clearly puts the journalist in an oppositional position against corrupting forces. As I describe in this chapter, this

social group, which might be comprised of politicians, bureaucrats, corporations, and other people of influence, is frequently referred to ambiguously by the term “vested interests.” At the same time, the cartoon warrior is an agent of the mothertongue and motherland or, rather, of those people for whom Odia is the mothertongue and Odisha is the motherland. Thus the warrior, and the journalist who inhabits that role, is fighting on behalf of Odia-speaking people. Throughout this chapter I will explore how, in Odisha, journalism’s ethical projections posit particular kinds of relationships to various others.

Three major daily newspapers dominated Odisha between 2007-2011: the *Samaja*, *Sambad*, and *Dharitri*. Though there are major differences of organization, presentation, and reputation, the three dominant newspaper dailies in Odisha also share several features. Most obviously, they are each in Odia—the most popular non-Odia language daily is the English-language *Times of India*, and it stays somewhere around the fifth or sixth most popular newspaper in the state. The three dominant newspapers each fulfill the basic organization expectations of professional dailies, including multiple editions, specialized staff, weekly special pages/magazines, and color off-set printing. Additionally, all three have been associated with politicians in their history, having each been both founded and run by political stars. Finally, each dominant newspaper is associated with charitable works; two of the newspapers (*Samaja* and *Dharitri*) were established as charitable organizations, and the *Sambad*, though established as a business, now funds a very active charitable organization.

This chapter begins with a discussion of what I mean by ethical self-presentation and how it relates to newspapers’ roles in Odisha. I then provide a basic description of Bhubaneswar’s

newspapers themselves, as these are the explicit and implicit focus of both the rest of the chapter and the dissertation overall. A series of following sections describe different ways that newspapers have functioned in Odisha, including descriptions of how newspapers project themselves as writing on behalf of others and writing to others, and who constitutes those others. In order, I address the political history and present of Odisha's press, the involvement of newspapers in service and patronage, the role of language differentiations, and the changing role of profit and commerce in journalistic ethics. I then turn to a form of ethical self-presentation focused on advocacy "for the people" that is increasingly self-identified as the "alternative" press. In the final section of this chapter, I compare the different kinds of ethical frames proposed by the newspapers in the light of Odisha's marginality. The role of this chapter in the overall dissertation is to describe the contemporary media scene and to provide the local knowledge necessary to understand the rest of the dissertation: what are the main newspapers, how are they differentiated from each other, what consistencies are there across the newspapers, who makes the newspapers, and how these features of media production are meaningful in Bhubaneswar.

Contextualizing the Social World of Newspapers

Before turning to the ethical landscape of Bhubaneswar's media, I will describe how people relate to newspapers, which is helpful for understanding how the newspapers' represent themselves. In Odisha, knowledge of newspapers is constituted not only through brand and other discursive media but also through strikingly interpersonal relationships formed through time—

and it is also limited by those relationships. A brief comparison between Odisha's newspapers' self-presentations and the idea of brands helps explain what I mean.

My understanding of the brand follows Robert Moore's (2003) account of branding as a host of material-semiotic processes. If we start from Marx's description of the commodity as two-fold, a sensuous (material) object with use-values as well as a social identity constructed through exchange, then we can see the development of brand marketing as an art of the fetish (Marx 1990 [1976], see also Mazzarella 2003). Brands themselves assert a token-type relationship between objects, events, places, actions (tokens) and the brand itself (the type) through the interpretive frames of marketing signs that construct experiential qualities of the commodities, such as the color white, with culturally compelling associations, such as "freshness" or "cutting edge design" (Moore 2003, 332). Brands can also function as signs of a commodity's source (for complications however, see Moore 2003, 339; Manning 2010, 37-8), conferring authorial authenticity on an object (but see Nakassis 2013). The distinctive characteristic of contemporary branding from the perspective of both marketing professionals and many academic discussions is what Robert Moore has called the "dematerialization of the brand" through which brand becomes a phenomenon that is "everywhere, and yet nowhere" (Manning 2010, 35), but which is constantly troubled by the persistence of the actual branded objects. Even as marketing research seeks constantly to widen the net of what concrete information is included and subsequently influenced by brand, the sought achievement is the brand's apparent abstraction or purification from those particular contexts (Foster 2007).

This push and pull between the dematerialization of the brand and its material interruptions is only just emerging in Odisha's newspapers. Explicit branding efforts themselves are new, in Odisha overall and in Odishan newspapers specifically. This is also true for newspapers nationally, as sophisticated newspaper branding efforts only began with the *Times of India* after it was taken over by Samir Jain in 1986 (Kohli-Khandekar 2006, 33-35). In Odisha, explicit cultivation of newspaper brands according to marketing expertise only began after the millennium and, as I explore below, was still new during my research. Several features of newspaper production and circulation in Bhubaneswar work to limit the persuasiveness of branding efforts, and even the newspapers' own practices of relating to others (readers, supporters, allies) draw on a variety of relations beyond that projected by the marketing industry's attempted purifications. In the remainder of this section, I'll describe two of these limiting contexts: that kin- and contact-level relations to newspapers are widespread across Bhubaneswar, and that newspapers cultivate contact relations more or less in place of brand marketing. I begin with a few anecdotes.

At a popular drugstore on one of the main roads between the airport and the Old Town, where a long line stretched down the road in the evening because they were renowned for having the best balance of cheap prices and "effective" medicine, the mid-fortyish owner with paan-stained teeth just shook his head when I asked about taking a newspaper at home. "Here!" He exclaimed between spits behind the counter, and threw me the pile of the day's disheveled newspapers: *Samaja*, *Dharitri*, *Samaya*. "He brings them," the pharmacist gestured to me a short and round man standing on the other side of the line of customers. As the queued patients

watched, the rotund man greeted me with a laugh as I recognized my own newspaper agent, who shouted across the crowd, explaining his presence at the pharmacy: “We are childhood friends!”

A posh doctor on the other side of town, whom I’d gone to see for a persistent intestinal issue, was much more interested in my research topic than in my unhappy guts. “My sister’s son works for *Dharitri*,” he explained as his male assistant drew my blood. Woozy, I tried to continue the conversation over the nurse’s head, “oh, he’s a journalist?” “No, No, he is in the business side. It is my wife’s side that has the journalist. Her cousin was at *Samaja* and then *Sambad*.” He then wanted to know if I had any good gossip on the owner of one of the newspapers and was visibly disappointed when I became too sick to talk.

I met the branch manager of one of Bhubaneswar’s state bank branches through a high school teacher who tutored his son in Odia (the high school teacher, we later discovered, was also the cousin of a journalist I knew). The twelve year old attended an English medium school and had grown up speaking a lot of English at home, but his father was concerned that he would be shut out of local management positions eventually if he couldn’t communicate well in his mother tongue. Asking him about his newspaper reading, the bank manager explained that though he now took all English language newspapers (“*Times of India* for my son and wife, the *Hindu* and *Business Standard* for myself”), he also took the *Samaja* “mostly for sentiment.” He explained that he had had a *māmā* (maternal uncle) who had written for the *Samaja* and who had even had his own newspaper for a short time “in the ‘70s or ‘80s.” “We come from a family of freedom fighters,” he explained to me proudly, presumably to account for why his uncle had started his own newspaper.

Writing about newspaper culture in New Delhi, Mark Peterson has described the distinction between a newspaper that a person “takes” and a newspaper that a person reads from a news stall. The delivered newspaper, according to Peterson, “implies a commitment to the newspaper, perhaps even a compulsion” (Peterson 2010, 169)—you might read other newspapers, but the newspaper that you take at home can become a sign of character through which others understand you. We can see a similar feeling of relationship about the newspaper someone “takes” at work in these examples from conversations across the social spectrum in Bhubaneswar, but in Bhubaneswar these relationships are remarkably interpersonal. I was initially shocked by the frequency with which a discussion about my research became a discussion of the other person’s kin or close contacts, but by the end of my research I had come to expect it—when there was not a discussion of contacts to a newspaper or journalism, I sought a reason why. And I often found one. For instance, one young woman in her early twenties, whom I’d met during my commute, said that her family did not have a relationship to the media; on further discussion, she described that she and her brother were the first members in the family (a low caste family) to read easily.

While it is obviously dangerous to extrapolate from a single person’s experiences in a metro area of a million people, I think the experiences do suggest some important structuring conditions. The first is Odisha’s historically low literacy, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Literacy and Urban Residency in Odisha, 1971–2011

	Total Population	Rural	Urban	Literacy (% of State)
1971	21,944,615	20,099,220	1,845,395	26
1981	26,370,271	23,259,984	3,110,287	34
1991	31,659,736	27,424,753	4,234,983	49
2001	36,804,660	31,287,422	5,517,238	64
2011	41,974,218	34,970,562	7,003,656	73

Source: Census of India 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011.

Low literacy along with low urban populations produced social density across Odisha’s readers. To some degree, throughout the twentieth century those who read also wrote—or at least had a relative who did. The extensiveness and yet strength of social networks in coastal Odisha made for a tendency toward intimacy in twentieth century Odishan “publics” compared to the stranger sociality assumed by Warner (2002). Of course, this is not merely a demographic coincidence. In a comparative qualitative study of rural local elites in coastal Odisha and Gujarat in the late 1970s through the 1980s, Subrata Mitra (1992) found it impossible to match in Odisha the numbers of political leaders that he interviewed in Gujarat. In Dhenkanal district, he was only able to interview 102 compared to 131 in Gujarat’s Surat district.

The explanation for the higher figures for Gujarat despite the equality in the number of villages is significant. The Gujarat villages have a larger institutional base, and, as such, a larger number of leaders to choose from, who in turn represent a larger number of categories. The extent of development activity and number of institutions are both at a lower level in Orissa. Besides, the Orissa netas [political leaders] often manage to have a finger in every pie, which for our purposes further reduces the leadership base from which the sample was to be recruited. (Mitra 1992, 88)

Even among the political leaders, Mitra's demographic findings reveal a definite concentration of power among upper caste men (Brahmins, Baniyas, Kandayats, Karanas, Kshatriyas), who are also the dominate landowners and the most literate—the upper caste survey participants, a third of his selected group, were affiliated to a more organizations than were the lower caste political leaders. Mitra concludes that, though elite status is not merely conferred through birth, the consolidation of elite indicators among Orissa's high castes makes it possible to speak of caste and class simultaneously. I would suggest that the concentration of postcolonial political power, education, and literate production in Odisha's upper castes also strengthened social networks among literate Odias and, as a result, the social networks of the press.

That the interpersonal social network still serves as an important function in Odisha's media world is quietly apparent in newspaper production itself. Priority for pre-planned event coverage is often given to the important contacts of the top-level management, and coverage is a way to forge relations with an important person or institution. In other words, like individual journalists, newspapers also cultivate contacts. That newspaper coverage is an important means of strengthening ties with individuals and groups is perhaps most obvious in the space accorded to coverage of community events and *karyakrama* or programs on the city-focused pages. The moral anxieties that grow up around this sociality in newspaper production are explored in Chapter 2.

Finally, the feature of Odisha's newspapers that most obviously (from a local perspective) counters dematerializing branding efforts is the newspapers' political alliances. The most prominent feature of Odisha's media world has long been the political control of the press. In a

1982 article about violence against journalists in Odisha published in the English-language national newspaper the *Indian Express*, journalist Arun Sinha wrote that Odisha “unlike the other states” has a “Press managed by politicians and not businessmen” (January 24, 1982, p. 3). This statement has echoed in Odisha since Sinha’s article, and all journalists I talked to about the overarching media field in Odisha mentioned this aspect of the locally-owned press—most with contempt. Robin Jeffrey’s (Jeffrey 1997, 2000) case study of Odishan newspapers similarly focused on the political ownership of newspapers, arguing that in the late nineties Odisha’s newspapers were in the throes of a “revolution”, shifting from politics to profit. While Jeffrey was correct on the point about the growing importance of profit, politics have not waned..

Politics, however, also has a particularly interpersonal character in Odisha. Though political, Odisha’s newspapers are not distinguished ideologically. This is most apparent by comparison. In their comparative discussion of media organization in southern Europe and Latin America, Daniel Hallin and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos (2002) describe newspapers that are owned by politicians as clearly representing their associated ideological perspectives. In Odisha, by contrast, dominant political parties associated with newspapers do not have clear ideological differences. Instead, the political force of the newspapers seems to be concentrated in the newspapers’ abilities to build alliances rather than to project an ideologically differentiated position. In the next section, I provide a historical account of Odisha’s modern politics and their impact on the local development of the press.

A Brief Account of Recent Politics in Odisha

The structuring of newspaper ownership along political lines has deep historical roots in Odisha. It began organically in the 1920s with Gandhi's encouragement of newspaper publication as *satyagraha* (literally "truth-force") during a period in which politics and nationalist activism were often indistinguishable. Odisha's oldest living newspapers, the *Samaja* and *Prajatantra* were both established under the influence of Gandhi's publication-as-activism (described in the next chapter). The early 1930s saw the growth of strong political differences with regard to how much emphasis to place on the amalgamation of the Odia-speaking tracts in a single administrative unit (also described in the next chapter). Activist-politicians turned to newspapers and pamphlets to enunciate and circulate their platform and establish their influence. With Independence, a newspaper's influence became an explicitly political tool, and nearly all of the leading politicians had their own Odia-language newspapers in the two decades after Independence.

Given the centrality of politics, a brief introduction to local political structure is helpful. The Odishan state government has a unicameral legislative assembly. The state Governor, appointed by the center's President, is the head of the executive branch in the state, and he or she ceremonially invites the elected party or coalition to form the state government under its selected Chief Minister. Chief Ministers serve five-year terms, the length of a legislative assembly term, with no term limits. Thanks to the state-center relationship, the central government (and its ruling party) has the ability to dissolve or remove from office legislative assemblies and Chief Ministers. This has been a significant feature of political life in post-Independence Odisha, as in many other Indian states, and low confidence, party in-fighting, and conflicts between the

regional and central party control have resulted in the central government's institution of "President's Rule" in 1961, 1971, 1973-4, 1976, 1977, and 1980. Additionally, the national Congress Party organization removed Odishan Chief Ministers from office in 1989 and 1999.

Harekrushna Mahatab, publisher of *Prajatantra*, was the first Chief Minister after Independence. The 1950s were dominated by conflicts between the coastal region's Congress leadership and the recently incorporated "princely states" from western Odisha, who joined together to form the Ganatantra ("Populist") party, associated with the newspaper *Ganatantra*. Together they formed a coalition government in the late 1950s that was dissolved in 1961. The 1950s and 1960s also saw conflicts within the state Congress party leadership, especially between Mahatab and pilot and industrialist Biju Patnaik (founder of the short-lived daily newspaper *Kalinga*). In 1962 the Ganatantra party merged with the free-market and socially conservative Swatantra Party, a growing national party associated with the prominent politician from south India, C. Rajagopalachari. In the late 1960s, Mahatab split from the INC forming the Orissa Jana Congress, which was largely distinguished by alliances rather than ideological differences, and formed a coalition government with the Swatantra party in 1967. Biju Patnaik split from the INC forming the Utkal Congress. After a series of reorganizations under different parties, both the Jana Congress and Utkal Congress eventually joined the Janata Party, a national party that sought to consolidate opposition in the mid-1970s against the Emergency.

The 1970s in Odisha are hard to understand without the broader national context. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1966 and her leadership was marked by dramatic consolidation of power in the executive branch and military force, culminating in the institution

of Emergency rule in 1975. During this time, Gandhi's administration arrested political opposition leaders, imposed strict censorship on the press, and undertook wide variety of other restrictive measures. In Odisha, Biju Patnaik's 1972 split with the INC produced a leadership vacuum in the Congress party, and one of Indira Gandhi's ministers at the national level, Nandini Satpathy, returned home to Odisha to run the party. Shortly after her return to Odisha, Satpathy established the daily newspaper *Dharitri*. Nandini Satpathy was closely aligned with Gandhi initially but grew critical of the Emergency, resigning as Chief Minister in 1976 in protest. Satpathy split with the INC to form the national-level Congress for Democracy party, which merged with the Janata Party later the same year. The Janata Party successfully ousted Gandhi's Congress Party in the national elections, and after President's rule, Biju Patnaik's close associate Nilamani Routray became Chief Minister of Odisha. Nandini Satpathy eventually returned to the Congress Party in the late 1980s at the request of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, serving in the state legislature. Her son, who had by then taken over the newspaper *Dharitri*, remained in the Janata Party and developed a close alliance with Biju Patnaik.

The 1980s returned Congress to control both nationally and in Odisha. Along with Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1981, another of her former cabinet ministers, Janaki Bhallav Patnaik, became Chief Minister. Though prior politicians had owned and edited newspapers, J.B. Patnaik was the first to have developed journalism as a profession prior to politics. He began working as a sub-editor as a young man and by 1950 he was joint editor for both the Odia language daily *Prajatantra* (Mahatab's newspaper) and for its sister English daily, *Eastern Times*. In the 1950s he served on the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference and became

involved with literary societies. In 1981, Patnaik's chief ministership was initially supported by the dominant newspapers, *Prajatantra* and *Samaja*, but the relationship soured around Patnaik's alleged abuses of journalists following critical publications. In 1984, Patnaik's son-in-law, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, established *Sambad*, the newspaper that most attribute the "modernization" and "professionalization" of journalism in Odisha. Though J.B. Patnaik was not technically involved in the management or editing of *Sambad*, he is closely associated with the publication locally and during my research many journalists presumed that *Sambad* was able to launch thanks to the patronage of J.B.'s government. Many non-Odisha accounts of Odisha's media misreport Soumya Ranjan as J.B. Patnaik's son or even as the founder of *Sambad*.

J.B. Patnaik's chief ministership was plagued by scandal, and he resigned from office in 1989. During the 1980s, his rival Biju Patnaik led the dominant opposition from the Janata Party, and in 1990 Biju Patnaik became Chief Minister. J.B. Patnaik and Congress regained the state government in 1995. Nationally, the political scene shifted dramatically in the 1990s with the rise of the Bharitya Janata Party [BJP]—a political party associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] and Hindu exclusionary politics that grew partly out of the Janata alliance of the Emergency era—that posed the first real challenge to Congress dominance. Though there were longstanding sympathies for the RSS in Odishan politics and Harekrushna Mahatab himself became a supporter in the last decades of his life (Kanungo 2003), the BJP was slow to grow in Odisha compared to other states.

After Biju Patnaik's death in 1997, his son, Naveen Patnaik, joined with Biju supporters from the state Janata Party and formed the Biju Janata Dal [BJD]. The BJD grew in popularity in

Odisha during the period of the BJP's national growth, joining the BJP-led central National Democratic Alliance in 1998 but without adopting the Hindu-exclusionary discourse. Raised largely outside of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik is a curious figure in Odishan politics: he is unmarried and he neither speaks nor reads Odia proficiently. He became Chief Minister of Odisha in 2000 and was re-elected in May 2014, becoming the longest running Chief Minister and leader of the most stable government in Odisha since independence. In 2009, following the RSS-spurred violence against Christians in Kandhamal, Odisha, Naveen Patnaik withdrew the BJD from an alliance with the BJP. Though party officials played coy about whether the withdrawal was related to the violence, it underlined his party's secularism. Both Nandini Satpathy's son and editor of *Dharitri*, Tathagatha Satpathy, and Harekrushna Mahatab's son and editor of *Prajatantra*, Bhartruhari Mahatab, represent the BJD in the national parliamentary body, the Lok Sabha.

Ideologically, at the state level, there is little distinction between the ruling BJD and its opposition Congress party. Each accuses the other of being corrupt and not sincerely serving the interests of Odisha's poor. Perhaps the most uncomfortable feature of the relationship is that the state-level BJD looks a great deal like the national-level Congress party insofar as it seeks to balance pro-poor and distributive social welfare programs with pro-privatization and foreign direct investment [FDI] initiatives. This is perhaps most apparent in state-center relations regarding FDI in mining and industrialization, which Naveen Patnaik's government began energetically pursuing in 2005. Upon Patnaik's signing of a memorandum of understanding [MOU] with the South Korean steel producing giant Posco, the state opposition parties raised

protest at the terms of the agreement but found little support for their complaints at the national level. Both the BJP and the Congress parties at the national level had supported aggressive FDI-courting, and the national parties seemed to support the Posco agreement regardless of local politics. Indeed, Odishan journalist Prafulla Das reported that Patnaik met with L.K. Advani, chairman of the BJP (“Challenging a Deal,” *Frontline*, July 16, 2005), to complain about the lack of support from his party’s state leadership, and Congress Party Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was an active, public supporter of the project¹⁷.

During and since my research, beginning in 2007, the strongest line of opposition across parties in Odisha has been accusations of corruption in the form of “the mining scam” and “the chit fund scam,” but Naveen Patnaik has successfully weathered corruption accusations and scandal by aggressively reorganizing his cabinet and party several times. He has a reputation for honesty that is routinely a feature of media profiles, and the most damning statement about him is that, wrote one critical article, “he has superbly kept his image clean and simple,” (Sheela Bhatt, “Naveen’s Master Stroke,” Mar. 11, 2009, Rediff.com) with the implication that such cleanliness must belie deeper trickery.

This style of politics means that party-inspired views are not necessarily compelling to readers, but scandals and investigations of misdeeds are. When asking about the recent history of newspapers, I was routinely told that Odishan readers much prefer opposition newspapers because they offer a harder look at corruption accusations. *Sambad* employees explained this to

¹⁷ This balance shifted a degree when Rahul Gandhi began to take over as the public leader of the national Congress Party in 2009 and 2010. Gandhi sought to invigorate the state’s Congress opposition through support of popular adivasi resistance to Vedanta Aluminium’s mining of bauxite in Lanjigarh, Odisha.

me in their discussion of low circulations during the late 1990s (during the Congress years) and success since Naveen Patnaik's election; *Dharitri* employees used this to explain the rise of *Sambad*. News itself has long been fueled more by personal rivalries than ideological differences, and thanks to the flexibility of the party system in Odisha, personal rivalries have often resulted in political party divides. For instance, between 2012-2013, a personal animosity in each of Odisha's dominant parties, both the BJD and the Congress, led to the creation of new political parties. Naveen Patnaik ousted his longtime advisor, Pyarimohan Mohapatra, after a failed party takeover. The Congress party ousted Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, editor of the *Sambad*, for leading anti-party activities following a conflict between the Party's new leadership and Patnaik's brother, Niranjana Patnaik, who had been replaced as the chief of the state Congress Committee. Both men have formed new political parties, the Odisha Jana Morcha and the Aama Odisha Party, respectively.

An implication of this political organization is that the newspapers, playing political roles, do not need to convert readers to a point of view on issues or platforms so much as to forge alliances and build the reputations of individual politicians (specifically reputations that they are "clean"—*saphā*). What I am calling the newspapers' ethical faces is one method of building these alliances and reputations, both for the politicians directly associated with the political proprietor/editor as well as for their close allies.

The Ethical Frame of *Sebā* and the Newspaper *Samaja*

Within this political culture, in which alliances and reputations rule, one of the dominant idioms for an ethical relationship between a newspaper (and its associated politicians) and its readers is that of *sevā* or service—in Odia pronounced *sebā*. *Sebā* is a complex category of action with deep regional roots as well as significant modern nationalist transformations, all of its meanings resonating together when the term is used to refer newspapers' charitable works. In a study of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS], religious historian Gwilym Beckerlegge has defined *sevā* as “service to humanity” (Beckerlegge), following from Swami Vivekananda's late nineteenth century placement of *sevā* at the center of a Hinduism reimaged as a universal religion for all of humanity. Through its twentieth century transformations, *sevā* has grown to include almost anything, from the establishment of free schools and handing out food to the poor, to political work on behalf of a religiously-oriented political party. However, even this universalism is itself achieved by borrowing the earlier theistic understanding of *sevā* as service to a god, a meaning that resonates strongly in Odisha.

Foremost among Odishan meanings of *sebā* is the routine caretaking of the deity for which special priests or *sebākas* are employed. As Christopher Fuller observes about Vaishnavism across India, Odisha's Vaishnavite temples such as Jagannatha's included, “the god himself is often thought to need the offerings and services provided him in worship” because the deity “has bodily needs that must be met by the offerings and services of *puja* and he is—in the form of the image receiving them—pleased because his worshippers meet those needs” (Fuller 2004, 70). But the *sebā* of the gods may itself draw on domestic forms of *sebā*. In her study of Puri's

devadasis or *maharis*, a historical class of female religious specialists whose temple work included singing, dancing and, controversially, having ritualized sexual relations, Frédérique Apffel Marglin describes *sebā* as an implicitly gendered activity:

The women say and are said by the men to do the *sebā* of their husbands. The husband is called *swami* or *pati*, meaning Lord, and his wife does his *sebā* as he does the *sebā* of gods. The brahmin *sebākas* in fact say that when doing the *sebā* of Lord Jagannatha they feel like women, since they do the work of women... [The *sebā* of women] is expressed by the daughter-in-law who, every morning, is supposed to wash the feet of [her husband, her father- and mother-in-law] and sip the water from this ablution (*paduka*). This is also done in the worship of deities with the worshippers sipping the *paduka* of the deity. It is also done to any superior or exalted person such as a guru. In fact, worship of deities and of people consists in the same acts of feeding, dressing, washing, decorating, etc.: In other words, in doing all the acts which further the well-being of the person or god worshipped. (Marglin 1985: 59)

In Odisha, then, the following charitable works by newspapers draw on categories of action that resonate with caretaking in both domestic and religious relationships.

While each of the major newspapers draws on *sebā* in its self-representations, the newspaper most prominently associated with the idea of service is the *Samaja*. The *Samaja* (“Society”) is Odisha’s oldest existing newspaper. In 2009, the *Samaja* website stated that:

About 80% of the net profit of The Samaja is spent for the welfare activities of the people of Orissa by way of extending stipend to needy students, by helping the patients and victims of natural calamities and through miscellaneous charity and donations.

The *Samaja* is not published from Bhubaneswar at all, but from the center of Bhubaneswar’s “twin city,” Cuttack, in the large rambling complex called Gopabandhu Bhawan (“Gopabandhu’s House,” named after its founder). The *Samaja* is considered by many to be the top newspaper of Odisha, and it is always among the top three in named in circulation numbers. In an interview with the owner of its competitor *Dharitri*, even he allowed it the top position, an uncharacteristic

act of deference for a competitor that felt just like a *pranaam* or ritual bow to an elder. *Dharitri*'s head went on to explain that *Samaja* was the most popular among Odisha's *rural* population, while his own paper does better in cities, especially along the coast.

The *Samaja* has seven simultaneous editions and printing locations, including one in Kolkata and one in Vizag, in neighboring Andhra Pradesh state; it was among the first in Odisha to have a downloadable internet newspaper. *Samaja* operations include the Satyabadi Press, a separate corporate entity, and formerly the Gopabandhu Type Foundry. The newspaper was founded by the national activist Gopabandhu Das, who began publishing it as a weekly in 1919 on the wave of Gandhi's call on nationalists to publish. As shown in Figure 3, each issue's masthead, underneath the title, reads "Founded by Utkalmani [Jewel of Utkal] Gopabandhu Das" in ornate calligraphy. Das began publishing the newspaper in a village near Puri, then in Puri, and then, from 1926, it published from Cuttack. A fervent nationalist throughout the 1920s, Gopabandhu Das was influenced by Gandhi as well as by the freedom efforts of Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. Shortly before his death, Das wrote a will leaving the care of the *Samaja* to a charitable organization established by Lala Lajpat Rai.¹⁸ This charity, the Lok Sevak Mandal or Servants of the People Society [SOPS], was originally in Lahore but now based in Delhi. The SOPS owns the *Samaja* to this day, and its management is overseen by a committee of SOPS members from the national organization's Odisha chapter.

¹⁸ Bose and Jalal (2003, 116) call Lajpat Rai's version of nationalism a "noxious brand of religious bigotry," writing that "Lajpat Rai represented the Punjabi Hindu desire to make full capital of the colonial logic of a 'Hindu majority' at the all-India level, while refusing to accept its implications in a province where Muslims were in a majority". Though it would have been largely unmarked throughout twentieth century Odisha due to the overwhelming majority of Hindus along Odisha's coastal region, the discourse of "seva" as interpreted by the SOPS may come with an implicit assumption of Hindu exclusivity that may be increasingly significant in Odishan politics.



Figure 3. The Samaja masthead, circa 2007.

Samaja has a reputation of conservatism, not so much politically as culturally: it does not cover celebrities or nightlife, it does not have large images of scantily-clad women on its second page, and it has historically not engaged in the competitive audience building of the other major newspapers. One high school teacher of Odia characterized the *Samaja* for me, in Odia: “The news doesn’t come as quickly in the *Samaja*. It might take some days, maybe even a week. The other newspapers will publish it the same day. But when it comes, then it will be straight (*siddha*).” Many other peoples’ comments confirmed the perception of the *Samaja* as dignified and staid, though I did not personally observe any noticeable difference in the timing of the *Samaja*’s news coverage despite attempts to identify such a difference.

This popular impression of the *Samaja* as culturally conservative and devoted to *sevā* was also thanks to another personality nearly synonymous with the *Samaja* for most of its life. Radhunath Rath was born to an esteemed Brahmin family in 1896 in Athagarh, Odisha. He worked for Gopabandhu Das in the early days of the press, and then served as the editor of the

Samaja much of the time between 1946 until his death in Gopabandhu Bhawan, the residence attached to the press, in 1998.¹⁹ A nationalist and prolific author, Rath served two years in prison thanks to his publishing activities in the 1940s and then went on to serve in the state legislature and in various state-level cabinet positions 1951-1961 and 1971-1977, first as a Congress party member and then as an Independent. He was President of the SOPS in the 1980s and was well-known for his associations with many other charitable and social service organizations. Rath was widely lauded as a freedom fighter, an Odia-language literary giant, and a paragon of the ideals of service for the people of Odisha.

To understand how *sebā* asserts an ethical relationship it is helpful to consider an example. In 2002, the *Samaja* and SOPS began construction of the Gopabandhu Institute of Medical Science and Research [GIMSAR] in Athagarh, the same area in Cuttack district where Radhunath Rath was born. An article published in the *Samaja* on November 20, 2009 described the Institute as intended to provide medical treatments for those who are “poor, miserable, and helpless” (“*gariba, duḥstha, o asahāya*”) by following the tradition of the SOPS and the final intentions of the *Samaja*’s founder, Gopabandhu Das. The website of the Institute, entirely in English, explains that its provision of medical treatments is necessary in the “neglected” state of Orissa, “where people are mostly backward both economically and educationally” (GIMSAR 2011). In addition to the discussion of the Institute’s medical instruction for students and medical treatments for the poor, publicity for the Institute often routinely mentions the “green” (*sabuja*) area that has been sown on the Institute’s campus.

¹⁹ I heard many different stories about his years of tenure as editor and was unable to confirm the dates.

The Gopabandhu Institute of Medical Science and Research epitomizes the forms of *sebā* presented by newspapers in Odisha, which consist primarily of projects focused on health (hospitals, blood drives) and education (institutional development, school sponsorship, scholarships, essay competitions). Addressivity is useful for making sense of what is common across these instances. As a type of action that is addressed to the well being of some other (not-self) person or set of persons, acts of *sebā* propose a direct beneficiary or object. In domestic instances of feet washing, the direct beneficiary is obviously the person whose feet are being washed. In the descriptions of the Gopabandhu Institute, the direct beneficiaries are Odisha's poor. The service of the Institute also figures superaddressees or indirect beneficiaries. The emphasis on the impoverished "miserable and helpless" people of Odisha in the context of statements about Odisha's general backwardness (*annunati*) creates the direct beneficiaries as representatives of the generally suffering populace. At the same time, the recurrent discussion of the Institute as the product of the *Samaja*'s profits conducted according to the dying wishes of Pandit Gopabandhu Das himself effectively removes the newspaper's current management as agents, making them only conduits for the joined will of *Samaja*'s readers and the esteemed freedom fighter. Thus the Institute becomes an act of service not simply by the newspaper and the SOPS, but by the *Samaja*'s readers, and not only the for the benefit of the poor people of Athagarh block, but for all of Odisha's backward, suffering people.

While Radhunath Rath's leadership and the newspaper's charitable activities have generally established an association between the *Samaja* and charitable service commitments, this ethical face also poses some risks for the newspaper's reputation. As Marcel Mauss

suggested, the presentation of altruism with the charitable gift opens the way for suspicion, and suspicion plagues the *Samaja*. First, there have been difficulties over the paper's leadership since Rath's departure. Bringing these to a head, in 2006 the then-General Manager, Braja Bhai, was ousted by the SOPS leadership and then arrested for embezzling about 9 million rupees from the newspaper through forged cheques. In this environment, statements about charitable contributions are not read as sincere. Following this crisis, there have been several short-termed editors, and much speculation and rumor about why good editors are being "forced out" by the SOPS; there is even one circulating conspiracy theory that Braja Bhai was framed to take the fall for the SOPS leadership's own embezzling. In a 2010 conversation about *Samaja* with several leftist journalists, one speculated about casteism, voicing concerns that the *Samaja* had always been the newspaper of Brahmins and one of the fired editors had not been Brahmin. Others present quickly shamed the speculator for such a "low insult."

Most troublesome to the *Samaja*'s ethical face are ongoing concerns around the legality of the entire enterprise, concerns that are justified by an argument that Radhunath Rath and the SOPS conspired to control the press by forging Gopabandhu Das's will upon his death in 1928. Since my research, in 2011-2013 there have been ongoing demonstrations by a contingent of Odisha's journalists who argue that the *Samaja*'s transfer to the SOPS was the result of this forged will, and that Gopabandhu did not intend for his newspaper to be published by non-Odias. While the Odia-nationalist claim to the *Samaja* is not surprising given the general context of anxiety that Odisha is generally being "looted" by foreign corporations, the accused forgery of the will itself says that Gopabandhu Das wanted the SOPS to take over the press and its

publications precisely so that Odisha would always have a newspaper, pointing perhaps to Odisha's poverty relative to the Panjab as well as the complications of local politics. The *Samaja's* ongoing success over nearly a century is certainly noteworthy; for some observers that longevity is clearly because of its outside ownership, while for other observers the *Samaja's* longevity is in spite of it.

The Ethical Frame of Linguistic Belonging and the Newspaper *Sambad*

Understandings of language play a general role in how people understand newspapers in Odisha. Elsewhere in India, linguistic style is a component of brand differentiation across newspapers in the same language. For example, Tamil regional newspapers are distinguished by differentiations in linguistic style, especially “spoken” and “written” styles, which both construct the intended audience of the newspaper as well as orient the newspapers to the complex identity issues negotiated through Tamil linguistic styles (Cody 2009, 2011). Before considering how Odisha's newspapers are differentiated by language, it is helpful to have a sense of the kind of differentiations that might be relevant.

Two kinds of linguistic variation within Odia are routinely described in Odisha. The first relates to dialectal variations generally associated with regions. The most salient difference to Odia speakers in Bhubaneswar is the difference between coastal or “Kaṭaki” (for Cuttack) Odia and Sambalpuri Odia or Koshali, in part thanks to a longstanding movement for state recognition

of Koshali as a separate language. In coastal Odisha, however, this was largely seen as an attempt to divide Odia speakers—not as recognition of a separate language.

The second way of describing linguistic variation is between formal/informal or refined/colloquial (*sādhubhāsā/calitabhāsā*, literally pure/current). For non-journalists these distinctions were largely full of sentiment, and could be read as either pure/impure Odia or humble/pretentious. For instance, one of my Odia teachers refused to help me understand verb forms I had found myself using. “Chī!” (“Yuck!”) he said, when I used a casual form of the past tense. When I pushed him to explain, he said, in English, that the verbal form was “rustic” and “not right for me.” But in the family among whom I had learned this form, the primary school age daughters would, for laughs, play-act being high status by adding fake Sanskrit-sounding flourishes to their words. Both of these situations emphasized marked variations in opposition to a relatively unmarked conversational variety in coastal urban Odisha that elicited little comment.

Journalists were much less emotional about these distinctions, and also much more precise. When I asked elder journalists and editors about the linguistic styles in use in the newspaper, I routinely elicited talk about three categories that are technically a means of categorizing word origins, but map on to stylistic patterns. *Tatsama*, *tadbhaba*, and *desaja* are terms to describe the origins of an Odia word as, respectively, directly from Sanskrit, modified from Sanskrit, and originating locally (non-Sanskritic, often Dravidian or Munda in origin). While these categories were developed by Sanskrit grammarians and are also used to describe other Indian languages, they have developed a local resonance in Odisha. Writing one of Odisha’s first only-Odia dictionaries in 1916 (the nineteenth century saw almost entirely multilingual Odia dictionaries),

Gopinath Nanda Sharma categorized each of the 35,000 words according to these three categories. These categories may appeal to well-educated news writers because the focus on the categorization of individual words supports a reflexive, stylistic flexibility that is characteristic of Odia-language newspapers. As linguists Behera and Tripathy(2012) note in their study of language use in Odisha's newspapers, Odia newspapers heavily borrow from English and Hindi and also draw on informal slang and casual speech styles. However, rather than pointing out the specific origins of individual word choices, news writers and editors described the role of word origins in newswriting as general categories, noting that early journalism in Odisha used a lot of *tatsama* words, while contemporary news even uses *desaja* words to give the newspapers "local flavor" and to appeal to people who "don't know Sanskrit." I read the latter statement as a veiled reference to the importance of appealing to non-Brahmins in contemporary Odisha. That these categories had come to mean more than word origins specifically was suggested by a statement of a senior columnist who gave me an example of early Odia journalism's *tatsama* words by describing the first person plural pronoun use: old newspapers used *āmbhemane* (nominative case) and *āmbhemanankara* (genitive case) while contemporary newspapers generally use *āme* and *āma*, respectively. While I can confirm this observation, even the archaic pronouns are not *tatsama* words, that is, they are not directly Sanskrit. This suggests that complicated, multisyllabic words are associated with Sanskrit and with a certain archaic style and social order, while shorter, pithier words are more valued in contemporary Odishan journalism.

In this chapter's opening discussion of the cartoon in *Sambad*, the warrior wielding the pen and the screen fights on behalf of Mother Odia against the evil demon, corruption. While the

Samaja's ethical self-presentations focus primarily on acts of service for Odisha's poor masses, the "helpless," the *Sambad* connects with a popular readership through tropes of shared substance and belonging: language, land, and blood. I propose that this usefully deflects risks to ethical presentations based largely on altruism, allowing *Sambad* to pursue corporate growth and profit without apparent conflicts. Profit, in this ethical frame, becomes merely a tool for expanding support for the mother tongue and her warriors.

Sambad is the daily newspaper component of the media company Eastern Media Limited [EML], which were both established in 1984 by Soumya Ranjan Patnaik. Patnaik, who left his position as a lecturer in political science at Benares Hindu University to establish the newspaper, was the son-in-law of Odisha's Chief Minister in the 1980s and 1990s, J.B. Patnaik, of the Congress Party. Soumya Ranjan Patnaik's brother, Niranjan Patnaik, was then a member of J.B. Patnaik's state cabinet as Minister of Mines and Industries and was later the leader of the Congress Party in Odisha. Though initially not in politics himself, in 1995 Soumya Ranjan Patnaik brought political attention to himself by taking on former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik in his own Bhubaneswar constituency for the state-level legislative assembly. Patnaik lost, but established a reputation for fearless politicking. The following year he was elected as a member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Bhubaneswar constituency as a representative of the Congress Party.

Though *Sambad* has long been the flagship holding of EML, the firm has consistently included other media as well. In the 1980s, in addition to *Sambad*, EML ran an Odia-language literary journal, an Urdu-language weekly news magazine (which closed within the year), and

film news weekly. From 1988 to 1999, EML published a daily English newspaper called the *Sun Times*. Now, in addition to *Sambad*, EML includes what its employees refer to, in business administration jargon, as several “verticals”: Kanak TV, an Odia-language “24 hour cable news channel”; Radio Choklate, an Odia-language FM music station; Eastern Media Entertainment, which consists of a *jatra* theater production company producing the highly popular dramatic form around Odisha, and an Odia-language film production company. In addition to these multiple media platforms, EML also has an active charitable trust, Ama Odisha (“Our Odisha”).

The charitable trust aims to “protect the Odia language and create awareness for blood donation” (Patnaik 2011), which it does through two hosting frequent blood drives and language-promotion activities. These include a mobile book library called “Ama Bahi” or “Our Books”, book publishing, making DVDs in Odia highlighting different aspects of Odishan history, and hosting annual essay competitions to celebrate “correct Odia” (AmaOdisha 2011). Since 2006, Ama Odisha has also been working to establish two private educational institutes: an institute for journalism training called the Sambad School of Media and Culture to be affiliated with the Utkal University of Culture, and an engineering college called KMBB College of Engineering and Technology. Both had their first batches of students in 2009, though indications are that they have been slow to get off the ground. Engineering and media are both areas of rapid growth in Odisha: in 2009, there were twenty-seven new private engineering colleges established in the state (Baral 2011). As the *Samaja*’s establishment of a medical training institute uses the outward vector of popular education as a tool to perform its broad assistance to Odisha, *Sambad*’s

pedagogical programs similarly establish an outward reach that works as a claim to popular address.

EML's charity wing is the locus of talk about *Sambad's sebā*. The website for Ama Odisha encapsulates the service discourse of the entire EML endeavor, which focuses on shared substances of belonging, especially blood and language, as the grounds for mutuality and co-participation. "Odisha is our mama. Odia is our mama's language," the website announces, in Odia, beneath an area with automatically scrolling images of the organization's activities. Rather than using the formal word for mother, it uses the intimate term of address. "This mother," the website states, referring to the mother tongue, "is the mother of our blood." (*E māṭi āma raktara māṭi*.) It goes on to describe the establishment of Ama Odisha (*āma Odiśā*, literally, "our Odisha") as a project to protect "Odia language, culture, and self-respect" (*Odiā bhasa, sanskr̥ti o swabhiman*).

To consider the contemporary interpretation of this language-focused platform, it is useful to juxtapose it with the reputation of Naveen Patnaik, Odisha's current Chief Minister²⁰. Patnaik is renowned for his inability to speak Odia. He was schooled at one of India's most elite prep schools, the Doon School in Dehradun in the Himalayan foothills. Though his father was an Odia industrialist and politician, his mother was Panjabi; his sister is New York-based novelist Gita Mehta (author of *Karma Cola*), who is married to the Sonny Mehta, Editor-in-Chief of Alfred A. Knopf books. Jacqueline Onassis edited one of Patnaik's pre-political career books. Especially given that Patnaik never married, these relationships are widely cited in Odisha, and people often

²⁰ Others have made this comparison between Naveen Patnaik and Ama Odisha as well. See Ruben Bannerjee, "Orissa's Lingua Fracas," *India Today*, April 22, 2002.

speculate that he knew French better than Odia when he became Chief Minister. When a photo of Patnaik reading from a printed speech of Odia words written in roman script circulated on the internet in 2013, the *Times of India* covered it and included quotes from critics:

President of Utkal Sahitya Samaj, a literary organization, Ratnakar Chaini echoed the view. "In no other Indian state, it will be possible for someone to rule without knowing the state's language. It is strange that people still vote for Patnaik," Chaini said, adding, "Naveen can never identify himself with Odisha no matter how long he rules the state. He can't associate himself with Odia society." (Ashok Pradhan, "Odisha CM's Odia speech written in English goes viral, ridiculed," *Times of India*, May 17, 2013)

Predictably, during my fieldwork I was routinely congratulated for speaking better Odia than "Odisha's own Chief Minister." Yet when Patnaik's political opponents early in his tenure tried to turn his lack of linguistic skill into a political issue, they failed. To the contrary, it seems that *not* speaking Odia has perhaps been an asset for Patnaik. Like his lack of local family, his failure to marry, his presumed independent wealth, and his childhood abroad, Patnaik's ignorance of Odia is precisely what allows him to stay "clean." As Narottam Gaan, Political Science Professor at Bhubaneswar's Utkal University, recently told *Open Magazine*, there may be truth in the joke that not knowing Odia helps him: "people thought that[,] unlike the leaders who spoke their language and looted them, including relief funds following the 1999 super cyclone, Patnaik is someone who is very different. Until he came along, the state was ruled by middlemen who acted at the behest of politicians. The joke here is that it is good he doesn't speak Oriya, the only language that middlemen knew." While he may be mocked for it, it also gives him a reputation of being above the fray, above the corrupt dealings of ministers and bureaucrats.

The comparison between Ama Odisha is useful because it highlights the risk for Odia newspapers, including *Sambad*, that comes with invoking the mutuality produced through the mother-tongue and Odia-ness. Evocations of such mutuality can lead to experiences of shared sentiments and convictions of sincerity, but they can also come with an aura of corruption and dishonesty.

The Ethical Frame of Business Growth and the Newspaper *Dharitri*

Another major area of ethical self-construction among Odisha's newspapers involves the pursuit of profit and the ethic of entrepreneurialism. This ethical framing is linked to the broader transformations associated with economic privatization and neo-liberalization, through which the government and public institutions have increasingly sought market-based models of operation as well as adopted the support of the free market as one of their objectives. This has been accompanied by an ethical shift in the imagination of the citizen from one that needs taking care of by the state to one that encourages the citizen to make free, rational choices for his or her own upliftment (see Rose 1999). Aihwa Ong has observed that this emphasis on economic calculative action in Asia differs from that of the United States, with an emphasis in Asia on its role in solidarity production. Across Asia "citizens are urged to be self-enterprising, not only to cope with uncertainties and risks, but also to raise the overall 'human quality' of their societies." Odisha's newspapers increasingly seek to demonstrate this ethic, that entrepreneurialism is not

merely for the benefit of the individual but that this “neoliberal ethics of self-responsible citizenship are linked to social obligations to build the nation” (Ong and Collier 2005, 698).

In Odisha, assertions of this entrepreneurial ethic are broadly framed through the popular narrative about the reshaping of the journalism profession and the local newspaper industry in the 1980s. The narrative typically consists of a discussion of the professional organization of newsrooms (such as distribution of labor according to routine “beats”), the adoption of current technology (specifically, off-set printing and then computerized production with desktop publishing), and—at the heart of the story—the beginning of newspapers as profitable businesses. Odisha’s media proprietors recount the same story: Odisha did not have a professional press until the 1980s. Until that point, Odisha’s politicians required low capital investment for newspaper production: technology was relatively cheap because Odisha dramatically trailed national standards, most newspapers were only a few pages, content itself was often reproduced from other publications and news agencies, and most financial income came from government advertisements and notifications which could themselves be guaranteed through political influence (see also Jeffrey 1999). In the 1980s, first *Sambad* and then the already-existing *Dharitri* purchased off-set printers, (re)organized their newsrooms, and gradually created an environment in which the other newspapers could not but follow. By the mid-1990s, circulations had increased to the point that local newspapers were beginning to attract national advertisers—circulation numbers were beginning to matter.

On the public-side, the most significant shift enabled by this period was the transition in how the newspapers stood in relationship to Odisha. What qualities of Odisha did the

newspapers demonstrate to the world? Topmost among these public qualities was the transition from afternoon and evening editions to the international metropolitan practice of morning editions, long contrasted in local understanding with the local *dak* or post editions. The late or slow news of the late-day editions, necessary because of the time it took to set out the movable type, embodied Odisha's own qualities of backwardness, slowness, and non-modernity. Outside of the city of publication, the newspapers might come several days or even weeks late. Now the morning edition is delivered around the state, and is even available on the same day in the most remote areas of the state. Now the newspapers' up-to-date industrial practices act as prominent signs of their modernity, professionalism, and cosmopolitanism—which in turn allows the newspaper producers to offer themselves as a synecdoche for Odisha's modernity generally.

The growth of revenue from advertisements are the foundation of the contemporary newspapers' modernity. As noted, government advertisements have long been and continue to be a major purchaser of newspaper ad space. Since 1955, the central government's advertisement purchasing has been managed by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity [DAVP] within the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Newspapers must apply to the organization in order to be included in their purchasing, submitting extensive annual documentation. The normalization of prices led to the categorization of newspapers according to large, medium, and small newspapers; prices per space are determined by these circulation categories. The periodical recalculation of these prices is contested, with the Indian Newspaper Society representing the interests of the industry in the negotiations; in the last recalculation in 2009, the DAVP settled on

fixing advertising price to the newsprint price.²¹ By contrast, at the state level, per the Advertisement Policy of 1998, the state Information and Public Relations Department enters into annual contracts with individual newspapers, basing the rates on the DAVP but not being bound by them (Odisha 1998). This flexibility in rate contracts mirrors private sector advertisements, which are also negotiated: newspapers produce standard rate cards, but businesses negotiate what they actually pay. The state’s advertising flexibility is a frequently cited concern when Odishan journalists decry the ethics of the political ownership of newspapers—if you run the government, you can pay yourself whatever you want for advertisements.

There is a long history in India of anxiety about the threat that profit poses toward the freedom of the press. In 1956, the Central Government adopted the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956, which sought to limit “unfair competition among newspapers so that newspapers may have fuller opportunities of freedom of expression.” Though ultimately struck down by the Supreme Court, concern with the threat of “profit motives” embodied in the Act had a lasting impact. This has been echoed most recently in a national concern about “paid news,” which has largely focused on the payment for favorable news coverage by political candidates. In Odisha, some people have laughed at this national concern, because of the obvious irony that paid news in Odisha is not a problem since the politicians already own the newspapers—“why would they pay themselves?” (Though one senior journalist quipped, “they probably *would* pay themselves!”)

²¹ Newsprint is one of the highest expenses of newspaper publication in India. Newsprint is distinguished by foreign and “*desi*” or Indian newsprint, and the top newspapers have a clear preference for the foreign which Odisha’s producers justified through descriptions of quality, especially how the papers hold the ink. During my research newsprint prices were jumping dramatically (up by 40% in 2008), making newsprint a top financial concern across India’s newspaper producers.

Despite the concern with neutrality and independence at the discursive forefront of the national conversation about commercialism in India, the history of political ownership in Odisha allows commercialism to paint itself as neutral by comparison. This is best exemplified by the daily *Dharitri*, one of Odisha's most explicitly commercial and market-oriented newspapers that also claims to be the "only neutral publication in the State" (Dharitri 2012). *Dharitri* was established in 1974 by Nandini Satpathy, Chief Minister of Odisha from 1972-1976; she was only the second woman to serve in the top position in any state government since Independence. Born Nandini Panigrahi, Satpathy came from a family associated with the freedom movement; her uncle had established the Communist Party in Odisha in the 1930s. Her father, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, was an Odia-language writer best known for a Gandhian novel called *Matira Manisha* (*Man of the Soil*), which was later made as a film by Bengali social realist Mrinal Sen, and she was herself an author and literary translator into Odia. As described above, Satpathy participated on and off in state and national politics from 1968 until her retirement in 2000, primarily as a representative of the Congress Party.

Dharitri itself was initially established in 1974 as non-profit newspaper with a social mission under the Samajbadi Society²², a society established in 1973 by Satpathy's novelist father, Panigrahi, for the purpose of running the newspaper. According to its Articles of Association, the broad goals of the organization included "to strive for securing the ends of social justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; (ii) equality of status and of opportunity, to promote among all fraternity, assuring the dignity, of the individual and the

²² Not to be confused with the political Samajwadi Party.

unity of the Nation; (iii) towards that end, to publish newspapers, journals, magazines, periodicals, books, pamphlets and other literary words” (quoted in *Samajbadi Society v. Assistant CIT* (2001)79ITD112Ctk).

Since the late 1980s, *Dharitri* has been run by Nandini Satpathy’s second son, Tathagatha Satpathy. A trim man, clean-shaven and with silvery hair trimmed close to his head. In 2007, Tathagatha Satpathy looked a bit like Sting, an impression not disrupted by his wife and managing partner, the former model and actress Adyasha Satpathy.²³ Satpathy is a member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Odisha in the Bharata Janata Dal [BJD] party, elected from his home district of Dhenkanal, and, like many national-level politicians, he is usually photographed wearing hand-loomed cotton shirts. From 1985-6, *Dharitri* began to adopt those features of national newspapers that were signs of modernity and professionalism: off-set web printing, high page numbers, color photos, multiple editions, local reporting, and specialized divisions of labor.

This latter characteristic, the specialized divisions of labor, is especially important to Satpathy’s representation of *Dharitri*’s role in Odisha. During a long conversation with Satpathy in early 2007, he emphasized how the division of labor protects the interests of the newspaper. Though he is the titular Editor on the masthead, and though he stands legally responsible for what is printed, he said “all [of the people who work at Dharitri] make sure that I have nothing to do with things” because, he said with a self-effacing laugh, “other colleagues are balanced.”

²³ It is a curious coincidence that the three women most active in Odishan media management are non-Odias who married into Odia political families. Monica Nayyar Patnaik, Joint Managing Director of EML (Sambad) is Soumya Ranjan Patnaik’s nephew’s wife and Jagi Mangat Panda is the co-founder and Managing Director of Ortel and OTV, Odisha’s top local cable television station.

“*Dharitri* is there for the sake of journalism,” he said, implying that the other newspapers published for different reasons.

Publicly, this neutrality is achieved by appealing to a particular kind of Odia reader: the upwardly mobile urbanite. In our interview, Satpathy emphasized the introduction of the first Odia-language business section and other regular features that would appeal to the “young and upcoming leaders of Odisha”, such as Sudoku puzzles, “info tech,” and career pages. The combined emphasis on *Dharitri*’s achieved neutrality and its appeal to the upwardly mobile “upcoming leaders” of the state is producing a new understanding of how a newspaper can “serve” Odisha through an emphasis on class aspiration and entrepreneurialism.

Corrupting Interests and the Threat of Social Relations

Corruption (*durnīti*) is a concern shared across all of these newspapers’ self-presentations as ethical participants in modern Odishan society. Scholars have described several features of corruption in India that apply to Odisha as well. One sociological approach has shared with citizens the project to identify the features of local political organization that produce corruption. Rather than seeing corruption as mere moral failure of the individual, this sociological approach has seen corruption as the result of incommensurable systems that undercut modern commitments to the public interest. In this view, corruption results from the inherent the weakness of the Indian state system, which “enshrined in the Constitution a value system which was never internalized, and which was external to the Indian ethos” (Williams and Bendelow

1998, 230). The actual Indian ethos, in contrast to the modern liberal expectations of the Constitution and the state bureaucracy, is based on clientism, patronage, and especially kinship. Shiv Visvanathan and Harsh Sethi enunciate a popular reading of Indian corruption when they write that “in the nexus of state and family lie the problems of modern India” (1998, 38).

While relatively agnostic about the causes of the activities that constitute corruption, Parry (2000) points out that rather than the weakness of the public sphere or of the modern, rationalist bureaucratic imagination, the pervasiveness and conviction of corruption concerns, what he calls the “crisis of corruption,” demonstrate precisely the opposite. Instead, the concern about corruption serves as a “testimony to the internalization of [the democratic state’s] norms and values”:

If corruption is the misuse of public office or assets for private interest, then the notion obviously presupposes a clear conceptual separation between the two. In the administration of the Mughal empire no sharp distinction was drawn. Many officials received, not a salary, but a share of the revenue; and *dastur* (‘custom’) and *mamul* (‘usual practice’) and other like payments that would today be ‘corrupt’ were taken as a matter of legitimate right... What I am suggesting, then, is that the idea of ‘crisis of corruption’ may be as much a product of a growing acceptance of universalistic bureaucratic norms as of its actual increase. Corruption has seemed to get worse and worse not (only) because it has, but also because [it] subverts a set of values to which people are increasingly committed. (Parry 2000, 52-53).

While also interested in discourses of corruption, Gupta is much more concerned with how they are constitutive of social reality rather than indicative of already existing conditions (Gupta 1995, 2005). He has proposed that corruption is itself the media through which people constitute the state and relationships to the state, especially in situations of multi-strand power imbalances such

as those found in interactions between rural district residents and their administrative officers (Gupta 1995, 2012).

In Odisha, all of these interpretations seem applicable to the concerns with corruption that both motivate and threaten to undercut how newspapers and media producers present themselves as ethical. Two aspects of local discourse around corruption and the press are particularly relevant to this context. First, there is the ideal project of the press, to “banish the demon corruption” as the Sambad cartoon put it. Idioms for this in English and Odia draw on visual metaphors—transparency, exposure, *swachcha* (clearness, whiteness), *prakāśa* (light)—that are found in the very phrase “to publish” in formal Odia, *prakāśana kariba*. The point here is that fighting corruption effortlessly maps onto basic understandings of the ideal ethical role of the press in Odisha. Of course, Odisha is not alone in making this association, but it is reinforced through particularly local histories and practices.

A second aspect of local corruption discourses is their projection of corruption’s participation structure. Corruption does not just happen alone, to a sole individual. Corruption is a problem of relationships to others. This is well represented in Visvanathan and Sethi’s statement about kinship, and anxieties that are explicitly about kinship are the focus of a later chapter. In general discourse in Odisha, this relational anxiety was framed in talk about “vested interests,” a phrase that is one of the most important elements of the vocabulary associated with corruption in Odisha, used in Odia conversation and in Odia writing. This term captures a whole range of potentially corrupting relationships: the influence of politicians or powerful local families, the influence of kin ties and patronage, the influence of multinational and national

industrial and mining corporations, or the influence of global bodies such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. “Vested interests” is an especially useful term because it emphasizes the threat of forms of connection or relatedness but does not specify what those are.

A very typical example of what I heard in oral conversation is reproduced in this English-language article from 2009, published on the growing English-language but local news website, Orissadiary.com:

People in backward regions lack economic opportunities. They are deprived of fruits of developmental efforts. People in socio-economically depressed regions often carry a deep sense of frustration and discrimination against their better off neighbors. Poor and disaffected people are often easily manipulated by anti-social elements and powerful vested interests. These pockets of poverty breed serious socio-economic problems. There is corroborating evidence that the problems of terrorism, Naxalism, increased incidence of crime, law and order and social strife in many pockets are attributed to social and economic depression of such regions. (Manoj K. Das, “Orissa’s Lalgah: Undivided Koraput,” Jul 28, 2009, Orissadiary.com).

Here “powerful vested interests” isn’t meant to describe the interests of the Koraput’s residents themselves. Instead the phrase is a metonym for those unspecified others who have their own interests in mind—exactly *not* the interests of Koraput’s residents—but who influence and manipulate the residents. The idea of vested interests is so open as to even allow the most obvious example of a vested interest to use it. In 2008, an article in the English-language daily Pioneer quoted a press release by TATA Steel, one of India’s top steel producers:

Thursday’s shooting of Jogendra Jamuda, a villager of Chandia by miscreants is deplorable and we strongly condemn such anti-social activities near our project site... We apprehend that some vested interests are instigating and perpetrating violence to de-rail the discussions with the villagers and delay our project. We once again condemn all such anti-social activities. (Mar 7, 2008, The Pioneer)

These two examples show that the talk about “vested interests” shares with the scholarly study of corruption an emphasis on motivations that disregard the public interest. Yet, the language about vested interests leaves open the nature of that disregard. The lack of specification is what makes it so useful for casting aspersions on projects, political positions, demonstrations, and publications. It becomes a way of framing an action as motivated by a disregard for the wellbeing of society without requiring that the complainant spell out the terms of that disregard.

Even more than merely calling someone or something “corrupt”, the accusation of involvement with “vested interests” increases the scale of the accusation. Corruption can be an individual failing, but in local usage, “vested interests” is always multiple. It is this multiplicity finally that is the source of the phrase’s power, for it suggests a hidden agency that is more powerful than any particular individual’s intentions but that is also unknowable. The implied hiddenness of the motivations, the unspecified multiplicity, enchant supposed acts of corruption with the power of secrecy (see Taussig 1999; West and Sanders 2003).

The Right to Information [RTI] movement and political activism around transparency and “anti-corruption” have been the dominant sites for organizing unmasking efforts at both at the national and state level (Khandekar and Reddy 2013; Mazzarella 2006). While some journalists were involved in these movements in Odisha, they are beyond the scope of this dissertation. As earlier noted, journalism itself has an implicit project of exposure or revealing corruption in Odisha that need not necessarily call on bureaucracies of transparency. Yet this is precisely complicated by the cultural figure of vested interests, which casts suspicion on the politically-affiliated Odia media with almost no effort. Indeed, I found myself remarkably susceptible to the

suspicious of those around me, and at one point in my research I thought I had stumbled upon an illegal conspiracy among some Odishan media producers. Only with the distance of a year could I see that the talk of suspicion itself had a hold on me, and that there were a handful of simpler and much more mundane explanations. The experience however made me attentive to how easily the Odia-language newspapers efforts at ethical self-construction can be turned on their heads. Indeed, “vested interests” seem to be outrunning the newspaper’s branding efforts in the dematerialization project: it is the corrupting forces of power that are “everywhere, and yet nowhere,” not the newspapers’ intended brand identities.

Resisting Corruption through Ethical Publication

Fears about “vested interests” undercut newspapers’ presentations of their ethical participation structures. Such accusations of newspapers threaten to expose as lies any claims to publication on the behalf of the Odishan people—whether through *sebā*, Odia language (and, thus, people) advocacy, or entrepreneurial spirit. Implicitly, such accusations also undercut authorship.

“Vested interest” claims project exactly those shadowy and self-interested but unidentified others as the voices speaking through the newspaper. Within Bhubaneswar’s media world itself, two growing tendencies are partly in response to fears about “vested interests” influencing the Odia-owned media: organizing around the independence of the press and the growth of “alternative” media. In this chapter’s final section, I turn to a description of journalists’ own organizing and alternative media.

Media producers in Odisha have variously been involved in professional organizations since Independence that fall into three main categories. The first is professional-trade organizations, which have been overwhelmingly national, such as the All-Indian Editor's Conference and the Journalist Association of India. These merge into industry interest groups with the Indian Newspaper Association, the Indian Language Newspaper Association, and the Federation of Small and Medium Sized Newspapers, all of which focus on advocating for "language" (read non-English) newspapers with low circulations. The government calls on these organizations when it seeks to change regulations, such as the DAVP's advertisement pricing discussed previously. There is limited participation in these groups from Odishan publications. The second category is trade unions. These have been very active in Odisha in waves since Independence, and they exist at district and state as well as national level. The top two unions are the Orissa Union of Journalists, which is affiliated with the National Union of Journalists, and the Utkal Journalists Association which is affiliated with the (national) Indian Federation of Working Journalists. The *Samaja* is the only local paper in which its employees have organized their own trade union. A handful of the state's districts also have unions, including Bolangir, Keonjhar, and Ganjam, some of which are affiliated with the state-level unions. During my research Odisha's journalist unions functioned largely as social clubs and professional conference hosts, overwhelmingly promoting the same discourses of professionalism and ethical commitments that I describe in this chapter.

The third form of organization is what we could call activist organizations. At the national level, the People's Union for Civil Liberties has been significant, and it has had an Odisha

chapter since its inception in 1981; one of its founding members was the publisher of Odia-language daily *Pragatavadi*, Pradyumna Bal. The Network of Women in Media (NWMI) is a national organization affiliated with Bangalore-based journalist and activist, Manu Joseph, that holds yearly conferences (I attended the 2007 conference in Bangalore). The small Odisha chapter (about 12 in 2007) was not especially active during my research, though its members were friends and saw each other regularly outside of official activities.

During my research, one of the most active organizations involving Bhubaneswar's journalists was the Media Unity for Freedom of Press. The following 2011 self-description of the work of the activist group Media Unity for a Free Press or MUFP, published in a pamphlet about the organization, shows how the concept of vested interests is at the center of their project:

A major reason behind the spurt in attacks on media persons is the state government's growing intolerance of any view that does not toe the government line on corporate and mining interests—particularly those dealing in precious metals like iron ore and bauxite. These companies, we are told, will usher in 'rapid development', create enormous employment opportunities and make Odisha a land of milk and honey. There is a concerted effort to manufacture consensus on the need to roll out the red carpet to these companies and turn a blind eye to their flagrant violation of all laws and norms of civilized corporate behavior. When media persons refuse to buy this line and raise questions on the acts of omission and commission by the government and the corporates, the wrath of the government falls on them like a ton of bricks. There are many instances where the police have actively colluded with vested interest groups and slapped concocted charges against scribes who dare to question the powers that be.

With the rapid growth of media profitability in the last ten years, this haunting of commerce by Odisha's perpetual underdevelopment has led to a split in the field of locally-produced media between commercial media and media that presents itself as anti-commercial—"alternative", "grassroots", "for the people." While the self-styled alternative media represents a very small

portion of Odisha's actual media organizations—there are only a handful—their moral presence is disproportionately significant. The arguments of the alternative press hook into widespread concerns about commerce and profit-motives that have a long political history in Nehruvian democratic socialism but which have found new life given the rising multinational mining interests and discourses about vested interest corruption in Odisha.

Samadrusti began publication in 2006. The semimonthly publication is published on a white paper folio that stands, when closed, slightly larger than an A4 sheet. Being neither made of newsprint nor folded like a newspaper, yet not having a separate cover paper like a magazine, its difference from other Odia-language serial publications is embodied in its very form. The covers are typically line drawings or a single black and white image with text beside it; the masthead is the only typical colored section of the publication. These differences underline the distinction that *Samadrusti* claims for itself in terms of content and production organization. Rather than accidents, crimes, or political scandals, *Samadrusti*'s leading news focuses on social problems related to poverty, industrialization, uneven development, rural violence, and activism—"issues." Editorials and opinion pieces adopt an explicitly "pro-people" stand that is critical of industrialization, politics, and the government.

Like Odisha's other small media that increasingly identify as "alternative," *Samadrusti* is founded on a critical comparison of "corporate" media and "independent" media. In an interview with the editor, Sudhir Patnaik, he explained that funding is at the heart of the differences: daily newspapers are expensive to produce, but the newsstand price only pays about ten percent of that cost, and so the media houses rely on advertising. "It is the corporate who funds the newspaper

who runs the newspaper,” he said in English. By contrast, his publication doesn’t subsidize its price with advertising, but asks the reader to pay the full cost. Most importantly, his publication employs several schemes to circulate the publication in rural areas, in “the villages,” including gift subscriptions whereby urban and foreign readers can pay for its circulation in rural, poor areas. Patnaik explained:

We, the so-called ‘alternative publications,’ are actually covering 85% of the people—we are reader-supported media; we are the mainstream media. The corporate media are only for 2-5% of the people... moreover, they are quickly losing the love and affection of readers across the state because of their alliance with these corporate interests. Ethically they are in a weaker position. With us, the readers and editorial staff together create ethics—we must conform to the requirements set by our readers—our readers hold you to it. The people own it.

In this statement, Sudhir Patnaik draws attention to the role of commercialization in interrupting Odia-language newspapers claims to representing Odia people, and especially the peasantry, the “people.” In this account, rather than providing a service to the people of Odisha, profit-seeking prevents the daily newspapers from speaking to for the main body of the people.

We can see, both in his criticisms and in his publication’s innovations, a robust working theory of ethics with participation at its center. Much like the “mainstream” daily newspapers, Satya’s publication seeks an identity between the publication and “the people.” Both map an identity between the publication’s addressees and those it writes about through its content. But whereas the daily newspapers described above seek to achieve this identity by drawing on the participation roles of *sebā*, substances of regional belonging, or entrepreneurial and aspirational projections of “the people” to motivate sales, Satya’s working theory of the people presumes a different orientation. Several aspects of the publication assert that its coverage of people’s

movements and environmental issues are precisely because it's readers, "the people," are not the class-aspirational subjects of the dailies but instead those very same people who are described in the articles: those whose low-cost houses are threatened by cyclones, whose subsistence rice paddy harvests depend on rainwater, or whose homes are at risk of destruction by a multinational mining conglomerate. Yet this ideal reader who is of "the people" would likely not be able to purchase the publication, and so the free circulation of the newspaper in villages and rural centers of activism is made possible by those readers who do pay for subscriptions, and especially by those who purchase "guest subscriptions."

While claiming solidarity across all participant roles, this model of subscription donation institutes a difference, an inequality, into the premise of reader solidarity, a move that resembles the models of service adopted by mainstream dailies. More elite readers become the patrons of the impoverished but ideal readers. Indeed, as the section of Odisha that is literate expands rapidly and geographically, this subscription model can be seen as a *sebā* of the old literate class offering a patronizing hand to the new. Yet the difference in the service model between *Samadrusti* and the mainstream media is that it becomes such well-off readers themselves, rather than the publication, who are the patrons or servants of the poor in the case of Satya's publication. Among the largely upper caste/class journalists with whom I spoke about this publication, this patronage model served as a convincing sign of *Samadrusti*'s commitment to producing journalism for the people.

Another feature noted by local journalists who talked to me about *Samadrusti* and other alternative media was the publications' reliance on cover price rather than advertisements. They

saw this as cutting out the risk to authorship that advertisers pose in a commercial model. Other journalists remarked the production model itself, which relies not on staff journalists but on writers, activists, and scholars with a commitment to “issues.” The result of this model is that even authorship itself is distributed across those whom it writes about and writes for. The eclipse of Authorship through solidarity and the constructed distribution of agency of all participants was reflected in Sudhir Patnaik’s very refusal to adopt a comfortable biographical narrative during our interview. When my questions took for granted his own agency in the production of the publication, he resisted, undercutting the questions in order to destabilize my own assumptions about authorship.

There is an irony in the Odishan projects to counter the corrupting influences of vested interests, which are to some degree predictable given the pattern of suspicion that I have outlined, which is this: those who are seen as the most sincere and least likely to be corrupted can be celebrated for this reputation. The effect can be deleterious on their ability to be sincere, for such celebration is not far from co-optation by exactly the vested interests the activist sought to resist. These critical-of-commercialism positions are not limited to the “alternative media” and sometimes find expression in the Odia-language daily columns and English-language local coverage, but such positions are not usually identified with the publishing newspaper in those instances.²⁴ While not technically affiliated to ongoing resistance movements (not the official publicity arm, etc.), some working in the alternative media have come to represent a perspective

²⁴ There are exceptions: the English-language national daily the *Hindu* is locally seen as critical of commercialism, perhaps thanks to its local bureau chief, and in Odia, *Suryaprava*, *Odisha Bhaskar* and *Anumpam Bharat* could also be seen as critical. But they were still not included when people talked about the “alternative or grassroots media,” likely because both their form (daily newspapers) and organization (private ownership) still looked like commercial newspapers.

critical of rapid industrialization and mining that is highly valued within the commercial media. These representatives are both accessible to the commercial media and yet have the authenticity to speak on the behalf of resistance movements. Thus, for instance, a large daily newspaper talking about an ongoing protest at the Posco site might seek a generally critical or evaluative quote from one of the outspoken critics from the alternative media. The diagramming of ethical positions—and participation structures—onto the coverage of certain “issues” or topics can produce the “alternative media” journalist as an expert whose opinion can be sought and reproduced. This transformation into an expert is remarkably close to branding, and some journalist-activists seem to be quite wary of the process. There is now reticence among some of Odisha’s journalist-activists to speak publicly about their work, lest the same suspicions that plague Odisha’s mainstream newspapers turn their way.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the ethical self-presentations of newspapers in early twenty-first century Odisha. I have focused on three dominant ethical constructions performed by Odisha’s major newspapers: *sebā* or service, linguistic-regional belonging, and business growth. Though I have described the ideals in relationship to particular newspapers, in fact each newspaper draws on these three ethical frames at various times (though the *Samaja* is the least likely to draw on business growth). Uniting these three ethical frames is their answer to the question of ‘for whom’ the newspaper is produced: the people. But each ethical frame constructs a different

understanding of the people and the relationship between readers and said people. The service frame draws on a twin construction of the readers as those being served and, as patrons of the paper, as those doing the service to Odisha's poor; at the height of ethical construction, the poor of Odisha are valorized, like Gods, dependent on their servants and unable to care for themselves. The frame of linguistic belonging seeks solidarity based on shared substances of language (and blood) that are prior to the act of newspaper reading itself; the branding activities of *Sambad* thus seek to construct a readership for itself immanent in the very nature of being Odia. The ethical frame of business growth projects Odisha into the global consumerist future, drawing on signs of youth and mobility through entrepreneurialism and elite education. This version of the people is capacious because it is aspirational: it includes people not by who they are now but by who they would like to be in the future. Finally, the emergence of media in Odisha that explicitly claims to produce people's media suggests a growing doubt or suspicion about the ability of the dominant newspapers to reach the real people of Odisha. One of the notable features of this new media, represented here by *Samadrusti*, is precisely its claim to being alternative to the dominate press. Small newspapers in Odisha have long emerged out of explicit dissatisfaction with the state of existing newspapers or political scene; now, however, these new small-scale media differentiate themselves through production styles as well as political affiliations. In the next chapter, I turn to look in detail at newspaper production practices in Bhubaneswar and their ethical interpretations.

Chapter II

The Object of Writing

This chapter addresses what many journalists, in eastern India and elsewhere in the world, see as the heart of the print journalists' work: news writing itself. In the last chapter I described the overarching frames that newspapers and journalists draw on to assert that their work is ethical. In this chapter I turn to a consideration of news production practices themselves as contested moral ground in contemporary Bhubaneswar's newsrooms. In other words, while the last chapter looked at ethical frames at the scale of institutions and political reputations, this chapter looks at ethical frames around activities that cross institutions. This chapter seeks to balance local evaluative and explanatory talk about news writing with field observations of news writing practice.

Prakash, the journalist we met in the Introduction, has been deeply concerned about the morality of journalistic writing. During my fieldwork, Prakash was a freelancer for English-language publications and had long been struggling to find a satisfactory news staff position. In his mid-thirties when we met, his underemployment had been preventing him from getting married and was thereby causing him and his patrilineal family great anguish. He saw himself as

an activist-writer—his writing *was* his activism, he had told me early in our friendship—and so he only wanted work that would involve covering “people’s issues”. Prakash’s friends and family, including myself, were delighted when one of the local Odia-language newspapers began an English-language edition as a marketing innovation in 2011 (after my formal fieldwork) and immediately hired Prakash as their “human rights beat” reporter.²⁵ But several months later he had already quit the newspaper. They had expected him to file an average of three articles per day. “And that was because of my reputation,” he explained, “for others, it’s four!” Prakash felt that this schedule had prevented him from doing the kind of research and thinking that “real human rights reporting” requires. He explained that in “real” (read: national, non-Odishaan owned) English newspapers, there is proper respect given to research and writing, but not in “these local newspapers.” He glossed the problem dismissively as “commercialism”; in another casual conversation later, when I brought his quitting up again to understand better why he had quit, he remarked that the newspaper itself had been “totally unprofessional.” Writing for the Odishaan-owned newspaper had prevented him from doing the writing that had the potential to “make a difference.” “What’s the point of work like this,” he had demanded of me rhetorically during another conversation in 2012. Before I could reply that there would obviously be financial value, he put his head in his hands and exclaimed, “But what will I do now! I’ll never be able to afford to get married!”

This chapter investigates the understanding of writing itself such that Prakash quit what his friends and family thought was a great job because it didn’t allow him to do the writing that he

²⁵ These events occurred after the conclusion of my official fieldwork, and the conversation reported here occurred over video chat.

felt he should do in the way that it should be done. This conflict echoed across Bhubaneswar's newsrooms during my research between 2007 and 2010: the feeling that there was an ideal sort of work or writing to be doing, and then there was the writing that one must actually do—usually in order to get paid. Some complained about this distinction after their work in newsrooms, others opted-out of newsroom work and sought work on the margins of media production. I explore how, enfolded within concerns about the kind of writing that is valuable, there are a series of conflicting understandings about what writing itself is and should be. To explore this ambivalence or conflict, I look at the process of producing readable media in Bhubaneswar as a series of objectifications of writing itself, drawing on prior analyses of the materiality of language. I am especially interested in the conflict that Prakash experienced between the writing he believes he should be doing and the complaints of both “unprofessionalism” and “commercialism.”

I explore the question of how writing is a moral concern through a discussion of routine writing tasks in Bhubaneswar's newsrooms and how they are recognized and explained by Odisha's journalists in informal conversations and interviews. I propose to understand the newsroom, the organization of labor, and the talk about production practices as forms of objectification through which certain activities become identifiable as writing. The understanding of objectification that I'm working with comes out of work on the materiality of discourse over the last twenty-five years, including Bauman and Briggs' (Bauman and Briggs 1990) discussion of entextualization as the social process by which a segment of text becomes recognizable as such. I directly draw on Keane's (Keane 2003, 2006) account of objectification

as an elementary semiotic process by which a series of interpretive contexts determine how an object comes to exist.

To give a better sense of what I mean by the objectification of writing, rather than writing as objectification, we can look at the example of composition instruction in US colleges. The field of US college composition studies has, over the last thirty years, shifted its focus from the “products” of composition writing to the “process”, a transformation in the objectification of writing that has changed how college education is understood, practiced, and evaluated. Writing about “the process approach,” John Trimbur (2000) has argued that the focus on process did not change the objectification of writing enough. Trimbur’s example is basic enough: when students have technical issues that prevent them from turning in work on time, he typically tells them that these issues do not constitute an excuse—because the assignment is to *write* and the technical issues are external to and separate from the act of composition, and therefore they should have found another way to meet the deadline. Trimbur argues that by making these mundane distinctions between writing and its technical embodiments, composition instructors are isolating what rhetoricians have called “delivery”—the materiality of writing—from “invention, arrangement, and style” (Trimbur 2000, 189). In the context of the US college classroom, this process, which we might call purification (Latour 1993 [1991]), is in part the result of how instructors are expected to take on the role of (middle-class, professional) parent, especially in calling on the students to “make accounts of themselves” (Trimbur 2000, 207). In contrast, Trimbur calls for seeing writing itself through Marx’s understanding of use-value and exchange-value in the *Grundrisse*, which, he argues, would bring all of circulation into the purview of the

composition classroom. In the analytical language of this chapter, Trimbur is arguing that rather than objectifying writing as the invention of materially-purified linguistic forms that sincerely communicate the inner state of the student, composition classes should objectify writing by focusing students on the circulation of language between people in materially determined ways.²⁶ What I want this discussion of Trimbur's argument to demonstrate is how writing itself, the act of writing, can be defined in different ways, as different kinds of things, by the social practices around it (in this case, the college composition classroom).

Trimbur's use of Marx demonstrates the contrasting perspectives of writing common within the United States' universities, as either ideal or material, spirit or economy. This chapter has a similar project, to show the contrasting perspectives on writing among Bhubaneswar's journalists. However, rather than two, I describe three and briefly indicate several others; just as there are many ways for newspapers in Odisha to construct themselves as ethical, there are also many ways by which their news production practices themselves are recognized as a practice. Because of this plurality, Marx's dialectal account of production is methodologically restrictive in this case, even as market exchange is one of the objectifying²⁷ processes of news writing in

²⁶ One exercise to achieve this asks students to "translate" medical journal articles into popular press accounts, which focuses students on expertise as economic value as well as helps them to see texts as existing within a chain of texts.

²⁷ Despite sympathy for Kockleman's (2007) project to join a Peircian theory of semiotic process with a Marxian theory of value, I find it useful to distinguish between a Marxist account of objectification and a semiotic one (which I use here). For Marxists, objectification describes the separation of a person from the use-values of her labor through the misrecognition of that labor as being defined by its exchange-value; in short, commodification. As described above, the semiotic definition treats objectification as a description of the process by which some phenomenon is rendered recognizable as a component of a semiotic process. This approach treats commodification as a subset of [semiotic] objectification processes. There is also a third definition of objectification in use in anthropology, associated with the work of Marilyn Strathern, who uses it to describe "the manner in which persons and things are construed

Odisha. The three interpretations (or regimentations) of writing that I concentrate on in this chapter can be heuristically distinguished as commercial, professional, and filial or local social relations.

Haunting the production of news in Bhubaneswar is a form of writing that is largely not practiced, which shares key features with what literary historians call “romantic authorship” (Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994), especially the focus on a singular author’s creative originality. Romantic authorship grew out of late eighteenth century German literary circles, as poets, printers, and lawyers worked together to explicitly prevent publishers from printing texts without license (Woodmansee 1984; Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994). It is a conception of production that lies behind much copyright law. Romantic authorship has been profoundly influential on the South Asian subcontinent, thanks in part to the valorization of literature in the production of a certain classed British subjectivity (Viswanathan 1987). Comparing British India to Gramsci’s discussion of cultural domination, Gauri Viswanathan writes that colonial India’s “checkered history of cultural confrontation conferred a sense of urgency to voluntary cultural assimilation as the most effective form of political action” (Viswanathan 1989, 2). According to Viswanathan, as colonial education and political force established European literary authorship as a highly valued orthodoxy that relied on racial criteria, authorship itself became a longed-for enactment of political subjectivity that was constantly destabilized by European racial assumptions. Literary, original authorship was constructed in such a way as to make it desirable but also impossible for non-Europeans to enact. Authors of India’s colonial and postcolonial

as having value” (Strathern 1988, 176). This understanding of objectivity could be productively applied to this chapter though I do not claim to do so here, on the grounds that semiotic recognition and the construal of value are not necessarily the same thing.

literature often innovated new forms of writing from various subaltern positions. According to Satya Mohanty (2011), in Odisha early novelistic innovations were characterized, formally, by irony, experiments in voicing, experiments in narrative order, code-switching, topical focus, and forms of mimicry. Yet the pull of romantic authorship has not lessened. In Odisha, it is especially evident in the popularity of Odia-language romantic poetry. Indeed, poetry authorship is so popular that one esteemed literary scholar in Bhubaneswar made an excellent joke out of warning me from talking to Odia bureaucrats—because they would not let me escape before I had sufficiently appreciated their poetry.

The organization of Odisha's newsrooms, however, largely undercuts claims to romantic authorship—in Goffman's terms, it undercuts the identification between the Animator, the Author, and the Principal. And what it does allow to exist can be understood in multiple ways. Thanks to indeterminacies in the objectification of writing, many interpretations of writing co-exist, though not without some conflict. The first section of this chapter describes the contexts that regiment how newspaper writing is interpreted as commercial, professional, and filial or locally social writing. I begin with an overview of the institutional transitions involved with the growth in circulations and an overview of the context of professionalism established by the national level Press Commissions and Press Council.

I then examine news production routines. First, I describe the location and spatial organization of the newsroom. I then describe newsroom activities, focusing on the division of writing labor and how it ideologically diagrams corporate hierarchies onto linguistic function while quietly drawing on social hierarchies. Third, I describe prevalent and metapragmatically

identified types of reproduction that preserve linguistic forms across communicative instances, focusing on the features of these reproductions that are apprehended locally as the most problematic. Finally, I focus on voice, which I propose that we see, following Voloshinov, as itself a kind of reproduction. This perspective on voice is especially relevant in Odisha because texts are routinely read for signs of their social histories. I seek to show that writing, in Odishan news production, can be read as generalized participation in an abstract community of professionals, as capitalistic alienation of labor, or as a potentially corrupt embedding in local social relations.

The Press Council and the Institution of Professional Ethics

The ambiguous character of newspaper production that I explore in this chapter is not only a local situation. Regulations of newspapers as an industry in the post-independence period saw the pivotal reimagining of the categories, values, and roles of the press for the new democracy, but such reimagining was often contested. A central concern of this reimagining was the relationship between the press and commercial industry. Much of this was worked out through the first and second Press Commissions, and the development of the Press Council as the self-regulating body of the national press. Tax laws have also been a profound but understudied aspect of this balance.

Shortly after Independence, prominent members of the Central Government formed a Press Commission to review the position of the press and its needs under Bombay High Court Justice

G.S. Rajadhyaksha, who had served on several industrial inquiry commissions. Several concerns led to this Commission. The method of convening Commissions to research problems related to governance was itself a British legacy which the Indian leadership had adopted with gusto in the transition to Independence (Kumar 1976: xiv). In 1952, India adopted the Commissions of Inquiry Act, which detailed the specific process by which Commissions were rendered legitimate and authoritative, and progressive legislation in post-Independence India routinely relied on such public inquiries. The Commission's dominant questions were about the role of newspapers vis-à-vis business and political interests, and how the government could legislate to shape newspapers in consonance with the Constitutional goal of democracy. It is useful to remember that Nehru's limited economic socialism was assumed by most in the Congress-controlled government to be the economic arrangement most conducive to democracy. Following the established pattern, the Press Commission conducted research by mailing surveys nationally to editors, publishers, journalist unions, civil society institutions, and political representatives, and in 1953 the Commission convened in a series of metropolitan areas to "record evidence" from associations and unions related to newspaper production. The Commission's inquiries resulted in a list of recommendations, many of which produced legislative innovations in press regulation over the following twenty years.

In 1956, the Central Government adopted the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956, which sought to limit "unfair competition among newspapers so that newspapers may have fuller opportunities of freedom of expression." The Press Commission had recommended this legislation exactly, explaining its need thus:

The newspapers serve as media for the free exchange of information and of ideas. The proper functioning of democracy requires that every individual should have equal opportunity, in so far as this can be achieved to put forward his opinions. Measures should therefore be adopted to reduce the differences due to economic advantages or other causes and to enable newcomers to start with a fair chance of achieving success. (Report of the Press Commission 1952)

This Act gave the Central Government the right to “make an order providing for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their maximum or minimum number of pages, sizes or areas and for the space to be allotted for advertising matter in relation to other matters therein.”

One of the outcomes of the first Press Commission was the 1966 establishment of an independent national Press Council²⁸, designed as a body comprised of judges and industry members who would be able to manage the ethical breaches of the Indian Press without involving the courts, thereby avoiding governmental impingement on the rights of the free press. The Press Council has three main functions. First, it has a hearing process for managing complaints about breaches in journalistic ethics involving newspapers and magazines or about breaches of journalistic autonomy (from the government especially). Second, it undertakes investigations in events involving the violation of press freedoms, such as attacks on journalists. Third, it publishes recommendations regarding ethical behavior of the press.

For its hearing process, the Press Council accepts complaints from the public or from publishers. After receiving the complaint, the Council requests follow-up information from the complainant, and then sets a date for a hearing. An Enquiry Committee meets in different locations around the country throughout the year, hearing cases in locations that are often

²⁸ The Council was abolished during the Emergency and reestablished afterwards.

regionally central; in 2007, the Enquiry Committee met in Bhubaneswar and heard cases from Bihar, Jharkhand, and Bengal in addition to Odisha. The Press Council does not have judicial powers—it is not able to punish or enforce its recommendations—its powers are limited to admonishment and recommendation. Complainants and those they have accused are invited to meet with the Committee, though the Committee has no ability to require attendance. Similarly, while the investigative reports issued by the Press Council might influence press coverage of an incident, they have no legal standing. These self-motivated investigations have produced reports on Ayodhya (1993), on AIDS and the media (1993), on reporting on women (1996), and on favors to journalists (1998); such reports often result in recommendations for best practices, such as reporting during communal conflicts, that are added to the published recommendations.

The Press Council's publication of ethical norms has had a significant impact on journalism in Odisha. The first series of ethical publications were developed in the 1980s and these led to the 1992 publication of the *Guide to Journalistic Ethics*. Revised and published in a new edition in 2010, the guide provides a list of best practices in general language that have become an accepted standard of journalistic professionalism. To my knowledge they have been published only in Hindi and English, and in Odisha I saw them circulating in English. The majority of the rules focus on the relationship between media producers and non-producers.

Some of the guidelines are focused on production procedures. For example:

8. Recording interviews and phone conversation

- i) The Press shall not tape-record anyone's conversation without that person's knowledge or consent, except where the recording is necessary to protect the journalist in a legal action, or for other compelling good reason.
- ii) The Press shall, prior to publication, delete offensive epithets used during such conversation.

The ethical guidelines also speak to broader issues of representation, institutional practice, and managing the interests of conflicting parties. For example, several of the norms speak to the issue of defamation, including the degree of privacy that public officials can expect (none with regard to the functioning of their duties), the grounds for determining journalistic negligence, and the use of temperate language. Overall, the norms paint a picture of a neutral, disinterested, discerning, and autonomous press. The guidelines on the relationship between the press and public institutions, a subsection on the guidelines on defamation, captures the quality of the entire document when it advises:

Newspapers should refrain from barbed, stinging and pungent language and ironical/satirical style of comment. The attempt of the press should be to so shake up the institutions as to improve their working, not to destroy them or the public confidence in their working or demoralize the workforce. A corresponding duty of course devolves on them to ensure that in doing so they present a fair and balanced report, uninfluenced by any extraneous consideration. The Press as a custodian of public interest and a protector of its rights is also expected to bring correct information to its notice so that it is able to correctly judge those to whom it has entrusted the responsibility of running the country.

These norms and the general discourse of professional restraint paired with great responsibility as a public protector are routinely taught in journalism programs in Odisha—even journalism programs without developed practical components—and journalists’ statements to me about what “should” be done frequently echoed the Press Council guidelines without explicitly citing them.

The Press Council’s ethical norms say a great deal specifically about managing the relationship between commercialism and the free press. The directly relevant sections are those commenting on “crass commercialism” (Norm 28), advertisements (Norm 36), and “Manager-

Editor relationship (Norm 37A). These norms speak to lofty ideals and offer a few concrete practices; they also note that the “unethical character” of commercialism depends on “the circumstances of each case.” For example:

28. Newspapers to avoid crass commercialism

- i) While newspapers are entitled to ensure, improve or strengthen their financial viability by all legitimate means, the Press shall not engage in crass commercialism or unseemly cut-throat commercial competition with their rivals in a manner repugnant to high professional standards and good taste.
- ii) Predatory price wars/trade competition among newspapers, laced with tones disparaging the products of each other, initiated and carried on in print, assume the colour of unfair 'trade' practice, repugnant to journalistic ethics. The question as when it assumes such an unethical character, is one of the facts depending on the circumstances of each case.
- iii) The practice of taking security deposit by an editor from the journalists at the time of their appointment is unethical.
- (iv) The media house must retain its impartiality in functioning as media house and reporting cannot be permitted to become subservient to other business interests which the owner of the media house may have when such private interest conflict with public duty of such vast magnitude segregation of the two is not only justified but essential.

The general point of the guidelines on commercial activity and profit is that profit-motives constitute a threat to the editorial imperative. Editorial objectives must be pursued independently of the commercial interests of the newspaper, and these competing interests (professional ethics and profit) must be balanced within an institution by the organizational autonomy of the editorial staff from the business/managerial staff.

Income Tax Laws Structuring Newspaper Organizations

Before turning to an overview of circulation practices in Odisha, I briefly describe in this section a set of regulations that have received little to no attention in the literature on the Indian

newspaper industry: tax law. Income tax laws have been a significant player in shaping the actual form newspapers take in their pursuit of profit. But whereas commerce and profit are complications for journalistic ethics, it is the ethical imperatives of journalism that are complications for tax law. Newspapers in India have been sticky financial objects for tax law since the 1930s, when three Sikh lawyers running a Lahore newspaper, which had been left to them in trust by a well-respected public figure 35 years prior, sought tax-exempt status for the newspaper's income on the claim that all of the income was used to support the newspaper's activities. The colonial Tax Commissioner at the time remarked that it "will be very difficult to say whether the running of a newspaper is an object of general public utility" (quoted in *Trustees of Tribune Press v. The Commissioner of Income-Tax*, 1939 41 BOMLR 1150), encapsulating the position of the income tax laws and legal decisions since then. In the case of the Lahore newspaper, the British Colonial Court ruled that the English-language newspaper did qualify as tax exempt, citing that "the object of the paper may fairly be described as 'the object of supplying the Province with an organ of educated public opinion', and that it should prima facie be held to be an object of general public utility."

In 1961-2, the Income Tax Act [ITA] reshaped taxation of individuals and corporations, including exemptions through the organization of charitable trusts. The 1961 ITA introduced the overarching clause that business enterprises may be included within the activities of charitable trusts without losing exemption, but then it added a restriction limited to those charitable trusts whose purpose is only "general public utility" that they must exclude "the carrying on of any activity for profit" (ITA Section 2(15), see also Direct Taxes Code Bill of 2009, page 29). This

created a sizable gap between charitable purposes focused on “relief of the poor, education, and medical relief” and those dedicated to the “general public utility.” Then-Finance Minister Morarji Desai, explained this new restriction to the taxation of charitable trusts precisely as a problem of newspapers:

"The definition of charitable purpose in that clause is at present so widely worded that it can be taken advantage of even by commercial concerns which, while ostensibly serving a public purpose, get fully paid for the benefits provided by them, namely, the newspaper industry which while running its concern on commercial lines can claim that by circulating newspapers it was improving the general knowledge of the public. In order to prevent the misuse of this definition in such cases, the Select Committee felt that the word not involving the carrying on of any activity for profit should be added to the definition."

This speech was quoted in subsequent legal judgments as the context for interpreting the meaning of the ITA[1] (see also the Direct Taxes Code Bill of 2009, pages 27-55). Among post-ITA charitable trust legal decisions, the case of *Sole Trustee, Lok Shikshana Trust v. Commissioner of Income Tax*, 1976 AIR 10, is the most relevant. The Lok Shikshana Trust was entirely devoted to the support of Kannada-language publications, including the publication of a Kannada-language newspaper; the Trust argued that its charitable purpose was, first, education, but that if in the Court’s eyes it did not qualify as educational, its purpose of “general public utility” still qualified it for tax-exemption because it was not operated “for profit” as interpreted as “private gain.” The Court majority opinion ruled against Lok Shikshana Trust, determining that “for profit” did not mean “for private gain” and that, therefore, all that the Court must do is determine the “carrying on of activities for profit.” In his widely cited independent opinion, Justice Beg detailed the incoming and outgoing monies of the Trust, including its growing investments, and described its operation by the sole Trustee as one that operated exactly like a

profit-oriented business. He concluded that this organization was an exemplar of exactly that “mischief” which the Finance Minister had sought to manage in his proposal of the ITA’s restrictions regarding profit by charitable trusts in 1961.

The implications of the 1961 Income Tax Act’s restrictions for Odishan newspapers may be seen in a judgment about the charitable trust owning the Odia-language newspaper *Dharitri*, *Samajbadi Society v. Assistant CIT*, 2001 79ITD112Ctk. In 2000, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal [ITAT] for Odisha, based in Cuttack, considered the charitable status of the Samajbadi Society after the Society appealed a report by Odisha’s Commissioner (Appeals) of Income Tax. In a routine review of years 1974-5 and 1982-3, a reviewer had flagged concerns about the Samajbadi Society’s qualification for tax exemption. The earlier Commissioner’s report concluded that there should be no tax-exempt status for the Samajbadi Society based on it not actually functioning as a charitable trust. In contradiction to the Commissioner’s opinion, the ITAT held that the operation of a profitable enterprise would not by itself prevent an organization from being charitable. The pivotal issue was, instead, that “the profits must necessarily feed a charitable purpose.” To the point of determining the nature and fact of this “charitable purpose”, the ITAT judgment quotes several discussions of the difference between charity and profit-motive at length from *Loka Shikshana Trust*. On the issue of the relationship between profit-motive and charitable purpose, the ITAT concludes:

Profit making must be the end to which the activity must be directed or in other words, predominant object of the activity must be making of profit. Where an activity is not pervaded by profit motive but is carried on primarily for serving the charitable purpose, it would not be correct to describe it as an activity for profit. But where, on the other hand, an activity is carried on with the predominant object of earning profit, it would be an activity for profit, though it may be carried on in

advancement of the charitable purpose of the trust or institution. Where an activity is carried on as a matter of advancement of the charitable purpose or for the purpose of carrying out the charitable purpose, it would not be incorrect to say as a matter of plain English grammar that the charitable purpose involves the carrying on of such activity, but the predominant object of such activity must be to subserve the charitable purpose and not to earn profit. The charitable purpose should not be submerged by the profit making motive; the latter should not masquerade under the guise of the former.

In the case of the Samajbadi Society, the ITAT concluded that “[the activity of the profit and the activity of the trust] are intermixed and interest to such an extent that it is difficult to bifurcate the two. One is not possible without the other.” Therefore, though the Samajbadi Society fulfilled the requirements of a charitable society in purpose, in practice it did not qualify for tax exemption in the years under consideration.

The language governing the taxation of charitable trusts has been changed numerous times since its first revision in 1984, though each change has built on the assumptions found in the case law seeking to limit those profitable activities qualifying as tax-exempt. In the Finance Act, 2008, this was expanded dramatically, barring all exemptions for charitable societies whose purpose is the “advancement of any other object of general public utility.” At a time when there was a broad global- and national-level push toward philanthropy and especially toward self-supporting (rather than grant-supported) aid organizations, the Finance Act of 2008 generated outrage. A common complaint is that, now, a large number of charitable organizations with obvious charitable intents²⁹ no longer qualify for tax exempt status. Following significant

²⁹ “The effect of the same may well be that institutions to promote Gandhian ideal of ahimsa, promotion of arts and music, promotion of language and literature, community centres, promotion of safe driving and road sense, animal welfare, promotion of sports, widow marriage, running a public park, running a newspaper, promotion of civic consciousness and promotion of research falling under the object of general public utility will all lose exemption, if they charge fees for some minor service or sell booklets

criticism, subsequent amendments have enabled allowances for certain amounts of profit. A profound shift in tax law is forthcoming with the imminent repeal of the 1961 ITA and its replacement by the Direct Tax Code sometime in 2013-4. Circulated in draft form in 2009, the Direct Tax Code will change the name of “charitable trusts and institutions” to “non-profit organization,” but otherwise it is currently set to reproduce the categories and restrictions of the Finance Act, 2008 (Rajaratnam 2010). Though there may have been some ambiguity in the 1961 ITA, it is now clear that there is no longer any charitable tax-exemption available for organizations whose main purpose is the production of publications in any language. Organizations who can demonstrate that their general goals include the relief of poverty, education, and medical relief may, however, claim tax-exempt status for their newspaper income, as in the case of the Servants of the People Society’s publication of the *Samaja*. This arguably marks the legal end of an era in which the promotion of the Indian public and its languages is itself seen as charitable, though we have yet to see how the Courts will manage the restrictions presented in these new laws. The overarching point of this discussion of tax laws is to point out that ambiguity or indeterminacy experienced in news production practices is mirrored on the national scale. While newspapers have been the focus of attempts to regulate their corporate activities and to discipline their journalistic activities on the basis of the threat of profit-motives to their functioning, tax laws have simultaneously been pushing newspapers into corporate, non-tax-exempt status.

pertaining to such objects, though incidental to such objects. The entire income including income from investments would also be liable for tax.” (Rajaratnam 2010)

Commercial Growth in Odisha

As discussed in the previous chapter, the transition of Odisha's newspapers from loss to profitability—locally described as modernization and professionalization—began with changes in the mid-1980s. These changes involved shifts in technology and in the organization of labor, but neither of these would have generated profit without the new focus on circulation.

The movement of circulation to center of the newspaper industry began much earlier elsewhere in India, especially in major cities. The Audit Bureau of Circulations was established by a group of metropolitan advertisers in 1948, shortly after Independence, to produce reliable numbers of newspapers sold to help attract advertisers (see also Jeffrey 2000). ABC's numbers are established through audits by independent, contracted accountants, and rely on member organizations maintaining records according to the ABC's requirements. To be included in the ABC's circulation audits, the publications must be registered with the central government and be members of the Indian Newspaper Society [INS]—only 14 of Odisha's newspapers are members of the INS as of 2014 (Society).

One of the challenges of the Indian circulation context was the tendency of newspaper readers to read together, sometimes aloud to groups of people, and then pass the newspapers on to someone else—something that is now called the Readers Per Copy average. European and American assumptions about single or household readership did not translate into the Indian context, resulting in very low circulation numbers. To address this, two Indian advertising associations established the Indian National Readership Survey in 1970, but it was irregularly performed until its re-establishment in 1995 as a partnership of the ABC, the Indian Newspaper

Society, and the Advertising Agencies Association of India. The Indian Readership Survey [IRS] is now performed by international market research firms with, reportedly, a sample size of approximately 200,000 (Economic Times 2004) and a comprehensive account of “over 100 categories of consumer products.” Citing biased survey techniques and insufficient Odisha coverage, *Dharitri* went to court in 2005 to demand removal from the IRS, and since then it has not been included in the reports. In 2008, Odia daily *Pragatibadi* similarly filed a case on the basis of the newspaper having already forbid the IRS from using its name and masthead in any of its materials. *Pragatibadi*'s argument hinged on the IRS number itself, which was lower than the ABC certified circulation number. Though the 2013 survey has provoked national complaints, the Odishan complaints echoed broader concerns about being marginalized nationally.

In Odisha, the new focus on circulation has produced a dramatic increase in both rural circulation and rural coverage, both of which have required new infrastructural developments. Nationally this trend has been called “localization,” though in Odisha it was often referred to simply as “modernization.” The infrastructure that developed has consisted, primarily, of a vast set of middlemen, but also trucks (mostly on contract), bicycles, phones, small-shop signs, and account ledgers. Newspapers manage the infrastructure differently: *Dharitri*, for instance, employs exclusive contracts with its distributors, who also become its local advertising sales staff; in other words, they are *Dharitri* agents (and are usually called “agents”). This organization encourages single agents to work on larger scales, employing and contracting with more labor for the distribution work. Among non-*Dharitri* agents, it is more common is for independent middlemen to contract with multiple newspapers; many do both advertising and distribution.

Typically, in rural Odisha, newspaper distributors also send local news information back to one or several of the newspapers for whom they distribute—working as “stringers”. This makes sense at the local level because the individual becomes identified with a newspaper; the individual is simply the local representative of the organization/s. Since stringers are often unpaid, this multipurpose relationship allows them to be paid through their cut of the distribution. However, from Bhubaneswar, during my research, there was a lot of discomfort with this overlap because it meant that the advertising and news content were being generated by the same person. Some denied that it happened anymore in their own newspaper while others would just shake their heads at “our backwardness.”

One of the revolutionary shifts in Odisha’s newspapers over the last ten years is the spread of multiple editions that are printed in different locations; before that, multiple editions were printed from the main edition headquarters and shipped by train or truck across the state, arriving a day late. Now the distribution of printing presses and the ease of content sharing thanks to network technologies means that dispersed editions can be localized, printed, and circulated, so that even the regions of the state furthest from the capital have a morning newspaper delivery that reflects their own district’s events. However, there are still typically several editions printed from Bhubaneswar/Cuttack headquarters; typically those non-metro editions cover relatively nearby regions through train or truck delivery. For instance, the second-tier newspaper *Bhaskar* has a Berhampur edition that is printed at Bhubaneswar, in part because the train service to Berhampur is so well timed. The scheduling of multiple editions at a single press means that the shipped edition must be printed early in the evening, both so that the press is free in time for the

other editions and so that it is finished in time to meet the train; that edition's layout is set mid-day, drawing on any immediate news submitted by the local Berhampur staff—but primarily the previous day's news. Even among editions printed elsewhere, such as Sambalpur, Rourkela, or Vizag in Andhra Pradesh, the press typically runs before all of the current day's news is submitted at the Metro edition. That said, the edition presses wait on an important story if it is almost finished. As a result, despite the distribution of presses at edition sites around the state, a margin-center relationship is echoed in the timelines of the Odia news: the Bhubaneswar and Cuttack editions typically have newer or faster news than the other editions. As this description demonstrates, the timing of presswork and transportation dictate much about the shape of the labor in the news offices around the state.

Placing the Professional Newsroom in the City

Bhubaneswar stretches about fifteen miles from north to south and about half of that across. There are three main arteries through the center of town, in addition to a ring road that serves most thoroughgoing traffic. During the planning of the city in the 1940s, the government of Odisha had suggested a central square for all of the public buildings, a twin to the Old Town's Lingaraj Temple complex. But Bhubaneswar's German designer Otto Koenigsberger instead placed the capitol complex along a ridge far to the east of the railway station, connecting it by a long road, and then distributed the government buildings among public-use buildings such as a library and an auditorium along a wide avenue (Kalia 1994). Koenigsberger wanted to organized

the city “on the simple device of one main traffic artery to which the neighborhood units [were] attached like the branch of a tree” (Koenigsberger 1960, 7-8, quoted in) assuming that the wide availability of motorized transportation and popular media had made physical interaction in central squares obsolete. Yet most newspapers did not begin publishing from Bhubaneswar until the mid-1970s, before that they were largely still in Cuttack, and there was no municipal public transportation—no buses—until the last months of my fieldwork in 2010. Instead of a modern functional city, until recently Bhubaneswar’s structure failed many of its residents, making their lives more difficult rather than easier.

Though most of the city differs significantly from Koenigsberger’s vision, these three main arteries are differentiated by purpose much in the way the German designer proposed: Janpath, which translates as “the people’s road” is the main commercial thoroughfare; Sachivalaya Marg, though I never heard a single person use that phrase in conversation, is the home of the Capitol complex and several other important public buildings; and Puri-Cuttack Road, the highway between Puri and Cuttack, is light industrial. As occurs across India, small-scale commerce spills across the spaces designed for other purposes. The far edges of the city are home to new industrial parks, affluent high rise developments, and posh shopping malls. The result is a city without a central focus. There is no single public square for gathering or for public speaking and organizing, and this has a profound effect on the relationship between protest speech and the media. The annual Durga Puja procession traverses Janpath, with onlookers and revelers overrunning the roads and gardens in front of the railway station. In the planning of a protest or *dharana*, protestors and demonstrators must decide who it is they want to address: masses of

people involved in commerce, the governor who is assigned to represent the central government in Odisha, or the legislative assembly? Most organized protests addressing the government congregate across from the Governor's house or the Odisha Assembly. Being so far off the commercial road, these locations mean that protestors are not visible to the general city population. The result is that protests— those events that epitomize Article 19 of the Indian Constitution's guarantee of free speech— rely on media coverage to achieve a public audience. Like its assumption of public transportation, Bhubaneswar's very spatial organization presupposes the existence of a free press.

This free press itself also has a spatial character. When a resident travels the approximately four mile length of intensively commercialized Janpath, past the city's original open-air, three story commercial blocks like Ashok Nagar, where small stationaries back up against computer repair, medical supply, and eyeglasses shops, past the railway station and the dusty but manicured gardens before it, and past the large new luxury hotels and glass enclosed malls, that traveler is bombarded with information about newspapers. The most obvious are the billboards, for there is always at least one newspaper billboard at each major intersection, along with billboards for Vedanta Resources or IMFA (minerals companies), private English-medium schools, and Honda motorcycles. These billboards typically flame the wars between the top two Bhubaneswari papers, announcing that *Sambad* is “number 1” or that *Dharitri* is the “preferred choice.”

The other information one learns about newspapers is subtle. Janpath is dotted with the news offices, but only the local editions of English national dailies. *The Telegraph's*, *New Indian*

Express, *Times of India*'s, and *Business Standard*'s offices all announce themselves along Janpath with prominent signs displaying their mastheads. The Odia editions of these papers are all under ten years old. The office of *The Hindu* is in fact still just a bureau for the Vishakhapatnam edition, sent up from Andhra Pradesh and circulating in Bhubaneswar a day late. The prominently displayed newsrooms of these national dailies serve to advertise their brand and associate that brand with the rapid commercial growth of the busy road.

Aside from the billboards, the Odia newspapers are nowhere to be seen on Janpath. Rather than placing themselves in the commercial district, the Odia-language dailies' offices congregate in the city's growing industrial parks. This reflects several features of Odia newspapers. First there is the simple fact that, since they have to produce the entire newspaper and not simply the local pages then superadded to a national edition, the Odia newspaper offices need more space. The emerging industrial parks in the northern part of Bhubaneswar provide a cost effective solution: they offer space at reasonable rates, they are next to the highway— as close as possible to Bhubaneswar's sister city, Cuttack— and relatively near the railway stations, locations which enable their large circulations. Industrial parks are also appropriate cultural spaces for the newspapers, as until recently newspaper production was largely an industrial process. As the industrial parks increasingly turn from trying to attract industrial manufacture to software and other white collar work, they track the newspapers' own shift, happening in Odisha since the mid-80s, from the craftsmanship of moveable type, through the use of films to expose the printing plates, to the entirely automated computer-to-plate (CTP) printing technology. With

these shifts in technology, the laborers themselves become increasingly associated with knowledge and technical labors and less with print-craft.

Surya's newsroom, like all of the top-tier newspapers' newsrooms, is up a flight of stairs—or the elevator ride—from the entry. Old newspapers wrapped in cord and waiting to be recycled crowd the landings. At the top of the stairs there is a waiting area for visitors with a square window that looks into the newsroom. There is a bathroom for women at the end of the hall, and one for men on the floor below; there is a kitchen on the top floor where low-status workers make tea for management.

Pushing open the glass door of the newsroom, one stands at the far end of the large, artificially lit room. Figure 4 shows the organization of the room. To the immediate left of the door are three offices, each belonging to a different manager, including the General Manager of News, Mr. Mohanty. The managerial offices are fully enclosed, with glassed doors and half-glass walls, making it possible to see if the manager is alone or with others—also making it possible for the managers to see into the newsroom. Along the wall opposite the door, there are five open half-offices against darkened, closed windows. The half-offices have half-walls and no doors, but they do provide some degree of separation from the main room. Three of these small offices have a single desk and chair, while the last two have desk areas for four people to work: four computers and four telephones and four chairs. In the center of the newsroom are four blocks of four cubicles, each consisting of a large table with cutout work areas or two people, separated from the rest of the table by a low, glass-topped wall. Figure 5 is a photograph of the newsroom from the perspective of someone sitting at one of the central desks.

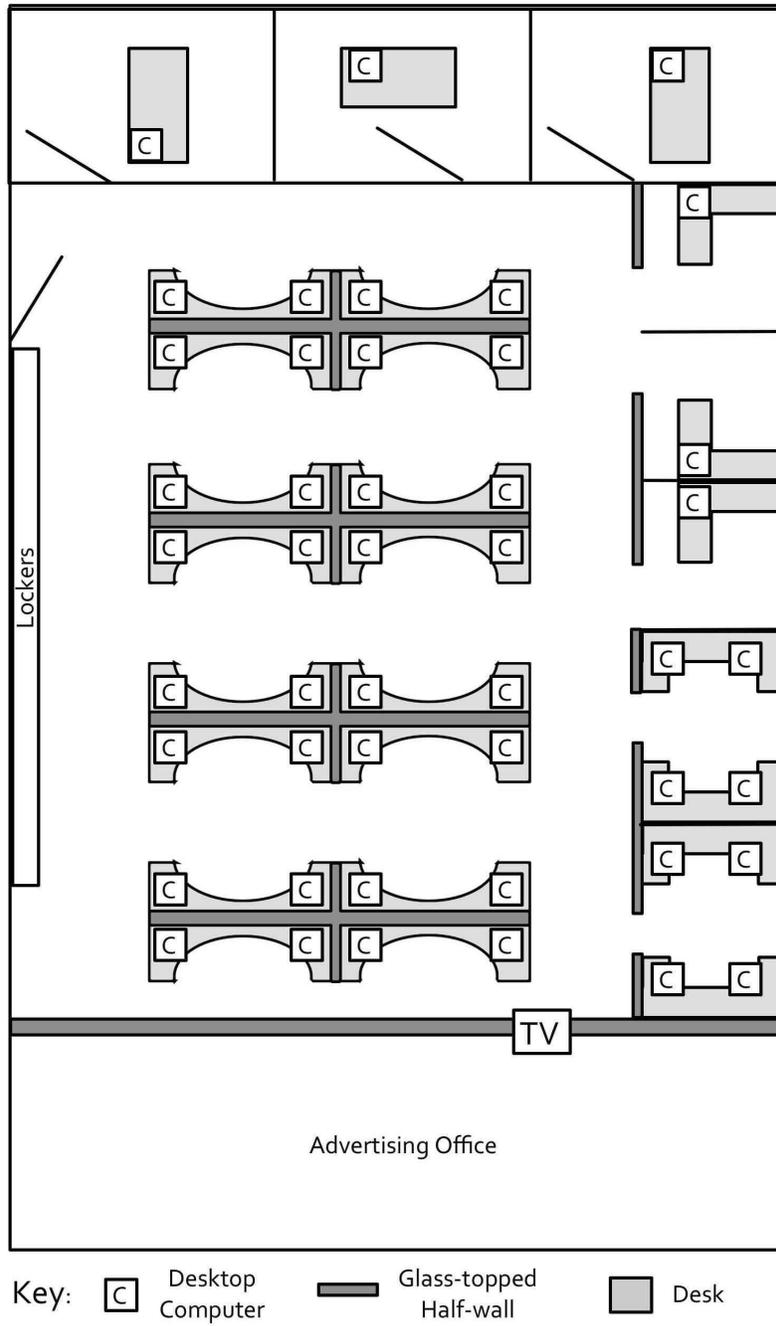


Figure 4. The layout of a newsroom at one of Odisha's top newspapers.



Figure 5. The perspective from a desk in one of Bhubaneswar's newsrooms.

I consistently sat in one or other of the central cubicles, moving a chair to the side so that I could watch activity and write in my notebook at the desk without taking up one of the computers, though there were often several free computers during the day. During my months observing work in the newsroom, I came to describe to myself the activities of writing—as I watched them from a desk across the room or only inches from a computer screen or notebook—as acts of shoveling language. This term came to me in part because I had been rereading William Mazzarella's (2003) book about advertising in India, called *Shoveling Smoke*, but it stuck with me because it emphasized the characteristics of representation directly opposite those highlighted by Mazzarella's title. Rather than smoke-like, the process of writing a newspaper

seemed more like moving dirt around; rather than airy or ideal, language in the newsroom was always, first, material. This is such a basic aspect of newsroom life that it was not something that anyone could tell me, for it structured everything newspaper producers did. The distribution of (linguistic) labor depends upon and ambivalently values that dirt-like quality of language: it takes up space, how it looks on the page, how it must be physically transferred from place to place, and how it indexes other contexts. Shoveling is a useful trope because it points to these qualities, which are the same qualities that terms like “commercialization” point to as a feature of news production when it is used to criticize the newsroom’s lack of creativity, sincerity, time for writing, and value for authorship by its reporters. Newspaper production is like shoveling dirt—not dirt in the sense of being dirty, but dirt in the sense of the language being heavy, taking up space, while also being full of the possibility of growth and adaptation.

The temporal structure to the news-information itself played a significant role in the material organization of news writing. Newsmakers in Bhubaneswar do not release news throughout the day, but tend to concentrate in particular periods of the day, especially the evening. First, often in the early mid-day by the news editor and the individual journalists, who can be in touch with the news editor by phone, is any news catch-up from the day and night previous; for this, television news is essential, as is checking with the news coverage in the other papers. The major time crunch for new emerging information, though, is the late afternoon and early evening, when politicians and other public figures make announcements. One of the second-tier newspaper editors called this the “news time” (in English). The lateness of this information release poses a logistical challenge for especially the smaller newspapers, who have

smaller staff to absorb the demands for new content so close to the to-press deadline, after reporters have already been working on their content for the day.

The lateness of the daily news cycle compared to the press-time was managed by the coverage of planned gatherings. This addressed the problem of the news cycle in three ways. First, coverage of planned gatherings meant that there was always a ready set of news content come press-time. Second, it was news coverage that could typically be shortened or easily elaborated upon depending upon the available space; it could be easily cut entirely or moved back a day if something else demanded the space. Finally, such events could be easily covered without much labor—relatively predictable and form-following, they can easily be covered in a short article even without a journalist actually attending.

The features of news organization I describe here, spatial, temporal, and personnel, are logistical principals of the newsroom that could seem outside of or encompassing of any particular relationships between individuals. I believe it was this quality of impersonality and goal—that the organization had a logistical and corporate goal—that almost all newspaper management staff were indexing when they described for me the “professionalism” of their newsrooms. I begin with a description of these features because they both play a role in various moral interpretations of newsroom activities.

Divisions of Writing Labor

During my days in the newsroom at *Surya*, I spent a lot of time sitting near Sanjay-*bhai*. A lower-prestige day writer—“I’m the international news writer” he told me in Odia—he was usually peering into the screen of his Gateway desktop computer at one of the small, open cubicles in the center of the room. He would open an Internet Explorer window and go to Yahoo’s international news page and scan through for good stories. He would then copy and paste the English text into the blank Aldus Pagemaker window, move it toward the bottom of the window, and then move his cursor to the top of the page and switch the keyboard back to Odia with a few clicks. He would then, with an ease that astonished me at first, summarize the content of the English article in Odia, barely taking his eyes off the English text as his hands flowed over the keyboard. This produced a stream of text that he would then copy and paste again, changing windows to open up, from the Local-Area-Network (LAN), the Pagemaker draft of the next day’s International News page, and then paste the text. Then began a long series of trial and error writing tasks. Rather than simply translating the tagline from the original article into the closest Odia, he would try several different phrases for the tagline as well as re-scaling the font several times with the computer’s mouse. After each series of changes, he briefly leaned back in his seat, judging each version by its visual properties rather than semantic. He then went through the article, making the same visual judgments on the section of text itself.

This happened so quickly, his mouse clicking away at high speed, the leaning back to get perspective just a quick tilt of the head, that I didn’t understand the rhythm of the work around me until I had been observing it for a couple weeks. Once I saw it as a pattern, though, I

recognized its incessant repetition throughout the newsroom during the daytime, as the daytime staff are largely involved in formatting the early editions and in creating the feature supplements that go out two or three times a week. Though this aspect of news labor is especially visible during the day shift, the importance of an article's visual properties is just as true for the night workers' final news items. A newly submitted article for Bhubaneswar's own Metro edition, for instance, is not done being written until the evening layout sub-editor places the typed piece into the edition layout and edits it for spatial fit on-screen.

Typed characters are the fundamental unit of the newspaper's visuality. The typed character's spatial dimensions are routinely as important as anything else about a series of words. There are obvious pragmatic aspects, namely that language must be of a size that is readable by the general public without squinting, which sets a lower limit. The upper limit on size is limited by the need to accommodate the other content and advertisements, and typically the size of typefaces is determined by the relative role of a particular segment of text with regard to a generic schema of headlines-taglines-article-caption text and front-interior-back page. Sizes, however, can be manipulated in several ways, both through changes to typeface, type face size, tracking (the distribution of letters in space), and by changing the words themselves.

The visual aspects of the newspaper are the basis for important divisions of labor in the newsroom. We can see these as horizontal divisions of labor at the level of the newspaper itself, distributing potential articles across "departments" and "beats" that cover different kinds of news in different ways depending on where it will eventually appear in the newspaper. Thus it appears obvious to everyone that the reporter on the "sports beat" writes the story about the phenomenal

Odishan cricketeer Dilip Tirkey's visit to Bhubaneswar, and self-evident that the "senior political correspondent" covers an ongoing conflict between top-brass in the ruling political party.

Knowing where the news will appear in the newspaper, which then usually determines who will be writing the article, means that the decision of how to write the article has already been made.

If there are last minute changes, the sub-editor will simply cut a longer article down or ask the reporter to add a few more lines to it. Frustrations for journalists can result from what they see as deviations from this obvious division of labor by topic and site, and such deviations are often read as evidence of favoritism (or of disfavor) by the editor. Hierarchy is the exception: senior reporters will be given sensitive or major articles regardless of their topic. For example, senior reporters across Bhubaneswar's newsrooms covered the 2008 killing of Lakshmanananda Saraswati and the rioting and violence that followed, though they relied heavily on the reports by stringers in Kandhamal.

Vertical divisions of labor are also the most relevant to the life courses of the articles themselves; we can see this hierarchy as organized according to the degree of metapragmatic authority over a news text. These divisions begin at the lowest level of the stringer, who works in some contract capacity to feed highly local information to the reporters. In Bhubaneswar, most stringer reports come in largely by fax as hand written pages. They are typed, then cut down and reframed—a few lines of introduction or background—by either a reporter or a sub-editor; sometimes they are the basis for articles "written" by someone else. For example, during 2010 coverage of rural conflicts about the Vedanta Aluminium bauxite mine in Lanjigarh, travel to the site of the conflicts was too expensive to send senior reporters, and across Bhubaneswar's

newsrooms, senior reporters covering the conflict relied on local stringer reports and quotes from government officials.

Reporters are thus a level above the stringers both in the general hierarchy of news production and in the trajectory of a particular article. In Bhubaneswar's "professional" newsrooms, reporters are typically assigned a "beat" or a "department." Depending on their seniority and area of work, they may also manage the daily work of stringers. When individual writers have more seniority, they are typically called "correspondents" rather than reporters. Indeed, correspondent is often the term used to describe journalists who have mostly retired and now write occasionally on a topic at the request of the editor or management, who is usually their peer and friend. Department heads, when they exist, as in *Sambad's* standalone "city department", and sub-editors each regiment the news texts on a high-frequency basis, checking in with reporters and requesting or making changes if necessary.

Concern with the visuality of the newspaper on a daily basis is skewed toward the bottom of the production hierarchy, though the overarching design is itself a top-level concern. The News Editor himself did not concern himself with how the news texts fit into the graphic artifact of the newspaper. Instead, as the description of Sanjay-bhai's work suggests, the visual qualities of writing were managed by lower-prestige employees. This may be of little surprise to anyone who has spent time working on a computer word processor in which the selection of typeface (font) and size are obvious components of even basic composition. But the broadly distributed and low-ranked social distribution of concern with visual properties is relatively new in Odisha. A discussion with three seasoned layout specialists at one of the major Odia newspapers

articulated this shift in the division of labor. The Layout Department staff, located in a separate small room, explained to me that, back when they used a moveable-type press (into the 1990s for some newspapers), the Layout Department used to set the type and, in conversation with the news editor and marketing staff, create the layout for the entire paper. Low-ranking sub-editors now do layout and organizing of the daily edition through the desktop publishing (DTP) system, such as Pagemaker, and it is largely understood as a mere application of the designed template. Now, with offset printing and computerized production, the department receives the computer files over the network, prints and examines a proof copy, and then prints a film and transfers that film, via a process that resembles dark room printing, to a plate used on the printer. While an entire department of specialists used to be aesthetically concerned with the paper's visual layout, now it is just a few men who mostly worry about the technical aspects of film transfer. As the major newspapers are in the process of digitizing even the plate preparation—so that there is no longer a process of hand printing the film onto the plates—the Layout Department's work will be even further attenuated. The most senior of the layout staff, a man who looked to be near 80, predictably joked, "Soon we'll be completely unnecessary!"

If visual properties are now at the low-ranked end of the ideological spectrum, decisions about news content and what to cover is largely concentrated at the top. The widely idealized practice of a daily meeting among all news staff to set the day's agenda was not practiced in locally owned newspapers in Bhubaneswar, a fact which high-level staff would themselves bring up, with signs of embarrassment, when I asked how reporters would know what to write about. Instead, most reporters simply call the mobile phones of the head of their department or the

senior journalist on their “beat”, sometimes directly calling the News Editor. The agendas were set in personal discussions between the senior reporters and the News Editor, which often took place informally by phone throughout the evening before and the morning of the writing. The newspaper’s overarching editorial policies were set through weekly or semi-weekly meetings of the top staff in the organization who had editorial experience. Inclusion in these meetings did not seem to follow directly from official job title, and this seemed to give these meetings a sheen of charismatic power rather than merely bureaucratic authority—an effect with which the managerial staff themselves were uncomfortable in our interviews. Not only were they unwilling to allow me to observe these meetings, but they redirected conversations when I asked for details of who was present and what was discussed.

Opacity around overarching editorial policies created distance between the tasks of writing at the reporter level and the overall intent and vision motivating those tasks. In general, this did not seem to be especially problematic for reporters because their work was so tightly regimented by other factors, namely the categorical division of topics, limitations on the space the article will take up, time limits, and generic conventions. Editorial vision carried relatively little influence on a daily basis. Yet the social distinction nonetheless produced ideological effects. This can be seen most clearly in a comparison with Goffman’s (Goffman 1981) production roles. The tasks associated with what Goffman called the role of Author (decision making, envisioning, framing areas of concern, high status linguistic forms) and Animator (managing visual qualities, assembling texts, gathering information or content) were socially distinguished and concentrated at opposite ends of the hierarchy.

The hierarchical aspect of these divisions of linguistic labor become especially palpable in the newsrooms when interactions between staff call on social practices associated with hierarchy outside of the newsroom: deferentially standing while the editor reads the text, waiting outside his door for comments on the article text, calling frequently to find out the day's assignments and having the phone go unanswered, being reassigned with no notice, being ignored when the editor is talking to someone else, and being asked to do tasks at the last minute. Though most Odishans gloss these pervasive aspects of newsroom life as simply signs of a junior's respect for a senior, sociological differences between the management and the editorial inner circle (often from "better families," and almost always upper caste men) and the news writers—and also differences of the ideological valuing of some forms of language over others—can also be mapped onto forms of social distinction and status made outside the newsroom. Thus the distribution of linguistic labor across the social hierarchy becomes intertwined with language ideologies valuing conceptual tasks over the management of visual qualities.

The Ethics of Fast Production and the Copy

While several institutions of journalism education opened in Bhubaneswar between 2005 and 2009, the majority of working journalists in Odisha during my research had still learned how to write by doing the job itself. In a long interview with Kailash, a journalist who had learned to write news at one of the major Odia-language dailies in the late 1990s but now worked in video journalism, he encouraged me to ask journalists in the newsrooms how they were learning to

write. “It’s all just *copying*,” he tsked in Odia, codeswitching to the English for the word copy, laughing and shaking his head. “You ask them! The whole newspapers are only *copied*.”

Both copying and concerns about it were pervasive during my research. When I did ask reporters how they had learned to write articles they routinely said that they learned on the job, simply by doing what others did and following their editors’ corrections. When I asked one young staff reporter, who had been on the job for about three years, he grabbed the newspaper next to him and opened to the Metro page. He put his finger on the first line of an article and traced it along, reading the phrase, then mimicking looking at a computer screen and typing, then back for another phrase, then typing, and so on several more times. As we laughed, he also put his finger to his lips, jokingly miming that I should keep his secret safe.

As this short mime of learning-by-emulation points out, Odishan anxieties about the circulation of form do not necessarily coincide with an American definition of copying. Even as a great many styles of reproduction are routine newsroom practice, there is concern that some or most of it is unethical. Despite the concern about “copying”—in Odia *kapi* or *abhikala nakala*—I suggest that a more precise description of Bhubaneswar’s newsroom practices is a tendency toward a preservation of linguistic forms across textual instances, and that these preservations of form are seen as morally problematic but can also be seen as a perfectly normal part of newsroom activity.

There are many explicit instances of news production that involve the preservation of linguistic forms across texts. As in Sanjay’s translations of Yahoo international news, there can be a spectrum between direct and entire reproduction, faithful translation, translation as

rewriting, summary, and using a text as background information or “research”. The most discussed and probably the most practiced is the reproduction of press releases. This practice is far from particular to Odisha. British journalist Nick Davies (2011) has coined the term “churnalism” to describe how journalists have become “passive processors of unchecked, second-hand material, much of it contrived by public relations to serve some political or commercial interest,” largely as a result of journalists having to “fill” so much news space. Looking at how this happens, linguist Geert Jacobs (Jacobs 1998, 1999; see also Sleurs and Jacobs 2005; Sleurs, Jacobs, and Van Waes 2003) has demonstrated that press releases in the United States and Europe make use of metapragmatic linguistic devices to “preformulate” the news, making them readymade for publication as news articles. Yet, at least in Odisha, the mere reproduction of a press release does not necessarily determine its social function. There is a daily influx of press releases that come directly to the relevant beat reporters and to the News Editor from Odisha state’s Department of Information and Public Relations, political parties, politicians, small businesses and large corporations.

In 2009, an Odia newspaper received a small sized stack of press releases and invitations every day via post. Typically the director’s Personal Assistant opened the mail and distributed it among the relevant staff; the press releases and invitations were taken to the News Editor. He then looked them over and decided whether individual events were worth covering, distributing the cards and pages to appropriate reporters. The coverage of these events sometimes involved a reporter actually going to an event or a press conference or talking with someone who had, but often the press release provided enough information to write the article—or enough information

to be the article. When I asked the News Editor how he decided what kinds of notifications and events were worthy of covering, he gestured to a page on the top of the stack in front of him. He said it was a literary event run by some friends of one of the other senior managers—he would send a photographer to get a photo to include with the description. As an Odia literary event, it was firmly within the explicitly stated goals of the overarching media firm; as an event organized by a friend, it solidified the newspaper’s role in a net of well-maintained and influential social relations.

Journalists who are expected to produce four to five articles a day often do not have time to physically attend the local events they are covering. Journalists have several strategies for dealing with this: they may arrange with other journalists at other news organizations to take turns attending events or sitting at an office, they may ask someone else in attendance for a report, they may rely on the press release, or they might even simply translate or re-work coverage of the event from another newspaper or internet news portal. Thus press releases serve the important functional role of filling newspaper space. This role is observable in the publication of content at unpredictable intervals from their release dates: press releases might be published even several weeks late, when there is the need for a piece that size.

We can see the preservation of linguistic forms in a simple account of how an article becomes an article.³⁰ An item of rural news, like an overturned bus, would be on one of the first

³⁰ I am limited to a typical descriptions, as my attempts to elicit detailed narratives of specific articles were repeatedly brushed off with statements like, “that one was like all the others—I just called my contacts and wrote it. It’s not interesting.” After so many instances of being put off in the same way, I began to notice that there was some discomfort with my interest in the writing process, as though reporters and editors believed that I was suspicious of the writing process itself. Indeed, though it may have been coincidental, as soon as I began to gain more confidence in the newsroom and ask more

few pages of the local edition and then, if deemed of enough interest, would be placed on the *Rajya* or State page of the Bhubaneswar edition. Stringers routinely telephone and fax handwritten reports of local information that they come across. The faxed stringer reports come in handwritten and are often handed off to a daytime staff writer to type and save to the LAN. A telephoned report frequently exists as notes in the reporter's notebook. Depending on how rough this text is, the reporter may quickly rewrite it on a loose sheet of paper or, if in the office and a proficient typist, may directly type it into the computer or ask another office worker to do so. At this point, the reporter will fill out the story by drawing on the stringer's notes. To add quotations, the reporter makes a mobile phone call to a "contact" who can provide a quote. This document will then be sent to the top editor of the local edition for correction and any necessary revisions. If there are major problems or if the editor is looking at a handwritten sheet, the reporter may do the corrections, but it is also possible that another staff-member, a low-status reporter or feature writer, will perform the typing, corrections, and edits—especially if the reporter has more stories to write. By any of these routes, the article ends up typed and saved on the server in the file designated for that day's news. The electronic document then waits in the folder until the designated sub-editor for the local edition page opens it, copies and pastes it into the emerging layout, and then edits it for size and adds the title line. If there is a photo to accompany the story, that photo is separately handled by a sub-editor (or a separate photo editor

detailed questions, the management asked to me to observe in another office, not the newsroom. I spent the next two weeks watching activities in the office of Human Resources. I re-entered the newsroom by sticking close to a (non-reporter) female friend on the staff who seemed to enjoy my presence, as well as by asking less pesky questions.

at the major editions of the major newspapers), sometimes drawing on notes left by the photographer.

This method of writing news articles is recognizable within Odisha and around India (Rao 2010). There is a centrally involved reporter gathering information from legitimate sources—the newspaper’s own stringer and cultivated authoritative contacts—and creating text from their contributions. The specific language of the article itself often originates from these individuals, with the reporter’s story reproducing the stringer’s sentences and phrases and, as much as possible, directly reproducing the sentences of the contact’s statements. Contacts’ statements have already been entextualized as a quote by the generic organization of the journalist’s phone call. The preservation of linguistic form here is between the oral and handwritten statements of people (contacts and stringers) and the written article.

We can see this method at work in the reporting of Raja, a be-spectacled, early-career reporter on the city beat at a major Odia daily; he is one of those reporters who produces about four articles a day. I found it difficult to get him to open up about his work, and I think it was more than just the standard awkwardness. As I asked about what he does during the day, he kept shifting to general statements: “on the city beat, reporters go and see what is happening in the city and report on it.” As I pushed him further to describe his work that day, he made further general statements, like, “we cover traffic, traffic accidents, new developments, planned events, the BMC [Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation].” After some interruptions, I asked about what he was currently writing. He reported to me that he was writing about a traffic collision, and, with some further questioning, he said that it had not been necessary for him to go to the scene.

The photographer, who had gone to the scene earlier in the day, had gotten a photo. The reporter had simply called his contact in the police, with whom he is in regular, almost daily contact. This contact provided key information—the facts of the collision, as well as a quote from the police about the collision.

Several journalists I interviewed across Bhubaneswar’s media field spoke contemptuously of exactly this process, despite (or because of) its normalcy. These journalists drew attention not simply to the preservation of form itself but to the writing style that the preservation of form itself enables. Several journalists called this, at different times, the “pic and two bytes” approach. For example, Satya explained to me that while it has now been adopted to print media, it was first used to describe “video journalism’s usual approach to reporting in India” which is, he said, “completely without substance”—though he quickly went on to name exceptional video journalists. The phrase draws attention to the merely formulaic role of the quotations, implying that the formulaic-ness is itself a problem. Media scholars have commonly remarked on the high generic conventionality or centripetality (Bakhtin 1981[1937]) of news production, which include reproductive textual routines for providing a news story’s background knowledge. Cotter (2010) calls these routines “boilerplate” because they are “repetitious, unattributed, identificatory, descriptive, often expendable, and summarizes what have been presented by journalists as key ‘complicating actions’ of a story” (176). By contrast, Satya’s critical appellation for (cross-generic and cross-medium) styles of news writing curiously focus not on the boilerplate itself but on the features that are *not* boilerplate—the quotations and photos—which allow the rest of the article to consist of boilerplate without seeming to. Kailash, the same

journalist who complained about copying, told me cynically that quotations allow a reporter to dress up what he probably got from just one source or from just copying a press release. Kailash and Satya were both concerned that the reproduction of form could hide what is actually happening in an article, whether that is merely shoddy reporting or something potentially more sinister.

Interpreting The Ethics of Reported Speech

I now turn to consider the practice of reporting speech in news production. While some in Odisha, like journalists elsewhere, are concerned about reported speech because it is seen as disguising what is otherwise merely reproductive content, the relationship between the moment of article production and the reported speech context can also be the focus of ethical concerns. To understand these concerns, I draw on the work of Russian literary philosopher Valentin Voloshinov's discussion of reported speech (Voloshinov 1986[1929]), and especially his attention to the various relationships that may be constructed between reported and reporting contexts.

The concerns with the intertextual relations of reported speech are enunciated especially clearly in a critical essay by Odishan journalist Kedar Mishra, written in response to the violence in Kandhamal district, in southwestern Odisha, in 2007 and 2008. I focus on Mishra's perspective here, but his was only one of about five different pieces I read from both local and non-local observers about the powerful role played by local media in the events. When violence

erupted in Kandhamal district in southwestern Odisha in December 2007 with rioting and church burning, and then again in September 2008, Odisha found itself again on the world stage thanks to crisis. While the immediately precipitating factors of the conflict were clear in 2008—the murder of RSS activist Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati—there was disagreement about the reason that the violence took the shape that it did. Explanations closely followed political alliance. At the time of the riots, the BJP and the BJD were in a political alliance at the state level. A dominant explanatory line, drawing on a history of public complaints about Christian missionaries in the region, was that the Christians had murdered Saraswati and that the rioting was part of a larger rejection of Christian conversion in the state.³¹ Progressive and Congress Party critics blamed the inflammatory activities of Saraswati and the RSS-subgroup, the Bajrang Dal, for the production of communal tensions. After a Naxalite (Maoist) group claimed responsibility for the Saraswati’s killing, the state government’s reports emphasized the non-communal role of terrorism in initiating the riots. The local English editions of national papers as well as a series of “fact-finding reports” (based on “fact-finding missions” to the region) focused on the longstanding conflicts between the ethnic groups involved, the low-caste or untouchable Pano caste and the Kandha tribe or adivasi group. In the months following the violence, arguments condensed around the anti-Hindu and the anti-Christian poles; both anti-Hindu and

³¹ This explanation often implicitly if not explicitly cited the 1999 killings of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons in northwestern Odisha. There was public ambivalence about Staines’ death at the time thanks to the widely reproduced explanation that Staines had been “forcibly converting” unsuspecting tribals. Then-Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik’s first statements to the press after the killings focused on his plan to ban religious conversions; fears among central Congress party leaders that these statements could be read as supporting communal violence was one reason for Patnaik’s subsequent removal from office (Ruben Banerjee with Javed Ansari, “Sonia Strikes,” *India Today*, Feb. 22, 1999).

anti-Christian arguments drew on the colonial and post-colonial history of the ethnic conflict. Across the Odia-language media there was variability: for instance, according to a contact who clipped the articles, *Dharitri* and the *Samaja*, both published pieces critical of conversion and about the work of Saraswati, as well as articles denouncing violence against Christians (for more on the conflict, see Akkara 2009; also Hota 2012).

Kedar Mishra is a prominent Odishan columnist and cultural critic who worked for Berhampur-based daily *Anupam Bharat* during my research, though he lives in Bhubaneswar. He wrote two critical essays about the media's role in the violence in Kandhamal, the first followed the rioting in December 2007, the second after the violence of 2008. These circulated on Odisha-themed internet listservs and among Bhubaneswar's journalists; the first essay was included in a letter by the Sampradayik Hinsa Prapidita Sangathana (Association of Survivors of Kandhamal Violence) and a report by the progressive secular advocacy group, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra. Both are published in English and available, along with other English language materials, on the website of the Civil Society for Human Rights, a progressive, Bhubaneswar-based organization that developed after the Kandhamal events (Rights 2011). Reviewing over 500 articles, televised reports, and editorials from 2007-8, Mishra argues that the media is responsible for perpetuating and exacerbating the violence, questioning the ethics and motives of the media producers. As I explore in detail in Chapter 4, statements about the moral responsibility of media for communal violence are both common and potent in India's legal context, in which publishers can be held responsible for violent responses to their publications, and in which the Indian government frequently impedes media circulation and communication technologies in the name of preventing

such violence. Mishra explicitly follows this dominant legal discourse about how news articles work by describing the media's role in enflaming "sentiments" during the 2008 events.

In his essays, Mishra describes the errors in media reporting as the problem of reported speech. He returns repeatedly to three aspects of the coverage: the uncritical quoting of Saraswati (before his death) and his supporters, the reliance on the analyses of government officials, and the lack of quotations from the "minority" community (referring to the Pana Christians). While Mishra focuses on specific instances, the overall pattern of his analysis demonstrates concern with the ethics of the relationship between reporting and reported contexts that epitomizes broader concern among Odia journalists about the bleed between the two.

There are several methods of reporting speech in Odia, both direct and indirect, which can take reported speech markers before (using *je*, "that") or after the reported material (using *boli*, "spoke") (see Patnaik and Pandit 1986); direct speech can also be conveyed syntactically without reported speech markers. The following excerpts from the same article in the *Samaja* from December 22, 2009 ("VSS Medikāl Kāleja o Haspiṭāl Sampūrṇṇa Swayam Śāsita Heba: Mantri"), demonstrate two common forms employed in Odia news articles; the reported speech, attenuated, is underlined:

Direct:

bīra surendra sāe medikāla kaleja o haspiṭalaku ... parinata kariba pāi rājya sarakāra nītigata niṣpatti neithibā swāsthya mantri prasanna ācārjya kahichanti.

Health Minister Prasanna Acharjya said "We will be completing the plan to transform... Veer Surendra Sai Medical College... etc."

Indirect

...ehāku kariyakārī karibe boli mantri śri ācārjya kahicanti.

[...] said Minister Mr. Acharjya.

In the first case there is no marker of reported speech beyond the shift in agreement between the reported speech and the reporting line. In the indirect, *boli* marks the completion of the indirect reported speech. A common use of these markers in sections of multi-sentence quotes involves beginning with the syntactic or front-positioned reported speech marker, writing several reported sentences without markers, and then returning to close with a final-position marker like *boli*, above. This effectively frames content as reported speech without ambiguity.

In 2007, one senior Odia journalist half-jokingly, half-seriously told me that one of the “problems” with Odia newswriting was that the newswriters often do not frame reported speech carefully enough to allow readers to distinguish between reported and reporting contexts.³² He said this joke in the context of telling me why Odia journalism was always politically biased, essentially implying that the reason was in the very structure of Odia. At the time, I did not know what to make of his statement, and I filed it away under contemptuous jokes that people make about Odisha. Yet Mishra’s criticisms of the uses of reported speech in the Kandhamal coverage echo this joking criticism. The potential ambiguity or bleed is especially clear in one of the articles quoting of Saraswati. Mishra describes and then quotes the entirety of an article published in the *Samaja* during the 2007 riots that referred repeated to Saraswati as “Swamiji,” a title of affection and respect. An excerpt from his translation:

After the alleged attack by the Christians on 24th, Swami Laxmanananda being treated in Cabin No.3 of the Surgery Department gave an exclusive interview to The Samaj in which he said that the missionaries are trying to establish special

³² English can do this, too, especially with indirect speech that is ambiguously framed; indeed, it is a favorite technique of modernist literature. In the following discussion, I am not claiming special status for Odia.

Christian zones in the divided districts of Bhulbani, Koraput, Kalahandi, Bolangir and in Bhanjanagar of the district Ganjam, Khandapada of the district of Nayagarh and in Anugul and Athamalik. For this money flows from such Christian countries like the U.S. and the U.K. The Swami and his supporters are working towards the preservation of Hinduism. Their efforts have resulted in the drastic reduction in conversion and many converted Christians have come back to the Hindu fold. Infuriated at it, some people have attempted to kill him...

Asked about the possible solution to this problem at Khondmal, Swamiji has said that this was the spontaneous protest of the Hindus. No government can stop this. The age-old dissatisfaction of the Hindus are now ventilated. In it he had no role to play. After massive protest the missionaries desisted from conversion but after the Congress Party came to power they have become active. If the conversion comes to an end there will automatically be no unrest in the state. (*Samaja* 2007, quoted in Mishra 2008)

Mishra expresses concern that the newspaper reproduces Saraswati's statements without "questioning" them. He says that they have only "been showing respect", whereas "the role of Laxmanananda is that of a villain." This respect is especially conveyed by the lack of frequent distancing between the reporting and reported contexts, which effectively conveys the reporter's—the newspaper's—alignment with the speaker, in this case a highly partisan figure.

A similar situation occurs in an article from the Odia daily the *Prajatantra* from January 17, 2008:

The BJP has alleged that some organizations run by the Christians are responsible for the present riot at Khondmal. For this purpose the names of some organizations and NGOs operating there have been published. Jewel Oram, a senior leader of BJP, in a press conference on Wednesday said that a deceptive news is given currency. It is said that the Christians there are a minority. The Hindus have been oppressing them and that this riot is created by VHP and BJP. But this is absolutely false. The truth is that the Hindus are a minority there and they are being oppressed instead. In Brahmanigaon Christians numbering about 5000 attacked the Hindus. Their houses were burnt. Visiting that area Jewel Oram came to know that those Christians were armed and supported by such NGOs as Action Aid, NISWAS, SFDC, Aama Gaon, CPSW and Alok Grama. (Mishra 2008)

Following the standard pattern for press releases described above, Oram's statements are quoted largely without comment or additional framing. Voloshinov describes this form of reported speech as one in which the speech "becomes more forceful and more active than the authorial context framing it," and as a result the reporting/authorial context "loses the greater objectivity it normally commands in comparison with reported speech" (Voloshinov 1986[1929], 121). For Mishra the explicit problem in this article is that Oram "has only lied," a statement that reflects Voloshinov's insights, for the lie is a problem especially when it becomes forceful and active. Mishra writes: "Communal politics operates on baseless and misleading facts. We get to hear such a voice from Jewel Oram." Mishra concludes that there can be "nothing but political motivation" to publishing such statements about working organizations without providing any evidence for them. Yet for Mishra it is not only the publication of the statements themselves but also the close alignment that the routine practice of press release treatment here performs between the reported (Oram) and the reporter (*Prajatantra*).

In an environment in which accusations of unethical and self-interested motives are typical, one of the notable aspects of Mishra's analysis is that he does not see the media coverage of Kandhamal as resulting entirely from intention. Mishra is a careful reader, and he notes wide inconsistencies across the coverage, across both the locally-owned and the nationally-owned press. He concludes these inconsistencies are signs of the "mental conflict of the journalists" (Mishra 2008), resulting from the journalists' feeling affection for the Hindu(tva) position at the same time that they wrestle with the facts of the communal violence itself. Nevertheless, despite this "mental conflict," Mishra says that one voice was never heard:

The most interesting thing was that there was not even a single statement of any affected person in their one thousand and five hundred-word article. Nor were the opinions or reactions of the minority community placed in it. (Mishra 2008)

The lack of representation of the experiences of those hardest hit by both the 2007 and the 2008 violence—the low-caste Christians—is what Mishra finds the most unethical about the coverage.

How much can be read about authorial intention and motivation from the way that a journalist writes? Mishra's media criticism in the wake of Kandhamal is an extreme case of a pervasive concern that I heard across conversations with journalists: that writing practice means something. Yet the practice of writing, whether through research or boilerplate, reported speech, or press releases, translating, or copying-pasting, is indeterminate, and it may be read in many ways. Writing may be a sign of intentions to establish social and political alliances, of the profit motive and commercialism, of a commitment to journalistic ethics, or of routine newsroom production practices and nothing more. Who writing can tell about also changes from interpretation to interpretation: writing may be a sign of the journalist's own investments, of the newspaper, or its proprietor, or his political party, or of the Odishan-owned media as a whole. And, finally, the part of writing that constitutes writing, the part of the writing that is significant, also changes from interpretation to interpretation. In this chapter I have drawn primarily on techniques of reproduction because they are both wide-ranging and rich with multiple interpretations, but even "reproduction" looks like a different object depending on whether it is reproduction in the context of copying an article from the internet or reproduction from the words spoken by a controversial political-religious figure.

Conclusion

I have argued that writing practices in Bhubaneswar's locally owned newsrooms produce and allow several objectifications of writing. I have focused on ways that writing has been made into something commercial, something professional, and something locally social. I began this chapter noting that throughout all of these objectifications, there echoed the question of romantic authorship—the ideology of the sole creator who possessed the original idea whose flourishing is the resulting text. This ideal is not captured in any of the newsrooms' objectifications of writing. Newsroom practices themselves contrast with values of romantic authorship especially in their organization of agency and reliance on reproduction. The division of writing labor ideologically diagrams corporate hierarchies onto linguistic function, assigning concerns with visibility and materiality to largely low-ranked staff and preserving most decision-making for the most elite members of the institution. Decision-making is often obscure from the perspective of lower staff. “Copying” and other types of reproduction that preserve linguistic forms across communicative instances are seen in many ways: as instances of routine unmarked newsroom practice, as signs of the commercialization of newsrooms, or as signs of the influence of others. Much of news production activity is equally likely to be treated as laudable, merely routine, socially suspicious, or professionally contemptible, especially for its capacity to hide other, potentially amoral alliances.

In both the case of division of labor and in the case of reproduction, there is an obvious way in which newsroom practice contrasts with ideals of romantic authorship and a less obvious way. The obvious way is simple: agentive authorship is a foil for reporters who feel they have

little control over or overarching vision of what they write about, especially when they additionally feel that their labor is not very valuable; originality is a foil for writers who spend a good deal of time reproducing texts and slotting well entextualized quotes into boilerplate articles. Less obviously, these news production practices present challenges to romantic authorship that may be especially meaningful in Odisha's contemporary political-economic context, in which shadowy corporate-political-religious-foreign alliances are seen as the potential source of violence. Each news production practice serves as a way for identified and unidentified others to be involved in or to stand behind the writing of the news. In the division of labor, the concentration of decision making at the top of the hierarchy and the lack of information about that decision-making with lower-ranked staff makes it possible for unidentified others to have an authorial role in the news. Reproduction similarly makes room for the authorial agency of others—both directly, as others are quoted, and off-stage when the quotations themselves obscure the real source of information. Writing practices that quote at length and with limited framing context can allow the voiced perspective to be, in Voloshinov's words, "more forceful and more active" than the writer's own.

Finally, to recall momentarily to the introductory narrative, we may speculate that Prakash's decision to quit working at the locally-owned newspaper may have been a rejection of the forms of labor the job required because of the newspaper organization's "commercialism," echoing national concerns about the relationship between commerce and the free press. At the same time, his decision to quit his job may also have been a rejection of all of the job's implicit social embeddings, potentially echoing local anxieties about political interests and corruption, or

anxieties about the local failure of professionalism. In the next chapter, I further pursue such ethical echoing in an examination of the press' historical role in national and regional belonging.

Chapter III

Genealogies of Odisha's Press

Mr. Mohapatra's house lay in a neighborhood of Bhubaneswar I had never visited, and I was surprised when the spaces between the new city houses narrowed to dim alleys. From a wide main road, I had entered a village of cement houses overgrown with illegal additions. The auto-rickshaw driver pouted, complaining of the narrowness, and left me to walk the last hundred yards to the house. Mr. Mohapatra, a middle aged but senior journalist of much renown in Bhubaneswar's literary circles, was waiting for me at the door and he waved to me to step through the garden gate, through the small yard overgrown with shade-loving creepers, and then through the house's first iron-grated door. We greeted each other with *namaskars* and then stepped through the interior wooden door to the front room of the polished concrete house. The low-ceilinged, rectangular room had a mauve couch and two wide wooden chairs, a wooden coffee table, and a steel bookcase; a single door on the far side from the front door led to a hallway and, presumably, the kitchen and bedrooms. A single, decoratively barred window above the couch let in dim natural light and mosquitos. Mr. Mohapatra's round face was friendly above his plaid oxford shirt and jeans, but it fell back into an expressionless, drooping state

between greetings. As I sat down on the plastic covered mauve couch, I thought to myself: this is a man accustomed to sitting by himself to write—his face can hardly remember that I'm here. His aging mother served us refreshments of first water, and then pink squash and cookies, while we waited respectfully for her to finish her hosting duties. I knew he was married, but his wife never appeared, and he never mentioned her. Then he got right down to business.

“What do you want to know about journalism in Odisha?” His face made the effort of smiling again as he posed his question in precise English, rounded with Odia's open vowels. I gave him my standard reply to this oft-posed question. I said that I would most like to understand his own experiences as a journalist, to know about his own work. I then offered him a place to start. “You are renowned for your outspoken social and political writings,” I prompted, “can you tell me how you began writing about social issues?” Mr. Mohapatra paused and looked at the glass-doored bookshelf across from me. The books appeared to have been neatly organized before the rest of the books had been crammed on top of them. “*Acchha...hmm...*” He nodded, still looking at the bookshelf. I prepared myself for a long personal story, readying my pen at the top of the page to catch the details. “What you must do,” he began, and then turned his face to me, “is look at the *Utkala Dipika*.”

For Odishan journalists like Mr. Mohapatra, history is alive. It is alive not only because it is remembered, though it is, or because it was important in shaping the present, though that's also true; it is alive because the historical situation resembles the contemporary situation in such resonant ways that the choices and actions of historical journalists can guide the actions of present day journalists. I encountered this repeatedly during both formal interviews and casual

conversations, as journalists would answer a question about themselves with a historical story. Sometimes these were stories about Gandhi's battles against colonialism, Harekrushna Mahatab's mid-century work to unite the Odias, or about the establishment of the "professional" newspaper industry in the 1980s. Overwhelmingly, though, the most contemporary moment in the history of Odisha's journalism—the most powerfully alive moment for today's journalists—was in 1866. In the winter of 1866, famine had eaten its way across the districts that now comprise Odisha, consuming at least a third of the population. In their commitment to laissez-faire economics, and a belief that if the prices went high enough then the local *rajās* and *zamindars* (chiefs and landlords) would sell their secreted rice stocks, the British government did not send relief even when death totals began reaching London. In fact, there had been no rice stocks in reserve. In the face of such tremendous miscalculation and misgovernance, in the face of such profound but unaddressed suffering, a group of elite Odia men in the local governmental headquarters of Cuttack established Odisha's first locally-owned press and newspaper, the *Utkal Dipika* or *Lamp of Utkal*.

In this chapter I track the interplay between the regional and national trajectories of Odisha's press. I trace the emergence of a politics of representing the people and its relationship to the Odia press through the establishment of the Odia language press in the 1860s in the wake of the great famine, the formation of a modern Odia language in resistance to the threats of replacement by Bengali, and the development of a social consciousness in turn-of-the-century prose. Local politics eventually connected to the growing nationalist movement, but this generated local political divisions about the priority of the Odia-unification movement. I describe

the features of the national press context that echo in contemporary Odishan journalism, especially the colonial state's censorship of north Indian publishers and Gandhi's theorization of the press at the center of the nationalist ethic. I conclude with a description of the elite but divided political scene of the Odishan state at Independence, setting the scene for the next chapter's discussion of the interaction of local politics with the new Constitutional environment.

From the mid-sixteenth century³³, the regions that comprise contemporary Odisha spent several centuries ruled by outside empires, first the Mughals and then Marathas. Local kingdoms fed these non-local empires. These local kingdoms were themselves the result of centuries of incorporating neighboring tribes into caste-organized political economies. German historian Hermann Kulke (1993) has argued that the early centuries of the Common Era consisted mainly of small *rajyas* or kings, who may have descended from tribal chiefs, whose nuclear-organized courts were separated from each other by mountains or jungles. These courts depended first on a circle of tax-free villages donated to the Brahmins who maintained the administrative and ritual functions of the court. The courts and their specialists in turn depended upon an outside circle of peasant agriculture (mainly rice paddy) production. On the edges of these courts were various tribal groups, upon which, Kulke suggests, *rajyas* depended for both trade and military protection. Over centuries, these tribes were variously incorporated into the Brahmanical sphere of courtly power through transposition into the caste system, typically as *kshatriyas* or martial castes,

³³ Odisha is locally famed for its early history, for it was the site of the Mauryan king Ashoka's Kalinga war (262 BCE), the bloodshed of which turned Ashoka to Buddhism and a period of peace under the Mauryan empire. The war is memorialized in the Ashoka edict on a stone pillar that stands on a hill overlooking Bhubaneswar. Odisha's distinct temple architecture of the Bhubaneswar's Old Town stands in monument to the tenth and century Somvamsi dynasty. The Surya or Sun Temple of Konark is a monument to the Eastern Gupta Dynasty of the thirteenth century. Odia literature emerged during the Gajapati dynasty of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

which Kulke calls “kshatriyization from above” (Kulke 1993).³⁴ A second path of royal legitimation occurred through the adoption and patronage of tribal/local deities into courtly religious life, evident throughout Odisha in the Sanskritic patronage of deities whose visual characteristics are typically described as crude or rustic—undifferentiated limbs or facial features and *murtis* (icons) of uncarved rock. Shown in Figure 6, Jagannath and his siblings are the most prominent examples (Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi 1978; Kulke and Schnepel 2001).³⁵

³⁴ Anthropologist and historian Akio Tanabe has undertaken sustained analyses of caste and political organization in central Odisha, in the period of approximately 1770-1810 as well as in the 1990s. Through an analysis of a palm-leaf records of account books from approximate 1770-1810, Akio Tanabe argues that social obligations in pre-colonial Odisha were organized through a “system of entitlements” (Tanabe 2005) that was not identical to either the *jajmani* system as described in North India (Raheja 1988) nor the “sacrificial unit” of South India (Dirks 1993). This system of entitlements worked by redistributing payments throughout a multi-village unit surrounding a fort; kingdoms such as the Khurda kingdom were then comprised of many forts (100+). After the redistribution of entitlements according to occupation/caste per household at the fort-level, then the state tax collectors collected for both the *rāja* of Khurda and the overarching state—the Mughals, then the Marathas, and then the British until they dismantled the Khurda kingdom. Tanabe argues that this redistribution was functioning somewhat independently of Brahmanical ideological dominance (as in Dumont) as well as royal centrality (as in Dirks).

³⁵ This is not to say that high castes entirely dominated pre- or early colonial Odia-speaking areas. To the contrary, low-caste and anti-caste devotional (*bhākti*) cults across the region flourished in the early modern period, drawing on Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Tantrism as well as local religious practices. Bhima Bhoi’s Mahima Dharma cult was especially important in Odisha in the nineteenth century. Yet the Brahmanical control of dominant cults like Jagannatha have generally incorporated or suppressed such heterodox cults (Beltz 2002).

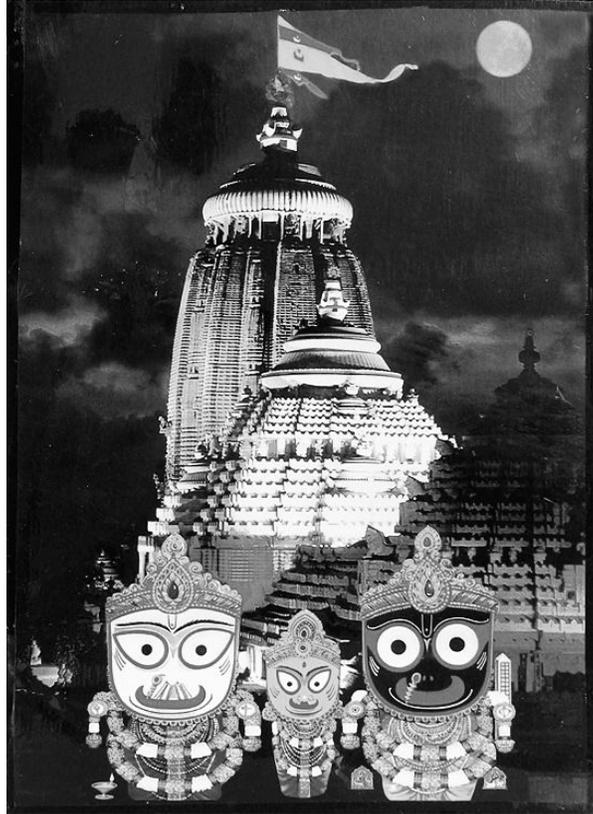


Figure 6. A laminated photo collage sold outside of the Puri temple shows Jagannatha (right) with his siblings, Balabhadra (left) and Subhadra (center).

Under the British, adjoining Odia-speaking³⁶ regions crossed three separate administrative units: Bengal Presidency (Bihar and Orissa Province from 1912), Madras Presidency, and Nagpur Presidency (Central Provinces from 1861). Much of this territory continued the suzerainties established by the earlier external rulers; the major exception was the Khurda kingdom. In 1804, the British destroyed the Khurda fort and imprisoned the king. After hanging his political advisor, the British established the Khurda king in Puri as the manager of the Puri

³⁶ The degree to which these various linguistic forms resemble each other has been a point of ongoing negotiation, especially regarding the difference between “Kataki” and “desiya” Oriya, or around the claims for separate language status for Kosli, the Sambalpur “dialect” of Oriya (Mathai and Kelsall 2013).

temple, forbidding him from returning to Khurda. In April 1817, after the Collector of Cuttack—a Bengali—had taken over the lands of one of the Khurda king's military leaders, the remaining Khurda military class rebelled on the grounds that the British had denied them their king-granted lands, killing British supporters and destroying British buildings along the coast. In September, 1817, the rebellion was violently suppressed; rebels were largely deported, though the leader escaped and only later surrendered on condition of his ability to live with his family in Cuttack with a British pension (Mohanty 2007; Chaudhury 1991; Mubayi 1999).

Historian Ravi Ahuja has argued that, following this period of conflict, during the first few decades of the nineteenth century the British systematically dismantled local economies, outlawing the local salt industry, eliminating the cowry shell currency, and allowing infrastructure and roads to decay (Ahuja 2009). Looking at British correspondence related to a highway that cuts through Odisha, a road that was well-used during Mughal rule, Ahuja has demonstrated that the British failure to maintain basic infrastructure in Odisha produced Odisha's marginality, rather than Odisha's original and natural marginality being the logical cause of its lacking infrastructure. By the mid-nineteenth century, even Odisha's main roads were impassable much of the year (Ahuja 2007). The Odia-speaking areas of each administrative unit seemed remote as well as culturally and economically insignificant from the perspective of their British capitals. This colonial experience structured colonial and postcolonial regional belonging around Odisha's unification in the face of Bengali cultural and linguistic dominance and the region's marginality within larger political structures.

Baptist Missionaries and Odisha's Press

Ethical journalism in Odisha has its roots in the beginning of local, Odia-language printing in the mid-nineteenth century, which began with Cuttack-based Baptist missionaries from England. Contemporary Odishan journalists and historians counter this association through the memorialization of *Kujibar Patra*, a hand-written periodical that has been called “Odisha’s *first* newspaper”—some in Odisha reported to me that it was written and distributed on palm leaves; others say rough paper. This memorialization is recuperative, seeking to decenter the role of Christian missionaries in local journalism by establishing Odisha’s first Odia-language printing presses. In a monthly or semi-monthly periodical published by the Odisha’s Information and Public Relations Department, local historian and librarian R.K. Mahapatra (2004) reports that *Kujibar Patra* was published by Sadhu Sunder Das, from an ashram in Kujibar in central Odisha. The existence of such an early chronicle apparently on the model of newspapers indicates local innovation in the direction of journalism and newswriting prior to local printing technologies. However, given the little known about this early publication, I begin my discussion of the Odishan press with the model of evangelical pedagogy that Baptist missionaries established with their printing presses.

The role of the missionaries in Odisha was shaped by the relative late entry of the printing press to the region, compared to other areas of India. In most of India, Indian-owned vernacular language presses grew exponentially between 1830-1860, due to a combination of growing support for vernacular language education in the government, the greater availability of the press technology, the growth of a class of Indian men familiar with printing and thus interested in and

able to run the presses. Odisha was far behind other linguistic centers when it came to literacy and printing in the mid-colonial period thanks to its broader political economic situation.

While Odisha languished on the margins of British awareness, Christian missionaries found this marginality inspiring, especially when paired with Odisha's reputation as the home of Jagannatha, one of the premier pilgrimage sites among Vaishnava devotees, which one Cuttack-based missionary described, in a meeting report on his return to Britain, as fully exemplifying, like "nowhere [else] on earth," the "Psalmist declar[ation] that *their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God*" [original italics] (James Pegg, quoted in Society 1826, 348). The Odisha Mission was established at Cuttack in 1822 by the General Baptist Missionary Society. It had been inspired by the Particular Baptist Mission in Serampore, near Calcutta, which has been credited with establishing the form of the contemporary Christian mission (Smalley 1991, xi). Serampore's Baptists were renowned in India and in Britain for their printing innovations, establishing a successful multi-vernacular-language printing press that translated and published Bibles in 15 languages, including Odia (Khan 1962). With the assistance of Serampore's printer, William Ward, two young Englishmen founded the Cuttack Mission Station in 1822 and, after sending their print work to Serampore and Calcutta for 15 years, procured a working press and established the Cuttack Mission Press in 1838. The Cuttack Mission Press published Odia translations of scripture and other religious tracts, as well as textbooks, grammars, and readers in Odia (for a detailed account of the surviving archive, see Shaw 1977).

As the first printing press in an Odia speaking region, the Odisha Mission Press formed the context in which many Odia speakers encountered their first mechanically printed texts. The

Odisha Mission helped to establish the interpretive frames through which printed text would be understood, often by marking the difference from usual textual practice. Pre-colonial Odia literary culture had a long manuscript tradition. The development of this tradition in the four hundred years before British colonialism is an example of vernacularization (Pollock 1998, 1998, 2006), in which the medieval rise of regional identities and languages was worked out through the emergence of regional literary cultures. Puri was a center of palm leaf manuscript construction and maintenance in both Sanskrit and Odia, and even when not serving ritual purposes, texts were managed as highly valuable objects in their own right. While governmental document production was typically managed by men of the Kayastha caste (on the challenge of determining actual caste of Kayasthas, see Gupta 1983), by the medieval period, the copying of palm leaf manuscripts seems to have been a peripatetic merchant operation, with copyists traveling to their patron's homes to make prized aesthetic objects (Patnaik 1989, 94). Well-established villages may have had stores of popular texts, but most of the manuscript collectors were either *rajās* or involved in ritual transmission.

In this milieu, the first printed materials were fascinating but also suspicious. The entire printed object was dissimilar from the treasured manuscript texts: compared to dried palm leaves, which are inflexible, deeply etched with a stylus and filled with pigment, and wrapped in bundles with thread, flexible papers are bound along an edge or folded and merely covered in ink. Production, storage, and use differed. Additionally, thanks to the introduction of print to the region by missionaries, the social trajectories of printed texts, at least initially, also looked much different from the circulation of palm leaf manuscripts. While scribes seem to have come from

many castes and poets certainly did (Patnaik 1989), once produced, manuscripts circulated primarily among high castes, sometimes with ritual restrictions on who could touch the texts and in what conditions (Apffel-Marglin 1985). By contrast, the missionaries hoped to interest anyone in their printed booklets. There were no ritual restrictions or rules governing the printed texts. In a 1979 letter to British congregations describing his proselytizing in Puri, one young Cuttack missionary narrated several methods of interesting illiterate pilgrims in printed scriptures: producing “magic lantern” slide shows, holding public debates with visitors (non-priests), and even charging money for the scriptures “so that they are properly valued” (Heberlet 1880). The missionaries sought to spread their texts as widely as possible, among anyone who might find their heart moved to the Christian God. The result of all of these divergences from usual textual practice was that the printed text came to be seen as dangerous. In his memoir about the period, novelist Phakirmohan Senapati recalled that “no Hindu children would attend [the government schools] for fear of losing caste by reading their printed book” (Senapati 1985[1918]).

One of the profound and lasting effects of the Orissa Mission Press was the metaphor of printing as the spreading of light, a trope already in wide use across South Asia as an imagery of wisdom (*jnana*), but which could not have been further from the initial Odia suspicion of printed text. This metaphor of the press as light is exemplified in a six-page poem about India’s missionaries, quoted in one of the contemporary Baptist missionary publications:

Amplly were these fulfilled! the chains of caste
Were broken; languages and tongues made one;
That mighty power, THE PRESS, its influence vast
Lent to the cause, that “they who read, might run;”
...
Thus, many a solitary place made glad,

The wilderness forgot its earlier doom;
The joyful desert, with new beauty clad,
Rivalled the rose in its luxuriant bloom;
Thy glory, Lebanon! was given for gloom,
To those who sat in darkness and in night;
And they who in the shadow of the tomb
Before had slept, beheld the radiance bright
Of that arising Sun whose beams are life and light.
(Bernard Barton, "The Missionaries, A Poem" in Cox 1845)

Echoing Habakkuk 2:2, "And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it," these verses effectively merge the ontological Logos or Word of God, the "message" of the Gospel, and the mechanism of the movable-type printing press. The joining of this Christian imagery with Romantic metaphors of mind (Abrams 1971) through images of lamps and mirrors found a ready home in Odisha, where such metaphors resonated with poetic imagery of *dīpas* (lamps) and *darpanas* (mirrors) from Vaishnavite bhakti literature like Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda* (for comparison, see Sinha 2008; for a discussion of philosophical implications of mirrors in Indian literature, see Ramanujan 1989)

The story of the *Utkal Dipika*, the "Lamp of Odisha," tells the story of the beginning of Odisha's interest in political modernity; it also anchors the value of advocacy among Odisha's contemporary journalists in the living past. The *Utkal Dipika*'s biography tells of the new awareness of the political potentials of the Odia language, the rise of modern associations and native business ventures, the popularization of Odia nationalism, the growth of local social reform, and the rise of an independence movement, all as the heroic story of how marginalized men, in response to great injustice, forged a new way for the people of their country.

Synonymous with the name of its editor, Gaurishankar Ray, and the Cuttack Printing Press, the

Utkal Dipika is remembered for establishing both Odishan journalism and that journalism's ethical ideals.

The Emergence of Advocacy By Publication

The understanding of press ethics that developed through the *Utkal Dipika* revolved around several key categories and metaphors, including understandings of “the people” as those who are most vulnerable and unable to speak for themselves, questions about the authenticity of speaking on behalf of the people, and figuring of a shared linguistic-racial-cultural identity as the ground for such authentic representation or voicing. This section explores how these conceptions of publication took root in Odisha in the 1860s to 1900s, especially through two events: the famine of 1866 and the emergence of the pro-Odia language movement.

The rains of 1865 started too well. The monsoon came nearly a month early to the coast, with Balasore and Puri districts recording record high rainfalls in May, so much that many farmers feared crop damage from the heavy rains. But the rain dwindled early, and by mid-September there was nothing. The rice crops that depended on rain through October dried out and died. In the year that followed, the colonial government's official figures later suggested, more than 800,000 people died of starvation and illnesses such as cholera, and observer's routinely suggested that death tolls might have been as high as a third of the population in the coastal districts . However, such extreme starvation did not necessarily follow from a poor monsoon—there had been poor monsoons before without such high death tolls. In the aftermath

of the crisis, locally called the *nā'ānka durbhiksha* (“famine of the ninth year [of the king]”), administrators, legislators and politicians, collectors, British journalists, and the emerging Odia intelligencia argued numerous theories to account for the severity.

As Ahuja has observed, the famine of 1866 had wide-ranging implications for the social world of Odisha, with “food riots and famine crimes, transgressions of community norms and loss of caste status, religious conversions and large-scale migration, the disproportionately high mortality of landless laborers and a partial redistribution of property in land” (Ahuja 2009, 187). Comparing famines in peasant societies in the pre-modern and modern period, David Arnold (1988) has suggested that famines regularly catalyze major social transformations, and the Odisha famine of 1866 was no exception. The famine also established a model narrative, a sort of template event, through which Odias would conceptualize the relationship between Odisha and the rest of the world over the next century and a half. Several key aspects of the famine that continue to echo today include the feeling that Odisha’s suffering is unrecognized by the larger world, that Odisha is only ever recognized by the rest of the world in times of extreme crisis, and that this inattention (whether by the British administration in the nineteenth century, or by the central government in the twenty-first) is one of the reasons for Odisha’s continued crises.

The famine in its extremity in the summer of 1866 was the first time that many in the British administration of India, not to mention the British public more generally, had ever given consideration to Odisha. Though there were scarcities felt from the final months of 1865, there was still very little general British attention to Odisha until the following hot season. Even as the famine gained momentum in Odisha, it warranted little more than a line or two in the *Times* of

London. At the height of Odisha's starvation in June 1866, after the failure of the winter crop and the onset of the hot season, the London *Times*' Calcutta correspondent wrote of the global market shifts in cotton that had produced both high prices and an abundance of cash among the Indian peasantry of Madras, the North-West Provinces, and the Punjab, and then turned to the situation on the eastern coast. "But in the outlying corners of the empire," he wrote, "[...] there has been, and now is, terrible famine." (*Times of London*, June 18, 1866, p. 5)

However, the enormity of the crisis soon overtook the tendency to dismiss the "outlying corners of the empire," and the events in Odisha became a site of significant political contest in both India and Britain. In October 1866, the *Times* called the Odisha famine "the worst evil against which India is called on to contend" (*Times of London*, Oct 1, 1866). It also became the major topic through which various political and economic theories were argued in 1866 and 1867, in the House of Commons and various national newspapers. The famine circulated throughout the parlors and meeting-houses of the Empire's high-society; mentioned every few days in the *Times* by the fall of 1866, it was a dominant concern among Britain's ruling classes. Numerous observers and critics suggested the famine served as a test of British crown rule generally—and a test that the British had failed.

In the early reports of the famine, several theories served as explanation of the famine, in addition to the rain shortage. These are worth recounting because they also tell us about the context of the early Odishan press: an obscure political-economy exposed to the whims of foreign officials and unsupported by infrastructure or funds. One dominant explanation was the land settlement situation in Odisha. Settled long after the rest of Bengal thanks to its continued

administration by the Marathas into the nineteenth century, the first settlement was undertaken in 1835. Coming after several experiments in the emerging colonial science of land administration, the Odisha settlement was intended to follow the ryotwari system of southern and north-western India. The main difference between the two systems is often presented as the personnel structure of responsibility for taxation: in the ryotwari system, taxes were collected directly from cultivators. In the Bengal zamindari system, the colonial administrators collected taxes from a land-lord or zamindar, who in turn collected rent from the cultivators. The ryotwari system was widely understood as a more successful mechanism for instilling in the peasantry a respect and desire for private property than the zamindari system, which over the nineteenth century had become increasingly desirable over the apparent preservation of feudal social relations of patronage under the zamindars—even though, in Odisha at least, many of the zamindars were Bengalis who had recently purchased their estates at low rates from struggling nobility (Mohanty 2007). Yet the incomplete settlement and the inattention of the government meant that the ryotwari system dropped increasingly into a system of exploitation by zamindars. In his memoirs, former Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, argued that the main drawback of the Odisha's lapse into the zamindari system, despite the original settlement plans, was the zamindar's essential removal of the bureaucratic specialists who had managed the revenue under the Mughals and the Marathas: the kanungoes and the tehilsidhars (Campbell 1893). Without these Crown-employed clerical staff dedicated to managing the local land-registers, updating the settlement documents, and the noting of population, crops, and revenue payments, there existed no statistical record of the region under settlement (Mohanty 1993, 55).

This lack of information became a political concern in London in the fall of 1866, and after a series of meetings around London, a Famine Commission was formed to investigate the government's responsibility, to be led by the former Lieutenant Governor himself, George Campbell. In January 1867, the officers commissioned with the Famine Report conducted a series of interviews in Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore districts. Gaurishankar Ray was among the named and many unnamed Indians interviewed as part of the Famine Commission investigation. In Cuttack on January 11, 1867, "Baboo Gouree Sunkur Roy" sat in the makeshift Commission court in the Cuttack Darbar and responded to the Commissioner's questions about the availability of food during the year prior. Based on rumor, Ray had believed that there was much more grain in storage than there proved to be. After answering their questions regarding the amount of information available and the progress of starvation in Cuttack, Ray advised: "I manage a vernacular paper called the 'Utkul Deepika,' and have drawn the attention of the Commissioners to a number of articles published therein bearing on the famine. Those articles generally express my views."

Gaurishankar Ray was born to a Bengali family long domiciled in Odisha. His father worked in the Cuttack court, and Ray worked in the courts as well. But his real love was the Press. Ushered into existence by his friend Bichitrananda Dasa, the Cuttack Printing Press was the first Indian-owned, non-religious printing press of Odisha. Dasa had been born to an influential family, and he rose through the ranks of native positions in the British administration after establishment of crown rule (Boulton 1993). In the mid-1860s, they together began to work for the establishment of a native-owned press in Cuttack, likely modeling their work on

Calcutta's active "native press." The support of progressively-minded Maharaja of Dhenkanal, a region just to the north of Cuttack, was transformative, and according to historian John Boulton, the Maharaja's support allowed Bichitrnanda Dasa to find shareholders among independent rajas and zemindars, his familial and government position lending further credence to the project. The printing company was established with 300 shares distributed entirely among Indians, equaling 7,500 rupees (Boulton 1993, 27). Gaurishankar came on as the operations manager of the Printing Press, his continued work for the government allowing him to do so without placing a financial burden on the Press. Under Ray's guidance, the Press flourished, becoming the center of cultural and political change in Cuttack through the 1920s.

From the *Utkala Dipika's* first issue, it was trying to do something other than what was typical among Bengali newspapers of the same period. It was not seeking simply to report on events, or to teach the public or raise discourse, or to expose corruption, or to publicize certain views. While it eventually incorporated all of these goals, in August 1866, it sought to scaffold Odisha, to provide some basic form of lifesaving support, by circulating information about the state of food stores, of crops, of the people who could help and what they could do, information whose absence had allowed the British to neglect Odisha and persist with misinformed policies. One way it did this was through graphic accounts of hardship, located geographically:

Today we came to know that in the village Mahanga a hungry woman is walking around. Her condition is dangerously ill. She is eating flesh from the dead bodies. It has been said that she is digging out dead bodies under the earth and eating them. Out of acute hunger she even dares to attack living beings to eat flesh. (*Utkala Dipika*, August 11, 1866, translation by Kedar Mishra)

Another way that the Utkal Dipika, that is, its publishers and mostly its editor, Gaurishankar Ray, sought to help Odisha was by becoming the center for actual organizing. The first issue called for participation in a “Help Odisha” campaign, a group that would meet at the press and raise funds for the most affected.

In Defense of the Mother Tongue

The language of printing was itself a moral project for Odisha’s early printers. Benedict Anderson’s (1991 [1983]) account of the formation of new linguistic hierarchies through print, in which one linguistic variation becomes the “print language” according to which others were judged, may be considered broadly descriptive of the early development of print in what is contemporary Odisha. But this development in Odisha was reflexive: Odisha’s elites were themselves concerned with the sociopolitical dominance of the language used for printing and education. While the role of publication in response to the famine of 1866 focused on the relationship between content—namely information about food availability and suffering—and elite decision-making, the 1870s and the following several decades saw a growth of explicit concern for the politics of language. The role of new language ideologies (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) joining a dominant language to a single people and geographical region is especially evident in the following conflict over the relationship between Odia and Bengali. Elites in Balasore, Berhampur, Sambalpur, and Cuttack established self-described newspapers and literary journals. The reflexive concern with the form of printed language was itself

overdetermined by the growing colonial science of linguistics, which sought to map genealogical connections between languages as evidence of racial origins (Trautmann 1997, 2006). As the following argument demonstrates, the political status of the printed language was balanced by the rhetorical power of scientific legitimacy, itself conferred by proofs of linguistic purity.

On the first Wednesday night of June, 1870, the British and Indian members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal met for their monthly meeting in Calcutta. After hearing a paper on the customs of Andamanese Islanders, administrator John Beames and esteemed Bengali Indologist Rajendra Lal Mitra presented positions in a debate that had, until that point, been confined to Odisha. Beames' presentation "On the Relation of the Uriya to the Other Modern Aryan Languages" (Beames 1870) was already a rejoinder to arguments posed by Mitra and a Balasore-based Bengali, Kantichandra Bhattacharyya, who had recently published a book called "Uriya is not an Independent Language." Two years prior, at a meeting of the Cuttack Debate Club—a group of elite Odias who met regularly to discuss contemporary social issues—Mitra had delivered some remarks on a paper on "patriotism" at the invitation of the members. Mitra had, in the course of describing the "injury which false patriotism or insensate love for everything that is national causes to real progress," took as his example the local love for the Odia language. His remarks that night, he later reported them to the Asiatic Society meeting, "pointed out the injury which was being inflicted on the Uriyá race by their attachment to a provincial patois, which they wished to exalt to a distinct language" (Mitra 1870, 201). Mitra's arguments about Odia had a profound influence in Odisha, not simply because they helped to unite and focus efforts to support and reshape the local linguistic landscape, but also because Mitra's specific arguments

about mass education and “progress” shaped the form of linguistic and social advocacy that would take root over the last decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth.

Rajendra Lal Mitra was a philologist and historian whom Rabindranath Tagore called “an all-round expert, an academy in himself,” remarking about him: “I have met many Bengali men of letters in my time, but non who left an impression of such brilliance” (Tagore 1992[1911]). But Mitra was more of an intellectual bureaucrat than a poet, compiling books on topics of governmental concern (Mitra Antiquities), organizing teams of pandits to translate for the Asiatic Society researches (Tagore 1992[1911]), writing textbooks himself, and seeking to influence education policy. Underlying these works lay a deep belief in social progress through scientific discovery and technological invention, and a theory of education that saw the cultivation of societal excellence through elite knowledge production. In his argument about the “injury” done to Odisha’s residents through attachment to Odia, Mitra drew on these beliefs about social progress.

Mitra’s argument before the Asiatic Society had two overarching steps. The first step was philological, being an argument about the structural similarity between Odia and Bengali. For this, Mitra adopted several rhetorical strategies. First, he argued for mutual comprehensibility: that the same text written in Bengali and Odia would share “over ninety per cent” of the same vocabulary, which he demonstrated with a three examples in three “dialects,” one each from Cuttack, Calcutta, and Dhaka (Mitra 1870, 207). For rhetorical flourish, Mitra chose as the exemplar text the first two paragraphs of a statement against him by Gouri Shankar Ray published in the *Utkala Dipika*, in which Ray argues for Odia’s distinctiveness. Mitra answered

counter arguments about the mutual incomprehensibility of spoken Odia and Bengali—phonological differences—by comparing them to the likely misunderstandings between “a cockney and a farm laborer in Yorkshire,” which, he said, “would in the same way . . . decide the fate of English in the two places.” Having pronounced that neither vocabulary nor the “local peculiarities of pronunciation [...] constitute language,” Mitra then addressed that which did: grammar. Arguing against Beames’ own grammatical comparisons, which had been at the center of Beames’ own test of Odia’s distinctiveness, Mitra harkened to archaic forms of Bengali verbs and noun declensions to show their identity with contemporary Odia. He concluded the first part of his argument stating that “instead of being a ‘self-contained and independent member of the Aryan Indian vernaculars,’ [Uriya] is most closely and intimately connected with the Bengali, and the Pandit [Beames] has very good reasons to take it to be a daughter and not a sister of the vernacular of this province” (Mitra 1870, 208).

The second step in Mitra’s argument addressed the pragmatic implications of Odia and Bengali’s similarities, claiming that scientific and technological progress would be impeded unless all of Bengali’s closest cognate languages—Odia as well as Assamese and other dialects spoken throughout Bengal Presidency—were standardized as modern literary Bengali for the purposes of education. This argument pivoted on an analysis of the poverty of the existing population of Odia speakers:

According to the last census, [Uriyas] number only a little over two million in the three districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri, and a million may be added for those who live in Ganjam, Sambhalpur and the Tributary Mahals. But on the other hand, we must deduct at least five lacs for foreigners, Muhammadans, Kyas, Madrasis, Bengalis, and others, who want not and care not for the Uriya language, so that we have only about 2 ½ millions for whom a distinct literature has to be

created. The three districts under the Cuttack Commissioner yield to Government in the way of revenue under 17 lacs a year, and the zemindars at 37 per cent get about 11 or 12 lacs. This sum is divided among 3881 persons, of whom only 26 get above ten thousand a year each, and of them 16 are Bengalis, mostly non-resident, who are not likely to offer any especial encouragement to the Uriya language. The people are mostly agriculturists and having very little trade, are generally very poor. How it is possible for such a small community, and under such circumstances to create a literature in their vernacular, and maintain it, I cannot conceive. (Mitra 1870, 210)

In this passage, Mitra cuts to what would become the core of Odia linguistic advocacy: the distance of “the people” from those who rule them—and rule them in linguistic forms that they didn’t themselves speak. As Mitra points out, over half of the most highly paid Indians in Odisha’s government were Bengalis, while over 2 million Odia agriculturist and traders were “very poor.” What, for Mitra, was a demonstration of the impossibility of Odia public education and literary development was, for the elite of Cuttack, Berhampur, and Balasore, exactly an argument *for* Odia’s development.

Thus, while North India saw the growth of nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century, Odisha’s political activists focused on the protection and unification of Odia speaking areas. This period was profoundly shaped by Madhusudan Das, a lawyer who had been born and raised in a small village near Cuttack and later schooled in Calcutta. In Cuttack, he was tutored by *Utkal Dipika* editor Gaurishankar Ray, and during a stint in Balasore he became close with Phakirmohan Senapati, writer and publisher. Das participated in the early meetings of the Indian National Congress as a representative of Odisha, but historian Nivedita Mohanty reports that he left the INC after a long conversation with Surendranath Bannerjee, politician and subsequent publisher of the *Bengalee*, in 1902, in which Bannerjee refused to take up “the provincial

question” in Congress (Mohanty 2005[1982], 159). Turning from national to regional politics, throughout 1903, Madhusudan Das hosted a series of meetings among public men in Odisha, including intellectuals and writers, government employees, feudatory chiefs, and British officials at which were discussed the status of Odia education, Odia literature, and the desire for the unification of Odia-speaking areas under a single administration. At the end of the year, Das and a core group of activists held a gathering of over 300 supporters, establishing the Utkal Sammilani (Utkal Union Conference) (Mohanty 2005[1982], 97). Solidifying its opposition to the Indian National Congress [INC], as the feudatory chiefs were generally suspicious of the INC, the first president of the Utkal Sammilani was the Raja of Mayurbhanj.

As evidenced in the concerns discussed by Madhusudan Das and his guests, Odia writing, publication, and education were at the center of the increasingly political organization. The organization did not have strong political philosophies, though Madhusudan Das’ background in law gave him ample resources for the liberal oratorical style popularized by mid-nineteenth century Bengali liberals (Bayly 2011, 135-7), which mixed discussions of legal rights and cultural ideals (see Das, Sahu, and Mishra 1980). Instead of overriding philosophies, the Sammilani had a populist agenda to spread its message across the districts. While the print media were not a method for reaching Odias, print was essential to the Sammilani’s conception of its project as forging a unity of people beyond even those hundreds present—of being for *all* the people. It was the possibility of the spread of print that enabled the organizations’ claim to representing the Odia people, despite its relatively small organization. Here we see the idea of the public that can be constructed through the circulation of print media as itself one of the

meaningful features of the press. The growth of the Utkal Sammilani involved the increasingly explicit claim to representation of the non-elite peasantry, as evidenced by the speeches of the President of the 1914 Session, in which the chief of Paralakhemundi, Ganjam, argued for a focus on campaigning in the remotest Odia-speaking areas. This session saw the appointment of a “roving missionary” of the Odia movement, whose travels around the outlying areas were published in the Berhampur-based newspaper *Asha* (Das, Sahu, and Mishra 1980).

Pritipuspa Mishra’s (2012) study of debates in Odia literary journals from the 1890s, demonstrates how the reimagining of the people in Odisha was both a focus of literary production and an effect of it. The contest began over the role of past Odia literature in textbook production for secular education. Turn of the century critics read earlier Odia poetry, much of it recounting erotic scenes from popular religious tales, as obscene; there were also concerns about the excess of ornamentation without ethical lessons.³⁷ In contrast, Odia literary critics of the 1890s were seeking to establish “local Odia everyday life” within literary and thus political concerns. In articles published in *Utkala Dipika* and *Sambalpur Hitaeseni*, and then in two spin-off literary journals devoted entirely to this debate, Odia literary critics argued about the purposes of Odia literature by drawing especially on the new ideal of *desa-kala-patra* or place-time-character, a concept that describes literature’s ability to address its contemporary context. In 1896, critic Biswanath Kara proposed a program for Odia literary production that explicitly acknowledged the value of different literary styles in a “living literature” (*jibana sahitya*) by capturing the social world of the people.

³⁷ This is reminiscent of other contemporary movements, such as the hyper-rationalism of the Punjab-based Arya Samaj, which sought to pare Hinduism down to an austere truth by drawing from European rational skepticism and Sanskritic philosophers (Bayly 2011, 225).

At the heart of this growing concern with realism was the desire to transform Odia writing into a representative technology, a semiotic form that could represent the people—especially the people who could not represent themselves. While the content or topical focus on new literature was an area of concern—it should focus on daily life in contemporary society—the forms of language were also useful. The later work of Phakirmohan Senapati is the strongest example of formal innovations toward a “living” Odia. Senapati is widely regarded as the founder of Odia critical realism, especially as embodied in his novel *Chhaa Mana Atha Guntha* (*Six Acres and A Third*), published serially in the *Utkal Sahitya* literary magazine between 1897-1899, as well in as his short stories. *Six Acres* tells the story familiar through nineteenth century Indian peasant narratives of the unfair village money lender and his peasant victims. But whereas most nineteenth century Indian tales of peasantry seek to evoke feelings of sentimental but patronizing concern for the simple villagers, Senapati’s work relies on many levels of irony and satire. Senapati’s work innovated narratively, in tone, and in linguistic style itself—he has been most remembered for drawing on ‘low’, ‘spoken’, and ‘rustic’ speech in his portrayal of characters (Mohanty 2008).

Censorship and the Growing Politics of Opposition

While the nineteenth century Odia press received patronage and encouragement from British officials such as John Beames and T.E. Ravenshaw, especially as those officials aligned

themselves with Odias in the protection of their language from the threat of Bengali, the relation between the “native” press and the British government in North India was markedly contentious. Historian Gerald Barrier usefully adopts imagery of a pendulum to characterize how press freedoms in British India swung between the liberalists in British parliament (with growing pressure from Indian nationalists) and Indian administrators (Barrier 1974, 4). With the establishment of Crown rule after the Rebellion of 1858, the British Government established the Gagging Act of 1857, designed to limit future rebellions by controlling what presses printed about the government.³⁸ The surveillance of the native press was established in bureaucratic practice with the law that became known as the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, which required that copies of all publications be submitted to the government and that printing presses and newspapers be registered with the government prior to circulation (see Stark 2008). Surveillance efforts solidified with the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the strongest of the censorship laws, which gave the police power to review and censor prior to publication as well as to jail editors or publishers without judicial involvement (Barrier 1974). Historian Uma Das Gupta (Gupta 1977) has argued that the Vernacular Press Act was pivotal in the formation of a reflexive awareness among India’s fragmented and highly diverse pressmen, establishing the first inklings of professional identity in their opposition to the government. With strong criticism against it in both Britain and India, Ripon’s government repealed the Act in 1881, but the self-awareness of the press remained.

³⁸ This Act was widely criticized in England at the time for failing to distinguish between “the libels of the native and the loyalty of the British press” (The Press Gagging Act in India. Lyttelton *Times*, Volume VIII, Issue 529, 28 November 1857, Page 3).

The pendulum of press freedoms continued to swing, and with it, the growing salience of the press to itself. Macaulay's Indian Penal Code dwelt extensively on the criminal potential of speech acts, especially involving obscenity and blasphemy (Ahmed 2009). Built on an understanding of the Indian subject as "an autonomous liberal subject tempered by Indian prejudices, sensitivities, and particularities" (Ahmed 2009, 178), including especially the sensitivity to "mental injuries" by language. At the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, a series of laws sought to limit the press, including the Newspaper (Incitement of Offenses) Act, 1908, and the Press Act of 1910, which demanded financial securities from publishers (see Pinney 2009). With the war of 1914, the British Government enacted the Defense of India Act, 1915, establishing emergency powers to try any number of IPC-designated criminal acts in specially created courts, with no appeal process. Between the Press Act and the Defense of India Act, obstacles that one contemporary American printing-trade periodical described as "really making any press worthy of the name an impossibility," India's publishers increasingly looked to each other. Drawing on the British model of the professional journalist that had been forged in the late nineteenth century (for an account of this, see Hampton 1999) and exemplified in the Imperial Press Conference of 1909 (Kaul 2006), a combination of Indian- and British-owned publishers joined together to form the Press Association of India in 1915. According to their widely circulated "Articles of Constitution", the Press Association's stated aim was "to protect the press of the country by all lawful means from arbitrary laws and their administration, from all attempts of the Legislature to encroach on its liberty, or of the executive authorities to interfere with the free exercise of their calling by journalists and press proprietors"

(Press Association of India 1915, quoted in Printer 1916, 483). The Press Association was formed through an uncommon mix of Anglo and Indian publishers all relatively nationalist, including such figures as Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, outspoken critic of the government and editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, B.G. Horniman, and Surendranath Bannerjee,³⁹ publisher of the *Bengalee*, Indian National Congress leader, and Indian representative at the Imperial Press Conference several years earlier. Over the subsequent five years, the Press Association published memoranda enumerating the newspapers that had been censored or shuttered through the government's actions.

The Press Association's own statement about protecting the "free exercise of their calling by journalists and press proprietors" demonstrates that by 1915 there was a discourse of professionalism beginning to circulate among Indian journalists. The public figures at the helm of the Press Association were not the people most suffering under the Acts, and many of them were not likely to imagine themselves as journalists primarily, but they were distinct from the general Anglo-Indian press in their outspoken criticism of the government and support for the Indian National Congress. Natarajan (1962) cites a long list of publishers and printers who were imprisoned, exiled, and financial destroyed during the twentieth century's second decade. While this developing talk about journalism as a profession (and a "calling") took hold in India significantly later than the professionalizing activities of journalism in either Britain, the United States (Schudson 1981), or even in Britain's "Dominions" (Cryle 1997), what is especially distinctive about this Indian professional journalism is that it formed not around a core concern

³⁹ Bannerjee was not new to organizing the press. In 1878, in response to the Vernacular Press Laws, he sought to organize Calcutta's publishers in the Native Press Association. Bannerjee later cited this moment as the beginning of the nationalist movement (Natarajan 1962, 95-98).

with objectivity and facticity, as Schudson (1981) argues for the United States, but that it formed around the core idea of freedom.

The pursuit of freedom as the core of journalism, and the essential role of the press in nationalist movement, rested on a complex of ideas that over the next twenty years would be elaborated, mobilized, and distributed by the editor of *Young India*, Mohandas Gandhi. Though in some initial conflict with the elite clique of the Press Association—Besant, for instance, lampooned Gandhi for being allowed “every week to excite hatred and contempt against the Government” while “papers that one has never heard of, wielding little influence have their securities forfeited or heavily enhanced” (Natarajan 1962, 200-201)—the spread of a freedom-centric journalism, one not far from that imagined by the Press Association’s leaders, was accomplished through Gandhi’s encouragement and example in the inter-war period. After the war, in March 1919, the emergency powers of the Defense of India Act were continued as the Anarchic and Revolutionary Crimes Act (widely known as the Rowlatt Act), including restrictions on the press. As anger spread nationally in response to the Rowlatt Act, Gandhi promoted non-cooperation of the press in addition to his national *hartal* (suspension of all business), focusing on the publication of unregistered and unsecured papers. His own *Satyagrahi*, of April 1919, pledged to “court imprisonment by offering civil disobedience by committing a civil break of certain laws” (quoted in Bhattacharyya 1984[1965], 34). Though Gandhi called off his general non-cooperation movement after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Amritsar (Panter-Brick 2012), his advocacy of non-cooperation of the press continued unabated.

Odisha came under the influence of national (and nationalist) politics in 1919. Up until this point, politics in Cuttack, Balasore, Sambalpur, and Berhampur had focused on protection and unification of the Odia speaking areas largely in cooperation with the British. Thanks to this cooperation, the press limitations of the Press Act and the Defense of India Act affected few publishers in Odisha (Natarajan 1962; for comparative data on Odisha, see Mahapatra 1959, 17). Animosity toward Bengalis-supporters united Odia-advocates under an umbrella capacious enough to include domiciled Bengalis and sympathetic officials.

Following the 1919 Congress endorsement of Gandhi in Amritsar, Odisha interest in nationalism grew rapidly led by the lawyer Gopabandhu Das and several others. A group of young Odias led by Gopabandhu Das attended the 1920 Calcutta- and Nagpur-sessions of the Indian National Congress. The Utkal Union Conference at Charadharpur between in January 1921 registered a major shift from a primary focus on regional unification to the support of a national *swaraj* movement. However, the growth of Congress-affiliated nationalism in Odisha did not replace or eliminate the regional movement for ‘amalgamation’—it merely polarized it.⁴⁰ Shortly after the conference, Madhusudan Das joined the ministry of the Government of Bihar and Orissa in explicit opposition to the Congress movement. This split Odisha’s activists, and Harekrushna Mahatab, Nabakrushna Chaudury and several others campaigned from door-to-door against Madhusudan Das’ cooperation with the British. Political divisions between those who supported cooperation with the British with the aim of unifying the Odia-speaking areas against the abuses of its neighbors, and those who supported joining with those same neighbors to oust

⁴⁰ The resulting political friction has caused no small amount of discomfort among Odisha’s post-independence historians. For instance, historian Soma Chand writes that “narrow provincialism shamelessly took precedence over the pan-Indian fight for freedom from the British” (Chand 1997).

the British, continued at least through Odisha's statehood in 1936 and in some cases beyond (Mohanty 2005[1982]).

Gandhi's Nationalism and the Role of Restraint in Press Freedom

Before continuing with the narrative of Odishan politics, I describe in some detail Gandhi's position on journalism and the press. Though Gandhi is not a major figure in this dissertation, his philosophical and political innovations underlie discussions of press ethics, press regulations, and especially talk about "self-restraint" among journalists. Moreover, in his invention of an ethical politics for India, Gandhi created one of the most profound and lasting fusions of democratic ideals with Indic philosophies of self-restraint and action. Despite diversity within each tradition, orientations to ideals of freedom or liberation, *mokṣa* or *nirvana*, became a fecund area for Gandhi's innovations. Historian Mithi Mukherjee has argued that Gandhi achieved this fusion by taking on the role of ascetic renunciate, a role which she argues "was anticipated in the discursive context of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century India, where the discourse of renunciation had come to be tied to the discourse of ethical service to society" (Mukherjee 2010, 468). Gandhi, however, transformed this ethical freedom into political activity. Drawing on the *Bhagavad Gita*'s exposition of disinterested action, Gandhi invented what historian Ananya Vajpeyi has argued was a paradigmatic transformation, on the scale of Galileo, of understandings of the self and sovereignty (Vajpeyi 2012, 55-56).

Gandhi's conceptual apparatus itself demonstrates his innovations at the intersection of liberal democracy and Hindu philosophical principles. *Satyagraha* (truth-force), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *swaraj* (self-rule), *harijan* (child of God)—these terms claimed ground for a pragmatic perspective born from his reading the *Bhagavad Gita* but held to a practical standard of negotiating for Indian independence. As we see in these terms, self-restraint played a central role in Gandhi's politics, yet so, too, did publicity. The interaction between these two concerns forms one of the most perplexing knots of his activism for contemporary scholars (see Mazzarella 2010; Rao 2011). On one hand his public actions, demonstrations, and publications seemed profoundly calculating and theatrical, while on the other hand he advocated a demanding theory of *satya* (truth) as the only right motive for publication or action. This balance is evident in his somatic disciplines of spinning, fasting, and celibacy, which were at once demanding, time consuming, and sincere as well as carefully presented and persuasive in the national imagination (Alter 2000; Gonsalves 2010). Prior to Gandhi, political power and renunciation had been starkly opposed to each other in the *sastras*, the *puranas*, as well as actual practice. If we consider the forms of politics in play contemporary to Gandhi—distant rulers from elsewhere, local kings who rested on their genealogical priority (difference) in relationship to their subjects, and an administrative class who did most of the work of ruling in both situations—it does not seem so far-fetched to consider Gandhi's reconstruction of the sincerity of the self in political representations vis-à-vis renunciation as an Indian political reformation on the scale of the

European religious reformation. And in this reformation of ethical politics, journalism played a vital role.⁴¹

Born in 1869 to a family of Vaishnavites in Gujarat. Trained in law in England, upon his return to India he found the legal profession unwelcoming and took a position with a company in South Africa. It was in South Africa that Gandhi's ethical politics took shape, as he experienced discrimination against diasporic Indians and undertook to fight against it through publishing experiments.

Historian Isabel Hofmeyr (2013) has provided a careful analysis of Gandhi's textual innovations during the South African period, between 1893 and 1914, during the establishment and growth of *Indian Opinion* and culminating in the circulation of his pamphlet *Hind Swaraj*. Durban's printing environment hosted diverse traditions for diasporic, colonial, missionary, and "white" printers, providing a rich environment for reimagining the role of publication through the juxtaposition of multiple understandings. Gandhi's innovations included the rejection of capitalist models of printing through the reduction of advertisements, the rejection of print jobbing, and the refusal to assert copyright (the first edition of *Hind Swaraj* carried the advisement: "No Rights Reserved"). Hofmeyr's focus is Gandhi's innovations in the very model of reading itself, including the relationship between the producer and the consumer of

⁴¹ The primacy of self-restraint and its accompanying integrity was not only evident in Gandhi's publishing, but also in his national programs for activism. At several points between the 1919 Amritsar Massacre and Independence, Gandhi called for an end to popular agitations or counseled against them due to a lack of control. We can see this, for example, in 1922, when Gandhi called off the noncooperation movement after villagers killed 22 policemen in Chauri Chaura, Uttar Pradesh. In even this basic way his advocacy of self-restraint was amplified beyond the representations of his own self-discipline, shaping the practices of activists across the subcontinent.

publications, which was slowly developed in the pages of *Indian Opinion* but took its fullest form in *Hind Swaraj*.

The 1909 pamphlet is written as a dialogue between an Editor and a Reader, in which the Reader's increasingly impatient attempts to get the Editor to state clearly his vision of India's political future are continuously put off. Uday S. Mehta (2011) has argued that this format is evidence of an entirely novel orientation to political life and modernity that values habits of self-restraint, especially patience, above mere knowledge or cognition. "*Hind Swaraj*," Mehta writes, "was ultimately concerned with the condition of the soul in the practices of everyday life and perhaps beyond" (2011). Rather than writing about the ideal political organization, Gandhi's Editor considers the effects of everyday modern life. He warns against railways and biomedicine because they unsettle the natural temporalities of the human body, which are slow and best embodied in a walking pace. Technology encourages the loss of control over the self: rather than limiting his diet, a man may overeat and then simply seek pills from a doctor. Gandhi's Editor warns against "civilization" because it works like consumption, creating the "seductive color" of health while debilitating the individual (Gandhi 1997[1910], 47). Mehta reads in this analysis of technology and civilization a broader concern with modernity's surfaces, with how "civilization works by a kind of subterfuge just like modern medicine and modern parliamentary democracy, which gives citizens the illusion of self-rule" (Mehta 2011). In the style of *Hind Swaraj*, as well as in his demanding somatic disciplines and in his journalistic standards, Gandhi advocated and modeled the way to reject modernity's surfaces for a wholesome and integral political self—the "self" of "self-rule" (*swaraj*).

This integral, restrained self could also be cultivated through the discipline of slow reading, and instructing his readers in this discipline was one of the goals of *Hind Swaraj*. Like railways and modern medicine, industrial printing posed a moral threat to the reader in two ways: readers could be confronted by wrong or deceptive information and readers could be overwhelmed with too much information which would seduce them into “hasty and ill-considered reading” (Hofmeyr 2013, 145). According to Hofmeyr, Gandhi’s publications sought to “inoculate readers against dangerous situations”:

Formerly the fewest men wrote books that were most valuable. Now, anybody writes and prints anything he likes and poisons people’s minds. (Gandhi 1997[1910], 35-36; see also Hofmeyr 2013, 145).

To protect against these ills, Gandhi advocated a laborious method of engaging with publications. In *Hind Swaraj* this instruction is achieved through repetition, and the effectiveness of repetition is modeled as the dialogue’s Reader begins to accept the repeated points and agrees to “ponder” them. Throughout his publications, Gandhi encourages readers to create archives of everything inspiring they have read, to reread, to share what they have read with others, and to hold his ideas close in their mind and in order so that their actions may be influenced by them. Ultimately, the process of slow reading and archiving should produce in the reader a feeling of responsibility for the paper, of solidarity with the producers of the paper and a feeling of participation: “a newspaper,” Gandhi advised his readers in *Indian Opinion*, “does not mean only its editor and management; the vast majority of those connected with it are readers” (quoted in Hofmeyr 2013, 133).

Later in Gandhi's career, after he had returned to India and become the face of nationalist activism, he expanded his prescriptions for readers into ethical principles for newspaper producers. He advocated that nationalists around the country establish newspapers in their own languages in order to spread the message (and, presumably, the ethical comportment of the ideal reader). In *Young India*, in 1925, Gandhi wrote about his own discipline as a newspaper producer:

I have taken up Journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived as my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of matchless weapon of 'Satyagraha'... To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics on my vocabulary. It is training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds. (July 2, 1925, quoted in Bhattacharyya, 80)

In this passage we can see that the role of newspaper producer, which at the time ranged across roles such as author, editor, conveyor, printer, and publisher, was for Gandhi an exercise of self-restraint and thus self-integration not unlike celibacy. But whereas celibacy led only to the ethical self, restraint in publishing could lead to a community joined together through ethical politics and thus ruled by its own integral self (that is, *swaraj*).

The freedom that Gandhi advocated for the press, as for the nation, was not simply the removal of fetters or legal strictures. As in Gandhi's oft-quoted warning of an Indian independence leading merely to being "Englishmen without the English," without cultivating self-restraint, both newspaper readers and producers would not be truly free. This perspective stood behind both his non-cooperation with the Rowlatt Act by publishing a non-registered

publication, his refusal to offer an apology for contempt of court (described in Chapter 6), but also his recommendation in his *Delhi Diary* (1948) that those newspapers “publishing false report or report likely to excite the public” “should never be allowed to be published” and that “such newspapers should be banned” (73, quoted in Bhattacharyya, 148). Press freedom, from Gandhi’s perspective, was not a right to print anything. Press freedom, for Gandhi, was a call to responsibility, to both the self and to the ideal nation.

Political Modernity and Political Rivalry in Odisha

Thanks to the efforts of Madhusudan Das within the colonial government, Odisha achieved separate state status in 1936. Yet the territory accorded the new state was a great disappointment along the coast, for it left large regions of Odia-speaking territory under the administration of other provinces on the basis of their separate political organization as princely states or vassal territories. This intensified a distinction between the coast and the mountainous interior kingdoms that had been developing since the British dismantled the coastal kingdom of Khurda. In the British organization of tax collection and dispute management throughout the region, the difference between the administrative organization of the former Khurda kingdom and the princely states reproduced the relationship of dominance that existed between Bengali and Odisha: coastal administrators were sent as the representatives of British interests, and their political authority was mapped onto their cultural modernity (see Pati 1996). With the movement to amalgamate the Odia speaking areas, the coastal political perspective felt that all Odia-

speaking princely states should be included, while the princes themselves were often hesitant to see their authority further threatened by the coastal dominance (Mohanty 2005[1982]; Mohanty 2007).

After 1936, tension swelled between the new provincial politics and the rulers of the Odia speaking princely states, who saw the coastal politicians as seeking political takeover (on the broader context of colonial politics in the princely states, see Bhargava 1991; Ramusack 2004). Simultaneously, a local resistance to the *rajās* or princes, called the Prajamandal or People's Movement, grew in the princely states. While it was local, it was also fed by anti-feudal socialist strains within the nationalist movement. It found itself met with increasingly repressive tactics within the princely states in part with the justification that it was not a local movement but merely the manipulations of the coastal politicians seeking to destabilize the princely states (Pati 1993). There were divisions within both the national and Odisha Congress Party leadership about how to manage these conflicts between the provinces and the princely states, and it became a point of conflict between state and national leadership at several moments in the years between 1936 and 1947 (Mohanty 2005[1982]). As reorganization of the princely states became a political necessity in the run-up to the formation of an independent republic, and as the Constitution framing itself got underway, the focus increasingly shifted from the shared language to the problem of the princely state's organization. Feudalism had no place in the new nation-state. Nehru's 1945 statement that "all these ancient and harmful relics will have to go if the people as a whole are to raise themselves out of the morass of poverty and degradation,"

suggested that much of India's poverty could be read as a sign of its surviving political premodernity.

Harekrushna Mahatab, a major representative of the Indian National Congress in Odisha and a friend of Nehru's, was at the center of the coastal-based unification movement. Mahatab had followed Gandhi in the 1930s, leading local salt marches in Odisha and starting his own newspaper, the *Prajatantra* ("People's Rule"); for political activities he was imprisoned from 1942 to 1945 (Chand 1997). In 1946, Mahatab became the Odishan state Chief Minister. As political structure became an increasingly central feature of the conflict between the princely states and the coast in the 1940s, the press itself became a sign of both coastal political modernity and of modernity in general. An exchange of letters between Harekrushna Mahatab and the Raja of Seraikella, Aditya Pratap Singh Deo, in May, 1946, exemplifies these tensions, illustrating the growing figuring of the press in the regional conflict over political modernity. While the letters center on a perceived insult and whether or not such an insult was intended, what was actually at stake in the exchange was, first, the question of whether the princely states could effectively claim political modernity or would have to step down as rulers and, second, the question of the coastal region's actual interests in the unification.

In the first letter, the Raja wrote a full-page account, with numerous assurances of good faith, of how the press had been representing Mahatab's position on the amalgamation of the States. The Raja said that the press' representation of Mahatab's position had "created the gravest misgiving in the minds of the Rulers of Odisha States and elsewhere." The Raja described the recent instances of the States and Province working together on common goals,

and he then pointedly described the ongoing and sensitive negotiations between the British and the Congress leadership with regard to the role of the Eastern (Princely) States in the future constitution. He says that it “has been very unfortunate that when matters of such paramount importance” were in negotiation between the States and the Congress that there had “appeared in papers certain unhappy statement which instead of contributing towards the success of the negotiations, mostly created misgivings in the minds of the Rulers.” At the end of the letter, the Raja concludes: “I, therefore, feel it would greatly help the success of the negotiation if the unhappy statements finding place in papers are contradicted publicly and officially and that the agitations if any started in the States need be withdrawn in our mutual interests” (Singh, letter to Mahatab on May 20, 1946, reproduced in Mohanty 2005[1982]).

The second letter, from Mahatab to Singh, has not been preserved, but Singh speaks to it in his reply with the complaint that he had been “completely misunderstood.” Singh’s begins with a reminder that he had been a participant in the Declaration of the Fundamental Rights of the People, which had been issued by the trans-regional federation of princely states, the Chamber of Princes. He continues:

I am second to none in standing for free expression of opinion. I never suggested to you to control the comments of the Press and expression of opinion by others in the Province with regard to the States, far less a request for invocation a law to stop their free expression.

He complains that Mahatab had intimated that there was “something inherent in the circumstances prevailing in the states which provides for agitations,” indicating the coastal politicians’ discourse about the princely states’ feudalism. Singh counters, noting that “great strides” were being made as the princely states did their “best to modernize their administration

and offer social amenities as well as invite association of their people in the administration.” The Raja of Seraikella concludes with the pointed observation that the princely states, which he refers to throughout as simply “the States”, “could legitimately claim greater progress in certain spheres than those in the adjoining areas” (Singh, letter to Mahatab on May 30, 1946 Mohanty 2005[1982]). This final jab at Mahatab’s and the Congress’ leadership in Odisha proposes that structural political forms are not the best measure of modernity and progress. Instead, he economically suggests, the princely states’ developments suggest that the deeper connections between the princely rulers and their people—through ritual relations as well as political-economic—provide an equal or better path to progress and representation.

In December 1947, a group of princely states organized as the Eastern States’ Union signed an agreement to be merged with the Republic of India; accounts of the merger include statements of dissatisfaction, that Orissa’s politicians had the “mentality of conquerors” (Bailey 1959; see also Mohanty 2005[1982]). Though most these merged with Orissa State, though the Raja of Seraikella joined Bihar state (it is now in Jharkhand); this decision is still mourned in contemporary coastal Odisha as having prevented the full unification of the Odia speaking areas. The Raja of Seraikella’s son, Rajendra Narayana Singh Deo, had been earlier given in adoption to the childless ruler of Patna state in contemporary Bolangir district. He joined Bolangir to Odisha in 1947 along with the other Odia-speaking princely states and established the Ganatantra political party, along with the newspaper *Ganatantra*; the Ganatantra party was the major opposition party to the Indian National Congress Party for the first two decades after Independence. During his research in 1959, F.B. Bailey observed that the Congress politicians’

harshest criticisms of the Ganatantra party and its candidates were their reliance on feudal relationships to fuel their elections, compared to the modern methods of the Congress politicians. Bailey himself saw little difference, and he suggested that the conflict over the ethics of political representation between the coastal political elite and former-princes had the effect of distancing political discourse from the experiences of peasants, reinforcing the elitism of state politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the coincident emergence of the Odishan press with the contemporary state of Odisha in the independent Republic of India. British Baptist missionaries established the first vernacular press along with the template of paternalistic pedagogy through the press, by which the light of insight could be spread among the people. Local political organizing adopted the press in the 1860s and 1870s, in order to better speak to the British on behalf of the Odia people, and then to speak to and on behalf of the Odia people themselves in opposition to Bengali. But the press itself was not the constituting force of these communities, as that it is relatively distinct from Anderson's (1991 [1983]) account of imagined communities formed through coordinated daily rituals. Instead, the press functioned as a sign of the people, and as a sign of the people it also functioned as a sign of political modernity and ethical orientations, such as those advocated strongly by Gandhi's nationalism. As a multivalent sign, the press was powerful and important, but this power was largely constituted by the mere presence of the press—not by its circulation. In the next chapter, I explore changes in local understandings of the

power of the press in the postcolonial state, which, thanks to the new legal system, were increasingly integrated with national understandings of the press.

With Independence, the Indian Constitution became the dominant force recontextualizing various strains of liberal theory within the apparatus of the new state. In the 1940s, in the midst of Partition, anti-caste movements, the growth of Hindu conservatism, linguistic activism, and several separatist movements, the Constituent Assembly faced a difficult task of framing a document to hold a state together. The shift from the freedom movement to nation building brought with it a vast shift in the role of free speech and the press, which was marked nationally by the increasingly oppositional role of the press with regards to the politicians and by those politicians' attempts to legally restrict the power of the press to disrupt nation building and political ambition. With independence and the establishment of democracy, the question of the power of publications took on entirely new dimensions: now the problem became how to protect an existing government rather how to dismantle an unwanted one. In the next chapter, I explore the understandings of how publications work—and the sorts of participants they enroll—that emerged in the new republic at the intersection of the new laws, local Odishan politics, and the judiciary's own commitments to press freedom.

Chapter IV

The Unethical Text

Shortly after lunch on December 7, 2008, Lenin Kumar, the editor of the Odia-language leftist magazine *Nisan*, was taken from his home in Bhubaneswar. Plainclothes policeman loaded him into an unmarked van without explanation. A simultaneous raid on a Bhubaneswar press destroyed copies of Kumar's recently printed Odia-language book about 2007-8 violent Hindu-Christian conflicts in the district of Kandhamal in western Odisha. In the book, entitled *Dharma Nāmare Kandhamalare Raktanadi* or *In the Name of Religion, Rivers of Blood in Khandamal*, Kumar had strongly argued that the burning of churches in December 2007 and murders, rapes, arson, and general rioting in August-September 2008 had been the effect of Hindu fundamentalist activism in association with the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh [RSS] and Bajrang Dal. Kumar was charged with "publishing provocative literature which can disturb communal peace and harmony" (Pradhan 2009) under Sections 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code, provisions that date to the 1860, Bentham-inspired colonial Penal Code. These two laws make it illegal to create representations that promote "disharmony" and "hurt sentiments" along lines of religion, language, caste, region. Representations of the Kandhamal events were surrounded by

anxiety in the several years following the conflicts because of the fear that talk about the violence and its causes would spark further violence. This concern has continued, and even in Christmas 2013 there was a heavy police presence reported in Kandhamal to prevent renewed outbreaks of violence.

I encountered two major responses among Bhubaneswar-based journalists to Kumar's arrest. The first is epitomized by the group of well-established journalists who established the group Media Unity for Freedom of Press [MUFPP], described in Chapter 1. Kumar's arrest was one of the catalyzing events in the formalization of the group. In one of their earlier protests together, shortly after Kumar's arrest, the MUFPP organizers stood silently outside of Raj Bhavan, the Governor's house, with black cloths tied over their mouths, holding signs. One expensively printed banner consisted of a large square color photo of Kumar with a policeman's hand over Kumar's mouth so that he couldn't speak with reporters. In large capital letters over the picture was written "GAGGING ORISSA STYLE." At the time, the *Indian Express* quoted one critical journalist, Sudhir Patnaik, observing that the RSS and BJP—who was at that point in alliance with the ruling political party the BJD⁴²—promote disharmony along religious lines as a matter of course, and that this was in fact the argument in Kumar's book that the police found to be offensive (Debabrata Mohanty, "Book on Kandhamal Lands Writer in Prison" in *Indian Express*, December 10, 2008). The general argument of this perspective was that Kumar's arrest was politically motivated and demonstrated a growing tendency to limit free speech along political lines, a tendency that violated the very guarantees of the Indian Constitution itself.

⁴² Shortly afterward, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik severed the alliance between his party, the BJD, and the BJP, potentially because of the role that the RSS, the BJP's sister organization, played in Kandhamal.

Having not been in Bhubaneswar at the time of Lenin Kumar’s arrest or the protests against it, I later asked journalists I knew whether they had participated in the protests. From nearly all journalists who were not part of the MUFP’s small group of journalists, I heard ambivalence. While they found the arrest of journalists generally shameful and indicative of broad corruption, at the same time Bhubaneswar’s journalists seemed to feel that this particular case was not so clear-cut because the risk of inciting further violence through strongly worded arguments like Kumar’s was real. “Journalists should not be arrested, that’s true,” a mid-career Odia-language reporter at a major daily explained to me in Odia, when I asked him casually during a visit to his workplace, “but this book, it should not be published. It may worsen the violence. The police were probably right to keep it from going out. How many lives is it worth? He should not have published it, so I did not go [to the protests].” The ambivalence about Kumar’s arrest was thanks to the questionable ethics of the text itself. Moreover, several journalists reported a general feeling of needing to write with great restraint about the subject of Kandhamal and the subsequent arrests and fact-finding missions. One friend put it to me emphatically, in English: “No one is writing what they think right now. They don’t know what will come of it! It is a very sensitive time here.”

This chapter will explore how the concerns that infuse journalists’ reactions to Lenin Kumar’s arrest—legality and ethics, freedom and responsibility—are both shaped and performed through legally-mediated evaluations of texts. As we see in the discussions about Kumar’s arrest and the censorship of his book, there is a complex relationship between legality and ethics for Odishan journalists and readers. While there is clear criticism of any arrests of journalists,

criticism of the censorship of texts is itself is much more ambivalent, in part thanks to a broadly held, genuine concern about the damage that representations can do. This perspective on the potential provocativeness of representations in India has recently received a fair amount of global attention. In January 2013, Bangalore-based journalist Manu Joseph wrote an op-ed for the *New York Times* on a controversy sparked by critical scholar Ashis Nandy's comments on the role of caste in corruption, stating a position that sums up a relatively popular perspective on India's relationship to offense among non-resident and global-oriented Indians:

One of India's favorite sports is "taking offense." People go about their lives, brushing their teeth, ironing their shirts, waiting for the bus. Then some man somewhere says something ordinary and a community erupts in what looks like joy even though they say they are offended. They go in a carnival procession to some place to announce that they are offended, often laughing and waving to the television cameras... India is a paradise to those who take offense because the first reaction of the state is to appease those who claim to have been offended. The law itself favors those who claim to be offended. And the police, who are so often reluctant to press charges against politicians accused of murder or men accused of rape are quick to arrive at the doorsteps of the intellectuals, movie stars, and other public figures who have allegedly offended people by words, actions or photographs. The fact is that India's intellectual elite is one of the few oppressed castes left in the country today.

While it is tempting to see so many claims to being offended as mere political rhetoric, as Joseph implies here, that simplifies the complex semiotic and social processes that support this power accorded to representations—the power to cause harm, or at least the power to cause harm to be done. In some laws governing representations, such as the IPC sections that allowed the arrest of Lenin Kumar, there are echoes of colonial anxieties about the uncontrollable and irrational agency of crowds (Pandey 1990; Hansen 2008). However, this chapter argues that there are broader assumptions about representations themselves in play as well, assumptions or "semiotic

ideologies” (Keane 2003) about how texts work. To look at this as a broad cultural assumption that extends beyond concerns about violence, I consider the legal treatments of texts in the Odisha’s courts in cases that have nothing to do with communalism or mass agency: the contempt of court and the defamation of individuals.

Pre-independence, the emergent forms of belonging that propelled regional political activism and anti-colonial nationalism relied on new forms of writing and publication to forge connections and project unity. I described how early forms of advocacy and activism progressively constructed Odia-speaking people as those on whose behalf newspapers published, even as the addressees of the newspapers were much more limited: a small circle of educated society. Initially the British themselves were imagined as potential addressees, too, though this was no longer the case by the beginning of anti-colonial nationalism in the 1920s. The projected addressee of all Odia-speaking people grew during the nationalist movement, but actual circulation of newspapers likely remained quite limited. Despite a growing discourse of professionalism in press production pre-Independence, institutional regimentations of their own newspaper production as an ethical activity were largely unavailable to Indians: such institutions were controlled by the British. Though Gandhi sought on several occasions to direct the actions of the press toward what he saw as the ethical ends of the press, these efforts were often unsuccessful. As pre-Independence Indian journalism was increasingly framed in opposition to the colonial government, the colonial state drew on rapidly attenuating moral grounds to impose semiotic restrictions. Nationalist activists sought expressly to cause semiotic offense to the colonial state; indeed, we could say that the solely semiotic offense was the cornerstone of

Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence. This commitment to semiotic offense is reflected in the large number of activists who served time in prison for writing or publishing seditious material.

With Independence, when the explicit foundation of the new government became the people of India themselves, the relationship between the state and journalism changed radically. The republic was dedicated to the same principle as ideal journalism: an informed citizenry who could determine its own governance. This shared moral basis of the state and the "fourth estate" gave the government not only the right but also, as is evident in postcolonial regulations on the press as an industry, the responsibility to protect the freedom of the press. Yet at the same time that the state found itself with a new role vis-à-vis journalism, the success of nationalists' nonviolent activism against colonial rule undercut press freedom. The success of activists who had earlier sought to destabilize the colonial state through nonviolent resistance to its rule now sought to build and protect the integrity of the independent national-state as participants. The same understanding of publication that led nationalists and freedom fighters to believe that semiotic activity could undercut the government led those same activists—now politicians—to fear the implications of semiotic activity for the integrity of the Independent nation-state.

In this chapter, I describe the fears about the role of semiotic offences in the new republic, the implications of those fears, and how those fears have been codified, managed, and manipulated. I begin with an exploration of the nature of semiotic offenses by publication within the text of the law and legal application, describing both the colonial laws criminalizing semiotic offense and the Constitutional framing and amending that legitimized both free expression and the power of semiotic offense. Then, through detailed discussions of categories of offense

recognized as the appropriate limits of free speech by even the strongest formulations of free speech, that is, contempt of court and defamation, I show how the specifically Indian history of concern about semiotic offense has ongoing power. In a discussion of a series of contempt of court cases from the 1950s, a defamation case from the 1980s, and a defamation case from the mid-2000s I describe how Odisha's courts have depicted the social life of publications, as well as how, in contemporary Odisha, that depiction has itself become an important stage in the life of some publications. I focus on elucidating the kinds of social roles and publics constructed through the management of semiotic offense: Who is responsible for an offense-by-publication and how is that determined? Who is affected by semiotic offense and how can that be managed? Who must be protected and who should do the protecting? Finally, in a comparative discussion about the quasi-legal Press Council and its methods of managing semiotic offense, I explore the relationship between ethics and legality.

Legal Regimentations of Ethical Evaluations of Texts

From protests about free speech to anxieties about the effects of reporting, we can see much of the ethics of texts being framed through constitutionalism. The writing of the Indian Constitution consisted of an attempt to balance the existing ethical expectations of the citizenry with the aim of improving those citizens through legal-institutional interventions (Austin 1999). It explicitly sought to balance the view of India's laws as codifications of the citizenry's existing expectations of each other with recipes to create new social forms and new ethical expectations

more in line with the economically socialist, liberal democratic nation that the framers envisioned. In other words, the Constitution's writers sought to construct a document that was both descriptive and prescriptive. The subsequent ritual acceptance of the Constitution further established the document as representative of the Indian people in a way reminiscent of Benjamin Lee's reading of the American Declaration of Independence. Out of this ritual identification between the Constitution and the Indian citizenry then came a series of affective connections between citizens and their laws in Indian democratic discourse, as the Constitution is repeatedly represented as embodying the highest ideals of the national body in the moment of its self-making. We could see the entire apparatus of legislative politics—from reserved seats in the legislature, to elections and voting, to the use of parliamentary procedure—as a series of techniques supporting the identification between Indian citizens and the laws of the Indian state.

My argument here is thus that the Indian legal apparatus, the laws and the courts, play a profoundly important role in ethical understandings of newspaper texts and, thus, the work of journalists. Yet this important role is not a straightforward story of legal regimentation. Newspaper texts' straightforward legal regimentation, that is, how laws (via the mediation of courts) determine what is and isn't written and how those writings are evaluated, have been routinely interrupted in several ways. First, as observers of government have been arguing since Weber, governments do not usually act as single entities but as numerous agencies working toward various ends; this plurality has been taken as a definitive characteristic of South Asian governments. In the cases of textual censorship, this can mean that legal police actions against writers can be denounced as shameful by other governmental officials, as can be seen in the case

of Odishan journalist Laxman Choudhury's arrest. In September 2009, Gajapati district police arrested Choudhury on charges of aiding Naxals (Maoists), but this was immediately denounced by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who was quoted as saying, "It is ridiculous. Isn't it... We live in a free society. We live in a democracy. The press is a part of democracy" (Odishadiary.com, September 22, 2009). To demonstrate his disapproval of the arrest of journalists, Patnaik immediately ordered an investigation into Choudhury's arrest by the Deputy Inspector of Police. Thanks to these differences across governmental agencies, many of the arrests of Odisha's journalists have not reached court. Though not the focus of my research here, close ethnographic studies of the socio-cultural reasons for differences in how governmental agencies (local police, block- and district-level officials, legislators, high up IAS officers) interact with concerning publications would be valuable and perhaps indicative of the range of different relationships to Constitutional ideals and discursive/physical force. As I suggest in the brief discussion of the judiciary in the first section of this chapter, differences between governmental agencies map onto other social differences and perhaps different means of reckoning with power.

There is also a second way that the story of texts' legality is not a straightforward story of regimentation by decree: how both the courts and citizens make use of the legal sphere's role in managing publications. In the following discussion of contempt of court cases in the decade after Independence, I describe how the Odisha High Court was at once at pains to establish its jurisdiction over contemptible publications, but at the same time was loathe to exercise that jurisdiction out of a concern for the illiberal restriction of the free press. The Odisha High Court judges instead used the cases as opportunities to instruct journalists on their ethical

responsibilities, urging them to self-restraint while also holding out the threat of future court action if the local press did not exercise more restraint. At the same time that the court has seen its role as more capacious than the simple determination of legality, citizens who have felt offended by publications also approach the courts in ways that exceed its strict legal adjudications. Later in the chapter, I describe a series of defamation suits in which the legal charges of defamation seem calculated as a scalar response to the offense of the publications, theatrically constructing the moral outrage of the offended party in public. In fact, thanks to the costs of arguing cases, and the long period of time to legal resolution, many defamation cases are dropped prior to adjudication: some are settled out of court, some appear to be simply dropped or left hanging, unpursued. This took me a while to figure out, as I had a great deal of difficulty tracking down the resolution of cases that were well-publicized at the start; for years I thought I must not be asking the right people the right questions, but I gradually realized that people were simply not paying much attention—the court’s ruling was ultimately a relatively small public concern when it came to defamation, perhaps because they are rarely ruled or only ruled long after the scandal has passed. With the public emphasis off the court’s determination of legality both within the court and without, the court has been able to serve many other roles.

It is thanks to these many roles of the legal apparatus that law is such an important area for managing the ethics of texts. As discussed above, ideologies of Indian democracy imagine laws as expressions of generally accepted morality of the citizenry (these are “our laws”), thereby placing the courts in the position of determining the relationship between specific cases and legally-determined moral types. In using the courts to make a complaint about an offensive text,

the offended party can evoke the representative character of the laws themselves, transforming the locus of the offense: this text does not merely offend *me* but the entire nation. At the same time, the particular character of the laws—and, I argue in this chapter, their legal interpretations in the post-independence courts—allows the harm achieved by the publication to be known and determined through a consideration of the publication itself. As we can see repeatedly in Indian legal management of representations, offenses are treated as though they originate with the texts themselves.

This model of a published text's action in the world has implications for⁴³ those who play the roles of text producers. Here, it is useful again to recall Goffman's (1981) decomposition of production into the participant roles of Author (the one who composes), Animator (the one who produces), and Principal (the one who is responsible) with regard to an utterance or a text/segment of text. Using Goffman's participant roles, we can ask how the legal theory of a text's action relates to the assignment of role of principal, of responsibility for the text, as well as the responsibility for the text's effects. The responsibility for the action of a text—that is, for how a text is interpreted—is not necessarily shared with participants in roles of reception. As in the case of Lenin Kumar in Odisha as well as a long list of other cases in India generally, various Indian state agencies have chosen repeatedly to limit the circulation of texts in order to protect the nation, or particular groups within the nation, from reactions to those texts. Restraint is

⁴³ This may sound like I'm arguing that the understanding of texts came first historically. Yet the ethics of production implicit within it may well precede this theory of the text's actions in the world. Given the role of restraint in the cosmology of Indian philosophical traditions (think *tapasya*), the historical precedence of this ethics of production – or of any other kind of action – seems much more likely. Here, I'm describing ideological levels of presupposition rather than historical.

chosen repeatedly and advocated at a number of levels to protect the nation from the effects of texts as mediated by the reactions of their readers. Yet, we will see, even as readers are not responsible for their interpretations of texts, neither are courts enthusiastic about holding writers—whether as Goffman’s Authors or Animators—legally responsible for those textual interpretations. Even while strongly advising restraint, courts seek alternatives to the prosecution of producers for those reactions. The result, I suggest, is an even greater emphasis on restraint.

On the Laws Governing Unethical Texts

While most of this chapter focuses on the complications of ethical interpretation in legal arenas beyond the laws themselves, the laws themselves are also an important feature of evaluations of the ethics of texts. The particular character of the laws evoked to govern publications allows the harm achieved by the publication to be known and determined through a consideration of the publication itself. This is true not least because the laws are themselves entextualizations of theories of how texts act in the world. In this section I will describe both the content of several major areas of Indian law used for regulating newspaper publications as well as describe how some of those laws, especially the Constitution’s Article 19, embody those textual ethics which the laws’ contents seek to promote.

The Indian Penal Code [IPC] provides the legal justifications for the majority of cases regarding the legality of newspaper publications. Inspired by Jeremy Bentham’s comprehensive plan to systematize the entire legal system through “codification”, Thomas Macaulay proposed

and then drafted a comprehensive criminal code for India in the 1830s while holding the position of legal member of the Governor-General's Council, a body which performed both the highest legislative and executive functions in (British) India at the time. Historian Radhika Singha has shown that the 1830s and 1840s were a period of penal reform discourses, in which British concerns with sovereign power produced new orders of social punishment and discipline, especially a growing concern with the “negotatory clutter around caste and rank as something which compromised legal authority” (Singha 1998, 231). The IPC addressed these growing anxieties through the banishment of punishments assigned according to categories of caste and rank, instead assigning punishment to the offense itself. Calculated to produce greater British sovereignty, this shift also allowed for the adoption of the utilitarian and liberal assumption of the universality of human rationality. According to legal historian Barry Wright (Wright 2011), these shifts were an accomplishment of the explicit purpose and method of the code: taxonomic and linguistic precision. Modeled on taxonomies in natural science, the Code provided a typology and categorization of the entire spectrum of criminal offenses, from sedition to larceny, and did so in language that aimed to be comprehensible to non-specialists. Rather than basing his distinctions on existing custom or law, Macaulay sought to organize the IPC according to abstract principles of abstract human action⁴⁴, and he sought new language in which to do it. Macaulay rejected technical legal terms with long histories in British jurisprudence and adopted ordinary language. Moreover, Macaulay maintained the uniformity of terms across the entire Code, expressing frustration when the ambiguities of language resisted precision. Macaulay

⁴⁴ Wright discusses this at length in the context of Macaulay's criticisms of utilitarian a priorism, which Macaulay was later criticized for adopting in the IPC.

obsessively sought language that would leave little doubt (or room for interpretation) as to its meaning, by which he “aimed to have legislators fully exploit the modern public policy potential of the law and strictly limit judicial powers in the application of the law” (Wright 2011, 53). This effort would later echo in the concerns of independent India’s legislators’ First Amendment to the Constitution, as we see below.

Macaulay’s utilitarian projects do also echo in the two laws, IPC Section 153A and 295A, on which Lenin Kumar’s arrest relied in 2009, though these sections also represent the IPC’s attempt to balance utilitarian ends with the particular challenges of India’s social world as perceived by the British, namely the preservation of uniform control over a population despite its dramatic religious and caste differences. These two Sections see publications and other acts of representation as potential threats to the social body, even as the sense of what that social body is and why it matters changed profoundly with nationalism and Independence, even as the text of these two laws has changed very little since their adoption in 1860.

At the intersection of the concerns with the effects of representations on the social body and the utilitarian projects of the legal Code (and much of India’s “legal complex”) generally, lies a series of assumptions and judgments about how representations work. Both Sections 153A and 295A of the IPC present challenges for the Court’s translation of the law into legal judgments of specific cases, in no small way thanks to the challenges they present to legal methods of determining evidence. Section 153A allows for the imprisonment of whoever “by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote, on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or

community or any other ground whatsoever, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.” In other words, it allows for the punishment for the production of any kind of representation that promotes social divisions based on forms of identification. Yet this Section does not detail how to determine whether a word or sign “promotes or attempts to promote” enmity among subjects or citizens based on such criteria, and this becomes a point of case law.

The second law at issue in Lenin Kumar’s arrest, IPC Section 295A, similarly focuses on the effects of publications on the social body. But rather than pointing to incitement to violence, this Section forbids acts intended to “outrage religious feelings” by prescribing punishment for whoever “with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class.” This law is routinely cited as the closest thing to a blasphemy law in India, and indeed it is regularly invoked in situations in which citizens are calling representations blasphemous. But it is precisely a text’s creation of the feeling of blasphemy that Section 295A is intended to punish, not whether the blasphemy has actually occurred. The program of the law is to make subjects respectful of the beliefs of other subjects.⁴⁵ In this sense, we might indeed think of this law as indeed a sort of blasphemy law, but one in which it is not a particular understanding of God or religious law that is being offended but the very ideal of the harmonious collective body that

⁴⁵ Commenting on Section 295A, Fitzjames Stephen wrote that it “is characteristic of English people to consider their modern liberalism as not only true but self-evident, and certain to be popular at all places and in all times. In fact, it is a very modern growth, and extends over a small part of the world” (quoted in Wright 2011, 48).

must not be injured. This law places the preservation of secular peace among religious communities as itself one of the highest ends of India's rule.

Both of these laws create epistemological questions for the courts to resolve: how to judge the relationship between a text and some subsequent (or potential) occurrence as being a relationship of cause. Section 295A raises the question of how to determine whether a text causes the experience of insult to a religion or a religious belief. IPC Section 153A raises the question of how to discover whether disorder and violence in response to a publication is actually caused by that publication. We could see this as a question of the responsibility for a response: if a person performs an act after reading a text, does that make the action an effect of that text or the cause of some other quality inherent to that person? In a 2007 decision, the Supreme Court summarized the existing case law, arguing that “the effect of the words must be judged from the standards of reasonable, strong-minded, firm and courageous men, and not those of weak and vacillating minds, nor of those who scent danger in every hostile point of view. It is the standard of ordinary reasonable man or as they say in English Law, ‘the man on the top of a Clapham omnibus’.” This statement suggests an ideal legal method in which “reasonableness” is obvious and easily determined through something like common sense. But the sociological imagination of India is not so straightforward (nor is Britain's), and the “common man” argument of reasonableness does not necessarily allow a way to address vast differences of class, language, and caste, not to mention religion and political ideology, across the Indian population. Which way of seeing the world is the “reasonable” one? Even in the interpretation of a law that is explicitly used to enforce civility across vast social differences, the methodological practice finds itself presuming

utilitarian universal rationality. As we will see throughout this chapter, determining the viewpoint of this “ordinary reasonable man” has proven a persistent challenge throughout legal cases regarding newspaper publications, and the result in Orissa has been the Court’s direct reliance on the texts’ themselves rather than on any interpretive contexts or evidence of direct cause.

Finally, across laws managing newspaper publications, there is the underlying issue of determining intention and legal malice. While this is not a problem limited to cases about the legality of publications, the question of intention does raise a series of questions specific to publications, especially thanks to the distributed labor of production. In its 2007 judgment finding against the Maharashtrian State government’s case against American historian James Laine and his publisher and printer, the Indian Supreme Court wrote that Section 153A depends not merely on some offensive passages of text but on the intention to generate divisiveness through that text:

The gist of the offence is the intention to promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of people. The intention to cause disorder or incite the people to violence is the sine qua non of the offence under Section 153A of IPC and the prosecution has to prove prima facie the existence of mens rea on the part of the accused. The intention has to be judged primarily by the language of the book and the circumstances in which the book was written and published. The matter complained of within the ambit of Section 153A must be read as a whole. One cannot rely on strongly worded and isolated passages for proving the charge nor indeed can one take a sentence here and a sentence there and connect them by a meticulous process of inferential reasoning. (*Manzar Sayeed Khan v. State of Maharashtra*, Appeal (crl.) 491 of 2007)

This statement seeks to shift the evidential burden from the mere form and content of the questionable text to evidence of “intention to cause disorder or incite people to violence.” But the

evidence suggested for determining intention is again the text itself and the “circumstances” of its publication, which can be interpreted as narrowly as the time and forum of publication or more broadly in terms of ongoing conflicts between the parties. In the cases related to Orissa’s press discussed in this chapter, the challenge of intention is routinely addressed by simply reading the texts in question. This reading of intention through the reading of texts is supported by the strict understanding of legal malice or *mens rea*. In the 1960 decision of *Baba Khalil Ahamad v. State*, AIR 1960 All 715, the Allahabad High Court reviewed the case law related to about a publication censored under Section 295A and concluded that “malice can be presumed” when “an injurious act” is performed “voluntarily without lawful excuse”; the decision went on to conclude that the provocation of other publications does not constitute a “lawful excuse”⁴⁶ because the writing was a voluntary act. The case law, then, allows the presumption of malicious intent given both the voluntary production of a text and the fact of the text’s offensiveness. Common across the court’s epistemological resolutions is the reliance on the text itself as a source of evidence for both the action that the text is accused of causing and the intention that produced the text (and its effects) in the first place.

⁴⁶ The *Baba Khalil Ahamad* decision stated: “Mr. Sadiq Ali contended that the applicant had a lawful excuse for writing the six books, because pamphlets in support of the opposite view had been issued. I do not think that, this circumstance can be regarded as a lawful excuse. Writing of these six books was a voluntary act on the part of the applicant! There was no command from any superior authority. If the applicant chose to refute certain arguments, he did so at his own risk. Provocation received from supporters of the opposite view cannot be treated as a lawful excuse for writing the offensive books. The applicant was guilty of committing the injurious act without a lawful excuse. He knew the probable result of the writing. Malice, is, therefore, established.” Note here that “knowing the probable result of the writing” is taken as itself establishing malice.

The National Politics of Free Speech After Independence

So far I have described laws within the Indian Penal Code, focusing on how their interpretations shape the court's assumptions about published texts. It is now useful to turn to how these laws of the IPC coexist with the Constitutional protection of "the freedom of speech and expression" in Article 19(1a). This coexistence is possible thanks to the Constitution's Article 19(2a) which provides for "reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence." When the Indian Constitution was first adopted, however, the restrictions in Article 19(2a) read differently, and were interpreted by the Courts as undercutting the Penal Code's restrictions. In the rest of this section, I'll describe the process through which Article 19(2a) was amended in order to allow for greater restrictions on publications and the press. The narrative demonstrates that the implicit theory of how texts act in the world, and how to manage this, was itself an assumption of the legislators concern with the language of the amendment.

The proposal to amend the Constitution Amendment generated a good deal of strife in the provisional parliament as well as among its public critics. The need for it was seen as having been demonstrated by three court cases rejecting three different states' attempts to control publications, rejections which supported strong readings of the Constitution's protections of freedom of speech. In Bihar, the Patna High Court rejected the government's claim that it could censor a political pamphlet for the incitement of violence. The Supreme Court ruled against the

constitutionality of the East Punjab Public Safety Act, 1950, in a case in which the East Punjab government had sought to censor an English-language weekly, arguing that censorship prior to circulation was disallowed by Article 19(1a). The same Supreme Court bench also ruled against the Madras government, which had banned the publication of *Crossroads*, a publication associated with the communist party, on the basis of the Madras Maintenance of Public Safety Act, 1949, shortly after the Madras government had declared illegal the communist parties of Tamilnadu, Andhra, Kerala, and Karnataka.

Though these decisions were heralded by the press at the time as demonstrating the strength of the Constitution and the Indian commitment to free speech, according to historian Granville Austin, their most significant effect was the creation of a desire for Constitutional amendment among legislators. Following the *Crossroads* decision, Home Minister Sardar Patel wrote that the decision “knocks the bottom out of most of our penal laws for the control and regulation of the press” (Sardar Patel, in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru letter, July 3, 1950, quoted in Austin 1999, 42). Similar concerns found a large audience when the Patna High Court’s own judgment against Bihar state’s censorship observed that “if a person were to go on inciting murder or other cognizable offences either through the press or by word of mouth`, he would be free to do so with impunity” thanks to Article 19 protections (quoted in *The State Of Bihar v. Shailabala Devi*, 1952 AIR 329). According to Austin, Patel’s explicit concern at the time of this statement was the ability to limit statements about Kashmir and the partition with Pakistan, statements which were seen as directly threatening the unity of the new nation.

The arguments over the amendment to the Constitution's protection of freedom of expression display a concern with the wording of the law that resemble the concerns that the legislators hoped for the law itself to address. This is a concern with the action *necessarily* achieved by words; in other words, a concern among legislators that the language be precisely calculated in order to achieve exactly the right effect. In the case of Article 19(1a)'s language, the precise effect with which the legislature was concerned was the prevention of the court's interference with the legislature's authority to determine fundamental rights. According to Austin (1999, 42), the legislature's feeling of conflict with the court was increasingly pronounced in the first few years of 1950 and led to numerous legislative acts and constitutional amendments, including zamindari abolition and the nationalization of road transport, demonstrating that this conflict between legislature and court was not unique to the freedom of expression. With regards to freedom of expression the situation was urgent, as several courts had already proven their willingness to adopt strong interpretations of speech freedoms, and therefore the court was felt as an immediate threat to legislative priority. Moreover, as seen in the reaction to the court's judgments immediately after the Constitution's adoption, the court's free reign was seen as a very dangerous thing for the unity and peace of the new nation.

As the provisional assembly debated the proposal to amend Article 19 in 1951, the debate settled on proposal to add the word "reasonable" to the restrictions the government could impose on the freedom of expression met with great controversy. The qualifier was already present in the other sections restricting the freedoms described in Article 19(1). The Joint Secretary in the Legislative Department of the Law Ministry, S. N. Mukherjee, proposed that removing the

qualification “reasonable” from the restrictions on the other freedoms described in Article 19 would protect the restrictions on speech from judicial review. Law Secretary K. V. K. Sundaram expressed support for this position because he thought that “legislatures, not courts, ought to be the final authority deciding the ‘nature’ of any restrictions on Fundamental Rights” (Austin 1999, 43). On the other side, Law Minister B. R. Ambedkar was less concerned with the power of the courts than with the power of the state to overreach, arguing that “reasonable” should “be added lest the state have the power ‘altogether’ to deny freedom of speech and expression” (Austin 1999, 45). Harekrushna Mahatab, Minister of Commerce and Industry, whose defamation and contempt of court petitions are the focus of the next section in this chapter, argued against the word “reasonable” because it would generate confusion, making unclear “the framework within which [both the people and the legislatures] have to operate” (Austin 1999, 44).

In national politics, the immediate post-Independence concern with semiotic offence was inextricable from fears about the dissolution of the nation through its differences, especially those inflicted by the extreme violence of Partition. The division of Pakistan, Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), and India along religious lines gave great weight to the Indian Penal Code’s protection of religious feelings—religious feelings had already split the nation and could, presumably, do more damage. There were also anxieties about separatist movements in South India and the North-East. New legislators, especially members of the ruling Congress Party, saw their Constitutionally defined inability to enforce discourse that was in the national interest as a major threat to India’s stability. While legislators who restricted Article 19’s purview may have been seeking to protect the nation from the mass actions of people, the most feared catalysts of

these masses were not regular citizens but fellow elite politicians, especially members of the Hindu Mahasabha like Shyama Prasad Mookerjee who had called for the annulment of Partition (Austin 1999, 42, n.13). At the national level, the concern with free speech was perhaps its ability to make people believe something that might already have been true: that India was riven by dramatic differences that many thought were the grounds for yet more separate states. Yet, at the same time that legislators felt that the Indian people had to be protected from the influence of certain statements, the Constitutional protection of free expression also served to legitimate the new democracy and thus it needed protecting.

Contempt of Court after Independence

In Odisha, the felt threat of the free press after Independence was less about the dissolution of the nation-state itself than with the dissolution of power by those who held it. Immediately after Independence, the coastal Odishan politicians strongly felt the threat of power loss thanks to the recent integration of the Princely States into the Republic of India and into Odisha state⁴⁷. The former princes or *rajās* formed their own political party, the Ganatantra Party, which was the primary state opposition party to the dominant Congress Party through the 1970s. According to F.B. Bailey's ethnography of Odishan politics in the 1950s, the dominant complaint in Bhubaneswar about the former *rajās* and their political methods was that they relied on feudalism and thus undercut democracy entirely. Yet Bailey's own observations in a former-

⁴⁷ The Raja of Seraikella, described in the last chapter, maintained his refusal to merge with Odisha and his primarily Odia-speaking kingdom stayed with Bihar; it is now the southernmost district of Jharkhand.

princely state dominated by the Ganatantra Party contradicted this. Instead, he found that they relied on the same methods that Congress Party politicians used: sponsoring events, seeking meaningful connections with their constituencies through ritual participation, and visiting villages. The difference was that the Ganatantra Party politicians had powerful, longstanding networks of influence and ritual sponsorship to draw on that many nationalists-turned-politicians did not have. In Bailey's interpretation, the problem that the former *rajās* posed for other politicians was essentially that they did the same thing but better. In this environment, loss of political power and social influence was a possibility.

Here I examine three cases that arose from a single political scandal in Cuttack, Odisha (the then-capital of the state) in 1952. The chart in figure x provides summaries of the three cases. The barest bones of the scandal are this: in June of 1952, the Delhi Special Police, which was established just prior to independence to investigate political corruption, searched the Cuttack offices of a locally well-known businessman named Bijayananda Patnaik who had high political associations in the ruling Indian National Congress Party. Opposition newspapers claimed that this search was evidence of longstanding corrupt activities by the Congress Party generally, but especially by one of Odisha's most famous politicians, Harekrushna Mahatab (and the founder of *Prajatantra*), who was then the Minister of Industries in Nehru's cabinet. The general suspicion was that Mahatab had been giving special import licenses to his friends, who not only profited from the legal importing business but who additionally sold those goods at higher prices on the black markets outside of Odisha. The suspicion was not only that Mahatab and his associates were engaging in corruption but that the corruption was exploiting Odisha to

benefit other states and himself. Shortly after the police search of his office, the businessman Patnaik filed a petition in the court to get the search deemed illegal. Based on the simultaneous circulation of the newspaper articles with the petition, Patnaik additionally petitioned for contempt of court against one of the newspapers, *Matrubhumi* (“Motherland”), on the basis that the publications had violated his right to a fair hearing. Additionally, both Patnaik and the politician Mahatab brought about both civil and criminal defamation cases against *Matrubhumi*. Finally, several months later after *Matrubhumi* and another newspaper called *Krushak* (“Cultivator”) continued to publish on the issue, Patnaik and Mahatab undertook contempt of court proceedings based on their inability to get a fair hearing in the defamation trials. A consistent argument of defense across the contempt cases was the freedom of expression protections offered by the Constitution. I have been unable to establish the ultimate adjudication of these defamation cases in the lower courts, but three of the contempt of court cases received long and carefully documented judgments by the newly established Odisha High Court (which had only been established in 1947; prior to that Odisha hosted a circuit court from the Patna High Court). The Odisha High Court found the newspapers technically guilty of contempt, but let them off with strong warnings to practice restraint in the future.

In this section, I look at the legal adjudications of highly contested newspaper publications shortly after Independence, through which the boundaries between ethical and legal, institutional and individual, were being worked out for Odishan journalism. As the judgments elaborately perform the act of reading newspaper articles and legal precedents, they achieve two things. First, these judgments offer ambiguous theories of how newspaper publications act in the world,

and why and how those actions can be judged as ethical and legal. Second, these judgments produce a theory of the participant roles in newspaper publications, including interlinked theories of the social distribution of production and reception. These theories of action and social roles at once lean on circulation as itself evidence of impact, while also seeking to establish the interpretive room for the judiciary's own independence from the publications' influence. The judiciary demonstrates repeatedly its concern with the ethical behavior of the press beyond questions of strict legality, accepting for the courts the responsibility of monitoring the ethics of the press even while performing an uncomfortable reluctance to take on that watchdog role. The judgments collapse the act of reception into a moment of mere contact, in which the act of reading is made into the sheer collection of a text's effects. Like sympathetic magic, they produce a reading of the reader's mind as merely taking on the characteristics of the read text. In this model, the degree to which readers are affected by a text is determined not by their active interpretive capacities but by their weaknesses or inability to resist the text, their susceptibility. Yet that the adjudicating Court itself is not susceptible suggests that susceptibility may be a function of social position and its accompanying linguistic competencies.

The laws of contempt of court were inherited from British Common Law. The first Indian statute regarding contempt of court was in 1926. The Indian Constitution later accorded the power of contempt of court to both the Supreme Court and to the provincial High Courts, with the result that any contempt case at the lower level is adjudged in the High Court. In 1952, the very year the Patnaik-Mahatab suits were filed, a national Contempt of Courts Act sought to clarify the powers of the High Courts with regard to the contempt of lower courts. However, all

of these treatments of contempt of court left it largely to legal precedent to define and enunciate. The resulting uncertainty around contempt of court and its appropriate functioning in the independent nation of India led to a Committee, in 1961, to review existing law and recommend a legislative solution under the Chairmanship of H.A. Sanyal, which resulted in the Contempt of Courts Act of 1972.

Under all of these iterations of the treatment of contempt, both the colonial and post-colonial Indian Courts recognized Contempt of Court by publication, which is also known as indirect criminal contempt—contempt outside of the presence of the court. First recognized in the nineteenth century, it was sparingly applied until the mid-twentieth century and the growth of the nationalist movement. India’s most famous contempt of court case involved Mohandas K Gandhi’s prosecution for indirect criminal contempt in 1920, in his role as the editor of *Young India*, an English publication that was significant in establishing his non-cooperation movement. The colonial High Court of Bombay found Gandhi and his publisher guilty of contempt of court for having published both the content of and comments upon a letter, written by a judge, that asked whether the lawyers who had taken the *satyagrahi* pledge shouldn’t be disbarred from the legal profession. Gandhi defended his publication, arguing that he did not see his action as constituting contempt of court because it was “a useful public duty” and was done without the intent to “prejudge the issues that Their Lordships had to decide.” When called upon to apologize for the publication, he wrote:

In [publishing and commenting] I performed, in my humble opinion, a useful public duty at a time when there was great tension and when even the Judiciary was affected by the popular prejudice. I need hardly say that I had no desire whatsoever to prejudge the issues that Their Lordships had to decide.

I am anxious to assure His Lordship the Chief Justice that at the time I decided to publish the document in question, I had fully in mind the honour of journalism as also the fact that I was a member of the Bombay Bar and as such expected to be aware of the traditions thereof. But thinking of my action in the light of what has happened I am unable to say that in similar circumstances I would act differently from what I did when I decided to publish and comment upon Mr. Kennedy's letter. Much therefore as I would have liked to act upon His Lordship's suggestion [to tender an apology], I feel that I could not conscientiously offer any apology for my action. Should this explanation be not considered sufficient by His Lordship I shall respectfully suffer the penalty that Their Lordships may be pleased to impose upon me. (M.K. Gandhi, in *Young India*, October 3, 1920, p. 6-8, reproduced in Kher 1962)

Ultimately the High Court of Bombay decided to let the case go with a warning, with the rationalization that Gandhi had simply not been aware of the law. Yet Gandhi is clear, in this moment and others, that the question for him was not the law but “the truth”. Comparing this instance with the cases in 1950s Odisha demonstrates how remarkably the construction of journalism vis-à-vis the courts changed through the creation of the Republic, despite institutional continuities in the courts, the criminal laws, and legal procedures. While in 1920 Gandhi’s resistance to contempt of court indicated a commitment to the idea of the nation, in the 1950s, the Orissa High Court framed the disciplining of journalism through the contempt of court as protecting the nation.

Contempt of court functions like an Agamben state of exception for the court: contempt is how the court enacts its sovereignty, how it defends against threats to itself. If we look at it this way, we see in contempt of court in a post-colonial period a portrait of how a legal system is imagining both itself and its relationship to the new nation-state. Moreover, in these first free speech cases in Odisha after the adoption of the Indian Constitution, the Courts were also consciously enacting the legitimacy of the new Constitution and regimenting future enactments

of the free press in Odisha (and in India, since there are not separate jurisdictions for state and federal law in India). I see this as a moment when the ideals of free speech hit the road at the local level, intervening, for the first time, in local power conflicts about who could say what in which kind of situations with what kinds of effects—all through reference to the Republic-constituting text of the Constitution.

Reading Contempt

The Contempt of Court judgments, which consist of a wide range from under 10 to over 25 pages of English-language narrative written by the presiding judge or judges, are multivocal entextualizations of a series of speech events. The polyphony of the court judgments is clearly linked to their multiple pragmatic roles: first, a judgment closes the speech event of the court case, performatively bringing about the judges' ruling; second, they typically consist of narrative retellings of multiple other communicative events; third, they both rely on and are written in order to become part of case law. Here, I focus on the fourth and dominant role that these judgments play: the adjudication of the effects of the potentially contempt publications. The adjudication of the newspapers' effects enrolls the various participants in the court case into social roles in relationship to the questionable text/s: the judges put the defendants/respondents into the position of the Author and—in the rhetorical move that I focus on here—the judges authoring the judgments put themselves in the position of reader.

The judge's adoption of the role of reader is motivated by the requirements of the contempt legal precedents, which require the judgments to rule about the "ability of the publications to impede justice" by determining the specific communicative contexts on which the publications acted. However, despite close readings of the case law regarding the contexts in which the publications might have effects, such as whether the petitioners' right to a fair trial was being impeded, there is no discussion of how the acts of reading occurred in the real world—with one exception that I will return to in a few minutes. In general, the judges' performances of reading the texts are enacted entirely apart from their description of reception contexts. This absence of attention to real-world reading is most notable in comparison with US legal practice in cases about publication effects, which typically involve testimony on specific effects by plaintiffs and witnesses. For example, in the 1964 US Supreme Court Case *Sullivan v New York Times*, which sought to adjudicate the legality of an advertisement, the Court reviewed numerous witness statements as to the advertisement's effects on people in the plaintiff's local community. This stands in stark contrast to the Odisha High Court, which apparently did not consider any evidence of actual moments of interpretation across these cases. Instead, as in this example from *The State v. Matrubhumi*, 1954 AIR 1954 Ori 149, the judges' decisions about the impact of the publications were achieved through simply reading the publications in question themselves.

This article is under the heading 'Matrubhumi will remain unperturbed'. Service of countrymen is its ultimate aim.' The first sentence in the article refers to more than one law suits filed against Matrubhumi in law Courts. The editor has attempted to justify the publishing of the alleged defamatory articles by saying that he was exposing those who were defaming their mother land. He further states:

"Matrubhumi is determined to endure smilingly the thunderous attacks from any quarters while exposing those people who are polluting the limited present and the

vast future of the country and the nation by their preference for their self-interest to the interest of the country.”

There is a clear suggestions [sic] in this article with special reference to the case brought against ‘Matrubhumi’ that the paper was merely exposing the misdeeds of certain group of people who in the context would mean none else but the complainant of this case. There is thus an assertion of one of the main facts to be determined during the trial of the defamation case and consequently the article as a whole may amount to contempt.

The texts of the judgments are overwhelmingly devoted to these readings, reproducing large sections and even entire articles of the newspaper publications in question. In each judgment, the judge provided a by-publication analysis of whether the text constitutes contempt and what are the features of it that do or don’t enact contempt. We see in this excerpt, for example, that the judge focused on particular words and phrases that produce contempt regardless of the context of their reception.

There are numerous statements in the text that justify this context-less understanding of reading. For example, in the following excerpt from *Patnaik v. Kar*, AIR 1953 Ori 249, the judgment transitions from a digression about the historical authority of the High Court’s contempt proceedings into a discussion of the individual articles with a general statement.

On a plain reading of the publications no reasonable man can have any doubt that they constituted a gross abuse of the petitioner who has been charged with having swindled public moneys, cheated the Government, and has further been described as a leader among blackmarketeers. Anyone reading these articles cannot but have a feeling of revulsion against the object of these attacks.

In this general statement, which introduces the judge’s interpretations of the contempt violations of individual articles, the judge adopted classic language of Anglo legal interpretation: “plain reading,” “reasonable man,” “hav[ing] no doubt.” This figure of the Odia-reading-public’s

everyman, who engages in mere “plain reading,” invokes a fantasy of transparency that is itself contested by the very fact of the court’s proceedings.

The “plain reading” theory also shaped the rhetorical strategies of the judges’ narrations of their own analysis. Consider the following excerpts:

It appears, therefore, quite clear to our mind that by these two aforesaid articles by expressing their own views by the editorial of 8-9-1952, and by facilitating circulation and publication of similar views expressed in another paper in the issue of *Matrubhumi* (Weekly) dated 13-9-1952, (at page 9, Col. 4) the opposite parties have prejudiced the mankind to some extent against the plaintiff in the suit. (*Patnaik v. Kar*)

The advertisement offering a reward for documentary evidence was also found to be inoffensive. The principle seems to be quite clear that a mere appeal to the persons who have got a common cause with the defendants to combine and contribute towards the expenses of litigation is inoffensive. (*Mahatab v. Kar*, AIR 1954 Ori 57)

Here, again is what appears to be a definite assertion of fact that documents have been seized and that these documents showed that Rs. 50,000/- had been received by Sri Bijoyananda Patnaik through, a shady transaction [sic]. (*Patnaik v. Kar*)

Underlined in the above excerpts, the use of evidential verbal phrases like “appears quite clear” and “was found” puts the judges in a passive relationship to the text in question. Here, the judges describe their interpretations as lacking interpretation—instead, the text presents itself and requires of its reader a mere clarity of mind. Though this frequent use of evidential phrases may be a rhetorical move aimed at establishing the justices and the Court’s own authority, it can also have ideological weight. It is useful to remember that what the judges found to be “quite clear” was indeed not so clear for others—conflicting interpretations were the reason for the court cases in the first place—and thus the evidentials eliding the judges’ own interpretive chains also elided

the contexts that would have allowed for other interpretations. Here we see the act of reception collapsed into a mere reaction. There is no consideration of multiple perspectives or possible other interpretations, and the judges' own interpretive actions are erased from view. According to this implicit theory of reception, the responsibility of a text's effects lies entirely in the text itself, not in the reader.

There is the question, then, of the interpretive contexts that are erased by the judges' placement of responsibility for their readings on the texts themselves. We can see an indication of these contexts in the comparative work of texts among members of the judiciary. Compare the following two excerpts:

It must also be remembered that there is not the least danger of any Judge of this Court being influenced by the scurrilous writings appearing in the vernacular papers. I am certain that these writings would have gone unnoticed but for the fact that the petitioner has brought them up before the Court. While, therefore, I am satisfied that the opposite parties are guilty of contempt in making hostile animadversions on a litigant at a time when his cause was pending, the mischief in the instant case so far as it affects the proceedings in this Court, has been trifling. (*Patnaik v. Kar*)

[T]he two offending articles in 'Kurshak' might have a serious effect in view of the fact that Sri Sarangadhar Das and Sri Surendra Nath Dwivedi being members of the Parliament, their statements suggesting that the defamatory articles contained a true statement of facts might affect the decision of the trying Magistrate... But... [t]he undue pendency of criminal cases in the files of Magistrates at Cuttack and the frequency of transfers of Magistrates are too notorious to be said that the Magistrate who may eventually try these cases would have read the offending articles which appeared in August and September, 1952 and would approach the cases with a prejudiced mind. (*The State v. Matrubhumi*)

That the High Court judges are "not in the least danger... of being influenced" by the publications in question is in no small part thanks to their having been published "in the vernacular papers," with the implication that High Court judges are outside the reach of the

Odia-language newspapers' formal persuasions as well as their concerns. This small comment calls into the foreground the host of inequalities indexed by linguistic competency in mid-century Odisha. Not only did (and does) English language competency index a confluence of caste and class advantages, together these linguistic and class advantages have themselves indexed different geographical and political orientations. The Odia “vernacular” newspapers may have been the provenance of the local elites, but the High Court Judges held themselves above this fray, stepping into the recently vacated paternalistic role of the British judge or administrator. The High Court Judges were appointed at the national level. Indeed, the High Court judges were some of the best educated men in mid-century Odisha, many having been schooled in England. By stark contrast, the lower magistrates or district judges in the early 1950s were members of the Odisha state-level civil service, distinct from the higher ranked Indian Administrative Service. Of particular importance was that this lower-level judiciary was, in the 1950s, not administered separately from the executive branch, and judicial magistrates were appointed by the Odisha High Court and the state government together.⁴⁸ Moreover, those appointed to the state-level judiciary were generally schooled locally.

In distinguishing between their own and the lower magistrate's resistance to the statements published in an Odia-language newspaper, the judges rely on an understanding of reception that

⁴⁸ Several administrative processes were established in 1963 that aimed to separate the judiciary and executive functions of the within the Orissa State Government. Both these processes and the organization of the judiciary in the 1950s is recounted in depth in the case *Barada Kanta Misra v. State of Orissa*, AIR 1976 SC 1206. In this case, the petitioner, Misra, sought reinstatement or relief after a demotion with the ranks of judicial magistrates (district judges) which had been achieved through actions of legislators. In this light, the High Court's anxieties about the influence of the “vernacular press” on the magistrates points to potentially intertwined relationships between the district judges and politicians. We see here, then, that in the period after independence, concerns with restraint and ulterior motives were not confined to the press but were shared with the judiciary itself.

is more about susceptibility than intellectual discrimination. Susceptibility—and thus the need to be protected from the negative effects of a publication—seems to be largely determined by social position, but also by linguistic competency, educational background, and all that indicates (caste and class) in mid-century Odisha.

Theatres of Reputation

In the last section I explored how the Odisha High Court took on the role of reluctant moderator for the local press shortly following Independence in three contempt of court cases that resulted from defamation complaints. In the next two sections, I turn to explore directly two contests over the defamatory character of publications that highlight the role of the court beyond the courtroom. These two scandals and the role of defamation cases within them illustrate the importance of defamation suits beyond legal resolutions. After the description of these defamation cases, I contrast the role of the courts in the adjudication of ethical publications in these scandals with the complaint process of the Press Council of India.

In the two scandals I describe in this and the next section, the legal charges seem to function as ways to perform publicly the moral offense of the publication/s, theatrically constructing the moral outrage of the offended party before an audience. During my research, I witnessed this theatricality in action when a friend of a friend, who worked as a lawyer, freelance journalist, and activist, found himself being sued for defamation by a government official for a critical email he had circulated. Both parties put out press releases or statements after each move

in the case, and these were routinely picked up for short notes in both the Odia-language and (local edition) English-language press. What was most curious about it from my perspective was that, since the original offensive emails themselves had merely circulated over some internet listservs, the offenses themselves seemed to gain much greater circulation through the publicity of the defamation case than they ever had on their own. In fact, it was possible that even the recipients of the offending emails had simply ignored them: the emails' author had shared with me the list of addressees and on the named listservs, looking at the threads, there was only one person who responded. The government official could have simply shrugged off the perceived insult and left no one other than the email's writer feeling that the emails merited a response. That the government official—himself a prestigious head of an important and high-profile department—would not just shrug off a statement made by a relatively unimportant activist in an email suggests that morally outrage on a public stage served some useful purpose for this government official.

However, I found this particular case challenging to contextualize because I was unable to get an interview with most of the players. Echoing the letter exchange between Harekrushna Mahatab and the Raja of Seraikella, the activist being sued in this case saw the case as evidence of this government official's lack of commitment to liberal principals of speech freedom and governmental transparency. Dissatisfied with this explanation, I asked others what they thought would be behind such a defamation suit. Another journalist offered the explanation that, since this defamation suit followed on a long conflict between activists and this official, the point of the case must be for the offended governmental official to publicly show that the activists were

personally motivated and therefore not making valid criticisms of his work. However, this long conflict was itself not covered in the press so I had little access to its trajectory or development. For this reason, despite having access to the legal documents in the just-described case, I turn instead to the description of cases for which, despite having much less access to court documents, the broader contexts are relatively more available.

In May 1986, a long-running English weekly news magazine based in Bombay, the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, published a cover story on the current Chief Minister of Odisha entitled, “Shocking: The Strange Escapades of J.B. Patnaik.” The article claimed to have first-hand sources of sexual misbehavior among employees on Patnaik’s part, namely that he had pressured young men who had sought employment with him into performing sexual acts in his office. A long, several-year battle ensued, with Patnaik seeking civil damages from the article’s author, editor, and corporate publisher, Bennett Coleman, the owners of the *Times* (of India) group. Rather than filing criminal defamation charges, Patnaik sought to quash circulation and to establish the falsity of the story through a civil suit. In addition to the civil suit for damages, the same publication led to criminal charges for the publication of obscenities; the civil suit was ultimately resolved through a compromise out of court.⁴⁹ However, this suit came at a time of

⁴⁹ I first learned about the existence of the Patnaik scandal early in my research, in 2007. Several non-journalists mentioned it in passing and then, during my time in newspaper offices in 2009 and 2010, I heard mention of it again from people who had known and worked closely with J.B. Patnaik. I heard from them that the case had deeply affected him, and that it was generally seen as a period of great pain. It had been talked of around the newsroom in hushed tones out of respect for those who knew Mr. Patnaik well. Though the case was in this way silently present during my research, I was unable to ask specific questions about it due to the sexual nature of the accusations against Patnaik and their attendant sensitivity. I focus here on the information in the public domain.

general political dissatisfaction with Patnaik and his Congress Party's state leadership, and the national Congress Party leadership removed him from office in December 1989.⁵⁰

The first article, in the May 18-24, 1986, issue, included a set-apart text box separately titled, "He Is A Pervert," that detailed an interview between the author and Odishan Member of Parliament Shyama Sundar Mohapatra. About this, one of the court judgments summarizes: "The statements said to have been made by the latter [Mohapatra] in the interview with the former [the author] were alleged to be grossly abusive depicting the plaintiff as a sex monster." (*J.B. Patnaik v. Bennett Coleman*, AIR 1990 Ori 107). The August 3-9, 1986 issue followed this up with an article titled, "Why is J. B. Patnaik Being Allowed To Gag the Press?" in which, the judgment reports, "affidavits of two persons describing the plaintiffs immoral and perverted sexual character were further published." The judgments that came out of the scandal described the motivation behind the defamation suits as the emotional pain and moral outrage of Patnaik and his family:

⁵⁰ Patnaik again left the role of Chief Minister a decade later under the cloud of another protracted sexual scandal. This second scandal, often referred to as the "Anjana Mishra rape case," was complicated by several other accusations. Anjana Mishra was raped at knifepoint after her car was stopped while traveling on the highway between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, while her co-traveller, a local journalist, was held in the car at gunpoint throughout. Though this rape was successfully prosecuted, one of the men found guilty was never apprehended, and Mishra claimed that this was part of a larger cover up by the government because she had been raped in retaliation for an earlier grievance. Two years prior, she had been molested by a politician and had gone public with the charges. Initially, Patnaik played a tertiary role in the scandal, and he was accused merely of not taking suitable action against his employee in the first molestation case. Mishra eventually accused Patnaik of having ordered the later rape. Late in the scandal, though, two separate individuals filed notarized affidavits claiming personal knowledge of Patnaik's sexual misbehavior, including a complaint by a junior politician that Patnaik had sexually exploited his (the junior politician's) wife. Though there were no charges filed and there was a general confusion around the truthfulness of the accusations, the overall scandal and loss of confidence in the government led Sonia Gandhi, then-president of the national Congress Party, to step in and replace three-term Patnaik as Chief Minister. According to interviews given at the time, Patnaik saw all of these accusations as evidence of deep conspiracy against him.

The plaintiff felt greatly outraged, because he held a high office and found that his character was being assassinated on account of a deep rotted conspiracy so as to oust him not only from the office of Chief Minister, but also from the field of politics. He also felt deep mental agony along with his family members. Therefore, alleging that both the articles contained false and grossly defamatory allegations aimed at character assassination by political rivals, he instituted the suit for damages to the tune of rupees one crore against defendants.

This short summary encapsulates the arguments of the plaintiff: first that the articles were motivated by “a deep rotted conspiracy” among his political competitors, and second that the “false and grossly defamatory allegations” of such obscene content caused “deep mental agony” not just for the defamed person but also for his family.

The role of publicity became an explicit concern of this case in a petition that also demonstrates how the effects of texts are regularly seen as immanent in the texts themselves, rather than being acts of people in response to texts. Because the content of the impugned publications, the *Weekly Illustrated's* articles, were full of sexual descriptions, Chief Minister Patnaik brought a petition to hold the hearings and trials held *in camera*. The *Patnaik v. Bennett Coleman* court found in favor of Patnaik’s petition, preventing publication of any obscene evidence that resulted from the proceedings:

In the instant case the allegations against the plaintiff which he was challenged are mostly obscene. A picture has been depicted that the plaintiff is a sex pervert loving unnatural sex. In view of the nature of the pleadings in the plaint, in his evidence the plaintiff will deny each and every allegation in which obscenity has been attributed to him. Some other witnesses are also likely to repeat obscenity in their evidence. The allegations, the words and sentences are so filthy and obscene that generally a normal person much less children, adolescents, young girls, ladies and men will hate to hear and read. The moral and cultural background of India is such that such language can hardly be relished when spoken to be heard and read. They are not literature depicting the sexual behavior of the hero, nor are the Indians so modern in the sense modernity is understood in the western countries that they will hear and read trash and obscene matters and forget it. It will be

embarrassing for the counsel to examine and cross-examine the witnesses on the allegations, it will be embarrassing for the Court to record the statements and those who will be present in Court will not enjoy such events.

The decision to disallow the further circulation of the content of the published texts through gag orders on the press coverage of the case rests on the fear that “the words and sentences,” being so “filthy and obscene,” will cause shame and embarrassment to any who read them. The judgment’s comment about the effects of the offensive texts on “children, adolescents, young girls, ladies and men” implies that one of the problems with press coverage is that it then becomes impossible to restrict the texts’ circulation to those people who will not be susceptible to the text—such as those “in the western countries” who are “modern” and thus can “hear and read trash and obscene matters and forget it.” Instead, these texts are so “filthy and obscene” that even the petitioner’s counsel and the Court itself, those who seem the mostly likely to have developed resistance to offensive texts, are likely to be susceptible enough to this material to experience shame and embarrassment in the light of such “words and sentences.”

Rather than impeding the publicity of Patnaik’s defamation case, however, this petition to censor press coverage likely contributed to the situation that I encountered in Bhubaneswar’s newsrooms even more than twenty years later: hushed tones and discomfort discussing the entire episode. While the *in camera* trial may have made straightforward publicity, that is, direct press coverage of the case more difficult, it also meant that all instances of press coverage displayed traces of the egregiousness of the defamatory offense. It became impossible to discuss the case without reproducing the court’s moral response to the “filthy and obscene” magazine articles. Moreover, the inability of the press to directly report the content of the case or its proceedings

scaled up Patnaik's moral outrage from being a quality of only one man's sentiments to a quality of all potential readers.

The case's dismissal was surprisingly complicated, however. Though Bennett Coleman and Patnaik eventually came to an agreement, which involved Bennett Coleman publishing an apology and a retraction, the author of the article himself wrote a petition to the court dissenting from this agreement. The author argued that the case should still go to trial on several grounds, including Patnaik's alleged intimidation of witnesses and Bennett Coleman's decision to retract the coverage, which he, the author, continued to stand behind as verifiable and true. Despite the author's complaint, the case was dismissed.

One of my goals in these discussions of defamation cases is to explore how the courts can serve purposes that exceed their strict legal roles. To some degree the distinction between the legal and extra-legal role of courts is a false one, as the courts themselves necessarily rely on forms of publicity, and distinctions between the public and private, in their very constitution. The difference that I see at work in these defamation cases is more of degree than kind: we could place some kinds of court action at the far end of publicity, in which any publicity is constrained to that which is integral with the functioning of the court. Some kinds of property adjudications may fit within this category, such as property disputes between neighbors or family members, in which the primary goal of involving the courts is to figure out who gets what, rather than to put the position of the petitioner on display. In some "private" cases regarding family disputes and divorces, the publicity inherent in the court is precisely a deterrent to seeking legal adjudication. At the other end of the spectrum, though, are cases whose purposes seem primarily about public

display rather than a decision by the court. Here defamation cases may be seen as the extreme case. This is especially apparent in a comparison between court cases dealing with defamation and the Press Council of India's resolution of defamation complaints. The Press Council is devoted to quietly resolving press disputes and ethical complaints, largely without publicity—a comparison that will be clearer with the later description of the Press Council.

Defamation, in India and elsewhere, is contested terrain in for civil libertarians, who seek to balance freedom of expression with right to privacy. While these were also the stated concerns of the lawmakers who included defamation as a restriction on free speech in the Indian Constitution, the cultural embeddedness of understandings of freedom (of expression) and privacy make the court cases about defamation complex sites of contact between globally circulating discourses of liberalism and local concerns about reputation and face. While the laws themselves have inherited a largely British approach to defamation, the uses of defamation laws often call on historically particular, local concerns about what it means for people to think certain kinds of things about each other. Legal scholar Roger W. Shuy writes that defamation involves not just compensation for the insult itself but “for allegedly false accusations that reorder the accused person's relationship with the community” (Shuy 2009, 26). My argument is a stronger argument of Shuy's perspective, arguing that the defamation case seeks to address the “reorder[ing]” of the “accused person's relationship with the community” not merely through compensation but through a further reordering of the relationships between the parties and society that is performed by the case itself, in which the accused becomes the victim, the person righteously, morally outraged at his or her mistreatment.

Adjudicating Responsibility

In the Odisha High Court's judgments of the contempt cases in the 1950s, the judges exercised self-conscious restraint from judicial action due to a stated desire to preserve the independence of the press. In the exercise of judicial restraint, the High Court judges were not only admonishing the press but also providing a model of ethical comportment in a democracy—that is, not acting simply because one has the *right* to act or say a certain thing, but acting in a way so as to achieve the right ends. We see a similar concern with modeling ethical behavior through the court's decisions in the defamation suits in this section and the last. In the Patnaik and *Illustrated Weekly* decisions, the court went to great lengths to justify its decision to limit news coverage of the case, ultimately portraying it as a necessary protection given the excessive offensiveness of the publications in question. The court offered its decision to gag the press, despite the court's stated commitment to press freedom, as a sign of the egregiousness of the publications rather than a sign of the court's desire to curtail press freedom. In the case I describe in this section, the High Court again seeks to display its commitment to self-restraint at the same time that it seeks to restrain the press. At the same time, the offended individual himself seeks the Court's intervention as a means of demonstrating moral outrage.

In the early summer of 2008, senior Indian Administrative Service [IAS] Officer Priyabrata Patnaik filed a criminal defamation complaint petition (under sections 499/500/501/502/34 of the Indian Penal Code) against Tathagata Satpathy, Dandapani Mishra, and the Samajbadi Society, respectively the Chief Editor, Publisher, and owning body of the Odia-language daily newspaper *Dharitri*. The petition sought legal redress for what Patnaik

claimed were libelous allegations in several articles against himself for involvement in the murder of famed sports coach, Biranchi Das, in April of that year. This defamation suit was only one of numerous twists in the story of Biranchi Das' murder, yet the defamation suit itself must be placed within the broader context of the broader scandal for it is the association with the broader scandal that made *Dharitri's* texts so offensive.

Biranchi Das was the coach of a young Odishan boy, Budhia Singh, who became known as the world's youngest marathon runner, completing several marathons at the age of 3. Budhia Singh's story was perfect for publicity: he was born to an "untouchable" caste mother in one of Bhubaneswar's slums and as a toddler he was "sold" to a hawker in the city, but was then "discovered" by Judo coach Biranchi Das. Under the fostering of his coach, Biranchi Das, Budhia Singh became a running sensation, dominating sports coverage in Odisha state and receiving international media attention for two years. Broadcasts of Singh as a preschooler frequently showed him making nationalistic statements. In May 2006 abuse allegations against Das in his coaching of the young boy led the state to remove Singh from Das' custody and send Singh to a state hostel. Das had publicly complained that the state was losing an opportunity to compete internationally, further arguing that false abuse allegations had been motivated by Singh's family's jealousy.

Not two years later, in April 2008, coach Biranchi Das was shot dead at his training facility in Bhubaneswar. Witnesses reported that he was shot by two individuals who sped away on

motorcycles—as if calculated to provide a ready script for an “Ollywood” film.⁵¹ Within a month, two “gangsters” had surrendered for the murder. Despite this, rumors circulated in and out of the press that there was a broader conspiracy behind the murder that involved police and government officials, including the defamation complainant, Priyabrata Patnaik. The story that was ultimately accepted as the motive in the murder conviction of Raja Acharya explained that Acharya murdered Das because he had been providing protection to an Odia actress, Leslie Tripathy, whom Acharya had been harassing in the attempt to establish a romantic relationship. In interviews with the English daily *Pioneer*, Patnaik explained that the actress’s father had approached him as a well-respected IAS officer because Patnaik’s son was a student in the college where Tripathy’s father was a lecturer. Tripathy’s father had requested assistance after attempts to seek police protection from Acharya’s stalking had failed, and Patnaik had met Acharya once to try to dissuade him from his abusive behavior. The articles at the heart of the defamation suit claimed that there was evidence that Patnaik had conspired with others to kill the coach, Biranchi Das. There were also rumors that Biranchi Das held some information about the involvement of the existing government in illegal mining operations and that he was killed to keep him from using that information.

The breadth and depth of this scandal is partly due to its composition by several separate scandals and media stories: first there was the irresistible story of the boy marathon runner, then the shocking allegations of abuse by his coach, a gangster’s stalking of a young actress, the

⁵¹ In fact in December 2013, long after I wrote this line, I discovered that there may in fact be a Hindi film based loosely on this story, starring Saif Ali Khan. According to the *Pioneer*, Raja Acharya’s mother sought to file a defamation suit in November 2013 to prevent the showing of “Bullet Raja” which she claimed “tarnished” her son’s image. No subsequent reporting has confirmed whether she actually did file the defamation suit.

cinematic murder of the coach, and finally the possibility that powerful politicians and bureaucrats were involved in the murder because the coach had information about illegal mining activities that threatened them. At the time, in addition to being an IAS officer of high standing, Priyabrata Patnaik had played an important role in the Posco steel plant project and was also the President of the Bhubaneswar Club, a former-officer's club that had become *the* elite social institution of the city. Moreover, during the unfolding of the above events, the Bhubaneswar Club was rumored to be beginning to invest in mining itself. The responses of several Bhubaneswar residents to my questions about the scandal were that, while Patnaik himself might not be involved, certainly some powerful people had been, and that, moreover, this was exactly the kind of thing that went on in the Bhubaneswar Club's shadowy power brokering. Without even considering the content of *Dharitri's* allegations, it is clear that any public association with this series of scandals would have been undesirable for a public figure and that it was this association, as much as the content of any particular allegations, that was the most damaging.

Patnaik's complaint sought criminal prosecution of the chief editor, the publisher, and the society that owns the offending newspaper on the grounds that "the prestige of the complainant [had been] tarnished in the society" (*Satpathy v. Patnaik*, CRLMC No.358 2009) under sections 499/500/501/502/34 of the Indian Penal Code. In an appeal to the High Court to dismiss the case filed in January 2009, the defendants—the editor, owner, and publisher of *Dharitri*—proposed two grounds for dismissal, each of interest to this discussion.

First, the producers of *Dharitri* argued that the publications themselves did not count as criminal defamation under the IPC codes 500/501/502. The petition to dismiss remarkably

argued that the court “had absolutely no power to entertain the complaint petition” because the offences did not qualify for prosecution under the IPC. Instead, it argued that “it would have been just and proper for the complainant, if at all he had any allegations, as stated in the complaint petition to have approached the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978.” The dismissal petition’s claim that there the was “no case made out” relied on a 2008 judgment in the Kerala High Court, which itself relied on earlier case law, that in order to count as defamation an “imputation” must have been demonstrably made “with the intention, knowledge or belief that such an imputation will harm the reputation of the person concerned.” In 2010, the Orissa High Court dismissed this aspect of the *Dharitri* petition outright, saying simply that “the publications made, which have been taken exception by the complainant cannot be equated with the publication, which were dealt with by the Kerala High Court.”

This is an important moment. Though it is easy to lose track in the form of the legal judgments, essentially what I’ve described is an attempt by the producers of *Dharitri* to argue that the texts themselves are not evidence enough of criminal defamation, and that according to case law prosecuting criminal defamation also requires evidence of the “intention, knowledge or belief” of harm by publication. The Orissa High Court deals with this through an implicit comparison between the texts of the Kerala case and the *Dharitri* case. The Kerala case (*Mathew v. Radhakrishnan*, 2008 CRI.L.J.845) involved an article in a Malayalam-language newspaper about an Insurance Company branch manager citing employee complaints about him during his leave. Upon the branch manager’s providing evidence of the impossibility of some of the complaints, the newspaper published the new information. The Kerala High Court had found that

“by no stretch of the imagination could it be said that [the] news item was published with the intention of harming the reputation of the complainant” as attested to by the daily’s timely publication of the new information (*Mathew v. Radhakrishnan*). By contrast, the Orissa High Court judgment’s consideration of this aspect of the criminal defamation does not address attempts by Priyabrata Patnaik to correct the newspaper’s stories nor any responses to such corrections. Instead, the *Satpathy v. Patnaik* judgment merely provides the titles and one-sentence summaries of the articles, a strategy reminiscent of the Orissa High Court’s analysis of newspaper articles in the 1950s contempt of court decisions. For example:

In volume 34, issue no. 148 dated 23.4.2008, of the said newspaper, another news item under the caption in bold letters, such as, “SUPARI DEITHILE PRIYABRATA” [trans: Priyabrata Had Given Blood Money] was published, wherein the public were conveyed that the complainant is involved in the killing of the Judo coach Biranchi Das and that Sandip Acharya [alias] Raja Acharya was not involved in the crime. It was also conveyed to the public that the media has evidence and proof of involvement of the complainant in the murder of Shri Biranchi Das.

In the above statement, the title line “Supari Deithile Priyabrata” vividly portrays dark intent, using a slang term for the money paid to contract killers—“supari”—closely associated with Mumbai gangsters in films. This vivid metaphor in the context of the film-like events of the entire scandal allows the texts to stand on their own as evidence of the worthiness of the consideration of the case under IPC sections 500/501/502, though the judgment leaves it unclear whether this is possible because these texts are themselves signs of malicious intent or because they are simply such egregious acts of defamation. The subsequent statement that these publications “cannot be equated” with the publications in the Kerala case points to the texts themselves as the locus of the criminal defamation rather than any other feature or context.

Despite this unproblematized treatment of the text, however, the problem of the *responsibility* for the text, which haunts the criminal defamation case law's concern with intention and prior knowledge, was not resolved so easily. In *Satpathy v. Patnaik*, the second part of the petition to dismiss the criminal defamation focused the Court on the problem of responsibility for newspaper publications, arguing that:

The petitioner no. 1 [Satpathy] is stated to be a popular politician of the State and at present, the Member of Parliament from Dhenkanal Parliamentary Constituency. It is, therefore, stated that he seldom has time to select the news item to be published in his newspaper and, as a matter of fact, being the Editor, his duty is to control the administrative affairs of the newspaper concerned but not to select the news items which is the duty of the news Editors.

Here, in addition to the earlier argument that the publications were “in good faith and not with a deliberate intention to malice the reputation of any body,” Tathagatha Satpathy's counsel argued that as Editor he was not responsible to the day-to-day selection of news items. Indeed, this claim mirrors that which Satpathy told me during our interview in 2007. Satpathy spoke with pride of his disengagement from the daily affairs of the newsroom, arguing that this preserved the independence and neutrality of the news, despite his own necessarily political affiliations and agendas. For Satpathy, his distance from the news production itself was at once one of *Dharitri's* most ethical and also commercially valuable qualities.

The Court, however, found legislative and case law supporting the *prima facie* case against Satpathy. In this, the Court relied on the Press and Registration Act, 1867, which requires that newspapers contain a name printed as “Editor” on each copy of the newspaper; the “Owner” must also appear. The 1867 Act defines an Editor as “the person who controls the selection of the matter that is published in a newspaper.” The Orissa High Court's 2010 judgment reproduced the

entirety of the 1867 Act's seventh section, regarding legal responsibility, then summarized its position: "Law is well settled that presumption under section 7 of the Act, 1867 is available to be drawn against the Editor of the publication, whose name appears in each of the issues of the publication." Responsibility for the content of newspaper publications thus is assigned by matter of course to the person who prints his name as "Editor," even if in fact that person has little or no role in the production of newspaper content. Disproving this presumption is possible only during the course of the trial. However, such disproof would produce another, more curious situation, intimated in a Supreme Court case quoted at length in the Orissa High Court's decision: "in case such 'Editor' succeeds in proving that he was not the 'Editor' having control over the selection of the alleged libelous matter published in the newspaper, the complainant would be left without remedy to redress his grievance against the real culprit" (*K.M. Mathew v. K.A. Abraham*, AIR 2002 SC 2989, quoted in *Satpathy v. Patnaik*).

Requests to friends in Bhubaneswar have not turned up the conclusion of Priyabrata Patnaik's criminal defamation charges against *Dharitri*. If it was resolved, it does not seem to have drawn public attention. Instead, the filing of the defamation charges—and the publicity of the filing—may have served the purpose of the defamation suit's "reorder[ing]" of the "accused person's relationship with the community" (Shuy 2009, 26).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of the postcolonial courts in journalistic ethics in post-Independence Odisha. I have described how the courts have stood between the constitutional ideal to refrain from interference in the free press and laws that give the courts relatively wide if imprecise license to intervene in newspaper circulation in the name of protecting people from the negative effects of offensive texts. I have suggested that this understanding of offense relies on an understanding of how texts work that is foundational and pervasive beyond debates about religion. At the same time, I have suggested that this pervasive understanding of how semiotic offenses work relies on assumptions about sociological difference, that is, that some people are more susceptible than others.

Semiotic offenses consist of a cycle of events in which each event comments upon and seeks to define the other events. A publication in a newspaper frames some supposed prior set of acts as a problem, usually as a moral breach of some sort. An arrest or a legal complaint about that publication frames it as offensive to some person or persons. The legal complaint also frames some person as culpable for the publication and another person (or group) as having been vulnerable to it or its effects in some capacity. The court itself may accept and reinforce the frames proposed by the legal complaint or it may redefine the roles and actions at issue. Publications about the legal proceedings may reinforce or recast the prior interpretations. Not all of these events need to be real, some of them may be merely portrayed as having happened in the past or as going to happen in the future. Yet both real and projected events reframe the semiotic

offense itself—the publication—and its social enrollments. These multiply layered or laminated communicative events each seek to define what occurred, who was involved, and why it matters.

Sorting out the recognizable forms of participation is thus complex not only because there are so many different roles and potential personnel involved, but also because the construction or framing of those roles is always located from the perspective of one of those communicative events. There is no “view from nowhere” (Nagel 1989) of these events. There are many different layers of responsibility at stake in adjudications of semiotic offenses by publication. First there is the technical, legal responsibility for the newspaper text itself. This is legally defined according to the Registration of Newspapers Act, which requires that all newspapers print the name of the editor and the publisher on each issue of the publication. Individual authors can also be held accountable, legally, but the conventional lack of by-lines in Odia-language newspapers usually prevents this. In Odisha, the role of the named editor and publisher is to accept legal responsibility for the publication entirely, in short, to take the fall or to sacrifice themselves. This was expressed to me during a tour of one of Bhubaneswar’s newsrooms when my tour guide introduced me to the newspaper’s publisher. “This man,” my tour guide joked in Odia, “is the one who hangs.” When I didn’t understand the joke, he explained patiently that the publisher was the one who would go to court if people filed cases against the newspaper.

We can see the local significance of the sacrificial role of the Editor in one recent and remarkable event in which the one of Odisha’s major newspapers violated the convention. On January 14, 2014, the *Samaja* newspaper published a drawing of the Prophet Mohammed in supposed celebration of Mawlid al-Nabi. The newspaper is based in downtown Cuttack, home to

a historically significant Muslim population. Protests by Muslims outside of the Gopabandhu Bhawan, the site of the newsroom, sought an apology from the newspaper and the arrest of those individuals responsible for the offense. The *Samaja* management apparently responded by releasing the name of the sub-editor who placed the image in the newspaper, and police subsequently arrested sub-editor Jitendra Prasad Das.

While news of the arrest itself evoked concern, Odisha's journalists were appalled that newspaper would release the name of the lower-level worker. On January 15, journalists protested in Bhubaneswar against the arrest of the sub-editor, strongly criticizing the *Samaja*. The Media Unity for the Freedom of Press advocacy group released a press statement quoting one of their organizers: "It goes without saying matters of this nature are in the domain of the Editor and the Publisher as per law and it is ridiculous to implicate a [desktop publishing] operator or a sub-editor for the offence committed by the Editor/Publisher" ("Media Rights Body Condemns Arrest," www.OrissaDiary.com, January 16, 2014). Another news report quoted the National Union of Journalists' secretary general, Prasanna Mohanty, who said, "The editor is responsible for the content of a newspaper. But unfortunately the Samaj management gave out the name of the young sub-editor by entirely passing the buck of responsibility on him. This is unethical" (Pratap Mohanty, "Muslims Attack Newspaper Offices in Odisha," www.niticentral.com, January 15, 2014). Jitendra Prasad Das was released on bail several days later. For many of Odisha's journalists the event seemed evidence of general ethical decline at the *Samaja*, others saw the entire event as evidence of casteism—an accusation that already plagues the *Samaja*.

While we see in the journalists' reaction to the *Samaja* a strong ethic of who should take technical responsibility for the content of the text, this does not establish responsibility for the semiotic offense itself. This determination is much more challenging and is the focus of legal proceedings. In both civil and criminal defamation, culpability for the offense relies on whether the harm to the individual resulted from a failure of journalistic duty—negligence or intent to cause harm. The courts also repeatedly state that such failure of duty is required in contempt of court. However, in all of the cases that I have reviewed, which includes all of the cases in the Orissa High Court involving locally published newspapers, evidence of culpability seems to be drawn primarily from the texts themselves. In other words, the courts read the offending texts as signs of the intentions of those who are responsible for the texts. In the next chapter I explore how journalists themselves also interpret newspaper writing as evidence of social relations and underlying motives.

There is also the additional question of responsibility for the actions that result from an offense. Not the offense itself, but what the offense makes happen. This category of responsibility would not be legible in all legal regimes; in the United States, for example, representations are generally not held legally responsible for acts subsequently performed by other people, except in the cases deemed to be explicit instructions—though moral panics about such relationships are popular. Yet in India, representations can and are routinely held responsible for the actions that follow. This sort of responsibility is most evident in cases of semiotic offense related to communal violence, as in the example of Lenin Kumar that opened

this chapter. In Kumar's case, censorship of his book and his arrest were justified through the projection of the future violence that it was likely to cause.

Relevant to the question of responsibility for subsequent actions is the role of receiver of the harm itself—the social role of the injured. This, too, is quite different across categories of semiotic offenses. In both civil and criminal defamation, the receiver of the harm is technically the individual, who is usually the petitioner. By contrast, in contempt of court, even though indirect contempt of court could be described as libel against the court, the harm is not simply to court itself, but to the general citizenry who seek justice through the courts. As the Orissa High Court stated in a contempt of court judgment regarding several Odishan newspapers' coverage of a 1995 court ruling: "it is in the public interest to see that allegations or criticism which would scandalise or tend to scandalise or tend to lower authority of the Courts is not permitted because in the functioning of democracy an independent judiciary to dispense justice without fear or favour is necessary and its strength is the faith of the public in general in that institution" (*Lokanath Mishra v. State of Orissa*, 1999 CriLJ 4719). This projection of harm onto the social body is also an integral component of semiotic offenses governed by the Indian Penal Code regarding religious sentiments and social identities, as the harm to one portion of the citizenry is projected onto the rest of the nation.

Chapter V

Work Relations

This chapter explores the ethics of newsroom employment relationships. I have so far explored how ethical understandings of journalism and newspapers in Odisha involve interpreting both published texts and their modes of writing in terms of social relations. Contempt of court and defamation cases both construct the kind of impacts that newspaper publications have on social relations, especially relations between citizens and the court and between public figures, newspaper readers, and other journalists. When the defamed individuals are politicians, then the relationships at issue are between the politician and existing or future constituencies; defaming articles may also be read through relationships between the newspaper's figurehead (often a politician himself) and the insulted politician. When journalists evaluate newspaper writing practices, they also look for signs of relationships—relationships in the past or intended future of a text. In this chapter, I look at ethical ideas about relationships themselves in news production, and especially how employers and employees manage having multiple moral perspectives on their work together.

Siba had longed to return home. He had been in Delhi for most of his adulthood, for college first and then for work, but now that he had two young children, he and his wife—he married an Odia girl, too—dreamed of their girls learning good Odia and how to be good “Odia daughters” (*odiā jhiamāne*). But Odisha had not offered any professional opportunities for him. When the job offer came from the Odia-language daily *Surya* in 2009, Siba was doubly thrilled: not only would he get to bring his family home, he would be working to support his mother tongue while also supporting his own family. *Surya* was barely matching the pay at his metropolitan job, but it would be enough for Bhubaneswar: he’d be able to afford actual English-medium schools for his girls, not just those English-medium schools where the teachers can’t speak English.

From the perspective of the daily newspaper *Surya*, Siba was a lucky find. He specialized in a printing technology new to the newspapers of Odisha. Odisha’s newsrooms have historically trailed national and global technology standards—for instance, they only adopted offset web printing⁵² in the 1980s, almost eight decades after US newspapers—and Siba’s expertise in computerized plate production could bring the newspaper *Surya* up to speed, both figuratively and literally. Technological transitions have been a longstanding challenge for Odia newspapers not only because of the cost of the technology itself but also because of the human resource challenge posed by the necessary new expertise: in Odisha, the technical side of newspaper publication has been the domain of less-educated, artisanal classes who do not typically have the

⁵² Off-set printing is the global standard of newspaper production; it involves the production of printing plates that are then inked and pressed onto large rubber rolls, leaving impressions that are then rolled onto the newsprint. Plate production itself has long relied on film exposure, not unlike photography. Computerized plate production cuts this laborious step between newspaper formatting and printing.

language skills or professional polish to represent the newspaper at national training events, while hiring someone from “outside” is impeded by Odisha’s national image as a poor and “backward” province with little to offer metropolitan professionals. Finally, the printing staff speaks Odia primarily, so hiring a non-Odia from Delhi or Mumbai would not only be expensive but would present communication challenges. Siba was the perfect solution.

Yet Siba’s new job did not last long. *Surya*’s hiring of Siba had resembled an arranged marriage courtship, taking several months to settle: he had been first approached by one of the financial management staff whom he knew socially, who acted as a third person for the general manager and head of the business. Only after several informal but increasingly direct conversations about the job had Siba talked to the general manager who would be responsible for his hire, but even then specifics were slow to come. The hiring manager had low-balled his salary, Siba had said he wasn’t sure he’d be willing to move; finally they had agreed to match his existing salary. He arrived by himself for a month to get settled and find housing—they would live separately from their extended family—and then Siba moved his family from Kolkata. Then, about six months later, Siba was approached by one of the upper-level managers at *Surya* and asked to take out a significant personal bank loan, in his own name, and to give the money to the newspaper. The manager insisted that this would not create problems for Siba because the newspaper had done this several times with other employees and had paid the money back. But Siba did not share the newspaper’s perspective—far from it. He was livid. He felt deeply offended by the request, remarking to our mutual friend that it was the height of “unprofessionalism.” Moreover, this unprofessional request epitomized what Siba had

experienced of the Odia-language media industry in his six months: how managers disrespect workers, how workers aren't serious about their responsibilities, how people don't know how to act appropriately in offices, and how nothing runs on the right schedule. Even though the decision was difficult for his family, and even though it meant the loss of the dream of raising his family in Odisha, Siba quit. He moved his family to Mumbai to seek a new job.

The manager's request that an employee take out a personal loan on the newspaper's behalf was, for Siba, a sign of entrenched unprofessionalism, but other workers saw such requests differently. It was rumored that Krishna, a *Surya* sub-editor who had moved from another local Odia-language newspaper a couple of years prior, had agreed to the same request. When I asked his gossipy co-worker why Krishna had agreed, she had shrugged. "He's willing to help—that's good. Now he is like family (*paribara*).” The dowry-like request by his new employer seemed, at least to the co-worker, to have achieved its desired ends in Krishna's case: Krishna had proven himself as a loyal employee invested in the wellbeing of the newspaper company, willing to take on personal risk on the newspaper's behalf. As a result, the newspaper itself would now care for Krishna like family, providing him with a stable job and the promise of other perks.

Why did Siba feel so offended by the manager's request that he take out a personal loan on the newspaper's behalf, while Krishna (and his co-worker) saw the request as acceptable, even beneficial? Why did the newspaper engage in this practice in the first place, especially if they ran the risk of losing an important employee? In this chapter, I explore these questions by examining what it means to be professional compared to being like "*paribara*" or "family" in Odia-

language newspaper production, and by exploring how and why these two categories dominate Bhubaneswar's media producers' evaluations of work ethics. Siba's decision demonstrates that these frames of family-ness and professionalism both make sense of and prescribe conduct with strong affective and moral force.

Susan McKinnon and Fanella Cannell (2013) describe the dominant ideology of modernity as the opposition between kin-based societies and state- or contract-based societies. They write:

“in kin-based societies, kinship is understood to constitute the fundamental structure in terms of which all other social relations—political, economic, and religious—are organized... In “modern”, state-based societies, however, kinship is understood to be relegated to the domestic domain and divested of its political and economic functions—which are separated into distinct institutional domains” (McKinnon and Cannell 2013).

Modernity's separation of domains of kinship and not kinship—including work, state, civil society, and politics—is an ideological effect involving what Latour (Latour 1993 [1991]) has described as “purification” and what Yanigasaki and Delaney (Yanagisako and Delaney 1994) have called “naturalization”—both processes that make the modern separation of kinship and contract, private and public, morally compelling, as the way things should be. As Susan Gal (Gal 2002; see also Gal and Woolard 2001) describes in her analysis of private and public distinctions as a language ideology, the discursive opposition between kinship and modern states scales up to distinctions between kinds of societies, and it scales down to distinctions between interpersonal social relations and practices. I describe how Bhubaneswar's newspaper producers not only offer a counter-example to this separation of domains, but also how being a counter-example is a reflexive concern for Odisha's newspaper workers. In other words, I explore how these journalists live with modernity's ideological compulsion to keep kinship in its own domain

even as they don't play by its rules. Modernity's limitations on kinship, I argue, are at the heart of a double bind for these workers.

Such diagramming of modernity and non-modernity onto kinship practices is especially powerful in former colonies like India, where ethnological accounts of "native" kinship practices—like child marriage and *sati* or widow immolation—justified colonial rule (Mani 1998; Oldenburg 2002).⁵³ Moreover, the colonial government denied local political legitimacy by portraying Indian political organizations, from local kingship to caste-based economic patronage, as kinship writ large (Chatterjee 1993; Dirks 2001). Even as nationalism successfully reclaimed much of "Indian tradition" as a form of local modernity, the most morally and politically controversial aspects of tradition continue to be social practices associated with kinship: *sati* (widow immolation), dowry, son preference, caste. I explore how modernity's purification of kinship and non-kinship troubles not only exceptional forms of traditional kinship but even daily work relations among urban professionals, as people reflexively evaluate signs of kinship as signs of relationship to modernity. Bhubaneswar's newspaper producers often articulate such moral evaluations in talk about "unprofessionalism."

The category of "kinship" itself is not entirely appropriate for this analysis given the capaciousness of the category role historically. Marshall Sahlins (2013) has argued that anthropologists have typically used the term kinship to capture relations of mutuality. I use it as a discursive stand-in for those features of relations that have been historically opposed to the modern state society, recognizing that historically this is actually a range of relations that have

⁵³ Of course, no where was there a naturally occurring of bourgeois private family (Chakrabarty 2000; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

negatively valued as patronage, caste, clientism, and despotism. We might recall here Shiv Vishvanathan and Harsh Sethi statement that “the nexus of state and family lie the problems of modern India” (1998, 38). Partha Chatterjee has proposed that colonialism on the subcontinent conditioned a separation between the “outer” material world of the West’s power and the “inner” spiritual core, which formed the foundation of Indian nationalism. This made family a central site for the construction of Indian sovereignty⁵⁴, thus allowing kinship practices to serve as signs of Indian identity and sovereignty even as such practices themselves shifted to reflect modernist ideals of private life (Sreenivas 2008).

In his account of American kinship, David Schneider (1980) argued that Americans have defined it primarily in opposition to capitalist market relations. Whereas market relations can be cut by firing and forged through payment, kinship relations cannot (should not) be cut or paid. Anthropologists investigating the ethics of relationality in work contexts have found that intimacy is often a reflexive concern thanks to its apparent opposition to the interests of market exchanges. In contrast to the American ideology, Yanagisako’s (2002) study of Italian family firms in Como’s silk manufacturing industry argues that sentiment in family firms is a constitutive and organizing force. Yanagisako finds that among capitalist families, sentiment (such as “for the good of the firm”) is emphasized when family members want to keep other family members from selling off business shares, especially in the context of increasingly progressive inheritance laws giving women intestate rights. For fathers/proprietors who want to preserve the capital in the business after their death and prevent the division of “the patrimony,”

⁵⁴ Whether nationalism figured Odishan families similarly to Bangla would take a distinct study. Sarkar’s (2001) emphasis on the role of class among Bangla nationalists suggests that family might have worked differently in Odisha in the mid-twentieth century.

including preventing non-managerial share-holding daughters from cashing in their shares and bankrupting the firm (161), the best strategy is to keep the issue of inheritance “inside the domain of the family” and “outside the domain of law” (171-2). One of Como’s capitalist families managed this by incorporating more distant kin into the “family core” and thus “strengthen[ing] the sentiments of unity and loyalty to the grandfather and founder [of the firm]” (Yanagisako 2002, 153). By contrast, in an ethnographic study of a diamond processing plant in southern India, Cross (Cross 2010, 2011) describes how management staff worked to insulate themselves from exactly the strong ties that indexed local forms of relationality. Instead, the managers cultivated detachment in order to “separate themselves legally, morally, and socially from binding obligations and responsibility” (Cross 2011, 35-6) to lower employees, which served their goal of “achieving control and productivity” at international standards (Cross 2011, 39).

In Odisha, the method for dealing with mutuality and relationality in the context of news production is neither clear cut nor singular. I propose that the functioning of modernity’s opposition between modern professionalism and Odia social relations is brought to life in moments of slippage between representations or kinds of kinship in the newsroom. I heuristically distinguish four kinds or categories of kinship, which I call kinship as domain, kinship as trope, kinship as relational category, and kinship as doxa. I am not making ontological claims for these kinds of kinship; this is an analysis of pragmatically relevant categories from the perspective of Bhubaneswar. From the perspective of the newsroom, the first category, kinship as domain, is essentially a description of kinship’s absence; it is the confinement of kinship to the domestic

sphere and its absence as a formative feature of professional relations. It is modernity's ideal from the perspective of the workplace. Professionalism itself is key to how this domain production is experienced in Odisha's news offices.

The second kind is kinship as trope, especially the corporate use of the family as in "we are all family here." While this does involve the presence of kinship outside of modernity's domain production, it is nonetheless amenable to modernity's purifications of private and public or kin and non-kin domains. This is possible thanks to the historical implications of the family trope, which was designed explicitly to familiarize enormous corporations—it implies that we are not all family.

The third kind of kinship at work in newsrooms I call kinship as a relational category. By this I mean that relations that are constituted elsewhere as kinship⁵⁵ structure the organization of the newspaper business, producing, in other words, the family business. This is morally ambivalent when regarded through modernity's purifications. On one hand, family businesses are known to occur around the world, and they have historically and continue to dominate the list of India's non-government controlled corporate giants. On the other hand, newspaper producers can be sensitive to evaluations of job-provision to family members as a form of despotism or corruption.

Finally, the last kind of kinship, kinship as doxa, is not necessarily "kinship" at all, but is instead a host of social practices and ways of reckoning relationships that the oppositional ideologies of modernity have coded as kinship. Kinship as doxa describes social practices in

⁵⁵ It does not matter for my current analysis how kin relations are reckoned, e.g., jurally or through substances like blood, milk, or DNA.

newsrooms that are implicitly patterned on domestic relations, such as food-sharing and forms of deference. I see these as relevant to kinship because they share domestic spaces' largely tacit assumptions about ways to forge meaningful relations as well as what constitutes meaningful social differences—especially gender, caste, and class. I call these “doxic” drawing on Bourdieu's use of the term for those practices which seem to be, or are misrecognized as being natural or God-given, even when they are a function of political organization. *Mis*recognition is not my argument—in a social setting so thoroughly soaked with multiple discursive possibilities, recognition of many features of the interaction is often in play—but Bourdieu's broader concern about reflexivity applies. Doxic kinship is a useful strategy for making social relations work, not because it cannot be reflexively perceived and addressed, but because it does not have to be in order to be effective. Indeed, sometimes it works best when it is not the subject of discourse.

Before I describe the ethnographic situations in Odisha's contemporary newsrooms through the lens of these four categories, I first describe the national and state-level regulatory contexts within which news producers' work relations take shape.

Press Regulations and Employment Relations

National and state-level rules regulate the work relations among Odisha's media producers, managing employment conditions, wages, journalist accreditations, and various benefits. The first Press Commission was described in Chapter 2. After Independence, the first of the Press Commission's adopted recommendations was the establishment of a body for determining and

legislating the wages of newspaper employees. The Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955, allowed for the appointment of a Wage Board for Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees that followed a model by then routinely adopted for other industries (e.g., cotton textile, sugar, cement). As in other industries (Mahapatro 1993, 211-215), the wage board was intended to, and ultimately did, determine hire-able employee categories, such as reporter and sub-editor; categories of newspapers based on their revenue; and proposed minimum wages for various categories of employees within each of the categories of newspapers. This Act was found necessary by the failure of Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 to cover editorial workers; as the Delhi High Court observed in its historical recount of the regulation of journalism work, “the Industrial Disputes Act defines workman as any person employed in any industry to do any skilled, unskilled, manual, supervisory, technical or clerical work... [it] naturally would not apply to literary or intellectual workers” (*Statesman Limited v. Lt. Governor*, 1974). The resulting Working Journalists Act then reaffirmed the distinction between intellectual and physical labor, even as it sought to regulate intellectual labor along the same industrial lines.

The 1955 Act was legally challenged by several newspapers and ultimately heard by the Supreme Court in *Express Newspapers v. Union of India*, 1958, in which the petitioners argued that the minimum wage requirements would force newspapers out of business, thus impeding the working of Article 19(1)(A). The Supreme Court found against Express Newspapers, determining that neither the “intention” nor the “proximate effect” of the legislation was to work against the freedom of expression and that, moreover, such an effect would “depend upon

various factors which may or may not come into play.” The Working Journalist Act continues as an important regulator of a newspaper’s employee relations, requiring newspapers to adhere to certain categories of worker and minimum wages, according to the size of the newspaper. The Wage Board for Working Journalists has been convened each decade since independence. At the time of writing this, there was another challenge to the Working Journalists Act of 1955 in the Indian Supreme Court following the most recent wage board, overseen by Justice G. R. Majithia, which published its recommendations in 2011.

While national-level regulations have intervened directly in the newsroom relations, regulating categories of employment as well as wages, hiring, and termination practices, state-level regulations have functioned external to the industrial relations of publications themselves. Indeed, the regulations often presumed and built upon employer relationships—far from seeking to alter them, or to protect employees from employers, state regulations have made journalist employees more dependent on employers.

The clearest example of this is in journalist accreditation, which is managed at the state-level throughout India, and exists in a fuzzy area between certifying publications’ representatives to receive government information and access to press events and establishing a system of state-patronage for an elite class of journalists. Accreditation, which, in Odisha, is awarded based on application to a committee convened under the Information and Public Relations Department of the state government, requires certification of status by the employing publication. It can transfer with the journalist to another publication, but it may also be revoked by the committee during an employee’s movement between publications. In practice, accreditation is notoriously difficult for

new journalists to achieve, especially since they are often employed by a single employer for less than the five years required by the accreditation rules to establish seniority. For freelance journalists it is even more difficult: the seniority requirement is fifteen years of full-time employment as a journalist, the demonstration of which is itself challenging for freelancers since there is no employer/patron to vouch for them and work is paid piecemeal. Yet accreditation also serves the state as a short-hand for “who is really a journalist” when providing benefits to journalists, such as railway discounts or quotas, inclusion in state-sponsored visits to disaster-affected areas, and, most controversially, government housing allotments. Accreditation policies at the state level reinforce journalists’ dependence on their employers as their patrons.

The most sought after of Odishan state benefits to journalists has been the allocation of government quarters—houses—to journalists, enabled in part because of the large provision of land to government quarters in the planning of Bhubaneswar. I became aware of this benefit first because many of the senior and well-established journalists, whom I occasionally visited at their centrally-located (and therefore expensive and in-demand) homes, would explain that they lived in government quarters allotted for journalists. This was usually said with some pride, as the housing allotment was for them a sign of their seniority and of society’s recognition of their contributions. Housing allotments are usually for government officials and those in the administrative services, but they are also provided to “freedom fighters”—an overlap which can journalists’ housing allotments into a sign of the state’s recognition of their social service.

The allotments themselves consist of mid-level house plots, with houses, for which journalists pay both plot- and water-rent. They are responsible for all other utilities themselves.

In the response to a 2012 right-to-information request by an activist, the Odisha state Department of General Administration released a list of journalists who were occupying state housing allotments in Bhubaneswar, including the category of housing, the monthly rent, and the monthly water payment. The 65 journalists on the list are a who's-who of early twenty-first century journalism in the state, including high-level Odia-language editors, English-language editors, union officials, and end-of-career journalists who no longer work for daily publications and are thus categorized as "Freelance" or "Correspondent". Most remarkable, from the perspective of someone who had to renegotiate rent in Bhubaneswar several times in the five years prior to the release of this list, during which time rent prices in the city doubled, is the low monthly rent. Market price for similarly located housing would in some cases be ten times more than that paid by these senior journalists, who according to the document pay between 350 and 990 rupees per month in housing rent (with the exception of the families of deceased journalists, who pay two to three times this rate).

A friend of mine, Bijaya, was in the midst of application for a housing allotment during my research, ultimately unsuccessfully. He had submitted the required documents several times over the years. But because Bijaya had moved between positions frequently and worked on a freelance basis, he had received accreditation very late in his career. The housing allotment itself, he explained, required a certain number of years as an accredited journalist. Though he had now fulfilled all of the requirements, he was having difficulties getting the relevant departments to process his application. When he would visit the offices to put pressure on the staff, they would say that there were not allotments available, or that there was some hold-up with his application

in another office. By the conclusion of my research in 2010 Bijaya said that he had given up. “I’m too old to move now anyway,” he said, though he was not much over 50. “It would just be my retirement home!” While Bijaya saw the difficulty as largely a typical experience of applying to the government for any benefit, or doing paperwork land- or real estate-related, he also speculated that he had been outspoken against the government in one of his columns, so that it was no surprise that they were not jumping up to help him. He also said that he was at a disadvantage because he was not chummy with the right people—like the members of the elite Bhubaneswar Club, or the owners of the daily newspapers. “I’m nobody big,” he remarked.

In late 2011 and early 2012, the issue of housing allotments to journalists and others became a hot political issue in Odisha. The state Housing and Urban Development department minister had a discretionary quota that was to be devoted to state achievers in “distress” and “extreme hardship”, but which was instead used to grant housing to top-level bureaucrats, politicians, and journalists. It became an issue after it was discovered that the Odisha state Law Minister, Birkram Keshari Arukha, had two allotments, one in his name and one in his wife’s. The Chief Minister immediately cancelled the program, which had apparently been established in the 1980s and then flown under the government’s own radar. The allotments became a political issue in the legislature in December 2011 and in January it was covered in the local editions of the English-language papers (since this was after my fieldwork I wasn’t collecting the Odia-language dailies at the time, so it may have been covered there also). The editorial in the *Hindu* said that the issue had caused a “divide among the journalistic fraternity in the city” and quoted Sampad Mahapatra—the same journalist who advocated against starvation in 2001, and

who was also a friend of the editorial's author. Mahapatra explained that he had done nothing wrong in accepting the house because his house had been meant for a "middle income group" and because he had previously "lost two rounds of lottery for allocation of BDA [Bhubaneswar Development Authority] houses" (Prafulla Das, "Scribes in Residence," in the *Hindu*, January 9, 2012). The end of this discretionary fund and its politicization leaves housing allotments for journalists in an increasingly gray political territory.

According to the national Press Council, though, housing allotments and other benefits have always occupied a gray ethical territory. In a study released in 1995, the Press Council addressed the issues of "favors" to journalists, focusing on favors from government-affiliated departments and individuals. Though it claimed to be including favors from corporations, these were not explicitly addressed. The report's first finding was that housing accommodation constitutes a favor, a decision it based on a judgment by the Punjab and Haryana High Court that the government was under no onus to supply journalists with housing because they are not employees of the government. It further found that there had already been a recommendation to this extent during the Second Press Commission in the 1980s, that "no further housing facility should be provided to the journalists and the existing allotments of the government accommodation in the National Capital and the States should be charged at non-subsidized rates and phased out as the present occupants leave... and in respect of the existing allotments, rent would be charged at non-subsidized rates." This recommendation, said the report, never enforced. The report noted that its investigative committee had found that some newspapers "were not even reporting on attacks on their own scribes for the simple reason that they wanted

to remain in the good books of the government” in order to continue the state allotments of housing to its associates (1997). In lieu of government support, the report said that “it is the responsibility of the newspaper establishments to provide accommodation to its employees.” In addition to housing, the Press Council recommended that the government’s provision of transportation concessions to major newspapers, invitations for foreign travel, financial assistance, medical facilities, and duty-free electronic equipment could all constitute favors and should therefore be provided by the newspaper employers themselves.

The Press Council’s recommendations embody concern that the government’s control of journalists’ housing and other employment conditions would limit the freedom and independence of the press. While described as a problem in terms of “favors”, the most pointed case against the practice of governmental housing allotments in Odisha has been a legendary story of its role in the state’s mistreatment of a journalist. In the 1980s, journalist Prasanta Patnaik and his family were forcibly evicted from their government-allotted housing in the middle of a winter night during the Chief Minister-ship of J. B. Patnaik, following what was likely a politically motivated cancellation of Prasanta Patnaik’s accreditation. Patnaik has since recounted for numerous local media the refusal of the 1980s local Odia-language press to report on the event, because of their own alignment with or fear of the government. Only one newspaper covered it at the time: the national, English-language Indian Express.

While the Press Council’s report against favors sought to limit the outside pressures on the press (governmental, corporate) that reduce freedom of expression, it relied on an understanding of press industrial relations that either presumed an identity between the interests of the

employees and the employers, or at least presumed that any existing legal solutions would be sufficient to manage resulting differences. Indeed, a lawyer at one of the top-three newspapers explained to me that industrial relations compete only with defamation for the most common legal challenge for Odisha's media firms. But he also told me this during a tea break from working on a case that had been first filed in the mid-1990s, over ten years earlier. The Indian courts are not a viable option for most employees to address an immediate and pressing issue, like where their families live.

Professionalism Across Bhubaneswar's Newsrooms

From the perspective Odisha's news producers, the regularity and speed of "daily" local newspaper production distinguishes professional media work from self-aggrandizing and "backward" self-publicity projects. This I learned when I asked a mid-level editor at one of Odisha's top three newspapers about the Bhubaneswar's numerous, smaller newspapers. We were sitting in his air-conditioned office waiting for the tea he had ordered from a servant to be brought to us. To his question about why I was interested in Odia newspapers, I explained sincerely that my curiosity had been piqued by the sheer number of local dailies. How could such a small city support 12 or more daily newspapers? Where I come from, I explained, a city Bhubaneswar's size would have one, perhaps two newspapers. My host snorted derisively and replied, "Those aren't dailies! Sometimes they publish, sometimes they don't. Maybe they feel like it, maybe they don't. You see, they get registration [with the Newspaper Registration Act] so

that they can tell ‘I have a newspaper’—get their friends to write something, collect some money for ads. But whether they publish, that is separate.” This contempt was echoed in a comment by another sub-editor I met for tea, who laughed when I mentioned the same curiosity about the number of local newspapers and told me, echoing the popular style of communicating statistics by adopting a news-announcer voice: “In Odisha, every 24 hours, one newspaper opens and another one closes.” These off-the-cuff remarks reveal a convergence between the relative professionalism of the newspaper and the motives for publication: newspapers published for reasons of influence and self-aggrandizement among one’s existing contacts are rarely publishing on a schedule. The unprofessionalism of these newspapers is two-fold. Personal motives for publication, as compared to motives of community and social-improvement, are marked as archaic and antimodern, echoing narratives told about non-modern mid-century newspapers and more generally about Indian despotism. Conversely, maintaining strict schedules and distributions demonstrates a newspapers’ commitment to modern, impersonal goals, whether the goal is advocacy or information distribution.

There is an as-yet (and curiously) untold story of the rise of professionalism in India within which this Bhubaneswar’s newsrooms participate. Yet professionalism is a label with a great power in India. It speaks of an individual person who does his special-purpose work efficiently, while wearing clean clothes in a clean room. It indicates elite education and belonging, transparency and cosmopolitanism. It also stands in opposition to *paribara*, to “oriental despotism”, to clientism and feudal patronage, to strong sentiment, and to corruption. Families

are organized by sentiment and obligation to specific others; professions are organized by individual commitments to abstract goals—profit among them—and emotional detachment.

In Bhubaneswar, just as professionalism is often mapped onto the distinction between legitimate daily newspapers and casual or self-interested daily newspapers, it is often mapped onto the distinction between English-language and Odia-language news production. Sometimes such mapping is quite explicit. One young journalist named Chitra, who was well educated in English medium schools through his MA, had been initially unable to get a position in one of the English newspapers when he first began looking in 2009. He accepted a position in a growing department at one of the top Odia newspapers, but was soon quite unhappy there: “everyone was unprofessional!” He related that the staff arrived late and the managers said nothing, the managers acted “too familiarly” with the staff, and the expectations of what the management wanted were not consistent. We were discussing this sitting in his new office, in one of the English national dailies on Janpath, where he had finally gotten a job as staff writer. He gestured out toward the editor’s desk. “You see Mr. ----. He is there, he is friendly, but he first respects us as professionals. Here, we all have standards. At ----, it is never like that.” A very new Odia newspaper whose founding editor I interviewed stated explicitly that his goal was to establish a “professional” Odia newspaper, explicitly stating that such a newspaper was lacking in pointed criticism of the dominant Odia newspapers who claim professionalism in their own founding narratives. Yet he too complained that professionalism in Odia newspapers was difficult to attain because “people don’t understand professionalism.”

While diagramming of professionalism/unprofessionalism onto language of publication worked effectively like a language ideology, resulting in a strong preference to work in English language newsrooms by those who could hope to, the newspaper's language of publication was itself not a feature of discussions of professionalism. By this I mean, people did not say things like, "Odia is unprofessional"—unprofessionalism does not seem to have become an experiential quality of Odia, to the contrary, the are Odia's stylistic variations described in Chapter 1 provide ample resources for constructing professionalism linguistically. Rather, the professionalism of English newspapers was seen as resulting from those features of production that were allowed or caused by their publication in English.

In Chapter 2, I described how reproduction, especially copying and voicing, are the focus of moral concern in Odisha's newsrooms. English-language news writing is just as exposed as Odia-language newswriting of suspicions of being compromised. I heard just as many suspicions of the interests and unethical intentions motivating English journalists and Odia. Indeed, in his accounts of the Kandhamal coverage, Kedar Mishra concludes that thanks to the diversity of perspectives represented across all of the news coverage, those articles produced by local English-language journalists and those by local Odia-language journalists did not demonstrate a consistent difference. That said, the Hindutva-circulated accounts of the news coverage did strongly distinguish between the "English" and the "local" press, lauding the Odia press for their support of the Hindus and their criticism of conversion. Mishra argues that this was intended to manipulate sentiments and create divisions within Odisha (Mishra 2009).

The dominant distinctions between English and Odia news production that were the focus of local perceptions of professionalism included the organization and ownership structure and the organization of the work itself. The defining feature of working in Bhubaneswar’s English newspapers is that the offices are only outposts for national papers produced in major metropolitan centers—Madras (the *Hindu* and *New Indian Express*), Calcutta (the *Telegraph*, the *Statesman*), and Mumbai (the *Times of India*). The local bureaus of the English newspapers were focused on production of only the page or pages that focused on the state, which was a very limited space and meant there was less room for questions about what would or would not be covered—the most important news was usually relatively self-evident to news producers. By contrast, the Odia newspapers have a great amount of space to fill—and not only in the Bhubaneswar edition, but also across the rural edition. The highly local work of stringers and rural reporters results in wide variations in the resulting stories (what one Odia newspaper management staff called a “quality control issue” in English), as well as a general exposure to local social relations. This is evidenced in the frequent stories of rural reporters experiencing abuse at the hands of police, such as those mentioned in the prior chapter. At the same time, it is usual to hear journalists say that “Odia reporting is more grounded” compared to English language reporting. In my reading, both Odia and local English language reporting tended to be grounded, by which I assume is meant describing events straightforwardly, though the requirements of coverage obviously mean that there is more coverage of local events in the Odia press.

The English language ownership structure means that there is no intrinsic or structural connection to Odishan politics or political families. Moreover, though English newspapers' relationships to local advertisers are important—indeed, during my research advertising staff was as robust as editorial staff in the three English language offices/bureaus I visited—the English papers were reputed to be able to cut ties with advertisers more easily than Odia newspapers. One English editor told me this himself, relaying a story of an advertiser who was upset about a news item his paper had published, and who threatened to stop advertising with them. He reported telling them, “fine! Stop!” (They did not.) He then observed to me that if he had been at an Odia newspaper he would have never been able to say that. English newspapers can lean on the national funding; at the same time—and this is where language ideologies do clearly enter the scene—English newspapers do not fear a lack of local advertising thanks to the positive brand associations of English papers for advertisers. That said, it similar positive associations are now offered by the major Odia publications: much of the advertising is the same.

Finally, the work itself is routinely cited as “more professional”. First of all, it pays more, in some cases a great deal more. During my observations in newsrooms, I witnessed salary negotiations for entry-level positions during one news organization's expansion. The standard rate on these positions was 8,000-9,000 Rs per month, which at the time was about 175-200 USD, and which would have barely paid for a single bedroom apartment in the city at the time. Though I did not witness any salary negotiations—I was told they occurred in private—English language reporter positions started closer to 20,000 Rs. In addition to salary, the work itself is reputed to be less rushed—recalling both the Introduction and Chapter 2, this was part of

Prakash's own explanation of wanting to work in English media. In English media, he imagined, he would have the time to write articles that would do justice to the issues. (Though the English journalists I spoke with certainly felt themselves to be just as busy as Odia journalists expressed feeling.) That employees themselves were demographically different surely also mattered for the perception of professionalism, though this was a feature I did not hear people mention. Though Odia news work is historically male and upper caste, as described in Chapter 1, it is also largely staffed by men (and during the day, women) who did not attend elite English language schools. By contrast, the English language newspapers were predominantly staffed by young people who came from families who could afford English language schooling. Here, the inequalities that have long riven schooling in India become definitive for media employment (LaDousa 2007, 2008). These different class orientations were obvious in the dress of the newsroom staff, especially among young women: women staffing the Odia press were largely in saris or salwar-kameez. Women working for the English press routinely wore jeans with kameez-tunics; I never saw a woman wearing jeans or Western-style pants in any of the Odia-language offices.

Finally, the distinction between Odia and English language newspapers comes down to a perception that in the local offices of English language newspapers employment is straightforward and transparent. Prakash indicated this when he told me that he quit the local job, as described in Chapter 2, in part because of the local newspaper's "unprofessionalism." When I asked him to elaborate, he said that he had had assignments changed at the last minute, he was routinely kept waiting until late in the day to get his assignments, and that he sometimes had to call his assigning editor on the phone several times in order to reach him. This displayed, from

his perspective, a lack of respect; it was also a “daily headache.” As is true for Prakash, I often heard about the unprofessionalism of Odia news organizations through conversations with dissatisfied current and former employees. Lakshmi, a young woman in her mid-twenties whose first job had been at one of the Odia-language media firms, described quitting after a few months because of “unprofessionalism.” She cited work practices that people would hate anywhere—favoritism, inconsistent expectations, frequently changing schedules. Then she said, “the managers feel like they don’t have to respect the workers there,” and compared her work there to her subsequent work at an English-language newspaper edition. She said, “here, nobody treats me like a *jhia* [the Odia term for both young girl and daughter]. They treat me like a professional.”

This unequal mapping of professionalism onto the Odia and English newspapers in Odisha is distinctly local. At the national level there is indeed a great deal of discussion about the unprofessionalism of English newspapers, especially around sexual harassment in the workplace but also paid news and plagiarism.

Paribāra between Trope and Relational Category

On November 26, 2009, the front page of the Bhubaneswar edition of the national English daily, the *New Indian Express*, published a quarter-page advertisement for one of India’s largest privately owned steel producers, Tata Steel. The advertisement specifically portrayed one of Tata’s corporate social responsibility programs, Tata Steel Parivar (Tata Steel Family).



The advertisement describes Tata’s rehabilitation program for the adivasis or “tribals” who lost their homes to Tata’s Kalinganagar steel plant in Odisha’s Jajpur district. It shows a father named Mangal Bage, a distinctively tribal name, apparently at an industrial job, while the two side photos show, above, a man and a woman hugging three healthy and well-dressed children and, below, a woman preparing food in well-made home while a laughing man in the background holds a young child on his lap. The copy reads:

Mangal Bage no longer lives in a hut on encroached land but in his own new sweet home. He stepped in the Tata Steel Parivar at Trijanga for rehabilitation. Since then, his life has become a dream. He was trained and employed in Tata Steel Fabrication yard for its upcoming Orissa Steel Plant. His wife Jamuna also earned new skills and self employment under the Tata Steel Rural Development Society. His family’s income has increased and now his children go to school and today his family have a better future. With Tata Steel Parivar.

The ad portray's Mangal Bage's family as making a "dream" transition between his earlier life of insecurity and even criminality ("encroached land") to one of security and family values. The story behind the advertisement, which the ad is itself seeking to obscure or at least reframe, is that site has been one of ongoing conflict over the last fifteen years. In 2006 a police shooting killed thirteen indigenous demonstrators⁵⁶, one policeman, and injured another thirty-seven adivasis. As one of the most active areas of the Naxal movement in Odisha, police have increasingly not distinguished between politically-active adivasis, Naxal-involved adivasis, and other adivasi residents of the region. By journalists' accounts, it is a warzone.

Tata's rehabilitation program draws on the trope of family, what I am calling the second kind of kinship at work in Bhubaneswar's offices. When kinship is figured as a trope, it works by applying the positive sentiments associated with kinship to novel contexts. Tata's program and advertisement both draw on the positive associations of "parivar" (the Hindi equivalent of Odia's paribara) with care, mutuality, and cooperation in order to counter the association between the company and the police shootings, between the company and the displacement of adivasis and the loss of their homes, and, generally, between the company and the perception of industrialization as the cause of the fragmentation of families, communities, and livelihoods. Though Tata has long cultivated an image of itself as ethical and invested in the wellbeing of both its employees and of Indians as a whole—in 2007, the company's centenary celebration included a website with a section called "the many faces of care"—a review of Tata Steel's past

⁵⁶ Based on injuries to the bodies when they were returned to the families for cremation—several bodies' hands had been cut off, among other mutilations—many speculated that those "killed in the shooting" had actually been captured alive, tortured and killed in police custody.

promotional materials suggests that this is the first time in recent history they have used the term “parivar” within one of their organizations or departments (TataSteel 2007).

Tropic kinship is amenable to modernity’s purifications of private and public domains because its power draws from their natural separation. American historian Roland Marchand (Marchand 1998) has traced the invention of trope of family in corporate advertising and public relations in twentieth century North American. He argues that advertising and public relations innovators developed the trope of family following a period of large-scale concentration of capital, in which daily life for many Americans came to depend on the products of giant corporations. Accusations of “soullessness” and lack of conscience plagued consumer-level talk about these corporations at the same time that corporate employees organized and faced well-publicized violence from corporate militias. Facing “incomplete social legitimacy” (9), the portrayal of the corporation as family supplied a feeling of “security, collaboration, and united moral purpose” (107) that the faceless, soulless corporate giant lacked. Moreover, Marchand notes that compared to other popular collective social metaphors at the time, such as “army” and “team”:

The idea of family was also more compatible with the hierarchical image of the company. It conveyed a more paternalistic concern for the welfare of subordinates than did the notion of a team. The family’s relations were more intimate than a team’s, and its bonds of loyalty deeper and less situational, while the father’s moral authority was greater than that of any coach. (Marchand 1998, 107)

Not only did family in corporate advertising construct sentiments of care, safety, and moral purpose, but also the metaphor offered a way to conceive of new social relations through comfortingly familiar paternalism.

In India's postcolonial context, corporate metaphors of family can draw on sentiments of Indianess or Odia-ness while at the same time maintaining modernity's public/private split. One of the most elaborate demonstrations of this dual assertion—sentiment and modernity—among India's corporate behemoths is in the promotional materials of Sahara India Pariwar (or Parivar), a conglomerate valued at 11 billion U.S. dollars and capitalized at over 25 billion that is also one of India's most visible corporations. An online explanation of Sahara's elaborate semi-annual (Republic and Independence Days) and occasionally televised corporate celebrations of Indian nationalism, "Bharat Parva," advises:

'My'/ Small Family's festival/ Birthday or Marriages
'We'/ Big Family's Festival/ Mahavir, Buddha or Nanak Jayanti,/ Christmas, Id
or Diwali
'Our'/ Indian Family's Festival/Bharat Parva

Sahara Bharat Parva

Nation should always be placed above religion. We all have every right to perform Pooja, Ibadat, Ardas and Prayer inside our homes, but no sooner we come out of our houses we should be Indians and only Indians.
(SaharaBharatParva 2010)

The first description envisions the Indian family as a series of nested baskets of sentiment holding increasingly large numbers of Indians, from kin to religion to nation. The second makes explicit the private/public distinction at the heart of modernity's understanding of kinship: the domestic sphere and the public sphere are split and demand separate styles of comportment and moral commitment.

The night of October 4, 2009, an enormous crowd gathered to celebrate the *Sambad's* twenty-fifth anniversary on the grounds of the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya (Utkal University of the Performing Arts). The grand outdoor stage was covered by an enormous tent and more

than 2000 people crowded under it to watch amateur and professional performances of dance and music. Prominent members of *Sambad* and its parent company—Eastern Media Limited—gave speeches featuring inspirational talk about the mother tongue. Managing director of Eastern Media Limited, Sudatta Patnaik, who is also the daughter of former Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik and married to Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, *Sambad*'s CEO and figurehead, gave a speech in which she described *Sambad* as her husband's first-born son, joking that the newspaper took just as much time and devotion as a first-born. A video followed in which the newspaper was itself depicted as the father-head of a media family, now consisting of Odisha's first FM radio station, *jatra* plays, a cable news station, and a charitable organization devoted to Odia publishing and blood donation drives.

The tropic use of kinship at this event was itself, however, slippery. Many of the top management at *Sambad* and its overarching corporation were also the founder's actual kin and one of the newest media subsidiaries—the FM station Radio Choklate—is in fact run by the newspaper founder's daughter. This kind of slippage made it especially funny when the parent firm's managing director, Mrs. Sudatta Patnaik, described the early days of the newspaper. Her husband, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, had founded the newspaper company in the early 1980s thanks to the support of Mrs. Patnaik's own father—who had been the Chief Minister or majority leader of Odisha's state legislative assembly at the time. Describing this obviously family endeavor, she said that *Sambad* had been her husband's first-born son, joking that the newspaper took just as much time and devotion as a first-born. Here, Mrs. Patnaik's presentation also evoked the third kind of kinship at work in newspaper production, which could call kinship as a

relational category. By this I mean that relations that are constituted elsewhere as kinship structure the organization of the newspaper business, producing, in other words, the family business. This is morally ambivalent when regarded through modernity's purifications. On one hand, family businesses are known to occur around the world, and they have historically and continue to dominate the list of India's non-government controlled corporate giants, namely TATA and Reliance and, in Odisha specifically, IMFA. On the other hand, newspaper producers can be sensitive to evaluations of job-provision to family as a form of despotism or corruption. And such criticisms of family business do circulate: outside of the news office I frequently encountered casual descriptions of the familial ties binding Bhubaneswar's media and political world that dripped with contempt.

Such explicit and idealized talk about family or *paribara* is complicated by that feature identified in the newsstand conversation: many of the major media organizations in Odisha are managed to some degree by people connected through kinship. Cousins, brothers, uncles, and in-laws often manage Odisha's media businesses together; other close connections are also common, such as having attended primary school together. In general this was something that people told me openly in passing, sometimes with a small laugh, as in: "I'm Mr. Mohapatra's maternal cousin—soon you will know our whole family!" Yet the contextually shifting moral valences of such connections posed a methodological challenge. For instance, on one slow day during a visit to an office, the daytime office manager asked me what information I needed for my research. Like many newspapers across India generally and in Odisha specifically, the management personnel of this media firm were overwhelmingly relatives. When I met these

individuals, they would often tell me casually how they were related to other people in the newsroom, but I was rarely able to write immediately after the introductions and had been losing much of the information. I asked the manager to help me record people's family relations correctly, took out my notebook, and turned to my incomplete list. A look of horror came over her face. "You shouldn't be writing this down! This doesn't matter!" When I tried again with a secretary in the same office who usually gossiped with me, she repeated what felt like a party line "oh, that doesn't matter. Here we're all family."

With all of these different definitions, scales, and values for family, there is predictably a fair amount of semiotically pregnant slippage in its evocation. I encountered talk about *paribara* as a quality of the business organization on a routine basis during my observations in the *Surya* newsroom. The most affecting example of this took the form of a long, emotionally intense, unrecorded conversation with Pratima, a middle-aged, female administrative staff member that occurred during a slow-work period in the middle of the afternoon. I had asked her simply, casually, how she had come to work in the office. She began her story with a dramatic exclamation, "Oh, Kati, mine is a sad story!" She went on to describe, in a volume barely above a whisper, that her husband had abandoned her. She had been a good housewife to him, but he had begun to treat her poorly. One day, about ten years before our conversation, he simply didn't come home. She waited and waited, but what could she do? The police looked for him, everyone looked for him, but there was no sign. Maybe he is dead, she said, or in some other part of India. Her in-laws blamed her and so, even though she and her son were now dependent on them, they treated her terribly. She explained that, in the midst of these dark days, one of her paternal

cousin's brother-in-laws, who worked in the finance department at *Surya*, arranged for her to work in an administrative position there. As she narrated this to me, her eyes filled with tears, and my own followed. "*Surya* is my family [*paribara*] now," she said solemnly, continuing on to explain that the proprietor was especially caring, watching out for all of his employees. Thanks to the proprietor's interest in her situation and support of her, she and her son were able to live apart from her in-laws now, so that they were no longer treated badly on a daily basis. She made several more statements to the effect of this familial character of the business before we were interrupted.

Interpretations of the business organization through frames of *paribara* sentiment can be keyed through small interactions between employees, such as that involving food. As I discuss more below, food is important to social relationships in newspaper offices, establishing secular/liberal apparently post-caste ideals at the same time that it provides opportunities for performances of hospitality, kinship, and social difference. It is well established in India that eating involves the sharing of substances. For Dumont eating practices are the quintessential caste-defining activity, as food transfers the pollution of the giver and thus must not be accepted from lower castes. The converse of this power of food-sharing is that may also create closeness in relationships, as numerous anthropologists have remarked in Indian families, not least in Odia families in Bhubaneswar (Menon 2013; Seymour 1976; Seymour 1999). Thus the pervasive ritual of *chaa* drinking was also an opportunity for the office to take pleasure in each other's company and to show each other small kindnesses, as workers routinely stopped their activities during the tea drinking, leaning back in their chairs or against the wall. Several other people from

around the office knew about this tea break in the Human Resources office and would try to stop in to join, sometimes meaning that the female *peon*, Bigyani-didi, had to go back upstairs and make more tea. As visitors insisted, “no, no, that’s not necessary for me!” the office was able to show its hospitality by inconveniencing itself to accommodate them. Similarly, the proprietor of *Surya* himself drew my attention to the office’s cafeteria, which offered “affordable” lunches, including a “veg” and a “non-veg” option, saying that they were committed to taking care of their staff. This explicit discourse of stewardship and care at the institutional level is subsequently keyed by simple acts of kindness or politeness between employees. When one news-staff employee, Sarojini, remembered another’s employee’s birthday, bringing her a packet of her favorite snacks that day, I remarked to a third female employee, Madhu, that Sarojini was very sweet. “Yes, but we always take care of each other here,” was the response. I confirmed with her that she meant “here” at *Surya*, but her use of the “here” (*ethi*) stuck with me because it moved easily between *Surya* (not other workplaces), Odisha (not other places in India), and India (not where the anthropologist is from). It left me with the impression that from Madhu’s perspective, if I saw such acts of remembering a co-worker’s birthday as an indication of personal character, I was likely in need of some Odia-style moral education myself.

Similar sentiments of familial loyalty, responsibility, and obligation resonate in Pratima’s story of the *Surya* family, which begins to slip into the form of kinship I am calling her doxic. While her narrative emphasized the loyalty that the newspaper and the newspaper’s founder evinced toward her, in my time in the newsroom what I witnessed was her own loyalty and sense of obligation to the newspaper. For example, one afternoon we were sitting in her office sorting

that day's mail when a peon-worker came in to share with her the instructions for the planning of an upcoming event⁵⁷ that was two days away. He handed her a clipboard with a list of staff and the time they should arrive at the event site. She started reading the list aloud, exclaiming that 4:30 (in the morning) was very early to begin preparing for the event, and then continued down the list until she came to her own name at a still-early morning time. She froze: this was supposed to be one of her days off, and I could see her mind racing with the implications for her son's childcare and all of the other household work that her weekends relentlessly required. She whipped to face the peon and demanded of him, "Has Madam seen this?" "Seen it," laughed the low-status worker, "she *wrote* it!" Pratima sighed and handed it back to him, wordlessly returning to her desk to resume sorting the mail. Swallowing her frustration and accepting her lot without complaint, Pratima's slow return to her desk and heavy head drooping forward as she returned to her desk, called to my mind the movements of Subhadra, an Odia woman I'd known for years. Subhadra's relationship with her mother-in-law was typically rocky, but she placed great pride in never fighting her mother-in-law, in showing her the greatest respect even at her most aggressive. But after every one-sided battle—and I had the misfortune of witnessing many—as Subhadra went back to her household work, her body slowed and her head dropped forward, as if the weight of all of the years of her remaining life in service to her mother-in-law had gathered on the back of her neck. In the newsroom, Pratima's body suggested that her acceptance of her work-assignment was not out of professionalism or a desire to advance in the

⁵⁷ Orissa's newspapers are involved in numerous events, such as publication releases, essay and drawing contests, music and dance performances, holiday celebrations, and special events marking anniversaries of the newspaper itself or its founder/s.

organization, but out of commitment to her work *paribara* and a sense of obligation to those who taken her in.

The Comfort of Doxic Relational Practices

One of the advantages of framing business relationships as *paribara* in Odisha is that it allows the business to adopt just the right stance with regard to issues of social difference and inequality: one that publically rejects inequality and emphasizes attachments and shared purpose across social differences while at the same time allowing naturalized social distinctions and inequalities to go unchallenged. As discussed, gender is integral to the organization of the newsroom for reasons that have entirely to do with gendered understandings of public/private and outside/inside, even as management insist that women are equal and able to do any of the work men do (routinely, if asked about the role of women in journalism, men point to the women in positions of authority, who are also often related to the proprietors of the newspapers). This gets right to the heart of the newspaper business, which has occupied a nexus between longstanding forms of political culture—especially the prominent, politically powerful family epitomized by *zamindars* (landowners) and *rajas* (local rulers/princes)—and liberal democratic ideals for the new nation-state.

One event in particular brought this mediating aspect of *paribara* in the newspaper to my attention. *Surya* had planned a special feast or *bhojana* for all of their employees in order to celebrate India's Independence Day together “like a family,” as one of the managers off-

handedly explained to me. Bhojana is a term with strong affective connotations, for though it can also simply mean a feast or simply food, it is also the term used for the food offered to deities and then consumed as *prasada* or offerings, the prominent example in the minds of Bhubaneswaris being the *bhojana* offered to Lord Jagannatha in nearby Puri. The entire newspaper staff was invited to the event via small printed invitation cards handed out five days in advance. The cards were printed in red and about the size of a business card, with the date, time and place written on them in Odia. Two of the female administrative staff, who did so much of the affective labor of the office, had hand-written on each card the name of the employee, which they had then crossed off their list, and the time during which that employee should appear for lunch. This inscribing, list checking, and distributing of the cards took two whole days. Each department was provided a different time to eat: printers together, business staff together, marketing staff together, newsroom staff together, the other media departments together. My own card named the time of the newspaper newsroom staff, which was listed 1:30-2:15.

Because of the labored scheduling of the meal times, I had originally imagined that space at the feast location—an off-site location at the offices of a cultural organization—must be limited. So I was surprised when I arrived to find a spacious event tent set up with about fifteen long tables (with separate areas for veg/non-veg) and food served at the table. When I arrived at one of the busiest scheduled times, awkwardly before any of the female day-workers, only about three of the tables were occupied. The labored scheduling of each department to eat separately did not seem justified by the demands of space—at most two shifts would have been necessary.

Yet eating in small shifts based on department made good cultural sense in an organization like *Surya*.

Shared eating is a culturally profound activity in Odisha, long riven with caste prohibitions against accepting certain foods or drinks from certain other groups. Now, with the pervasiveness of egalitarianism (whether via Gandhi or Ambedkar or Mao), especially among journalists, people generally believe themselves post-caste, and, specifically, they believe that they are able and willing to eat with anyone else. I suspect that the people I know in Bhubaneswar would strenuously disagree if I said that this is not true, and I am not saying that this is not true. But I would suggest that not offering moments for challenging this self-belief helps everyone involved feel more comfortable, and that this preservation of self-belief is the art of being a good host.⁵⁸ Because a newspaper business has many different kinds of staff—laborers, technicians, writers, accountants, marketers, and administrative staff—that involve people from many different backgrounds who would otherwise exist in distinct social circles, communal meals offer exactly the environment that could lead toward the kind of discomfort about public eating that a good host would like to help everyone avoid. One way that hosts in Bhubaneswar manage this, according to one of my close informants, is by hiring Brahmin catering companies. Another way is to have people eat among others with whom they are already familiar and with whom they share backgrounds, even if not precisely the same *jati*/caste. Eating in shifts according to departments accomplishes this coordination of similarity (“we do the same work” along with “we have the same kind of upbringing”).

⁵⁸ I am reminded of Žižek’s description of tact as the apologetic “excuse me, sir” after walking in on a woman undressing for a shower.

Even without the particular concerns about co-eating, though, the distribution of eating shifts across the departments resonates with the importance of social distinctions within institutions or social bodies. This is classically evident within households, in Odisha as around India; indeed, the Indian home is the subject of an excellent tradition of scholarship on inequality. Usha Menon's study of kinship practices in Bhubaneswar's Old Town, for example, found that distinctions of seniority, gender, and relation (in-law, child-parent, adopted) shape the organization of routine activities. Eating, for instance, happens separately and in shifts: husbands eat first, then wives.⁵⁹ In Menon's research, the importance of these distinctions was especially evident from the perspective of women, who typically move into their husband's parents' home at marriage. Their roles in household activities are determined first by gender and relation (in-law) but changes dramatically over time as they gain seniority and are incorporated into the fabric of the household through childbirth, care for aging family members, and other methods of embodied incorporation such as the performance of *sebā*. The pervasiveness of outside labor in well-off households—whether a person who spends twenty minutes sweeping the floors each morning or a series of people who do cooking, cleaning, laundry, and childcare—means that status differences are well-habituated aspect of domestic life (Adams and Dickey 2000; Dickey 2000). These examples demonstrate that the quality of being like family may be intensified or at least not disrupted by the temporal and spatial preservation of social distinctions. At the level of individual experience, an employee experiences this institutional coordination as the feeling of

⁵⁹ In my experience across Bhubaneswar, women do typically eat separately from their husbands, which each will say is simply because they are cooking or have work to do (*kama kariba*). I have seen many young children eating off of their father's plates as easily as off of their mother's.

being surrounded by people he already knows and in whom he recognizes himself; this feeling of familiarity and comfort keying *paribara*.

It is in this context that the earlier story of Siba's requested but refused loan to his employer begins to make sense. Why would the newspaper business ask its employees to take out personal loans? I did not try to discuss this story with anyone in a newspaper management position, in part because I wasn't sure of the legality of the practice and my IRB approval had been contingent on the explicit statement that I would not seek information on illegal activities. Indeed, I heard rumors of inventive financial practices at several media firms, and I pursued information on none of them. As to the economic logics that might motivate small personal loans by employees, it is possible that businesses find it difficult to attain the credit they need to keep a business running, such as paying salaries on time. That such requests of new employees may be routine—beyond Odisha—is suggested by the Press Council's explicit statement in its published *Norms of Journalistic Conduct* that, "the practice of taking security deposit by an editor from the journalists at the time of their appointment is unethical." Yet this is speculation. What is remarkable about the story is how much sense it makes from a structural perspective: anthropologists have written extensively on how, when entering a new group, individuals are asked to take on some form of debt or make a sacrifice in order to become part of the new social body. The immediately relevant example, especially given the talk of family, is the local practice of dowry—a gift from the bride's family to the groom's family that accompanies the bride when she goes to live with the groom's family, becoming the *bohu* or daughter-in-law. In this case, the sacrifice is not only the loan itself but also the risk such a loan presents legally, for it would

require lying to the bank about the purpose of the loan. Providing such a loan to an employer would go a long way toward creating the kind of interdependence valued as *paribara*.

Doxa and the Gendered Space of the Newsroom

Gender plays an important role in any Odishan newsroom's negotiation of professionalism and *paribara*; with regard to gender we see a blend or slippage between the doxic aspect of kinship and the first aspect of kinship—kinship's restriction to the domestic domain. Specifically, the newly built professional newsroom is composed of qualities that seek to make it an appropriate place for women to work during the day, and I argue that these qualities can be interpreted as either signs of the newsroom being “inside” or professional. A key aspect women's broader participation or lack of participation in newswork in Bhubaneswar is the spatiotemporal dimension of news-work: about the city and late at night. Women's restricted roles in news making are locally justified and reproduced through concerns about sexual violence in the city. Moreover, as I describe in this section, the experiential qualities of the newsroom itself—its safety and its familiarity—is cultivated in no small part by and for the women of the newsroom. Gender and status differences that work across genders, namely the intersection of class and caste, together shape the newspaper offices, providing both the felicity conditions in which discourses of family can be effective as well as the justification for their uses. Vulnerability and safety are concerns never far from women's minds in Bhubaneswar, and relative judgments of interiority and exteriority map well onto judgments of women's safety from sexual violence. I

begin this section with a description of the indeterminate qualities of an Odia-language newsroom and then consider the implications of the newsroom's slippery frames for the participation of women.

Writing about colonial Calcutta, Sudipta Kaviraj (2002) has suggested that the colonial importation of the public/private distinction existed in an always uncomfortable and unmatchable relationship to the indigenous concept of inside/outside or mine/other (*apna/par*) (see also Chatterjee 1993; Chakrabarty 1992). To think about this, he juxtaposed the spatial distinctions evident in the Bengali home with those of the colonial city park. In a description that could have easily applied to contemporary Bhubaneswar's homes, Kaviraj writes that the interiors of colonial Calcutta homes were "swept and scrubbed with punctilious regularity" (2002: 98) on the schedule of twice-daily ritual performances, even as the garbage was dumped on the street directly before the house. The threshold of the house provided a "conceptual distinction" between the inside and outside, between the space of care and responsibility and the space devoid of personal responsibility. Kaviraj has interpreted the "outside" as a space without meaning of its own:

[I]t therefore lacked any association with obligation, because it did not symbolise any significant principle, did not express any values. It was merely a conceptually insignificant negative of the inside, which was prized and invested with affectionate decoration. Thus, the outside—the streets, squares, bathing ghats, and other facilities used by large numbers—were crowded, but they did not constitute a different kind of valued space, a civic space with norms and rules of use of its own, different from the domestic values of bourgeois privacy. (Kaviraj 2002: 98)

This is a different understanding of non-interior space from the assumptions offered by European colonial (and now Indian municipal) parks: unrestricted gardens meticulously maintained,

marked with signs as civil spaces of municipal responsibility. Rather than an “exterior”, the park offered an entirely different theory of the public sphere as a space of universal rights and cultivated attachments to shared qualities (even as such “public” areas of nineteenth century Calcutta were restricted from native use). Without pursuing all of the historical complexities of Kaviraj’s argument about Calcutta, his distinction between outside/inside helps us better interpret the material qualities of an Odia language newsroom. But the interiority of the newsroom itself has two conflicting interpretations, as signs of professionalism and as signs of familiarity. The semiotic openness or indeterminacy of the newspaper office’s signs of interiority (the framing of the space, the cleanliness, etc.) allows the newsroom to function in several different cultural capacities, even contradictory capacities.

Walking to the *Surya* newsroom from the main road, as those workers without two-wheelers (or four-wheelers) must do, there is first a long straight road that passes between the industrial park on one side and a large fallow field on the other, then several turns through light industrial buildings and shacks with children playing outside, and then a last turn onto the newsroom’s lane. There are actually two newsrooms here, not a block from each other, two of Odisha’s fiercest media competitors in their opposing and imposing large whitewashed buildings. Not far away in another industrial park, many of the second-tier competing newsrooms face each other across another difficult dirt lane. The grouping of like-industry or commerce is a common feature across Indian cities. I asked several people about this coincidence but no one could make it out as more than a coincidence: it was just where space was available and of the right size. Those same people, as well as their various editors, also

laughed when I asked if there were any advantages to such a placement—did they cooperate on deliveries of, for instance, newsprint webs (the large rolls of newsprint)? The answer was a definitive no.

Yet there is an effect to this proximity that, however possibly coincidental, does heighten other aspects of the news offices that are not coincidental. First, there is the intensification of newsy-ness as one moves toward the news offices. One enters the realm of the news as one moves close to the news offices, in both industrial parks. The teashops will be full of news office employees. The people coming and going will likely be familiar, either personally or at only one remove—known to people who are known. The people one sees are involved in the same kind of work and share the same kinds of concerns. This increases scrutiny: people want to know about the people they know as well as about the people those people know. Is there a new two-wheeler? Is someone walking when they don't normally walk? Did someone arrive later or earlier than usual? These are things that may be worth knowing, and people coming and going themselves observe closely the actions of others. These are the kinds of things that might be idly mentioned in passing once inside the office, with one's office companions, and can be used to gather more information.

The result of this intensification is that the process of moving from the main road into the office is a process of going from the outside to the inside. At the entrance to the news offices, there is a large metal exterior gate that sits open, and just inside there are one or several *chowkidars* or uniformed guards who sit inside or on the verandah of the small security building that stands by the gate, watching those coming and going. They recognize most everyone; people

say hello as they pass. Visitors introduce themselves and are escorted to the front desk, as I was on my first visit. The cemented driveway is about 50 feet, and then one enters under the building through what is, essentially, a large garage door. Immediately to the right there is an enormous, cavernous room that contains two printing presses. Mid-mornings it is quiet and there are few workers around, their shifts starting late and ending early. Walking ahead, past the presses on the right, there is a glass double-door with another guard watching it a few feet away. To the left and right of the door are three-tiered shelves lined with shoes. There is also a guard by this door—during my research there was often a young, uniformed woman named Jyoti, who lived with her uncle's family in the city in order to send money to her parents and younger siblings in their village. She would stand and hold the door for high status individuals, but most she just let pass through the doors on their own, greeting them if they made eye contact.

Going past this third threshold, the entrant's bared feet feel the cool marble of the entryway. Straight ahead is an elevator and to its side a door to the stairwell. It is air-conditioned inside and lit with fluorescent ceiling lights. The entry way has two dark couches for waiting visitors and a desk with a receptionist, one of a rotating cast of young men or women who also answer the phone. They will call up for visitors or direct them to the appropriate floor if already expected; if high status, the receptionist or one of the guards may accompany the guest to the appropriate office. The elevator or stairs open to the first (American second), second, or third floor, and then final set of thresholds remain: the door to the general staff rooms and, from the general staff rooms, the doors to the various separate (managerial) offices.

The newsroom has many of the marks of an upper-class Odia home. There is the gate and the chowkidar; there are numerous thresholds over which one passes. Removing the shoes is a move that especially marks a space as “interior”—characteristic of homes, temples, and the occasional shop. The removal of shoes is often explained as a deferential act toward a house’s resident deities, though there is not such a deity obviously presiding over the offices of the newspaper.⁶⁰ Instead it seems calculated to provoke the bodily dispositions associated with such deistically organized spaces, though at least one well-connected employee had a ready explanation when I asked: “these are new floors—they don’t want them scuffed, do they?” Yet even such literalist understandings of organized behavior rehearse Kaviraj’s distinction between inside and outside, for indeed the news offices are an inside zone of cleanliness compared to the lanes of the industrial park. Yet such cleanliness and other markers of spatial distinction—the guards, glass doors, air conditioning, marble floors, and smooth elevator— could be interpreted as signs of modernity and professionalism rather than of homeliness and familiarity.

As these examples indicate, much of the potential danger of the city for women is experienced as a problem of circulation. Moving around the city is a time when women are seen as vulnerable. It is not that particular areas of the city are seen as dangerous or particular ways of being in the city are dangerous—for instance, no one ever told me to make sure that I was not alone or to take someone with me, as women are frequently warned in the United States. Instead a more general association seems to exist between movement and risk. This general association first became clear to me during my first visiting to Bhubaneswar in 1999 as a dance student,

⁶⁰ A couple employees said yes when I asked if there had been a blessing ritual at the opening of the office though did not provide details.

when even mid-morning visits to the museum were strongly discouraged. Chaffing against the restrictions placed on my movements, after several months I finally demanded to know why. My teacher, in her own frustration, put it to me starkly: rapes happen when women are on the street travelling, and, as a visiting foreigner, if I were raped or molested it could destroy their school—for who would want to come then? As my host, the school would be responsible. The same logics were in play when the Odia newspaper managing editor requested of me, as kindly but as insistently as possible, to please not stay late at the newsroom. Despite my protests that I had arranged for an auto (three-wheeler) driver I knew to pick me up, he insisted, one night as it neared 10 PM: “After 9 o’clock it is very dangerous for you in the city. You have a long road. Please go home at 7:30.”

That movement is especially dangerous for women has been well established by news stories of sexual violence on roads and in vehicles, especially at night. One very well known case occurred in January 1999, when a well-connected, middle-class woman was gang-raped by three men in a car on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. She and a friend of hers, a male journalist, had been on the highway to nearby Cuttack at night when their car was stopped by the men who then held them at knife point. A series of other cases have created a generic convention of sexual assault in transit. In August 2011, the *Times of India* in Bhubaneswar published a story on the “menace” of eve-teasing, an Indian-English term for sexual-harassment, that involved young men on motorbikes grabbing women as they drove past. Not only did the street expose the women to harassment, the young men’s use of transportation protected their anonymity. The globally infamous example is the horrific gang rape and disemboweling that killed the student

called “Nirbhaya” in Delhi in early December 2012, which prompted nation-wide demonstrations and a reexamination of sexual violence laws at the Centre. But later that same month two similar cases rocked Bhubaneswar, both occurring while women traveled in the dark on Janpath, the main commercial road: one in which a woman waiting for a three-wheeler at an auto-rickshaw stand at night was offered a ride in a car by a distant acquaintance who subsequently kidnapped and raped her, another in which a woman was taking a share auto home from work at night and was sexually assaulted by the other men in the vehicle before being pushed out of it.

Such acts of violence seem to follow the same logic as fears about them do: movement in the city, especially at night, is dangerous for women. The night, the temporal period during which men roam the streets drinking (and during which newspapers are published), is the urban equivalent of the classic literary trope of the *jangli* or jungle—the space in which civilization does not hold sway. This dangerousness acts as both a rationalizing and organizing force, as everyone (men, women, liberals, radicals, fundamentalists) rationally points to the issue of safety concerns posed by moving around after dark. It is precisely this argument about safety that allows newspaper management to argue that they fully endorse women’s equal participation in newspaper work, thus aligning themselves with metropolitan professional newspapers, while at the same time restricting women’s participation and assigning them to lower-status work. By invoking the Odia household’s gendered divisions of labor and access to the outside world, gendered roles which are themselves always shaped by class status, the roles that women play in newspaper production contribute profoundly to the feeling that the newspaper is like family.

That this is rule is also proved by its exceptions, by which I mean those women who do work later. In the late 1990s, Manorama Mohapatra, an esteemed Odia author and member of the Servants of the People Society since 1985, became the editor-in-chief of the *Samaja*. I met Naina in 2009. A small woman in her late thirties, with a single girl aged 10, her husband owns his own car service, giving her important access to private transportation that someone of her income level would not otherwise have. When she works later (not late, but past dark) the drivers picks her up at the office. Only one woman stays late at the offices of Odisha's Odia newspapers—she was the only woman in the entire field that worked routinely after 9pm—but when I asked other women about her schedule they always pointed out the difference of her situation: her family was well enough off that she had her own car (four-wheeler) and driver who waited for her while she was working.

Doxic Grounds of an Office Conflict

One moment in my fieldwork drew my attention to how talk about both family and professionalism rely on well-established and unquestioned sedimentations of inequality. Toward the end of my negotiated regular schedule in one of Bhubaneswar's offices, in November 2009, the controlled portrait of office life to which I was given access slipped a bit, and I witnessed an outburst that *Surya*'s managers would surely have preferred I not see. It was one of few instances in which a current staff member used the word “unprofessional” about his current employer with me. I was sitting in one of the main non-editorial offices when Mr. Mahapatra, one of the

corporate managers, entered and asked brusquely for a copy of an agreement about printing services. He clearly expected it to be easily pulled from a file. Newspapers with printers of their own in Odisha often contract print for other publications in their printer's off-hours; one of these contracts was due to expire in several months after three years, and the other publication was seeking to extend it. The finance manager was clearly irritated, directly ordering the office's peon, Guru, to find the file. After waiting while he picked through several stacks of files against one of the walls—there were files stacked against three of the small office's walls—the office's resident senior staff-member, Mr. Patnaik, whose staff had become the defacto corporate clerks thanks to the presence of the files in their room, stood from his desk. "You are asking him to find it, but it is impossible to find anything—the *files* are a problem!" Mr. Patnaik directed Guru to open all of the cabinets, which covered two walls: "See? They are completely full!" He gestured to the files stacked waist-high in front of the cabinets. "There is no order!" Mr. Mahapatra looked at him, "Why not use the record room? Why keep all of the files here?" There was a pause, as if for a slight recalibration. "Well," said Mr. Patnaik in a low voice, "I haven't seen it." He returned to stand behind his desk. "But the problem here is also one of organization. We need cabinets—we need ways to find them!" Then he gestured to the five people at work on the room's two tables: "Look at all the people here, playing musical chairs to work in this small office! And I don't even have a computer of my own!" In a fit of pique following Mr. Mohapatra's exit, Mr. Patnaik turned to me and unleashed a stream of complaints about the business's management. As he slowed down he glossed his own frustration with how

“unprofessional” the office was, enrolling me in English, “you see! See how he treats us! As if we’re just here for him and have no other work!”

In this instance, I was impressed by two levels of social action. At the surface there was the conflict between Mr. Mahapatra and Mr. Patnaik. They were both essentially management-level staff, though Mr. Mahapatra was of a higher level, being in charge of an entire department. Mr. Patnaik was the only skilled member of his small department, and so while he might have had claims to the same level of prestige, he simply didn’t have the skilled staff to oversee to establish himself as management. Moreover, Mr. Mahapatra’s work on the financial aspects of the business gave him a privileged position with regard to all of the other work—as evidenced in Mr. Patnaik’s complaint to him about not having a computer. Mr. Mahapatra could make that computer happen but Mr. Patnaik could not. This level of conflict and negotiation is a common occurrence in offices globally—certainly in any of the many offices where I’ve worked in the United States. The discourse of unprofessionalism was obviously available to Mr. Patnaik, who took refuge in it in a moment of frustration in my presence.⁶¹

Invisible, *almost*, to these men, was the labor of the “peon” Guru, who was being sent around the room to search files and open cupboards. That I can’t say much about Guru personally is demonstrative of his position—he felt uncomfortable talking to me, and would

⁶¹ Of course, my presence may have itself spurred talk about unprofessionalism, as people saw their interactions through what they thought of as my perspective. Given the “western” associations of professionalism, since colonialism and newly invigorated in Orissa with European multinationals, it would be unsurprising if the presence of a white American spurred such talk. However, I do believe that my presence did not create this talk – rather than seeing my presence as a radical break from the usual, I would suggest that my presence may have spurred a seeing of the self as if from the perspective of another (and especially “the West”) that is well practiced thanks to the long history of white/Western/European presence in India, of which I am just a small part.

typically answer my questions with single word answers. He was more comfortable with someone else answering my questions about him, which Mr. Patnaik or one of his typing staff would do, speaking of Guru in the third person in his presence. In the above interaction, while Mr. Patnaik got increasingly angry, Guru's face and actions betrayed no emotion. He did as he was asked, not especially fast, but not especially slow. He said nothing, though he looked to Mr. Patnaik when Mr. Mahapatra gave him the first order, but Mr. Mahapatra was looking elsewhere and I never saw them exchange glances about it. Yet Guru was not fully invisible, for Mr. Patnaik smarted when his staff-member was ordered by Mr. Mahapatra, in his own office. Guru's labor constituted the partial ground of the contest between Mr. Patnaik and Mr. Mahapatra, and Mr. Patnaik's complaints, made on the behalf of the interrupted office, may be read as including a complaint that Guru was being ordered around ("You are asking him to find it"). But the complaint of unprofessionalism that Mr. Patnaik adopts after Mr. Mahapatra's exit is hardly available to Guru in this space. While his labor acted as the ground for the contest between the two upper-level skilled employees, it was not the grounds for his own complaints. While Mr. Mahapatra's actions draw on a long history of relations among unequals through patronage, low or unpaid labor, and linguistic condensation (especially the use of familiar imperatives), Mr. Patnaik's inclusion of Guru in his own complaint draws on the same history of inequality while using it to build attachment and the feeling of shared interest. These long histories of inequality echo throughout Odisha's newsrooms, and that they are essential to the forms of obligation, care, and sentiment that go along with *paribara*, even as the particularity of

those long histories are difficult to identify thanks to their social sensitivity and ongoing transformations.

The relationship between management and staff in Odisha's newspapers is difficult to sort out. One of the aspects that I observed, but which would require an improbably accurate census of newsroom staff and management to prove, is that there is a pattern of status differentiation between management and even the skilled employees in Odia newsrooms that differs from English newsrooms. While seniority is the most common attribute across management staff in both English and Odia newspapers, most managers were also highly educated, and many— even in the Odia newspapers—were educated in English-medium schools. By contrast, the employees in Odia newspapers often work there because those positions are among the best options for people who are not educated in English. The staff members called “peons” are lower status and treated this way, as clearly seen in the above example, but this is also the case for reporters and other skilled staff. Because of the well-established class differentiation between English medium and Odia medium school attendance (and the schools themselves, with expensive private schools being primarily English medium and even the less expensive “English medium” schools taking place primarily in Odia), the difference in linguistic competencies between the management and the employees in Odia newspapers is concomitant with a difference in status. By status I primarily mean class status, though in Odisha, even more so than in many other places in India, higher class status does indeed routinely map onto membership in a high or dominant caste.

English newspaper management and employees offer a stark contrast. Here, many of the senior management have worked themselves from quite humble local origins, some even

teaching themselves English and paying their dues as low-status journalists in Delhi. Indeed, one prominent English newspaper journalist cited his outsider status among the politically powerful families of Odisha (which overlapped with the newspaper management from his perspective) as his reason for pursuing a career in English journalism—“I was not getting any opportunities for advancement with *them*” he said, indicating the entrenched Odia elite. While, now, the families of the management in the local editions of the national English dailies *do* have elite status, those managers themselves often did not come from such backgrounds. By contrast, contemporary employment in the English media in Bhubaneswar is now so competitive that the young staff arrive with excellent, elite educations from English programs in media and journalism—which they are able to do because they come from relatively elite backgrounds.

In summary, I am suggesting it is no accident that the cases I have heard of journalists being outraged by their treatment in Odia newsrooms involve individuals now working for English media. There are several reasons for this beyond a language ideology that simply associates English with professionalism and Odia with *paribara*. The discourse of professionalism itself, which quite easily slips into a euphemism for certain forms of elite comportment and identification, already seems to code the Odia newspapers, where many of the employees do not display such signs of elitism, as objects of suspicion. But it is more complicated than that. The differences in status between the individuals occupying management and staff positions in Odia newspapers may indeed lead toward interactions in newsrooms that reflect or reproduce those status differences—much as they would in any household. In my observations, this can mean simple things like whether someone is offered a seat when they

come into a room or how long they are expected to wait before being addressed, but it may also mean the difference between whether a reporter is expected to produce two or four stories a day, whether an administrative assistant is expected to give up her day off with little notice, or perhaps even whether someone is considered for advancement within the organization.

Conclusion

I have argued that Bhubaneswar's Odia language newspapers draw on four kinds of kinship: kinship as a separate domain that is absent in work relations, kinship as a trope that creates a soul for corporate structures resulting from modernity's domain-purifications, kinship as relational categories or connections that are built largely outside of the workplace, and kinship as a doxic organization of relational practices that draw on longstanding patterns of status, exchange, and belonging. These four categories suggest a few points of comparison.

First, the role of awareness or explicitness: in Bhubaneswar, the first and second categories—domain and trope—seem to be the kinds of kinship about which people are most explicit in the workplace. These seem to cause very little discomfort for Bhubaneswar's news workers. The latter two categories, kinship as relational categories between individuals and kinship as a set of doxic practices, seem to work best in the background. Whether or not there is actual awareness, explicit discussion of kinship in terms of these categories is fraught with moral risks and seems confined to non-public interactions. Indeed, I use a pseudonym for the

newspaper *Surya* in this case because I do not want to publicize aspects of newsroom practice that the newspaper itself would not make public.

Finally, we can see in these examples some of the ways that these different kinds of kinship inflect the distribution and exercise of power in social relations in Bhubaneswar's media workplaces. Class, educational, and biographical background shape who rejects doxic kinship in the newsrooms, thanks both to the shaping of expectations as well as the reality of other job opportunities for those who are of higher status (especially those who can expect to switch to English-language media). At the same time that doxic kinship, then, becomes a feature of work relations disproportionately unavoidable for workers of lower social standing, the ideological work to guard newsrooms from accusations of "backwardness" prevents workers in local media firms from discussing critically the actual organization of newswork. Newspaper workers in Bhubaneswar thus find themselves caught in the powerful double binds of modernity: either they reject the possibility of local claims to modernity or they accept the forms of inequality that local concerns with modernity obscure.

Chapter VI

Selves in Circulation

I went to visit Manomohana at his home on the humble block of an otherwise posh neighborhood to the north of the city, adjacent to one of the quickly growing shopping districts. Well accustomed to negotiating the city by “share auto” by the end of my research, I arrived at his place wiping my face with my *dupatta* (scarf) and trying to present myself as more presentable than I felt, covered in mid-day sweat and city grime. I was self-conscious that these signs of moving about the city without my own transportation could be taken as even more alien, for a certain class of city residents, than my foreignness itself— especially being a woman, with all of the gendered concerns about movement “outside” it entailed. While some might read in my use of share autos a kind of humility and commitment, others might read in too-free movement around town an alignment to hippy culture and a general ignorance of Bhubaneswar’s residents’ own understandings of the semiotics of space. But the towel I usually travelled with for these purposes had dropped out of my bag, and so I was left with the insufficient chiffon scarf as I rang Manomohana’s bell.

A short woman in a thin, cotton printed sari, with the end wrapped around her waist like a belt, peered at me through the iron gate at the door. She looked me up and down. I explained I had an appointment with Manomohana and she stared at me. Without her facial expression changing at all, she gestured upstairs and turned away. To the left past an unkempt yard, there was a partially-enclosed staircase leading upwards. I didn't want to surprise anyone in simply walking upstairs. I quickly typed an SMS message to Manomohana on my phone —“I've arrived”—and then waited for a minute at the bottom of the stairs. When I was sure the message would have arrived, I walked slowly up the stairs, calling out as I neared the top, “Manomohana-sir? Hello? *Āpana achhanti?*”

As I stepped on the verandah, a man stepped out from an open doorway. He had a *lungi* tied short around his hips and a yellowed white handloomed shirt and a beard. He nodded, gesturing me inside, and began chatting about the mutual friend through whom we had met. He ducked behind a doorway and brought out a red plastic moulded chair. We sat a few feet from the two computers that dominated the front room of the house from their places along the wall, the one apparently set up for video editing was held by an imposing wooden bureau. We spoke in a mix of Odia and English.

Manomohana had agreed to meet me after another journalist I had interviewed, a journalist with whom he had worked closely in the past, suggested I get in touch with him. I had emailed him giving the mutual friend's reference and then we had spent the typical six weeks trying to set a meeting around his busy schedule. He was finally in town for a short time, and his wife would arrive later in the day. Manomohana's work was well known to me: in addition to writing for a

progressive Hindi magazine and the occasional Odia column, he had begun a news website in order to publish investigative pieces on “people’s issues.” That his website published largely in English was from his perspective an advantage, because, he said, internationally there is appreciation for Odisha. Indians care less, he said, but in only a half year of publishing he had received positive responses from European and Canadian readers. He was thrilled that Google advertisements allowed him income along with independence from local advertisers.

Our conversation was easy, and it rambled over many topics. As it had started so well, I decided not to take out my audio recorder—by then I was well-familiar with the changes brought about by the audio recorder: it was a surefire way to end a conversation’s ease, and it also led to very pat responses. Throughout our several-hours long conversation, Manomohana returned several times to the remarkable fact of our conversation’s freedom. This first happened in the middle of a narrative about one of his reporting experiences in rural Odisha. The District Collector, the highest district-level administrator, had organized an event in which, Manomohana reported, the local “*adivasi*” residents dressed up in traditional costumes and then lauded the District Collector “like she was a queen.” Toward the end of this story he paused and reflected on himself, chuckling: “I am just telling you what I think!” (I recorded the phrase verbatim in my notebook.) He then went on to compare this District Collector’s performance to colonialism, concluding that current governance is essentially a continuation of colonialism for *adivasis*.

Manomohana’s self-reflexive remark followed immediately after the strong criticism of a well-known and high-status person. She was well-known administrator about whom I had read news reports in both English- and Odia-language dailies of her appearances as an important guest

of honor at development-oriented conferences in Bhubaneswar. Framing the story with the comment “just telling you what I think” achieved both a personal commitment to the story as well as a limit to the story’s claims. By only telling me what he thought, he emphasized that he was not trying to speak objectively, to the facts themselves, or on behalf of anyone else. At the time I interpreted his remark as disclaimer (Bauman 1993) of his performance: it might seem that he was making strong criticisms of rural administration, but in fact he was only narrating to me something he saw and what he thought about it. I took it as implicit instructions about what I should do, or rather not do with the story, namely that I should not circulate it. As I reflected on it more, I realized that it also constructed the story as evidence of Manomohana’s own sincerity: the story was a kind of reveal of Manomohana’s mind.⁶² It reminded me of the American joke that a listener can make after a strong complaint or “rant” against someone else, “but tell me what you really think!” Manomohana too, he seemed to be saying, was telling me what he really thought.

Such metapragmatic constructions of the orientation of the speaker to the interaction were common in my research. Most of my conversations during my research could have been categorized in one of three overarching generic categories: “reporting” conversations in which people shared information about something neutral, “formatted” conversations in which people talked in ways that seemed pre-formulated for circulation (these often took a pedagogical tone as well), and “sincere” conversations in which people remarked that they were revealing something

⁶² Mind is a good translation for the Odia/Sanskrit concept of *manas*, which is a concept usually understood as the site of the interior, embodied process of both thinking and feeling. It is similar to what Americans mean when they say “I can’t make up my mind,” which often expresses feelings as much as thoughts. Manomohana may have found the European understanding of mind just as salient as *manas*.

of themselves through the conversation. It was only after my research that I realized I could have avoided some of my access difficulties if I had said I was interested in studying production technologies, an area of news work that people seemed quite happy to describe in a “reporting” mode without discomfort or ethical evaluations. Instead, naively, I had described my research as a study of changes in Bhubaneswar’s journalism since the 1990’s liberalization, a description that immediately keyed sensitive questions about ownership structure, profit, development, and political hierarchies—including questions about professionalism and local relations—that consistently provoked either well formulated talk or self-revelatory talk.

A similar moment occurred later in our conversation as well. Manomohana had just provided a self-initiated review of the ethical status of many of Odisha’s major journalists, an account that focused on their known social alliances. He said that one journalist belonged to the Bhubaneswar Club, an elite club formerly restricted to Indian Administrative Service officers widely thought to be one of the centers of Odishan power brokering.⁶³ Another person had invested in mining. He spoke of the family connection between the cable channel OTV and the major minerals firm, IMFA and scoffed⁶⁴. Another journalist had started a public relations firm in his wife’s name and was doing PR work for Posco while also claiming to report neutrally on the industry. Manomohana then referred to a recent article in which one of the top reporters for

⁶³ I had visited the Bhubaneswar Club a handful of times with some non-journalist friends who were members, and it had been on one of those visits that I met the journalist whom Manomohana described—a journalist I had otherwise had difficulty finding a strong connection with among my journalist contacts. After meeting me at the Club through mutual friends, this high-status journalist was very generous with his time. This is not to say that perceptions of the Bhubaneswar Club were correct.

⁶⁴ Indian Metals and Ferro-Alloys or IMFA has been one of Odisha’s most successful indigenous companies. The founder’s son, MP Jay Panda, owns Odisha’s top cable distributor, Ortel, and dominant Odia language cable news television station, OTV.

one of the top English-language editions that had implicitly insulted activist-journalists with whom Manomohana identified, though he couldn't remember the date of the article. He concluded, "95-99% are co-opted." Many of the people he was describing had participated in my research, and I tried not to betray my discomfort. For even though such talk was a routine part of many interactions with journalists, I wondered: What would he say if he knew that I had received help from many of the journalists he was criticizing?

Then Manomohana again shifted footing to a self-reflexive comment: "They—[he listed the names of few friends, those among the approvingly ethical journalists, including the journalist who had recommended I meet him]—say that I should be careful. 'You are too open!' they tell me. I suppose some day I will have their experiences and then I won't want to talk to anyone about my work. Now I will just say what I like!"

Such moments were by then routine for me during what seemed to be successful interviews. One editor at a second tier Odia-language daily, about 20 minutes into our conversation, shifted the footing of the conversation in the midst of a description of how his newspaper had developed "contacts" in the relatively short time that it had been publishing. "In fact," he had asked after a bit of verbal stumbling and a repair, "I had this question. How is Katherine able to meet people and—and—meet them *and get something out of their mouths?*" He laughed with me and then said, again, "but it is a real problem, isn't it?" Later, at the end of our long conversation, he leaned back as I closed my notebook and said, "You've extracted everything from me!" A senior correspondent at another newspaper similarly closed an interview remarking that he had "revealed himself to me."

This chapter explores a few of the ways by which journalists present themselves interactionally, and what that means to them. I draw on Goffman's dramaturgical perspective on social psychology, especially his concept of face, to use interactional moments to understand journalists' methods of negotiating the world in which they live. Underlying this approach is Webb Keane's observation that "the presentation of self is a kind of ethical work on the self" (Keane 2010, 77). In this dissertation I have explored how journalists in Bhubaneswar evaluate themselves and others. I have argued that the morality of relations are often what is at stake in journalists' moral evaluations, even when they are evaluating apparently different kinds of things, such as news production. These concerns with relations themselves can be structured by questions of participation, and specifically by the question of who represents whom to whom in what capacity. I have discussed these ethics of participation in Odishan journalism in terms of the organization of newspapers, the circulation of news texts, the practice of writing itself, and work relationships. In this chapter, I look in more detail at the forms of interpersonal social relations as themselves a kind of ethical practice.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the contact as an important social form for Odishan journalists. Examinations of contact sociality, which include a detailed look at contact cultivation and a discussion of "off-record" requests, illustrate local concerns about ethical self-presentation, especially with regard to sincerity, circulation, and deception. Prakash again returns in this chapter thanks to a series of frank conversations about how he manages his social interactions. I then describe briefly three instances of deception, or suspected deception, and their local evaluations. The chapter concludes with a consideration of what Odishan styles of social

presentation and evaluation contribute to this study's broader concern with journalism and the ethics of participation.

Between Stranger and Relative Sociality

In an essay that Goffman calls “an analysis of the ritual elements in social interaction”, he lays out his theory of “face-work” (1967 [1955]). While most accounts of Goffman’s theory of face begin with the idea of face itself, I suggest starting with his use of the word “line” (Goffman 1967 [1955], 5). He begins with a statement that the world is composed of “face to face or mediated contact” with other people and that, “in each of these contacts, [a person] tends to act out what is sometimes called a *line*—that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (Goffman 1967 [1955], 5). This line is not only something that a person does, it is something that other participants in the interaction will assume that he or she is doing, or trying to do. Other participants will therefore seek to read this line from the interaction. Social interaction, from Goffman’s perspective, consists of a constant stream of interpreting other’s lines, interpreting signs of how others are inferring one’s own line, and seeking to regiment or shape others’ interpretations of one’s own line.

Face, according to Goffman, is the “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (5). If line is the immediate narrative or first layer of socially significant sign, I understand face as the mediating

set of conceptions about what kinds of presentations are desirable that a line calls upon and asserts. Face is more durable than a line—a person may take a series of lines over an interaction in the service of establishing a particular face; the successful establishment of face may also condition the subsequent lines and interpretations of lines. This reading differs from frequent usages of Goffman’s concepts. Sociolinguists have primarily read Goffman’s discussion of face as the grounds for the study of politeness as an exceptional arena of language use that is not “rational, purposive, and goal-directed” (Mao 1994, 453` see). I read Goffman’s theory of facework as concerned with something at once more mundane and more foundational to sociality than the approach to politeness as an exceptional area of communicative practice. Facework can be seen as a placeholder for the culturally specific ways by which any social interaction has the potential to be constitutive of self and other.

As I note above, the methods of reading communicative instances and actions as signs of self vary dramatically across conceptions of personhood, status, and morality. Goffman’s own description of competitive face was deeply grounded in the United States’ mid-twentieth century version of stranger sociality. Stranger sociality presumes a lack of knowledge of individuals about each other; it is a cultural environment in which civility (Elias 2000 [1939]), self-presentation (Goffman 1990[1989]), and distinction (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]) are dominant forms of interpersonal self-making. Application of Goffman’s insights about indexical construction of self to the South Asian context thus requires a consideration of the role of the interpersonal interaction in the socio-construction of the self more generally. Stranger sociality stands in stark contrast to historical forms of sociality in South Asia (Chakrabarty 2002; Chatterjee 2004),

including those often described by anthropologists (see, for example: Daniel 1984; Lamb 2000; Cohen 1998). In contrast to stranger sociality, we might call the social world of South Asia historically the social world of relatives—not because everyone is related to everyone else, but because everyone is related to *someone* else, and it is usual that some knowledge of a person can be effectively gained by knowing about those relations.

In a social world of relatives, a person's actions may be read for information about his or her relations; a person will likely be aware of this and may seek to manipulate those readings. Returning to Goffman's understanding of facework, we could see that one of the interpretations being potentially negotiated through an interaction is the very ground of interpreting a line. For instance, I accompanied a young, unmarried friend, Arati, who was hoping to become a journalist to meet some political activists. Arati was visiting these activists as a journalist, though her journalism career was just getting started, and she was hoping to get information about a *bandh* or city closing that a competing political party had called for the following day. She hoped to turn the conversation into a short article. It turned out that these political activists knew Arati's elder brother. As they plied her with questions about her brother's activities and their family (her mother had recently died), my friend became increasingly frustrated. After we left, my friend let off steam, complaining that they had not given her any information. To the contrary it had seemed to me that she had gotten the information she had gone for, but that what she had not gotten was recognition as a journalist: they had treated her as a member of her sister's house.

In the above example, Arati's assertion of a line was relatively successful, at least enough for them to answer her questions, but she felt that her preferred face—as an independent

journalist—was unsuccessful. Instead, her would-be sources kept switching (“footing” to call on another Goffman term) back to her relationship to her house and kin. The case was illustrative, though Arati’s frustration about being interpreted as a representative of her family rather than as a representative of journalism was rare during my research, which may be thanks both to Arati’s personality and her non-Odia background—her family was from Bihar. To the contrary, I usually witnessed people play representative of their family or village with ease and even pleasure.

Yet relative sociality does not adequately describe the contemporary world of most Bhubaneswari journalists either, not least for sheer pragmatic reasons. Rapid growth of both the city and media field means that many journalists are faced with interactions in which information about others is not immediately available. Moreover, for contemporary media producers, professional advancement often means interacting with as yet unknown people, both among potential news sources and among potential job sources. Yet, this does not mean that Euro-American stranger sociality applies. As Matthew Hull describes in his description interactions between strangers in Pakistan (2012), this can intensify the risks of relative sociality: one does not know whether there are people around to whom one is already or would like to be connected, making interactions among strangers potentially treacherous or potentially rewarding—but always potent. In the following two sections, drawing on a long series of conversations with Prakash, I propose that we think of much of the work of journalists as being done in a zone of contacts, in which features of stranger sociality meet the habits and expectations of a world of relatives. After laying out the contours and stakes of this contact sociality through a series of examples, I then return to the concerns about sincerity and deception that opened the chapter.

Contacts as Social Art

Contacts are a fundamental principle of social life in Bhubaneswar. Whether they are a necessary evil is a personal judgment that has more to do with personality than with any consistent moral tone, but there is no getting past their necessity. A contact can make the difference between waiting for an hour at the bank to make a deposit and waiting five minutes, or between finding your sister a local husband whom you trust to treat her well and settling on a marriage to an unknown family who requires a steep dowry and lives in Surat, Gujarat, on the other side of the country. Contacts are the bones of a good life, and one ignores this at one's own and one's loved ones' peril—but, in fact, I have never seen it ignored, even by those who seem to sigh at the work they require. Being so pervasive and consistently important throughout my experiences in India, and in a language shared in the by American English, it was not until the end of my research that I began to think about "the contact" as something to study.

While contacts are important for everyone, they are especially important for journalists, whose work requires them to supply information and quoted statements by experts and relevant citizens on any number of topics on a daily basis. The most common answer I received when asking one of my most repeated questions, "how did you do the research for your article," was: "*Kanṭākt achi*" or "I have a contact." Odia speakers routinely used the English word "contact" even when speaking in Odia. Since my work has taken place in a post-mobile phone world, I am unable to say whether the term has been adopted following its use in mobile phone menus and email programs. My question to several friends about whether there was an Odia word for "contact" was met with a half-joke: "that is the Odia word!"

A “contact” is a relatively fluid category that says more about the context in which relationships are deployed than about the relationship between the two people, with the exception that calling a close relative a “contact” is likely to generate some laughter, since it is a great understatement. Indeed, throughout most of my conversations with journalists, they were simultaneously waiting for contacts to return phone calls—rare was the conversation that wasn’t interrupted for a phone call.

Contacts require management and cultivation in two senses. The first challenge, especially for journalists, is simply to keep track of the contact information. This is no small task, given that a journalist might talk to twenty people a day while working on four different stories. While this is true globally for any journalist, the particular social expectations of Bhubaneswar give this contact management an urgency and riskiness not felt in the United States.

While it is relatively easy for an American perspective to conceive of the advantages and risks of contacts from the perspective of someone low-status who wants to, say, move up in their profession, the social risks of contacts for someone who is high status demonstrate their investment in Bhubaneswar’s particular cultural context. As journalists rise in their fields and become public figures in Bhubaneswar, they begin to receive invitations to make speeches to classrooms or public events, or to attend cultural programs or conferences as felicitated guests. These involve shifts that can be disorienting for journalists; suddenly, the journalist himself is the sought-after contact. Journalists, habituated to contact cultivation, may be wary in these situations as they realize that it is likely for someone they meet to take offense that the journalist does not remember their meeting. One senior Odia-language journalist explained his strategies

for managing these risks: if he is presenting or appearing somewhere and people approach him, he will hand them his card. Sometimes a mutual contact introduces him to someone. Sometimes in these situations, people will ask for his mobile number and even call the number right then, during the short meeting, giving him a “missed call”—presumably so that he can save the number. (Attending an event for students where he was speaking, I saw this happen.) But he does not save the number. Instead, he pre-emptively suggests to them that, if they do call, they should remind me where they met. In this way he has prepared the caller for not recognizing him or her, but also tried gently to indicate that just because they have met in person does not mean that they know him well. Asking Prakash about this, he explained, “that happens once you become gradually a public figure, coming into contact with so many people—you can’t possibly remember.” Prakash’s reading of the situation was that the not-remembering itself needed justification, while I was interested in the part he took for granted—that not-remembering/saving would be potentially offensive, and that the offensiveness would be concerning to someone high-status.

During a long conversations about “contacts,” which I draw on below, Prakash spent more time explaining to me the biographical details of the various individuals he mentioned than he did describing his interactions with those individuals. For example, the description of the stages of his relationship with a well-known documentarian involved several minutes of telling me about his work before making documentaries, and then a detailed review of several of his films and the people with whom he worked on each film. Since I knew that I wouldn’t be able to use this information, as I would be obscuring all individual identities in this conversation, I was at

first impatient with Prakash's descriptions. Then I realized that Prakash was sharing with me an important aspect of his networking strategy: taking great care to know details about the lives of others. Knowing and collecting the biographical details of others are key components of the social art of contacts. Keeping a close eye on bureaucratic movements and activist collaborations from afar allows one to be aware of potential connections to elites in every day life.

Contact Cultivation

For a low-status journalist, the best way to first establish a contact is through an introduction by a trustworthy intermediary—but an introduction is only the beginning. The full cultivation of a contact from first introduction to solid professional relationship takes time and continued effort. Prakash frankly described the process by which he cultivated a “very good rapport” with a “big-shot”, a non-Odia man who is also a member of the National Advisory Council; this big-shot had also led several important social-issue campaigns and written columns for the English daily *The Hindu*. This important individual, whom I shall call “Mr. Kumar,” came to Odisha for a conference related to a development issue that Prakash also writes about. Many national conferences on poverty-related issues are held in Odisha thanks to Odisha's own poverty and poverty-advocacy, and these conferences can be important networking sites for Odias who have difficulty affording visits to India's metropolises. Before the conference, Prakash had primed a well-established local contact, “Raju-da”, for an introduction to Mr. Kumar. A well-reputed, senior state-level official, Raju-da was the perfect introducer in this situation because he had

served as Mr. Kumar's advisor on Odisha/poverty-related issues for the National Advisory Council. Thanks to Prakash's prior cultivation of Raju-da as a contact through a process similar to that described here, Raju-da knew Prakash from his advocacy on the same poverty-related issues and also knew that Prakash was socially responsible to his contacts—in other words, Raju-da did not need to fear something negative resulting from the introduction.

Staging the first meetings with potential contacts requires empathetic calculation. Successful cultivation of a contact requires imagining oneself from the perspective of the other from the very start. Such empathetic calculation begins with the selection of the introducer, as the introducer must both vouch for the introduced as well as manage the actual moment of introduction with grace, leading to no initial discomfort on the desired contact's part. Prakash explained that Raju-da wouldn't bring a "Tom, Dick, and Harry to introduce, so this person [Prakash himself] must be something"—a comment that, in voicing the perspective of Mr. Kumar, demonstrates that Prakash's calculation takes into account the trustworthiness of the intermediary from the perspective of the desirable (new) contact. However, despite the care involved in setting up the first meeting, no first meeting would establish actual contact between low- and high-status individuals. Again adopting Mr. Kumar's perspective, Prakash pointed out to me how many people high-status officials would be meeting, implying that one meeting alone would not enable Mr. Kumar's subsequent recognitions of Prakash. A relatively soon second meeting would be necessary. In describing their second meeting at another conference, Prakash again spoke from Mr. Kumar's perspective, speaking of himself in the third person: "[at the second meeting] he [Mr. Kumar] may be faintly remembering. 'Yeah... somebody... *Ach-cha-*

cha, is this the boy who you [Raju-da] had introduced? He used to write something?” Mr. Kumar’s partial recognition provided the opening for Prakash to introduce himself again, saying, “Raju-da introduced me at the last meeting.” This moment of failed recognition and reintroduction was pivotal. Mr. Kumar felt (appropriate) social shame at not remembering him, for which he apologized: “Ok, ok, Prakash, I am sorry, I am sorry, how are things?” From that apology onwards, Prakash was relatively confident that Mr. Kumar would recall him at subsequent events, though still more cultivation was necessary to move from mere face-name recognition to full contact status.

Such a shift from mere recognition to a full, multi-directional contact often requires an event involving interdependent or coordinated action. Mr. Kumar finally came to know Prakash well during a conference event that Mr. Kumar himself helped organize in Odisha. Having met Prakash twice at similar events over six months, Mr. Kumar could be reasonably expected to know Prakash by name, at least in the right context. Moreover, given Raju-da’s introduction and the context of those introductions (at conferences), Mr. Kumar would be predisposed to trusting Prakash with certain kinds of responsibilities given the right opportunity. Making this calculation, Prakash contacted one of the local-side organizers involved in Mr. Kumar’s local conference and suggested that he, Prakash, handle the conference’s “media mobilization.” The organizer asked Mr. Kumar on Prakash’s behalf and Mr. Kumar agreed. As media mobilizer, Prakash introduced Mr. Kumar to well-ranked journalists and “media contacts,” made sure that the event was covered by news outlets in Bhubaneswar, and then emailed to Mr. Kumar all of the “news items” that did appear. The role of “media mobilizer” was perfect for Prakash in this case,

achieving a host of necessary steps in the transition to full-contact status. Prakash's introductions and the resulting coverage both demonstrated for Mr. Kumar the range of Prakash's own local contacts and influence, that is, it demonstrated his potential future value to Mr. Kumar. The range of activities established that Prakash is locally knowledgeable as well as socially and logistically capable. The conversations, emails, and (though unmentioned, likely) mobile phone calls, established open lines of communication during the term of the event that extended even after the event, as the news coverage would continue to follow by some days or weeks—these many modes of communication would make it possible for Prakash to get in touch with Mr. Kumar directly via one of these modes in the future. Finally, in depending on Prakash for this unpaid service, Mr. Kumar and Prakash entered into a relationship of obligation that, just as Mauss noted, potentially projected their relationship into the future through the irresolvability of the gift. “Then he can not forget me,” Prakash explained. “That is how you establish a rapport with somebody.”

Sometimes, though, there are no intermediaries who can provide an introduction. Then it is best to at least meet in person, for which one can attend an event that they are attending, even as a speaker or guest. The difficulty of these situations is that there will generally be many other people also introducing themselves. Prakash, who started without many contacts in either journalism or human rights/anti-poverty work, often relied on this method early in his career. “During the meeting [with a desired contact] I at least take two things,” he shared with me, chuckling at his reveals of his own strategic secrets:

Two things I take for sure: a card, and if there is not card, a mail and mobile... I do one little more trick—trick or what—I write them [an email that says]: ‘I write

on many issues, I keep sending many of my articles to my friends, if it's not any trouble, if it's not troublesome to you then I can also add you to my friends list.' Many people do not deny it. Many people will tell, 'ok, yes'... So they'll get one or two articles a month. I do add everybody without fail. That has helped.

And not only sharing his writing—Prakash will also write strategically to cultivate a relationship. For example, in order to cultivate a relationship with a documentarian whom he had met “cold” at a showing of his films, Prakash published a review of his newest film and then sent him the review. On the documentarian's next trip to Odisha, though he did not remember Prakash, he did remember the review when Prakash mentioned it. Prakash then did a quick interview with him that he emailed to him once it was published. “Now he is a friend. He responds to me on his Facebook and I share his Facebook [posts] with many others.”

In addition to providing access, once a relationship is established, it is further cultivated through such knowledge. For example, one of Prakash's well-established elite contacts—the documentarian mentioned above—went in for serious heart-related surgery. After the surgery, Prakash called his mobile phone, to ask how he was doing, which the documentarian was touched by. In Prakash's understanding, this matters because one is “taking an effort to enquire about you”, as opposed to merely thinking about a person in a professional way or only when they are present. Remembering someone “brings you closer, to the personal level also, from the professional relationship... [Attention to the professional contact as a person] really helps you. Growing a professional relationship, compared to personal relationships, are hardly cared for. I think if you care, it is always good.”

In another case, upon seeing a news report that one Prakash's elite contacts encountered some violence during some of his activist work in Rajasthan state, Prakash called his mobile

phone to wish him well. Though he was unable to talk at the time, this elite contact of Prakash's sent him an email shortly afterwards saying he was, "one in a billion,"—"in the whole billion country you were the only person who called me. I received some emails from friends, but you were the only person who called me." For Prakash, demonstrating this kind of care moves uneasily between professional strategy and morally appropriate care, bringing about moments of self-consciousness:

I just thought that I've known him for so many years, they are like friends, we should at least call them. Of course this is the way that many may have felt but many may have not dared to call him. After all, this is a professional relationship. And ——— is not my friend. I mean, no matter how close I am to him professionally, he is not my friend. I cannot just pick up the phone and say, you know, 'Katherine, how are you?'—This is something I can do with you. It is something I cannot do with him. I have to make up my mind, 'ok, but anyway, let's ask how he's doing.'

On one hand, professional contacts are "like friends" in that one may know them for many years and feel great fondness for them. On the other hand, especially when the contacts are elite and oneself is not, they are clearly not "friends"—defined here by one's ability to just call them, for no apparent reason, just to ask "how are you?" In this case, Prakash was taking a risk by calling his contact's mobile phone just to ask after his wellbeing—at risk of being seen as inappropriate or as putting on airs. In Prakash's understanding, the risk was that, if he were seen as acting inappropriately, that contact might choose not to introduce him to any other people, or be uninterested in his developing his relationship with Prakash further. But to Prakash's delight, the risk paid off—he received a personal email appreciating his concern and confirming that it distinguished him as a moral individual. In short, one must be able to strategically pursue the strengthening of relationships without it looking as though one is doing it for professional

reasons, but also without looking like he disregards professional distance. An elite person will not think equally of one who sees him only as a step on the professional ladder—while respecting hierarchical differences, a status-seeker must also perform, at the right moment, the ability to relate outside of professionalism, and perhaps even outside of hierarchically.

Media of Relations

As we see in the foregoing accounts, the materials or media by which contacts are forged play a significant role in journalists' relationships. In her study of the role of new communication technologies in American romantic relationships, Ilana Gershorn (2010) has proposed that “media ideologies,” ways of understanding and valuing distinctions across media, condition what kind or method of communication is appropriate according to local understandings of messages and communicative functions. She describes, for instance, that for college students in Indiana it is acceptable to ask someone on a date over a (mobile phone) text message, but it is seen as heartless to break up with someone through a text message (Gershon 2011). For break-ups, at the time of Gershorn's study, students evaluated ethical media use along a continuum from most to least appropriate: in-person, phone, email, text message. Similarly, for journalists negotiating a world full of contacts and potential contacts, appropriate use of media can demonstrate social fitness. Savvy use of media in relationships can also act as a means by which to transform those relationships.

Mobile phones were the most visible technology among journalists during my research. While the upper echelon of journalists sometimes had smart phones of the Blackberry variety, most journalists had either a middle range phone with a keypad that would fold out for better SMS-messaging or a straightforward phone. It was common for journalists to have several phones, or to have a phone that took several different SIM cards, allowing them to have multiple phone numbers with multiple companies. Multiple cards/numbers was a general trend, not limited to journalists. It seemed highly likely to me that different sorts of contacts would be given different sorts of numbers, but none of the people I knew well enough to ask said that they did this. Instead, the multiple SIM cards seemed to work explicitly as insurance against disconnection. Thanks to these steps to ensure mobile phone connectivity, phone-to-phone connections were the obviously dominate form of interaction between journalists and most others: others in their own organization, journalists in other organizations, family friends. I remarked very few instances of family members talking together on mobile phones, unless the family members were in different cities.

Prakash keeps his contacts in his mobile phone. When I first met him his mobile phone was a relatively simple Nokia model, whose screen shared device real estate with the keypad. In 2011, he lost that phone and replaced it with a touch-screen Samsung “smart-phone” model with endless features. Like most phones, the old phone and the new one kept names and numbers under a heading called “Contacts.” “You have, say, 1000 contacts. You have more, but those are the contacts you keep in your phone. Maybe you have 300 contacts you talk with regularly.” Prakash describes the method of indexing so many contacts as a process of judgments; his

description confirmed what I saw happening around news offices. During actual work on a story, journalists typically use a piece paper—sometimes just scrap paper—sometimes a notebook called a “diary” (people frequently use as notebooks the printed appointment diaries distributed by banks and other organizations). On this diary, the journalist notes names and numbers for a particular article’s contacts, or which were used during a day, contacts that are generally provided by other contacts or by fellow journalists. The journalist must then decide if the contact is useful beyond that story. If they are likely to be useful in the future, they are saved in the phone, if not, “once that call is finished, it’s finished. That contact is lost.” Saving contacts in a phone, unless they are regularly backed-up, can be quite a risk since phones are so easily lost.

I observed a deceptively low-key conversational genre typical of contact management. Often, not long after meeting someone, there is a conversation to establish mutual contacts. This conversation can be hidden by talk about work or places people have lived, and it can be initiated by a mediating third party. This is often a relatively quiet comparison, and people often do not reveal much even as they reveal a great deal: they will share names, experiences, places and even dates, but it is usual to do so with a very flat affect. That it was expected that people would find overlapping contacts became apparent to me after the third or fourth time that I marveled about two people at an event knowing the same people in other contexts. Where I felt the fizz of serendipity, Bhubaneswar’s journalists took it as a matter of course. I gradually learned the appropriate subdued response myself. I felt the social desirability of this convention acutely due to the IRB conditions on the anonymity of my research subjects, which meant that I had to avoid comparative discussions about who I had spoken with (which, when I did come up with names,

were not infrequently followed with questions about what they had said).⁶⁵ Thanks to these conversations about mutually known contacts, knowledge of others' contacts is itself socially distributed. People can find out additional information about the other people they know by calling those mutual people. People can also be located through others, and across Bhubaneswar's residents it is routine to call others for the most recent phone numbers of a known mutual contact. Such phone calls are generic, and there is very little additional social work that must be done to accompany such phone calls when the relationships are relatively solid.

With so many contacts and potential contacts moving through a journalist's life, there is a challenge of information management. The decision to save or not to save a contact relies on judgments of status/office, relationship, and the contact's expertise. For journalists, those contacts that most warrant phone saving are those who hold offices (in government, NGOs, universities, or corporations) or are experts in fields relevant to the journalist's ongoing area of concerns. The information of non-office holders or experts are saved when they offer important social access. For example, villagers' contact information will be saved, even though they might be farmers and have no institutional roles, if they can serve as future contacts in the case of rural events. For Prakash, the reason for saving a number is translated into a mnemonic device to remember the person, achieved by organizing his contacts by naming the contact entry with

⁶⁵ Not sharing my own contact-relations with others meant that I moved around Bhubaneswar like a half-person—not only was I not identifiable through my relationships with others, but I could not serve as a conduit to the others I was surely meeting. After the first flush of interest in me as an American, there was a long dry spell research-wise in which I had difficulty making interviews actually happen. It was only when I finally began to lean on other journalists to locate me socially (and got better at socially-appropriately deflecting questions about the other people I was meeting)—that research opportunities presented themselves readily.

contextual words. A contact whose work relates, for instance, to the Right to Information [RTI] Act or the Commission on Information (Soochana Commission) would be saved “RTI.firstname” in the “First Name” contact line. If Prakash meets someone helpful during a visit to the rural district of Bolangir, one of Odisha’s poorest districts and a site of typical famine, drought, floods, and epidemics (and thus the object of news coverage), he would save the person’s phone number and name under the title “Bolangir.firstname”.

The saving of contacts is an important aspect of social relations in mobile phone-mediated India, and perceiving how much information a person has saved about you can communicate how they understand your relationship, and especially whether they believe you are important. This means that there is always the potential that the phone answerer will insult the caller. People are easily offended when those with whom they have talked by mobile three or four times do not save their number, indicating that they have neither established a relationship nor that they are important enough to save. Slow to understand media ideologies of mobile phone use, I was myself an unwitting purveyor of such insults and came to understand these rules through repeated error. The meaning of saving contacts in phones is most obvious in situations of accidental fail—losing a phone can mean losing 1000-2000 contacts. Loss and theft make the small size of mobile phones a true liability for those who store all of their social information inside. Though there are several ways to back-up this contact data in most current models, few Odia journalists—whose personal technology adoption is general inconsistent and limited to that which is immediately useful—do back-up. Managers with support staff, tech-savvy independent freelancers, or internet journalists are more likely to use back-up technology. Older journalists

still have paper address books with stored contacts, though much of that information has changed since they wrote it. Instead, if a phone and its contacts are lost, one must recreate them and also accept that some are lost for good.

Prakash described the recent loss of his own phone: of the approximately 1000 contacts in his phone, about 300 are used on such a regular basis that they could be easily recreated—those 300 people would also be calling him—and another 300-400 he could get from those first 300. But that last 300 were gone. However, none of that slow repopulation of contacts on the new phone could prevent awkward situations: he had to ask the identity of callers. He reported that friends were initially offended, even angry, “What! You don’t know who I am!” With many he was able to pre-empt their calls by sending out a mass email, and I have seen Odishan journalists posting on Facebook about lost phones and contact lists, asking for their contacts to message their own information. Yet sometimes such preemptive strategies do not work. In one case, after his lost phone, an woman whose voice betrayed her seniority called Prakash and immediately started speaking. He couldn’t bring himself to ask for her name. He recognized her voice but couldn’t put it with a name: “She went on speaking to me for ten-fifteen minutes, I had to manage her. ‘Yes, we’ll do it.’ I could never ask her. Only ‘yes, yes.’ ... I could never dare ask her name. The people who you can never ask their names, and they treat you as a known person, then you can't ask. That's a big problem. I could never ask her—in a fifteen minute conversation I could never ask her.”

In situations of clear hierarchy, however, not-saving a contact can say less than saving would. Prakash pointed to a situation in which he received mere confirmation of his status with

the managing editor of a Delhi-based English weekly news magazine. Though he and the managing editor had talked via mobile phone at least five times, each time they had spoken she had asked in Hindi who was calling—“*Acchha, ha, kaun hain?*” Who is this? Prakash explained to me that, though he would be offended by this situation generally, in this case it was understandable: “I don’t mind, that’s fine. She’s at such a big level that I don’t mind, that she wouldn’t always save [all of the numbers]... [That editor] has ten thousand people she contacts, so everybody’s name she can not [save]. You do not actually matter that much to her. Ok, so that’s good. No problem.” Though that magazine has published many of his articles, the managing editor does not consider him an important asset, and so the hierarchy is merely confirmed by the editor’s request for his identity. If, to the contrary, she had saved his name, that would have conveyed (to Prakash) that he might have a future at that magazine, such as one of their coveted staff positions. That this didn’t occur confirmed for Prakash that he is merely a replaceable freelancer in her eyes. Given that he had written some of the best pieces on Odisha published in that magazine in the past year, I interpreted her failure to cultivate Prakash as a contact as symptomatic of a broader blind spot with regards to Odisha and its natives.

What we see emerging throughout this discussion is that contacts require cultivation. First, there is the cultivation that creates the “contact” in the first place—the interactions that mean the called person will talk with the caller and recognize them (even if they do not recognize their phone number because they have not saved it—though that would be a hoped for result in the case of many contact cultivations.) Second, there is the cultivation that will strengthen a relationship from one of mere recognition to one that is productive, opening new social and

professional opportunities. Thus it is clear that social cultivation rests on the shoulders of low-status individuals, and they will often excuse the social failures of high-status individuals as a natural outgrowth of their own unimportance to that person—“of course, he is so busy, how could he think of me?”

There are two exceptional cases. The first is that of a journalist writing an article or producing a video in which the contacted individual him or herself will have some stake—then a “cold call” may be necessary and will likely be well-received, or at least received. Thus a low-status reporter writing about a dance festival could call one of the high-status dancers or choreographers involved, though again in this situation the reporter would be advised to have a quick introduction by a senior journalist. The second exception is for callers of high status, whether the status is personal or institutionally-provided, such as by writing for an elite newspaper like *The Hindu*. A well-known reporter at a major English daily will have no problem cold-calling even national-level bureaucrats or politicians, though it is also likely that, due to their existing contacts, they would not need to. A distinction between personal mobile phones and office phones is here relevant: a higher status reporter with personal contacts to a bureaucrat could get away with calling his or her mobile phone even if they had not yet met, but a lower status reporter (or a reporter at a lower status publication) would call the office phone unless they had a very intimate contact.

While managing the meaningful distinctions between media falls especially heavy on the lower-status participant, high-status individuals do have responsibilities for managing the media of contacts. One of the most high-status journalists I interviewed in Bhubaneswar, whom I’ll call

Raja, expressed feeling a great burden around the maintenance of so many contacts, for his old contacts, friends, and relations would take offense if he did not call routinely to check on them. The personal phone call, rather than an email or an SMS message, would be the most satisfying to the contact because of its required investment of time and care. Another senior journalist, then an editor, pointed out that it is good for him to call his past main contacts regularly, even to ask them for information to make them feel valuable. They would feel bad, he speculated for me, if they went from being quoted regularly to not hearing from me; this suggests that a journalist's growing seniority itself can transform a contact's perception of the relationship. Raja said that his contacts would interpret his inattention as evidence that he now felt himself better or more important than them. In addition to not wanting them to feel hurt, he said, he also faced the risk that they would feel he no longer needed them. Though this senior journalist did not gloss this further, it seems likely that one of the dangers of people feeling no longer needed is that he could lose those contacts. Contact attrition, for a journalist, would be its own punishment.

The Problems of Forms, Intentions, and Interests

In this final section of this chapter, I consider the forms of contact sociality, described above, as a form of ethical self-presentation or self-management characteristic of journalists' sociality. Based on the preceding discussion, there are three main features of interpersonal interactions with non-intimates that elicit management and care: the forms of interaction themselves, how

such forms can be read for intentions, and how to manage the other person's perception of intentions in the broader context of what s/he may (or may not) know about one's own interests.

Intentions are a popular interpretation of the self that Bhubaneswar's residents manage in their interpersonal interactions. It is well established in the comparative anthropological literature that intentions are not a meaningful aspect of the interpretation of self in many parts of the world (Rosaldo 1982; Kulick 1997; Ochs and Capps 1996). In the Introduction's discussion of karma and Chapter 3's account of Gandhian nationalist revisions of the Hindu self, I have described the basic contours of a dominant tradition for understanding intentions on the subcontinent. In the literature discussing karma, the moral ideal, the most highly valued form of intention, is the selfless intention. The self-presentation of selflessness is evident in Prakash's account of his efforts to cultivate relationships, especially during those moments in which he showed his concern for their wellbeing. The apparently uncultivated reveal, the occasional moment of feeling, and the momentary shift into more intimate or friendly registers are key strategies to managing the presentation of selfless intentions. In the example of Prakash's email to the high status colleague who was injured, timing was everything: it allowed his concern to be the result of an outpouring, which was especially important because the relationship between them was not a relationship among friends.

This is my interpretation of the moments in interviews in which interviewees commented on their own frankness, as if with surprise. I am not doubting their experiences of their own frankness, but I am suggesting that the particular frame of the comments functioned locally to communicate to me a selfless conversational ethic: the comments were meant to communicate to

me that the interviewee was faithfully or sincerely participating in the interview. A brief recounting of another similar interview moment shows this clearly.

I was sitting in Mr. Patnaik's home office for an interview with him and two other journalists, who were organizing a protest following an arrest of a journalist. I was not recording but taking notes by hand. Our host had just described to me a recent case of abuses against a local journalist, when he paused and waved his hand. I waited, not sure what he meant. Mr. Patnaik leaned forward and said, in a slightly lowered voice, "Put your pen down." He sat back, gave a small self-conscious laugh, and said, in English, "I want to be off-record."

This was not my first experience with "off-record," but it was the first time I wasn't recording when it occurred. In my prior experiences, it had been a request to turn off the audio recorder, and I had always assumed its intent was relatively obvious: here is some information you might want to know, but I don't want an audio record of myself telling you. But in this case there was already no record of the conversation aside from my notes. I did as he asked, laying my pen in the notebook and closing the cover.

Mr. Patnaik told me a story that was only remarkable to me in retrospect, when I learned that it had already been published in an interview with him. As I learned from subsequent internet searches, it had been published in several newspapers when it occurred about fifteen years prior, but even in the same year of my interview with him, just prior to our meeting by several months, he told the story in an interview published on a local news website. It was again published in another local online news site profile of him the following year. I won't give the details of the account here in order to honor his request, and because, having been published, it

would make his identity obvious, but I can say that it was a personal story about his journalism career. Since he was telling me something already in the public record, and not just in the public record, but in a published interview with him, why did Mr. Patnaik ask to go “off-record”? The first and most obvious aspect of the off-record request is that it set the story apart from the rest of the conversation by making it seem especially powerful, even a bit dangerous. What would happen if I wrote it down? What would happen if word of this story got out? These were the questions I asked myself at the time. The immediate effect of the request for being “off record” was the heightened affect of the conversation. *This* would be important. I leaned forward; my heart sped up. While such an effect might be secondary to the actual desire for risky information to be sourced anonymously in most cases of “off-record” requests, in this situation the prior publication of the information in named, biographical interviews with this journalist suggest that this secondary, interactional aspect of the “off-record” frame was its primary goal. During the interview, I assumed that the information was just as he implied, somehow dangerous, and that he was letting me in on an important, private moment in his life.

Erving Goffman included “off-the-record” frame shifts in his account of conversational dramaturgy, emphasizing exactly the ambiguity that I experienced in the interview with Mr. Patnaik. Goffman was especially interested in how frame shifts like “off-the-record” may be used as interactional tactics to shape others’ credulity and attention in their search for evidence. The bracketing of a period of talk as “off-the-record” may involve either of Goffman’s “follies”: An informant who says that something is “off-the-record” with the intention of directing the information seeker’s attention away from it has naively failed to appreciate that marking

something as concealed or out-of-bounds may intensify interest in it, which Goffman calls the “informant’s folly.” Alternatively, the information seeker who presumes that such a frame shift removes any fabrication and thus provides credible “inside information” may be subject to the “insider’s folly,” that is, naiveté regarding the fabrication of fabrication’s absence. Both of these follies draw attention to the performance of non-performing, to the concealment that can be involved in shifts to frames defined by their sincerity. Indeed, looking back on it now I have the uncomfortable even embarrassed feeling of having been taken in by a sleight of hand, as if I been duped into believing that I was hearing a secret.

Yet when it comes to Odishan interactional ethics, my feelings of embarrassment are not always valid sources of information. Rather than duping me, based on the above accounts of contact management, a more probable interpretation is that Mr. Patnaik sought to demonstrate for me his commitment to appropriate interactional selflessness within the interview. The off-record moment was the reveal of his true intentions, his sincere orientation to assisting me and to fulfilling his role in the interview. Rather than an attempt to hide from me the truth, it was the indication of a sincere performance of an interview ideal. Given our other interactions, I believe that it was out of kindness that he sought to help me have the kind of interview that journalists want.

In social interaction in Bhubaneswar, such reveals of intentions are always subject to framing by interpretations of a person’s interests. In karma theory, the most selfless intention is that which does not even seek the cosmological fruits of one’s own selfless actions, similarly, evaluations of interests are judgments of what a person is likely to be seeking as an outcomes of

interactions. Whereas intention is something that communicators themselves perform or reveal, judgments of a communicator's interests are largely outside of an individual's control. Interests are contextual evaluations of those aspects of a person's situation, outside of any individual interaction, that are likely to motivate an that person, such as economic situation, kinship, caste, political alliances, work or occupation, relationships to others, and broader knowledge about an individual's character and past actions. Interests are precisely what one can learn from mutual contacts. In practice, the role of interests in interaction is nuanced and contextual, largely mattering depending upon what the interests are taken to be.

The interpretive role of interests is illustrated by local reactions to a news story that was a frequent point of conversation in my 2010 research. This case demonstrates that individuals are not always negatively judged for selfish attention to their own interests, especially when there is a compelling outside force such as poverty and, as this case shows, the influence of vested interests. Jitu Jakasika was a member of the Dongria Kondh community on Niyamgiri, a mountain in Rayagada district that was the epicenter of conflicts between Vedanta Aluminium's bauxite mine and refinery project and the indigenous tribal group who lived there. Between 2008 and 2010, the resistance to the Vedanta plant in Rayagada was one of the most active social movements in Odisha, and it drew national and international attention. In 2008, Jakesika was not yet 20 and, unlike many Dongria Kondh, he spoke excellent Odia and had a flair for speaking quotable lines. During Rahul Gandhi's 2008 visit to Rayagada in support of the tribal resistance movement, Jakasika served as his interpreter. He quickly became the spokesman for the Dongria Kondh resistance. Then, in September 2010, Jakasika appeared at a rally supporting the ruling

BJD party and spoke in favor of allowing Vedanta's mining. Jakasika's "about face" (Bijay Chaki, *New Indian Express*, Sep. 4, 2010, p. 2) made headlines in both the major English-language and Odia-language newspapers.

In a discussion with several mainstream (not activist) journalists at a teashop several weeks later, one of them brought up Jakasika's change. There was a general shaking of heads. One journalist pointed out that Jakasika would have had no way to resist Vedanta and the government, and there was some disagreement about yet another spokesman for the Dongria Kondh—was he actually resisting? There was a question about whether any Dongria Kondh could truly resist. Another said that it was to be expected: hadn't everyone been turned? Yes, said another tea drinker, laughing: we (incl.) have all been turned. Similarly, Jakasika's change of perspective came up in several interviews in the fall of 2010, and each time the speaker used the story to show how powerful it was to take a stand in Odisha. "They are paying for this boy's schooling now," said one interviewee, "he is just acting in his interests." In contrast, activists and alternative-media journalists felt that Jakasika's shift in political alignments must have been the result of threats to him or his family and thus a sign of the power of vested interests, which was obvious because his actual interests could only be to protect the sacred mountain of the Dongria Kondh. But those journalists who believed that Jakasika was following his interests by accepting the government-corporate offer to pay for his schooling and, probably, many speculated, to provide him with a career in state politics, found his actions fully transparent.

In casual talk, the concern about the relationship between intention and interest is often enunciated as a problem of form, and especially as a problem of whether a person is *sidhā* or

straight. Straightness describes a lack of intentional manipulation to hide actual intentions, and it is a highly valued moral quality. From the perspective of the performer or communicator, however, straightness can be challenging to achieve. One way to do it is to follow closely the role-assigned performances of self, such as the expected comportments of a daughter-in-law or a high-status politician. Indeed, this seems to be exactly the current Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's skill, as described in Chapter 1, which is enabled by the fact that he does not socialize much with local residents, and therefore his performances do not have many opportunities for disruption. Yet not all roles or positions have a clear script that can function across all of a person's interactions.

This dissertation has traced the development of multiple scripts for journalists' ethical selves through multiple historical and contemporary contexts. In the discussion of contact cultivation above, the challenge for journalists is not only to show that they are straight or transparent, with ethical intentions in the context of potentially known interests. The challenge for journalists is to show that they are *sidhā* while also fulfilling multiple expectations of their social roles. This potential shift in social expectations when interacting with people whom one does not know well can be managed by social forms that are indeterminate, that can be interpreted as appropriate for a range of social interactions. For an aspirational journalist such as Prakash, care to perform such indeterminacy is necessary in interactions with senior or higher-status individuals. He must perform his socially appropriate role of being lower status and address the contact in a higher status role; this is not only achieved through terms of respect, but also through respect for the appropriate media, time, space, and social contexts of his

communication with the contact. To cultivate contacts who will help cultivate more contacts, a person must always demonstrate social appropriateness and, if possible, tact. At the same time, in order to take advantage of the opportunities raised by the contacts, and in order to be seen as a journalist, Prakash must be able to step outside of the social role circumscribed by his status. Only fulfilling expectations of his low status can communicate that he is not a serious journalist, or not able to interact on the same level with his higher status colleagues, a quality that would be necessary for their development of an appropriate social relationship. Ultimately, for a boy from village Odisha like Prakash, too much respect for status differentials may signal his home state's backwardness and his lack of global modernity, while too little respect for the appropriate differentials can equally signal his lack of metropolitan belonging or a more personal problem of unethical intentions (overrun by personal interest). Journalists from Odisha like Prakash run the risk of being dismissed entirely by his higher status contacts, and indeed, though unfairly, this happens.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have suggested that we consider the contact as a form of sociality that has developed at the interstices of relational knowledge about people and stranger sociality. Grounding the discussion in Goffman's (1967 [1955]) discussion of face-work, I described the work and media of contact cultivation and management from the perspective of Odisha. I argued that the ethics of facework among contacts require the management of intentions, interests, and

the forms of social interaction, suggesting that formal or semiotic indeterminacy is a method of managing the interpersonal risk of moral multiplicity. At the same time, indeterminacy itself may run the risk of seeming to be hiding something, of being insincere or lacking transparency of intentions. Occasional moments of self-reveal serve as methods to present one's own interactional intentions and commitment to participating in an interaction. This distinction between relational knowledge and stranger sociality echoes with the distinction that I described in the Introduction between simple societies and complex societies. Here I have explored one way to understand the differences of social organizing and evaluating in Bhubaneswar, such as those that Bailey (1963) described in his account of Odishan politics in the 1950s, that does not rely on oppositional categories of society or on evolutionary models of human progress, but which also acknowledges that there are differences in how people understand and construct their relationships with each other, and that these differences matter.

Conclusion

Bhubaneswar's evenings are the city's sweetest time. Even on hot days, the breeze picks up as the sun sets. *Pabana* is the word for this breeze, and it has always sounded onomatopoeic to me, the bilabials mimicking the soft puffs of air that land on cheeks and ears as late nappers emerge from their houses. Evening is also the most social time in Odisha. Businesses that closed for mid-day now open, tea stalls crowd with middle-aged men discussing the day's events, and school children are released into the streets for a romp before settling into their studies for the night. In the city, traffic picks up and the share-autos fill to the brim, just barely making it around corners without spilling out a rider or two. If I was home on these days, and not sealed in my room for fieldnote writing, I liked to go to my neighbor's home when I heard the TV go on. Awake from their naps in a single square bed in their one-room house, my friends' two daughters would prepare for their daily social visit to the nearby park with excitement. The TV would be turned to one of the Odia-language cable channels, whichever was showing the best Odia film that day, and the girls would dance to the film songs, mimicking the heroines and striking poses for me as their mother tried to get them dressed and coiffed. Chattering away about the film or their day at the Odia school down the street, or their plans for our adventures together, the girls would finally

settle on outfits and shove the rest of the pile of *phrāks* (frocks) gathered on the floor back into their aluminum chest, letting the top drop with a thump.

One evening I walked down the lane with the girls and their mother to the little park where the children played in the evening. It was already dusk, later than usual for the park, and as we walked past the fenced and manicured park maintained by the Bhubaneswar Development Authority in the name of the Chief Minister—it was an especially nice park because a member of the state legislature lived across the street from it—we could hear the children shouting. The girls ran ahead and their mother and I trailed slowly behind. When we had finally made our way through the small metal gate, across the bricked path, and through the garden to the group of mothers, the girls were already enmeshed in the ongoing game. I made small talk for several minutes with the mothers—most of whom worked in houses around the posh neighborhood where I rented a room, though two of the usual group of six stayed home with their young children because their husbands had office jobs—until I guessed I could politely detach from them and join the game.

The kids were in the midst of tag. A boy about age 7, on the older end of the pack, was racing after the other big kids but they kept jumping behind bushes. In the near-dark they were hard to catch. I was about to join in to take the heat off of him because he looked increasingly like he would cry, when I finally took in what the other children were calling him. “Sambadika! Sambadika!” They were calling him a journalist! I grabbed one of the girls as she ran past and asked her to clarify, were they really calling him a journalist? What was going on? She explained that “it was just a game” and that the boy was a journalist and had to try to get the kids, who kept

hiding. But why journalist, I tried to clarify. “He’s the chaser!” she said, shrugged out of my arms, and ran off.

While the reason behind the children’s game may have reflected my own role in their lives, given that I was collecting and reading newspapers and meeting journalists, it also reflected their own more general exposure to journalism on the cable channels, in movies, and through the newspapers themselves. They would not have played tag as a journalist without the journalist already existing for them as a generic cultural figure. Such a game involving the cultural figure of the journalist may seem like a small thing from a national perspective, where journalists have been an independent professional identity for over a century. But from a longer historical perspective in Odisha, it is remarkable. When F.G. Bailey studied Odishan politics in 1959, he wrote that “newspapers hardly reach the peasant” and that they were largely irrelevant to politics, as demonstrated by the fact that “up to now no politician in Orissa has been made or broken by what voters have read about him in the newspapers” (Bailey 1963, 108-9). Until the 1980s, journalists were largely indistinguishable as an occupation in Odisha. Those who published and produced newspapers were either primarily literary men or politicians—or both. Now, the journalist is distinct enough to give shape to a child’s game among working class young children. Indeed, the families of these children are exactly the aspirational audience whom *Dharitri* seeks to cultivate. Their parents moved from their home villages to Bhubaneswar for employment and better opportunities, and the children are living those opportunities as they attend private schools and spend their evenings with private tutors.

The transition that began in the 1980s with the “professionalization” and “modernization” of Odisha’s newspapers, which shifted the focus to the infrastructures of circulation and profit generation, has continued. During the years of my research from 2007-2010, Odisha went from having one locally-owned cable television channel to a diverse group. The first private Odia-language channel was begun by Andhra Pradesh-based Eanadu Television [ETV] in 2001. In 2006, Bhubaneswar-based Ortel Communications began OTV, which was initially a multi-purpose cable channel—the only locally owned private channel at the beginning of my research. In 2008, OTV launched Tarang as an entertainment channel and its flagship channel became a 24x7 News and Current Events Channel. In 2009, *Sambad*’s sister channel Kanak TV established what it called the first 24x7 Odia News and Current Events channel; another 24x7 news channel Naxatra followed shortly, and then Focus Odisha, Kamyab TV (later Odisha TV), STV Samachar—all in the News and Current Affairs sector. Along with news channels came more entertainment as well as devotional channels, and entertainment production company Sarthak launched a satellite television entertainment channel in 2010. Perhaps the true sign that the cable television market in Odisha has transitioned to profitable is the introduction, in February 2014, of Zee Media Corporation’s Odia language channel, Zee Kalinga.

Cable television is changing the demographics and culture of journalism in Odisha. Previously journalism was an occupation chosen by would-be poets and politicians—almost entirely upper caste men—and it depended on the manual labor of print craftsmen who were demographically distinct. Cable television’s production features, including as its entire reliance on computers and other professional-class technologies, its aesthetic preference for young

women in on-screen roles, and perhaps most of all its daytime production schedule, makes video journalism a much friendlier field for women than print journalism has ever been in Odisha. Though infrastructural challenges will continue to limit and reshape cable growth, including bottlenecks around the limited and therefore expensive distribution options (“Two More TV Channels,” *OdishaTime.com*, Dec 7, 2013), cable television is already reshaping the media production profession in Odisha more generally.

Within newspapers, two major areas of growth since my research merit discussion. The first is the widely heralded growth of electronic media and internet news. While the major newspapers all have downloadable editions as well as daily updated online news now, there is little evidence that local readership is shifting to computer screens, and it seems to draw readers largely from non-resident Odias. Like the pre-1980 newspapers, for whom production was impeded by the cost and labor of Odia-type production, Odia online newspapers are similarly impeded by their unique script, which makes it hard even for Odia-readers to find articles related to their interests. Without the linguistically biased infrastructure of the internet that allows the searching and circulating of news content separate from the newspaper itself, Odia newspaper online growth may be limited.

Savvy to the limitations of Odia’s profitability online, shortly after my research concluded *Sambad’s* and *Dharitri’s* respective parent companies each began publishing an English language daily newspaper and a frequently-updated English language local news website. *Sambad’s* sister publication is called the *Sun Times*, *Dharitri’s* the *Orissa Post*. It is unclear if these will be profitable or how long they will last, but for the time being it has disrupted the

diagramming of language onto ownership structure among Bhubaneswar's print media producers. And ownership structure has dominated: according to reports from friends, local journalists seem to perceive all locally-owned media with the same ambivalence I observed during my research.

Social Change and Semiotic Indeterminacy

I began this dissertation with a discussion of moral multiplicity. I argued that rapid social change in Odisha had produced a situation in which there were many methods for evaluating the rightness of human action, and that as a result individuals—like my friend Prakash—managed the coexistence of many perspectives on their obligations and responsibilities. Sometimes these coexisting moral perspectives are hierarchically nested, while other times they simply compete. What is challenging about this moral multiplicity is that it can be both internal and external—it can involve a single person feeling many things with conviction, as well as many people feeling many things with conviction. Because journalism is precisely about communicating with many people, exploring the coexistence of many ways of constructing and evaluating ethical journalism could, I have proposed, be a strategy for thinking about moral multiplicity generally.

My discussion of the situation as “moral multiplicity” may strike some as naive or apolitical. While I have adopted this language as a means of investigation in a dissertation, I have not intended to suggest that all ways of understanding or evaluating the world are equally valued or peacefully experienced. Throughout the analysis, I have emphasized how moral multiplicity is

always a part of historical transformations and power struggles. As described above, two of the most powerful historical transformations in Odisha have been the process of colonialism and its effects and the more recent process of neoliberalization. Through these historical transformations have emerged new understandings of politics, social participation, and moral selves.

We can see the particular impacts of these transformations through the lens of regionalism, which this dissertation did not address directly but which is a significant underlying concern throughout. By regionalism here I simply mean the use of some formation of belonging and identity that is geographically enunciated but not coincident with the nation-state. While such social movements can take the form of sub-nationalisms, the Odishan case contributes a different sort of case. As Sheldon Pollock writes in his discussion of vernacular precolonial literary cultures, “it is hard to imagine alternative cultural-political meanings of [the rise of vernacular languages] when it has come to be, as it everywhere has, locked into national narratives” (Pollock 1998). Yet alternative forms exist. In colonial Odisha, linguistic- and regional-centric organizing did not seek political sovereignty but rather administrative recognition. This became a significant feature of Odishan politics in the 1920s and 1930s, when regionalists came into conflict with the emerging nationalists. We could see this conflict as evidence of an imagination of political relationships taking shapes other than the nation-state.

Now, despite the geo-politics and linguistic ideologies of state politics, the regional inequalities and the coastal region’s dominance echo with historical fissures across political modes. Many of the ongoing political issues deterritorialize the state, such as anti-mining social movements, adivasi/tribal identity and politics, and Naxalism. Indeed, Odishan cultural politics

over the last century has exhibited a constant tension between the nation-state's logics and alternative cultural-political meanings of region. Within this, the major local newspapers work largely as territorializing forces, reproducing the coastal region's dominance, publishing from the coast and without much formal recognition of intra-state variations in identity and language, even at the same time that circulation growth relies on content localization. Similarly, circulation innovations largely reproduce state boundaries, thanks to the local relationship between newspapers and politics as well as the national regulations and institutions providing the infrastructure to make circulation profitable. Yet this all occurs within a geography that is being dramatically revalued, specifically by global capital extraction industries and more generally by the broader cultural transformations of globalization.

Finally, within these transformations in Odisha, I have proposed that there are some emergent practices for managing the multiple perspectives on ethical social participation that have resulted from Odisha's rapid and unequal social changes. One of these is what I have called semiotic indeterminacy. Semiotic indeterminacy is based in an understanding of meaning making and the semiotic process as a material activity occurring in time (Keane 2003). Human actions interpret the actions that have come before, but such interpretations are conditioned or restricted by aspects or affordances of the object or action that they are interpreting, as well as its specific contexts. Through discussions of the ethical evaluations of writing practices, newsroom work relations, and self-presentations in contact sociality, I have suggested that one method for managing the plurality of ethical interpretations is to act in ways that can allow for positive moral evaluations according to many potential interpretations. While many have studied the role

of semiotic determinacy or hegemony as a feature of power relations, this study contributes an ethnographic account of an alternative or opposite process. Hopeful scholars have often seen in indeterminacy the sheer agency of the downtrodden, such as “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1992) or rebellion (Guha 1999 [1983]). In this study, indeterminacy is a historically conditioned and methodical activity in human life that is socially distributed, and no more a feature of sheer human agency than anything else, even as its reflexive experience in Odisha echoes with the agencies of others.

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