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**Radio for the Millions: Hindi-Urdu Broadcasting at the Crossroads of  
Empire**

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**Radio for the Millions: Hindi-Urdu Broadcasting at the Crossroads of  
Empire**

**by**

**Isabel Huacuja, A.B., M.A.**

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## **Dedication**

For Timsal and Amalia

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# **Radio for the Millions: Hindi-Urdu Broadcasting at the Crossroads of Empire**

Isabel Huacuja, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisors: Indrani Chatterjee and Gail Minault

“Radio for the Millions” is a transnational history of radio broadcasting in Hindi and Urdu in South Asia. It focuses on specific moments of intense cultural and political change when debates about broadcasting came to the forefront across the late colonial period through the immediate post-independence era (1927-1971). Following the outbreak of World War II, British colonial administrators, despite their initial distrust of radio, turned to the new medium in a belated and improvised attempt to garner Indian support for the Allied Forces. In the decades following independence in 1947, the new leaders of India and Pakistan similarly attempted to foster allegiance to governments and to fashion national identities through state-run broadcasting networks—AIR and Radio Pakistan, respectively. Both imperial and national radio campaigns, however, met with mixed success. Sometimes, they were rejected by listeners altogether. Other times, government radio projects won immediate success, only to politically backfire soon after.

British imperial and later Indian and Pakistani state-run stations, however, were not the only ones on the airwaves. During WWII, pro-Axis and revolutionary stations,



including Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Radio, but also radio programs in Hindi-Urdu from Japan and Germany, filled India's airwaves bringing news of the war from an Axis perspective to listeners in India. After independence, commercial stations such as Radio Ceylon changed the soundscape of the post-colonial subcontinent, making film music an integral part of people's everyday lives. In the following pages, I argue that it was these stations, which contested state-run radio's linguistic, cultural, and political campaigns, that won the hearts and minds of listeners in South Asia. "Radio for the Millions" demonstrates that the medium of radio was never merely a tool of the colonial government or its Indian and Pakistani successors, and highlights the varied ways in which the medium not only escaped governments' grip, but also made it possible for broadcasters and listeners alike to build lasting connections across state-imposed borders.

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	viii
Table of Figures .....	xi
Note on Transliteration .....	xii
Introduction: Tuning in to a Radio History .....	1
FRAMEWORK .....	4
ORGANIZATION .....	6
EXTANT SCHOLARSHIP .....	10
INTERVENTIONS .....	15
SOURCES .....	20
<b>PART I: RADIO NEWS, INDIAN NATIONALISTS, AND WWII .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Chapter One: News on the Air .....	23
BROADCAST BEGINNINGS .....	26
LIONEL FIELDEN AND AIR .....	30
THE DISEASE OF AXIS RADIO .....	33
RUMOR AND RADIO .....	42
AIR NEWS .....	46
CONCLUSION .....	54
Chapter Two: “Quisling Radio” .....	56
FROM CALCUTTA TO BERLIN .....	58
WAR ON INDIA’S DOORSTEP .....	66
A RADIO CAMPAIGN FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA .....	70
AIR PROPAGANDA AGAINST BOSE .....	72
LISTENING AS POLITICAL ACTION .....	75
RUMOR IN LIFE AND DEATH .....	79
CONCLUSION .....	87

**PART II: MUSIC IN POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIA.....89**

Chapter Three: An Auditory Utopia .....89

DEFINING THE CLASSICAL .....93

THE GHOST OF MUSIC PAST.....95

THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF MUSIC.....100

RADIO'S POWER AND THE CITIZEN-LISTENER .....103

PROGRAMS AND REFORMS .....107

*VĀDYA VRIND*: CREATING A NATIONAL ORCHESTRA.....113

THE CRITIQUE OF FILM SONGS .....118

FILM MUSIC AS THE MUSIC OF THE COMMON MAN .....122

*SUGAM SANGĪT*: A SUBSTITUTE FOR HINDI FILM SONGS.....126

CONCLUSION.....129

Chapter Four: King of the Airways .....131

RADIO FOR DISILLUSIONED SOLDIERS.....135

COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING ACROSS FRONTIERS.....141

BUILDING A LINK TO INDIA .....146

BUILDING INTIMACY WITH LISTENERS.....152

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF SONGS.....154

MAKING FRIENDS WITH PLAYBACK SINGERS.....158

A GARLAND OF SONGS.....166

CONCLUSION.....177

**PART III: DRAMATIC RADIO AND THE 1965 INDO-PAK WAR .....179**

Chapter Five: Seventeen Days of Drama.....179

1965 INDO-PAKISTAN WAR IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....184

MAKING A RADIO WAR .....186

NUR JEHAN'S WAR SONGS .....192

DRAMA DAYS.....197

*MAULVĪ JĪ* AND AUDIOPOSITION .....199

<i>NIDĀ-E-HAQ</i> : A TALE OF TRANSMISSION .....	203
LANGUAGE AS TRANSMISSION.....	209
BROKEN HEARTS AND THE END OF RADIO WAR.....	214
CONCLUSION.....	216
Conclusion: <i>Āvāz De Kahān Hai</i> .....	218
PROJECT ROOTS.....	220
NEW DIRECTIONS.....	222
Bibliography .....	224
ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES .....	224
BOOKS AND ARTICLES .....	225
RECORDINGS (NON-ARCHIVAL) and TALKS .....	235

## Table of Figures

Figure 1	Advertisement in the <i>Indian Listener</i> .....	38
Figure 2	Advertisement in the <i>Indian Listener</i> .....	39
Figure 3	Supplement to the <i>Indian Listener</i> , July 22, 1942.....	40
Figure 4:	Supplement to the <i>Indian Listener</i> , June 7, 1942.....	41
Figure 5:	Leaflet distributed to encourage people to tune to AIR news broadcasts. ..	47
Figure 6:	Schedule of news broadcasts .....	48
Figure 7:	Poster advertisement for the film <i>Baiju Bawra</i> .....	132
Figure 8:	Picture of Radio SEAC transmitter in Ekala.....	138
Figure 9:	Picture of Clifford Dodd at Work in his office in Colombo .....	144
Figure 10:	Picture of Radio Ceylon's studios in Colombo .....	144
Figure 11:	Picture of Radio Ceylon Hindi Film song gramophone library . .....	149
Figure 12:	Advertisement for Murphy radios .....	161
Figure 13:	Advertisement for Geetmala's 1976 yearly program. ....	164
Figure 14:	Picture of pānwāllāh in Kolkata. ....	166
Figure 15:	Section of J.J. Kulkarni's diary. ....	173
Figure 16:	Map of East and West Pakistan.....	183
Figure 17:	Picture of Aqeel Ahmed (Mahashay) and S. A. Ameen (Mian) .....	206

## Note on Transliteration

I use a sound-based transliteration system for Hindi-Urdu that emphasizes pronunciation over spelling. I do not transliterate any names of people or cities and instead use the most common spelling conventions in roman script. Below are the Hindi and Urdu transliteration charts I followed. For Punjabi words, I used the same transliteration system as Urdu but add *ṇ* for retroflex n sound. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

### Urdu

ا	a	آ	ā	ب	b	پ	p	ت	t
ٹ	ṭ	ث	s	ج	j	چ	c	ح	h
خ	x	د	d	ڄ	ḍ	ڇ	z	ر	r
ڙ	ṛ	ذ	z	ڙ	z	س	s	ش	ś
ص	s	ض	z	ط	t	ظ	z	ع	a
غ	ḡ	ف	f	ق	q	ک	k	گ	g
ل	l	م	m	ن	n	و	u/v	ہ	h
ی	e/ī	ے	e/ie						

### Hindi

अ	a	आ	ā	इ	i	ई	ī	उ	u
ऊ	ū	ए	e	ऐ	ae	ओ	o	औ	au
क	k	ख	kh	ग	g	घ	gh	ङ	n
च	c	छ	ch	ज	j	झ	jh	ञ	n
ट	ṭ	ठ	ṭh	ड	ḍ	ढ	ḍh	ण	n
त	t	थ	th	द	d	ध	dh	न	n
प	p	फ	ph	ब	b	भ	bh	म	m
य	y	र	r	ल	l	व	v	श	ś
ष	ś	स	s	ह	h				

## Introduction: Tuning in to a Radio History

In May 2007, the seventy-five-year-old Mumbai-based broadcaster Ameen Sayani visited Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> Sayani spoke before the packed Arts Council auditorium in Karachi about his life-long affair with Hindi film songs and his career with Radio Ceylon, a commercial radio station in present-day Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup> Sayani anchored *Binākā Gītmālā*, a radio program that ranked Hindi film songs in order of popularity every week by using various measurements, including letters and gramophone record sales. *Binākā Gītmālā* started in 1952 and ran, with some brief interludes, until 1994, captivating audiences throughout South Asia for four decades and playing an important role in the popularization of Hindi film songs throughout the subcontinent.<sup>3</sup> Sayani charmed the audience with his characteristic energetic greeting of “*bahino aur bhāīyo*” (sisters and brothers), imitated to this day by broadcasters in Pakistan and beyond. When Sayani

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<sup>1</sup>"Hum TV ke progrām meñ Ameen Sayani adākār Nadīm se bāt cīt kar rahe haiñ, (Ameen Sayani talks to actor Nadem in HUM TV's program)." *Navā-e-vaqt*, May 8, 2007; "Pāk bhārat dostī mazbūt rište meñ bandh jāe: Ameen Sayani (Ameen Sayani: May India and Pakistan build a strong relationship)." *Express*, May 8, 2007; "Hum TV's tribute to Ameen Sayani- the legend," *Regional Tunes*, May 7, 2007; "Ameen Sayani ek muddat tak muhabbat kī mālā bunte rahe (For such a long time, Ameen Sayani knitted a garland of love)," *Gateway*, May 9, 2007; "Merī āwāz hī pahcān hai, gar yād rahe (my voice is my identity, if it is memorialized)" *Super Star Dust*, June 2007; "Sayani jaise sadākār ke līye reḍīo āj bhī muntazir (radio is still waiting for an actor like Sayani)," *QVS Audio Video*, June 2007. Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, Sultan Ahmed Arshad Personal Papers. Arshad worked for HUM TV and helped organize Sayani's trip to Karachi. He kindly shared his collection of newspaper and magazine clippings regarding this event with me. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> In this study, I use the term Radio Ceylon to refer specifically to Radio Ceylon's Commercial Hindi Service. Radio Ceylon, however, also had a public service aimed at domestic audiences. I use the name "Radio Ceylon" because Hindi Services broadcasters and listeners referenced the radio service by that name. For more details see Chapter Three, "King of the Airwaves."

<sup>3</sup>Anil Bhargava, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar* (Jaipur: Vangmāyā Prakaśan, 2007), 17. The title of this book can be translated as "*Binākā Gītmālā*'s melodious journey" I discuss this program in detail in Chapter Four. In particular, see the section titled "Garland of Songs."

replayed clips from his old radio programs, some members of the audience cheered enthusiastically while others quietly shed tears, overwhelmed by nostalgia.

Sayani's visit to Karachi and the sensation it caused in Pakistan raises many questions. How and why did this station with Indian broadcasters but based in Lanka,<sup>4</sup> an island beyond the subcontinent, gain popularity in Pakistan? How did the station build such powerful bonds to the Indian film industry in Bombay? What does Radio Ceylon's success tell us about the political and cultural possibilities of radio and about the politics of language in South Asia? What does Radio Ceylon's story tell us about the failures of its rivals—mainly Radio Pakistan and All India Radio (AIR)? Sayani might have only visited Pakistan once, but his voice had long been part of the Pakistani soundscape. This beloved broadcaster's story beckons to a radio history that, like the airwaves that brought his voice to Pakistan, crosses borders. The following pages set out to narrate that story.

"Radio for the Millions" is a transnational history of radio broadcasting in Hindi and Urdu in South Asia. It focuses on specific moments of intense cultural and political change when debates about broadcasting came to the forefront across the late colonial period through the immediate post-independence era (1927-1971). Following the outbreak of World War II, British colonial administrators, despite their initial distrust of radio, turned to the new medium in a belated and improvised attempt to garner Indian support for the Allied Forces. In the decades following independence in 1947, the new

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of my study this country went by a variety of names, including Ceylon in English and Lanka in Sinhala. For purposes of simplicity and to distinguish between the radio station and the country, I use the name Lanka. Except in cases when I am quoting or referring specifically to British accounts of events, where I use the British term Ceylon. In 1972, this country's name was officially changed to Sri Lanka.



leaders of India and Pakistan similarly attempted to foster allegiance to governments and to fashion national identities through state-run broadcasting networks—AIR and Radio Pakistan, respectively. Both imperial and national radio campaigns, however, met with mixed success. Sometimes, they were rejected by listeners altogether. Other times, government radio projects won immediate success, only to politically backfire soon after.

British imperial and later Indian and Pakistani state-run stations, however, were not the only ones on the airwaves. During WWII, pro-Axis and revolutionary stations, including Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Radio, but also radio programs in Hindi-Urdu from Japan and Germany, filled India's airwaves bringing news of the war from an Axis perspective to listeners in India. After independence, commercial stations such as Radio Ceylon changed the soundscape of the post-colonial subcontinent, making film music an integral part of people's everyday lives. In the following pages, I argue that it was these stations, which contested state-run radio's linguistic, cultural, and political campaigns, that won the hearts and minds of listeners in South Asia. "Radio for the Millions" demonstrates that the medium of radio was never merely a tool of the colonial government or its Indian and Pakistani successors, and highlights the varied ways in which the medium not only escaped governments' grip, but also made it possible for broadcasters and listeners alike to build lasting connections across state-imposed borders.

Radio boomed in South Asia, during a time of protracted political turmoil—from the late 1930s to the early 1970s. During this period, which I call the "crossroads of empire," British rule in India came to an end in the face of a mighty nationalist

movement and a changing world. Separate Indian and Pakistani nation-states were born on the eve of independence in August of 1947, but the subcontinent was immersed in a wave of communal violence, whose repercussions were felt for decades to come. These turbulent years were also radio's golden years and constitute the temporal setting of the story I tell.

## **FRAMEWORK**

Rather than organized around national or regional boundaries, "Radio for the Millions" is structured around language groups. I selected stations and networks that broadcast in Hindi and/or Urdu. Some did so to promote a national language (All India Radio and Radio Pakistan), while others sought to appeal to a large transnational population (Axis radio stations, including Azad Hind Radio, and Radio Ceylon).

Hindi and Urdu are North Indian languages with over half a billion speakers throughout South Asia. They share the same grammar and vocabulary of colloquial speech, but are written in different scripts—Hindi in Devanagari and Urdu in Nastaliq—and have developed distinct literary traditions. Literary Urdu borrows words and genres from Persian and Arabic and often has an Islamic orientation, while literary Hindi draws from Sanskrit and is often associated with Hindu traditions. After the 1947 Partition of British India into independent India and Pakistan, Hindi became the national language of India and Urdu of Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi movement in the Nineteenth Century of North India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994); Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhārtendū Harīścandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press,

Scholars of South Asia have long argued that Urdu and Hindi's separate identities were cemented during the communal turmoil that marked the last years of the British Empire.<sup>6</sup> "Partition killed Hindustani," Alok Rai famously noted. Hindustani is the name used to suggest an inclusive language that is neither Hindu Hindi nor Muslim Urdu. Hindustani, as Salman Rushdie put it, is "a colloquial mix of Hindi and Urdu."<sup>7</sup> The main problem with this definition is that nobody seems to agree on what that mixture actually entails—on how many Sanskrit-origin or Persian and Arabic words we can include in a sentence and still call it Hindustani.

Here, I approach Hindustani as contemporaries did: as a "utopian symbol"—a "point of desire."<sup>8</sup> During the height of the nationalist movement, it offered Mohandas K. Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, and other Congress leaders committed to Hindu-Muslim unity as a way to transcend the sticky problem of language and religious identity. Moreover, Hindustani was a "utopian symbol" not only because it was free of religious affiliations, but also because it promised to be a *lingua franca* that would connect speakers of other regional languages without threatening regional tongues and identities.

British administrators also believed radio in Hindustani offered the best way to reach the "masses of India." One government official explained that "two thirds of the native population can understand, even if it cannot speak, Hindustani." Referencing radio

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1997); Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> See studies cited in Footnote 5.

<sup>7</sup> Salman Rushdie, "The Art of Fiction No. 186 Interview with Jack Livings," *The Paris Review* 174 (2005): 107-143. Cited in Madhumita Lahiri, "An Idiom for India: Hindustani and the Limits of the Language Concept," *Interventions*, (2015). [forthcoming]

<sup>8</sup> Alok Rai, "The Persistence of Hindustani," *India International Centre Quarterly* 29, no. 3/4 (2003): 78.

broadcasts specifically, he assured his coworkers that Hindustani was “propitious” for a “large-scale” campaign.<sup>9</sup> British attempts to broadcast in Hindustani were, as we will see, marred by controversy, and after independence, the governments of India and Pakistan promoted Hindi and Urdu, respectively, as emphatically national languages through the medium of radio. However, if we tune to the competing voices on the ether—to the stations that challenged imperial and national agendas—we can “hear” how Hindustani did not “die.” On the airwaves, it remained not only a “utopian symbol” but also a viable project until at least the 1970s.

Axis radio broadcasters, including Subhas Chandra Bose, effectively harnessed Hindustani’s *lingua franca* status. In later years, Radio Ceylon successfully broadcast in a simple version of Hindustani to attract a larger, transnational audience and to appeal to non-native Hindi-Urdu speakers in South Asia. Although these stations had very different politics and agendas, both Axis radio stations and Radio Ceylon were able to deploy Hindustani as a *lingua franca* in part because they lay outside the jurisdiction of imperial and national governments, but also because radio, being an aural medium, could avoid controversies and linguistic barriers of script that literature, for example, could not.

## ORGANIZATION

Instead of presenting a comprehensive history of Hindi and Urdu radio, this study focuses on key moments that illustrate larger social and political changes in South Asian history during the four decades—from the early 1940s to the early 1970s—when radio

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<sup>9</sup> Comments on the report accompanying a dispatch from the secretary to the government of India, February 28, 1934, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence regarding, L/I/1/445, India Office, British Library, London (IO hereafter).

was the primary medium of mass communication in South Asia. This dissertation is centrally concerned with the creating and managing of listening publics. It draws on methodologies developed by media studies scholars who have approached media history by excavating key historical moments.<sup>10</sup>

“Radio for the Millions” consists of three sections. Each section covers a key moment: first, WWII and the peak of the nationalist movement(s) in South Asia; second, the difficult transition years after independence in India and Pakistan; and third, the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, during which the colonial administration, the Indian government, and the Pakistani government turned to the medium of radio to assert their legitimacy or authority. During all of the moments, the role of radio also became a matter of contentious debate. In each of these moments, I first analyze the different governments’ broadcasting aims and policies, and then turn to the most significant challenges to those policies. Moreover, each section focuses on one radio genre. Here, I do not mean to imply that other genres were not important during the period at hand; rather my aim is to ensure I dedicate sufficient space to each of the most influential broadcast genres.

*Part I: Radio News, Indian Nationalists, and WWII*

In Part I, I explain how the war changed the course of radio on the subcontinent.

**Chapter One, “News on the AIR,”** focuses on the first two years of the war and

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<sup>10</sup> Two scholars who approach the study of media by focusing on key historical moments are John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). My approach is also inspired by the work of Brian Larkin, who although an anthropologist by training, is deeply invested in Media Studies debates. See, Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

analyzes both German and British radio broadcasts. Here I also briefly outline the early history of radio in the subcontinent so as to draw attention to the changes that the war engendered. I argue that it was not until after the outbreak of WWII that the central government made a genuine attempt to reach the general population through the medium of radio. This chapter also highlights the importance of radio's connections to oral networks of communication. News first broadcast on the radio traveled via word-of-mouth, enabling radio's influence far beyond those with access to a receiver.

In **Chapter Two, "Quisling Radio,"** I focus on the latter half of the war, and provide a detailed analysis of the Indian revolutionary and Axis-sympathizer Subhas Chandra Bose's radio broadcasts from Germany and Southeast Asia, which constituted British radio's most prominent rival. I analyze how Bose used the medium of radio to reach compatriots and fellow nationalist leaders in India. The radio, I argue, allowed Bose to occupy a position simultaneously inside and outside of Indian affairs. I also pay careful attention to listening practices and maintain that by listening to Bose's broadcasts—as well as the rumor and gossip that surrounded them—many Indians were able to question British accounts of events.

### *Part II: Radio Music and Post-Independence Radio*

In Part II, I turn to the post-colonial era and focus on music broadcasts. In **Chapter Three, "An Auditory Utopia,"** I analyze All India Radio's social uplift programs of the early 1950s and 1960s. The state-run network famously banned the already popular film music and songs and campaigned to promote Indian classical music

traditions as a new “national” culture among the “masses of India.” AIR’s agenda, I argue, failed to attract significant number of listeners to its classical music programs, largely because its administrators mistakenly envisioned their listeners to be easily impressionable and malleable.

In **Chapter Four, “King of the Airways,”** I uncover the story of AIR’s most prominent rival: Radio Ceylon, a commercial station based in Lanka (now Sri Lanka) that played Hindi film songs and became especially popular throughout South Asia after AIR banned film songs. I begin this chapter by tracing Radio Ceylon’s imperial roots and its links to WWII. I also offer a detailed account of the important relationship that developed between the film industry in Bombay and Radio Ceylon, and argue that Radio Ceylon did not merely ensure that film songs circulated on the airwaves—its broadcasters also consciously designed programs that encouraged listeners to integrate songs into their daily lives.

### *Part III: Dramatic Radio and the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War*

In Part III, I return to radio broadcasting during wartime, but focus on radio drama. **Chapter Five: “Seventeen Days of Drama,”** chronicles Radio Pakistan’s broadcasts during the seventeen-day-long 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, the second military conflict between the two countries over Jammu and Kashmir. The national network provided nearly round-the-clock programming—mostly in Urdu—that created an atmosphere of intense national pride in two of Pakistan’s largest metropolises, Karachi and Lahore. Radio plays such as *Nidā-e-Haq* (Voice of Truth) were especially effective

in rallying support for the war and in inciting anti-Indian sentiments. The war and the patriotic broadcasts, however, politically backfired in the years to come as they set the stage for East Pakistan's secession and to the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. A test case for nationalist radio in post-colonial South Asia, the 1965 'radio war' reveals the fault lines running through South Asian nationalisms as well as the endurance of trans-regional audiences across these borders.

### **EXTANT SCHOLARSHIP**

Scholarship on radio in South Asia is startlingly thin. In the early 1990s, David Lelyveld published three pioneering articles on All India Radio. In one article, Lelyveld argues that radio in independent India failed to reach its true potential in great part because it remained loyal to the British centralized system of broadcasting.<sup>11</sup> In a second article, he maintains that both the British administration and later independent India's government unsuccessfully attempted to centralize and standardize Indian music via radio and briefly charts some of the first minister of Information and Broadcasting B.V. Keskar's reforms in the early 1950s.<sup>12</sup> A third article, while not exclusively about radio, agrees with Alok Rai in arguing that Hindustani disappeared from the airwaves after Partition.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David Lelyveld, "Transmitters and Culture: The Colonial Roots of Indian Broadcasting," *South Asian Research* 10, no. 1 (1990): 41-52.

<sup>12</sup> Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All India Radio," *Social Text* (1994): 111-27.

<sup>13</sup> Lelyveld, "Colonial Knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 04 (1993): 665-82.



A few recently published articles have complemented Lelyveld's articles in later years. Joselyn Zivin, for instance, studies the lives and work of British broadcasters in India and argues that their vision of the British Empire diverged from that of typical British civil servants.<sup>14</sup> For the most part, however, Lelyveld's work on radio has remained uncontested since its publication.<sup>15</sup> This dissertation is inspired by Lelyveld's pioneering research, which preceded the recent rise of Radio Studies, but the present work takes a different approach. First, I study AIR alongside Radio Pakistan and other non-national radio stations. Second, while Lelyveld is primarily concerned with AIR as a government-run institution, I am interested in radio as medium of communication—in the connections that radio enabled.

While there are few academic works on radio in South Asia, practitioners—broadcasters, station administrators, and directors—have written extensively about their work. H.R. Luthra's and Nihal Ahmed's monographs chart AIR and Radio Pakistan's institutional histories and serve as excellent references.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, a number of

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<sup>14</sup> Joselyn Zivin, "'Bent': A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," *Past and Present*, no. 162 (1999): 195-220; Zivin, "The Imagined Reign of the Iron Lecturer: Village Broadcasting in Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 03 (1998): 717-38. Stephen Hughes was one of the few scholars who tackled the role on radio as medium of communication, but his article focus on Tamil Nadu exclusively. See, Stephen P. Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002): 445-73.

<sup>15</sup> A few recent articles concerned with the present-day radio industry have charted radio's past, but only cursorily and with the aim of understanding contemporary policies. They have, nonetheless, pointed to the importance of the medium's history. See for example Frederick Noronha, "Who's Afraid of Radio in India?," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 38 (2000): 385-387; Robin Jeffrey, "The Mahatma Didn't like the Movies and Why it Matters Indian Broadcasting Policy, 1920s-1990s," *Global Media and Communication* 2, no. 2 (2006): 204-24. Biswarup Sen, "A New Kind of Radio: FM Broadcasting in India," *Media, Culture & Society* 36, no. 8 (2014): 1084-1099.

<sup>16</sup> H. R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986); Nihal Ahmad, *A History of Radio Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

published memoirs by retired employees from AIR, Radio Pakistan, Radio Ceylon and Azad Hind Radio offer rare access into the overall culture of these organizations and sometimes also provide detailed descriptions of programs.<sup>17</sup> In the following pages, I make ample use of these works.

Radio aficionados remember radio's history with the same enthusiasm as practitioners. I met the seventy-plus-year-olds Srikanth Patel and his wife Saroj Patel from Sangli in Maharashtra, India in the studios of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation in the summer of 2013. They traveled all the way to Sri Lanka with their son to visit the studios of what was once their favorite radio station: Radio Ceylon. This was the couple's first and probably only trip outside of India. As a teenager in the 1950s, Srikanth Patel listened to radio every day and kept a detailed diary of his favorite programs. By contrast, he remembers seeing no more than three complete films in at the movie theatre in his town. In South Asia, as in most of the world, radio was a central facet of the quotidian lives of many, a source of news and a central conduit for entertainment and culture.

Why then, we might ask, is scholarship on radio in South Asia so characteristically thin in contrast with the exceptionally deep vein of scholarly publications on South Asian film? It is not easy to answer why that is so (and this is not

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<sup>17</sup> Some examples include, P. C. Chatterjee, *The Adventure of Indian Broadcasting: A Philosopher's Autobiography* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1998); G. C. Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1965); Kumar Satinder Mullick, *Tangled Tapes: The Inside Story of Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1974); Zulfiqar Bukhari, *Sarguzašt* (ġālib pablišarz, 1995). Gopal Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Doston* (Mumbai Gopal Sharma 2007). Yawar Mehndi, *Yāvar Mehndī*, ed. Ovais Adeeb Ansari (Lahore: Jāvedañ, 1998).

just a South Asian question). As a number of scholars have noted, cinema has the prestige of a higher art form that radio has yet to claim.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, radio's reign as the leading medium of mass communication in South Asia, like elsewhere, was short in comparison to the moving image. Radio was preceded by silent cinema, it had to share the limelight with the talkies, and it was followed by television. Most importantly, as I detail below, sources present a very real challenge: many radio programs went out live and were never recorded. In South Asia, the few surviving recordings are shelved in government-managed archives with bureaucratic barriers to access or are tucked away in the dusty basements and crowded closets of retired broadcasters and radio aficionados. The result is that, while radio's past seems to have been everywhere, its record is nowhere to be "seen."<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, it was the difficulty of accessing radio sources, and not just the lack of studies of radio, that led Michele Hilmes to describe radio as the neglected medium in 1997.<sup>20</sup> In recent years previously inaccessible recordings have been archived and digitized, in great part due to the scholars' persistence. Scholars have also learned to search for radio's traces in unconventional places and to make do with limited sources. In the past decade, studies of radio have grown into an exciting field in its own right that includes places as distinct as Turkey, Mexico, Egypt, Israel, and Palestine. Radio Studies

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<sup>18</sup> See for example, Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, "Introduction," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1-15.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 10, Kindle edition.

<sup>20</sup> Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), ix.

scholars have explored how radio molds collective identities and forms listening publics.<sup>21</sup> They have analyzed the medium's links to politics as well as its many artistic contributions, and have provided new theoretical tools for "reading" radio broadcasts with the same care and detail that we might approach written texts or moving and still images.<sup>22</sup> In the following pages, I draw on many insights of this rich body of scholarship.

Despite the diversity of regions studied and methodological approaches employed, many works on radio share a common framework: the nation. Some Radio histories explicitly link radio to nationalism, arguing that radio helped build imagined national communities<sup>23</sup> or that radio networks supported the state's interest.<sup>24</sup> Others use the nation-state as the point of departure and/or arrival without necessarily making an explicitly nationalist argument.<sup>25</sup> Yet radio's waves have long transcended borders. To

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<sup>21</sup> Two excellent works that explore how radio fosters collective identities include Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting* and Douglas, *Listening in*. For examples of more theoretical works about radio's listening publics, see Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-mediated Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005) and Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), Kindle edition.

<sup>22</sup> An excellent example of a work that develops new theoretical tools to "read" broadcasts is Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> For example, see Douglas, *Listening in* and Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952*.

<sup>24</sup> Two good examples are Asa Briggs, *The BBC: the First Fifty Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Meltem Ahiska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London: IB Tauris, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Examples of work that doesn't make an explicitly nationalist argument, but nonetheless holds the nation as a guiding framework include Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama*. The literature that links radio to nationalism is vast. Some key works include Hilmes, *Radio Voices*; Douglas, *Listening in*; Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920-1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000); Derek Jonathan Penslar, "Transmitting Jewish Culture: Radio

the rich work on radio and nationalism in Mexico, for instance, we must add more scholarly and analytical studies about the Spanish language stations on the US-Mexico borderlands, whose radio waves crossed the borders, while many people on both sides of the divide, to their regret, could not. We might ask how these stations sought to—and did—reach beyond borders and explore the cultural, political, and commercial ramifications of creating regional and cross-national “listening publics” on the air.

On the one hand, the national framework cannot be jettisoned: the vast majority of stations in this era *were* funded and run by the state, and unabashedly projected state (imperial or national) interests. On the other, the unboundedness of the air was one of the constituent features of radio broadcasting, one that fueled the ambitions of its magnates and practitioners; it is this aspect of radio’s history that has been neglected. By framing my study around language groups, and by studying both Hindi and Urdu (and Hindustani) sources, I set out to tell a different story of radio—one whose boundaries were not pre-determined by the contours of the nation-state.

## INTERVENTIONS

“Radio for the Millions” makes four other significant scholarly interventions. The first two speak specifically to the historiography of South Asia; the last two engage with other fields. First, “Radio for the Millions” argues for an alternative periodization of

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in Israel,” *Jewish Social Studies* 10, no. 1 (2003): 1-29; and Ahiska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting*. An important challenge to romanticized nationalist radio histories has been the recent work on Black-oriented radio. See, for example, Brian Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 1999).

South Asian history. Following the pioneering work of Vazira Zamindar on Partition and its aftermath, this dissertation considers the late colonial and immediate post-colonial periods together.<sup>26</sup> Until very recently, historians had considered the postcolonial period the territory of political science, sociology, and anthropology.<sup>27</sup> This has promoted an understanding of India's independence from British rule as the apex or culmination of 5,000 years of civilization, dating as far back as the Harappa civilization in the Indus Valley. This view not only aggrandizes the importance of both the nation-state and the British Empire, but more dangerously, it also presents these two categories as separate, opposing ideas. Empire and nation, however, were never separate entities, but rather byproducts of each other, intimately intertwined.<sup>28</sup>

“Radio for the Millions” highlights the significant continuity between colonial and postcolonial radio. Both colonial and postcolonial governments owned and managed some of the same national networks. At the same time, during the years that marked the “crossroads of empire,” listeners tuned to foreign radio stations that challenged colonial and national radio's agendas. As Biswarup Sen remarks, it was not until the 1980s with

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<sup>26</sup> Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, Cultures of history (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Ramchandra Guha was also one of the first historians to tackle the postcolonial. Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> I am not alone in making this claim. Srirupa Roy makes a similar point in Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Mrinalini Sinha made a similar point during a talk. Mrinalini Sinha, “The Abolition of Indenture: Between Empire and Nation.” Colloquium, SOAS University, London, UK, May 28, 2013.

the growth of local FM broadcasting that radio stations throughout South Asia embarked on a very different course from their colonial predecessors.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, this study challenges the standard periodization of South Asian history by positing WWII and the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War as defining moments in South Asian history, shifting our attention away from the usual focus on the 1947 Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh War. My aim here is not to deny the importance of these two very influential developments, but rather to point to the importance of WWII and the seemingly insignificant 1965 Indo-Pakistan War in the region. As Tim Harper, Christopher Bayly, and Indivar Kamtekar have shown, it was not only the might of Gandhi's nationalist movement but also the war and its effects that rendered old forms of imperialism increasingly obsolete, and that hastened British departure from India.<sup>30</sup> A study of radio in South Asia makes the war's influence on the region, if not more visible, certainly more resonant. This study also shows how the 1965 Indo-Pak War set the stage for the breakup of Pakistan that was to follow in 1971 and the failure of Pakistan as a Muslim homeland—a homeland that, as Philip Oldenburg puts it, had not been “sufficiently imagined.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sen, "A New Kind of Radio: FM Broadcasting in India," 1084.

<sup>30</sup> In particular see the following works: Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Harvard University Press, 2007). Indivar Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939-1945," *Past and Present* (2002): 187-221 and Kamtekar, "The Shiver of 1942.": 81-102.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Oldenburg, "'A Place Insufficiently Imagined': Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no. 04 (1985): 711-33.

Second, by looking at developments in both India and Pakistan (and to a lesser degree also in Sri Lanka), this study challenges the division in scholarship that mirrors the partition of the subcontinent along national lines.<sup>32</sup> Pakistan and India need to be studied together. One of the aims of this study is to bring Pakistan back into the fold of South Asia and to step away from the trend to relegate Pakistan to the Islamic world. In *The Long Partition*, Zamindar follows the “divided” Muslim families from Karachi to Delhi and back again so as to tell a transnational story of Partition and its impact on the region. In the subsequent pages, I too follow the radio’s waves, whose *boundaries* were determined not by the physical borders imposed by newly-formed governments, but by the strength of transmitters and radio receivers and by the programming preferences of listeners.

The third and fourth contributions have to do with Radio Studies. As mentioned earlier, by deliberately stepping out of the nation-state framework that has guided so many studies of radio, “Radio for the Millions” hopes to invite more transnational histories of radio. More importantly, however, a study of radio in South Asia challenges our understanding of how people *listen* to the radio and how the medium reaches listeners by pointing to the importance of public and collective radio listening practices.

There is a growing body of scholarship that addresses the “publicness” of listening. We now know, for instance, that the “voice of the Führer” echoed through city

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, the latest post-colonial studies: Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*; Alyssa Ayres, *Speaking like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle edition.



centers and speakers in Nazi Germany<sup>33</sup> and that radio audiences in towns of Belgium and France gathered to listen (and sing) collectively at the liberation.<sup>34</sup> Yet scholars continue to treat these as “historical instances of collective listening”<sup>35</sup> rather than habitual listening practices. In an innovative study of listening practices in Germany, the US, and Britain, Kate Lacey concludes that the “story of mediated listening across the long twentieth century has been dominated by people listening to both recorded and broadcast sounds in private spaces or privatized forms.”<sup>36</sup> In South Asia, however, public and collective listening was not an exception. It was *the norm*, and, as I demonstrate in succeeding chapters, it remained so well into the sixties. Moreover, colonial officers’ concern with the spread of rumors during WWII “directly traceable to radio broadcasts” suggests that radio’s power lay not only in the medium’s capacity to disseminate information, but in its ability to spark rumors and gossip, lending local significance to far-flung political and military developments.

Lastly, Radio Studies scholarship has tended, understandably, to focus on a neglected aural medium. In South Asia, however, radio cannot be fairly separated from visual culture. Indeed, one of the remarkable features of the radio industry and the content of radio programs in South Asia is the convergence of radio and film. Radio Ceylon, the subject of Chapter Four, built its transnational audience through an extended

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<sup>33</sup> Lacey, *Listening Publics*, Loc 2472-2564.

<sup>34</sup> Derek Vaillant, “Occupied Listeners: The Legacies of Interwar Radio for France During World War II,” in *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. David Suisman and Susan Strasser (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Lacey, *Listening Publics*, Loc 3125.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

reciprocal relationship with the by then well-established film industry in Bombay. The film industry provided the soundtracks that helped this station attract both listeners and sponsors. In turn, Radio Ceylon not only made this music widely available on the radio, but through its programs, influenced the way listeners experienced film songs, encouraging them to decouple songs from films, to develop personal relationships with singers, and, most important, to integrate film songs into their daily lives.

## **SOURCES**

Radio as an object of historical inquiry poses serious challenges. In South Asia, it has left a scattered and thin record. I therefore had to approach archival research with patience and creativity, carefully limiting my study and searching for radio's traces in both conventional and unconventional archives. For information on radio during the late colonial period, I consulted the British Library's India Office in London, the National Archives in the UK, the National Archives of India in New Delhi, and the Netaji Research Bureau in Kolkata. I consulted official documents on post-colonial radio in India and Pakistan—including government reports, broadcast transcripts, and administrators' correspondence—at the National Information Center in Islamabad, the Indian National Archives, and the Jawaharlal Nehru Library in New Delhi. I also collected recordings and printed records from local stations in several Indian and Pakistani cities, including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Delhi, Mumbai, and Lucknow (all hubs of Hindi-Urdu broadcasting). Radio Pakistan's Central Production Unit in Islamabad, for example, houses a collection of 1965 Indo-Pak War broadcasts that I draw

upon in my last chapter, along with documents on the war from the US State Department records found at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, Texas.

To conduct research on Radio Ceylon, I traveled to Sri Lanka and visited the station's music library, the National Archives of Sri Lanka, and the National Museum in Colombo. I also perused Hindi and English film magazines in the National Film Archive of India in Pune, India, which helped me better understand the important connection between radio and the Bombay<sup>37</sup> film industry. To make sense of listeners' daily experiences of radio and of radio's entry into the fabric of everyday life, I collected magazine and newspaper articles, personal diaries, letters to radio stations, and works of fiction. Finally, this study also benefited greatly from conversations with retired broadcasters in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, who kindly shared their stories, private papers, and recordings with me. Although the archival material presented here is more expansive and diverse than that of studies that have come before, it remains far from exhaustive. I present the following narrative hoping not to still alternative narratives, but, on the contrary, to invite them.<sup>38</sup>

These sources have made it possible for me to approach the study of radio from several angles. Some of the following chapters are concerned with governments' policies toward radio or with what politicians wished/imagined radio would do, while others focus on radio content itself. When sources permit, I also analyze listeners' reactions to

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<sup>37</sup> This city is now called Mumbai. In this dissertation I use the name of cities that corresponds to period discussed.

<sup>38</sup> Neil Verma makes a similar claim when talking about his sources in Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama*: 4-5.

broadcasts. I agree with Neil Verma that Radio Studies scholars have for far too long ignored the “actual sound of programs” in search of the nearly impossible-to-get-at entity of “the listener.”<sup>39</sup> I too sense that we need more analysis of broadcasts themselves. At the same time, I don’t believe that radio’s parts—its institutions, its audiences, and its sounds—can be easily separated or that that separation is always productive. Close readings of radio programs can—with some conjecture and extrapolation, of course—help us better understand both listeners and the experience of listening to the radio in late colonial and early postcolonial South Asia. In the following pages, I tune in to a radio history so that we might hear the story of South Asia at the “crossroads of empire” in a new tune.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 7-11. Emphasis added.

## **PART I: RADIO NEWS, INDIAN NATIONALISTS, AND WWII**

### **Chapter One: News on the Air**

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, the British Viceroy of India, the Marquess of Linlithgow, declared war on Germany on India's behalf without bothering to consult a single Indian elected official. One man, who called himself the "Bengali observer," recorded his impressions of the general atmosphere in Calcutta in the month immediately following the controversial declaration of war. He did not write about the Congress Party governors' resignations or the viceroy's insolent refusal to negotiate with Indian leaders. Instead, he wrote about how friends and acquaintances in Calcutta experienced the war through their radio receivers. The outbreak of war, he explained, had spawned an unprecedented interest in radio news programs. Foreign stations—most prominently German radio—inaugurated news programs in Indian languages, particularly Hindustani, and eager to learn more about the war, Indian listeners tuned in to these broadcasts with great interest.<sup>40</sup> The Bengali observer's annotations point to what many contemporaries then certainly sensed, but present-day scholars have failed to account for: the outbreak of WWII transformed the role of radio in Indian society.

In an effort to counteract Nazi broadcasts, the British colonial government funneled money and personnel into broadcasting and for the first time made a haphazard attempt to reach the general population through the medium of radio. The government-

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<sup>40</sup> Notes by a Bengali observer, Appendix III, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding, L/I/1/445 India Office, British Library, London, United Kingdom (IO hereafter). This specific document is undated but based on its content, we can infer that it was written in 1939.

run radio network, All India Radio (AIR), greatly increased programming in Indian languages, especially news bulletins and news commentary. This meant that in the months following the viceroy's declaration of war, Indian languages and voices were heard on the airwaves more than ever before as Allied and Axis radio stations competed for Indian ears and minds. Moreover, during the war, broadcast news about events outside of India acquired a new kind of importance. Referring specifically to radio news, a colonial administrator explained to his colleagues in London that the outbreak of war had created a "demand for news" as many in India wanted to learn more about the war.<sup>41</sup>

There is certainly no shortage of scholarly works on 1940s India, but as Indivar Kamtekar laments, this body of scholarship, highly concerned "with the unfurling of flags on the eve of independence,"<sup>42</sup> has paid scant notice to the WWII's impact on the region. In recent years, a few historians have turned away from the familiar nationalist narrative to study the war in South Asia in its own right.<sup>43</sup> Radio, however, has hardly featured in these new works. The omission of wartime radio from the historical record, I argue, is no minor oversight. It represents a failure to account for an issue that greatly concerned

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<sup>41</sup> Delhi rural broadcasting scheme for year ending in September 1941, Government of India report on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO.

<sup>42</sup> Indivar Kamtekar, "The Shiver of 1942," *Studies in History* 18, no. 1 (2002): 6.

<sup>43</sup> Works that exclusively analyze the WWII's influence on South Asia include: Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Harvard University Press, 2007). Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939-1945," *Past and Present* (2002): 187-221; Kamtekar, "The Shiver of 1942.": 81-102; Jagdish N. Sinha, *Science, War, and Imperialism: India in the Second World War* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Yasmin Khan, "Sex in an Imperial War Zone: Transnational Encounters in Second World War India," *History Workshop Journal* 73, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 240-58.

British administrators, and more importantly, for an essential feature of the quotidian lives of the general population in late colonial India.

In Part One of this dissertation, which includes Chapters One and Two, I explain how the war changed the course of radio in the subcontinent. In Chapter One, I focus on the first two years of the war and analyze both German and British radio broadcasts. I also briefly outline the early history of radio in the subcontinent so as to draw attention to the changes that the war engendered. I explain how the colonial government came to direct and own a national radio network in the 1930s. I argue that the government became involved in broadcasting halfheartedly. First, it was cajoled by businessmen to take over failed private broadcasting initiatives and then it took to broadcasting so as to prevent nationalists from doing so. It was not, however, until after the outbreak of WWII that the central governments made a genuine, albeit belated and haphazard, attempt to reach the general population through the medium of radio.

The final contribution of this chapter has to do with reception. A study of the circulation of radio news during WWII forces us to reconsider our understanding of how radio reaches audiences. In wartime India, news that was first heard on the radio traveled via word-of-mouth to cities, towns, and villages, lending local significance to far-flung military and political developments. Just as scholars have argued that the strength and resilience of oral networks of communication made India a “literacy-aware” society long before it achieved high levels of literacy, this chapter posits that oral networks of communication made India a “radio-aware” society before it had high radio-ownership

rates.<sup>44</sup> I argue that in late-colonial India, radio's influence reached far beyond those with access to a receiver.

## BROADCAST BEGINNINGS

Orientalist accounts about the parochialism, illiteracy, and so-called backwardness of India's population, then estimated at 300 million, provided an exemplary template for idealistic early radio visionaries to dream big. Among them was John Reith, the iconic founding director of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Reith long dreamed about what radio could do for India's millions. Reith wrote letter after letter to the government of India urging administrators to inaugurate a public broadcasting service in the country.<sup>45</sup> It was one thing to dream about what radio could do and another thing altogether to pay for it. Radio transmitters were expensive and so was their maintenance, and the colonial government showed little interest in financing a broadcasting scheme.

Nonetheless, a few privately-funded radio clubs began to sprout up in urban centers in India in the 1920s. In November of 1923, the Radio Club of Bengal, Calcutta made its first broadcast,<sup>46</sup> the Bombay Presidency Radio Club in June of 1924,<sup>47</sup> and the

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<sup>44</sup> Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40.

<sup>45</sup> John Reith's interest in broadcasting in India is well known. Reith wrote a number of letters to the Government of India expressing his interest in broadcasting in the late 1920s and 1930s. His pleas, however, received little attention. Reith lobbied for the establishment of a public service model similar to the BBC in India. See Charles Stuart, ed. *The Reith Diaries* (London: 1975), 156; Joselyn Zivin, "'Bent': A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," *Past and Present*, no. 162 (1999): 203; and, Alasdair Pinkerton, "Radio and the Raj: Broadcasting in British India (1920–1940)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 18, no. 02 (2008): 170.

<sup>46</sup> H. R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986), 6.



Madras Presidency Radio Club in May of 1924.<sup>48</sup> These clubs, however, used low-power transmitters, rarely put out more than two or three hours of broadcast material a day, and had listeners that numbered in the hundreds.

In 1926, a group of enthusiastic Bombay entrepreneurs and representatives from the Marconi Company, then the leading telecommunications company in Britain, took on a more ambitious project. They pooled enough funds to purchase two medium-wave transmitters and convinced the central government to protect the company's monopoly for five years—sufficient time, the investors believed, to build an adequate infrastructure and a loyal listenership. They called their company Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) as they dreamed that their company's financial success would soon surpass the BBC's. The IBC's Bombay station aired its first broadcast on July 1927, and the Calcutta station in August of the same year.<sup>49</sup>

If early visionaries had dreamt of radio uplifting India's millions, the IBC made no such pretensions. It catered to British families and elite, anglicized Indians. Its programs were in English and consisted mostly of BBC relays and Western music

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<sup>47</sup> For more information on early radio clubs in India see Government of India, *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India (up to the 31st March 1939)* (Shimla 1939). Lionel Fielden was likely the primary author of this document. The copy I used for this chapter is from the National Documentation Center, Islamabad, Pakistan. One newspaper account notes that on July 1927, the Bombay Presidency Radio Club broadcast from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm and from 7:05 to 7:45 pm. "Schedules of the Bombay Presidency Radio Club" *Times of India*, July 4, 1927.

<sup>48</sup> The Madras Residency Radio Club broadcast twice a week in 1924 and four times a week in 1925. Stephen P. Hughes, "The 'Music Boom' in Tamil South India: Gramophone, Radio and the Making of Mass Culture," 458.

<sup>49</sup> Radio broadcasting and its future development in India, note by director of wireless, 5 August, 1927, 87-R, 1928, Foreign and Political Reforms, National Archives of India, New Delhi (NAI from hereafter).

broadcasts. The IBC even secured an agreement with the Performing Rights Society of London to broadcast recordings of the society's concerts.<sup>50</sup>

Within months of its inauguration, the IBC faced serious financial difficulties. The company relied solely on fees from licenses and import taxes, but it did not collect enough revenue to cover the station's operating costs.<sup>51</sup> Eric Dunston, the IBC's director, asked the colonial government for financial assistance. The Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, remarked: "It cannot be said that broadcasting is, under existing conditions, of immense strategic importance in India."<sup>52</sup> The IBC announced it would cease its services in February of 1930.<sup>53</sup>

Radio vendors protested that the imminent closing of the IBC would be the death-blow to their business, which they had started with the government's blessing back in 1927. They persuaded the very reluctant Viceroy to purchase the IBC's stations in Calcutta and Bombay. The stations resumed broadcasting on April 1, 1930 under the new name of Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS). Thus, under these inauspicious circumstances, state-controlled radio in India came into effect.

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<sup>50</sup> Development of broadcasting in India from 1927 to 1933, Broadcasting in India, L/PJ/7/754, IO.

<sup>51</sup> In 1927 there were 850 license holders in Calcutta and 210 in Bombay. Given the limited numbers of radio owners in India, the colonial government agreed to charge a ten percent import tax on radio receivers and to transfer the proceeds to the newly formed broadcasting company. All radios had to be imported from Europe because there were no radio manufacturers in India. For information on the number of receivers in 1927 see: Wireless Importation Indian Broadcasting Company Bombay Agreement, 1074 CUS 1927, Custom Duties, Central Board of Revenue, NAI and Letter to Earl and Birkenhead, April 28, 1922, 84(5) 1922, Reforms, Mysore Residency, Radio Broadcasting in India, NAI.

<sup>52</sup> Telegraph from Viceroy to Eric Dunston, April 8, 1928, Broadcasting in India, L/PO/3/1, IO.

<sup>53</sup> Letter dated January 12, 1929, Broadcasting in India, L/PO/3/1, IO.

The colonial government, however, refused to divert any more public funds to broadcasting. To pay for the cost of running the two stations, it raised import taxes on radio receivers from ten to fifty percent.<sup>54</sup> This meant that fewer people could purchase the now-even-more-expense radio receivers. In 1930, for the first time in several years, the number of radio receivers in India declined.<sup>55</sup> By the end of 1931, the future of broadcasting in India looked bleak.

The following year, however, the IBC received a much-needed boost from an unexpected source. In September 1932, the BBC Empire Services inaugurated services on the shortwave.<sup>56</sup> In a broadcast, King George V explained that the BBC Empire Services targeted “men and women, so cut off by the snow, the desert, or the sea, that only a voice out of the air can reach them.”<sup>57</sup> Within weeks, the BBC Empire Service gained loyal followers among the British community in India.<sup>58</sup>

A detailed study of the BBC Empire Services is outside the scope of this study, but it is not hard to imagine why it outdid the ISBC. The Empire Services, with studios in the heart of London, employed more experienced broadcasters and put out many more hours of programing. Most importantly, as one administrator and fan of the service

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<sup>54</sup> Development of broadcasting in India from 1927 to 1933, Broadcasting in India, L/PJ/7/754, IO.

<sup>55</sup> Pinkerton, "Radio and the Raj: Broadcasting in British India (1920–1940)," 176.

<sup>56</sup> The Empire Broadcasting Service-Proposals of the BBC - Questions of finance and use of languages, Reports as to interest shown in India to the service, L/PJ/6/1996, IO.

<sup>57</sup> "The Empire Service is founded BBC World Services," September 1932, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1122\\_75\\_years/page2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1122_75_years/page2.shtml), accessed on January 2, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> For scholarship on the BBC Empire Service, see Andrew Hill, "The BBC Empire Service: the Voice, the Discourse of the Master and Ventriloquism," *South Asian Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (2010): 25-38; John M. MacKenzie, "In Touch with the Infinite': the BBC and the Empire, 1923-53," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986): 165-91.

explained, the Empire Services provided a “sentimental link” between residents in the overseas dependencies and the mother country.<sup>59</sup> The European community in India purchased more radio receivers than ever before, despite the exorbitant fifty percent import tax on radio apparatuses. Within a period of less than two years, the number of licenses in India doubled from 8,000 to 16,000, and by 1934, there were 25,000 registered licenses in India.<sup>60</sup>

Once more, radio vendors persuaded the unenthusiastic colonial government to become further involved in radio broadcasting. Vendors argued that revenue from license fees and import-taxes, which was no longer insignificant given the sudden increase in sales of radio receivers in India, should be used to develop the broadcasting infrastructure in the subcontinent. The new Viceroy of India, Lord Willingdon, conceded to the vendors’ demands. He set aside two and half lakh rupees to build a radio station in New Delhi and wrote to John Reith in London to send a radio-expert trained by the BBC to India to become India’s first Controller of Broadcasting.<sup>61</sup>

## **LIONEL FIELDEN AND AIR**

Reith chose Lionel Fielden, a forty-one-year-old broadcaster from the BBC Talks Department. Ian Stephens from the Home Department insisted that this post should be offered to a “concealed die-hard” imperialist, who would protect the interests of the

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<sup>59</sup> Correspondence regarding Empire Services-1933, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding, L/I/1/445, IO.

<sup>60</sup> India, *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India (up to the 31st March 1939)*: 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> Fielden, *The Natural Bent* (London: A. Deutsch, 1960), 159; Gupta, *Radio and the Raj: 1921 -47*, 24. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*. See timeline of significant events, 493-505.

colonial government.<sup>62</sup> Fielden hardly fit that bill. During his time in India, Fielden managed to rile up his coworkers by breaking just about every unspoken rule of European life in India. He made no effort to disguise his homosexuality. He stayed away from clubs, avoided summer vacations in hill stations, and refused to live in European quarters.<sup>63</sup> Most important, however, he openly supported the nationalist movement. Within months of his arrival, he had reached out to M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the activist and poet Sarojini Naidu. With all three he exchanged long conversations, personal letters, and sometimes even late night meals. He counted Naidu among his “fast” friends, and wrote in his memoirs: “her enormous warm sympathy and her unquenchable sense of fun flowed over you like a warm bath.”<sup>64</sup>

Despite Fielden’s anti-colonial leanings, he served the Empire rather well—perhaps better than he would have liked to admit. His arrival in India marked a new stage for radio, one that was above all characterized by centralization. He renamed the radio network All India Radio and assigned its catchy and rather appropriate acronym AIR, which to this day remains in use.<sup>65</sup> In the years to come, Fielden toiled to ensure that the organization lived up to its new name.

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<sup>62</sup> Letter from Ian Stephens, Home Department, to Hugh MacGregor India Officer, New Delhi September 17, 1934, EI/896/2, BBC Written Archives, London. Cited in Pinkerton, “Radio and the Raj: Broadcasting in British India (1920–1940),” 183. Also cited Zivin, “Bent: A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting,” 199.

<sup>63</sup> Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, 179.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 181.

<sup>65</sup> H. R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986). See timeline for the date of the official name change. For a description of Fielden’s version of the story see Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, 191–93. Here Fielden takes full credit for the organization’s new name. Fielden claims that he tricked Viceroy Linlithgow into thinking that he had come up with name himself when Fielden had actually devised it.

Despite having access to very limited funds, Fielden oversaw the erection of new stations in strategic urban centers, including Lucknow, Trichnopoly, and Dacca.<sup>66</sup> He also integrated a few independent broadcasting projects into the national network. For example, Fielden incorporated a YMCA radio club in Lahore owned and managed by an American-born Christian missionary and a privately owned radio station in Madras into the national radio network.<sup>67</sup> During his tenure in India, Fielden also incorporated two rural broadcasting schemes into AIR's network, one outside of Delhi and the other in the Northwestern Frontier province.<sup>68</sup>

AIR's infrastructure grew, but its programming remained characteristically poor. Part of the problem was that the colonial government placed strict restrictions on what material could be broadcast. It prohibited members or representatives of any political party from speaking on the radio. In Britain by contrast, the BBC provided plenty of opportunities for political debate on the radio. To cover up what was clearly an "illiberal" policy that restricted freedom of speech, the Government of India banned any kind of political material from the airwaves. This meant that government servants could not advertise the "benefits of the Empire" on the air just as nationalists could not criticize colonial rule.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For more detailed about each of these stations's opening see Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*. In particular see timeline of significant events 494-505.

<sup>67</sup> In June 1938, AIR purchased the Madras Corporation's radio station. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>69</sup> In an anonymous article published in the *Times*, Fielden wrote that the colonial government was acting out of duty rather than pleasure and remarked that it developed broadcasting just to ensure nationalists leaders would not take to the airwaves. See Zivin, "'Bent': A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," 198.

Under these restraints, AIR could broadcast only educational and entertainment programs. In the heated political atmosphere that characterized India in the mid-1930s, AIR's radio programs must have seemed comically banal to those who cared to tune in. On a given week AIR broadcast a debate between two Muslims on the question, "Should cars be used instead of bullock carts?" and a discussion in English by Miss Norah Hill titled, "Round India with Red Cross."<sup>70</sup> The outbreak of the war and the popularity of German radio soon changed all that.

### **THE DISEASE OF AXIS RADIO**

As early as December of 1939, British officers exchanged anxious telegraphs discussing the sudden popularity of the newly-inaugurated Hindustani-language news programs from Germany. The governor of the North West Frontier Province wrote, "it is remarkable how much attention appears to [be given to] daily broadcast from Germany."<sup>71</sup> To a distressed British administration in India, Nazi radio in Hindustani seemed to have emerged from nowhere and in no time.

German broadcasts to India, however, formed part of a larger radio propaganda campaign to populations in British colonies. In addition to programs in Hindustani aimed at audiences in colonial India, the Nazi government also inaugurated Arabic-language radio programs that targeted audiences in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>70</sup> These programs are cited in *ibid.*, 215.

<sup>71</sup> Letter to Mr. Joyce, December 20, 1939, BBC Indian language services to India, L/I/1/784, IO.

<sup>72</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). In particular see Chapters 3, "Growing Contacts, First Broadcasts: 1939-1941 (36-56)" and Chapter 4, "Propaganda and Warfighting in North Africa and the Middle East in 1941 (57-87)."

German government recruited from the small Indian population residing in Germany—a small group of translators, scriptwriters, and newsreaders—who could effectively reach out to their compatriots in India.

Germany ultimately benefited from the Government of India's inertia toward anything related to radio in a rather unusual way. German radio propaganda reached India on the shortwave.<sup>73</sup> Nearly all radio receivers in India could tune to both shortwave and mediumwave frequencies, even though AIR only put out medium wave broadcasts at the time.<sup>74</sup> In the years leading to the war, radio manufacturers and AIR personnel discussed the possibility of designing and manufacturing a cheaper, medium-wave-only radio receiver for Indian audiences. Fielden, in particular, had been a big advocate of these cheaper radio receivers.<sup>75</sup> But plans to design and manufacture affordable radio receivers never materialized. This meant that AIR, despite being a local radio provider, held no advantage over foreign stations, even if thousands of miles away.<sup>76</sup>

The language employed by German radio broadcasters was an important part of the service's appeal. By broadcasting in Hindustani, German radio was able to reach a larger, less elite audience than it would have with English-language broadcasts. In the absence of recordings or transcripts of these broadcasts, however, we must rely on British officers' interpretations of these programs. British authorities repeatedly remarked that the broadcasters purposely employed a simple version of Hindustani to reach a

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<sup>73</sup> Shortwaves are reflected by the upper atmosphere and can travel great distances. In contrast, medium-waves are beamed directly and are immediately broadcast to the surrounding area.

<sup>74</sup> Developing of broadcasting in India, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding L/I/1/445, IO.

<sup>75</sup> Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, 209.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



widespread and diverse population in northern, eastern, and western India that could understand, if not always speak, Hindustani.<sup>77</sup> One officer remarked that German radio broadcasts were in “clear Hindustani, mixed with a few Hindi words.” Another commentator remarked that the “Berlin style” was popular with Indian listeners because it was “independent and [did] not constantly give the impression of translation.”<sup>78</sup>

Language alone, British administrators believed, could not explain German radio’s appeal. A member of the Home Department explained that German radio had “the psychological effect of flattering Indian self-esteem and producing a feeling favorable to Germany, which has taken the trouble to address India *direct*.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed some in India might have turned to German broadcasts out of mere curiosity, and if nothing else, because the broadcasts provided a *direct* link to an otherwise unfamiliar region of the world. The Bengali observer (who might be more accurately described as the *Bengali listener*), however, offered a slightly different interpretation. People tuned to German radio, he explained, to hear different perspectives on the war and to “draw their own conclusions.”<sup>80</sup>

Few could deny that one of German radio’s strongest attractions was its alleged support for the nationalist movement. In these radio broadcasts, Nazi Germany presented itself as an ally of the anti-colonial movement and, more importantly, as Britain’s most

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<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of the language issues faced by AIR see David Lelyveld, “Colonial knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 04 (1993): 665-82.

<sup>78</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc: BBC broadcasts in Arabic, L/PS/12/4132, IO.

<sup>79</sup> BBC Indian language services to India, L/I/1/784, IO

<sup>80</sup> Notes by a Bengali observer, Appendix III, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding, L/I/1/445, IO. Emphasis added.

formidable enemy. A confidential government report circulated in May 1940 stated that German radio appealed to Indian audiences because it portrayed “England as the ruthless oppressor” and “Germany as a friend of India,” even if it has to “twist every item of news for this purpose.”<sup>81</sup>

Administrators were far more troubled by German radio’s penchant for broadcasting fabricated stories about events in Europe and India than by German radio’s biting criticism of colonial rule. “There has been no abatement in the stream of falsehood and exaggeration issuing from Berlin,”<sup>82</sup> wrote an alarmed official in 1940. When covering the war in Europe, another administrator explained that German radio reported Axis countries’ “sweeping successes,” even when they clearly faced heavy losses.<sup>83</sup> German radio, British officials complained, also broadcast false news about developments in India. During a relatively tranquil week in India, German radio reported that there was “rebellious activity on the frontier,” that “labour [was] in violent revolt,” and “the viceroy’s train [was] guarded by 49 men with machine guns as he [left] Delhi on tour.”<sup>84</sup>

The popularity of Nazi radio propaganda prompted some of the first studies of radio audiences in India. For example, in May 1940, AIR personnel interviewed 12,507

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<sup>81</sup> Political situation in India since the outbreak of war - confidential appreciation of the political situation in India, December 18, 1939,” L/I/1/777, IO.

<sup>82</sup> Measures to check ill-effects of German Hindustani Broadcasts-1940, Home, Political, 60/2/40-Poll, NAI.

<sup>83</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc: BBC broadcasts in Arabic, L/PS/12/4132, IO.

<sup>84</sup> Confidential Appreciation of the political situation in India, December 18, 1939, Political situation in India since the outbreak of war, L/I/1/777, IO.

listeners in major cities including Bombay, Delhi, Lahore, Lucknow, and Calcutta in the hopes of better understanding people's listening habits. Unfortunately, we have little knowledge of the kind of questions asked and about how the data was analyzed. Researchers ultimately concluded that German broadcasts in Hindustani and English were "widely-listened-to" in these cities, but that "belief in their truthfulness varied."<sup>85</sup>

Moreover the colonial government had other reasons to believe that opinion in India, despite being increasingly anti-colonial, was not pro-Nazi, at least not during this early period of the war. The Congress Working Committee's statement of September 14, 1939 protested the viceroy's decision to declare India belligerent, but condemned "Fascism and Nazi aggression."<sup>86</sup> Moreover, pro-nationalist newspapers were virulently anti-colonial, but not pro-Nazi.<sup>87</sup> One colonial report remarked, "we have a powerful ally in the Indian Press," and concluded at that moment that opinion in India was "almost hundred percent anti-Nazi."<sup>88</sup>

Proof of the lack of support for Nazi Germany during the early part of the war did little to ease the British government's anxieties about the effects of Nazi radio in India. One administrator remarked, "The German broadcasts are known to be full of lies but everyone listens to them with great interest and they undoubtedly *have an effect*."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Report on the development of broadcasting in India, August 1940, Home, Political, 52/8 1938, NAI.

<sup>86</sup> Confidential Appreciation of the political situation in India, December 18, 1939, Political situation in India since the outbreak of war, L/I/1/777, IO.

<sup>87</sup> Measures to check ill-effects of German Hindustani Broadcasts -1940, Home, Political, 60/2/40-Poll, NAI.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc: BBC broadcasts in Arabic, L/PS/12/4132, IO.

German radio, the British government believed, was the source of rapidly spreading and destructive rumors about the war. One report explained, “a croup [sic] of rumors has been generated, in many cases directly traceable to enemy broadcasts... [and] in some parts of the country they have disturbed the confidence of the people and led to such signs of nervousness...”<sup>90</sup> We should take British anxiety about the spread of rumors seriously, as it is deeply revealing of how radio worked in wartime India (see figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).

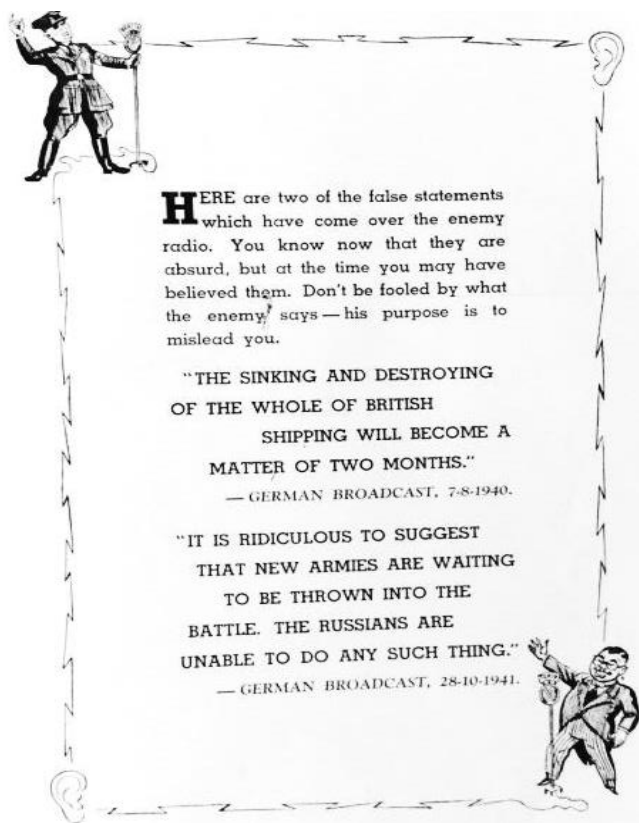


Figure 1 This advertisement is from a supplement to the *Indian Listener*, a magazine distributed free of cost to all holders of radio receiver licenses. This particular supplement was undated. Based on the content and its placement in the archive, it is likely to have been published sometime in late 1941.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

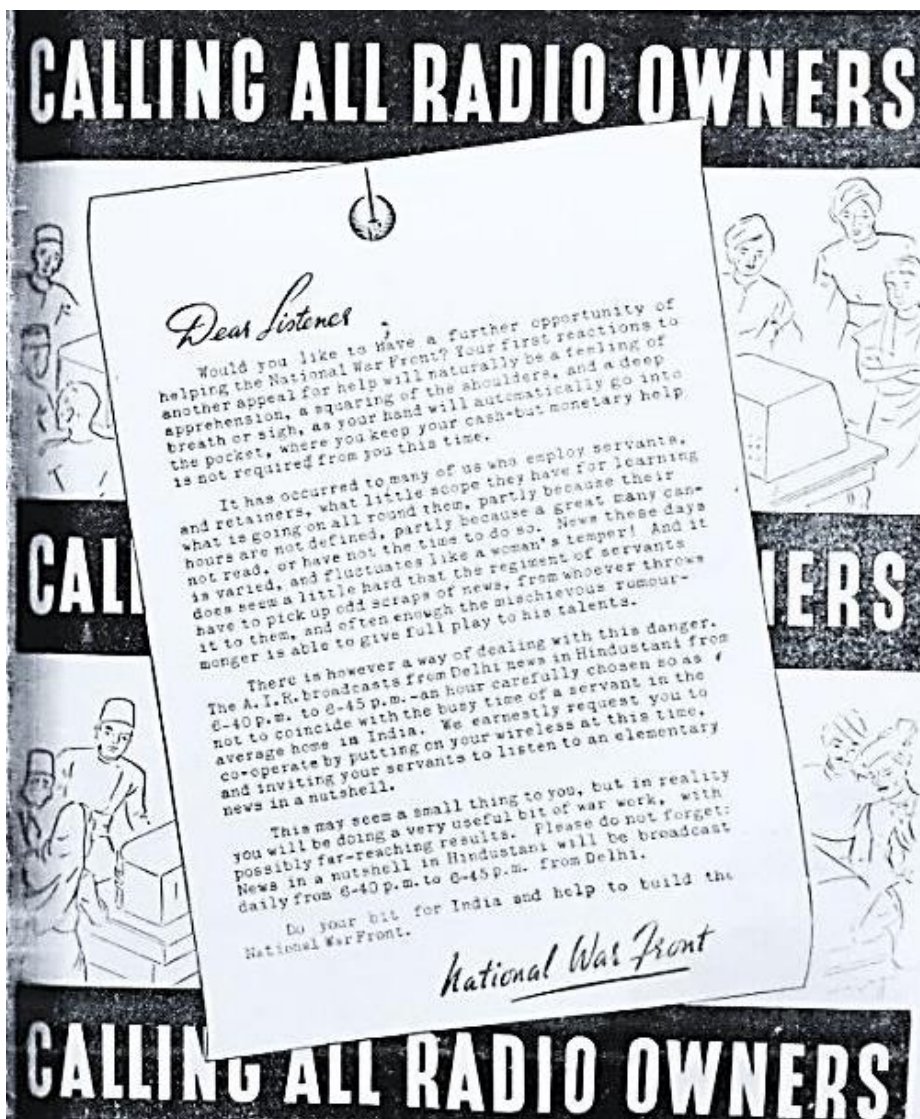


Figure 2 This advertisement was found in the same appendix as Figure 1. Note the following phrase, which highlights radio and rumor's relationship: "News this day is varied and fluctuates like a women's temper! And it does seem a little hard that the regiment of servants have to pick up odd scraps of news from whoever throws it to them and often enough the mischievous rumor-monger is able to give full play to his talents." Source: All India Radio Library, New Delhi.



Figure 3 Supplement to the *Indian Listener*, July 22, 1942. Note how this cartoon depicts how “enemy radio news” travel via word-of-mouth. Source: All India Radio, Library.



Figure 4: Supplement to the *Indian Listener*, June 7, 1942. Note how this cartoon depicts the “dangers” of listening to enemy radio stations. Source: All India Radio, Library.

## RUMOR AND RADIO

Only a small fraction of the population actually owned radio receivers.<sup>91</sup> According to one survey, there were 52,883 registered licenses in 1938. License statistics, however, were notoriously unreliable. Despite the administration's efforts to crack down on license evasion practices, or "wireless piracy" to use the lingo of the day, many in India continued to own receivers without registering them or paying the designated fees.<sup>92</sup> Most importantly, radio-ownership statistics are poor indication of the size of radio audiences because radio listening was hardly ever a solitary activity.

It is telling that the colonial administration made repeated attempts to stop people from playing Axis radio programs in public spaces. In 1940, the administration passed an edict forbidding holders of commercial radio licenses from playing Axis radio programs.<sup>93</sup> A few months later, the administration prohibited *all* owners of receivers from playing enemy broadcasts in public spaces including shops, bazaars, places of worship, or even verandas, where the sound of the radio could easily reach the streets or neighboring homes.<sup>94</sup> Colonial administrators, however, could do little to stop people from listening to the radio collectively. Sadat Hasan Manto's radio play, *Āo Redīo Suneh*, (Come Listen to Radio), provides a lively example of communal radio listening practices in 1940s India. With his characteristic knack for capturing everyday life, Manto describes

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<sup>91</sup> Measures to check ill-effects of German Hindustani Broadcasts -1940, Home, Political, 60/2/40-Poll, NAI.

<sup>92</sup> AIR Anti-Piracy campaign, a review of the results achieved, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding, L/I/1/445, IO.

<sup>93</sup> Report on broadcasting in India, December 16, 1940, Home, Political, 52/8 1938, NAI.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



how an entire middle-class neighborhood in New Delhi gathered to listen to a single receiver.<sup>95</sup>

In a recent study, Kate Lacey analyzes “historical instances of collective listening” in Germany and Britain.<sup>96</sup> In particular, she looks at the Nazi government’s efforts to promote collective listening in factories and other work places and at the BBC’s mostly failed attempts to establish radio clubs. Lacey, however, concludes that experiments in collective listening were “exceptions to the rule,” as the “story of mediated listening across the long twentieth century has been dominated by people listening to both recorded and broadcast sounds in private spaces or privatized forms.”<sup>97</sup> But in wartime India collective listening was not an exception. It was the norm, and, as I demonstrate in succeeding chapters, it remained so well into the sixties. Simply put, the quintessential image of a nuclear family gathered around the radio receiver does not apply to wartime India. Neither do arguments about how radio brought public politics into private living rooms.<sup>98</sup>

Collective listening practices were prevalent in India because radio entered the region through oral networks of communication. Scholars of South Asia— from members of Subaltern Studies groups to imperial historians—have long emphasized the strength and resilience of oral networks in the region. Ranajit Guha, for example, argues that

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<sup>95</sup> Balraj Menra and Sharad Dutt, eds., *Dastāvez Manto* (New Delhi: Rājkamal Prakāśan, 1993), 60-67.

<sup>96</sup> Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), Kindle edition, Loc 3125.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, Loc 3570-3589.

<sup>98</sup> For an example of a study of how radio brought public politics into private living rooms see Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

discussions outside mosques, bazaars, and *melās* mobilized large groups to revolt against colonialists' oppressive measures.<sup>99</sup> Christopher Bayly explains that the “the combination of *harkara* information, newsletters and public recitation in bazaars or near the platform of the *kotwal*'s station spread news very quickly across the country.” He goes as far as to note that an “identifiable group of people” sometimes called *bazarians* “leaked news to the wider population.”<sup>100</sup> The system was so effective that a number of observers in the eighteenth century noted that Indian bazaars often circulated international news long before official reports arrived on ships.<sup>101</sup>

During WWII, radio took on the role of a *bazarian*, “leaking” official news to the wider population. Radio is widely understood as a broadcast medium that distributes or “broadly casts” information via sound waves. Yet colonial officers' concern with the spread of rumors “directly traceable to radio broadcasts” suggests that radio's power lay not only in the medium's capacity to disseminate information, but in its ability to trigger rumors and gossip. In this sense, it is not the information that radio programs convey per se that matters so much, but rather how this information is discussed, retold, reworked, and reinterpreted.

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<sup>99</sup> See Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*: 204; Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). Ranjit Guha belongs to the subaltern studies group and is interested in uncovering means of resistance espoused by underprivileged groups. Bayly, in contrast, is an historian of the British Empire whose work unravels the inner-workings of the British Raj. While Guha sees the spread of rumors and the upsurge of riots as examples of peasant insurgency, Bayly contends that such outbreaks constitute “part of the ecumenical critique, they are not sudden upsurges of resistance from tyrannized voices.”

<sup>100</sup> Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*: 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

Rumor, of course, is not a neutral term; it is a colonial term. It reflects the colonial government's understanding of Indian society as naïve and prone to superstition. Nonetheless, the term rumor is useful because it conveys the sense that it is the retelling and reinterpreting of the story, and not just the story itself, that matters. As Luise White explains, "it is in their exchange and evaluation that [rumors] take on sophisticated analysis."<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, looking at radio's relationship to rumors then forces us to reconsider assumptions about how radio connects to listeners. Much of the recent literature on radio has focused on how people *listen* to broadcast material, but, in wartime India, radio's influence extended beyond those who could tune in to broadcasts. Scholars have made similar arguments about the written word in South Asian society. In *Empire and Information*, Bayly argues that "awareness of the uses of literacy spread much further than the number of formal literates suggests."<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the spread of rumors "directly traceable to radio broadcasts" in late colonial India suggests that India was a "radio-aware" society long before radio ownership was comparable to places in the Americas or Europe. As I describe in the following section, colonial administrators saw matters differently. They did not see rumors as emblematic of how the medium worked. For them, rumors were a disease and false radio news from Germany was the original source of infection.

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<sup>102</sup> Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in East and Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 84.

<sup>103</sup> Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*: 40.

## AIR NEWS

Referring specifically to enemy broadcasts and their effects on the general public, one rather patronizing colonial officer remarked: “It is only fair that the ordinary ignorant man should be protected against the exploitation of his natural fears.”<sup>104</sup> The idea of jamming German broadcasts came up in some discussions, but many felt that starting an outright radio war would eventually cause more harm than good.<sup>105</sup> “Truthful” news broadcasts, colonial administrators reasoned, would be the best antidote to the rapidly spreading disease of German radio. In the wake of the war, the colonial government for the first time made an attempt to reach the general population through the medium of radio.

Fielden had already inadvertently built the infrastructure that allowed AIR to respond to the war. He left India in 1940 to join the BBC and was not able to see the fruition of his work. (Given his anti-colonial leaning, that might have been for the better.) Ahmed Shah Bukhari, the director of the Delhi station and also a renowned Urdu writer, took over Fielden’s post and remained in charge of AIR during the war and through India’s independence and Partition. As I elaborate in a later section, Bukhari’s ascendance in AIR was source of controversy as some—in and out of AIR—felt that he favored Urdu over Hindi. Nonetheless, under his leadership, AIR responded to the war.

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<sup>104</sup> Measures to check ill-effects of German Hindustani Broadcasts -1940, Home, Political, 60/2/40-Poll, NAI.

<sup>105</sup> Policy of His Majesty's Government on the question of jamming -1940, Home, Political, 52/15/40-Poll, NAI.

Although the colonial government certainly would have approved funds for new stations, wartime restrictions made it difficult to transport transmitters to India. Instead, Bukhari used resources to improve existing stations. Over the course of the war, AIR more than doubled its staff. By 1942 it employed nine hundred workers, including announcers, editors, writers, translators, engineers, and administrative personnel.<sup>106</sup> As we might expect, the Central News Organization, (CNO), which edited, translated, and distributed news bulletins to all of AIR radio stations, saw the biggest expansion during the war (see figure 5 and 6).

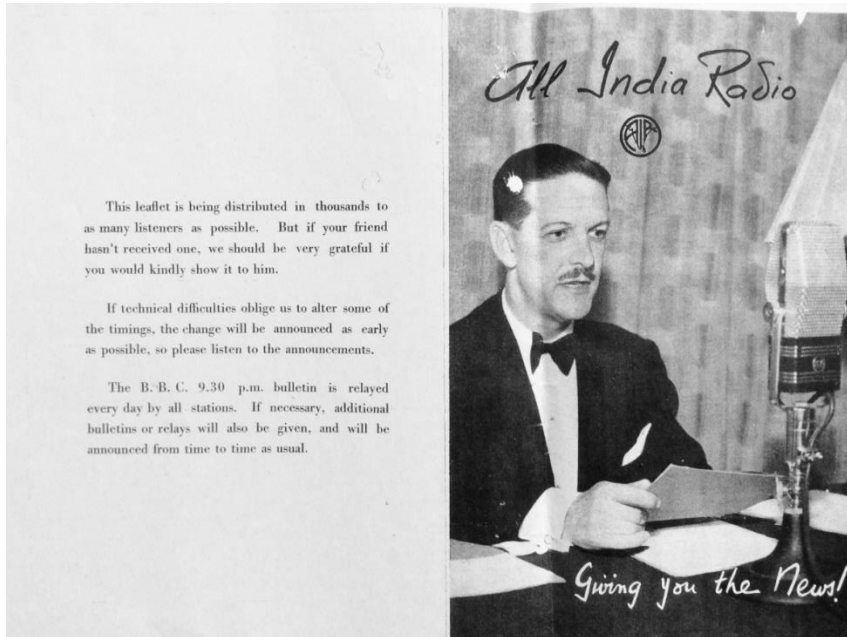


Figure 5: This leaflet was distributed widely in India during the war to encourage people to tune to AIR news broadcasts. Source: British Library, India Office.

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<sup>106</sup> Change of the designation of the Controller of Broadcasting to that of the Director General-All India Radio, Home, Public, 264/43 1943, NAI. According to this report AIR employees' salaries were raised and AIR also became a permanent service.

**ALL INDIA RADIO**  
is now giving 27 news bulletins daily in English and seven Indian Languages as shown below

Language	Time	Delhi	Bombay	Calcutta	Madras	Lahore	Lucknow	Trichinopoly	Peshawar
ENGLISH	8.50 a.m. 1.30 p.m.	19.62 31.3 338.6m (15.29) (9.59) (886) f	31.4 244 m (9.55) (1231) f	31.48 370.4 m (9.53) (810) f	31.35 211 m (9.57) (1420) f	276 m (1086) f	293.5 m (1022) f	396 m (758) f	200 m (1500) f
	6.0 9.20 10.30 p.m.	31.3 60.48 338.6m (9.59) (4.96) (886) f	61.48 244 m (4.88) (1231) f	60.98 370.4 m (4.84) (810) f	60.98 211 m (4.92) (1420) f	276 m (1086) f	293.5 m (1022) f	396 m (758) f	200 m (1500) f
HINDUSTANI	8.40 a.m. 12.57 p.m.	19.62 31.3 338.6m (15.29) (9.59) (886) f	31.4 244 m (9.55) (1231) f			276 m (1086) f	293.5 m (1022) f		200 m (1500) f
	6.5 9.0 p.m.	31.3 60.48 338.6m (9.59) (4.96) (886) f	61.48 244 m (4.88) (1231) f			276 m (1086) f	293.5 m (1022) f		200 m (1500) f
BENGALI	8.30 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f		31.48 370.4 m (9.53) (810) f					
	5.40 8.45 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f		60.98 370.4 m (4.84) (810) f					
GUJERATI	8.20 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f	31.4 244 m (9.55) (1231) f						
	5.30 8.10 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f	61.48 244 m (4.88) (1231) f						
MARATHI	8.15 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f	31.4 244 m (9.55) (1231) f						
	5.25 7.55 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f	61.48 244 m (4.88) (1231) f						
TAMIL	8.5 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f			31.35 211 m (9.57) (1420) f			396 m (758) f	
	5.15 7.35 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f			60.98 211 m (4.92) (1420) f			396 m (758) f	
TELUGU	8.0 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f			31.35 211 m (9.57) (1420) f				
	5.10 7.20 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f			60.98 211 m (4.92) (1420) f				
PUSHTU	9.5 a.m.	19.62 m (15.29) f							200 m (1500) f
	5.0 7.0 p.m.	31.3 m (9.59) f							200 m (1500) f

Figure 6: This schedule was distributed along with the leaflet above. Source: British Library, India Office.

The CNO had also been one Fielden's contributions. When he arrived in India, many complained that AIR's news coverage was pitiful and that new bulletins did little more than string together a number of messages.<sup>107</sup> Rather than spread AIR's limited resources by hiring editors and translators for each radio station, Fielden founded the central organization that provided news programs to all other stations. CNO staff selected

<sup>107</sup> Reorganization of news services division AIR, Broadcasting Administration, Information and Broadcasting 1926-1970, 13/89/62-3(A) 1962, NAI. The report notes, "The news organization had its initial start in 1937 when a scheme to centralize the service was prepared and a news editor was appointed with his office in Delhi. The next two years did not witness any appreciable expansion. With the outbreak of war in 1939 a strong impetus was given to the development of the organization; and by 1945, the Central News Organization has come into its own."

news provided by news agencies, edited the stories, and translated them to various Indian languages. Just one month after the declaration of war, the CNO was putting out twenty-seven daily news bulletins in eight languages including English, Hindustani, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Pashto.<sup>108</sup> In October of 1939, the CNO inaugurated news studios, complete with the latest sound equipment.<sup>109</sup>

AIR had contracts with Reuters and the Associated Press of India, but during the war, it also contracted the services of United Press of India.<sup>110</sup> Also, in February 1940, AIR asked Reuters to triple the number of words it provided AIR every month, and agreed to cover any extra expense that might arise. The Home Department also made a special request to Reuters to provide more news and “interpretive comment” about the war effort by “empire countries” such as Canada and Australia.<sup>111</sup> British officials hoped that Indians would be inspired by the Canadian and Australian contribution to the war cause and would support the Allies in equal measure.

Increasing the number of news bulletins, the colonial government quickly learned, was not enough. One commentator explained the “the main trouble” is that British programs broadcast “purely news items” whereas the “German broadcasts comment on

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<sup>108</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc: BBC broadcasts in Arabic, L/PS/12/4132, IO; *Statesman*’s article clipping, October 1, 1939, Broadcasting in India, Correspondence Regarding, L/I/1/445, IO.

<sup>109</sup> Report on broadcasting in India, December 16, 1940, Home, Political, 52/8 1938, NAI.

<sup>110</sup> Report on broadcasting in India, May 27, 1940, Home, Political, 52/8 1938, NAI.

<sup>111</sup> Telegraph from Government of India Home Department to Secretary State of India, November 8, 1940, Reuters Service 1938-1942, L/I/1/663, IO.

most items.”<sup>112</sup> In response to an outpouring of similar remarks, in succeeding months AIR staff toiled to increase war commentary programs or “interpretive commentary,” to use the lingo of the day.

Hearing the voices of well-known Indian public figures on the radio supporting the Allies, British administrators hoped, would help sway Indian opinion in Britain’s favor. As expected most Indians who agreed to speak on AIR on matters related to the WWII, were either notoriously anti-Congress or had opposed the Congress Party’s response to the war. For example, AIR devoted the week of June 11, 1940 to programs related to Italy’s participation in the war and the “the collapse of the French army.” Among the notable speakers featured that week were Sikander Hayat Khan, a Punjabi politician who later opposed Gandhi’s Quit India movement and Sir Cowasji Jehangir, a prominent member of the Bombay Parsi community who openly clashed with the Congress Party’s two most respected Parsi members, Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozesha Mehta.<sup>113</sup> In addition to Indian public figures, AIR also brought in British administrators to its studios to speak on war-related matters. For example, the Viceroy of India, The Marquess of Linlithgow, gave a speech on May 26, 1940 titled, “Unity, Courage, and Faith.” His message was translated to Hindustani and broadcast from all AIR stations.

AIR also put out programs to translate the war to Indian audiences. For example, on the week of the June 11, 1940, AIR put out a series of radio programs “devoted to

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<sup>112</sup> Copy of an express letter, from Baluchistan Quetta to Foreign Office in New Delhi, October 20, 1939, BBC Indian language services to India, L/I/1/784, IO.

<sup>113</sup> Report on broadcasting in India, December 16, 1940, Home, Political, 52/8 1938, NAI.



talks, discussions and plays bearing on the situations created by Italy's participation in the war and by the collapse of the French army."<sup>114</sup> On September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1940, the first anniversary of the war, AIR broadcast a series of programs that put the war in perspective for the benefit of Indian audiences. India's Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Robert Cassels, was the featured speaker. This program was meant to be a sort of radio "teach-in" about the first year of the war in Europe. British administrators hoped that these kinds of "educational" programs would not only dissuade people from believing rumors spread by German radio, but also convince Indian listeners to support the Allies in the war.<sup>115</sup>

AIR also broadcast recordings from Indian soldiers serving in the Middle East or other theaters of war. To emphasize the direct connection to its audience, AIR made a point of announcing the names of soldiers in advance, so that families and neighbors could prepare to listen to their loved ones' messages. H.R. Luthra, later director of AIR argues that the programs were "listened [to] eagerly," and were among AIR's most popular productions.<sup>116</sup>

AIR also put out news programs and commentary on war-related issues especially designed for rural audiences. The CNO put together a daily news bulletin in Hindustani for north Indian rural audiences.<sup>117</sup> A program called *Jag Beeti* (what happened in the world) offered rural listeners a review of "the main events of the past week." The purpose

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*, 133-34. I have not, however, found listings of these broadcasts in available AIR schedules.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Delhi Rural Broadcasting Scheme for the year 1944-45, Government of India reports on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO.

of this program was to provide the necessary background information to help rural listeners better understand news bulletins.<sup>118</sup> One officer, perhaps more wishfully than truthfully, remarked that “during the last few weeks the Delhi Province has been largely free of disturbing rumors regarding the war which appear to have been common in other parts of India, and I believe that this is due in no small measure to the broadcasting schemes.”<sup>119</sup>

As the popularity of the German news increased, AIR also put out radio programs that directly responded to enemy broadcasts. In May 1940, AIR inaugurated *Berlin kī xabar* (News from Berlin). This Hindustani-language program discussed news from German broadcasts and pointed out biases and fallacies. *Berlin kī xabar* aired from the Delhi, Bombay, Lahore, and Lucknow stations. In August of 1940 the Calcutta station inaugurated a Bengali version of the program, and a Marathi version went on the air shortly thereafter.<sup>120</sup> There was some debate within AIR circles regarding the effectiveness of these types of counter-propaganda programs. Some sensed, and perhaps were ultimately right, that programs like *Berlin kī xabar* were counterproductive because they inadvertently encouraged Indian listeners to tune in to enemy wavelengths.

As AIR increased its programming, it could not avoid being hobbled by language controversies. “The protagonists of Hindi” repeatedly remarked that AIR’s “Hindustani”

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Report on the working of the Delhi Rural Broadcasting scheme for the period of October 1941 to March 1944, Government of India reports on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

leaned closer toward Urdu.<sup>121</sup> In many ways Fielden had set the stage for these problems. Shortly after his arrival in India, he hired two brothers—both educated at Government College Lahore—who in the coming years not only greatly influenced AIR’s broadcasting style, but also the organization’s atmosphere and reputation.

Ahmed Shah Bukhari and Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari belonged to a well-to-do North Indian Muslim family. The elder of the brothers, Ahmed Shah Bukhari, had been a professor of English at the Government College of Lahore and was also a relatively well-known satirical Urdu writer.<sup>122</sup> The younger brother, Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari, had been a translator for the army, but was also an Urdu literature enthusiast and had shown great interest in theater and acting more specifically. The two brothers quickly rose through the ranks of All India Radio—whether that was due to their hard work and talent or through their proximity to Fielden is hard to judge.<sup>123</sup> (Many suspected that Fielden and Zulfiqar Bukhari were in a romantic relationship). Together the Bukhari brothers not only promoted a highbrow and literary style of broadcasting, but, in the opinion of many, also favored Urdu at the expense of Hindi.

AIR organized an “ad hoc committee” to evaluate its Hindustani broadcasts. It invited representatives of the *Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan* (Hindi Literature Convention) and

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<sup>121</sup> Memorandum by the Department of information and Broadcasting, Questions affecting the Department of Information and Broadcasting, 1945, L/I/1/1132, IO.

<sup>122</sup> He was known as Patras Bukhari. His best known work is *Pitras ke Mazāmīn*, which is collection of essays published in 1927.

<sup>123</sup> Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, 195. The two brothers recruited a number of influential writers including Rajinder Singh Bedi, Saadat Hasan Manto, Shaukat Tanvi, and Krishan Chandar among others.

the *Anjuman-e-Taraqqī Urdu* (Organization for the Advancement of Urdu).<sup>124</sup> AIR also organized a series of talks under the title “What is Hindustani?” Among the invited guest were Maulvi Abdul Haq from the *Anjuman-e-Taraqqī Urdu*, Rajendra Prasad, the future president of independent India, and Acharya Narendra Dev, a leading socialist leader. Meetings and deliberations, however, did little to ease the controversy.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, German radio, away from the chaos, was able to effectively take advantage of Hindustani’s lingua franca status to reach a widespread population in North, Eastern, and Western India, who could understand, if not necessarily speak, Hindustani.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued that the outbreak of WWII transformed radio’s role in Indian society. Prior to the war, the colonial government was suspicious of the new medium. Eager to keep the increasingly vociferous nationalist leaders off the airwaves, it banned political broadcasts of all kinds and provided meager funding to the national radio network. After the outbreak of WWII and largely in response to the influx of Axis radio propaganda in Indian languages, the colonial government mobilized radio to garner Indian support for Allied forces. As the war progressed, AIR increasingly assumed the role of a propaganda machine. However, it was also during this period that listeners learned they could tune in to foreign radio stations for alternative sources of information. In Chapter Two, I provide a detailed analysis of the Indian revolutionary and Axis-

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<sup>124</sup> Report on the development of Broadcasting 1944, Government of India reports on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO.

<sup>125</sup> Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*, 257. For a more detailed account of the Hindi-Urdu controversy in AIR see Lelyveld, “Colonial knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani.”

sympathizer Subhas Chandra Bose's radio broadcasts from Germany and Southeast Asia. I argue that by listening to these broadcasts—as well as the rumor and gossip that surrounded them—many Indians were able to question British accounts of events and, as the Bengali observer explained, “draw their own conclusions.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Broadcasting in India, Correspondence regarding, Appendix III, Notes by a Bengali Observer, L/I/1/445, IO.

## Chapter Two: “Quisling Radio”

The title of the November 21, 1943 issue of *Newsweek* was “Axis Propaganda Barrage Badgers Britain on India.” It meant to catch readers’ ears more than their eyes. The article’s prose also had a sonorous appeal: “Out of the ether a chilling voice whistled. Dial twirlers, halting at a German beam, caught the cold fury of a man who had spent more than a dozen years in empire jails.” The article went on to describe an Indian revolutionary’s radio campaign from Germany. “This voice belonged to Subhas Chandra Bose, the most implacable British-hater of all Hindu radical leaders, now a prized specimen in Hitler’s covey of Quislings.”<sup>127</sup> Like most American and British media then, *Newsweek* played up Bose’s alliance with the Nazis, calling him a quisling or collaborator and emphasized his demonic radicalism. This particular account, however, stands out from others in that it highlights the significance of Bose’s radio addresses. Bose’s broadcasts to India, the *Newsweek* article explained, demonstrate how radio had escaped the grasp of British authorities.

While to some in Europe and the United States, Bose might have been a quisling or collaborator, in India, he was a revered anti-colonial leader.<sup>128</sup> Bose chose a very different path from fellow Indian nationalist leaders. He allied with the Axis powers, and trained an army of liberators made up of Indian prisoners-of-war in Southeast Asia that at the height of the war fought alongside the Japanese, against the British army and its

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<sup>127</sup> “Axis Propaganda Barrage Badgers Britain on India,” *Newsweek*, November 21, 1943. Cited in Ranjan Borra, “The Image of Subhas Chandra Bose in American Journals During World War II,” *The Oracle* 1, no. 1 (1979): 20, Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata, India, NRB from hereon.

<sup>128</sup> Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 7.

allies. As the abovementioned *Newsweek* article makes clear, Bose was also the only Indian nationalist who effectively took his message to the airwaves.

Despite the wealth of writing on Bose's political career in India and abroad, there is little work on his radio broadcasts.<sup>129</sup> Few have pondered what it meant that Bose spoke on the radio, on what his radio broadcasts reveal about the flow of information in wartime India, or on what they tell us about his own politics, in particular his alliance with Axis countries. Part of the reason why scholars have paid little attention to Bose's radio is because they have de-emphasized, consciously or unconsciously, Bose's ties to the Nazi government and to the Axis powers more generally. It is however difficult, perhaps impossible, to study Bose's radio broadcasts without placing them in context of Axis radio propaganda in India.

This chapter focuses on the latter half of the war, when Japan's official entry into the war effectively brought the conflict to India's doorstep. I analyze how Bose used radio to reach compatriots and fellow nationalist leaders in India. The radio, I argue, allowed Bose to occupy a position simultaneously *inside* and *outside* of Indian affairs. I also pay careful attention to listening practices. Against the literature that has long associated listening with passivity, I demonstrate that during the war, listening to the radio—as well as to the rumors and gossip ignited by radio broadcasts—constituted a form of political action and protest.

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<sup>129</sup> The two main scholarly biographies of Subhas Chandra Bose are Leonard Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) and Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*.

## FROM CALCUTTA TO BERLIN

Bose's journey from his family home on 38/2 Elgin road in Calcutta to the heart of Berlin has acquired an almost mythical status. Bose's nephew, Sisir Bose, wrote an entire book about his uncle's "great escape" from the British yoke on Christmas Eve of 1940.<sup>130</sup> Here it suffices to note that on that night, Bose managed to deceive an entourage of British officers and escape house arrest. With the help of his teenaged nephew, Bose drove to a train station in the neighboring state of Bihar, boarded a train to Peshawar, and then made his way across the Indian border into Afghanistan, the last frontier of British rule. Bearing an Italian passport, he continued his travels across Afghanistan, through the Soviet Union, and finally reached Germany almost four months later in April 1941.<sup>131</sup>

From Berlin, Bose hoped to incite a revolution in India in two ways. The first is very well documented, and I will only discuss it briefly here. The second is the subject of this chapter. Bose wished to form a legion of Indian soldiers then held as prisoners-of-war in Germany and Italy. He believed that if he could break Indian soldiers' loyalty to the British crown, he would begin to chip away at what he deemed the British government's "last and strongest bastion of imperial control": the Indian Army.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, a revolution outside of India, Bose hoped, would serve as a "catalyst for another mass movement" inside India.<sup>133</sup> The second component of Bose's plan was to start a radio service to India from Europe. By then he had developed a keen taste for

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<sup>130</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 182-200; Sisir Kumar Bose, *The Great Escape* (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 2000).

<sup>131</sup> See Chapter 6 "One Man and World at War" in Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 180-201.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.



radio. Like many in India, he had followed Axis broadcasts closely and (rightly) predicted that the medium would play an increasingly important role in the war. As detailed in Chapter One, through a series of strict policies, the British had ensured that Indian nationalist leaders did not take their message to the airwaves. In Europe and with the help of Axis powers, Bose hoped to start a full-fledged anti-colonial radio campaign in India. While still in Kabul, he told the Italian ambassador that he was eager to launch “a special radio program of Free India” as soon as he reached Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>134</sup>

Bose’s desire to align with the Nazi government, which preached the superiority of the Aryan race, was from the onset contradictory. Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 further upset Bose’s plans.<sup>135</sup> The invasion put Bose, a fervent socialist and supporter of the Soviet Union, in an even more difficult position. He explained to Ribbentrop, from the German Foreign office, that only Adolf Hitler’s unambiguous public declaration in support of India’s independence could salvage the Nazi government’s image in India (and perhaps Bose felt his own image as well). Hitler, who felt little but disdain for the Indian nationalist movement, had no intention of making such a declaration, then or in the near future. Ribbentrop could only offer the disappointed Indian leader empty promises for a later declaration of support and a hefty sum of money to launch a Free India Center in Berlin that, among other things, would

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<sup>134</sup> Extract from Signor Prieto Quaroni report regarding Bose’s programs of achieving India’s independence with the help of Axis Nazis in T.R. Sareen, ed. *Subhas Chandra Bose and Nazi Germany* (New Delhi: Mouno Publishing House, 1996), 67-71.

<sup>135</sup> Reports about Bose’s meeting with Count Ciano, Rome July 5, 1941 in *ibid.*, 125-26. Bose was in Italy when he first learned of the Germany invasion of the Soviet Union.

include a radio station.<sup>136</sup> Bose accepted the monetary offer and, in the years to come, endeavored to justify that decision to compatriots—most prominently on the radio.

Bose learned that a Punjabi Muslim named Muhammad Iqbal Shedai had beaten him to both the prisoner-of-war and the radio ideas. With the support of the Italian government, Shedai founded the Centro Militare Italia in Rome, and recruited Indian soldiers from the prisoner-of-war camps in Italy. He also started a short-wave radio station called Radio Himalaya that broadcast to India.<sup>137</sup> Radio Himalaya's broadcasts from Italy were biting anti-Congress as well as anti-British and the German government suspected that his disdain for Gandhi and other members of the Congress Party actually alienated more listeners in India than it persuaded. Bose, nonetheless, made an effort to befriend Shedai and went to Italy. Shedai, who was envious of Bose's superior credentials in India and abroad, gave his Bengali compatriot the cold shoulder.<sup>138</sup> Bose, however, suspected that the Italian campaign would fall apart and not long after, his hunch proved correct. In 1942, following a mutiny by Indian soldiers, the Italian government shut down both Shedai's military center and radio station, leaving the platform open for the Bengali revolutionary.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> According to Milan Hauner, in May 1941 Ribbentrop offered Bose one million RM for propaganda activities in India, in addition to a personal allowance of RM 12,000 for Bose himself. Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 247. Hauner cites of 11 and 23/5/1941, German Foreign Office 4748 H/233373-5.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>138</sup> Shedai's account of his meeting with Bose. Refuses to cooperate with him, Rome, June 1, 1941, Foreign Office Archives Rome in Sareen, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Nazi Germany*, 117-18. For an account of this meeting see also Mukund R. Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era: Historical Reminiscences of the Fateful Years, 1937-47* (Bombay: Indo-Foreign Publications & Publicity, 1982), 334.

<sup>139</sup> Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, vol. 7, 422; Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 227.

Within weeks of Bose's arrival in Germany, he began recruiting Indian exiles from all over Europe to join the Free India Centre and help launch his radio station. Bose convinced A.C.N. Nambiar, who then resided in France and worked as a correspondent for several Indian newspapers, to join him in Berlin.<sup>140</sup> Among other Indians who joined the center and contributed to the radio stations were Girija Mookerjee, Mukund R. Vyas, Naidu Sharma, Habibur Rahman, Binu Banerjee, Promode Sen, Abid Hassan and M.N. Sultan.<sup>141</sup> Suresh Chandra and Bikam Johwry, like A.C.N. Nambiar, also came from France and joined Bose's team in Berlin.<sup>142</sup>

Bose called his radio station Azad Hind Radio (Free India). Azad Hind's premises were in the heart of Berlin, but its programs were aired to India from Huizen, a small coastal town in the Netherlands that housed a powerful 100 KW Phillips transmitter. The Dutch government had used this transmitter to broadcast to the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). After invading the Netherlands, the German government discovered that it could use the transmitter to reach audiences in British India and other parts of Asia. (The German Hindustani-language daily news broadcasts discussed in Chapter One were also broadcast with this transmitter.)<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, vol 7, 364.

<sup>141</sup> Alexander Werth and Walter Harbich, *Netaji in Germany: An Eye-Witness Account of Indian Freedom Struggle in Europe during World War II* (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1970), 29. Other names that Werth mentions, but I was unable to trace and verify, include Prof. Bhatta, Mama, and Majumdar.

<sup>142</sup> Girija K. Mookerjee, *Europe at War; Impressions of War, Netaji, and Europe* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1968), 211. Girija Mookerjee remembered that Azad Hind Radio staff constituted a diverse group with different interests, backgrounds, and political convictions. He also notes that most employees had little radio experience: "we were not experienced in radio work [...] and no one amongst us had any idea of planning and organization [of] a radio station." See *ibid.*, 199.

<sup>143</sup> Werth and Harbich, *Netaji in Germany*, 23.

Azad Hind made its first broadcast on October of 1941.<sup>144</sup> Just three months later, the station boasted more than twenty broadcasters and beamed three hours of news bulletins and commentary a day. Bose, however, refused to take to the airwaves and reveal his location to British intelligence until Hitler first made a public declaration in support of Indian independence.<sup>145</sup> Without the voice of its main leader, Azad Hind was confined to broadcast news and commentary about the war from an Axis perspective.<sup>146</sup>

The German government provided broadcasting staff with daily news summaries of events from various Axis-supporting news agencies. Azad Hind radio personnel selected stories they felt would interest Indian listeners, translated them into Indian languages, and added interpretive comments to help listeners contextualize events. Azad Hind Radio complemented the German radio service in Hindustani, which continued to run after the birth of Azad Hind Radio.<sup>147</sup>

Whereas German broadcasts to India had focused on developments of the war, Azad Hind Radio covered events in India more thoroughly. The station's personnel tuned in to the BBC and AIR broadcasts and jotted down interesting stories. They later reworked the stories and added commentary they felt would help listeners in India better "interpret" events. Girija Mookerjee, who was in charge of Azad Hind's "listening in" team remarked that this method of collecting information made it possible for broadcasters to report and comment about developments in India that German news

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<sup>144</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 225.

<sup>145</sup> Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 343.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Mookerjee, *Europe at War*, 212.

agencies did not cover. Listening to the radio, as I elaborate in succeeding sections, was a form of political action that allowed people, even if in a limited way, to make sense of the war on their own terms. By listening to various radio stations Azad Hind broadcasters were able to assert some independence from the German government and from its information sources.<sup>148</sup> This, however, also meant that Azad Hind Radio broadcasters often aired news items without being able to verify their authenticity. Nevertheless, as we might expect, Azad Hind employees were less concerned with providing “objective reporting” or “up-to-date” news than with teaching listeners how to “contextualize the news within political and ideological frameworks.”<sup>149</sup>

Azad Hind Radio personnel also developed strategies to ensure that listeners remained tuned to their station’s wavelength for hours at a time, helping them increase their chances of catching Azad Hind’s news broadcasts. For example, in addition to news broadcasts, the station put out several hours of music broadcasts. Azad Hind’s employees recorded BBC Indian music programs directly from their own radio receivers, changed the announcements, and then rebroadcast the re-worked music programs back to India!<sup>150</sup> These broadcasts most likely consisted of gramophone records, including film songs, but also popular semi-classical music such as the songs of Gauhar Jan, then widely available on gramophone records.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Nicole Greenspan, “News and the Politics of Information in the Mid Seventeenth Century: the Western Design and the Conquest of Jamaica,” *History Workshop Journal* 69, no. 1 (2010): 2.

<sup>150</sup> Werth and Harbich, *Netaji in Germany*, 28.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Vikram Sampath, *“My name is Gauhar Jaan!”: the Life and Times of a Musician* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2010).

Azad Hind Radio's primary broadcast language was Hindustani. Although a native speaker of Bengali, when leading the Congress Party, Bose had passionately advocated for Hindustani as a national tongue. He had advocated writing Hindustani in Roman script to avoid any kind of religious connotations attached to the Devanagari and Nastaliq scripts. Moreover, in later years, Hindustani became the official language of the Azad Hind government in exile in Southeast Asia.<sup>152</sup> In addition to Hindustani, Azad Hind Radio also aired programs in other Indian languages including Bengali, Persian, Tamil, Telugu, Pashto, and English.<sup>153</sup> In this manner, the station adhered to what Alok Rai once described as the "ideology of Hindustani," which presented Hindustani as a lingua franca that would coexist, rather than overpower, other regional languages. Hindustani could be understood, if not always spoken, throughout Northern India and parts of Eastern and Western India. As explained in Chapter One, All India Radio got bogged down in the religiously tainted Hindi-Urdu controversy. In contrast, Axis radio stations including Azad Hind Radio, away from the chaos in India, could effectively take advantage of Hindustani's lingua-franca status.

Mukund Vyas and other Azad Hind employees claim that, with the exception of some early "pin-pricks and minor irritations," the Nazi government "maintained a policy

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<sup>152</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 225.

<sup>153</sup> Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 345. The work was divided among the staff. Often Azad Hind Radio employees had to broadcast in languages that they did not feel entirely comfortable speaking or writing. Girija Mookerjee, for example, helped prepare Bose's Bengali speeches. Mookerjee explains, he had not written in Bengali in "quite a number of years" and that he, at first, struggled quite a bit. Mookerjee, *Europe at War*, 199.

of non-interference” and let Indian broadcasters say what they wished on the airwaves.<sup>154</sup> Vyas goes as far as to maintain that the broadcasting staff of Azad Hind Radio “not infrequently reproduced Allied claims” and ignored “German counterclaims.”<sup>155</sup> It is hard to ignore the retrospective defensiveness of their accounts. We do know, however, that many of the German Foreign Ministry officers directly associated with the Free India Center were not only sympathetic to the Indian cause, but also critical of Hitler and the Nazi Government. For example, Adam von Trott zu Solz, one of Bose’s closest associates in the German Foreign Office, supported the Indian liberation movement and had long opposed Hitler. Trott zu Solz was later imprisoned and executed by the Nazi government for his political views.<sup>156</sup>

Even if Azad Hind Radio enjoyed some independence from the Nazi government, the station remained loyal to its German sponsors throughout the war. As Vyas remarks, even when Germany’s defeat was around the corner, the station did not waver from its mission: promoting the “liberation of the India *in alliance with Tripartite Powers*.”<sup>157</sup> Azad Hind’s message was profoundly contradictory. It claimed that the Nazi government was a champion of freedom because it supported the Indian nationalists and opposed British imperialism, but it made light of the Nazi government’s own expansionary ambitions and its overtly racist rhetoric. While Bose and others at Azad Hind Radio

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<sup>154</sup> Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 345.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>156</sup> For longer description of Solz’s contributions to Azad Hind Radio see Mookerjee, *Europe at War*, 197-98.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 199. Emphasis added.

would have been hard pressed to know the extent of the Nazi crimes at that time, they were surely aware of Nazi ideology and the dangers it presented.

## **WAR ON INDIA'S DOORSTEP**

Early in December of 1941, Japan bombed British and American bases in Southeast Asia and the Central Pacific. The best known of these attacks was the bombing of the American fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, but almost simultaneously Japan bombed British bases in Thailand, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Shortly thereafter, Britain, the United States, and China declared war on Japan. Japan's entry into the war signaled the beginning of a new chapter in WWII. From India's perspective the war now looked—and, crucially for our discussion here, sounded—entirely differently.

Japan joined Germany's radio campaign to India and began broadcasting daily Hindustani-language news and commentary programs. One report published in 1943 explained, "The German transmissions are probably still first favorites, but the Japanese challenge during the past year has grown strongly." The report remarked that the Japanese had "developed broadcasting from Saigon with great ability, especially in Hindustani."<sup>158</sup> But after the war reached India's doorstep, it was Bose's voice that stole the limelight.

Back in Germany, Bose closely followed developments of the war and concluded he could not afford to remain silent. Bose had been waiting for the declaration from Hitler that Hitler would never make. On the 19th of February, 1942, Bose made his first

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<sup>158</sup> Number of receiver sets in India, statistics gathered by All India Radio, July 2, 1943, AIR and FEB Broadcasting organization, L/I/1/935, IO. The report notes that in January 1943 there were 162,000 licensed receiver sets in British India and 17,000 sets in Indian princely states.



broadcast. “This is Subhas Chandra Bose speaking to you over Azad Hind Radio. [...] [F]or about year I have waited in silence and patience for the march of events. And the hour has struck, I come forward to speak.”<sup>159</sup> He continued, “The fall of Singapore is an auspicious event which bears for India the promise of life and freedom.” Britain’s defeat in Singapore, he explained, signals “the collapse of the British Empire.”<sup>160</sup> Bose’s first radio speech was rebroadcast several times by German and Japanese stations—both foreign and domestic.<sup>161</sup> In the months to come, Bose took to the radio frequently and emphatically and used his medium skillfully.

On the airwaves, Bose assumed the position of both an insider and an outsider to Indian politics and affairs. Bose was the only Indian nationalist who was able to speak on the radio during WWII, and he was very conscious of his privileged position. He explained in a broadcast, “owing to war-time conditions prevailing in India, the voice of these freedom-loving Indians cannot cross the frontiers of that country.”<sup>162</sup> His task, he explained, in another radio address, was “to keep the outside world informed of all the facts of the Indian situation.”<sup>163</sup> On the airwaves, Bose explained, he represented India; as the radio had effectively made him an arbiter of Indian affairs.

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<sup>159</sup> Broadcast from Germany February 19, 1941 in Sisir Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Azad Hind: Writings and Speeches 1941-43* (London: Anthem Press London, 2002), 63-64. For a description of that speech see Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 366.

<sup>160</sup> Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 63-64.

<sup>161</sup> Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*, 7: 428. Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 355-56.

<sup>162</sup> Broadcast from Germany, February 19, 1941 in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 63-64.

<sup>163</sup> Broadcast from Germany, August 31, 1942 in *ibid.*, 139.

At the same time, when addressing compatriots back in India, Bose stressed that he could better judge the world situation than other Indian politicians because he had personally witnessed events in Europe and was *outside* of India. “I have *seen* with my own eyes and have *heard* with my own ears. I am therefore able to form an impartial and objective opinion as to what is happening.”<sup>164</sup> Bose reported to Indian audiences that while other Congress Party politicians languished in jail, he had been able to gain personal knowledge of world affairs and could therefore better assess the Axis leaders’ true intentions. He reassured listeners: “from my *intimate* knowledge of these three nations, I can assert [...] that they have nothing but sympathy and goodwill for India and for Indian independence.”<sup>165</sup> In other words the radio allowed Bose to simultaneously “live” in two places.

Through the medium of radio, Bose could stay in conversation with Indian leaders and express his opinion on matters while being thousands of miles away. During the Cripps Mission, for example, Bose took to the airways many times and tried to influence Indian leaders' decisions.<sup>166</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps, an Labour Party British politician, came to India to negotiate an agreement with the nationalist leaders. Cripps promised to give India dominion status after the war in exchange of Indian leaders’ support for the British war effort. On the radio, Bose urged politicians to reject the Cripps mission.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 69. Emphasis added.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>166</sup> See *ibid.*, 84-110.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 73. Emphasis added.

Abul Kalam Azad, then the president of the Congress Party, believed that Bose's broadcasts had had a powerful effect on Gandhi. Bose's radio broadcasts from Germany, Azad explained, had unconsciously colored Gandhi's view about the whole war situation and spurred Gandhi to take on a more radical campaign. In the summer of 1942, Gandhi called for the British to "quit India" once and for all and warned his followers that "rivers of blood may flow" in the months to come.<sup>168</sup>

There were, of course, serious limitations to the connections that radio offered. Bose could not simultaneously inhabit two places. It was, ironically, during the Quit India campaign when Bose's awkward position—6,748 kilometers away from India—became most apparent. Like in the past, he took on the dual role of "insider" and "outsider" to Indian politics, but this time his medium seemed inadequate. Bose informed Indian listeners of how the outside world "saw" and "heard" events in India: "friends, [...] you will certainly feel encouraged to hear that India today [is] on the front-page of the world press and Indian reports [are] the most interesting items of radio broadcasts all over the world."<sup>169</sup> At the same time, Bose spoke as if he was personally witnessing events in India, but he could no longer hide his unfamiliarity with the internal situation.<sup>170</sup> He gave vague instructions to followers in India: "organize processions for entering and occupying government institutions—like law-courts, secretariat buildings, etc., with a

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<sup>168</sup>Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988), 40. Cited in Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 217.

<sup>169</sup>Broadcast in English from Berlin, August 19, 1942 Time 8-15 pm Wavelength 19.56 cm. Documents from the National Archives of India related to Bose, NRB.

<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*

view to rendering all work impossible there.”<sup>171</sup> He continued, “I would like to point out that this campaign should be carried on for weeks and months. Activities should be shifted from place to place if necessary in order to avoid being crushed.”<sup>172</sup> His vague directions betrayed his insecurities as Bose must have wanted to be in India. They also pointed to the limits of radio as a communication technology. Ultimately, however, Bose could not inhabit two places simultaneously, even with radio’s help.

By the end of 1942, Bose had already made plans to leave Germany. He wrote to Ribbentrop: “I could do much more for my country if I would be somewhere near India.”<sup>173</sup> Bose wished to be in Southeast Asia and wanted to raise a liberation army that would make its way to Delhi across India’s border with Burma. After months of figuring out diplomatic logistics, on February 8, 1942, Bose embarked on a submarine trip that was to take him to Tokyo.<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile Azad Hind Radio continued to broadcast on a daily basis until Germany’s final defeat, providing news of the war from an Axis perspective. British sources noted that the station, despite losing its most important voice, remained a favorite among Indian listeners.<sup>175</sup>

## **A RADIO CAMPAIGN FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA**

On June 21, 1943, Bose spoke on the radio once more: “countrymen and friends, in April you last heard my voice over another radio in another part of the world. Now, I

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<sup>171</sup> Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 129.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>173</sup> Handwritten letter from Subhas Chandra Bose to Ribbentrop, December 5, 1942, Documents from the National Archives of India related to Bose, NRB.

<sup>174</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 232.

<sup>175</sup> Statistics gathered by All India Radio, July 2, 1943, AIR and FEB Broadcasting organization, L/I/1/935, IO.

am in Tokyo.”<sup>176</sup> In the months to come, Bose continued to reach out to followers back in India through the medium of radio. He broadcast from radio stations in Tokyo, and later he traveled to Singapore, Thailand, and Burma and broadcast from station in these places. As he had done in his broadcasts from Berlin, Bose sought to justify his alliance with the Axis powers. In “this titanic conflict our national interest clearly lies in allying ourselves with those young and virile nations, who are determined to overthrow the status quo.”<sup>177</sup> He continued, “the Axis Powers in general, and Japan in particular, are the best friends and allies that the Indian people now have for their struggle for freedom.”<sup>178</sup>

Shortly after reaching Singapore, Bose took over the Indian National Army (INA), a regiment of Indian British Army soldiers who had been captured by Japanese forces in Singapore. In large part due to Bose's dynamic personality, thousands of Indian civilians in Malaysia and Singapore joined the INA.<sup>179</sup>

From Southeast Asia, Bose essentially gave up on the idea of influencing Indian politicians. Instead, he used radio to ensure that the news of his military campaign in Southeast Asia reached India, trespassing “the thick layers of British censorship.”<sup>180</sup> Many of Bose's speeches to INA soldiers were beamed to India, as were speeches by other INA soldiers and generals. For example, Lakshmi Sahgal, an INA female officer

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<sup>176</sup> Broadcast from Tokyo on June 21, 1943 in Subhas Chandra Bose, Sisir Kumar Bose, and Sugata Bose, *Chalo Delhi: Writings and Speeches, 1943-1945*, vol. 12 (Netaji Research Bureau, 2007), 20-21.

<sup>177</sup> Broadcast from Tokyo on June 24, 1943 in *ibid.*, 30-32.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*. For an in-depth description of the INA see Chapter 8, “Roads to Delhi,” 231 -304. For more details on the INA also see Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

<sup>180</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 274.

who led a women's brigade, spoke on the radio: "the voice of a woman [...] may come as a surprise to you. But remember this. Ours is no Mercenary Army. Ours is an Army of liberation." She remarked, "the present world situation has given us Indians in East Asia this long awaited opportunity, and we are determined to make the fullest possible use of it."<sup>181</sup>

The INA also had a musical ensemble made up of soldier musicians.<sup>182</sup> V.N. Upadhyay from Azad Hind's 920 Unit wrote the lyrics to a few songs. One song was called "Šahīdān-e-vatan" (martyrs of the country), and its chorus line was "Āzādī khel mat samjho baṛī muškil se miltī hai" (Don't think freedom is a game, it's difficult to achieve it). Upadhyay wrote the lyrics for a song "Āzād karenge" (we will liberate). These songs and others composed by the INA musical ensemble were meant to boost the morale of INA soldiers, while also spreading the INA's message on the airwaves.<sup>183</sup>

### **AIR PROPAGANDA AGAINST BOSE**

When Bose first took to the airwaves, a colonial officer remarked: "[Bose] is now being used to broadcast from North Germany; but his political career in India was a failure, and his voice will add little force to the clamour with which Axis stations attempt to corrupt Indian opinion."<sup>184</sup> By the time Bose began broadcasting from Japan, British administrators had no choice but to acknowledge the "danger" that his broadcasts posed

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<sup>181</sup> Lakshmi Sahgal, "Broadcast by Capt. Mrs. Lakshmi," *Young India* 1, no. 42 (1943), NRB.

<sup>182</sup> The INA orchestra reassembled in Delhi after Partition and recorded some of their most popular songs. Gramophone records of these songs are available at the NRB.

<sup>183</sup> New Songs Rally, No 10A/APS/46, Documents from the National Archives, Netaji Research Bureau.

<sup>184</sup> Confidential appreciation of the political situation in India, May 26, 1943, Political situation in India since the outbreak of war L/I/1/777, IO.

to the British establishment in India and in the months to come, AIR staff began broadcasting programs that both directly and indirectly counteracted Bose's radio addresses.

AIR developed a set of guidelines that broadcasters could use to discredit Bose's radio addresses. AIR broadcasts should stress that "Bose and his INA are propaganda stunts which deceive no one in India, however much they may deceive the Japanese and those Indians overseas misguided enough to believe in Bose." AIR broadcasters could also directly attack Bose's character" exposing him as "selfish and ambitious and an actor who loves to hear his own voice" willing to "sacrifice all other interests to satisfy his ambitions."<sup>185</sup>

AIR programs also criticized Japan's ambition in the region. AIR news programs emphasized that the "so-called independence of Burma" was "a sham and another propaganda stunt—a bite in the trap for Indians." AIR broadcasters also remarked that the Japanese had imperial ambitions in India. One administrator even recommend that AIR should stress that "the people of India have no intention of allowing the progress they have already made toward self-government to be wrecked by Japanese fascism."<sup>186</sup>

By then, Axis radio broadcasts had already compelled the colonial administrators to devote resources to the war on the airwaves. In what became a complete reversal of AIR's pre-war policies, the national network began to broadcast news and commentary

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<sup>185</sup> Appendix B, Anti JIFC propaganda, War Series, L/I/I/1084, IO.

<sup>186</sup> Minutes and papers connected with the meetings of the Home Department and Department of Information and Broadcasting about their views on internal propaganda. Statement by D.M.I. on policy followed as regards India in broadcasts to Japanese troops and Indian language broadcasts to Indians in enemy occupied territories, War, External Affairs, 59(50)-W, NAI.

about events related the nationalist movement. In fact, AIR sent its own correspondents to cover negotiations between nationalist parties and the colonial Government of India.<sup>187</sup> One official report noted that AIR's recent ventures into journalism enabled the organization to offer listeners "a prompt objective account" of nationalist negotiations.<sup>188</sup> Of course, to many Indian listeners, AIR's coverage was far from "objective."<sup>189</sup> What is clear, however, is that in the last years of the war AIR moved away from solely broadcasting "international news" and began paying attention to what one official described as "news of all-India importance."<sup>190</sup>

Japan's victories in the East brought other changes in AIR's programming. AIR staff judged that news provided by private news agencies, which focused mostly on the events in Europe, were insufficient. AIR made the very bold move of employing its own journalists and correspondents.<sup>191</sup> AIR personnel reported about events in Burma, China, Japan, and Indonesia.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Report of the Delhi Rural Broadcasting scheme for the second half of the calendar year 1944, Government of India reports on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Basic plan for the development of Broadcasting in India (first draft November 1944; revised September 1945), Planning, Finance Department, 3(1)-PIII, NAI.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Report of the Delhi Rural Broadcasting scheme for the second half of the calendar year 1944, Government of India reports on the development of broadcasting, L/I/1/967, IO. See also H. R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Government of India New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986).



## LISTENING AS POLITICAL ACTION

Scholarship on the public sphere defines agency as “speaking up or finding a voice,” but rarely considers listening as an action in and of itself.<sup>193</sup> As Kate Lacey warns us, equating listening with “passive reception fails to give credit to the listener” for engaging in “the critical activity of reflection and critique.” Part of the problem, of course, is that it is remarkably difficult to study listening, especially historically. Whereas literary critics have long emphasized reading as an action in and of itself, cultural studies scholars have largely ignored the agency of the listener.<sup>194</sup> During WWII, listening to the radio took on a strong political character. As the Bengali observer introduced in Chapter One explained, people listened to Axis and Allied stations “to draw their own conclusions” about the events within and outside of India. In this sense, listening to the radio was far from passive; it was a way to question colonial accounts of events.

Frantz Fanon was one of the first to alert scholars to the idea of listening-as-resistance.<sup>195</sup> As a practicing psychiatrist, Fanon was particularly sensitive to listening.<sup>196</sup> In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon argued that before the revolution, Algerians rejected the radio altogether. The radio was an instrument of colonial society, which provided the French ruling class with a link to the homeland. During the revolution, Fanon argues, the

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<sup>193</sup> Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), Kindle edition, Loc 3870.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, Loc 2966.

<sup>195</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980). Rebecca Scales makes this point in Rebecca P. Scales, “Subversive Sound: Transnational Radio, Arabic Recordings, and the Dangers of Listening in French Colonial Algeria, 1934–1939,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 02 (2010): 386.

<sup>196</sup> Ian Baucom, “Frantz Fanon’s Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening,” *Contemporary Literature* 42, no. 1 (2001): 15.

radio became a “weapon of anti-colonial resistance” as Algerians tuned to the voices of the liberation movement. Recent research has shown that Fanon's assessment is too simplistic.<sup>197</sup> Algerians tuned to foreign radio stations before the Algerian revolution and developed radio listening habits prior to the revolution. Yet, Fanon's idea of listening-as-resistance is valuable because it attaches agency to the act of listening.

Listening-as-resistance need not mean simply tuning in to anti-British radio broadcasts. Listening-as-resistance means using the radio to acquire information and to question colonial power. This is precisely how Bose himself understood the power of radio in wartime India. In a speech from Tokyo, Bose remarked: “Radio broadcasting has now enabled people in every corner of the world to listen to both versions of the story on every point. Moreover the Indian public [...] has now become extremely cautious, and is not likely to be influenced at all by one-sided propaganda.”<sup>198</sup>

To understand the power of listening we might begin by commenting on Bose's own listening practices. Bose was an avid radio listener long before he became a broadcaster. During the weeks following the outbreak of the war and the Indian viceroy's controversial declaration of war, Bose, like many others in India, closely followed radio broadcasts from Axis and Allied stations. In fact, the excuse that his younger and more technology-savvy nephew, Sisir, was helping Bose tune to stations from across the globe allowed the two to spend many hours together planning an escape route, without eliciting

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<sup>197</sup> See Scales, "Subversive Sound," 414-15.

<sup>198</sup> Reports of broadcasts from Japanese and Japanese controlled radio stations regarding Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose's arrival in Tokyo from Germany and the text of Mr. Bose's speech from Tokyo radio on June 21, 1943, Home Political, 1/6/1943 poll, NAI.

suspicion from either British spies or from nosy relatives, whom they preferred to keep uninformed about escape plans.<sup>199</sup>

After Bose left India for Europe, he continued to listen to the radio zealously. Mukund R. Vyas, one of Bose's closest associates in Berlin, described Bose's passion for radio news: "I have yet to come across a person so devoted to radio news and commentaries."<sup>200</sup> Bose knew the timings of various stations by heart, and he never missed a transmission he deemed important. If he could not find time to tune in or if two or more programs' timings coincided, Bose would ask an associate to listen and take extensive notes. Vyas also recalled that Bose more than once called at an untoward hour of the night to discuss what so-and-so had said on the radio. A half-asleep Vyas had no choice but to pretend he too found the transmission terribly interesting. Even in the battlefield in Burma, when Bose clearly had many more pressing concerns, he followed radio news and reports closely. A soldier named Tara Chand listened day and night to the radio and prepared detailed summaries of transmissions that Bose later read and analyzed.<sup>201</sup>

Moreover, Bose's radio speeches were filled with listening references. He often quoted the BBC and AIR, which he had begun calling Anti-India Radio and Bluff and Bluster Corporation. In June 1943, Bose explained on the radio that "the Anti-India Radio" claims that "I was forced to resign from the Congress Party." Nothing could be

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<sup>199</sup> Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 185.

<sup>200</sup> Mukund R. Vyas, *Passage Through a Turbulent Era*, 312.

<sup>201</sup> The personal staff, household and private affairs of S.C. Bose, Appendix A to CSDIC (I) 2 Sec report no. 996 Documents from the National Archives of India ordered by Sugata Bose, NRB.

further from the truth; “everybody knows I was elected president of the Congress Party.”<sup>202</sup> In another broadcast, Bose noted that his trip to Tokyo had been a “slap on the face” of the British government. He argued that the latest AIR broadcast claiming that he had left Berlin due to differences with the German government was a pathetic attempt to conceal the British government’s embarrassment at being unable to stop one man from traveling across the world.<sup>203</sup> Bose also directly responded to the BBC and AIR’s broadcasts in his various radio speeches. Some “of my British listeners in the offices of the BBC have been upset that I have not yet redeemed my promise to return home and participate in the final phase of our struggle. [...] I would like to advise them to have some patience.”<sup>204</sup>

Bose listened to British broadcasts “against the grain” and encouraged his followers in India to do the same. For example, in June of 1943, he explained “if one were to listen to the broadcasts from England after the campaign in Tunisia [...] one would think that the Anglo-American forces have already won the war.”<sup>205</sup> In reality, Bose noted, the Allied forces are as far from winning the war in 1943 as they were in 1940. What these “propaganda tactics” in fact reveal, Bose told Indian listeners, is that the Allied countries “badly need some success, however insignificant, to bolster up the sinking morale of their people.”<sup>206</sup> During the Quit India campaign, Bose directed his compatriots to tune in to Colonel Britton programs. Britton gave British soldiers specific

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<sup>202</sup> Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 255.

<sup>203</sup> Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 256; Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 256.

<sup>204</sup> Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 171.

<sup>205</sup> Broadcast from Tokyo, June 21, 1943 in Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 20-21.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

instructions on how to quell rebellions. Listening to his transmissions, Bose explained, could help rebels in India preempt British responses and better plan their strategy.<sup>207</sup> Bose also paid close attention to the tone and character of broadcasts. For example, after listening to the speech by Lord Wavell in June of 1945, Bose concluded: “the manner and tone of the Viceroy’s speech gave one the impression that he himself had very little hope that nationalists in India would accept this offer.”<sup>208</sup>

As we might expect, Bose stressed that the most important form of listening-as-resistance was to tune to Axis radio and in particular to his own speeches. Tuning to radio stations was not always easy. While in Asia Bose spoke from various radio stations, in Japan, Singapore, Burma, and Thailand. It was not uncommon for Axis radio to air recordings of Bose’s various addresses. For example, Azad Hind broadcasters in Germany recorded Bose’s speeches from Asia directly from their receivers and rebroadcasted them back to India. Nonetheless, to tune to Bose’s voice on the airwaves was no easy task. It meant that listeners had to constantly fiddle with their receivers to catch the right wave. It also meant that they had to listen to “the talk of the town” to know which station to catch.<sup>209</sup>

## **RUMOR IN LIFE AND DEATH**

Fanon’s essay also points to the ways in which radio integrated itself into oral forms of communications. Fanon explains, “Every morning the Algerian would

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<sup>207</sup> Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 128.

<sup>208</sup> Statement broadcast by the Provincial Government of Azad Hind from Saigon, June 18, 1945 in Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 333.

<sup>209</sup> File 114/43-Poll. (I) September 1, 1943, IO. Cited in Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 250.

communicate as a result of his hours of listening in. [...] He would counter the official affirmation of the occupier, the resounding bulletins of the adversary, with official statements issued by the revolutionary command.”<sup>210</sup> Listening as a form of political action meant not only listening to radio broadcasts, but also listening to the talk around and partaking in the gossip. I make this last point with caution. We must be careful not to assume that the only way listening can take on a political character is by becoming talk. Instead, what I wish to emphasize here is that in late colonial India “listening” and “speaking” were not so far from each other as our present day understanding of the public sphere might suggest. Indeed as Luise White explains in her field-changing book on rumor in colonial Africa, what is particular about rumors is that their listeners and their talkers become one in the same—to talk is to listen.<sup>211</sup>

If rumors had worried British officials in the early years of the war, after Japan’s entry into the war, the British felt that rumors had become a pandemic of disproportionate dimensions that they could do little to control. General Slim, the famous commander of the British 14<sup>th</sup> Army, noted that the general atmosphere in eastern India in 1942 was characterized by “restlessness, which was fanned by fantastic rumors and worked on by unscrupulous propaganda.”<sup>212</sup> A police report from the United Provinces explained: “although 1942 was the third of the war years, it was during this year that more direct reactions to the war became perceptible for the first time in the United Provinces.” The

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<sup>210</sup> Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 86.

<sup>211</sup> Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in East and Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 30.

<sup>212</sup> William Joseph Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, (Dehra Dun: Natraj Publisher, 1986), 131. Cited in Indivar Kamtekar, “The Shiver of 1942,” *Studies in History* 18, no. 1 (2002): 85.

report went on to explain, “the vague feeling of insecurity, which had previously been the general response to war conditions, sharpened rapidly to a feeling much more acute [...]”<sup>213</sup>

Of course radio broadcasts were not the only sources of rumor, nor always the main source. After Japan conquered Burma, the British government rescued the European community in Burma and assured that it safely arrived in India by plane or train. In contrast, the 600,000 Indians residing in Burma had to trek through the “mud and green hell of high, forested passes of Manipur and Assam.”<sup>214</sup> It was an awful journey and thousands died on the way of disease, exhaustion, and hunger, but those who did make it home brought with them stories of Japan’s might. The Japanese, they assured their relatives and friends, would soon invade India, and Japan was sure to win the world war. The journalist Frank Moraes described the atmosphere in India during the last years of the war in the following way: “in the then hothouse atmosphere” refugees’ “alarmist tales” of the “prowess of the Japanese military machine [...] unleashed more panic and despondency.”<sup>215</sup>

Rumors “directly traceable to enemy broadcasts,”<sup>216</sup> however, posed a special challenge to British authorities because these maintained some of the liveliness and immediacy of original broadcasts. That Bose had spoken directly to his countrymen on

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<sup>213</sup> *United Provinces Police Administration Report, 1942*, V/24/3177, IO. Cited in Kamtekar, “The shiver of 1942.”

<sup>214</sup> Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945*, xxx.

<sup>215</sup> Frank Moraes, *Witness to an Era: India 1920 to Present Day* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 102-3. Cited in Kamtekar, “The shiver of 1942,” 84.

<sup>216</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc.: BBC broadcasts in Arabic, L/PS/12/4132, IO.

the radio was central to the story that circulated. For example, on August 1943, Bose broadcast a proposal to send one hundred thousand tons of rice to Bengal to help ease the effect of the terrible famine that engulfed his native state. He asked the Viceroy of India, by then Lord Wavell, to accept the offer since “hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children would be saved from starvation.” Word of Bose’s proposal spread throughout India. A few days later, British intelligence reports stated that the “latest Bose rumour” was that he had announced on the radio that he had made preparations to send rice to Bengal.<sup>217</sup>

Placing radio within the system of oral communication forces us to question assumptions about how the medium reaches out and connects with its listeners. Kate Lacey in *Listening Publics* argues that, “despite the utopian and ‘collectivist’ discourses that surrounded the emergence of radio there arose the paradoxical situation of a predominantly *privatized* modern public characteristically encouraging public life within domestic space.”<sup>218</sup> Lacey argues that in the end radio listening was “domesticated.” As evidence of this trend, she points to the BBC’s 1930 “National Radio Week” slogan: “Go Home and Listen!” This slogan, she maintains, makes it clear that BBC’s goals of “informing, educating, and entertaining” the British *public* would be accomplished within the four walls of the home. The story of the privatization, or we might say domestication of radio’s audiences, does indeed seem to be indisputable when one looks at sources from

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<sup>217</sup> File 114/43-Poll. (I) September 1, 1943, IO .Cited in Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, 250. Transcript of Bose’s speech regarding the famine is available in Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 79.

<sup>218</sup> Lacey, *Listening Publics*, Loc 2898. Emphasis added.



Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. But in wartime India, listening to radio was a public and collective act. More importantly, it was one that was deeply embedded in oral networks of communication.

It is telling that Bose never quite mastered what the historian Bruce Lenthall has called “ethereal intimacy”—that is, the art of fostering deep personal bonds with anonymous listeners. Bose’s broadcasts came far from resembling the famous “fireside chats” of Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose intimacy and personal touch not only brought “politics” to ordinary American homes, but also made him one of the most revered presidents of the United States.<sup>219</sup>

It is true that as the war progressed, Bose’s broadcasts increasingly took on a personal touch. From Tokyo Bose noted, “I would ask those countrymen to put their trust in me. For if the powerful British government that has persecuted me all my life and has imprisoned me eleven times, has not been able to demoralize me. No power on earth can hope to do so.”<sup>220</sup> When broadcasting from Burma, Bose described his surroundings in more vivid ways than before: “Here the weather is very pleasant and very agreeable. A feeling of supreme optimism pervades the whole atmosphere despite the boastful propaganda that the enemies have been indulging in for a long time and despite the occasional appearance of enemy airplanes.”<sup>221</sup> Bose, however, never quite abandoned the

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<sup>219</sup> Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). In particular, see Chapter 3, “Radio’s Democracy: The Politics of the Fireside,” 83 -114.

<sup>220</sup> Broadcast from Tokyo on June 24, 1943 in Bose, Bose, and Bose, *Chalo Delhi*, 9-14.

<sup>221</sup> Addresses to the INA and statements broadcast during the months of January -March 1944 in *ibid.*, 197-200.

militaristic tone that characterized his early broadcasts. Since information conveyed on the radio often traveled via word-of-mouth, ultimately it might have not mattered all that much that Bose was never able to convey a sense “ethereal intimacy” like other contemporary politicians from other regions.

Moreover, “rumors directly traceable to enemy broadcasts”<sup>222</sup> existed not only because of the limited number of receivers in India, but also because of the fragmented and often unreliable nature of information conveyed on the radio. Looking at radio coverage during the Cripps Mission in 1942 might help us understand this. When the final outcome of the Cripps Mission was still uncertain, Azad Hind inaugurated two separate radio services. These two stations technically broadcast from the same transmitter in the Netherlands as Azad Hind Radio, but announcers claimed to be speaking from India itself and took on different identities.<sup>223</sup> The National Congress Radio claimed to be located in North India and aimed to convince listeners that Cripps’s proposal was ultimately unsatisfactory. Mookerjee admitted that the station staff had to employ “greater powers of invention.” He explained, “we had to be up to date with Indian news which was very difficult and we had to give description of events in India *taxing the utmost of our imagination.*”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Broadcasting of anti-British propaganda in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, NWF and Central Asia, etc.: BBC broadcasts in Arabic,” L/PS/12/4132, IO.

<sup>223</sup> Underground stations were very common during WWII. See, for example, Derek Vaillant, “Occupied Listeners: The Legacies of Interwar Radio for France During World War II,” in *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. David Suisman and Susan Strasser (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010): 141-159.

<sup>224</sup> Mookerjee, *Europe at War*, 211. Emphasis added.

During the Cripps Mission, Azad Hind Radio's staff inaugurated another underground station: Azad Muslim Radio, which was also sometimes called Radio Waziristan. This station, which claimed to be in Waziristan—near the Indian border with Afghanistan—sought to dissuade Indian Muslims from supporting the Muslim League's call for a separate state.<sup>225</sup> Azad Muslim Radio put out a daily fifteen-minute program and its leading voice was a young man from Hyderabad named M.N. Sultan, who was well regarded among Azad Hind Radio staff for his command of Urdu.<sup>226</sup> This station's broadcasters, like National Congress Radio's, lacked in-depth knowledge of the internal situation in India and often had to resort to inventing and extrapolating events.

Axis radio stations were not the only stations to air false news. On March 12, 1942, the BBC announced that Bose had died in a plane crash on his way to a conference in Tokyo. Bose heard the announcement of his death on the radio, and, above all, worried about how his ailing mother would react to the news.<sup>227</sup> Two days later, Bose spoke on the radio: "This is Subhas Chandra Bose who is still alive speaking to you over Azad Hind Radio."<sup>228</sup> He remarked, "the latest report about my death is perhaps an instance of wishful thinking."<sup>229</sup> Gandhi had already sent his condolences to Bose's mother via telegraph: "the whole nation mourns with you the death of your son. I share your sorrow to the full."<sup>230</sup> It is unclear whether the British intentionally broadcast false news, but

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 210-11.

<sup>227</sup> Bose S., *His Majesty's Opponent*, 216; Mookerjee, *Europe at War*, 366-67.

<sup>228</sup> Bose S. C., *Europe at War*, 366-67.; Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 75.

<sup>229</sup> Bose S.C., *Azad Hind*, 76.

<sup>230</sup> Bose S., *His Majesty's Opponent*, 216.

many felt that the announcement, which coincided with the height of the Cripps Mission, was intentional and strategic. Moreover, after this event, the British government's claims that Azad Hind and other Axis radio stations put out false and misleading news, must have now sounded rather hypocritical to listeners in India.

In fact, Bose's life and afterlife seem to be deeply intertwined with rumor. INA and Japanese soldiers faced bitter defeat in Imphal in July of 1944, and were forced to retreat. Bose announced his army's defeat in a radio address from Rangoon on August 21, 1944 and blamed it on the monsoon, which he explained made it especially difficult for Japanese and INA soldiers to fight.<sup>231</sup> Bose promised to return to India and continue the fight before long. From Singapore, Bose broadcast three long speeches and offered his assessment on the war and on the political situation in India. Japan, he reassured audiences in India, was still bound to win the war. Japan's surrender on August 15, after the US dropped atomic bombs in the Japanese cities Nagasaki and Hiroshima, took Bose, like many others throughout the world, by surprise. He died three days later in a plane crash near the island of Formosa, now Taiwan.

Various radio stations announced Bose's death the following week, but as we might expect, many in India did not believe the news they heard. Even British administrations were doubtful and ordered an investigation to ensure the Axis-sympathizer was indeed "permanently dead."<sup>232</sup> In the decades to come, there were

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>232</sup> W. McK Wright, New Delhi, to Major Courtenay Young, Intelligence Division, Singapore, February 19, 1946, no. C-5, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, New Delhi, File 273, INA. This file is originally from the NAI, but the copy I accessed was housed in the NRB. It is also cited in *His Majesty's Opponent*, 6.

numerous rumors about Bose's mysterious appearances. Some claimed to have spotted him in an ashram, assured that Bose had renounced his political life in favor of a spiritual one. Others claimed that the Bengali leader was still in Europe and would soon return to India. Although a number of investigations have shown that Bose most definitely died in the plane accident, rumors about the circumstances of his death, or lack thereof, have continued to flourish.<sup>233</sup> However, as this chapter has demonstrated, rumors not only defined Bose's after life, rumors were there from the very beginning. They were part and parcel of his medium: the radio.

## CONCLUSION

In Chapter One, I argued that fears about the “effects” of Axis radio broadcasts on Indian audiences ultimately convinced the colonial government of the need to invest, both money and personnel, into radio broadcasting. The colonial government, however, could not stop listeners from turning to Axis stations for alternate sources of information about the war. In Chapter Two, I have focused on Subhas Chandra Bose's radio broadcasts to India, paying attention to the ways Bose used radio to reach out to followers and politicians in India, first from Germany and later from various cities in Asia. In this second chapter, I have also highlighted the importance of listening as political action, and argued that in wartime India, listening to the radio constituted a form of resistance.

Part One as a whole traced the changing course of radio during WWII and pointed to the ways in which the medium integrated itself into existing oral networks of

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<sup>233</sup> For a detailed account of rumors surrounding Bose's afterlife see Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, in particular see Chapter 9 “A Life Immortal.”

communication. In both chapters, I argued that radio ultimately escaped British control. At the same time, however, the wartime policies of the colonial administration had important long-term effects. During the war, the colonial government developed a national radio network. This set the stage for how leaders of the newly independent countries of India and Pakistan would attempt to foster allegiance to governments and fashion national identities through state-run broadcasting networks in the decades to come.

In August 1947, India and Pakistan became separate independent countries. The broadcasting network that the colonial government of India so actively developed during the war was partitioned. In the following chapters I focus on two moments during the postcolonial period. In Part Two, I analyze AIR's social uplift programs in the early 1950s and 1960s. I pay close attention to the network's controversial ban on film music and songs and to its campaign to promote Indian classical music traditions as a new "national" culture among the "masses of India." In Part Three, I chronicle Radio Pakistan's broadcasts during 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. In both of these moments, the nationalist radio projects were transformed and often undermined by trans-regional listening audiences and listening habits that pre-dated the nation-state and emerged in large part from this imperial war network.

## PART II: MUSIC IN POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIA

### Chapter Three: An Auditory Utopia

In October of 1952, B.V. Keskar, the newly appointed Minister of Information and Broadcasting and de facto head of All India Radio (AIR), took to the radio to deplore the public's dismaying taste for Hindi film songs. These songs, he remarked, are "becoming more and more vulgar and their tunes are concocted [of] irrational cocktails of western dance tunes."<sup>234</sup> At the time, AIR's various radio stations dedicated at least a few peak hours a day to film song broadcasts.<sup>235</sup> The "predominance of these songs," Keskar explained in another radio broadcast, "is slowly eliminating light music of various types and throttling its future growth."<sup>236</sup> Keskar was an Indian classical music connoisseur. He had trained in the *dhrupad* tradition in Benares, and although he had long given up singing for a career in politics, he joined the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1952 in the hopes of reviving classical music traditions.<sup>237</sup> Over the next decade, Keskar led an ambitious campaign to raise what he called the "sound standards" of the newly founded country through the medium of radio.<sup>238</sup> He not only filled broadcast hours with classical music programs, but also, less than two months after joining the ministry, ordered that AIR stations stop broadcasting Hindi film songs altogether.<sup>239</sup> Keskar's cultural uplift campaign—its goals, successes and failures; its supporters and critics; its

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<sup>234</sup> "Development Plans for All India Radio," *Indian Listener*, October 26, 1952, 59. All India Radio Library, New Delhi (AIR-Library hereafter).

<sup>235</sup> See broadcasting schedules in *Indian Listener* 1945-52, AIR-Library.

<sup>236</sup> B.V. Keskar, "Inaguration Speech," *The Indian Listener*, October 16, 1952, 8, AIR-Library.

<sup>237</sup> See foreword to Keskar, *Indian Music* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967).

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>239</sup> For a detailed description of the ban see the "Critique of Film Songs" section of this chapter.

convictions about the power of music, sound, and radio to influence individuals and societies; and its assumptions about how people listened—is the subject of this chapter.

In Part One, I focused on the role of broadcast news during WWII. Now, in Part Two, which includes Chapters Three and Four, I turn to music during the early post-colonial period. News continued to be important in this period, but I focus on music because, as I show in the continuing pages, it was music broadcasts became the subject of an ardent and prolonged debate. In the present chapter, I analyze AIR's cultural uplift campaign, and in Chapter Four, I consider the rise of Radio Ceylon and explain the station's relationship to AIR's reforms.

Scholars and lay observers alike have frequently described AIR's reforms of the 1950s as preposterous or nonsensical.<sup>240</sup> In a recent interview, the eminent Hindi broadcaster Ameen Sayani joked that Keskar had some "strange ideas" about "how pure and good and totally traditional we should be." Sayani went as far as to suggest that the minister could have greatly benefited from the guidance of a professional psychiatrist; how could one conceive of banning the now evergreen Hindi film songs of the 1950s

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<sup>240</sup> Some examples of film studies that make mention of Keskar's reforms include: Alison E. Arnold, "Hindi Filmiglit: on the History of Commercial Indian Popular Music" (Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991), 208-10; Anna Morcom, "Film Songs and the Cultural Synergies of Bollywood in and Beyond South Asia," in *Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema*, ed. Rachel Dwyer and Jerry Pinto (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011): 156-87; Aswin Punathambekar, "We're Online, Not on the Street: Indian Cinema, New Media, and Participatory Culture," in *Global Bollywood*, ed. Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 282-97. Articles that provide more detailed analysis of the ban and Keskar policies include David Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All India Radio," *Social Text* (1994): 111-27; Robin Jeffrey, "The Mahatma Didn't like the Movies and Why it Matters: Indian broadcasting policy, 1920s-1990s," *Global Media and Communication* 2, no. 2 (2006): 204-24.



from the national radio network?<sup>241</sup> AIR's cultural uplift campaign, however, was not idiosyncratic. It addressed a set of interrelated anxieties felt by many in and out of the Indian government in the decade following independence.

AIR's cultural uplift campaign spoke to the widespread concern that the influx of European ideas would soon destroy all that was good and noble about Indian culture. Second, the campaign promised to spread a national culture among India's linguistically, ethnically, and religiously diverse populations and to ensure that they remained, quite literally, tuned to the same wave-length. Third, by emphasizing classical music's ties to an ancient Hinduism, the campaign exploited anti-Muslim communalist feelings, which ran high in the years following the Partition of British India. Finally, Keskar's project addressed what historian Karl Miller has described as a widespread "uneasiness with the growing commodification of culture in industrial societies."<sup>242</sup> Many in India saw the popularity of film songs as "symptomatic of the larger problem of mass-marketed culture," to borrow Miller's phrase.<sup>243</sup>

Keskar was the main architect and the driving force behind AIR's campaign. His passion for classical music and his commitment to reviving and popularizing classical traditions shaped AIR's radio reforms. But he never worked alone. He received support from government administrators, prominent musicians, AIR employees, and—at least

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<sup>241</sup> Ameen Sayani, interviewed by Kamla Bhatt, March 27, 2007.

<http://kamlashow.com/podcast/2007/03/25/in-conversation-with-ameen-sayani-part-i/>. Accessed on March 3, 2012.

<sup>242</sup> Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Duke University Press, 2010), 163.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

during the beginning years of the campaign—from some radio listeners.<sup>244</sup> In India's highly bureaucratic and hierarchical government, Keskar could not have carried out such extensive reforms without the support and approval of both higher and lower-ranked government officials. As David Lelyveld points out, Keskar's vision for AIR as a "central government monopoly that would play a leading role in integrating Indian culture and raising 'standards'" went hand in hand with the basic principles of Nehruvian socialism. Named after the country's first Prime Minister, Nehruvian socialism describes a mixed economy, where the government controls major industries.<sup>245</sup>

While Keskar's radio campaign deserves a place in the story of postcolonial nationalism, it also deserves a place in the rich histories of auditory cultures—of sound, radio, and listening. AIR's cultural campaign was, as Judith Coffin puts it, "a phenomenon of radio, firmly anchored in and deeply revealing about the medium and its history."<sup>246</sup> My goal in this chapter, therefore, is to bring radio and sound back to the center of the story and to unpack the ideological foundations of the auditory utopia Keskar aspired to create. In particular, I explore how ideas about the special attributes of sound and music and conceptions about the power and purpose of radio—both as a government-run institution and as a technology of communication—informed the campaign's goals and reforms. I also pay close attention to how Keskar and his

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<sup>244</sup> See the "Critique of Film Songs" section of this chapter for listener responses to AIR's various reforms.

<sup>245</sup> Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant," 117. For a more in-depth description of Nehruvian socialism see also Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), Kindle edition. In particular, see the introduction to this work.

<sup>246</sup> Judith Coffin, "From Interiority to Intimacy: Historical Perspectives on Psychoanalysis and Radio in 20th century France." [forthcoming]

colleagues imagined radio audiences. For them, listeners were first and foremost citizens of India in need of the state's guidance. Administrators and broadcasters at AIR assumed that listeners, or citizen-listeners, as I suggest we might call them, were docile, impressionable and child-like. Radio listeners, however, proved to be quite the opposite. They protested against AIR's paternalistic broadcasts by writing magazine and newspaper editorials, but, most importantly, by tuning their dials to foreign radio stations, whose broadcasts better suited their musical tastes. In what follows, I show that by paying close attention to "the auditory," we can indeed hear the story of postcolonial Indian nationalism in a new tune.

## **DEFINING THE CLASSICAL**

What is Indian classical music? One answer is that Indian classical music consists of two largely separate musical traditions: the Hindustani in the north and the Carnatic in the south. The two traditions have "highly developed theories, musical forms, performance contexts, and stylistic lineages that pass on practical knowledge orally."<sup>247</sup> Scholars of Indian musical traditions, however, have arduously debated the meaning of the term "classical" in the Indian context. "The word 'classical,'" Katherine Schofield writes, is "multivalent and slippery"; the label, once used to refer to literature or material artifacts from ancient Rome and Greece, bears an obvious Eurocentric overtone.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ruth M. Stone et al., *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: South Asia: the Indian Subcontinent*, vol. 1 (Taylor & Francis, 2000), 63.

<sup>248</sup> Katherine Butler Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again: 'Classicization,' Hindustani Music, and the Mughals," *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 3 (2010): 484.

Indeed a number of recent works have argued that the very notion of “classical music” in India emerged under the shadow of British colonialism. Amanda Weidman argues that not only discourses about Carnatic music in South India, but “the very sound and practice of music” were produced “in and through the colonial encounter.”<sup>249</sup> Similarly, in an earlier publication Janaki Bakhle maintains that Hindustani music in North India transformed from being an “unmarked practice” in the eighteenth century to being marked as classical music in the twentieth and maintains that “colonialism marked the ideological epistemological beginnings” of this important change.<sup>250</sup> Bakhle goes as far as to claim that prior to the late colonial period there was no “elite” or “marked” music distinguished from any other entertainment such as wrestling or pigeon fancying.

Disagreeing with both scholars, Schofield maintains that “many of the shifts marked out by the most recent scholarship as uniquely a product of the British colonial moment” were actually “foreshadowed in a much earlier process of veneration, canonization, standardization, and systematization” in the Mughal courts.<sup>251</sup> For example, Hindustani classical music genres like *xayāl* and *dhrupad* were regarded as “elite” and “refined” by Mughal court audiences and musicians long before the advent of British

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<sup>249</sup> Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 9. Cited in Schofield, “Reviving the Golden Age Again,” 488.

<sup>250</sup> Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4 and 8.

<sup>251</sup> Schofield, “Reviving the Golden Age Again,” 490. Schofield calls for the use of the term “classification process,” which she argues better expresses the manner in “which past cultural artifacts are preserved, revived, or invented to serve as remodeling and political positioning of their present-day counterparts.”

colonialism in the subcontinent.<sup>252</sup> Regardless of whether Indian classical music underwent a "process of classification" during the late colonial period, in the Mughal period, or both, it is clear that by the 1950s there was certainly some notion of "classical" or "art" music, however fluid, inconsistent, and even contradictory that idea might have been. Keskar believed that radio had the power to make that form of "classical" or "art-music" the popular music of India.

Keskar's radio campaign was as ambitious as it was elitist. It sought to bring "high culture" to what Keskar somewhat patronizingly called "the mass of the people."<sup>253</sup> To his credit, Keskar did acknowledge the difficulties and contradictions of his project. He explained: "it is natural that the section of the society with higher emotional development and education enjoys and appreciates the more developed and more abstract type of music."<sup>254</sup> He then went on to explain that not all people share the same musical sensibilities: "the more developed people, who read and write [...] require a more complex vehicle to express" their thoughts and ideas.<sup>255</sup> Keskar, however, had unyielding faith in the power of radio to influence society. He believed that radio would "lift" the "sound standards" of the newly-formed country.<sup>256</sup>

## THE GHOST OF MUSIC PAST

Keskar's campaign, however, was as much about rescuing classical music as it was about rescuing listeners from their unfit musical sensibilities, habits, and tastes.

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 2.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 28.

Almost without fail, Keskar began discussions on Indian classical music with a melodramatic description of its dire current state: “Classical music is in the doldrums”<sup>257</sup>; “Music is an orphan wandering aimlessly for help”<sup>258</sup>; “As things stand today, music has been left to itself to drift with the stream or sink.”<sup>259</sup> His analysis of the causes of music’s unfortunate condition borrowed from a nationalist and communalist narrative about India’s pre-Islamic past with a complex trajectory.<sup>260</sup>

This narrative, by now perhaps “wearingly familiar”<sup>261</sup> to scholars of South Asia, goes as follows: British orientalists described a classical Hindu past and Sanskritic golden age. For example, Sir William Jones was the first European to argue that Sanskrit deserved a place in the “pantheon of European classical languages, alongside Greek and Latin.” While preaching about India’s great antiquity, Jones and others also argued that this magnificent golden age had “fallen from the heights” due to the “ignorance and illiteracy of Muslim feudal patrons.” In the nineteenth century, Hindu nationalists picked up on these European ideas about India’s “great antiquity and superiority” and about Muslim rulers’ role in fostering its decline, and eagerly incorporated them into their own vision of the new India.<sup>262</sup>

Keskar’s campaign, like that of many other Hindu nationalists, sought to revive an imagined “golden Hindu age.” He argued that in the pre-Islamic past, music was

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<sup>257</sup> “An Article on Music,” (undated), B.V. Keskar Papers, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (NMML hereafter).

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 12.

<sup>260</sup> Schofield, “Reviving the Golden Age Again,” 488.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 487.

intimately woven into religious life: “in the temples and in worship music was a vital medium. It was considered to be one of the most sublime ways of attaining God. Some of the greatest musicians were saints.”<sup>263</sup> He also professed, without providing any evidence, that “in ancient times in every family[,] instruction in music was a must while giving education to children.”<sup>264</sup> All in all, Keskar associated the revival of classical music with a return to an unadulterated Hindu past and blamed Muslims—both patrons of music and musicians—for classical music’s decline.

Keskar claimed that Muslim rule in India corrupted Indian musical traditions. He maintained that Islam frowns upon music and discourages adherents from listening to music and from playing it. So, even though many Muslim rulers had been generous patrons of music, under their benefaction the meaning of music changed. In Mughal courts, Keskar argued, music became the purview of “dancing girls, prostitutes, and their circle of pimps.”<sup>265</sup> Under Muslim rule music in India went from being a source of divine inspiration and worship for the middle classes to becoming a means of entertainment, often of questionable nature, for the rich and powerful. Keskar argued that “respectable” North Indian Hindus, eager to preserve their piety, had no choice but to turn away from music.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> “Article in the *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, for its Independence Day Feature 1962. Reprinted in Keskar, *Indian Music*, 59.

<sup>264</sup> “Address on the occasion of the anniversary of the late Ustad Fayyaz Khan at Ahmedabad on December 6, 1955. Reprinted in Keskar, *Indian Music*., 88.

<sup>265</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 5-7.

<sup>266</sup> Strategically absent from Keskar’s speeches are the various ways Muslim musicians have used music as source of spiritual inspiration.

Islamic rule, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting explained, did not penetrate nearly as deeply in the South as it did in the North. Safe from Muslim influence, he argued, Carnatic music enjoyed an “uninterrupted flow of old tradition.”<sup>267</sup> The result was that in the South, music retained its respectability and continued to be intimately associated with Hindu religious life. This, however, also meant that the spread of Islam in the North had another unfortunate consequence: it created an artificial rift between Northern and Southern styles of music. Due to Muslim influence, Kesar insisted, music in these two regions grew apart and Carnatic and Hindustani music eventually became two separate systems.<sup>268</sup> Islam had therefore not only corrupted and desacralized musical practices, but had also partitioned the nation’s musical heritage.

The British, Kesar asserted, “are the most unmusical people.”<sup>269</sup> Unlike Muslim rulers, the British did not actively try to impose their own musical preference on Indian society in great part because they had no “taste” for music whatsoever.<sup>270</sup> Indian musical traditions remained safe from European influence, but in the absence of interest or patronage, music “dried up,” surviving only in the courts of princely states “sprinkled” throughout India.<sup>271</sup> Rulers of states such as Gwalior, Baroda, and Indore saved this art from complete extinction. Eventually, however, these princely rulers too began to imitate

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<sup>267</sup> Kesar, *Indian Music*, 13.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>269</sup> Kesar, B.V. “An Article on Music,” B.V. Kesar Papers, NMML.

<sup>270</sup> As mentioned above, recent scholarship has pointed to the many ways in which British colonialism influenced Indian musical traditions. See Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*, and Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: the Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>271</sup> Kesar, “An Article on Music.”



British ways, turning to “horse raising and ballroom dancing.”<sup>272</sup> The problem, Kesar explained, was that the unmusical British colonial rulers had caused even greater harm than was initially apparent: they had trained a “new generation” of Indian elite in British ways, with no interest or background in their country’s musical traditions. The Indian elite’s plan for the new India left no room for music.<sup>273</sup>

Music’s story, Keksar maintained, was not all doom and gloom. In the early twentieth century an important movement arose to restore music’s due place in society, championed by two men: Vishnu Bhatkhande and Vishnu Paluskar. These two reformers labored to reestablish music’s respectability. They achieved some degree of success in popularizing music among respectable, upper-caste families, particularly, although not only, in their native Maharashtra (also Kesar’s native region).<sup>274</sup> Kesar admired these reformers’ work and borrowed their ideas, convictions, and even rhetorical techniques. He felt, however, that their campaigns had achieved limited success. Bhatkhande and Paluskar had influenced middle-class women and men and had convinced them Hindustani music was as “highly intellectual and respectable as any other branch of art and learning.”<sup>275</sup> The “masses” of India, Kesar argued, sadly still remained mostly ignorant of Indian classical music traditions.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Kesar, *Indian Music*, 6. See also, Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant."

<sup>273</sup> Kesar, "An Article on Music."

<sup>274</sup> Kesar, *Indian Music*, 9.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> "Address on the occasion of the anniversary of the late Ustad Fayyaz Khan at Ahmedabad on December, 6 1955." Reprinted in *ibid.*, 88.

## THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF MUSIC

Keskar linked music to the emotional, irrational, and even primeval qualities of humans. Music, he argued, was not just a matter of personal taste or refinement; it was “the language of expressing emotions.”<sup>277</sup> Music, Keskar explained in another occasion, “regulates the orderly expression of the primeval emotional forces.”<sup>278</sup> Keskar, however, was certainly neither the first nor the only reformer to make such claims. Ideas about music’s intrinsic powers bear a strong cultural resonance with historical documents of the subcontinent.

Texts such as the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, composed sometime between the first and fifth centuries and significantly expanded in later centuries, provide a detailed theoretical account of music and other arts’ effect on the emotions.<sup>279</sup> Similarly, Indo-Persian treatises from the eighteenth century discuss the power of music to move emotions in extensive detail. In Mughal courts, music was widely believed to “arouse tranquility, melancholy, longing” and to produce “truth, discernment, and even enlightenment in the

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 12. In his interpretation of music’s powers, Keskar drew on an understanding of human senses—namely, sight and hearing—as inherently separate and belonging to opposing domains. Jonathan Sterne famously coined the term “audio-visual litany” to refer to the idea that “vision is concerned with the exterior, hearing with interiors; vision is about intellect, hearing about affect; vision tends toward objectivity, hearing towards subjectivity; and so on.” In recent years, Sound Studies scholars have, as Judith Coffin nicely puts it, “shredded the binary logic that associates hearing with emotions and seeing with objectivity, highlighting the many ways in which such ideas have been overdone by both, past thinkers and present-day scholars.” Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 12-19. Quoted in Coffin, “From Interiority to Intimacy: Historical Perspectives on Psychoanalysis and Radio in 20th century France.” [forthcoming]

<sup>279</sup> For a detail account of the *Nāṭyaśāstrā* see Kapila Vatsyayan, *Bhāratā: Nāṭyaśāstrā* (New Delhi: Sāhityā Akāḍamī, 2006).

seeker of righteousness.”<sup>280</sup> Some writings even ascribed curative or medicinal powers to music. For example, the physician to the Mughal emperor, Muhammed Shah, noted that singing, which required the expulsion of the breath, could restore the health of the sick and the weak. In equal measure, Mughal writings also cautioned listeners about music’s potential dangers. Music of the wrong kind or from the wrong sort of source, they noted, could make men of influence lose foresight and, consequently, squander their wealth and political power. In these texts, music is likened to a courtesan, whose beauty had a hypnotic and magnetic power that could sway even the most unyielding of men.<sup>281</sup>

Ideas about the power of music to move emotions did not fade with time. Present-day musicians and music enthusiasts continue to make similar claims about the extraordinary power of music. Lalmani Misra, for example, in a detailed study of Indian instruments provides an elaborate account of various Indian instruments’ special ability to awaken latent emotions.<sup>282</sup> Misra warns readers that Indian instruments should be played and heard with caution. Much remains to be done on perceptions of music’s power in the Indian context and the ways these changed over time. What is clear, however, is that exaggerated or not, notions of music’s extraordinary power held currency in India and helped Keskar and other Indian politicians justify their policies in public forums.

Rajendra Prasad, then President of India, drew on these ideas when he spoke about the importance of music in a radio broadcast in November of 1958. Prasad noted,

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<sup>280</sup> Katherine Butler Brown, "Did Aurangzeb ban music? Questions for the historiography of his reign," *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 01 (2007): 109.

<sup>281</sup> Brown, "Did Aurangzeb Ban Music?," 109. See also Brown, "Love in South Asia."

<sup>282</sup> Lalmani Misra, *Bhāratīye Sangīt Vādyā* (New Delhi: Bhāratīye Jananpath, 1973).

“the question whether music is a means of human welfare or just an end in itself[, a] source of comfort only to the singer[,] is not quite relevant for us because the effect of music on man and human society is there for anyone to see.”<sup>283</sup> An acoustic analogy would have served Prasad better here, but he still succeeded in getting his main point across: music affects individuals and societies in ways that are difficult to pinpoint, but that are, nonetheless, real. Music’s power, he argued, was all the more resilient precisely because it affected people in ways that they could not fully comprehend or control. Debating the power of music and its effect on human beings, Prasad argued, was beside the point. He noted, we must “accept the power that music wields and then try to cultivate it for recreation and edification according to the requirements of the individual and the human society.”<sup>284</sup> Prasad implied, if not quite stated, that the government, as a benefactor and protector of its citizens, should become involved in musical matters. Keskar, however, was much more explicit than the President and remarked: the government of the newly-formed nation of India must “step in” and “support the evolution of sound standards.”<sup>285</sup>

If music was linked to the individuals’ soul, Keskar argued, it also was related to the nation’s psyche. A newly-formed country must pay especial attention to music: the “absence of this important aspect of a plan for a new society can only result in making the society defective and weak in its most important aspect[s], i.e. emotional and

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<sup>283</sup> Rajendra Prasad, "President's Speech," *Indian Listener*, November 16, 1958, 10. AIR-Library, New Delhi.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 28.

moral.”<sup>286</sup> While music was vital to all nations, Keskar argued, it was even more important to India. Music was one of the few arts that was “a hundred percent Indian” and had survived centuries of British imperialism unadulterated.<sup>287</sup> Recent scholarship has turned this generalization on its head, demonstrating that colonialism did in fact engender important changes in musical traditions. Keskar and his supporters, however, were correct in pointing out that Western classical music did not make inroads in Indian society as deeply as it did in other regions of Asia. Only a small fraction of the English-educated Indian population listened to and appreciated Western classical music.<sup>288</sup> Indian classical music’s resilience in the face of an all-pervasive colonialism, Keskar believed (and many in and out of the Indian government agreed), should be a source of national pride and justified government intervention in musical matters.

### **RADIO’S POWER AND THE CITIZEN-LISTENER**

Ideas about the power of radio to change society were as important to AIR’s cultural uplift campaign as conceptions of music’s faculties. Keskar theorized the power of radio in terms of what this medium could do for music. “Radio,” he explained, “stands for music.”<sup>289</sup> His thoughts on radio’s power can be divided into two categories: first radio’s potential as a national broadcasting institution, and second, radio’s potential as a technology of communication.

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 2-5.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>289</sup> Keskar, “Keskar’s Speech,” *Indian Listener*, November 16, 1958, 10, AIR-Library.

Keskar envisioned the national broadcasting network as a patron of classical music. In his inauguration speech in October of 1952, Keskar promised that under his leadership AIR would become the “greatest patron of music in the country.”<sup>290</sup> AIR, he explained, is “eminently suited for [this] role.”<sup>291</sup> As a patron of music, AIR would accomplish three goals. First, it would restore music’s respectability, which, he insisted, had been lost in the Mughal courts. Second, it would create a new kind of professional musician, knowledgeable of ancient musical theory (*śāstra*). Following the path of the twentieth century reformers Paluskar and Bhatkhande, Keskar argued that the current generation of musicians lacked proper theoretical training. Third, by encouraging Carnatic and Hindustani musicians to play together in radio programs, AIR would also help “reunite” Northern Hindustani and Southern Carnatic styles of music and would create a truly national music.

While Keskar cared deeply about the production of music, he was most concerned with its reception. In writings and broadcasts, he spoke about the importance of listeners: “Music lives and flourishes on listeners”; “The listener is the basic unit on which the edifice of music is built”<sup>292</sup>; “The knowledgeable listener who fully understands the beauty and fine points of the art [...] makes for musical progress and builds up the sound tradition.”<sup>293</sup> On several occasions Keskar explained that a music tradition needed first and foremost “discernable listeners” (by which he meant discerning listeners) who could

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<sup>290</sup> Keskar, "Inaguration Speech," 7, AIR-Library.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 28.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 26.

not only tell a good performance from a bad one, but whose passion for good music would inspire musicians to improve their performance. The goal of AIR's uplift campaign was to create a society of perceptive classical musical enthusiasts.

How did Keskar and others at AIR conceive of the listeners they sought to reach through their radio broadcasts? By this time AIR had access to some statistics about radio audiences. One report by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting estimated that by 1954 there were 759,643 registered receiver licenses in India.<sup>294</sup> As explained in Chapter One, Keskar and others at AIR had reason enough to distrust these reports because, among other things, they failed to account for collective listening practices, then (as now) prevalent in India. Keskar's conception of radio audiences, however, owed much more to a broad vision of the polity than to his appraisal of available listener statics. He and his associates at AIR conceived of radio audiences as neither individual listeners nor an organized public, but rather as citizens of the newly formed nation-state—as citizen-listeners.

Srirupa Roy argues that “in marked contrast with the liberal-democratic norm [of] autonomous citizen[ship]” in postcolonial India, citizenship was defined as a “learning activity or an ongoing process of acquiring skills and attributes” and not as “an already-possessed right or claim that could be exercised in the present.”<sup>295</sup> It was precisely in these terms that Keskar imagined AIR's audiences. Listeners, he remarked, “have

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<sup>294</sup> Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, “Annual Report,” (1954), NMML. However, as discussed in Chapter One, receiver licenses were a poor indicator of the size of radio audiences in India for a variety of reasons.

<sup>295</sup> Roy, *Beyond Belief*, Loc 1044.

developed unmusical manners and attitudes which do not help in creating the proper atmosphere for appreciating music.”<sup>296</sup> AIR's task, therefore, was to help listeners develop the necessary “manners and attitudes” so as to properly appreciate music.

As Roy tells us, early post-colonial leaders conceived of the Indian citizen as “infantile” and in “need of state tutelage and protection.”<sup>297</sup> Keskar remarked, “unfortunately, the public, even the educated part of it has little contact with music. Their want of knowledge makes them an easy prey to unjustified publicity in the field of music.”<sup>298</sup> For Keskar, radio listeners were malleable and easily persuaded. He remarked, “public taste is changing and [is] a fickle thing [...]. [I]t can be easily swayed this or that way.”<sup>299</sup>

Moreover, the “ideal citizen” in early post-colonial India, Roy tell us, was “defined in terms of his *dependence upon* an intimate relationship with the *lineaments* of *state authority*.”<sup>300</sup> AIR programs did not try to foster an intimate relationship with listeners through their broadcasters, in part, because broadcasters assumed that relationship was already in place and was defined by the state authority. As the succeeding section will demonstrate, AIR programs aimed not to connect or bond with listeners, but rather to reform and improve citizen-listeners’ musical tastes.

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<sup>296</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 28.

<sup>297</sup> Roy, *Beyond Belief*, Loc 579.

<sup>298</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 31-32.

<sup>299</sup> Keskar, "Inaguration Speech," AIR-Library.

<sup>300</sup> Roy, *Beyond Belief*, Loc 582. Emphasis added.



## PROGRAMS AND REFORMS

As I argued in Chapter One, the colonial government had not planned to build a government-owned and a centrally-run radio network. In the 1920s and 1930s, it had authorized private radio initiatives and provincially-run rural broadcasting schemes. Only under the pressures of war did the colonial administration bring these independent radio projects into a central network. The post-colonial government continued along that same path. The first Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Vallabhai Patel, ensured that radio in the newly-independent India remained a centrally controlled enterprise. Patel played a major role integrating princely states into the Indian union (sometimes through diplomacy and sometimes by force) and with equal zest incorporated radio stations from former princely states into a national broadcasting network.<sup>301</sup>

Keskar, like his predecessors both English and Indian alike, worked to centralize radio networks and programming. Keskar used very limited government funds to increase the number of broadcast hours and to purchase more powerful transmitters to widen existing stations' reach. Keskar, for example, ordered the closure of a radio station in Aurangabad, a city in his native Maharashtra, because he felt that the station in nearby Bombay already served the needs of this city's residents. Aurangabad residents protested the closure of the station and wrote to the Prime Minister directly. Their complaints, however, met deaf ears not least because Keskar's broadcasting centralization policies

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<sup>301</sup> Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant," 101.

aligned with Nehru's vision for the new India.<sup>302</sup> As Keskar explained in a radio broadcast: "In order to utilize our resources to the best advantage it is necessary to rationalize and restrict the number of stations to the minimum and try to give through them programs of better quality to the listening public."<sup>303</sup>

Keskar also carried on Vallabhai Patel's language policies. Patel discontinued Hindustani language broadcasts after independence and set up separate Hindi and Urdu programs. As we might expect, Hindi broadcasts took precedence, and Urdu programs were only aired from areas with "sizable number[s] of Urdu-knowing listeners."<sup>304</sup> With these policies, the idea of Urdu as Muslim language and Hindi as Hindu language, which had long been pushed by nationalist political and language organizations, became official in AIR broadcasts. Under Patel's leadership the Controller of Broadcasting, S.A. Bukhari, who was not only Muslim but also a prominent writer of Urdu, faced heavy censure and eventually migrated to Pakistan, giving up a career in broadcasting.<sup>305</sup>

New bulletins in particular became a point of contention because they employed very Sanscritized Hindi that many listeners complained was sometimes incomprehensible. One newspaper account explained: "News bulletins in Hindi have become increasingly difficult to understand" because they are "embellished with Sanskrit terminology." The critic went on to explain that "the educated Hindi scholar may find

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<sup>302</sup>"Listening Post: Aurangabad Radio Station," *The Statesman*, October 24, 1953, NMML.

<sup>303</sup> Keskar, "Inauguration Speech," 5, AIR-Library.

<sup>304</sup> H. R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Government of India New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, , 1986), 270-72.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

much praise in the elaboration of the language, and in the occasionally painful dexterity of the harassed news readers in pronouncing difficult obsolete words,” but the “the poor listener” was unable understand “the state of the world around him, which [was], incidentally the reason why he listen[ed] to news bulletins.”<sup>306</sup> In the early 1960s, Keskar wrote to Nehru to cleanse himself of any wrongdoing: “I am not the author of A.I.R.’s Hindi. It was started long before me. Certainly a great deal of expansion took place while I was there for 10 years but a large part was due to expansion of A.I.R.’s network.”<sup>307</sup>

While Keskar contributed to AIR’s centralization and carried on the language policies of his predecessor, it was music that concerned him most.<sup>308</sup> During his tenure, the Delhi station became a national music production center that provided recorded programs to smaller, regional radio stations. Keskar recruited top artists from all over the country and brought them to the Delhi station. By far the most important change that he implemented was to increase the number of transmission hours reserved for classical music. AIR’s program schedules show that by the mid-1950s classical music took up all peak airtime, including weekend and late afternoon hours.<sup>309</sup>

Keskar also inaugurated influential musical programs, many of which survived his tenure by several decades. In July 1952, he launched the “National Programme for

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<sup>306</sup> "Listening Post: AIR’s Opportunity in Language Development," *The Statesman*, January 10, 1954, NMML.

<sup>307</sup>“Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru from B.V. Keskar dated September\_July 5, 1962,” B.V. Keskar Papers, NMML.

<sup>308</sup> Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant," 116.

<sup>309</sup> See *Indian Listener* programs 1952 -1962 housed at AIR-Library, Akashvani (Hindi) program schedules. See also Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 78.

Music,” an hour long radio program that featured the country’s top Hindustani and Carnatic musicians during weekend nights, then (and still) a peak listening time. The program was recorded in Delhi and relayed by other regional stations.<sup>310</sup> AIR staff encouraged Carnatic and Hindustani musicians to perform on the same evening; he hoped that listening to each other’s styles would help foster a deeper understanding and respect for each other’s art among musicians of both traditions. He also hoped that this kind of exposure and collaboration among renowned musicians would help bring both Carnatic and Hindustani music traditions “nearer [to] each other” and ensure that these traditions “march together.”<sup>311</sup>

Musicians from both Carnatic and Hindustani traditions came to regard performing in the *National Programme* as a major badge of honor, and many classical musical enthusiasts became devout followers of the program. AIR staff took great care to select the performers and the pieces featured in the program, but made little effort to connect with audiences. It is, therefore, not surprising that the *National Programme* never acquired a significant following among non-specialists of Carnatic or Hindustani music. Daniel Neuman conducted fieldwork in the Delhi AIR station in the 1960s and noted that musicians believed that “fewer than one percent of the listening public tune[d] to the *National Programme*.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Keskar, *Indian Music*, 31.

<sup>312</sup> Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India*, 78.

In order to incorporate young talent into this project, Keskar established several amateur music competitions. The purpose of these programs was twofold: first, to offer budding musicians a platform to present their art to the larger public, and second, to familiarize radio audiences with the works of lesser known musicians. AIR also began broadcasting beginners' music lessons and music appreciation programs for uninitiated listeners.<sup>313</sup> Music teachers, usually trained in formal music academies founded by Paluskar and Bhatkhande, taught radio audiences the rudimentary concepts of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music. These projects had a rather pedagogical feel, which in the opinion of some listeners only made them turn away from music. One listener penned an eloquent letter to the *Illustrated Weekly*: "in the name of science and progress popular music is being replaced by an increased quota of scientific music." Dr. Keskar might seek to "popularize classical music," the letter-writer continued, but "scientific music will be regarded by the common man as an exhibition of vocal gymnastics pleasing to a limited few and wearisome to the great majority."<sup>314</sup>

Keskar not only paid attention to musical programming, but also, as David Lelyveld notes, to the "kind of people" that worked at AIR.<sup>315</sup> Keskar recruited directors of music academies and appointed them to AIR's top posts. He appointed Krishna

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<sup>313</sup> See program schedule printed in *Indian Listener* 1952-1962. Copies available at the AIR-Library.

<sup>314</sup> A. Anandan, "Letter to the Editor," *Illustrated Weekly of India*, August 9, 1953, 50. Cited in Shikha Jhingan, "Re-embodiment of the 'Classical' The Bombay Film Song in the 1950s," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 159.

<sup>315</sup> Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant," 119.

Ratanjankar to oversee the broadcast of classical music at AIR.<sup>316</sup> Ratanjankar had been the first principal of the Marris College of Music in Lucknow and a student and protégé of the music reformer, Vishnu Bhatkhande. Ratanjankar, with Keskar's backing, inaugurated a new audition system that required, among other things, that musicians have knowledge of musical theory.<sup>317</sup> This requirement put many hereditary musicians—who had learned music orally through the more traditional *gurū-śiṣya* or apprentice system at a serious disadvantage, and favored musicians trained in professional academies, more often than not Hindu and middleclass. As Max Katz noted, musical academies' goal of "liberation of knowledge from hereditary musicians" created institutional structures that put Muslim musicians at a great disadvantage.<sup>318</sup>

Many—in and out of music circles—accused Keskar of showing preference for Maharastrian Hindu musicians and of actively discriminating against Muslim musicians.<sup>319</sup> The matter became so heated that it reached the prime minister's desk. Keskar felt compelled to defend AIR's hiring policies to Nehru. He wrote in a letter to the prime minister: "whether in U.P., Madhya Pradesh or Punjab, the important musical educational institutions are guided and directed by eminent Maharashtrians for the simple reason that other persons are not available for that purpose." Keskar went on to explain, "the Muslim musicians whose number[s] are dwindling suffer under the handicap of

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<sup>316</sup> See Mohan Nadkarni, "The Great Masters: Profiles in Hindustani Classical Music," (New Delhi: Rupa, 1999). Cited in Jhingan, "Re-embodiment of the 'Classical,'" 159.

<sup>317</sup> B.V. Keskar, "Consolidating the Revival in Music," *Indian Listener*, March 9, 1958, 1, AIR-Library

<sup>318</sup> Max Katz, "Institutional Communalism in North Indian Classical Music," *Ethnomusicology* 56, no. 2 (2012): 289-91.

<sup>319</sup> Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari also makes this claim in his autobiography. See Saīyad Zulfiqār Alī Buxārī, *Sarguzast* (Gālib Publishers, Lahore, 1995).

illiteracy and they are not, therefore, capable of doing general cultural work [with the] exception [of] giving music performances.”<sup>320</sup>

### ***VĀDYA VRIND: CREATING A NATIONAL ORCHESTRA***

It is tempting to characterize AIR’s campaign as prejudiced and all-around perverse. Keskar and his team, however, did challenge conventions of classical music when such endeavors were consistent with the campaign’s larger goals of popularizing classical music and encouraging the professionalization of musicians. The National Orchestra, an instrumental musical ensemble, exemplified the kind of creative enterprises that AIR promoted during this critical period.

Prior to Keskar’s appointment, AIR had two small instrumental ensembles, one Hindustani, the other Carnatic. These ensembles formed part of the External Service Division, a somewhat neglected subsection of All India Radio that prepared broadcasts for foreign audiences. After becoming Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Keskar shifted the ensembles to the more prominent and up-and-coming New Delhi radio station. He combined the two separate groups into a single orchestra and made Ravi Shankar and T.K. Jayaramaiyer co-directors. Ravi Shankar had by then trained with the renowned court musician Allauddin Khan for several years and had established himself as one of the nation’s top sitar players. T.K. Jayaramaiyer, also a recognized musician in South India, directed the Carnatic ensemble. Keskar trusted that these two celebrated musicians representing Northern and Southern styles of music would work together toward creating

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<sup>320</sup> “Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru from B.V. Keskar dated September 21, 1955,” B.V. Keskar Papers, NMML.

a truly national music. He also gave the orchestra a new and more dignified Sanskrit name: *Vādyā Vrind*.<sup>321</sup> By the end of 1952, *Vādyā Vrind* had twenty-eight members, about half of them trained in Carnatic tradition and half in the Hindustani tradition. The orchestra also had a few Western-trained musicians that played woodwind or string instruments.<sup>322</sup>

It is worth emphasizing what a controversial concept *Vādyā Vrind* was at the time, especially in the purist music circles that Keskar frequented. Large instrument ensembles were not part of either the Hindustani or the Carnatic traditions.<sup>323</sup> Keskar and his team acknowledged their departure from tradition. AIR's Director of Music, D.T. Joshi, for example, explained to a radio audience that "the greatest difficulty in the formation of an Indian orchestra is the individualistic nature of Indian music."<sup>324</sup> Joshi, however, promised radio audiences that *Vādyā Vrind* would encourage "musicians to experiment

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<sup>321</sup> The word *Vādyā* means "instrument" and *Vrind* means "group".

<sup>322</sup> "A musician's notebook An Indian Orchestra," Newspaper clipping dated March 8, 1953, Bonnie C. Wade collection, Miscellaneous folder No. 9, Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE hereafter), New Delhi. According to this article the orchestra had no brass instruments and used only Indian percussion instruments. For more information on *Vādyā Vrind* see U.L. Baruah, *This is All India Radio: A Handbook of Radio Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1983), 136.

<sup>323</sup> Indian classical musicians do not traditionally play in large ensembles. Most Hindustani music performances feature two musicians: a soloist—most commonly a vocalist, but it could also be an instrumentalist—and an instrumental accompanist, usually, but not always a percussionist. Occasionally two, less commonly three, soloists perform together either in unison or by taking turns singing. Carnatic performances normally feature more musicians than Hindustani ones. They include: one principal performer (most commonly a vocalist), a violin, which serves as a melodic accompanist, a *mridangam*, which is the most common rhythmic accompanist and *tambura*, which serves as a drone during the performance.

<sup>324</sup> D.T. Joshi, "Experiments in Orchestration of Indian Music," in *Aspects of Indian Music: A Series of Special Articles and Papers Read at the Music Symposia Arranged by All India Radio* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1970).



with new styles of music, but would ensure that these experiments retained an Indian character.”<sup>325</sup>

Before *Vādyā Vrind's* inauguration, a number of individuals had experimented with orchestration of Indian instruments. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Maula Bakhsh, a celebrated court musician from the princely state of Baroda in Western India, formed a small Indian instrumental ensemble.<sup>326</sup> Also, the British-born musicologist John Fouldes, who worked for AIR during the last decades of British rule and long dreamed of fusing Hindustani and Western classical music, founded a small ensemble of Indian instruments.<sup>327</sup> As noted earlier, AIR's cultural uplift campaign embraced contradictory ideas about European classical music. On the one hand, Keskar resented European influence on Indian cultural, governmental, and educational institutions. On the other, Keskar, like the earlier music reformers, was keen to prove that classical music traditions were on par with European classical traditions. Keskar and his team encouraged Shankar and Jayaramaiyer to use European-style methods of conducting: to stand in front of the ensemble and to keep tempo and give other musical directions to musicians with visible gestures. In traditional Carnatic and Hindustani performances, there is no conductor and most of the performance is improvised. Usually an accompanying percussionist maintains the beat throughout the performance.<sup>328</sup> A newspaper editorial claimed that one of *Vādyā*

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Allan Kozinn, "Ravi Shankar, Prolific Indian Sitarist, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, December 12, 2013, 42; Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*.

<sup>327</sup> For a discussion of Fouldes see Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant," 114.

<sup>328</sup> A good accompanist, however, should follow the tempo set by the soloist.

*Vrindā's* main goal was to create a "standard method of conducting" for all Indian classical music traditions.

It is difficult to know if Keskar had heard of these experiments and even more difficult to determine if they influenced his own interest in orchestration of Indian instruments. Keskar was surely aware of the use of large instrumental ensembles in Hindi film music and their growing popularity with Indian audiences. By the 1940s the accompanying ensemble of film songs had grown from a harmonium, a violin, and *tablā* to a small orchestra of a dozen or more instruments.<sup>329</sup> Keskar wanted *Vādya Vrind* to provide listeners with a viable audio alternative to film music. He also wanted *Vādya Vrind* to demonstrate to film music directors that it was indeed possible to create orchestrated music that was pleasant, light, and easy to appreciate, but that nonetheless retained an "Indian character."<sup>330</sup>

Interestingly, western style conducting was a feature that film music composers had adopted a few years earlier. Alison Arnold explains that when music directors began to use Western music styles, they also began to conduct their orchestras in "Western fashion even though their *tablā* player or other Indian drummer was playing traditional rhythmical patterns."<sup>331</sup> It might not be a big leap of faith to suggest that Keskar's insistence on conducting was, at least partially, influenced by the film industry.

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<sup>329</sup> Arnold, "Hindi Filmigit," 143.

<sup>330</sup> This term is from Joshi, "Experiments in Orchestration of Indian Music."

<sup>331</sup> Arnold, "Hindi Filmigit," 139.

Keskar was also keen to promote a standard system of notation and insisted that all orchestra members play from scores.<sup>332</sup> By the time Keskar founded *Vādyā Vrind*, several individuals had experimented with notation. Despite all the initial hype around notation, Indian notational systems brought about fewer changes than initially expected. Notation made Indian classical traditions more accessible to European admirers. It proved to some music enthusiasts—Indian and Europeans alike—that Indian music was on par with European traditions.<sup>333</sup> As Janaki Bakhle notes, most importantly, notation “allowed a previously impossible access to music that made for a new audience that had some, if only a rudimentary, knowledge of theoretical basis of music.” Notation, however, was not the revolutionary change some expected.<sup>334</sup> It is hard to say with certainty if Keskar cared about notation because it made music more accessible to enthusiasts with a rudimentary knowledge like himself, or if, like other reformers, he cared about notation because he wanted to prove Indian music’s parity to Western traditions.<sup>335</sup> Most likely, it was a combination of both.

*Vādyā Vrind* was one of Keskar’s most enduring legacies, second only to the “National Programme.” Ravi Shankar left *Vādyā Vrind* in 1956 to pursue an immensely influential career abroad, and the renowned flutist Pannalal Ghosh and the former music

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<sup>332</sup> “A musician’s notebook An Indian Orchestra,” Bonnie C. Wade collection, ARCE.

<sup>333</sup> Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*, 67.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>335</sup> *Vādyā Vrindā* also served another rather important purpose: it provided a source of employment for the many instrumental soloists that otherwise had a difficult time securing a fulltime job at AIR. Ironically, however, many musicians considered performing in an orchestra an impediment to a performance career. Daniel Neuman, who conducted ethnographic work in AIR in the 1960s, makes this important point in *The Life of Music in North India*, 175.

director Anil Biswas followed Shankar as directors of the national orchestra in succeeding years. *Vādya Vrind* closed down in 1998, nearly half a century after its inauguration.<sup>336</sup>

## THE CRITIQUE OF FILM SONGS

Keskar wished to go down in history as a champion of music. Yet, in a strange twist of fate, he is popularly remembered less for his efforts to promote classical music than for his prolonged and tenacious campaign against Hindi film songs. Keskar joined the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at an important turning point in the history of film music. Early film songs, like early films, borrowed heavily from various Indian theatrical traditions. In fact, musicologists remark that film songs of 1930s were “stylistically virtually indistinguishable” from theater song numbers. By the 1940s, however, film songs had achieved some degree of independence and by the 1950s they had become a separate genre.<sup>337</sup>

Some of the changes that marked this important transformation included changes in presentation, voice, instrumentation, and lyrics. For example, by the mid-1940s most film songs no longer opened with an *ālāp*, the vocal, unmetered improvised section that

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<sup>336</sup> Mayuram G. Swaminathan, "Winds of Change in AIR newspaper " *Madras*, June 19, 1998. Newspaper clippings, ARCE.

<sup>337</sup> Arnold, "Hindi Filmigit," 78. For a more detailed description of the emergence of Hindi film songs as a genre see Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediation of Hindi Film Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). In particular see Chapter 2 "Film Songs at the End of the Colonial Era and the Emergence of Filmi Style." For a study of the life and work of the musicians that of the Hindi film industry see Gregory D. Booth, *Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai's film Studios* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

precedes classical music performances.<sup>338</sup> Vocalists also adopted a “soft,” “narrow” “crooning style” that was more appropriate for the microphone” instead of the loud, open-throated, sometimes coarse vocal singing style of theater artists.<sup>339</sup> The role of instrumental accompaniments in songs also changed dramatically. The instrumental ensembles used in earlier film songs and theater performances “played in unison with the vocal line,” and instrumental interludes in songs were short and modest. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, instrumental interludes were not only longer but also more grandiose. Singers joked that whereas in the past, musical interludes were meant to give them a chance to catch their breath, now they sang so as to give instrumentalists a break from playing.<sup>340</sup>

As Keskar pointed out in his various speeches, film songs also began to adopt a number of “foreign elements.” Although Hindustani classical music does not traditionally employ harmony, by the 1950s nearly all songs incorporated some form of harmony.<sup>341</sup> Moreover, as mentioned earlier, during this period, music directors began to experiment with orchestration in earnest. Most famously, the music director duo Shankar-Jaikishan used large instrumental ensemble in their compositions.<sup>342</sup> Electronic effects such as echo and artificial reverberation gave film songs a “new studio-produced ‘glossy’” feel that

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<sup>338</sup>Arnold, "Hindi Filmigit," 139.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 177. Quoted in Ana Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*, SOAS Musicology Series (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 65.

<sup>341</sup> Arnold, "Hindi Filmigit," 79.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 176.

helped listeners instantly identify film songs as a separate genre.<sup>343</sup> Last, but certainly not least, the lyrics of Hindi film songs also underwent important changes during this time period. Whereas early film songs drew heavily from the highly stylized poetic traditions, by the 1950s song lyricists began to employ simpler vocabulary and to repeat the same phrases in a single song.<sup>344</sup> Some songs even contained words with no specific meaning such as the much praised and still very popular song, “īnā mīnā dīkā,” from the film *Calī Kā Nām Gārī* and the song “āplam caplam caplaī re” from the film *Āzād*.<sup>345</sup>

Keskar criticized precisely those elements that musicologists argue marked film songs as an independent genre and argued that their musical composition had veered too far from Indian classical music traditions. He once complained that it was “difficult to call any such mixture by the name of composition.”<sup>346</sup> He also felt that film song lyrics were overly sentimental and devoid of meaning.<sup>347</sup>

One of Keskar’s first actions as MIB was to place a strict quota on AIR’s film song broadcasts. Programming schedules from the time period demonstrate that prior to Keskar’s appointment most AIR radio stations dedicated several hours a day to film song broadcasts. Keskar ordered that film songs make up no more than ten percent of the national network’s music programming and set up a film music censorship committee

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>345</sup> The title of this film can be roughly translated as “anything that moves is called a vehicle.” The songs’ titles do not have any specific meaning.

<sup>346</sup> Keskar, “Inaguration Speech,” 8.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

that screened film songs.<sup>348</sup> Filmmakers were particularly angered by this decision because it meant that film music now had to endure two stages of government censorship. First, film songs had to meet the approval of the Central Board of Film Censors, which screened the entire film, including its songs. Second, film songs had to pass AIR's own music board.<sup>349</sup>

All hell broke loose when Keskar announced one more modification to AIR's policies. The norm at AIR had long been that before or after playing a film song, broadcasters announced the name of the film in which the song had originally appeared. Keskar argued these announcements amounted to free publicity for films and that they violated AIR's commitment to non-commercial broadcasting. He ordered that all music show hosts stop announcing the names of films in their programs.<sup>350</sup> Shortly thereafter, the president of the Indian Motion Picture Production Association (IMPPA) called an extraordinary meeting to discuss the new reform. He maintained that out of "sheer self-respect," if nothing else, Indian filmmakers must once and for all cut ties to AIR. He noted that if AIR was unwilling to accurately credit film songs, then the national broadcasting organization should not play film songs at all.<sup>351</sup> Keskar responded to the IMPPA by unofficially banning film songs from AIR's programs.

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Keskar discussed this point in *ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> See also "Govt Will Consult Industry. Dr. Keskar's Assurance Awards for Good Films: Idea to be Considered. Dropping Film Names on AIR," *Movie Times* 1952, 14, National Film Archive of India, Pune (Hereafter NFAI).

<sup>351</sup> "IMPPA gives notice to AIR to stop film music," *Movie Times* 1952, 7, NFAI.

## FILM MUSIC AS THE MUSIC OF THE COMMON MAN

The ban unleashed an ardent debate over film songs, their propriety, and their relationship to national consciousness in newspapers and popular magazines. While many disapproved of Keskar's decision, his controversial policies did find some supporters. For example, S.G. Bapat, a movie goer from Ghatkophar in Bombay, wrote to the *Movie Times* to congratulate the new minister for condemning the "low moral tone" of the Bombay film industry.<sup>352</sup> Watching a film, Bapat moaned, was "a painful experience." Films were "cheap, sexy, degrading and humiliating."<sup>353</sup> Yet, as editorials in film magazines and newspapers of the time period demonstrate, such unreserved support for AIR's policies was rather rare. More commonly, radio listeners sided with Keskar on one or another particular issue critiquing film songs, while largely defending film songs' importance in the nation's soundscape.

For example, Keskar argued that lyrics of recent songs were too concerned with sentimental affairs, but also that they were "uncreative" and recycled the same phrases and words. In an effort to make songs more accessible to a larger, often non Hindi-Urdu speaking audience, film lyricists employed simpler, less ornamented language. J. Firoze from Bombay felt that "the art of lyric writing" had in recent years "fallen in[to the] doldrums." Film songs' lyrics, J. Firoze remarked, were "childish" and reused the same "stock words over and over."<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> S.G. Bapat, "Cheers and Jeers: Two Pills for Dr. Keskar. Sweet," *Movie Times*, 1952, 1, NFAI.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> J. Firoze, "Stock Words in Songs," *Movie Times*, November 14, 1952, 24, NFAI.



Keskar's biggest quarrel with film songs was not their unpoetic lyrics, but rather that their music had lost ties to the region's traditional music. A number of radio listeners shared Keskar's concern. M.C. Zainul Hussain addressed film music directors in an editorial note: "why stoop so low and copy music of other lands when we are fortunate [to have] an excellent base in our various ragas for compositions?"<sup>355</sup> In a similar vein, K. Ahmed from Hyderabad wrote to the *Movie Times* to complain that many new Hindi film songs were but a "cheap copy" of Hollywood tunes.<sup>356</sup> Ahmad felt especially frustrated because directors like Naushad, Ramchandra, and S.D. Burman clearly had the knowledge and musical training to compose film songs that remained true to the basic principles of India's classical traditions, but stubbornly refused to do so.<sup>357</sup>

Many within the film industry had similar trepidations about film music's growing westernization. In the month following AIR's ban, editorials by music directors discussing their music filled the pages of film magazine and newspapers. For example, R. C. Boral, a veteran in the field, wrote an editorial in *Filmfare*, wary of the growing westernization of film songs. He explained it that was a good thing that music directors were now aware of the musical traditions of other regions, and he praised directors' willingness to experiment. He insisted, however, that they should "remain true to [Indian] soil, where there is abundance of material to draw from and give forth rich and glorious melodies that can be found in the vast storehouse of our 'shastric' and folk

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<sup>355</sup> "Readers Write to the Editor," *Screen*, 1952, 2, NFAI.

<sup>356</sup> K. Ahmed, "Cheers and Jeers: Film Music Goes West," *Movie Times*, 1952, 10, NFAI.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

music.”<sup>358</sup> Boral shared Keskar’s concern that the growing popularity of film songs threatened Indian classical traditions and remarked, “the present trend will extinguish Indian melodies.”<sup>359</sup>

Newspaper and magazine editorials were important media through which the debate over “foreign” influence on traditional Indian music materialized, but they were not the only medium. Filmmakers, many of whom were deeply affected by the ban, also participated in this debate through the medium they knew best: film. It is not a coincidence that during Keskar’s tenure three major films that chronicled the lives of classical musicians made it to the big screens: *Baijū Bāvrā*, *Šabāb*, and *Basant Bahār*.<sup>360</sup>

In public forums, Keskar justified his controversial ban on film music by arguing that AIR had a special responsibility to improve the musical taste of the “mass of the people.” This idea resonated with some. For example P.S. Dravid from Pune agreed, “AIR is a medium of mass education and instruction. It has a duty to the *masses* to improve their taste in music.”<sup>361</sup> Another listener, Muhammad Raza, also felt that the masses of India were naturally attracted to “inferior” music. Raza, however, argued that the situation was ultimately irremediable and that Keskar could do little to improve the lay public’s “cheapness of taste.”<sup>362</sup> The minister, Raza wrote, was simply wasting his time and effort trying to uplift people’s musical taste.

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<sup>358</sup> "Music Orchestra Should Suit Context, Advises R. C. Boral," *Screen*, 1952, 12, NFAI.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> See Jhingan, "Re-embodiment of the 'Classical': The Bombay Film Song in the 1950s." For a longer description of the film *Baijū Bāvrā*, see Chapter Four.

<sup>361</sup> Emphasis added. P.S. Dravid, "Our Readers Say: Wise Decision," *Filmfare*, 1952, 42NFAI.

<sup>362</sup> Muhammad Raz Ali, "Cheers and Jeers: Two Pills for Dr. Keskar. Bitter." *Movie Times*, 1952, 1.,NFAI.

Some listeners expressed concern for the wellbeing of the film industry, which they felt was being unfairly punished by the government. A film fan accused AIR of “unnecessary libeling” of the film industry while “indulging in an orgy of self-righteousness.”<sup>363</sup> And another one noted that if the public wants a “romantic and erotic attraction,” the film industry “cannot be blamed.”<sup>364</sup>

The most common complaint was that AIR’s policies ultimately hurt the common man far more than the film franchises. E. Ragamani from Bombay felt that Keskar’s decision was unfair because “a large section of the *masses*”<sup>365</sup> purchase radios “only [to] hear a variety of film music without undergoing extra cost.”<sup>366</sup> In a similar vein, a listener from Bombay explained, “music in India was largely confined to the temple and the palace before the advent of films. The films brought music to the common man.”<sup>367</sup> Non-elites in India had access to music long before the advent of films, but this listener’s point is important because it demonstrates the ways in which listeners, in great part in response to AIR’s ban, began to describe film songs as the music of the “common man.” Likewise, D.S. Dayal from Bombay complained that she had paid a license fee of fifteen rupees to AIR, but could not listen to the music she loved.<sup>368</sup> Another reader noted, “the versatility of film music and its appeal to all segments of society explains its continuing popularity

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<sup>363</sup> “And Now Film Music,” *Filmfare*, 1952, 5, NFAI.

<sup>364</sup> “Cheers and Jeers: Two Pills for Dr. Keskar. Bitter,” *Movie Times*, 1952, 1, NFAI.

<sup>365</sup> Emphasis added. “Cheers and Jeers: A musicians tips to AIR,” *Movie Times*, December 9, 1952, NFAI.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> “And Now Film Music,” *Filmfare*, 1952, 5, NFAI.

<sup>368</sup> S. Dayal, “Well, Keskar Babu?” *Film India*, 1953, 156-87, NFAI.

and establishes its significance as a mass-art.”<sup>369</sup> H.P. Mahalik from Bombay accused Keskar and his supporters of elitism. She remarked: following “a hard-day’s toil the common man cannot listen to classical music even if it is forced into his ears.” Mahalik remarked, “classical music is for those whose dogs take bread and butter, but not for the public.”<sup>370</sup>

Largely in response to AIR’s campaign, music directors began to associate their compositions with common people. Naushad, the music director for the film *Baijū Bāvrā* explained in *Filmfare*: “the main reason why those who favor classical music detest film music is that its makers smashed the age old taboo. Film music brought a great art out [of] the musty halls of the Nawabs, out of the possession of [a] few to the millions who were denied the privilege of enjoying it for centuries.”<sup>371</sup>

### ***SUGAM SANGĪT: A SUBSTITUTE FOR HINDI FILM SONGS***

AIR could not ignore critiques of elitism. In response to listeners’ complaints that classical music programs were not of interest to the common listener, AIR inaugurated “light music production units” in various stations to compose and record film-like songs. AIR called this alternate film music *Sugam Sangīt*, which roughly translates to “easy,” “light” or even “melodious” music. These songs, Keskar explained, would be simple and easy to put to memory, but would avoid the many flaws of film songs, namely westernized tunes and erotic or meaningless lyrics. Ironically, AIR recruited artists from

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<sup>369</sup> “And Now Film Music,” *Filmfare*, 1952, 5, NFAI.

<sup>370</sup> H.P. Mahalik, “Music and the Common Man,” *Movie Times*, 1952, NFAI.

<sup>371</sup> Quoted in Jhingan, “Re-embodying the ‘Classical’ The Bombay Film Song in the 1950s,” 161, NFAI.

the film industry to work in this station in an effort to make the songs more attractive to a popular audience.<sup>372</sup> The famous music director Anil Biswas, who had been critical of the film industry's embrace of European musical elements, worked for AIR and composed tunes for *Sugam Sangīt*.

A radio critic who wrote a weekly column for *The Statesman* and called himself Vigilante wrote extensively about *Sugam Sangīt*. His critical columns are one of the few available accounts of this important production. Vigilante wrote that AIR had inaugurated this new scheme with a “fanfare of trumpets,” but that ultimately *Sugam Sangīt* proved to be a great disappointment.<sup>373</sup> Vigilante criticized the “monotony” of the compositions and the “paucity” of the singers.<sup>374</sup> On one rare occasion, he remarked that the song, “*ītnī dūr kinārā*” (A shore/edge so far) was “the right type” because it had “simple, effective words” and it was “sang [sic] in a pleasant manner.”<sup>375</sup> No other *Sugam Sangīt* merited his praise. In a series of weekly columns, he explained that film music had a “certain attraction and thrill for the ordinary listener” that AIR had simply could not replicate. In comparison to film songs, *Sugam Sangīt* compositions sounded “crude” and “amateurish.” By comparison with film songs, *Sugam Sangīt* tunes had “praiseworthy” motifs and strove to “improve the morals,” but they were not “food for love.”<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> For a description of these songs see also Baruah, *This is All India Radio: A Handbook of Radio Broadcasting*, 137.

<sup>373</sup> "Listening Post: AIR Talk Series Disappointing," *The Statesman*, October 4, 1953, NMML.

<sup>374</sup> "Listening Post: Calcutta Leads in Light Music Broadcasts," *The Statesman*, December 28, 1952, NMML.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> "Listening Post: AIR Talk Series Disappointing."

Even while congratulating the staff of these music units for “achieving a fair amount of success,” Sumati Mutatkar, the director of music at AIR acknowledged that the network’s songs simply could not compete with Hindi film songs. Mutatkar explained, “while listening to a film song out of its context the listeners visualize the situation and this adds great charm and appeal to the song.” Vigilante put it more bluntly: *Sugam Sangīt*, he asserted, “makes the listener yawn and stretch his hands towards the knob.”<sup>377</sup>

In October of 1957, five years after Keskar had banned Hindi film songs, he finally relented. AIR inaugurated *Vividh Bhartī*, a variety music station based in Bombay that included films songs in its programs. *Vividh Bhartī* supplied recorded programs to other regional stations, which relayed them at a later time. However, it was too little and too late. By then a commercial radio station in nearby Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) that broadcast mostly film song programs had, in the words of a loyal fan, “conquered the hearts of millions.”<sup>378</sup> As the legendary radio announcer Ameen Sayani explained, “when people found out they could hear Hindi film music on Radio Ceylon, they started getting fed up of AIR and started shifting to Radio Ceylon.”<sup>379</sup> Radio Ceylon’s rise to prominence is the subject of Chapter Three.

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<sup>377</sup> "Listening Post: New Light Music Fails to Satisfy," *The Statesman*, December 12, 1953, NMML.

<sup>378</sup> Anil Bhargava, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar* (Jaipur: Vangmāyā Prakaśan, 2007), 15. Bhargava writes that this station “lākhoṅ logoṅ ke diloṅ par rāj kiyā thā.”

<sup>379</sup> Ameen Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

## CONCLUSION

AIR's programs were designed to educate and, more important, to discipline the listener. Keskar conceived of the "citizen-listener" as impressionable and child-like. Listeners, however, proved to be quite the opposite. Dissatisfied with AIR's programming, they tuned to foreign and commercial stations, whose choice of music better fit their musical tastes. Yet, Keskar's effort did not fail entirely. AIR's cultural uplift campaign accomplished some of its goals. It provided a source of income for many talented artists and it created a forum where musicians could meet and experiment with new styles of music. Most famously, Ravi Shankar attested in interviews and biographies to the importance of his years working in AIR under Keskar's leadership.<sup>380</sup> For Shankar, as for many other talented musicians, AIR provided not only a platform to exhibit his art, but also a forum for creative enterprise. It should not go without mention that some of Shankar's earliest experiments with fusing Western and Hindustani classical music took place in the renowned studio "number one" of AIR's Delhi station, where he spent countless hours practicing with the national orchestra.

Keskar, however, did not succeed in making Indian classical music the popular music of India as he had set out to do back in 1952, when he first took over the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. His self-conscious project might have convinced some listeners that Hindustani and Carnatic classical music represented Indian culture better than any other genre or musical tradition. But it estranged many more. In later years, Ravi

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<sup>380</sup> Ravi Shankar, *Raga Mala: The Autobiography of Ravi Shankar*, ed. George Harrison (New York: Welcome Rain Publishers, 1999), 118.

Shankar was far more successful at associating classical music with Indian-ness than Keskar could ever be. Ironically, Shankar accomplished this not in AIR's studios, but on the stage of concert halls throughout Europe and the United States, where he performed alongside rock stars and Western classical musicians. AIR's cultural uplift campaign might have failed in some respects, but it did spur an ardent debate about the meaning and purpose of music and, in so doing, succeeded in bringing Indian classical music traditions to the vanguard of national discussion. If one thing is clear it is that in the years immediately following independence, many in India thought deeply about the meaning and power of music and about music's relationship to the newly-formed nation.



## Chapter Four: King of the Airways

The film *Baijū Bāvrā*,<sup>381</sup> set during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar, juxtaposes the lives of two legendary Hindustani classical musicians: Baijnath, the talented son of a poor folk singer and Tansen, a celebrated court musician. At the film's climax, Baijnath and Tansen are caught in a musical feud presided by the emperor, who has vowed to execute the weaker performer. In the end, however, neither musician faces that tragic fate because their music, which enchants not only the royal court, but also the film's audiences, emerges as the only possible winner of the challenge.

*Baijū Bāvrā* was released in 1952 during the height of All India Radio's (AIR) controversy over film songs.<sup>382</sup> As detailed in Chapter Three, after a prolonged dispute with the film industry, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, B.V. Keskar, took film songs off the national radio network. Keskar's main quarrel with film songs was that these songs had veered too far from classical musical traditions. In the mist of the controversy, many in the film industry felt they had to defend their music against the government's assault and prove its connection to South Asia's traditional music. Naushad, then an established film music director, came up with the original idea for *Baijū Bāvrā* and composed its songs, which in line with its storyline drew heavily on Hindustani classical music.<sup>383</sup> All but one of the film's songs were based on actual ragas

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<sup>381</sup> This film's title could be translated as crazy Baiju.

<sup>382</sup> For a longer description of *Baijū Bāvrā* and the film's relationship to AIR's social uplift see Shikha Jhingan, "Re-embodying the "Classical" The Bombay Film Song in the 1950s," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 157-79.

<sup>383</sup> In the Bombay film industry film music composers are normally called music directors, therefore throughout this chapter I use that term.

(melodic modes used in Hindustani classical music). *Baijū Bāvrā* was a huge success in the box-office, but the film's songs received the most praise and left the most enduring legacy (see figure 8).<sup>384</sup>

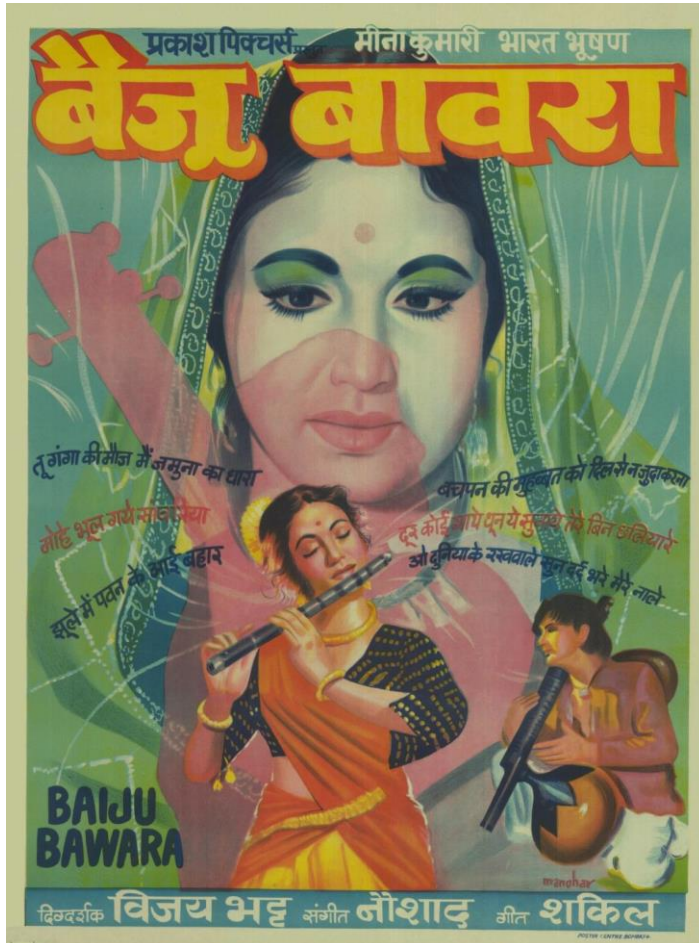


Figure 7: Poster advertisement for the film *Baiju Bawra*. Notice how prominently the film's songs feature in this ad. Source: National Film Archive of India.

<sup>384</sup> Naushad won the *Filmfare* award for Best Music Director that year. The film also established Mohammad Rafi as the top male playback singer.

*Baijū Bāvrā* songs aired on Radio Ceylon, a commercial radio station based in the nearby nation island of Lanka (also called Ceylon in English).<sup>385</sup> Radio Ceylon's most popular program was a hit-parade show called *Binākā Gītmālā* hosted by the now legendary Hindi broadcaster, Ameen Sayani. As I detail below, the show ranked songs in order of popularity every week by using various measurements, including letters and gramophone record sales. *Baijū Bāvrā*'s theme song, "Tū gangā kī mouj, main jamunā kā dhārā"<sup>386</sup> topped *Binākā Gītmālā*'s weekly lists during the show's inaugural programs.<sup>387</sup> Radio Ceylon had flourished in the aftermath of AIR's ban on film music, which in the words of B.V. Keskar, "threatened to extinguish Indian classical music."<sup>388</sup> In a rather ironic twist, it was the songs of *Baijū Bāvrā*, a film about the lives and struggles of classical musicians, which featured most prominently in *Binākā Gītmālā*.

Recent years have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in Hindi film songs. This interest has been fueled in no small part by the "sonic boom" in the humanities and social sciences and the rise of the field of Sound Studies, but also by the recognition that song numbers are one of the most distinctive features of Hindi cinema, and more generally Indian cinema. The many biographies of music composers, playback singers, and musicians as well in-depth studies of Hindi film songs (lyrics and music) have little

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<sup>385</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, at the time of my study this country went by a variety of names, including Ceylon in English and Lanka in Sinhala.

<sup>386</sup> An approximate translation is "you are the wave of the river Ganga, I am the current of the river Jamuna."

<sup>387</sup> Anil Bhargava, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar* (Jaipur: Vangmāyā Prakaśan, 2007), 24.

<sup>388</sup> "An article on music and art," (undated), B.V. Keskar Papers, NMML.

to say about Radio Ceylon's role in popularizing Hindi film songs and more generally on about how the medium of radio influenced the making and the reception of the songs.<sup>389</sup>

Anna Morcom refers to the period between the 1930s and 1980s as "the gramophone era."<sup>390</sup> But from the 1940s to the 1980s, most people heard film songs *on the radio*. Broadcasters played gramophone records in their programs, but they did much more than replay records. Radio Ceylon and the film industry in Bombay developed an important reciprocal relationship. The well-established film industry provided the music that helped Radio Ceylon attract millions of listeners. Radio broadcasters, in turn, made these songs widely available. They also designed programs that encouraged listeners to decouple songs from films, that inspired audiences to develop personal relationships with singers, and, most important, that encouraged listeners to integrate film songs into their daily lives.

If recent works on film songs have paid little attention to Radio Ceylon's actual programs they have also not considered the institutional history of this radio station and its transnational makeup. Who owned and managed Radio Ceylon? Why did Radio

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<sup>389</sup> Some examples include Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediation of Hindi Film Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Gregory D. Booth, *Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai's film Studios* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Anna Morcom, "Film Songs and the Cultural Synergies of Bollywood in and Beyond South Asia," in *Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema*, ed. Rachel Dwyer and Jerry Pinto (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011): 156-87; Aswin Punathambekar, "We're Online, Not on the Street: Indian Cinema, New Media, and Participatory Culture," in *Global Bollywood*, ed. Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 189-97; Gregory D. Booth, "Religion, Gossip, Narrative Conventions and the Construction of Meaning in Hindi Film Songs," *Popular Music* 19, no. 2 (2000): 125-45. See also, Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediation of Hindi Film Song*, Loc 1313-13135. In particular see Chapter 3 "'But my heart is still Indian': Film Song of the Early Postcolonial Era."

<sup>390</sup> Ana Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*, SOAS Musicology Series (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007).

Ceylon, a government-run radio station located in Sinhala, a Tamil speaking region, launch a Hindi-language service? How did this station develop links to the film industry in Bombay?

I begin this chapter by tracing the history of Radio Ceylon's predecessor, Radio SEAC (Southeast Asia Command) and make note of this station's relationship to imperial politics and World War II. I argue that Radio SEAC's imperial and transnational origins and the fact that it lay outside the jurisdiction of the colonial Government of India (both physically and administratively) enabled the station in its later reincarnation as Radio Ceylon to challenge the Indian government's policies. Radio Ceylon also fostered distinctive relationship with listeners. Throughout the chapter, I highlight the transnational collaborative nature of Radio Ceylon paying careful attention to the ways in which songs and voices circulated beyond national borders. Finally, by uncovering the story of Radio Ceylon and analyzing this station's role in making film music an integral part of Indian life, this chapter hopes to move beyond the idea that in South Asia Hindi film songs are ubiquitous and proceed toward an understanding of how they came to be that way.

## **RADIO FOR DISILLUSIONED SOLDIERS**

Radio Ceylon's history dates back to WWII, when the British Government set up a radio station in the British Crown colony of Ceylon in the hopes of boosting the morale

of British forces deployed in Asia.<sup>391</sup> Among these forces were the soldiers from the British 14<sup>th</sup> army, who called themselves the “forgotten army” because they felt that few back in Britain took notice of them.<sup>392</sup> News of the difficulties faced by British soldiers stationed in Asia reached Britain the summer of 1944. On August 6, 1944 the *Sunday Pictorial* published an investigative journalism piece, which noted: “In Normandy and Italy the [British] army has modern well-staffed and highly efficient medical service. It is admirably fed. Leisure is made pleasant and invigorating.” In contrast, soldiers stationed in the East, the article explained, faced very different conditions. “The medical service is starved of personnel and out of date in its equipment.” Moreover, British soldiers were deprived of the most simple pleasures, including beer, cigarettes, and, radio.<sup>393</sup>

The War Office in London took reports about soldiers’ lack of access to radio seriously. It approved funds to launch a radio station in Asia exclusively for British soldiers—despite being stretched for money—because its members believed that radio, more than any other form of entertainment, could boost British soldiers’ morale and ultimately help sway the war in Britain's favor. Access to the latest musical hits as well as “authentic news” from Britain, the War Office concluded, would offer soldiers a much-needed “link home.”<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Appendix A-Directive Station Commander Radio Unit SEAC, Radio SEAC Ceylon, L/I/1/440, IO. This document describes Radio SEAC as “morale station.”

<sup>392</sup> For a detailed account of the British 14<sup>th</sup> Army and its “forgotten army” label see Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

<sup>393</sup> Eric Hitchcock, *Making Waves: Admiral Mountbatten's Radio SEAC 1945-49* (Solihull, West Midlands: Helion & Company Limited, 2014), 50.

<sup>394</sup> Letter to Secretary of State from Lord Mountbatten, WO 203/5207, NA-UK; Radio SEAC, WO 203/5207, NA-UK; *ibid.*, 294. A new station, however, represented no small expenditure, for already nearly

Some had suggested that the War office build the new military radio station in India.<sup>395</sup> The Office chose the British Crown colony of Ceylon, largely because Lord Mountbatten, then South East Asia Commander in Chief, wanted to ensure that his military radio was not subject to the whims of the colonial Government of India.<sup>396</sup> This decision had important consequences for the history of radio and music in postcolonial India. Radio Ceylon and its listeners were able to challenge the Indian government's policies because the station lay outside its jurisdiction.

Mountbatten named the military station Radio SEAC after the initials of his military command. He reassured the concerned commander-in-chief of India, Claude Auchinleck, that the station had been named Radio SEAC, not because it would give preference to British soldiers in Southeast Asia over the India Command soldiers, but because it was a “short” and “easily pronounceable” name. All programs, Mountbatten explained, would begin with the following announcement: “This is the forces broadcasting Service, Radio SEAC, broadcasting in India and South East Asia.”<sup>397</sup>

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bankrupt British government. The station’s principal piece of equipment, a state-of-the-art 100KW Marconi transmitter, cost over a quarter million pounds

<sup>395</sup> Report on the discussion regarding forces broadcasting for India and South East Asia command, November 11, 1944, L/I/1/937, IO. In August 1943, Churchill appointed Lord Mountbatten, as the commander of South East Asia Command (SEAC), a branch of the British Army in charge of the defending colonies in the Southeast Asia. Lord Mountbatten had shifted the headquarters from Delhi to Ceylon. For a more detailed account of the South East Asia Command see Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>396</sup> Shortly after the war's end, Mountbatten became Viceroy of India.

<sup>397</sup> Letter to Claude Auchinleck from Lord Mountbatten, February 7, 1945, WO 203/ 5207, NA-UK.

Unaware of the war's imminent end, the War Office made plans to inaugurate the station in July of 1945.<sup>398</sup> That summer a team of ten BBC radio engineers reached Lanka to assemble and provide maintenance to the station's main transmitter. The British-built machine, however, had a harder time completing the trans-oceanic trip from the outskirts of London to Colombo, the capital of Lanka, than the staff trained to tend to it. A dock strike and other war-related hindrances set back the transmitter's arrival and inauguration by several months.<sup>399</sup> Not until almost a year after Japan's surrender—in May of 1946—did the much-awaited transmitter finally air its first broadcast (see figure 8).



Figure 8: Radio SEAC transmitter in Ekala, near Colombo (undated). Source: National Archives of Sri Lanka.

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<sup>398</sup> Report on the discussion regarding forces broadcasting for India and South East Asia Commands, November 27, 1944, L/I/1/937, IO.

<sup>399</sup> Eric Hightcock, "Radio SEAC's transmitters: Eric Hitchcock Brings us a Tale of 1940s Broadcasting from the Indian Ocean," *Shortwave Magazine* 2000, 45-52. Letter to Secretary of State from Lord Mountbatten, January 20, 1946, WO 203/5207, NA-UK. Eager to get the station up and running as soon as possible, Radio SEAC personnel used a low power transmitter to broadcast news and music to forces while they waited for the 100 KW transmitter to arrive.



In 1946 there were still more than 100,000 British troops stationed in Asia and Radio SEAC was put to their service. Much to the surprise and delight of the station's staff, the transmitter's broadcasts reached farther than originally anticipated. Not only listeners in Asia, but also in parts of Africa and Europe, and even some wireless enthusiasts in the United States reported hearing the transmitter's broadcasts.<sup>400</sup> Erik Hitchcock, a Radio SEAC engineer, recalls that an inmate in the Ohio Penitentiary sent detailed reception reports to Radio SEAC staff in Colombo!<sup>401</sup> Until the mid-1970s the transmitter continued to have excellent reception in the subcontinent and could even be heard in parts of Southeast Asia and Africa.<sup>402</sup>

Interestingly, some of this military station's broadcasts foreshadowed its later contribution to popularizing Hindi film songs. One of Radio SEAC's most popular programs was a weekly song request show called *Heard Memories*. The programs' host, Victor Poole, remarked that he received endless requests for the film song "Warsaw Concerto," a piano and orchestra piece featured in the popular WWII film, *Dangerous Moonlight*, released in 1941.<sup>403</sup> Moreover, while the majority of Radio SEAC's programs

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<sup>400</sup> Letter from Mr. E. Bonong to Mr. R.N. Bon, Permanent Secretary of Post and Telecommunication, Colombo, September 29, 1948, T 219/91, NA-UK

<sup>401</sup> Hichtcock, "Radio SEAC's transmitters: Eric Hitchcock Brings us a Tale of 1940s Broadcasting from the Indian Ocean."

<sup>402</sup> Ameen Sayani, "The Strange and Amusing History of Indian Commercial Radio." [forthcoming]. Ameen Sayani shared this article with me.

<sup>403</sup> *Radio Times*, June 1947, L/I/1/440, IO.

catered to British troops, the station also aired a ninety-minute-long Hindustani-language program for Indian troops that included music and news broadcasts.<sup>404</sup>

Despite severe funding cuts, the War Office continued to finance the station for two years after the war's end.<sup>405</sup> In February of 1948, British Ceylon gained independence and the country's first Prime minister, Don Stephen Senanayake, requested that the British government immediately shut down its military radio station.<sup>406</sup> Radio SEAC's staff could not disassemble the transmitter and transport it back to England and decided to leave it behind along with other broadcasting equipment for the benefit of the newly formed Lankan government.<sup>407</sup>

Shortly thereafter, British officials learned to their consternation that the Lankan Minister of Communication, John Kotenwala, planned to launch a commercial radio station using the discarded equipment.<sup>408</sup> One officer explained:

I did not realize what a wide area Radio SEAC can cover. [...] It can reach into Iraq and to the West to almost the whole of China. It can, of course, reach all the parts of India with great clarity. In view of this it is considered most *unwise politically* to let the station out of [our] hands.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Broadcasting service to troops in India and SEAC, L/I/1/937, IO.

<sup>405</sup> Operation of Radio SEAC, February 13, 1948, Broadcasting – Radio SEAC Ceylon, L/I/1/440, IO. The War Office officials noted that if the BBC could not take over the facilities, perhaps the Marconi office would be a good option.

<sup>406</sup> Information Services Committee Commercial Broadcasting, Broadcasting – Radio SEAC Ceylon, L/I/1/440, IO. The document states, "The Ceylon government [is] unwilling to allow the station to remain in United Kingdom ownership now that Ceylon is independent."

<sup>407</sup> Hitchcock, "Radio SEAC's transmitters: Eric Hitchcock brings us a tale of 1940s broadcasting from the Indian Ocean."

<sup>408</sup> Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations, April 15, 1948, Broadcasting – Radio SEAC Ceylon, L/I/1/440, IO.

<sup>409</sup> Letters signed by P.C. Shaw, April 9, 1948, T 219/91, NA- UK. Emphasis added.

The officer also reminded his superiors that US businesses could take advantage and advertise their product on the airwaves “with serious consequences to United Kingdom markets.”<sup>410</sup> Even more dangerously, commercial broadcasting “*across frontiers*”<sup>411</sup> could have unexpected political consequences. “The danger here is that the Lankan government may not stop at ordinary commercial broadcasting —toothpaste, magazines, etc.—but might sell time to political bodies, e.g. Hindus and Moslems.”<sup>412</sup>

Prime Minister Senanayake made two concessions that helped ease British officials’ worries. He promised to give preference to British and commonwealth clients and agreed to let BBC staff use the transmitter to relay news to the remaining British troops in Asia for a few hours day for a period of two more years. On the 1st of March 1949, a reluctant British government handed over ownership of Radio SEAC’s facilities to the island’s new government. That same month, the former military transmitter aired its first broadcast as Radio Ceylon.<sup>413</sup>

## COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING ACROSS FRONTIERS

Almost immediately after the transfer of radio equipment became official, the Lankan politicians reached out to the Australian government for assistance with launching a commercial station on Radio SEAC’s premises. As part of a foreign aid program called Plan Colombo, the Australian government sent out one of their best radio experts to Colombo. Clifford Dodd, a broadcaster and administrator with over two

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<sup>410</sup> Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations, April 15, 1948, Broadcasting – Radio SEAC Ceylon, L/I/1/440, IO.

<sup>411</sup> Letters signed by P.C. Shaw, April 9, 1948, T 219/91, NA- UK. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Memorandum, HO 256/279, NA-UK.

decades of experience in commercial radio became Radio Ceylon's first Director of Commercial Broadcasting in 1948.<sup>414</sup> Under Dodd's leadership, and in great part due to his foresight and resourcefulness, Radio Ceylon developed a strong Hindi service that went on to captivate audiences throughout the subcontinent (see figure 9).<sup>415</sup>

Lanka's broadcasting system was a hybrid of the two better known national broadcasting models, the United States' commercial network system and Britain's public service broadcasting system. The Lankan government owned two separate radio networks: the National Network and the Commercial Service. The National Network relied on government funds, targeted national audiences, and aired educational programs. It was similar in structure and in purpose to AIR. In contrast, the Commercial Service, headed by Clifford Dodd, put out entertainment programs and relied entirely on commercial sponsors for its sustenance. The Lankan government owned and managed both networks and income from commercial broadcasting—at least in principle, if not always in practice—offset expenses from the public service network.<sup>416</sup> This study is concerned only with Radio Ceylon's Commercial Service and, more specifically, with its Hindi-language commercial programs. Contemporary broadcasters in India and Pakistan used the term “Radio Ceylon” to refer specifically to the Hindi service, and I have done the same (see figure 10).

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<sup>414</sup>"Clifford Dodd," *Ceylon Radio Times*, September 24 - October 7 1950, British Library Newspapers at Colindale (BL-News hereafter).

<sup>415</sup> Ivan Corea, "Eighty Years of Broadcasting," *Daily News*, December 27, 2005, accessed May 10, 2013, <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2005/12/27/fea02.htm>.

<sup>416</sup> Nandana Karunanayake, *Broadcasting in Sri Lanka: Potential and Performance* (Colombo: Centre for Media and Policy Studies, 1990), 103-113.

Aware of the military transmitter's excellent reception in the subcontinent, Dodd marked out India and Pakistan as an important region for commercial broadcasting. In 1950, he inaugurated a separate transmission service for listeners in these countries, initially called India Beam and later renamed Indo-Pakistan to account for broadcasters' intention to also reach listeners in the newly formed country of Pakistan.<sup>417</sup> However, a perusal of this service's broadcasting schedules reveals that there was hardly anything distinctly Indian or Pakistani about its early productions. In fact, music and news programs do not seem all that different from Radio SEAC's transmissions for British soldiers. Radio Ceylon broadcasters might have even used Radio SEAC's gramophone library in their broadcasts. The station featured music from the United States and Europe. On Friday nights, then as now a peak listening time, it aired a program called "Vincent Lopez and Orchestra."<sup>418</sup> The Indian Beam also relayed BBC news and aired English-language drama serials. Moreover, all programs were in English, a language that only a privileged fraction of the populations of India and Pakistan could understand.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> See collection of *Ceylon Radio Times* magazines at the National Museum Library in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and at BL-News.

<sup>418</sup> "Commercial Radio News," *Ceylon Radio Times*, May 5 -18, 1952.

<sup>419</sup> See *Lanka Radio Times* magazines, 1948 -1951, BL-News.



Figure 9: Clifford Dodd at Work in his office in Colombo (undated). Source: National Archives of Sri Lanka



Figure 10: Radio Ceylon's studios in Colombo (undated). Source: Sri Lanka Corporation Library.

The India Beam began to shift away from Anglophone programming and experiment with “Indian music” and Indian language transmissions late in 1951. Dodd and his team sensed (correctly) that radio programs in Indian languages would attract a greater listenership India and Pakistan than English programs and began hiring Hindi-speaking staff to host the India Beam programs. Ameen Sayani remembers that these early Hindi broadcasters were not particularly well trained and did little more than play gramophone records of Hindi film songs on the air.<sup>420</sup> Their choice of music was not particularly strategic either; they played Hindi film songs because it was the genre of Indian music most easily available on gramophone records.<sup>421</sup>

Radio Ceylon’s timing, however, could not have been better. One year after it inaugurated Hindi-language service, B.V. Keskar took Hindi film songs off the national radio network’s transmissions. Listeners, dissatisfied with the AIR’s “serious music” transmissions fiddled with their dials in search of foreign stations whose programs better suited their musical tastes. Some tuned to Radio Goa’s transmissions, which in those days broadcast Hindi film songs (Goa was a Portuguese colony with its own radio station unconstrained by AIR’s rules). Radio Goa, however, had low-power transmitters and their programs could only be heard in neighboring areas.<sup>422</sup> Radio Ceylon broadcasts, in contrast, went out on the military transmitter, built to reach British soldiers throughout

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<sup>420</sup> Ameen Sayani, interviewed by Kamla Bhatt, March 27, 2007.

<http://kamlashow.com/podcast/2007/03/25/in-conversation-with-ameen-sayani-part-i/>.

<sup>421</sup> See the collection of *Ceylon Radio Times* magazines for 1951, BL-News. The Sri Lanka National Museum also houses copies of these magazines, but the Colindale collection is more complete.

<sup>422</sup> H.P. Mahalik, "Music and the Common Man," *Movie Times*, February 6, 1953, National Film Archive of India, Pune-India (NFAI hereafter). In 1962, All India Radio began to make plans to take over Radio GOA. See, Taking over radio GOA by AIR, States, Broadcasting Policy, 1962, 8(1) 62-B(P), NAI.

Asia, and had excellent reception in India and Pakistan. One listener in Bombay wrote to *Movie Times* in February of 1953 to endorse Radio Ceylon's new Hindi film songs programs: "the change is most welcomed."<sup>423</sup>

## **BUILDING A LINK TO INDIA**

Dodd faced one major difficulty. How could he and his staff located in a Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking staff in Colombo recruit sponsors with interest in advertising their products to Indian audiences? Dodd connected with Daniel Molina, an American entrepreneur based in Bombay with advertising experience.<sup>424</sup> Molina agreed to become Radio Ceylon's middle-man, but he did not have an easy task ahead. Radio advertising was a new concept in India and, after the carnage of Partition, which devastated the region's social and economic infrastructure, few businesses in India could actually afford to experiment with new forms of advertising. Nehru's socialist-leaning government also restricted private enterprise and foreign investment. Molina, however, managed to convince Ciba, a Swiss chemical company with an Indian branch, to buy airtime on Radio Ceylon. Ciba sponsored many of Radio Ceylon's pioneering Hindi programs, and other businesses followed Ciba's lead. Britannia Biscuit Corporation, Jay Engineers Works, Boots Pure Drug Company, and Associated British Foods were among the first

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<sup>423</sup> S. Dayal, "Well, Keskar Babu?," *Film India*, July 1, 1953, 70, NFAI.

<sup>424</sup> Ameen Sayani, interviewed by Kamla Bhatt, March 27, 2007.



companies to advertise their products on Radio Ceylon.<sup>425</sup> Eventually, Molina founded his own company, Radio Advertising Services.<sup>426</sup>

Molina's company also ventured into programing. He recruited knowledgeable broadcasters and producers who had intuitive knowledge of audiences' tastes and desires and started a programing branch that he called Radio Enterprise Services. He hired Hamid Sayani, who was then already an established AIR broadcaster and a fairly well-known voice, and made him Director of Programming. Hamid Sayani brought along colleagues from AIR and friends with connections to the theater and film industries of Bombay.<sup>427</sup> Hamid Sayani was also Ameen Sayani's elder brother, and introduced Ameen to broadcasting.

Molina's intervention enabled Radio Ceylon to build strong ties to the film industry. Many of Radio Ceylon's employees were connected to the film industry. Manmohan Krishna, for example, produced programs in Radio Enterprises Services, but also acted in and directed several films.<sup>428</sup> Perhaps most famously, the actor Sunil Dutt worked for Molina before his debut in the film *Railway Platform*, released in 1955.<sup>429</sup>

At first, Radio Advertising Services staff recorded programs in a small studio at St. Xavier's College in Bombay. In later years, the company shifted to the heart of the

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<sup>425</sup> Many programming schedules include the name of sponsors. See *Radio Ceylon Times* 1952-1695, BL-News and Sri Lanka National Museum.

<sup>426</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt; Arun Chaudhuri, *Indian Advertising: 1780 to 1950 A.D* (New Delhi: Tata Mc-Graw Hill Pub. Co., 2007), 227-35.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.; Sayani, "The Strange and Amusing History of Indian Commercial Radio."

<sup>428</sup> Sayani, Ameen, *Gītālā Kī Chāoñ Meñ*, RPG Enterprises, Volumes 1-5, 2009, Compact disks.

<sup>429</sup> Namrata Kumar Dutt and Priya Dutt, *Mr. and Mrs. Dutt: Memories of Our Parents* (New Delhi: Lustre Press/Roli Books, 2007), 28.

commercial district of Colaba in Bombay, in front of the renowned Regal Cinema. During the peak of Radio Ceylon's popularity, Radio Advertising Services occupied the entire floor of the building and commanded a strong presence in the Bombay film world.<sup>430</sup> Magnetic tapes of Radio Advertising programs traveled every week—via the newly operating Air India and Air Ceylon— from Bombay to Radio Ceylon's Colombo-based studios and were broadcast to India and Pakistan by way of Radio Ceylon's powerful military transmitter. Interestingly, what fans in India and Pakistan understood as Radio Ceylon's Hindi Service actually was the combined work of two independent organizations: a commercial radio station owned by the Lanka government and Daniel Molina's private advertising company based in Bombay. Staff from these two organizations worked closely together, but Radio Advertising Services never held official ties to the Lankan government.<sup>431</sup>

Clifford Dodd put as much enthusiasm into developing a strong Hindi branch in Colombo as he did into building links to India and the Bombay film industry. He recruited broadcasters from India with experience in either Hindi broadcasting or the film industry to move to Colombo and work for Radio Ceylon. Some better-known Hindi broadcasters who were based in Colombo include Gopal Sharma, Vijay Kishore Dubey, and Dalbir Singh Parmar. Sharma, for example, had tried his luck at acting in theater and film in

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<sup>430</sup> Aswin Punathambekar, "Ameen Sayani and Radio Ceylon: Notes Towards a History of Broadcasting and Bombay Cinema," *Bioscope* 1, no. 2 (2010): 192.

<sup>431</sup> It was, however, not unusual for Radio Advertising Services broadcasters to join Radio Ceylon's studios in Colombo or vice-versa.

Bombay, but realized that he lacked the requisite “good looks” to make it as an actor.<sup>432</sup> Following the advice of a theater director, who praised Sharma’s voice and clear pronunciation, he auditioned (in Bombay) for a broadcasting position in Radio Ceylon.<sup>433</sup> Vijay Kishore Dubey worked for Daniel Molina’s advertising company before joining Radio Ceylon’s staff in Colombo.<sup>434</sup> Radio Ceylon broadcasters became household names in homes throughout India and Pakistan and, in many cases, became as popular and well-known as the film songs they played and the programs they anchored (see figure 12).



Figure 11: Radio Ceylon Hindi Film song gramophone library with Jyoti Parmar, now a Hindi language broadcaster with Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation.  
Source: photo by author, published with permission of Jyoti Parmar.<sup>435</sup>

<sup>432</sup> For biographical details of Gopal Sharma’s life see Gopal Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Doston* (Mumbai: Gopal Sharma 2007), 1-20.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Sayani, Ameen, *Gītālā Kī Chāñ Meñ*, RPG Enterprises, Volumes 1-5, 2009, Compact discs.

<sup>435</sup> Radio Ceylon has one of the most extensive and complete collection of Hindi film songs records. For a description of the library see Gopal Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Doston*, 74.

Radio Ceylon was a transnational radio station par excellence. It was owned by the Lankan government, but managed by an Australian director. An American businessman based in Bombay recruited sponsors for the station's varied programs, while Indian broadcasters, some based in Bombay and others in Colombo, anchored Radio Ceylon's various programs. Radio Ceylon's audiences were also transnational. In addition to India, the program had a loyal following in Pakistan. As explained in the introduction, when Ameen Sayani visited Pakistan for the first time in 2007, Radio Ceylon fans gathered to finally "see" the man whose voice was a crucial part of their sonic past.<sup>436</sup> It is also telling that Radio Ceylon began to air programs with Pakistani film music in the early 1960s, most likely to please Pakistani listeners, but perhaps also to introduce listeners in India to Pakistani film songs.<sup>437</sup> Moreover, Sayani and other broadcasters note that, in addition to letters from India and Pakistan, they also received fan letters from listeners in Lanka, Southeast Asia and even in parts of Africa, who regularly tuned to their programs.<sup>438</sup>

Language was an important part of Radio Ceylon's initiative. Radio Ceylon broadcasters hailed from India and, for the most part, called the language they spoke on

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<sup>436</sup> "Hum TV ke progrām meñ Ameen Sayani adākār Nadīm se bāt cīt kar rahe haiñ," *Navā-e-vaqt*, May 8, 2007; "Express," *Pāk bhārat dostī mazbūt rište meñ bandh jāe: Ameen Sayani*, May 8, 2007; "Regional Tunes," *Hum TV's tribute to Ameen Sayani- the legend*, May 7, 2007; "Ameen Sayani ek muddat tak muhabbat kī mālā bunte rahe," *Gateway*, May 9, 2007; "Merī āwāz hī pahcān hai, gar yād rahe," *Super Star Dust*, June 2007; "Sayani jaise sadākār ke liye reḍiō āj bhī muntazir," *QVS Audio Video*, June 2007, Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, Sultan Ahmed Arshad Personal Papers.

<sup>437</sup> For example, the June 19 – July 2, 1961 edition for *Ceylon Radio Times* notes that Radio Ceylon played Pakistani songs on Friday nights at 8:45. *Ceylon Radio Times*, June 19 – July 2, 1961, BL-News hereafter).

<sup>438</sup> Ameen Sayani and Rajil Sayani, email exchange with author, October 19, 2012.

the airwaves Hindi.<sup>439</sup> Radio Ceylon employees, however, adhered to what I have earlier described as “the ideology of Hindustani.” The strove to speak a language that was free of religious affiliations and could connect with speakers of other regional languages without threatening regional tongues or identities of the films whose songs they aired. Radio Ceylon’s linguistic preferences were, no doubt, influenced by the film industry. As a number of scholars have pointed out, the Hindi film industry in Bombay also very consciously subscribed to the ideology of Hindustani. As Madhumita Lahiri puts it, “Hindustani does not persist in literary publications, legal records, or elementary school textbooks, yet it can be found in one large, populist realm: that of the Bollywood cinema.”<sup>440</sup>

Ameen Sayani’s own personal language history is revealing. Sayani had had no formal training in Hindi. He grew up in a Gujarati-speaking Muslim household and attended an English-medium boarding school. In a number of interviews, Sayani described his plunge into Hindi broadcasting as purely accidental. He was still in his teens when a senior announcer asked him to read a Hindi-language commercial because the permanent voice artist did not arrive in time. A few months later, when young Sayani agreed to host the Hindi-language program, his older brother advised him against anchoring a program in a language Ameen was not hundred percent comfortable

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<sup>439</sup> Ameen Sayani has referred to the language he spoke as Hindustani in personal correspondence with the author.

<sup>440</sup> Bollywood is the term more commonly used now to reference commercial Hindi cinema. Madhumita Lahiri, "An Idiom for India: Hindustani and the Limits of the Language Concept," *Interventions*, (2015): 2. [forthcoming]

speaking.<sup>441</sup> The young Sayani, however, was eager to prove himself as broadcaster in his own right and accepted the job despite his elder brother's disapproval.

In the years to come, Sayani worked hard to perfect his Hindi pronunciation (Sayani notes that it took him seven years to feel completely at ease broadcasting in Hindi), but the language he spoke was very consciously neither Muslim nor Hindu.<sup>442</sup> For example, he often used the greeting *ādāb* in his broadcast which can be associated with North Indian Muslims, but also used words much closer to the Hindi-spectrum such as *kāryakram* (program). Sayani very consciously adopted a simple manner of speech that non-native speakers of Hindi, including his own family members, could easily understand and appreciate.<sup>443</sup> If by ascribing to the “ideology of Hindustani,” broadcasters were able to access a large, diverse and transnational listenership, then it was through a set of well-thought out broadcasting techniques that they were able to develop intimate relationships with that listenership.

## **BUILDING INTIMACY WITH LISTENERS**

In the succeeding section, I turn to the actual radio programs in an effort to better understand the broadcasting techniques that Radio Ceylon's employees adopted as well to spell out the important mutual relationship that developed between the Hindi film industry and Radio Ceylon. I point to three main ways in which broadcasters integrated film songs into the daily lives of listeners. First, they helped songs develop what Anna

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<sup>441</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Sayani, Ameen. *Gītmālā Kī Chāoñ Meñ*, compact disc 1.

Morcom calls “double lives”—that is, songs’ peculiar ability to circulate freely outside the cinema yet, at the same time, remain attached to the films in which they had originally appeared. Second, Radio Ceylon programs promoted playback singers and music directors’ stardom, inviting listeners to develop personal relationships with listeners with radio listeners. Third, through programs like *Binākā Gītmālā*, Radio Ceylon strengthened the commercial value of songs, while simultaneously making consumers feel that they played an active role in this musical culture.

In what follows, I pay careful attention to what John Durham Peters creatively calls “formats of virtual participation for the absent.”<sup>444</sup> Expanding on Peters’ theoretical format, I suggest that Radio Ceylon broadcasters promoted two kinds of audience participation that we might call reciprocal and non-reciprocal. In reciprocal participation, broadcasters *actually* interacted with listeners by reading letters, incorporating listeners’ votes into a competition of some sorts, or simply saying a name in a radio show. In non-reciprocal participation, there is no real point of juncture. Broadcasters create “sociability through the ears and conversations without [actual] interaction.”<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>444</sup>John Durham Peters, “Broadcasting and Schizophrenia,” *Media, Culture & Society* 32, no. 1 (2010): 127. Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 206-25. Paddy Scannell uses a similar concept. See Paddy Scannell, “For-anyone-as-someone structures,” *Media, Culture & Society* 22, no. 1 (2000): 5-24.

<sup>445</sup> What Peters, who focused on the North American radio tradition, failed to notice is how unique these kind of democratic relationships between listeners and performers were in the context of Hindustani classical music. The seventeenth and eighteenth-century North Indian *mehfil*, for example, was a “gathering of connoisseurs and musicians in exclusive elite spaces for the purpose of musical performance.” See Katherine Butler Schofield, “The Social Liminality of Musicians: Case Studies from Mughal India and Beyond,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 3, no. 1 (2007): 13-49.

## THE DOUBLE LIFE OF SONGS

The musicologist Ashok Ranade notes that music directors strove to create music items that were “self-sufficient in [their] melodic drama and that could therefore be received in isolation irrespective of the filmic situation in which [they] are intended to appear.”<sup>446</sup> That new aspiration was spurred, in part, by the technologies of the era that provided new avenues for filmgoers to enjoy film songs outside the cinema hall. Making songs available on the airwaves encouraged the consumption of those songs independent from film. Radio was not the first technology to take film songs out of the studios—it was preceded by gramophone records, and also by pamphlets with song lyrics that were meant to help filmgoers remember songs..

Radio Ceylon, however, did much more than just ensure that songs circulated separately from films on the airwaves. Broadcasters designed programs that deliberately encouraged listeners to think of film songs as separate entities by grouping songs based on their qualities, rather than on the films where they originally appeared.<sup>447</sup> For example, Gopal Sharma anchored a show called *Śīrṣak Sangīt*<sup>448</sup> (title songs). Sharma selected a title word each week and played songs whose first two lines included this word. For

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<sup>446</sup> Ashok Ranade, “The Extraordinary Importance of the Indian Film Song,” *Cinema Vision India* (1980), NFAI.

<sup>447</sup> The names and times of radio programs are listed in *Radio Ceylon Times* magazines from the 1950s and 1960s. These are housed in the Sri Lanka Public Library and the British Library Newspaper Collection in Colindale. In his biography Gopal Sharma includes detailed descriptions of these programs. I also asked Jyothi Parmar to describe the radio programs listed on the schedules during my visit to the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation. Jyothi Parmar is the Hindi broadcaster of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (the successor of Radio Ceylon) and resides in Colombo. She is the daughter of the Radio Ceylon broadcaster Dalbir Singh Parmar, who joined Radio Ceylon in the mid-1960s, and has been involved in broadcasting since her youth.

<sup>448</sup> Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Dostān*, 91.



example, if he selected the word *dunīyā*, which means world, he would play songs such as, “Yeh dunīyā yeh mehfil mere kām kī nahīn”<sup>449</sup> and “Dunīyā meñ hasīn mileñge.” *Šīrśak Sangīt* encouraged non-reciprocal audience participation by encouraging listeners to predict the songs he would select during the course of the program.

Along similar lines, a program called *Anokhe Bol* (unusual words or gibberish) aired film songs that contained meaningless words such as the much praised and still very popular song “Īnā minā dikā,” from the film *Āšā* and the song “Aplam Caplam Chaplai Re”<sup>450</sup> from *Āzād*. Interestingly, *Anokhe Bol* celebrated an aspect of film songs that film music critics repeatedly condemned. The use of meaningless phrases was, in the eyes (or ears) of film music critics, a sign of film music’s degradation.<sup>451</sup>

Perhaps also in response to AIR’s recurrent accusation that film music had destroyed classical music traditions, Radio Ceylon aired a program titled *Sargam* that celebrated film music’s classical roots. *Sargam* means musical scale and the program featured film songs that were close to the Hindustani classical tradition, such as the songs of the acclaimed film *Baijū Bāvrā*. During the course of this program, the assigned broadcasters announced the raga on which the selected song was based and made note of the director and singer’s musical training. Lastly, a program called *Sandesh gītvāle*, which means “songs with messages,” might have also been a sort of a rebuttal to the all-too-

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<sup>449</sup> An approximate translation of this song could be “this world, this gathering, is not for me.”

<sup>450</sup> This song titles are meant to imitate sounds and do not have a specific meaning.

<sup>451</sup> J. Firoze told *Movie Times*: “Some of our song writers can also take the credit for having introduced a strange new language in our songs ... one of the popular songs runs as follows “Chuke Choom choom mera dil huya goom.” The writer called this song “stinking trash” and went on to note “this one line speaks volumes for the utter bankruptcy of our song writers.” See, J. Firoze, “Stock Words in Songs,” *Movie Times*, November 14, 1952, 24, NFAI.

familiar criticism that film songs were amoral and loutish. The announcer aired songs that had similar moral messages or lessons, talked about the chosen songs' shared message, and discussed the message's relevance to people's personal lives.

*Sandesh gītvalē*, *Anokhe Bol*, and *Sargam* challenged (and encouraged listeners to challenge) AIR's policies, but they also classified songs based on specific characteristics of the songs themselves rather than by the film where they had originally appeared and encouraged listeners to think of songs as independent units, not merely as fragments of a film. Yet the process of decoupling was never straightforward or uncomplicated. While broadcasters developed programs that encouraged songs' independence from films, they also simultaneously cashed in on these songs' intrinsic attachment to motion pictures.<sup>452</sup>

Radio Ceylon aired a program called *Driṣya aur Gīt*, meaning scene and song, which had the following format: listeners mailed in short written descriptions of a film scene preceding a song, the broadcaster read listeners' written descriptions, interjected a few comments, and then played the corresponding songs. This program encouraged listeners to visualize film scenes and connect songs to their original productions. *Driṣya aur Gīt* fostered the two types of audience participation described above. Some listeners engaged in reciprocal participation when they mailed in letters that broadcasters read and discussed in live programs.<sup>453</sup> Other listeners engaged in non-reciprocal participation when they tried to identify the song that corresponded with the scene the broadcasters played. In the age before television and video players, when people could not watch a

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<sup>452</sup> Morcom, "Film Songs and the Cultural Synergies of Bollywood in and Beyond South Asia," 162.

<sup>453</sup> Jyothi Parmar, interviewed by author, November 27, 2012.

film a second or third time without having to pay for a movie ticket, songs broadcast on the radio helped listeners relive their moviegoing experiences and expanded the popular ambit of film music.

Moreover, film songs also served as advertisements for films. Molina's staff back in Bombay prepared publicity programs for soon-to-be-released films that very deliberately pegged songs to motion pictures. These paid radio programs functioned as a sort of aural trailer for the film. Songs were the primary component of film publicity programs, but they also included a brief description of the film's basic story line, and short clips of the film's dialogue. Radio Ceylon's programming schedules reveal that at least a couple hours a week were set aside for film publicity programs.<sup>454</sup> From June 19 – July 2 1961, Radio Ceylon advertised: *Ham Hindustānī*,<sup>455</sup> *Sabaq*,<sup>456</sup> *Usne Kahā Thā*,<sup>457</sup> *Nārāinā*.<sup>458</sup> There is much work to be done on the way Hindi film songs helped to advertise films; such a study, however, lies outside of the scope of this dissertation. Here I wish to emphasize the ways in which Radio Ceylon's programs contributed to film songs' "double lives" by presenting songs as independent entities from films, while simultaneously cashing in on songs' attachment to films.

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<sup>454</sup>"Programs Service," *Ceylon Radio Times*, June 19-July 2, 1961, BL-News.

<sup>455</sup> The title can be translated "I/we Indians."

<sup>456</sup> The title can be translated "Lesson/teaching." In the program, the film is spelled *Zabak*, but this is likely a misspelling.

<sup>457</sup> He/she had said.

<sup>458</sup> A name of God.

## MAKING FRIENDS WITH PLAYBACK SINGERS

Radio boomed in South Asia around the same time as playback singing<sup>459</sup> became the norm in Hindi cinema. In the 1930s, most Hindi film actors sang their own songs in films, but by the mid-1940s, most songs were interpreted by professional playback singers while actors lip-sang songs in scenes. Radio and playback singing, two technologies of the disembodied voice, developed a symbiotic relationship.

As the film scholar Neepa Majumdar explains, the Hollywood musicals of the 1950s and Hindi films of roughly the same time period used similar musical technologies. Both cinemas paired “ideal voices” to “ideal bodies” in an effort to “appeal simultaneously” to two “sets of pleasure, the aural and the visual.” The “voice-body” combo, however, carried different meanings in these two film cultures. Hollywood’s audiences expected an “actual match” between the “body” and the singing “voice,” and directors went through great ordeals to conceal their different origins. It is telling, Majumdar notes, that Audrey Hepburn was denied an academy award nomination for her performance in the film *My Fair Lady* when it became public knowledge that she did not sing her own songs.<sup>460</sup> In contrast, Hindi film audiences not only accepted the mismatch of the body and the voice, but actually considered this disparity part of the film’s allure.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Playback singers record songs for use in films, but do not appear in the film. Instead, actors or actresses lip sync the songs in film scenes.

<sup>460</sup> Neepa Majumdar, “The Embodied Voice: Song Sequences and Stardom in Popular Hindi Cinema,” in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. Pamela Robertson; Knight Wojcik, Arthur (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 165.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

Majumdar argues that the difference in the two cinema cultures' attitudes to playback singing is explained by what is often described as the "playback star system" in South Asia. A handful of playback singers came to dominate the Hindi film industry in the early 1950s. Lata Mangeshkar, and to a lesser extent her younger sister Asha Bhosle, monopolized female Hindi playback singing. Lata and Asha, as they are commonly known on the subcontinent, outdid earlier singing stars including Getta Dutt, Suraiya, and Nur Jehan,<sup>462</sup> The monopoly in male playback singing, while less extreme, was no less significant with singers such as Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, and Talat Mahmood lending their voices to nearly every major Hindi film actor for several decades.<sup>463</sup> Majumdar explains that the "dominance" of a "handful of voices" in Hindi cinema made playback singing not only acceptable, but desirable to the point that voice casting was not practiced in most films.<sup>464</sup> Radio, and more specifically Radio Ceylon, played an important role in making a handful of playback voices recognizable to millions of listeners. A close look at Radio Ceylon's programs demonstrates how broadcasters tailored audiences' tastes toward the voices and styles of a few selected singers.

The program *Āj ke Kalakār* ("artists of today" or "contemporary artists"), which aired from Radio Ceylon's Colombo-based studios, perhaps best illustrates how broadcasters tailored audiences' tastes toward the voices and styles of a few selected

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 173. Nur Jehan migrated to Pakistan in 1947.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 168.

singers.<sup>465</sup> *Āj ke Kalakār* had a simple format: the presenter chose a singer every week and played a selection of her film songs and, when available, also some non-film songs she might have interpreted before or after joining the film industry. In between songs, the broadcaster briefly commented on the chosen artist's singing career as well as on her personal life. For example, during a forty-five minute episode dedicated to Talat Mahmood, the announcer would play two or three of Mahmood's film songs, one or two *ġazals* that he recorded outside the film industry, and perhaps also one of the Bengali songs he interpreted during his years in Calcutta. In between songs, the broadcaster would brief listeners on Mahmood's singing career, covering his early work in Bengali film, his shift to Bombay, and his short flirtation with acting. To liven up the show a bit, the announcer would have also discussed details from Mahmood's personal life. He could have, for example, talked about Mahmood's childhood in Lucknow and mentioned his parents' initial opposition to their son's musical predisposition on religious grounds. A singing career, they believed, was unsuitable for a young, respectable Muslim man. In this manner, *Āj ke Kalakār* circulated what Majumdar calls "extra-textual knowledge" of singers' lives and careers, and encouraged audiences to associate "moral and emotional" traits with playback singers' disembodied voices (see figure 13).<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> This was one of the most common and popular programs on Radio Ceylon. A version of this program appears on many schedules of Radio Ceylon.

<sup>466</sup> Majumdar, "The Embodied Voice," 171.



Figure 12: Advertisement for Murphy radios published in the film magazine *Movie Times* in 1952. Talat Mahmood poses next to a radio set, drawing attention to the symbiotic relationship that developed between radio and playback singing. Source: *Movie Times*, 3, no. 1 (1952): 24. National Film Archives of India.

Gopal Sharma started a program called *Kal aur Āj* which means “today and yesterday” or “present and past,” and was a modified version of *Āj ke Kalakār*. Sharma selected a singer for each week’s show and selected songs from that singer’s past films as well as from recent productions, encouraging listeners to track changes in voices and

styles, and to connect songs explicitly to the song star's biography rather than the film.<sup>467</sup> This program, like many of Radio Ceylon's productions, actively promoted what Majumdar calls "voice recognizability,"—that is, listeners' ability to recognize and identify playback singers' voices. Sharma explained that listeners wrote in letters that they enjoyed hearing the old tunes sung by favorite singers because it helped them relive bygone times. While actors and actresses had to retire when their youthful looks began to fade, singers continued to have commercial success over several decades.<sup>468</sup> Radio Ceylon's broadcasters actively celebrated this unusual aspect of the playback star system. The popularity of programs like *Āj aur Kal*, which explicitly celebrated playback singer's long careers, helps explain how it became possible for a very small number of singers to dominate the industry for almost five decades.

In the mid-1950s, Gopal Sharma also started a program called *Badalte Hūe Sāthī* or "changing partners." The program only played "film song duets," or film songs that featured two playback singers, usually female and male. *Badalte Hūe Sāthī*, would open, for example, with the duet, "Tasvīr terī dil meñ jis din se basā lī hai" sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafī. The next number then featured Mohammed Rafī and Geeta Dutt's "Aye dil hai muškil jīna yahāñ zarā haṭ ke zarā bac ke" and the one after that featured Geeta Dutt and somebody else. The idea was that singers would quite literally change partners after every song. But the trick was that the program always had

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<sup>467</sup> For a description of the program see "Programmes and People Commercial Service," *Radio Ceylon Times*, June 8 - June 21, 1959, BL-News. I have heard listeners refer to this program also as *Āj aur Kal*. See also Gopal Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Dostān*, 83, 84, 89, 90.

<sup>468</sup> Majumdar, "The Embodied Voice," 170.



to end with the singer whose voice had inaugurated that evening's show. The program *Badalte Hūe Sāthī* encouraged non-reciprocal participation. Sharma encouraged listeners to anticipate which duet would follow the one currently playing. Yet, listeners also engaged in reciprocal participation as they sent their own lists of possible duet sets to the show via mail, and Sharma occasionally played their selections in his shows.<sup>469</sup>

In India, music directors gained celebrity status around the same time as playback singers started to become household names. In the 1940s, the names of music directors began to be displayed in film posters, advertisements, and the covers of gramophone records.<sup>470</sup> Much in the same way that Radio Ceylon programs encouraged playback singers' stardom, they also contributed to music directors' celebrity status. Radio Ceylon broadcasters credited music directors before or after playing one of their songs. For example, a sponsored program produced in Bombay by Radio Advertising staff called *Burnaol Gītānjalī* featured the works of a different music director every week. In this program, singers and directors told listeners about their music, their careers, and their lives (see figure 13).

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<sup>469</sup> Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Doston*, 91.

<sup>470</sup> Producers began to purposefully employ commercially successful music directors to increase their chances of producing a popular film. Radio Ceylon's boom in the early 1950s further contributed to this trend by training listeners to identify music directors' compositional style.

**TONIGHT AT 7-45**

**BURNOL  
GITANJALI**

presents  
**INDIA'S POPULAR  
MUSIC DIRECTOR  
and  
PLAYBACK SINGER**



**HEMANT  
KUMAR**

Over **RADIO CEYLON**  
41 Metres  
Also a special  
free offer

**BURNOL GITANJALI**

Listen to your favourite play-  
back singers every Tuesday  
7-45 p.m. over **Radio Ceylon**  
41 Metres.

Figure 13: Advertisement for *Burnaol Gītānjālī*. Source: *Times of India*, December 22, 1976

The program *Pasand apnī apnī, xayāl apnā apnā*, which translates roughly to “your likings, your thoughts,” exemplifies the ways in which Radio Ceylon invited listeners to welcome these musical celebrities into their personal lives. For this program,

listeners sent in letters about their favorite singers, films, songwriters, or music directors explaining why they liked these people and what they meant to them personally. The broadcaster selected sections from letters, read them out-loud during the program, and played corresponding songs. In this manner, *Pasand apnī apnī, xayāl apnā apnā* consciously encouraged listeners to develop personal bonds with singers and directors.<sup>471</sup>

To understand the significance of the relationship between playback singers and radio listeners, it might be useful to briefly venture into a field more accustomed to analyzing people's bonds with an unknown or intangible being. In *Between Heaven and Earth*, the scholar of religion Robert Orsi argues that religion offers humans opportunities to form “deep ties with saints, ancestors, demons, gods, ghosts, and other special beings, in whose company humans work on the world and on themselves.”<sup>472</sup> These relationships, Orsi continues, “have all the complexities—all the hopes, evasions, love fear, denial, projections, and misunderstandings, and so on of relationships between humans.” In a similar manner, listeners' relationships to playback singers and music directors might have been one-sided, but at least for listeners, but they were every bit as real.

A picture of a *pān* (a chewable mouth freshener made with a betel leafs and nuts) vendor in present-day Kolkata perhaps best illustrates this point. Amidst the various addictive products displayed in the shop—cigarettes, soft drinks, and all the necessary

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<sup>471</sup> Sharma, *Āvāz Kī Duniyā Ke Doston*, 9.

<sup>472</sup> Robert A Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

ingredients for making *pān*—are various pictures and news clippings of the vendor's favorite singer, Mohammed Rafi. Judging from the décor of his tiny shop, where he spends many hours a day, one would be hard-pressed not to believe that Mohammed Rafi is an influential character in this man's life (see figure 15).



Figure 14: A pānwāllāh in Kolkata. Source: Suboor Usmani. Reprinted with permission.

## A GARLAND OF SONGS

*Binākā Gītmālā* was one of the many radio programs that made the weekly trip from Bombay to Colombo. Binaca was the name of a brand of toothpaste owned by Ciba, the sponsoring company, and the composite word *Gītmālā* means “garland of songs” or “chain of songs.” Ameen Sayani was the program’s host. The original format of the program was simple: Sayani played a selection of popular film songs and asked listeners to rank songs in order of popularity and to mail in their lists to the company’s offices. By compiling all mailed lists, Sayani made a final hit parade list, which he announced in the

succeeding program. Listeners whose lists coincided with the final hit parade shared a monetary prize.<sup>473</sup>

*Gītṃālā* is an important component of the story of Radio Ceylon for a number of reasons. It became an instant hit in 1952 and played an important role in popularizing Radio Ceylon's other Hindi-language transmissions. Anil Bhagarva, a loyal fan of Radio Ceylon, explains that *Gītṃālā* gave this station a "new identity" and "millions of listeners."<sup>474</sup> Like the above mentioned programs, *Gītṃālā* contributed to film songs' "double lives" and to playback singers' celebrity status. Sayani announced the name of the film in which songs originally had appeared, and sometimes even described the plot of the film or the scene where a particular song had appeared. Ultimately, however, this radio program was about songs and not films. It ranked songs' popularity and encouraged audiences to think of film songs as independent entities. *Gītṃālā* also encouraged playback singers' and music directors' stardom because Sayani credited the singers and composers of the songs he played. In some programs he would also comment on singers' and music directors' careers. But what *Gītṃālā* did best—perhaps better than any other radio Ceylon program— was to invite audience participation.

"*Gītṃālā* was a strange story,"<sup>475</sup> Sayani remarked when discussing the humble beginnings of this radio show that went on to conquer millions of hearts. Ciba, a Swiss chemical company with offices in India, then sponsored a fairly successful English-

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<sup>473</sup> Bhargava, *Binākā Gītṃālā kā Surīlā Safar*, 30.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>475</sup> Ameen Sayani, interviewed Bhatt.

language hit parade program on Radio Ceylon. By the early 1950s, hit parade programs, which rank songs based on popularity as determined by sales, playtime, or listeners' requests, had become commonplace in the United States and parts of Europe and Latin America, but they were new to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>476</sup> Ciba decided to try out a Hindi-film-song version of its current English-language program. Uncertain of the new program's potential for success, Ciba set aside a limited budget, but no experienced broadcaster showed the slightest interest in anchoring the program. At the time, nineteen-year-old Sayani's sole broadcasting gig at Radio Advertising Services was an Ovaltine commercial. He was eager to prove himself as broadcaster and agreed to produce and anchor the new program for a meager salary of twenty-five rupees a month.<sup>477</sup>

The first program aired on December 3, 1952.<sup>478</sup> Sayani recorded the program in Bombay and sent magnetic copies of the program to Colombo, from where it was beamed back to India from the former military transmitter. A week later, Sayani listened to *Gītṃālā*'s first broadcast on the radio and waited anxiously for the mail. Broadcasters at that time used fan letters to gauge their shows' popularity—a program was considered a successful production if it received a couple hundred letters a week. That very first week, Sayani recalls, *Gītṃālā* received around 9,000 letters. Radio Ceylon staff in India and

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<sup>476</sup> *Your Hit Parade* began airing in the United States in 1935. For a review of this program see John Dunning, *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-time Radio* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 739.

<sup>477</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

<sup>478</sup> Bhargava, *Binākā Gītṃālā kā Surīlā Safar*, 26-27. The signature tune was “Poñ Poñ Poñ Bājā Bole, Dholak Dhīn Dhīn,” which was one of the many playful music pieces with filler words and meaningless phrases that B.V. Keskar and his supporters had so ardently criticized. The song was featured in the film *Āsmān* (sky) and was *Gītṃālā*'s signature tune until 1970.

Colombo were flabbergasted. Sayani was the happiest of all until “it finally hit” him that he had also agreed to read and manage the mail and the competition format required that he consult every single letter! The second week, *Gītālā* listeners sent more than 16,000 letters and the third somewhere around 25,000. For those first hectic months, Sayani managed to convince school friends and colleagues to help him read and organize piles and piles of letters, but before long the mail became simply unmanageable.<sup>479</sup>

By the end of 1953, *Gītālā* was receiving an average of 65,000 letters a week. “There was no place to sit in the office,” Sayani recalled. To reduce the young broadcaster’s workload, Radio Advertising Services decided to cut out the competition portion of the show and to base songs’ rankings solely on gramophone record sales. Initially the company consulted with the top eight music shops in India and based the hit parade figures on sales from these shops. Ciba gradually increased the number of shops, and in later years the hit parade final list incorporated sales data from more than forty shops from all major metropolitan Indian cities.<sup>480</sup>

*Gītālā*’s ranking system, of course, was far from perfect. Only a tiny percentage of the population in India and Pakistan could afford to buy new records week and after week. One record could fit two songs, and the average film in the early 1950s had anywhere from five to fifteen songs. Moreover, the final hit parade list did not take into account record sales from Pakistan in part because availability of Hindi film song

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<sup>479</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

<sup>480</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.; See also Aswin Punathambekar, “Ameen Sayani and Radio Ceylon: Notes towards a History of Broadcasting and Bombay Cinema,” *Bioscope* 1, no. 2 (2010): 189-97.

gramophone records in Pakistan depended on current government policy toward imports from India. This meant that only a small percentage of *Gītmālā*'s audiences actually played any role in the rankings. But the program's main attraction—and surely part of the secret of its success—was that it made listeners feel as if they did in fact partake in the competition.


Sayani developed the concept of *sangīt sīrhī* or “musical ladder” and every week described how songs moved up and down this ladder. He invited listeners to anticipate songs' rankings and to root for their favorite songs and encouraged them to take the competition seriously. To add pomp to the transmissions, he played a concert of trumpets when revealing the name of the top song of week at the end of the program. Sayani built up curiosity and excitement in all his weekly programs, but for many, *Gītmālā*'s yearly program was the most thrilling and awaited radio program of year (see figure 14). During the end of the year program, Sayani announced the top songs of the year based on yearly statistics. Anil Bhargava remembers that on the days of the yearly programs, people rushed to radio stores to purchase radios.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Bhargava, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar*, 27-48. The first yearly program aired on December 30th, 1953, and it featured the top sixteen songs from films released in 1953. For this first yearly program, Sayani based his selection on listeners' requests sent by mail as Ciba had not yet started collecting music sales data. Starting in 1957, the Radio Enterprises team decided to lengthen the yearly countdown list to thirty-two songs rather than the usual sixteen. The company divided the yearly program into two episodes that aired on the last two Wednesdays of the year.



Display Ad 25 - No Title  
 The Times of India (2012 current) Dec 22, 1976  
 The Great Indian of Singapore The Times of India (1976-2007)  
 10



TUNE IN TONIGHT TO  
 THE 24th  
 ANNUAL PROGRAMME  
 OF

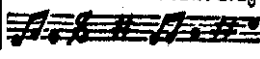
**BINACA  
 GEET  
 MALA**  
 (8 p.m.)

FOR THE  
**TOP**  
**FILM SONGS**  
**OF 1976**

Over [REDACTED]  
 25 & 49 metre bands

Part I: Tonight,  
 Part II: 29th Dec  
 (8 pm)

Compered by Ameen Sayani  
 Sponsored by  
 CIBA-GEIGY OF INDIA LTD.



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**Figure 16:** Advertisement for *Binākā Gītmālā*'s 1976 yearly program. Source: *Times of India*, December 22, 1976.

This system was remarkably effective. Listeners became so involved in film song competitions that many kept detailed records of each week's listings. For example, J.J. Kulkarni from Sholapur Maharastra kept a diary every week from 1957 until 1962 (see

figure 16).<sup>482</sup> Similarly, in Pakistan Sultan Arshad Ahmed from Karachi also kept a notebook where he annotated *Gītmālā*'s popularity lists, and remembers that many of his friends did so as well.<sup>483</sup> These diaries are important because they show the ways in which listeners actively partook in the program even if they ultimately could not influence the final lists. Most impressively, Anil Bhargava, for four decades diligently recorded all the songs broadcast on these shows as well as any changes that the program underwent during the forty plus years the program aired. Based on these detailed notes, Bhargava wrote a book called, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar* (Geetmala's melodious journey).<sup>484</sup> This book is one of the richest resources about *Gītmālā* available, and I refer to it extensively throughout this work.

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<sup>482</sup> Jyothi Parmar kindly shared copies of this diary that a listener gifted to her father when he worked for Radio Ceylon.

<sup>483</sup> Sultan Arshad Ahmed, email exchange with author, March 14, 2015. Ahmed worked for HUM TV and played an important role in helping organizing Ameen Sayani's visit to Karachi in 2007.

<sup>484</sup> Bhargava, *Binākā Gītmālā kā Surīlā Safar*.

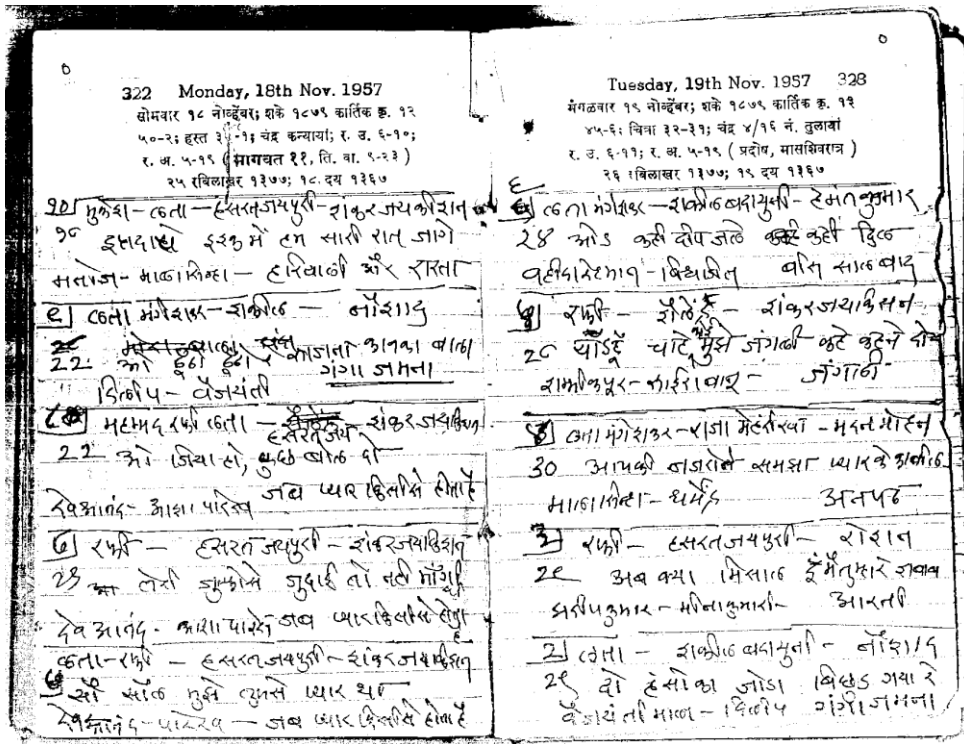


Figure 15: This one page from J.J. Kulkarni's diary. He lists the songs that topped *Binākā Gītāmālā*. Kulkarni sent copies of the first 20 pages of this diary to Dalbir Singh Parmar, a Hindi broadcaster based in Colombo. Source: Dalbir Singh Parmar, Personal Papers.

While these diaries highlight the way in which both radio and film songs influenced individual lives. For the most part, people listened to *Gītāmālā* and other Radio Ceylon's programs collectively—with friends, family members, neighbors or coworkers. By the late 1950s, the radio ownership rate in India had grown, but it still remained low in comparison to other regions.<sup>485</sup> Aware of the importance of collective listening

<sup>485</sup> The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting estimated that by 1954 there were 759,643 registered receiver licenses in India. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, "Annual Report," (1954), NMML. But as discussed in Chapter One, receiver licenses were a poor indicator of the size of radio audiences in India for a variety of reasons.

practices, Radio Ceylon broadcasters came up with the idea of forming *radio śrota sangh* (radio listening clubs). Members of radio clubs would gather in private homes or public spaces once a week and would vote for their favorite songs. The president or leader of the radio club counted the votes every week and mailed results to Radio Ceylon's staff. At first, *Gītṃālā* had ten to fifteen registered listening clubs, but by the peak of the period received mail from about four hundred radio clubs.<sup>486</sup> Sayani maintains that the program's sponsoring company, Ciba, sometimes used statistics from these clubs to check gramophone sales data and flag any major discrepancies, but club members' votes do not seem to have heavily swayed *Gītṃālā*'s hit parade lists.

Ameen Sayani's son, Rajil Sayani, compiled a list of 392 radio clubs based on correspondence records his father kept over the years.<sup>487</sup> A few things, however, do warrant mentioning. The vast majority of radio clubs were not in large metropolises or cities, such as Bombay, Delhi, or Calcutta or even in regional metropolitan centers, such as Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Patna. The majority of registered radio clubs were located in smaller cities such as Raipur in Chhattisgarh, Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Shri Ganganagar in Rajasthan, and Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, all with populations of less than a million. This is important because the gramophone shops whose sales lists determined *Gītṃālā*'s hit parade were located in major metropolitan centers. We can say that radio clubs constituted another form of non-reciprocal "participation with the absent."

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<sup>486</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

<sup>487</sup> Unfortunately the list doesn't include the dates when these clubs were first founded nor does it mention when clubs stopped sending mail. We must, therefore, approach this document cautiously.

Moreover, this list also offers some insight into the composition of radio clubs. Many electronic shops registered their own radio clubs and invited people to join and come to listen to programs in their shops. For example, Deepak Electronics in Jodhpur registered a radio club as did Sameer Audio Store in Bombay. Some extended families started their own radio clubs such as the Dakliya Family from Jodhpur Rajasthan. Also college students founded many radio clubs. For instance, the Bihar Agricultural College had its own radio club. Some clubs were limited to listeners of age groups such as the “Youth radio listeners clubs” in Belgaum, Karnataka. Finally there were radio clubs whose members likely had little else in common other than a love of music, such as the “Ajnabī Radio Śrota Sangh” (strangers radio club) in Bhagalpur Bihar. (One would hope that over the years member of this so-called strangers’ club became friends.)

The most famous of all the radio clubs, however, was in Jhumri Tilaiya, a town in the northern state of Bihar (now in the state of Jharkhand). Listeners from this club mailed hundreds of postcards and letters every month and Ameen Sayani mentioned Jhumiri Tilaiya so often in his programs that this previously unknown town became well-known throughout South Asia, and acquired a sort of mythical status.<sup>488</sup>

Just as collective listening practices remained important during in the early postcolonial period, radio’s link to rumor and oral networks of communication did not

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<sup>488</sup> Punathambekar, “We’re Online, Not on the Street: Indian Cinema, New Media, and Participatory Culture,” 291. Interestingly, radio clubs from Pakistan did not make it into Ameen Sayani’s radio club lists, despite the fact that collective listening practices were as widespread in Pakistan as they were in India. Sultan Ahmed, for example, from Hum TV, remembers that he listened to the program at friend’s house with a group of friends who would listen every week. Sultan Arshad Ahmed, email exchange with author, March 14, 2015.

entirely disappear in the postcolonial period. News about which songs had topped *Gītṃālā* during a particular week became the so-called talk of the town and songs heard on the radio were sung in public and private settings.<sup>489</sup>

*Gītṃālā*'s popularity, however, came with a heavy cost. The competition for topping the program hit parade became so fierce that filmmakers were willing to take great risks to improve their chances of success. For example, Radio Advertising Services learned that music and film directors bought out their own records to boost their songs' ratings.<sup>490</sup> In the late 1950s, a group of music directors approached Ciba and demanded that it stop sponsoring the show altogether because its countdown system was inaccurate. Ciba did not cancel the program, but to cool down the polemical debate, the company asked Sayani to stop announcing songs' ratings. He continued to play the winning songs in their respective rating order, but he did not announce the actual rating of each song during the course of the program.<sup>491</sup>

The rankings had been an important part of the program's attraction because it was the excitement of hearing which song would top that particular week or month that ultimately inspired listeners to keep track of the program. To bring the system back, Sayani suggested that Ciba appoint an ombudsman from the film industry to check the countdown list and ensure the ratings were fair. Individuals like Baldev Raj Chopra and

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid. Sultan Ahmed, for example, remembers that every Thursday students in the canteen discussed which songs had topped *Gītṃālā* on Wednesday evening.

<sup>490</sup> Punathambekar, "Ameen Sayani and Radio Ceylon: Notes towards a History of Broadcasting and Bombay Cinema." Another problem was that sometimes records sold out.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid. Alison Arnold, also notes that *Gītṃālā*'s popularity decreased significantly after it stopped announcing songs ratings. She, however, doesn't provide any proof of that decrease.

G. P. Sippy, both established film directors and producers, served as the program ombudsmen. “We developed a pretty strong system,” Sayani maintained in an interview,<sup>492</sup> but in actuality complaints about the program never ceased, and were as constant as praise for Sayani’s enigmatic voice. Ultimately, the controversy behind *Gītāmālā* could not be solved. At its heart, the controversy was about the fact that the program’s many fans actually had little say in the hit parade lists. But that was precisely the magic of the program: that its “formats of virtual participation for the absent,” ultimately obscured the unevenness of radio’s relationship with its listeners.<sup>493</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by tracing Radio Ceylon’s imperial roots and its links to WWII. Radio SEAC (South East Asia Command), Radio Ceylon’s predecessor, was a military radio station that exclusively targeted British troops in Asia. It had a powerful transmitter whose broadcasts could be clearly heard throughout the subcontinent. Lord Mountbatten, the South East Asia Commander in Chief, chose to build this station in Colombo instead of Delhi because he did not want to have to defer decisions to the bureaucratic British colonial government in India. As this chapter has shown, Mountbatten’s decision had important, if unexpected, consequences for the history of sound and music in South Asia. In the early 1950s, Radio Ceylon—its broadcasters and listeners—were able to challenge the government of India’s policies precisely because

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<sup>492</sup> Sayani, interviewed by Bhatt.

<sup>493</sup> Peters, “Broadcasting and Schizophrenia,” 127. Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, 206-25.

the station and its powerful transmitter lay outside the Indian government's jurisdiction. I also offered a detailed account of important relationship that developed between the film industry in Bombay and Radio Ceylon, and argue that Radio Ceylon did not merely ensure film songs circulate on the airwaves--its broadcasters also consciously designed programs that encouraged listeners to integrate songs into their lives.

Chapters Three and Four together demonstrate that despite the Indian government's aggressive campaign to create loyal citizen-listeners, radio ultimately escaped the state's grasp. In Chapter Five, I return to the role of radio during war and analyze Radio Pakistan's broadcasts during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. Radio Pakistan provided near round-the-clock programming—mostly in Urdu—and succeeded in creating an atmosphere of intense national pride in two of Western Pakistan's largest metropolises, Karachi and Lahore. At the same time, however, the 1965 radio war set the stage for the eventual breakaway of Eastern Pakistan in 1971. A test case for nationalist radio in post-colonial South Asia, this radio war reveals the fault lines running through South Asian nationalisms as well as the endurance of trans-regional audiences across these borders.



## PART III: DRAMATIC RADIO AND THE 1965 INDO-PAK WAR

### Chapter Five: Seventeen Days of Drama

On the morning of September 6<sup>th</sup> 1965, the Indian army bombed a canal near the Wagah border. The explosion was audible in parts of Lahore, but in the weeks following, many in Pakistan—especially in the cities of Lahore and Karachi—heard the “sounds of war” through their radio receivers. Within hours of the Indian army offensive, Radio Pakistan inaugurated an intensive “morale-raising” radio campaign. Radio stations throughout Pakistan aired continuous news updates as well as artistic programs including patriotic *mušāirā* (poetry recital gatherings), music programs, and dramatic productions.

The Indian army’s offensive followed a series of military skirmishes between the Indian and Pakistani armies that had begun nine months earlier.<sup>494</sup> Although the two countries did not officially declare war, in later years the various military clashes between the Indian and Pakistani armies in 1965—starting in February of 1965 in the Rann of Kutch and concluding with the Soviet Union-sponsored ceasefire signed in Tashkent by President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in February of 1966—came to be known as the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. For broadcasters and listeners in Pakistan, however, the war lasted seventeen days: it began on the morning of September 6, 1965 with the Indian army attack in Lahore and ended with the UN sponsored ceasefire agreement on September 22, 1965. More than during any other armed conflict in Pakistan’s history, radio was the primary medium for shaping most urban Pakistanis’

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<sup>494</sup> File 41a, Folder: Vol. 3, Indo-Pak War, State Department History, Box: 24 National Security Council Histories/ South Asia, 1962-1966, Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum, Austin TX, (LBJ hereafter).

experience of the war.<sup>495</sup> These “seventeen days of war” on the airwaves are the subject of this chapter.<sup>496</sup>

Drawing on a collection of recordings in Islamabad and published transcripts of broadcasts, in the following pages I demonstrate how radio programming transformed this otherwise minor military conflict into a significant cultural and political event.<sup>497</sup> It is revealing that during the war many radio listeners described the singers, writers, and artists that participated in Radio Pakistan’s campaigns as soldiers and weapons. One listener explained: “We felt that Pakistan's army was attacking the enemy with bombs and airplanes and every night a writer through his art was beating India's strategies.”<sup>498</sup> Across the border, All India Radio (AIR) responded to the crisis as well, but its wartime programming was not nearly as extensive as Radio Pakistan’s.<sup>499</sup>

Unfortunately, I cannot offer a detailed analysis of the feud between the two state-sponsored radio stations here. Whereas Radio Pakistan archived recordings of programming during the war, AIR has no such archive. (This, of course, tells us a great

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<sup>495</sup> Some experiments in televised broadcasting had begun in Pakistan, but the vast majority of Pakistanis did not have access to television then.

<sup>496</sup> “Seventeen days of war” is a phrase that Radio Pakistan uses in official publications to reference the 1965 war programming. See for example, *Ten Years of Development: Radio Pakistan 1958-68* (Karachi: Serajsons, 1968).

<sup>497</sup> 1965 Indo-War Collection, Central Production Unit, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, Islamabad, Pakistan (CPU hereafter).

<sup>498</sup> Comment by Sher Mohammad Akhtar reprinted in Naseer Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, ed. Syed Tafazul Zia (Lahore: Maktabae Jadeed Press, 1965), 21.

<sup>499</sup> Radio Pakistan personnel prided themselves on the fact that AIR radio accused Radio Pakistan of having prepared broadcast material beforehand. Radio Pakistan broadcasters noted that AIR’s false accusations actually demonstrated just how effective the Radio Pakistan campaign had been. Amrah Malik, “The Spirit of Creativity,” *The Nation*, June 7, 2007; Maqsood Gauhar, “Jaṅg sitambar ke tarānoṅ kī rīkāurḍīng mere liye faxr aur ejāz kī bāt hai,” *Family Magazine*, Newspaper clippings, Azam Khan Personal Papers. The title of this article can be translated as “for me, the recording of the September war is a matter of pride and dignity.”

deal about the different meanings that the organizations attached to the war and its auditory component). Moreover, the few available war programs listed in the AIR recording library are not open to scholars.<sup>500</sup> An analysis of AIR's rebuttal would certainly add an important dimension to this work. However, a study that focuses only on the Pakistani side is not necessarily incomplete. Ultimately, the war had very different meanings in both places. In India, the 1965 war was a territorial dispute with a recalcitrant neighboring nation. In Pakistan, the war was a moment when nationalist energies were mobilized.

In the following pages, I turn to the radio broadcast material itself and analyze how the "sounds of war" were created, focusing in particular on patriotic songs and radio drama. I do so, however, "with an ear towards" the medium-specific techniques and conventions that broadcasters and performers used to embed meaning and ceremony in the military clash in Punjab.<sup>501</sup> In particular, I am interested in how radio reels its listeners in, how it carries them over long distances, mobilizes many voices, and makes those voices seem like a chorus. Close analysis of the broadcast material, I argue, gets us closer to the historical moment—to the soundscape of war.

I am also concerned with this radio campaign's successes and failures. During the days of war, Radio Pakistan's broadcasts succeeded in galvanizing audiences in West Pakistan. The war, however, did little to fix the country's internal problems, in particular

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<sup>500</sup> I identified a number of recordings that might have been broadcast during the war at AIR's recordings collection, but was unable to procure permission to listen to them or take copies of recordings.

<sup>501</sup> Judith Coffin, "From Interiority to Intimacy: Historical Perspectives on Psychoanalysis and Radio in 20th century France." [forthcoming]

the growing hostility between the Eastern and Western wings—and in fact further aggravated these tensions (see figure 17). Pakistan was divided in two non-contiguous wings separated by more than 2000 kilometers of territory. The Bengalis in the Eastern wing made up sixty percent of the total population of Pakistan, but faced discrimination in the upper levels of the bureaucracy and in the military, which were dominated by Western Pakistanis, in particular Punjabis and *muhājir* (Urdu-speaking communities that migrated from India after the Partition). Language, however, was the most contentious point of debate. East Pakistanis wanted Bengali, the native language of most Eastern Pakistanis and more than half of the total population of Pakistan, to be an official state language on par with Urdu. This was a demand for which Western Pakistani politicians had made conciliatory concessions at best; at worst had completely dismissed.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Following a wave of protests in East Pakista, the constituent assembly granted official status to Bengali in 1954o, but this reform, unfortunately, was not implemented equitably. Moreover, the military government formed by Ayub Khan made several attempts to re-establish Urdu as the sole national language. For a concise history of East Pakistan see Willem Van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).



Figure 16: Map of East and West Pakistan. Source: New World Encyclopedia.

By drawing the circle of nationalism closer around the Punjab, the site of fighting and also the focus of many broadcasts, and by posing Urdu as the sole language of Pakistan, the 1965 “radio war” set the stage for the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. So, while the story of Radio Pakistan’s war campaign is, in many ways, an excellent example of how governments used radio to mobilize nationalist energies in the early post-colonial era, this “radio war” also brings to light the serious limitations that nationalist radio projects faced in South Asia, revealing the fault lines running through South Asian nationalisms as well as the endurance of transnational listening audiences.

## 1965 INDO-PAKISTAN WAR IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In this chapter I am concerned with Radio Pakistan's programming, but it is important to first place the 1965 war—and its broadcasts—in the context of a longer history of hostility between the two newly-formed countries. At its core, the 1965 war was a territorial dispute that dates back to pre-independence days. Mohammed Ali Jinnah and others in the Muslim League wholeheartedly believed that the princely state of Kashmir belonged in Pakistan because the majority of this state's population was Muslim. When Kashmir's monarch, Maharaj Hari Singh (who was Hindu) showed signs that he might choose to join India, the Pakistani government sent a covert military operation to the region. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sent the Indian army to Kashmir. This military dispute between India and Pakistan, which later came to be known as the First Kashmir war (the 1965 war became the second) ended with a United Nations sponsored ceasefire that allotted more than sixty percent of Kashmir to India.<sup>503</sup>

As the Cold War unfolded, Pakistani leaders—most prominently General Ayub Khan, who became head of state in 1958 following a military coup—warmed up to the United States.<sup>504</sup> Ayub Khan reckoned that befriending the United States would help Pakistan gain international support for its claim over Kashmir. More importantly, Ayub

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<sup>503</sup> The Maharaja initially wanted his state to become an independent country. The Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, however, called on Singh to choose either Pakistan or India. File 41a, Folder: Vol. 3, Indo-Pak war, State Department History, Box 24, National Security Council Histories/ South Asia, 1962-1966, LBJ. For a concise summary of the First Kashmir war see Sumit Ganguly, "Avoiding War in Kashmir," *Foreign Affairs* (1990): 57-58.

<sup>504</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru chose a non-aligned position, but leaned closer to the Soviet Union both in thinking and in rapport. Ayub Khan's alliance with the United States was more opportunist than ideological.

Khan hoped (and was right) that the United States would build up Pakistan's army.<sup>505</sup> Ayub Khan's plans, however, began to go awry in the early 1960s, when the United States leaned closer to India hoping to check China's growing power in the region. President John F. Kennedy tried to reassure the then very anxious Ayub Khan that whatever assistance the US would give to India would only be used against the Chinese. Kennedy's assurances, however, were to no avail.<sup>506</sup> The 1965 Indo-Pakistan War arose in the context of this now strained US-Pakistan relationship.

In February of 1965, Indian and Pakistani armies had a skirmish in the Rann of Kutch, a swampy and mostly uninhabitable territory near the Gujarat border. According to US State Department analysts, the Pakistani army purposefully provoked the Indian army by occupying Indian territory, but the details of this skirmish remain unclear. In June 1965, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, successfully persuaded India and Pakistan to end hostilities.<sup>507</sup>

Within months, trouble arose in Kashmir; rebels raided roads linking Kashmir to other major North Indian cities.<sup>508</sup> Khan, after some heavy pressure, acknowledged to US

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<sup>505</sup> Indeed, during the cold war United States provided training and military equipment for the Pakistani Army. See File 41a, LBJ. For a concise summary of the US-Pakistan relationship during the Cold War see, Isabel Huacuja Alonso, "Pakistan-U.S relations: A Jagged Relationship," *Cornell International Review* I, no. I (August 2005) 1-20.194

<sup>506</sup> The India-Pakistan War and Its Aftermath, File 41a, LBJ. In November 1962, China launched a series of military attacks on the disputed India-China border. The United States provided prompt military aid to the Indian government.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid; File 41b, LBJ.

<sup>508</sup> File 41a and 41b, LBJ. One US official explained, "Motivation for Pak irregular warfare initiative would therefore seem to be desire to create overt situation which would either cause GOI to react against Pakistan in what could be portrayed by GOP as aggressive manner, or to create set of circumstances which GOP could use to justify their employment of regular forces to 'protect' Indian Kashmiris." See also

officials that he had sent Pakistani soldiers to Kashmir disguised as civilians.<sup>509</sup> He did not, however, make that information available to the Pakistani public or even to many of his close associates. Radio Pakistan broadcasters have noted in conversations with me that at the time they were not aware of the Pakistani army's complicity in the upheaval in Kashmir or the Rann of Kutch. While it is impossible to verify these claims, it is true that the information did not become public knowledge until decades later when Ayub Khan's close associates published tell-all accounts.<sup>510</sup>

On the morning of September 6<sup>th</sup> the Indian army retaliated and launched a military attack near the Lahore border.<sup>511</sup> The attack took both the Pakistani military, then preoccupied with the fighting in Kashmir and Kutch, and the Lahore public by surprise.<sup>512</sup> Radio Pakistan's "seventeen days of war" began that day.

## **MAKING A RADIO WAR**

Within hours of the Indian army attack near the Punjab border, Ayub Khan took to the airwaves. "Pakistanis now face a major test," he told radio audiences. "This morning the Indian army attacked Pakistan from Lahore."<sup>513</sup> Making no mention of the

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Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2013). It is not clear which sources the author uses to draw conclusions.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid; File 41a, LBJ.

<sup>510</sup> Also see, Altaf Gauhar, "Four Wars, One Assumption," *The Nation*, September 5, 1999. Altaf Gauhar was a close associate of Ayub Khan. He later admitted to the Pakistani army complicity in the uprising in Kashmir.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid; File 64 and 41m, LBJ. Ayub Khan wrote to the Johnson in a telegraph, "The Indian armed forces launched an armed attack in full strength against Pakistan on the west Pakistan border thereby unleashing a war of aggression against this country. " See File 41m, LBJ.

<sup>512</sup> File 41p, LBJ.

<sup>513</sup> Ayub Khan, "Address to the Nation," September 6, 1965, radio broadcast.

[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x29hkaf\\_ayub-khan-address-s-to-the-nation-on-start-of-indo-pak-1965-war-6-9-1965-wmv\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x29hkaf_ayub-khan-address-s-to-the-nation-on-start-of-indo-pak-1965-war-6-9-1965-wmv_news). Accessed April 2, 2015. This is also available in the Radio Pakistan, CPU.



previous skirmishes in Kashmir and Kutch, Khan went on to explain the significance of the occurrence, relying on conspiracy theories about Indian rulers' intrinsic hatred towards Pakistan. "For the past eighteen years," Khan told listeners, Indian politicians "have been preparing for war against Pakistan." Ayub Khan told listeners that the very existence of Pakistan was under threat and urged them to draw strength from their faith as the war unfolded: "The Indian rulers, perhaps, do not know who they face. Faith and belief are in our hearts." Pakistan will win, Ayub Khan assured his listeners, because "the words, 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger' echo in the hearts of Pakistan's people." Ayub Khan concluded, "we will not sit in a peace until we once and for all silence the enemy's canons."<sup>514</sup>

Immediately after Ayub Khan's speech, Radio Pakistan's nine radio stations suspended normal services and replaced scheduled programs with rolling, continual news, discussion, patriotic music performances, poetry recitals, and radio plays for and about the current military conflict.<sup>515</sup> Broadcasters—including news anchors, program managers and station directors—contributed above and beyond the call of duty. For instance, Azam Khan, the music director of the Lahore station, remembers sleeping in the basement, skipping meals and surviving off peanuts and *gur* (a kind of molasses) during

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> In 1959, Karachi, Hyderabad, Quetta, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Dacca, Chittagong, and Rajshani had medium wave transmitters. Additionally, Karachi, Lahore, and Dacca had shortwave transmitters, which means their broadcasts could be heard in a wider area. This information is listed in *Ten Years of Development: Radio Pakistan 1958-68*, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, Central Productions Unit, Islamabad.

the “days of war.”<sup>516</sup> These kinds of retellings of the war experience are, of course, colored by nostalgia. Radio Pakistan employees were officially government employees and would have had no choice but to support the government’s undertakings or risk losing their jobs. Nonetheless, broadcasters’ sentimental stories of the war and also the large amount of original material produced during a remarkably short period, as evidenced by the war archive in Islamabad, suggest that many broadcasters did give their time and energy enthusiastically.<sup>517</sup>

Moreover, the 1965 war presented a marvelous opportunity for broadcasters, singers, writers, and poets to shine in the public light. Many seized the moment. Shakeel Ahmed, a newsreader from Lahore station, gained unprecedented fame after the 1965 war. His dramatic style of reading, which included fast delivery with abrupt, but carefully selected pauses, became iconic during the war and in its aftermath. Broadcasters in both India and Pakistan mimicked his style. The broadcaster Mirza Sultan Beg, also from the Lahore station, likewise gained considerable fame during the war through his talk show *Nizāmuddīn*, which aired from the Lahore station. Beg played the character Nizamuddin and shared personal experiences about the soldiers fighting in the war, whom he claimed to have actually met in the battlefield. Although Beg had worked in radio for twenty-one

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<sup>516</sup> Imdaad Nizaami, “un ke cāron jānīb maut kā raqs jāī thā, aur voh zindagī kā paigām sunā rahe they,” *Roznāmā Anjān*, January 3, 1966, Newspaper Clippings, Azam Khan Personal Papers. The title of the article can be translated “they were surrounded by the dance of death, and they were reciting the message of life”

<sup>517</sup> C.M. Naim reaches a similar conclusion regarding the participation of poets during the war. He concludes that the government did not coerce poets to participate. See Chaudhuri Mohammed Naim, “The Consequences of Indo-Pakistani War for Urdu Language and Literature: A Parting of the Ways?,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1969): 269-270.

years, his performance during the war, one account noted, was the highlight of his career.<sup>518</sup>

Singers and writers, some who were not employed or directly associated with Radio Pakistan, also stepped into the spotlight during the war. The story of the singer and actress Nur Jehan's decision to volunteer during the war is perhaps best known. She phoned the Lahore radio station from her home immediately after she heard Ayub Khan's broadcast and offered to sing on the radio. The station director did not believe it was her speaking until Nur Jehan showed up the next day in a white sari.<sup>519</sup> Mehdi Hasan, who by 1965 had already gained considerable fame through his enchanting *ghazal* performances composed and sang several patriotic songs from the Karachi stations. Mehdi Hasan and Nur Jehan performed in both Urdu and Punjabi. Other singers whose voices shone during the "seventeen days of drama" include Zarina Agha, Umeed Ali Khan, Gulzar Ahmed, and Khurshid Begum.<sup>520</sup>

Writers and poets were also very active during the radio campaign. Well-known poets including Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, Mukhtar Siddiqui, Safdar Mir, Ada Jafri, Himayat Ali Shair, Mustafa Zaidi, Majeed Aqeel, John Elia, and Kishwar Naheed composed and/or recited poetry supporting the Pakistani army.<sup>521</sup> Radio Pakistan aired many live

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<sup>518</sup> Nizaami, "un ke cāron jānib maut kā raqs jāī thā, aur voh zindagī kā paigām sunā rahe they."

<sup>519</sup> *Safar Hai Šart*, Interview with Nur Jehan, CPU. This recording is undated, but based on the sound quality and on the location of the recording, I estimate it was broadcast in the early 1990s. The title of this program can be translated roughly as 'when/if you travel'

<sup>520</sup> The names are listed in the war catalog. See, "1965 Indo-Pakistan War Catalog," CPU.

<sup>521</sup> Naim, "The Consequences of Indo-Pakistani War for Urdu Language and Literature: A Parting of the Ways?," 272. C. M. Naim does not mention Kishwar Naheed in his study of 1965 war poetry, but according to the CPU catalog she composed the lyrics to two the Urdu songs "Mādar-e-vatan" (homeland)

*mušāirā* mostly in Urdu but also in Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi and Baloch. Poets also organized “war” *mušāirā* outside the radio studios, in private living rooms, school auditoriums, and in press clubs and some of these were recorded and later broadcast on the radio.<sup>522</sup>

The Urdu critic, C.M. Naim wrote an in-depth study of the 1965 Urdu war poetry, arguing that among literary circles in Pakistan, during the war “the opinion was nearly unanimous” that writers must defend “their country by means of their writings.”<sup>523</sup> Some poets, however, chose not to participate. Most notably the prominent leftist Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, remained silent during the war, most likely for political reasons. Similarly, the poet Josh Malliabadi, who had long been critical of the Pakistani government and its anti-India stance, also did not participate in war *mušāirā*.<sup>524</sup>

Many amateur singers and poets also contributed to the radio campaign. The Karachi station, for example, actively encouraged student groups to perform on the radio during the war. A singing group from the Government College for Women performed several songs in the Karachi station. Mehdi Hassan accompanied this all-female singing group as the leading voice. Other examples of amateur musical ensembles that performed

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and “Aye sīyālkoṭ tumko merā salām.”(Oh Sialkot, I salute you). Naim also doesn’t mention the poet John Elia who according to the catalog also composed many songs.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid. and “1965 War Catalog,” CPU.

<sup>523</sup> Naim, “The Consequences of Indo-Pakistani War for Urdu Language and Literature: A Parting of the Ways?,” 273.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. The CPU catalog lists one poem by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, broadcast from the Hyderabad station. It seems, however, unlikely that Faiz himself recited this poem.

on the radio included ensembles from the Jinnah College for Women, NED Engineering College, and Islamia College for Women, to mention a few.<sup>525</sup>

Not all of Radio Pakistan's stations responded equally to the crisis. The Lahore station, closest to the sight of fighting, followed by the Karachi and Rawalpindi (then the provisional capital) radio stations were the most active. It was Radio Pakistan's stations were not well connected. Stations could share speeches and news bulletins via telephone, but could not simultaneously broadcast longer plays or song programs for which sound quality mattered. The Lahore and the Karachi stations managed to share some productions by sending recordings via a rushed postage system during the days of war.<sup>526</sup>

Not only did the Lahore radio station remain most active during the war, but it was also the focal point of many productions from other cities. Many poems, songs and plays were addressed to Punjab or more specifically to Lahore and either consciously or unconsciously promoted a Punjabi-centric form of nationalism. For instance, an ensemble from Government College for Women performed an Urdu song titled "Xittā-e-Lāhāor tere jāñ nisāron ko salām" (Region of Lahore, I salute those [soldiers] who readily sacrifice their lives for you) from the Lahore station. The poet John Elia penned the lyrics to the song "Lāhaur sar-baland hai, Lāhaur zindābād" (mighty Lahore, long live Lahore).<sup>527</sup> Also, the radio drama, *Maulvī jī*, which I analyze below, aired from the Karachi station, but was set in a village near Lahore. In this way, the war promoted a

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<sup>525</sup> 1965 Indo-Pakistan War Catalog, CPU.

<sup>526</sup> Azam Khan, interviewed by the author, January 24, 2012.

<sup>527</sup> 1965 Indo-Pakistan War Catalog, CPU.

Punjabi-centric form of nationalism that would have serious consequences in the years to come.

In the succeeding sections, I provide close readings of war productions. I first analyze Nur Jehan's legendary performance on the radio, paying attention to the importance of her persona. I then turn to the genre of radio drama and offer close readings of two radio plays produced exclusively for the war.

### **NUR JEHAN'S WAR SONGS**

Nur Jehan's war songs are the most celebrated items of the war and have best survived the test of time. Ask anybody in Pakistan, young or old, what she knows about the 1965 war, and she is likely to talk about Nur Jehan's radio performance. She might even hum one of Jehan's tunes, which are still traded in MP3 and CD form in Pakistan's many media bazaars.<sup>528</sup> Her extraordinary performance during the war was the result of an entire musical team's effort. Among them was the music producer Azam Khan, the poet Sufi Tabbassum who wrote many of the lyrics of her war songs, and a group of dedicated musicians from Radio Pakistan, including Nazim Ali (bansuri), Sadiq Mandu (tabla), and Faizi Sahab (sarod).<sup>529</sup>

Shortly after Nur Jehan called the radio station and volunteered to sing, the station director took Azam Khan aside and gave him one assignment: make sure Nur Jehan records one new song every day. Composing a song is a creative endeavor that can

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<sup>528</sup> I was able to purchase a number of these CDs in Lahore.

<sup>529</sup> The names of musicians are from Gauhar, "Jaṅg sitambar ke tarānoṅ kī rīkāurḍīṅ mere līye faxr aur ejāz kī bāt hai." Azam Khan confirmed that these musicians accompanied Nur Jehan's singing.

take weeks, sometimes months. Ayub Khan, however, came remarkably close to achieving his goal; he oversaw the production of twelve songs during the seventeen days of war.<sup>530</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, just two days after the Indian army's attack on Punjab, Nur Jehan performed the original Punjabi song "Mereyā dhol sipāhiyā tenuñ rabb diyāñ rakkhāñ" (My beloved soldier, may God guard you) on the radio. The song was dedicated to the lower-rank soldiers fighting on the front. Sufi Tabassum penned lyrics and both Azam Khan and Nur Jehan composed the tune. Azam Khan remembers that that evening, the phone would not stop ringing. People called to congratulate Nur Jehan on her performance and requested that the station replay the song again and again. In the days to come, many listeners also mailed suggestions for song lyrics.<sup>531</sup> A few days later, largely in response to requests that Nur Jehan also sing for army officers and generals who, like lower-rank soldiers, also put their lives on the line, Sufi Tabassum wrote the lyrics to the Punjabi song "Merā mähī chail chabīlā hāye nī karnail nī, jarnail nī" (My splendid beloved, oh colonel, oh general).<sup>532</sup>

Nur Jehan's persona was almost as important as the songs she performed. She was thirty nine years-old in 1965, and had by then built an extraordinary career that had spanned several media: from theater to silent film and from "talkies" to radio. Nur Jehan was no symbol of female purity or homely Pakistani values. On the contrary, she was

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Malik, "The Spirit of Creativity," Newspaper Clippings, Azam Khan Personal Papers.

known for her sensuality, which unfortunately some described as looseness. That sensuality was part of her appeal during the war. Nur Jehan's first husband, Shaukat Hussain Rizvi, wrote a scathing memoir of their life together criticizing her "lowly" origins and accusing of her having multiple affairs.<sup>533</sup> Similarly, the Urdu short story writer Saadat Hussain Manto, in a posthumously published memoir, wrote that Nur Jehan drank alcohol and had a way with men, and ultimately concluded that the renowned actress-singer clearly exemplified all the qualities of her class.<sup>534</sup>

Nur Jehan was born Allah Wasai to a musically and artistically inclined Punjabi family of humble means in 1926. As a young child she traveled with her family, including her seven sisters, from her hometown of Qasur in Punjab to the province's capital, Lahore, then to Calcutta and finally to Bombay, following the film and theater industries.<sup>535</sup> She became a household name in her twenties after her performance in the extremely successful film *Xāndān* released in 1942. The journalist and longtime fan of the actress-singer, Khalid Hassan, however, believes it was the less well-known film *Zīnat*, released three years after *Xāndān*, that first showcased Nur Jehan's voice. In a *qavvālī* number, her voice, Hassan remarks, was "like a flame leaping out."<sup>536</sup> Indeed

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<sup>533</sup> Khalid Hassan made note of this book in his essay on Nur Jehan. I have not been able to find a copy. Khalid Hasan, "Awaaz De Kahan Hai: A Portrait of Nur Jehan," in *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore*, ed. Bapsi Sidhwa (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005), 206.

<sup>534</sup> Manto wrote that Nur Jehan once wore a *šalvār-qamīz* (shirt and pant ensemble) made of net material that exposed her body when the sun rays hit at a particular angle. Manto, however, did not write why he had waited for the sun to hit at that particular angle. For Manto's comments regarding Nur Jehan's questionable character see Sadat Hasan Manto, *Nūr Jahān, Surūr-e-Jān* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-šer-o-adab, 1975), 18, 27, 40-43, 51-62. The title of this book can be translated as "Nur Jehan, the intoxication of life."

<sup>535</sup> The biographical details are from Hasan, "Awaaz De Kahan Hai: A Portrait of Nur Jehan," 205-220.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.



musicologists have noted that Nur Jehan pioneered the high-pitched, crooning singing style that Lata Mangeshkar perfected in later years.<sup>537</sup>

After Partition, Nur Jehan migrated to Pakistan. With her departure to Pakistan, Nur Jehan left the field open for Lata and her sister, Asha Bhosle, to dominate the Bombay film industry's music scene. In Pakistan, Nur Jehan found her own, if indeed very different, musical success. During the 1965 war, she seized the moment, and her voice then indisputably "leapt out like flame."

However, even in Pakistan and away from the Indian film industry, Nur Jehan remained in competition with the younger Lata. During the Independence Day celebration in 1962, Lata performed the song "ai mere vatan ke logoñ, zarā āñkh men bhar lo pāñī" (oh my countrymen, bring tears to your eyes), which honored the Indian soldiers who died in the Indo-China War of 1962. The renowned film music composer Ramachandra composed the tune to the song, which is widely believed to have brought Prime Minister Nehru to tears. Nur Jehan's performance in September of 1965, while much more extensive than Lata's prior performance, must have felt to some like a rebuttal to Lata's performance.

Nur Jehan's 1965 war songs also had a subtle but powerful message: India might have the stoic and asexual Lata to urge India to mourn martyred soldiers in a war it had clearly lost, but Pakistan had the fiery and sensual Nur Jehan, whose voice inspired

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<sup>537</sup> Alison E. Arnold, "Hindi Filmigiti: on the History of Commercial Indian Popular Music" (Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991), 145.

soldiers and generals to fight fearlessly and, most importantly, to win.<sup>538</sup> Nur Jehan's flirtatious songs addressed to male soldiers promoted a kind of romance between not only the actress and soldiers but also between Nur Jehan and her listening public. The Urdu song "aye vatan ke saḡile javānoñ, mere naḡmeñ tumhāre līye haiñ" (handsome young men of the country, my songs are for you) became a sensation during the war, and it is to this day one of the most celebrated songs of the war.<sup>539</sup>

Moreover, the live-ness of Nur Jehan's performance on the radio was also a key part of its appeal. In her retelling of the war days, Nur Jehan emphasizes that her performance was live. She told the journalist Khalid Hassan, "When I sang 'Mereyā ḡhol sipāhiyā,' it was not pre-recorded. I sang it straight into the microphone and I went live because the tape recorder was not working. It was very poignant moment for me, and I cried a lot."<sup>540</sup> Moreover, her songs also directly or indirectly commented on current news and this helped give the war radio programming a "real time feel." For instance, Nur Jehan recorded the original Punjabi song "Merā sohṇā shehar kusūr nī hoyā duniyā vicc mashhūr nī" ("my beautiful city of Qasur, is now famous through the world") shortly after listeners learned that the Indian and Pakistan armies had fought in the town of

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<sup>538</sup>As Neepa Majumdar notes, Lata Mangeshkar's star persona is defined precisely "by the absence of physical beauty and glamour" and in many instances seemed completely desexualized. Cited in Neepa Majumdar, "The Embodied Voice: Song Sequences and Stardom in Popular Hindi Cinema," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. Pamela Robertson; Knight Wojcik, Arthur (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 174.

<sup>539</sup>It is telling, for example, that Nur Jehan chose to sing the song "aye vatan ke saḡile javānoñ" in an interview about her career. *Safar Hai Śart*, Interview with Nur Jehan, CPU.

<sup>540</sup>Hasan, "Awaaz De Kahan Hai: A Potrait of Nur Jehan," 208-09.

Qasur, which was also Nur Jehan's birthplace. The tears, the live broadcast, and the song about the singer's home town, all contributed to Nur Jehan's symbolic meaning.

Nur Jehan's songs played an important role in galvanizing support for the war especially in the cities of Lahore and Karachi. Her songs in Punjabi and Urdu, like many of the 1965 war broadcasts, also promoted a Punjabi-centric type of nationalism that helped draw the circle of Pakistani nationalism closer to the Punjab. In later years, a movement emerged that posed Punjabi against Urdu and argued that Punjabi's literary and cultural heritage had been repressed by Urdu. Punjabi literary figures contended that Punjabis had all too readily "relinquished their language" in favor of Urdu and "ensure[d] their dominance in state administration and other positions of authority."<sup>541</sup> This movement, known as the Punjabiyyat, gained strength during the 1980s. During the 1965 war, however, Urdu and Punjabi were not set against each other, but complimented each other.

## **DRAMA DAYS**

Drama production, like songs, also helped galvanize listeners during Radio Pakistan's seventeen days war. These productions drew on what was by then a well-established tradition of radio drama. By the time of the '65 war, radio drama in Pakistan had emerged as an independent genre with a distinct aesthetic aural experience.

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<sup>541</sup> Naveeda Khan, "Review of *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan*," *Linguistic Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (2012): 133. For an excellent study of Punjabi in the colonial period see Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010). For a study of the Punjabi movement "Punjabiyyat" in the post-colonial period and its rise in the 1980s, see Alyssa Ayres, *Speaking like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle edition. In particular see Chapters 4 and 5.

Broadcasters and writers had developed a set of sound techniques and writing conventions that aurally conveyed “space, time, movement, and emotion.” The Lahore and Karachi radio stations became centers of radio drama production and attracted high profile writers such as Rafi Pir, Imtiaz Ali Taj, Ashfaq Ahmed, and Intizar Hussain.<sup>542</sup> Radio Pakistan also attracted and formed talented actors such as Mohni Hameed, Parveen Akhtar, Aqeel Ahmed, Khurshid Shahid, Mirza Sultan Beg, Sultan Khoosat and Zia Mohyeddin. Radio Pakistan produced plays in various regional languages, but Urdu and, to a lesser extent Punjabi, took the lead.

There is much work to be done on radio drama in the subcontinent—the genre’s development, its aesthetic contributions, and its relationship to other traditions, such as stage drama and film.<sup>543</sup> Both AIR and Radio Pakistan produced radio plays in the decades following independence, this genre seems to have flourished in Pakistan more than in India partly because the lucrative Bombay film industry attracted India’s best writers, producers, and actors. In contrast, Pakistan’s nascent and not nearly as economically successful film industry left more room for radio drama to prosper. During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, radio producers, writers, and actors showcased their skills and talents.

Existing radio serials such as Intizar Hussain’s *Mīyān Ke Yahān*, (Mian’s place), which broadcast from the Karachi station, and Ashfaq Ahmed’s *Talqīn Šāh*, which aired

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<sup>542</sup> Not be confused with the younger short story writer and columnist by the same name.

<sup>543</sup> In fact, one of the difficulties that the present study faces is that there is little secondary literature on Indian or Pakistani radio drama or any other radio production, for that matter.

from the Lahore station, continued to play during normal programming hours. Writers and producers, however, improvised new episodes that addressed the current military crisis.<sup>544</sup> *Talqin Shah* (Talqin Shah is a proper name), in particular, attended to the military conflict in a rather creative way. During the days of war the main character Talqin Shah, played by Ashfaq Ahmed himself, had a few brawls with a hostile neighbor named Hashmi, who had stolen a flower vase from Talqin Shah's house. Hashmi Sahab now claimed he was the rightful owner of the vase. Hashmi had become friends with a young man called John Hussain who supported Hashmi's sneaky moves. The flower vase represented Kashmir, which was famous for its scenic landscapes, Hashmi represented Prime Minister Shastri, and John Hussain, President Johnson.

Radio Pakistan also aired a number of plays exclusively produced for the war. In the following pages, I offer close readings of two such dramatic productions. In my readings of these plays, I draw on theoretical devices and vocabulary recently developed by scholars of radio drama in the United States that help us better "hear" how these productions were able to transform a minor military conflict into a significant event.

### ***MAULVĪ JĪ* AND AUDIOPOSITION**

The play *Maulvī jī* is a short radio drama produced and aired during the 1965 war. The catalog does not list the station that broadcast the play, but the play's location in the archive and its cast suggest that it aired from Karachi.<sup>545</sup> The play is set in an unnamed

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<sup>544</sup> This summary is based on the printed version of the radio drama. See, Ashfaq Ashfaq, *Jang-ba-Jang* (Lahore: Sang-e-Mil, 2001), 3-302.

<sup>545</sup> *Maulvī jī*, Radio Drama Catalog, CPU. According to the catalog, the play was produced and written by Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj. This catalog, however, has many errors. Since the play does not appear in Syed Imtiaz

Pakistani village. The narrator and main actor is a young girl named Billo, who, based on her voice and speech pattern, we can estimate is between eight and twelve-years-old. Billo narrates the story of her village Maulvi's (Islamic Preacher) martyrdom. The play's appeal, however, is not its plot, which is not very sophisticated, but rather in its sound techniques. What Neil Verma calls "audioposition"—the listeners' point of view in the radio plays—helps us to hear some of *Maulvī jī*'s sound techniques.<sup>546</sup>

The first scene opens with a long flute solo that slowly fades as Billo's equally melodic voice takes center stage. In her village, Billo explains, only boys can go to school, but her schoolmaster father tutors her in the evenings. She knows how to read and recently completed her first Urdu book. She recites one of her favorite prayers from the book. She evokes the sounds of her village life: the call of the vegetable seller, who visits her home every afternoon, the tinkling of the bulls' bells announcing their return from the fields just when the sun begins to set, and the ducks' squawking and splashing in the nearby ponds. But she holds religious sounds dearest to her heart—two in particular: the sound of schoolboys' voices praying in the morning assembly and the sound of the Maulvi's *azan* calling devotees to prayer five times a day.

We, the listeners, are "positioned" in close proximity to Billo. She doesn't speak to us. Instead, she speaks to herself, and we can hear her thoughts because we are "positioned" in her mind. The 6<sup>th</sup> of September, Billo explains, began like every other

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Ali Taj's radio drama anthology, I therefore suspect that Imtiaz Ali Taj was not the author. Some broadcasters have told me that the writer and actor Naim Tahir (son-in-law of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj) was the author of this play. I have been, however, unable to confirm that information.

<sup>546</sup> Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). In particular, see Section I.

day, with the sweet sound of the Maulvi 's *azan* calling devotees to prayer at the break of dawn. Like every other day, Billo gets out of bed as soon as she hears the *azan* and runs to the rooftop of her house to watch the village men making their way to the mosque. Today, however, something is amiss; in the background, Billo can decipher (as we can also) a soft, muffled rumble. This low growl soon turns into an awesome roar. And it is now that we the listeners realize that this play reenacts the Indian army attack near the Punjab border. The play also purports the Pakistani government's stance that the Indian raid near Lahore was completely unexpected and unjustified.

In the next scene, our audioposition changes abruptly, from Billo's mind to inside the village mosque. We hear the deep and aged voice of the village Maulvi: "I will not abandon my mosque, [...] take the women and children to safety," followed by the unidentified voices of men, one after another: "I will not abandon the house of God"; "I also will not abandon the house of God"; "I too will not abandon the house of God." A chorus of male voices follows: "We will not leave the house of God." The voices of the unidentified men in the mosque and the voice of Maulvi seem to revolve around us. We are neither closer nor farther from anybody, but seem to inhabit a kind of abstract space, where voices come to us.

Verma calls this kind of sequence where voices "leap from one mike to another 'objectively' arraying the world before us "kaleidosonic audioposition."<sup>547</sup> American dramatists in the 1930s used this technique to introduce listeners to varied perspectives

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 67.

and to take them on tours across the country. *Maulvī jī* does not go that far, but in the mosque scene, the listeners are positioned in a neutral space—at an equal distance from all characters, which is indeed very different from the space listeners inhabit in earlier scenes when they are coupled with Billo’s mind.

Another abrupt scene change, return us to Billo’s mind. Unlike stage drama or even film where frequent scenes changes can be cumbersome, radio plays often include many abrupt scene changes with minimal segue. Listeners in 1960s Pakistan, familiar with this artistic genre, would have been well accustomed to quickly adjusting to the changing audio scenario. From the rooftop of her house, Billo hears an explosion (and so do we) and she describes how the mosque’s tall *minar* dramatically falls to the ground, signifying an assault on Islam. A group of uniformed soldiers, Billo informs us, rampage the mosque.

Once more our audioposition shifts to the mosque. “You’ve dishonored the house of God,” the Maulvi defiantly tells the soldiers. One soldier yells at the Maulvi: “Stop this nonsense, and tell us where the Pakistani army is hiding.” We hear gun shots and then briefly return to Billo’s mind. Her voice breaks as she realizes that the Indian soldier just killed the Maulvi. The sight of his red blood spreading on the mosque’s white marble floor, she remarks, is as awe-inspiring as it is devastating. We once more return to the mosque and hear the voices of the village men chanting one after another: “Maulvi ji has become a martyr,” “I will protect the house of Allah,” “I am a pillar of the mosque.” Then a chorus follows: “we are all a pillar of the mosque”; “our house is the house of God.”



In these concluding scenes, kaleidosonic audioposition conveys a sense of comradeship or brotherhood—a feeling that we are all in this together. It is also telling, for example, that it is not Pakistani soldiers whose voices we hear at the end, but ordinary village men, chanting one after another, and finally chanting in unison, giving the feeling of a unified chorus where many voices might participate.<sup>548</sup> The careful juxtaposing of intimate and kaleidosonic audioposition throughout the play allows listeners to feel both a personal and an intimate connection with Billo as well as a sense of comradeship with strangers, making the war at once an intimate and collective experience.

### ***NIDĀ-E-HAQ: A TALE OF TRANSMISSION***

The dramatic production that stole the limelight during the “days of the war” was a sketch radio drama serial written by the film writer Naseer Anwar called *Nidā-e-Haq* or “voice of truth” that aired from the Lahore radio station every evening at nine o’clock.<sup>549</sup> The play features two male characters, Mian and Mahashay, who represent Pakistan and India, respectively. The two men discuss the ongoing military conflict between India and Pakistan. In this way, the show thematizes communication between two warring nations.

The terms *mīyān* and *mahāśae* are respectful titles of address for men, similar to the English-language titles “sir” or “mr.” *Mahāśae* is a Sanskrit origin word with the suffix “maha” meaning great. The word *mīyān* has an Islamic orientation, but it is not an

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> I was not able to locate original recordings of this broadcast, which unfortunately did not make it to the Central Productions Unit’s 1965 war archive, which contains only songs and poetry. The following analysis is based on a published transcription of the program that includes some sound directions, a recording of a reenactment of the play by the original actors that S.A. Ameen’s son very kindly shared with me, and on newspaper accounts of the play. Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*.

explicitly Muslim term of address. A schoolmaster, regardless of his religious identity, might be addressed as *mīyān*, as could a husband or, in some cases, even a father. In the play, however, Mahashay is unequivocally Hindu and Indian; Mian is Muslim and Pakistani (see Figure 18).

Each episode lasts somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five minutes. Recurring themes and jokes as well as references to previous episodes, give this production dramatic coherence, but the program does not have a narrative line that carries listeners from one episode to the next. *Nidā* has an improvised feeling and lacks the “glossy” finish of shorter dramatic productions like *Maulvī jī*.

Moreover, while the plot of *Maulvī jī* is a serious martyrdom meant to bring listeners to tears, *Nidā* is meant to be funny and derives humor from the litany of stereotypes about Hindus and Hinduism.<sup>550</sup> Humor has long been an important aspect of propaganda. In a study of radio propaganda in the US during WWII, Gerd Horten notes that “sugar-coated messages through humor” was almost always preferable to “straight propaganda,” not only because humor made propaganda more digestible, but also because laughter encourages “social cohesion and cross-cultural and cross-class harmony.”<sup>551</sup> *Nidā* hopes to bring Pakistani audiences together through shared laughter. Makeem Ahsan Kaleem, when commenting about this play’s appeal, wrote: “During the

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<sup>550</sup> If we had to compare *Maulvī jī* to a play familiar to Radio Studies scholars *Amos ‘n’ Andy* is perhaps the most appropriate. *Amos*, like *Nidā*, is comedy that derives humor from pushing a litany of stereotypes about African Americans and *Nidā-e-Haq*, like *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, is focused on speech and dialogue. In both plays, audioposition, for the most part, remains constant throughout the play.

<sup>551</sup> Gerd Horten, “Propaganda Must be Painless’: Radio Entertainment and Government Propaganda During World War II,” *Prospects* 21(1996): 385.

time of the war everybody felt a weight, and in those days it was difficult to find an opportunity to laugh, *Nidā-e-Haq* would take us to the world of laughter.”<sup>552</sup>

Moreover, *Nidā* is a very dialogue-rich. For the listener, the play’s challenge—and its appeal—is to decode the characters’ complex conversations, grasp the double meaning of phrases, and understand the many inside jokes. So, if in *Maulvī jī*, space and sound are vital and intimacy is created through careful “positioning” of the listener, in *Nidā* it is speech that takes center stage. In fact, we can say that the way messages are “transmitted” and “received” is the play’s central motif.<sup>553</sup>

For the first three episodes of the play Mian and Mahashay are pseudo-narrators. They do not speak *to* each other as much they speak *at* each other. In the third episode, the format of the program changes altogether, and Mian and Mahashay engage in what we might describe as a pure form of dialogue; they say exactly what they feel and think without any kind of filter. This unmediated dialogue not only brings the characters closer to one another, but also brings listeners closer to them. Through Mian and Mahashay’s frank and unmediated conversations, we get to know their personalities, opinions, and quirks, and come to imagine them as singular representatives of what was a thoroughly ideological caricature of different national and religious personalities. As listeners, we are positioned somewhere in between the two characters and remain there throughout the serial. In this way, the play is able to create the impression that we, the listeners, are prying into a private conversation.

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<sup>552</sup> Comment made by Makeem Ahsan Kaleem reprinted in Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, 20.

<sup>553</sup> Verma, *Theater of the Mind*, 131.

Mian and Mahashay's unmediated dialogue also serves another important purpose: it makes it easier for Radio Pakistan to voice a litany of abuses against Hindus without necessarily taking responsibility for them. Mahashay, and not Mian, makes the most of the derogatory comments about Hinduism. Moreover, by putting the Hindu-bashing abuses in Mahashay's mouth and couching them in the context of a truthful, unfiltered, conversation, Naseer Anwar makes them not only seem less virulent, but also more plausible.



Figure 17: Aqeel Ahmed (Mahashay) and S. A. Ameen (Mian) in the Lahore radio station studio during a recording. Source: *Roznāmā Anjān*, January 3, 1966, Newspaper Clippings, Azam Khan Personal Papers.

Mahashay tells us that Hindus are most comfortable in subservient roles. In nearly every episode, Mahashay addresses Mian as *maharaj*, a term of honor meaning king or ruler. Mahashay also tells us that for millennia, Hindus “have been worshipping every

incarnation of power.”<sup>554</sup> In one episode, Mahashay explains, “we have always been servants. Mountbatten has made us into a boss, but we just can’t get rid of our servant scars.”<sup>555</sup> Mahashay explains that the Vedas, which he describes as Holy Scriptures, encourage and reward cowardly behavior and condone violence against non-Hindus. It is written in the Vedas, Mahashay claims, that Hindus must kill non-believers.<sup>556</sup>

The dialogue format also enables Radio Pakistan to present the Pakistani government’s stance on a number of political issues in casual manner, distracting audiences from the obvious fact that *Nidā* is straight government propaganda. Kashmir, as we might expect, is a central theme. Mian tells us that Kashmiris wish to join the Pakistani union and oppose Indian rule on all accounts, while Mahashay explains that Indian politicians refuse to let Kashmiris decide their own fate because they are greedy. In one episode, Mahashay tells Mian, “Maharaja, well you are right that India had borrowed Kashmir, but this impounded item’s time has run out. We just can’t return it now.” The play also makes it clear that the Pakistani government will not budge on the issue of Kashmir until Indian politicians allow a plebiscite in that state.

After Kashmir, the second most important theme in the play is that India’s secularism is a hoax. In a number of episodes, Mian and Mahashay discuss the misfortune of other minority groups—in particular, Sikhs, Christians, and low caste Hindus. For instance, in one episode Mian asks Mahashay, “why is there not a single Sikh

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<sup>554</sup> Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, 78.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 121-26.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 134.

representative in the Indian parliament?” Mahashay answers without the least bit of hesitation: “Why would India’s Hindu leaders want a Sikh representative?”<sup>557</sup> In another episode Mian confronts Mahashay: “the entire world knows that Indian politicians have “destroyed mosques, *gurūdūāre* (place of worship for Sikhs), and churches.” Mahashay responds, “Oh Maharaj those mosques, *gurūdūāre*, and churches became Hindu temples. So, what is the difference? In the end, we all worship (the Hindu) God and Ram. (*Bhagvān kī pūjā—Rām kī pūjā.*)”<sup>558</sup> Unsurprisingly, Pakistan’s own internal problems are absent from the narrative—in particular East Pakistan’s growing discontent with Western Pakistani dominance in the government bureaucracy and in the military.

Mian and Mahashay also discuss US foreign policy in the region. As detailed earlier, the 1965 war emerged in the context of strained US-Pakistan relationship. Pakistani politicians, in particular, were angry that the United States provided military help to India during a military dispute with China in 1962. In *Nidā*, Mahashay admits that Indian politicians smitten with the US are given access to weapons that they could later use against Pakistan. Mahashay goes as far as to claim that India lost the war against China in 1962 on purpose to ensure that the US army would continue to provide military aid to India.<sup>559</sup> As we might expect, Mian and Mahashay make absolutely no mention of Pakistan’s prior alliance with the US or the generous aid the US government provided to the Pakistani military.

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 161-62.

Finally, Mahashay and Mian also discuss the ongoing food crisis in India in many episodes. In 1965, India experienced a bad monsoon and grain production in the country fell significantly. The Indian government feared a famine would soon follow.<sup>560</sup> Naseer Anwar uses the metaphor of food in two ways. First, to show that Indian politicians have a total disregard for the welfare of the Indian public. While gluttonous politicians gobble down food, the Indian people must starve. Second, the metaphor of hunger and food helps portray Indians—soldiers and civilians alike—as physically weak and ultimately uncourageous. In a particularly funny episode, where Naseer Anwar showcased his aptitude with language, Mahashay explains that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri asked his fellow citizens to grow grains and vegetables in their own homes. Shastri even recommended that people start planting mustard seeds on their palms (*hathelī par sarson jamānā*), which is an aphorism that means to attempt the impossible. In rapid-fire delivery style, Mian tell us that the Indian Prime Minister asked his people to extract oil from those mustard seeds and to use that same oil to massage their heads and to regain some strength so that they can be ready to fight Pakistan.<sup>561</sup>

## LANGUAGE AS TRANSMISSION

As we might expect, *Nidā* conflates language with religion in the most overt possible manner. In the absence of visual clues, the characters' diction becomes the most important signifier of communal identity. We know that Mahashay is Hindu because he

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<sup>560</sup> The food situation in India, November 16, 1965, Narrative and Guide to Documents, Vol. I. Background Tab 3, Box: 25 National Security Histories, Indian Famine, August 1966-February 1967, LBJ.

<sup>561</sup> Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, 157-58.

speaks “Hindi” and uses Sanskrit-derived words, and we know that Mian is Muslim because he speaks polished Urdu and pronounces Arabic and Persian-origin words correctly. As Urdu speakers put it, Mian’s “sheens” and “qafs” were impeccable.

Still, at no point do the characters have trouble communicating. While Mahashay sprinkles in a few difficult Sanskrit words here and there, that doesn’t stop Mian from perfectly understanding what Mahashay’s has to say. Nor does it stop Mahashay from conveying the program’s message to the Urdu and Punjabi speaking audience in Lahore and surrounding areas. Indeed, the play’s writer, Naseer Anwar, received a lot praise for his command of Hindi. For instance, Rais Ahmed, a Pakistani listener and fan of this program, explained, “the strangeness of the language did not make it difficult to listen to it and enjoy it. On the contrary, it made it more enjoyable.”<sup>562</sup> Another listener remarked, “from the program you could tell that the writer was very aware of Hindu traditions. The language was beautiful, and I wanted it to last longer.”<sup>563</sup> Also the celebrated Urdu writer Intizar Hussain explained in an article “The Hindi that Nazir Anwar would write—now nobody else can do.”<sup>564</sup> In *Nidā*, the demarcation of linguistic and national difference between Urdu and Hindi hinges upon the audience’s familiarity with Hindi. The strongest expressions of Urdu-Hindi hostility, and in this case Indian-Pakistani hostility in the 1965 War, depend on intimate familiarity of Hindi. In *Nidā*, the listeners’ audioposition,

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<sup>562</sup> Comment by Rais Ahmed Jafri reprinted in *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>563</sup> Comment by Mohammed Ajmal from Government College Lahore reprinted in *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*



between Mian and Mahashay, creates a feeling that we are listening in to a private conversation.

Naseer Anwar also uses language to demonstrate Mian's cultural and linguistic superiority. Ultimately, *Nidā* is a linguistic feud between Mahashay (India) and Mian (Pakistan), and in every episode, Mian wins the battle of the tongue. Mahashay mispronounces the first name of India's own vice-president calling him "Jakir instead of Zakir." Mahashay cannot even say the name of region that he claims rightfully belongs to India. He says "Kasmir" instead of "Kashmir." These are not just mispronunciations but markers of Urdu-speakers linguistic superiority.

Above all Naseer Anwar is deeply invested in presenting Urdu as *the sole* national language of Pakistan against East Pakistan's claims that Bengali should be the joint national language of Pakistan. Herein lies what was perhaps *Nidā*'s most subtle and important message. Mian repeatedly tells us "this is the voice of Pakistan," echoing the first Governor-General of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah's, infamous address in Dhaka: "Let me be clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu with no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan."<sup>565</sup>

The introduction to a printed edition of the program includes a long section with listener responses. These, of course, had been carefully selected, and include only responses by listeners who liked the program and, more importantly, who agreed with its politics. Nonetheless, these cherry-picked listener responses offer some insight into the

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<sup>565</sup> Mohamed Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan, 1947-1948* (Karachi: Ferozsons, n.d.). Cited in Philip Oldenburg, "'A Place Insufficiently Imagined': Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no. 04 (1985): 716.

ways in which listeners experienced the play. A shared thread in many of these responses is that listeners “took on” the voice of Mian. This actor’s voice, explained one listener, “became the voice of the Pakistani heart [...] whatever frustration we wanted to tell Indian animals/beasts (*darinde*), the program would say it beautifully. This is why we would all wait for this feature to air impatiently.”<sup>566</sup> Another fan of the program remarked, “Listeners felt that they were hearing the voice of their hearts in a lovely style.”<sup>567</sup> In November 27, 1965 the newspaper *Imroz Lāhaur* noted that “Mian spoke with the flow and accent of regular Pakistani.”<sup>568</sup> Mian’s voice was, however, far from unmarked.

S. A. Amin played Mian. His fascinating and surprising background provides some insight into the way’s Mian’s voice was marked. Amin was born in Channapatna, a small town famous for producing wooden toys near Bangalore in South India. Amin left Channapatna for Bombay in the hopes of breaking into the film industry, but had little luck. Shortly after the Partition of India, he migrated to Karachi, but most of his family remained in South India.<sup>569</sup> Amin came to radio in a rather roundabout way. He began as an announcer in a crafts exhibition in Karachi, selling his own products, and showing his acting ability with impersonations of various radio personalities, including the

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<sup>566</sup> Comment by Ahsan originally printed in *Roznāmā Kohistān, Lāhaur* reprinted in Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, 18.

<sup>567</sup> Comment by Zahur Alam Shaheed reprinted in *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>569</sup> "Not available," *Āhang*, July 1987; "S.A. Amin passed away," *Āhang*, February 1992; "S. A. Amin (1927-1991); the sketch of his artistic life," S.A. Newspaper Clippings, S.A. Amin Personal Papers. S.A. Ameen’s full name was Syed Ahmed Amin, but he preferred the abbreviated form.

enormously popular radio character *Qazi ji*.<sup>570</sup> A radio producer heard Amin's voice in one of these exhibitions and invited him to audition for a staff artist position at Radio Pakistan.

On the one hand, it is ironic that the so-called "voice of Pakistan" had such deep ties to India.<sup>571</sup> On the other hand, it is deeply revealing of the politics of language in newly formed Pakistan. Urdu, while widely understood in West Pakistan, was the first language of only a tiny minority: the *muhājir* community that migrated from India to Pakistan after Partition. S.A. Amin did not speak with the "accent of a regular Pakistani." His voice was clearly not the voice of the Bengalis who made up more than more than fifty percent of Pakistan's total population, nor was it the voice of speakers of other regional languages.

Ultimately, *Nidā-e-Haq* is a story about the power of language and speech. In this play, the "everyday act of verbal exchange" acquires a kind of cult status.<sup>572</sup> The voice becomes so powerful as to be "indistinguishable from force" itself.<sup>573</sup> Many programs end with Mian pointing a gun at Mahasahay and saying "this is the voice of Pakistan." Mahashay trembles in fear: "Ram, Ram, please turn your gun the other way." In *Nidā* the gun and the voice are one in the same.

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<sup>570</sup> Shaukat Tanvi, *Qāzi ji* (Lahore: Adara-e-Firogh-e-Urdū, 1948).

<sup>571</sup> "Nidāe Haq ke mīyāñ jī jin kī garajdār āvāz se mahāśae kāñpne lagte haiñ," *Roznāmā Šahar*, December 14, 1964, Newspaper Clippings, S.A. Amin Personal Papers.

<sup>572</sup> Verma, *Theater of the Mind*, 153.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

## BROKEN HEARTS AND THE END OF RADIO WAR

In every *Nidā-e-Haq* episode, the Pakistan army is just about to win the war. On the actual battlefield, however, that was far from the truth. Many of the details of the various military encounters remain unclear because armies provided contradictory accounts. Foreign observers, however, noted the war seemed to be heading toward stalemate, with no army showing a clear advantage.<sup>574</sup> What was certain, however, was that both countries were wasting not only human lives, but also precious resources in a senseless war. India was experiencing a major food crisis that threatened to escalate into an all-out famine, and Pakistan had many other much more pressing issues to address, providing basic facilities for its people not least among them.

The United Nations pressured the Indian and Pakistani leaders to end the fighting. On the 22nd of September, Ayub Khan and Shastri agreed on a new ceasefire line.<sup>575</sup> Radio Pakistan's "seventeen days of war" came to an end that day. Some programs shut down abruptly, while others slowly petered out as Radio Pakistan resumed its normal programming. Nur Jehan left the radio station and returned to her home in Lahore, as did many of the singers, musicians, and poets who had joined the war effort. *Nidā-e-Haq* continued to run for after the UN agreement, but as a number of listeners commented, these later episodes lacked the "punch" of earlier productions as neither writers nor the actors seemed committed the cause any longer.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> File 41a, LBJ.

<sup>575</sup> File 51 and 55, LBJ.

<sup>576</sup> Listeners in particular complained that when Naseer Anwar stopped writing the script the play lost its charm in Anwar, *Nidā-e-Haq*, 21. Also see Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, reprinted in *ibid*, 29.

Although Shastri and Ayub Khan agreed to the ceasefire on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, the undeclared war did not formally end until February 1966, when leaders of the Soviet Union offered to help negotiate a final agreement in Tashkent.<sup>577</sup> Shastri suffered a fatal heart attack the night after signing accord. Ayub Khan survived the accord, but in a way he too suffered from a broken heart. He had hoped that that the war would boost his political career; it did not.

In the end, Radio Pakistan's campaign, which Ayub Khan had encouraged if not directed, backfired against him. The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, accused Ayub Khan of copping out and giving up too quickly. During the UN meeting, Bhutto noted that the ceasefire resolution "did not take into account the self-determination of [the] people of Kashmir," and assured the UN that the Pakistani public would not accept the agreement.<sup>578</sup> In the months to come, Bhutto toiled to ensure that became true and publicly campaigned against Ayub Khan.

Ayub Khan found himself in a very difficult position. On the one hand, the international community pressured for peace. On the other, many who had been galvanized by the radio broadcasts agreed with Bhutto and demanded that Ayub Khan continue the war. President Johnson, after a brief meeting with Ayub Khan, remarked that the Pakistani president "had gone on adventure and had been licked." Johnson could not

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<sup>577</sup> File 62, LBJ. The September 22<sup>nd</sup> ceasefire marked the end of Radio Pakistan's "seventeen days of drama," but not the end of the armies' fighting. Five days after the ceasefire, the Indian and Pakistan armies had yet another skirmish. File 69, LBJ contains the entire text of the Tashkent declaration.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.; File 58, LBJ.

help feeling sorry for the Pakistani leader. It is hard to “to see such a proud man humble himself,” Johnson told his close associates.<sup>579</sup>

It was, however, in Pakistan’s Eastern wing where the negative effects of the 1965 war and its radio campaign were felt most prominently, if not immediately. East Pakistan had remained unprotected during the war, although there was a very real possibility that India might have attacked on the Eastern border. During the height of the war one wary US official observed: “the situation in the West can be controlled, but if it expands to the East it cannot be controlled.”<sup>580</sup> More importantly, Lahore, the capital of the state of Punjab, had been the center of the radio campaign. Radio programs propelled many West Pakistanis to draw the circle of nationalism much closer around Punjab and very far from Bengal. To those in East Pakistan, the 1965 radio war must have clearly shown that in Pakistan, there was no place for them..<sup>581</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The 1965 war’s radio campaign had transformed the military skirmish in Punjab into a grand event. Moreover, this radio campaign had given many broadcasters, writers, and artists in Pakistan’s Western Wing the opportunity to showcase their talents and build their careers. But as a nation-making project, the trials of 1971 and the breakup of the

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<sup>579</sup> File 79, LBJ.

<sup>580</sup> File, 41u., LBJ.

<sup>581</sup> For an excellent study of the high politics of the 1971 Bangladesh War in a global perspective see Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). Srinath Raghavan argues that that there was “nothing inevitable either about the breakup of united Pakistan or about the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. Rather it was the product of historical current and conjunctures that ranged far beyond South Asia.” ( 9) This cultural study of radio presents a counterpoint to Raghavan’s work and notes that the seeds of the issues of 1971 were planted in 1965.

Pakistani nation would soon demonstrate, the campaign had ultimately failed. Mian's powerful voice could not keep the nation together and had, in fact, contributed to the resentment that led to the country's ultimate breakup.

The rhetoric of the 1965 radio campaign was challenged by another radio service that I can only very describe briefly here, but wish to expand upon in later revisions of this work. In the aftermath of 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, India and Pakistan discontinued all diplomatic relationships. Indira Gandhi, who became Prime Minister of India in January of 1966, inaugurated the All India Radio's Urdu Service. This radio service targeted audiences in Pakistan, but quickly gained a significant following in North India, especially among Urdu-knowing Hindu and Sikh Punjabi immigrants who had migrated to India from what became Pakistan after independence. Clearly aware of these developments, Urdu Service broadcasters designed programs that catered to their transnational, multilingual, and multi-religious listenership. In so doing, they challenged many of the policies of Radio Pakistan's 1965 war.

## Conclusion: *Āvāz De Kahān Hai*

One of the AIR Urdu Service's most popular programs was a weekly show called *Āvāz De Kahān Hai*. The program's host and creator Abdul Jabbar named the program after the song, "Āvāz de kahān hai, dunīyā merī javān hai," (where are you [call to me], my world is young) from the film *Anmol Ghaṭī*. The song featured the voices of the celebrated actor-singers Nur Jehan and Surendra.<sup>582</sup> During the program, Jabbar played Hindi film songs from the pre-Partition days and read excerpts from letters sent to him by listeners in India and Pakistan. For instance, in July of 1974, Abdul Jabbar read a letter from Mohammed Shafi, who wrote from Karachi to ask if someone could tell him if his former hometown of Bulandshahar in India still had large mango orchards. A few months later, Jabbar read a response to that letter from a listener in Bulandshahar, who wrote about the city's orchards and reassured Shafi and other listeners that Bulandshahar's mangos were as tasty then as they were before Partition.<sup>583</sup>

Jabbar's radio program points to new directions that this study might take in the future, but the program's theme song also nicely summarizes the main contribution of this dissertation. The phrase "*āvāz de kahān hai*" could be translated in myriad of ways. It literally means "give me your voice, where are you? But it can also mean "call to me, wherever you are?" or even more metaphorically, "where is your voice?" In Jabbar's

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<sup>582</sup> As I further explain below, the title of this song is difficult to translate. It means something along the lines of "where are you?; the world is young" or "call to me, where you are; I am youthful" The title of the film can be translated as "precious moment."

<sup>583</sup> "A Touch of Nostalgia: Listening Post," *Statesman*, June 21, 1981, Newspaper Clippings, Abdul Jabbar Personal Papers. Jabbar kindly shared with me a collection of newspaper clippings from India and Pakistan about his program as well as an extensive collection of listeners' letters.



radio program, this song invited listeners to reflect on the power of radio and on the ways the medium connected with audiences. It urged listeners to ask where the radio voices came from and who the listeners were, but, most importantly, the song called attention to radio's ability to cross national borders.

The AIR Urdu Service was a government-run service, funded and administered by the Indian government. Yet, this service was also subversive in its own way. It provided listeners in both India and Pakistan a venue to challenge their respective government's policies and ideologies. Conventional thinking tells us that radio was a tool of the government—colonial or national. This study has presented a much more complicated story. Surely colonial and national governments attempted to use radio to foster allegiances and fashion national identities, but as preceding chapters have demonstrated, such attempts met with mixed success. Radio escaped governments' grip and in some instances actually facilitated defiance of colonial and national government policies.

In Chapters One and Two, I argued that by listening to Axis radio broadcasts—and the rumor and gossip that they unleashed—many in India were able to effectively question British accounts of WWII. At the same time, during this period, the colonial government—largely in response to the popularity of Axis radio—funneled money and personnel into radio broadcasting and effectively developed a national radio network. In the postcolonial period, the Indian and Pakistani governments made use of this infrastructure. Their various campaigns, however, faced serious challenges. Sometimes, they were rejected by listeners altogether, as was the case in the early 1950s, when the

Government of India promoted a modified version of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music as the new popular music of India (Chapter Three). Listeners, instead tuned to Radio Ceylon's film song-related programs (Chapter Four). Other times, government radio projects won immediate success, only to politically backfire soon after. As outlined in Chapter Five during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Radio Pakistan's patriotic broadcasts galvanized audiences in urban centers of Western Pakistan, but this radio campaign also set the stage for the linguistic controversy that led to East Pakistan's secession and the ultimate breakup of Pakistan.

## **PROJECT ROOTS**

My interest in national borders, their making and unmaking, has very personal roots. I grew up on the US-Mexico border, in the sister cities of Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. My mother lived in the Mexican city and my father in American one. For more than two years, I walked across the border almost every day. I therefore grew up with an intuitive awareness of the border—both as an institution and an infrastructure—that is simultaneously rigid and porous. Somewhat unconsciously, I brought this understanding of borders to my study of South Asian history.

Although this project has changed significantly since I first proposed it back in the summer of 2010, I knew from the outset that I did not want territorial boundaries of nation-states to define the geographical contours of my study. I originally proposed to undertake a comparative historical study of radio in late colonial India and independent India and Pakistan and proposed to study AIR and Radio Pakistan together. Axis radio

stations, including Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Radio, and Radio Ceylon did not feature in any of my original proposals.<sup>584</sup> It was after I had begun collecting sources and talking with broadcasters and radio aficionados that I realized the importance of these stations, which lay outside the states' boundaries. In particular, I remember sitting in Yawar Mahndi's living room in Karachi discussing his nearly three-decade-long career with Radio Pakistan and hearing a long and emotive sigh when Radio Ceylon's name came up in our conversation. I knew then that I had to learn more about this station. Shortly thereafter, I booked a ticket to Sri Lanka.

"Radio for the Millions" demonstrates that in South Asia radio crossed borders and argues that in so doing, the medium often defied the agenda of imperial and national governments. More generally, this study also calls for more transnational studies of radio. Despite the diversity of the regions studied and the methods employed, many Radio Studies works remain firmly anchored in the nation. At the same time, this dissertation also tests foundational understanding of how the medium connects with listeners. Radio's relationship to rumor and gossip, discussed in-depth in the chapters on WWII, can certainly be applied to other regions where radio ownership rates were relatively low but the medium's influence was great such as Latin America or Africa. Similarly, conclusions outlined in Chapter Four regarding the near collusion of so-called "visual" and "aural" industries call for further study of radio's relationship to the film industry in

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<sup>584</sup> Although ironically the original idea for this project emerged out of an earlier project on Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, I did not originally plan to study Azad Hind Radio along with AIR and Radio Pakistan.

other regions and places.<sup>585</sup> One of this study's underlying themes has been not so much that radio's story in South Asia is distinctive (although at times that was certainly the case), but rather that "listening" to radio's trajectory in the region (and very consciously not making Europe or North America the point of departure) allows us to hear the medium in a new wave.

## **NEW DIRECTIONS**

A few brief notes on the new directions this study can take in the future seem appropriate here. I would like to conduct research in Bangladesh in the near future to expand Chapter Five, "Seventeen Days of Drama." In particular, I want to further investigate reactions to the 1965 War's radio broadcasts in East Pakistan so as to better analyze the links between the 1965 War and the Bengali-Urdu controversy that culminated in the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. Moreover, the AIR Urdu Service to Pakistan and its loyal listenership in India and Pakistan, which I briefly introduce in Chapter Five, could also be the subject of another chapter altogether.

Further extensions of this project could involve expanding into the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). In this dissertation, I have focused on the social and political aspects of radio, and have paid less attention to radio as a technology. In the future, I would want to more directly address how wireless technology featured in imperial and national development projects such as Jawaharlal Nehru's five years

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<sup>585</sup> Some pioneering works on the relationship of film and radio in the United States include Rick Altman, "Deep Focus Sound: Citizen Kane and the Radio Aesthetic," ed. Ronald Gottesman, *Perspectives on Citizen Kane* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996); Michel Chion, *Film, a Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

plans.<sup>586</sup> Lastly, another addition would be to include a more in-depth analysis of radio's relationship to print and consider if and how radio news broadcasts during WWII, both Axis and Allied, were reproduced in both English and Indian-language newspapers.

I wish to end, however, not with a pitch for further research or new directions for analysis, but with a brief meditation on one of the unexpected thrills of pursuing this project. Researching and writing a transnational history of radio in South Asia has made it possible to stitch together seemingly unrelated stories and characters. After all, who would ever think that Adolf Hitler and the playback singer Lata Mangeshkar could feature in the same narrative? Radio linked these stories—Hitler's refusal to publicly declare support for Subhas Chandra Bose's nationalist movement and Lata's aural conquest of the film industry—as it brought recorded and mediated sound to listeners in South Asia. My duty as an historian of radio has been to turn an ear to the past and ask, *“āvāz de kahān hai?”*

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<sup>586</sup>Although radio did not feature in the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's famous “five years” development plan, radio played an important role in the new state's development projects.

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