Editorial: Celebrity Big Brother dialogues - the global pantomime of race

The banality of the UK Celebrity Big Brother (CBB) reality television show prepared no one for the global media spectacle of the fracas between the b-list Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty and the d(?)-list British super-ignoramus Jade Goody. To debate whether the exchanges between an Indian Actress and a white working-class ex-Big Brother participant (and her co-conspirators) wasn’t a racist confrontation simply denies the multiplicity of racisms of British life. Contrary to Germaine Greer’s insistence that Shetty vs. Goody exposed class rather than racial antagonisms, the aftermath of CBB raises more complex issues: What does the CBB media stampede say about the discourse of local-global race, gender and class relations? Is Reality TV the political unconscious of everyday repressed racisms? Does the ‘victory’ for Shetty indicate the triumph of anti-racism and/or multicultural neo-liberalism? These are some of the issues which have motivated the production of the first Journal Issue of darkmatter in the form of a series of dialogues interrogating CBB.

The analysis offered by the following pieces is by no means exhaustive and the global frame of reference needs to be developed further. One of the challenges of grasping the (in!)significance of CBB is being confronted by the unruly cultural politics of Reality TV. Hasn’t the relatively short-lived global pantomime of race which CBB generated now receded almost as quickly as it appeared? Notwithstanding the amnesia of contemporary popular culture, there is a danger that any public discussion of everyday racism is delimited by the very conditions of its articulation in a commodified parasitic media culture. What was dubbed as the CBB ‘race row’ revealed an ‘anti-racist’ public discourse that was little more than moralistic liberal knee-jerking. It also exemplified the central role of interactive media in creating new channels of fractured social discourse all caught up in the simulation of a transnational spectacle. It remains to be seen if ‘race-talk’ can develop new political modalities in the global virtual realm that move beyond the crisis and management mode of the liberal media sphere.

darkmatter is an experiment in creating a collective ‘prosthetic race memory’ that reconfigures the circuits of knowledge and power, in a situation where at present the blinding whiteness of network culture continues to make most of the people on the planet invisible. It seems appropriate for darkmatter to emerge at a time where a eurocentric media culture is reproducing itself as the champion of anti-racism, while simultaneously denying the central role of racism in the terrain of contemporary geo-politics. CBB was a minor symptom of the new digital politics of race to come.

Notes

1. Jade Goody on her farcical career-saving visit to India declared “I now know to tell my kids Pakistani people are not from India.”

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[1] Why does everyone hate me?: http://media.guardian.co.uk/site/story/0,,1992029,00.html

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Big Brother, Beyond Britain

A rather small column in an insignificant section of a local Malaysian newspaper alerted me to the Big Bully saga involving Indian actress Shilpa Shetty, which was unfolding in Britain at that time. Unsurprisingly, the ‘excitement’ with issues of racism and multiculturalism unfolding in the (former) colonial Empire had failed to alarm nor excite Malaysians - after all, it was Britain who had ’forced’ multiculturalism on the country by bringing in Chinese and Indian migrants to live in ‘racial harmony’ with the Bumiputeras in Malaya during its reign. Nevertheless, the seemingly racial-’tolerant’ country that Malaysia boasts today would not have been possible without its own continuous struggles with issues of multiculturalism since gaining Independence from the British in 1957, and with the constant (albeit implicit) threat of racial unrest if there is failure to practice self-censorship on every level - individual, society, and state - with regards to racial biasness.

The discourse of race and racism remains highly taboo and is much avoided as the consequences have proven detrimental to national security - engaging with this sensitive issue could result in an arrest by the ISA. Hence, racist remarks or racially connotative programmes seldom find their way into the media, especially one that has been categorized as ‘Reality’ TV - a genre that seeks to ‘realistically’ portray the lives of ‘real’ people. In Malaysia, ‘live transmissions’ are deliberately delayed for about two seconds to enable the censorship of any ‘unfavorable’ material; and in such a country, Big Brother faces an outright ban, for reasons as vague as the ban itself (parts of the BB format have been inserted into local reality programmes).

Nevertheless, the Big Brother programme in Britain somewhat embodies the ‘celebration’ of media and cultural ‘freedom’ enjoyed by its society; a freedom that many deemed had been misconstrued and misused in the BB House through the xenophobic display by white working-class participants towards a postcolonial Asian star whose only ‘offense’ (or defense) was to represent a successful middle-class individual with bourgeois mannerisms. Yet, when Jade Goody spoke with a racist tone, she conveniently disregarded the Indian communities worldwide and failed to realise that the closed doors of the BB House was in fact the most open platform for public scrutiny through the lenses of (surveillance) cameras - one would think that Jade would be familiar with the idea of ‘being watched’ and in turn, be watchful of herself. For such an issue to have any major racial bearings, the remarks would have to originate from ‘ordinary people’ who understood the taboo and consequences of playing the ‘racial card’ in a popular TV show and the consequences of displaying ‘anti-social behavior’ in this very ‘politically-correct’ society.

Indeed, there has been personal assimilation (on my part) to the ‘reality’ of racism in Britain having resided in the East London area for several years - whether delivered subtly or otherwise, racism is hardly a ‘brand new trend’ and neither would Jade’s remarks be deemed as shocking. Instead of following the debates and media frenzy in Britain, I had the privilege of witnessing the (lack of) reaction of another multicultural nation towards the incident that had caused an upheaval in Britain and India and which earned itself a mention in the World Updates section of the news daily (as opposed to the entertainment section where news on reality TV are usually published). In contrast to the British media coverage of the event, there were only three stories being highlighted - firstly, of the protests in India over a UK TV show causing a diplomatic row between the two countries, citing reactions from Tony Blair and
With Indians comprising approximately 30% of Malaysia’s populace, one would expect at least some form of response by the Indian community, possibly in articulating discontent over the racist remarks. Comments on the issue were scarce (apart from several short comments in web forums and blogs) possibly overshadowed by the announcement of Indian superstar Aishwarya Rai’s engagement to Abhishek Bachchan. Was the lack of revolt towards the BB issue due to the success of the Bangsa Malaysia ideology or were Indian-Malaysians simply dissociating themselves from their ancestral ties? Neither. The reaction of Indian-Malaysians (and Malaysians in general) was of a postcolonial one - to dissociate the Self from the (racial) struggles faced by its former colonizers; the (former) Empire now stands alone in fighting its own (internal) crusades which lacks significance in the lives of those who were once subjected to its eminent power; perhaps Britain is no longer seen as an imperial power and a source of civilized culture for its former colonies. While it is much desired that the protests in Britain and India would articulate the ‘triumph’ of anti-racism and multicultural neo-liberalism, its very limited consequence on the global Indian community reflects that the notion remains a utopian dream. On the contrary, it has magnified the discourse of racism in Britain and is once again ‘allowed’ to be concealed by the rather ‘uncanny’ victory of Shilpa.

It may be possible that Indian-Malaysians decided to dismiss the issue as a ‘day in the life of Western celebrities’ with the exception of Shilpa, although her media fame in Britain also makes her very much a ‘Western celebrity’. While Shilpa may be regarded as an ambassador of India in Britain, it is undeniable that her participation in a Western version of Celebrity BB had required her to transcend geographical and cultural spaces and to position herself within a Western context, indirectly subjecting herself to the ‘laws’ of the West, and to be integrated in Western culture and ideology. Shilpa (like countless other British migrants) would have shared the same ‘excitement’ of desiring to be a part of the elitism and grandeur of Western, imperial traditions. After all, she would have returned to India after winning the competition if there was refusal to partake of such Western ‘intolerance’, instead of applying for a work permit (which was subsequently granted by the British government) to extend her stay in Britain. Shilpa’s decision could have been influenced by a blurring of boundaries between the ‘reality’ of ‘successfully’ surviving 26 days in the BB House under 24-hour surveillance and the ‘reality’ of being able to live/work in Britain while also being subjected to scrutiny through similar forms of surveillance. With such blurring of boundaries, the BB House can be read as allegorical of Britain’s ‘white man’s territory’, where the Asian is stripped of her freedom as she enters this territory and is reduced (from a Bollywood star) to resemble a submissive Indian woman whose life should suddenly centre around being accepted (by winning) in a white man’s society whilst being subjected to the ‘dominant white gaze’ (as Fanon would say) through the eyes of Jade, other occupants of the BB House and of course the British community in general. However, Shilpa’s victory does not signify her liberation from the Western world; on the contrary, the way she negotiates her place in the white man’s society allows for the formation of an identity that embodies a process rather than a fixed state - a ‘becoming, not a being’. The process of transformation means that there cannot be a return to the initial moment of creation as the ‘Other’ creates a new life for herself in the ‘new world’ of the West and a new alter ego for her role as an ‘icon’ in the white man’s world. India’s beloved Bollywood star certainly enjoys the glitz and glamour of ‘making it big’ in the next-best-place to Hollywood, has no regrets of leaving her country for Britain and has no present desire of returning.

On the other hand, we may have also witnessed the infamous death-struggle of colonialism and the negative consequences of Jade, Danielle and Jo’s actions would merely be seen as a mirroring of their actions, an ‘imperial power injured at home for the first time’. The Celebrity BB programme, which has depicted colonial domination and influence, manifests what Jameson has termed as ‘political unconsciousness’ in this form of ‘art’. Having been denied a ‘voice’ by her fellow housemates, the subaltern cannot be restored to her proper place in a...
dialogical system of society unless she actively pursues 'the restoration of artificial reconstruction' of this formerly stifled voice. Thus, by crossing boundaries, utilizing many kinds of (high and low) knowledge, she legitimates the whole project of society, thereby restoring her place in society. Shilpa uses the reality programme to reconstruct this very 'project' - not only by taking control of 'high' established traditions from the more dominant culture and merging it with the 'low' of her subaltern identity, but also by 'crossing boundaries' to consolidate the disparate elements of a hegemonic world culture.

...when the Self is also the Other

It is in Malaysia alone that we find a state which constantly promotes the idea of being known as single race (Malaysian race or Bangsa Malaysia) as opposed to Chinese-Malaysian or Indian-Malaysian, a move towards achieving 'racial harmony' among its peoples. Nonetheless, it remains a utopian concept although one tends to practice added toleration due to the unconscious notion that making racist remarks only result in having it 'thrown back at your own face' because regardless of ones ethnic origin, speaking about the Other within this society also reflects in one speaking to/about oneself. It is not a perfect concept as there is always an inherent sense of belonging to our own collective-ethnic bodies and a natural reflex-action to defend this body; and in defense of its programme, Channel 4 claims that it was merely a 'clash of culture and class' rather than race. While it may seem to be a rather crude explanation in an attempt to conceal the racial issue, it also forces one to think beyond Beauty and the Beast - Shilpa and Jade, to address the presence of this 'clash' faced by British-Indians and India-Indians and the feeling of in-betweenness expressed by Homi Bhabha\textsuperscript{13} - when the Self is also the Other - Jade's racial slurs indirectly results in her being racist towards her own British (Indian) community, towards her own Self. Would the remarks have been made if Shilpa was British-Indian, educated in East Ham? Would Jade have flaunted her racial biasness if the show was produced in India and the participants were housed in New Delhi?

Nevertheless, it cannot be disregarded that the current racial discourse concerns 'celebrities' - individuals accustomed to gossips, backstabbing, and handling bad reputation in the media. Indeed, while the remarks may have seemed racist, the bullying may have been fueled primarily by jealousy - very common and, at times even necessary, in the world of celebrities (bitching, gossiping, constructing drama for fleeting fame, etc). In times of desperation (and possibly in discovering and desiring what the Self lacks which is present in the Other), Jade finds solace in belonging to a (former) superior race, class, and culture, while having confidence that she would have the support of her fellow British housemates and entire British community as the programme was the British version of Celebrity BB. Unlike the ordinary person who 'volunteers' to be enslaved in the BB House, participants of Celebrity BB are paid handsomely to 'perform' their job under a legally binding contract (hence making it equivalent to another soap opera on TV) where actors are subjected to all forms of control, especially by producers attempting to sensationalize the programme and to restore the 'glory' of the reality genre considering the dwindling interest of audiences in Britain (and generally in the West) in the reality programmes. Nevertheless, I do not claim that events which took place in the BB House did not reflect the reality of Britain's struggle with multiculturalism. Yet, if Britain is bold enough to produce a reality show like Celebrity BB, it should be prepared for such outrageous, morally-degrading events - after all, if participants 'self-censor' their actions in respect of the 'surveillance' cameras, then the programme would no longer be true to its purpose as a 'reality' genre.

It is also important to raise the question of whether Shilpa would have won if it was not for the racial controversy that took place and to examine whether the results of Celebrity BB reflects the way Britain is responding to the discourse of racism - where the act of racial tolerance (by voting an Indian winner on a British show) seems more like forced acceptance; by showing support for the Other in order to ensure that the Self is not harmed; to ensure that Britain is not placed under the threat of racial turmoil which it already faces from its Muslim community. In 'fearing' the Other, there is a parallel sense of fear towards the Self and what the Self is capable of (un)doing; Britain recognizes the power of the 'next' Empire and realises that it will
ultimately collapse if the entire (postcolonial) Indian/Asian community (within and beyond Britain) plan another racial upheaval against the West. Nevertheless, the reality genre should no longer be disregarded merely as a Western form of entertainment as the politics of reality TV has been reflected in the way that events taking place in the BB House are juxtaposed with other discourses of racism in Britain and by addressing the BB episode in the Houses of Parliament. Perhaps BB is banned in Malaysia because the 'powers that rule' recognize that the politics of reality TV extend beyond culture and entertainment, hence the refusal to tolerate a television format such as BB which 'pressures' participants into revealing 'un-Malaysian' characteristics (and partly because it does not help the developing nation achieve its Vision 2020 objectives compared to the 'discovery of new talents' through reality shows such as Malaysian Idol and Akademi Fantasia); and the British community could continue watching Pop Idol or X-Factor while enjoying a meal of Chinese take-away or tasty Indian curry, and any a 'desire' for one to be racially biased would be merely 'implicitly' reflected in the results.

Notes

2. ↑ The Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA) is known as "white terror" and permits detention of an individual (for up to 60 days or more) without trial if found to threaten the country’s security.
3. ↑ For example, reality-talent show participants are housed together and placed under the scrutiny of several hidden cameras located throughout the location.
4. ↑ I am not suggesting that racism exists exclusively in East London, rather I am suggesting that one does not need to even to tune in to the BB programme to know that racism has been a long-standing struggle of Britain.
5. ↑ [1] Blair drawn into 'Big Brother' racial abuse row as Indians burn an effigy (taken from the AP news report; accessed on 25/03/07)
6. ↑ [2] Big Brother’ revives Shetty’s fading career (Accessed on 25/03/07)
7. ↑ [3] Jade Should Not be Branded a Racist
8. ↑ Bangsa Malaysia means people who are able to identify themselves with the country, speak Bahasa Malaysia and accept the Constitution. To realize the goal of Bangsa Malaysia, the people should start accepting each other as they are, regardless of race and religion.” - Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, THE STAR, 11 September 1995
9. ↑ Indeed, the issue failed to have as big an impact worldwide as did the Islamic cartoons by the Swedish newspaper which saw a global upheaval by Muslim communities (and was also heavilyaddressed by the Malaysian government).

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URLs in this post:
[3] Jade Should Not be Branded a Racist:
Celebrity Big Brother 07: For Better or Worse?

Posted By Sarita Malik On 7 May 2007 @ 10:40 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

On a recent trip to India I had to sit down frequently, reeling from the shock that the name “Jade Goody” was mentioned by on average three people a day. The absurdity of this preoccupation with a runner-up from 2002’s UK Big Brother, was further illustrated when I looked around me and observed how depressingly quickly the chasm between rich and poor has developed since my last trip to the country four years ago. My own involvement in debates around Celebrity Big Brother 07 was called into question. Had the media spotlight, by weighing up the merits of Jade vs. Shilpa, done more bad than good; merely serving to produce superficial fodder for uncritical debate in a country with bigger problems? Did Jade Goody’s tokenistic ‘charity’ visit to India really matter? To whom? Had any of this episode produced new knowledge or new solutions?

My own preoccupation with the CBB affair related to what it told us about the UK politics of race and representation; and, as an ardent BB and CBB follower since 2000, how the series had become a strange catalyst for anti-racist discourse. So much so, that it had only taken The Sun newspaper a matter of days to jump on the anti-racist bandwagon in order to underline its own liberal credentials. But the impact of this year’s CBB has, as we know, been far-reaching.

Being in India (at the same time as Jade!) made me question what the CBB fixation tells us about India. India today is, more than ever, a society dichotomised by those fully-engaged with Western-led ‘global popular culture’ on the one hand (driven as it is by the demands of an ‘urban lifestyle’) and those leading proper ‘real lives’, imbued with the genuine challenge of making ends meet. The poor and underprivileged majority demographic are further disenfranchised through the fallout of this kind of globalised cultural politics. I can only imagine this chasm will deepen as India’s middle-class grows. Bollywood still seems the only possible cultural space where the gap might be bridged.

Everyone I knew in Delhi was talking about Liz and Arun, Ashwarya and Abhishek and busily reviewing Shah-Rukh’s performance as the new host (apparently after a bitter battle with the original host Amitabh Bhachan) of Kaun Banega Crorepati, the Indian version of Who Wants to be a Millionaire? And so the dehydrated dogs at the turn of every corner, and the stench of the slums backing on to the Railway Station seemed even more pronounced. For most villagers, the ‘cultural knowledge’ offered by this new economy and ‘urban lifestyle’ are well beyond their reach. And not least because the nature of the electricity supply in most parts of rural India means that even those with TV sets get intermittent reception!

There is a big question around the global dynamic that underpins this kind of cultural trading. Shilpa, by agreeing to appear on CBB, clearly wanted to expand her market to include the British. Endemol, who apparently worked hard to get Shilpa on their show, evidently saw this as an opportunity to jump on the Bollywood bandwagon and ‘connect with’ Channel 4’s British-Asian audience. But what has the media packaging of the ‘CBB race row’ really done for India: is it anything more than selling globalisation (albeit in the form of reality TV stars and cloned TV formats) to the Indians? Or is this a naive view which presumes that India represents a passive audience that uncritically receives Western-led media messages?

In spite of the recent spread of global formats (Big Brother, The Kumars at No. 42, Pop Idol, Wife Swap and X Factor have all been launched and aggressively marketed abroad), deep
differences amongst world audiences exist. This is interesting for how it connects to Diaspora politics (for example, where do these representations position the British-Asian viewer compared to a sub-continent based one?). Shilpa Shetty’s own naivety about the manifestations of particular kinds of British racism, is just one illustration of the differences in cultural understanding. Politically, there has been much to gain by engineering this as a global talking-point. Just as Gordon Brown, on his first trip to India, made a clear statement about what CBB meant for Indo-UK relations, senior India ministers knew that this had touched a raw nerve - not for what it demonstrated about UK racism - but because it was a big topic for the educated middle-class.

Discussions around CBB have demonstrated that many resident Indians are affronted to see their homeland and ‘their’ celebrity so publicly criticised, but basically because this taps into the umbrage and insecurity of middle-class ‘English-speaking’ India. Coupled with the fact that some English people (e.g. Jade and her crew and probably a fair amount of viewers) have a deep-seated resentment of a ‘foreigner’ competing for the top prize in a reality TV series that they had presumed ‘belonged’ to them, this tells us something interesting about the universality of national pride. There is a peculiar and municipal kind of xenophobia and territorialism at work here. But, to put it crudely, with less than one in forty Biharis owning a television, what does Jade Goody really matter for their well-being? The India that was so ardently ‘protected’ by those who protested about CBB remains a deeply divided space, and the impact of the CBB furore only seems to shed light on the inequities in its midst.

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Racism for anti-racism
Posted By Ben Pitcher On 7 May 2007 @ 10:21 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

...people are fascinated, terrified and fascinated by this indifference of the Nothing-to-see, of the Nothing-to-say...

Such was the reckoning of Big Brother propounded in a [1] late lecture by the freshly dead Jean Baudrillard. His words are familiar, his argument quite orthodox. It is unlikely that Davina, Dermot or Russell would have begged to differ.

Baudrillard’s reckoning of the fake sociality, the disappearance of reality, the banal consumption of the spectacle of banality: all this is less a pointed critique and more a basic operating premiss for the tired audiences of reality TV. Long before Endemol had removed the dust-sheets from its sets, the zeitgeist had caught up with and arguably overtaken the ailing septuagenarian. Baudrillard’s ‘silent majorities’ were consciously resigned to carrying out their designated role, patiently waiting to be bored by Leo Sayer, ground down by Jo O’Meara and unmoved by the announcement from H out of Steps that he was, as everybody already knew, attracted to members of his own sex.

And yet, of course, the tedious predictability of Baudrillard’s ‘pure virtual reality’ was disrupted quite spectacularly by the combination of such unpromising ingredients. Like the perfect mixture of chapatti flour, nail polish remover and bleach, the curious conjunction of celebrity, race, class and live streaming blew Baudrillard’s homilies to pieces. Nothing had been turned into something. The virtual had been made real again. It was a matter for immense public excitement.

I write this a few days after Commonwealth Day, where the Queen showed her breeding by incorporating Shilpa Shetty into the official fabric of British multiculturalism. Since Shetty’s own coronation, memory of the Big Brother incident has been reprised in countless, smaller echoes. Miss Scotland compares Samantha Mumba to a monkey; Tory frontbencher Patrick Mercer slips up and pays the price. Each time the reaction, to greater or lesser extent, is the same: public outrage, desperate contrition, ruined careers. The fantastic, frenzied dance of disavowed racism is quite a spectacle to behold.

What is particularly interesting about these modern-day morality plays is the particular status of the racist act and the public response it engenders. The former always constitutes a great Freudian slip of ethical propriety: it is, of course, never ‘really meant’. Jade Goody, Patrick Mercer, even the policeman beating the shit out of Toni Comer - all of them are quick to deny they really are racists. They were caught off-guard, unawares, misconstrued. The amplification of their error across media platforms reminds us of Jeremy Beadle’s old-fashioned reality TV: they had, indeed, been framed.

Compare this, then, to the popular response, where racism comes to be identified and named. This theatre of mass disapproval is not, in the main, disingenuous. When Ofcom came to be incorporated into the Big Brother drama as an alternative site for the registration of telephone votes, this was an organic manifestation of the popular politics of reality TV. It was a protest that was - at least in its origins - quite unorchestrated by the newspapers or other peripheral media. The point to make here is not to challenge the sincerity of the reaction, but rather to consider the conditions under which such instances of impeccable anti-racism come to be expressed.
All public discussion of race is today articulated from an anti-racist position. Indeed, it is in fact the only position from which to speak: it is not possible to mention the subject without stressing one’s anti-racist credentials. All this is of course well and good; it should indeed be impossible to beg to differ. Yet it is at the same time still worth noting that this ethical injunction on racist reference makes the anti-racist response an oddly hollow act, for if to speak about race immediately places one in a superior position of judgment, then to do so is to simultaneously remove oneself from the field of racist practice: it excuses one from the possibility of being judged.

We are as a result operating according to a social logic where racism only exists to be condemned: the rapidly censored spillages from the racist unconscious channelled by the ‘misunderstood’ victims of reality TV have a single purpose, and that purpose is to feed our disapprobation. The popular spirit of anti-racism is not interested in much beyond these spectacular slips, for the sustained, longstanding and institutional facts of racist Britain cannot be booted off with a text vote to Ofcom. They are not amenable to the armchair activism that has seen anti-racism transformed into a cause for a twenty-first century green-ink brigade, treated as evidence of a lapse in public morality that might, in pruder times, have ranked alongside the display of nudity or the vocalization of a rude word.

And so, beyond the excitement and public spectacle that appeared to invalidate Baudrillard’s neat pessimism, we are witness to its confirmation in this strangely empty form of virtual reality racism. The racist act or incident is entirely incidental, though it is - as in the case of Big Brother - always better if it takes place in a controlled environment. It is racism reduced to a resource, a material which feeds our popular ethics of anti-racism. The ideal form of virtual racism is a racism that seems to have had an essential property emptied out of it: it is a racism where nobody appears to get hurt. Our popular culture is on constant alert for this precious substance, always on its tantalizing trail. We latch onto incidents upon which it can be hooked, temporarily pinned up for our audience, so that we can hold it before us and admonish it with full vigour.

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When Shilpa met Jade: Celebrity Big Brother and Racist Enjoyment – schematic notes

Posted By ash sharma On 7 May 2007 @ 10:20 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 |
No Comments

A guide to the Schema:

This is a diagrammatic mapping of the racial logic of Celebrity Big Brother (CBB). Reworking Lacan’s schema from Seminar XX Encore it outlines the relationship of the three registers that structure human subjectivity:

Imaginary (I) - the illusion of wholeness, perfection.
Symbolic (S) - the order of ‘reality’ produced through language, which is always lacking.
Real (R) - the unsymbolisable limit of language.

The three ‘object’s are:

a - The objet a is the ‘whole in the real’ that sets symbolization in motion. The point at which the symbolic fails to represent the real but also produces the desire for the real.
Φ - is the failure of the imaginary to capture the real. In Lacan this is usually the Phallus- the symbol of castration and lack.
S (A) - designates the lack in the symbolic order.
The ‘abstract objects’ mark different ways of compensating for the deficiencies in the three registers. They work to ward off and possibly succumb to the Real of enjoyment (J) that organises the subject.

In the racial drama of CBB, Shilpa Shetty S(A) marks the ‘Imaginary Orientalist princess’ that causes and fills the lack in the Symbolic order. If racism is driven by the impossible whiteness of the Real and we understand whiteness as the ideal master signifier of race, ‘desiring whiteness’ is the attempt to be a subject without lack - a universal subject who can overcome castration, sexual difference and lack.\(^1\) In CBB, whiteness is the desire that structures the relationship between the impossible Real and the Imaginary.

The key objet a of desire, which at once sustains and keeps in motion the racist enjoyment of CBB was the televisual gaze itself. The gaze is the object that creates the desire to mark and look at racial Otherness as the Imaginary object, which in turn supports ‘desiring whiteness’ as the racist logic of the subject’s enjoyment of the unattainable Real.

The ‘anti-racist’ racist enjoyment of the programme was produced by the attempt to keep Shilpa Shetty as the beautiful imaginary object - the unattainable Thing - when it was threatened by the violence of Jade and her white working class figures, who undermined the universality of the master signifier of whiteness by marking whiteness itself as a class and racial particularity. The desiring TV gaze ideologically sutured together the fantasy of whiteness and ‘Oriental Otherness’ when it was threatened.

Notes


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Another ‘race row’ in multiracist Britain?

Posted By dhira On 7 May 2007 @ 10:16 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

"Racism does exist. Just because when you walk down the street, you don't get spat on in the street, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist." - DJ Kayper, BBC Asian Network

Despite New Labour’s efforts at papering over the cracks, racism towards Asians in Britain was brought to the fore by the ‘Shilpa Shetty affair’. Shetty, the prominent 31-year-old Bollywood star was a surprise contestant in Celebrity Big Brother. By the height of the ‘affair’, several of the show’s contestants had called Shetty ‘dog’, ‘paki’, and ‘Shilpa poppadom’. Jade Goody, a serial reality television ‘celebrity’ and the most truculent of the ‘housemates’, rounded off her vitriol with a call for Shetty to ‘go back to the slums’. These incidents were met by extensive global media coverage. Even small local Indian television networks picked up on the scoop due to Shetty’s fame in the subcontinent. Scattered protests in India ensued and branded Britain a racist country.

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown implied tried to defuse the situation, affirming Britain’s inclusive multiculturalism (in spite of the dominant discourse declaring the death of multiculturalism).

The real ‘victors’ of the incident have been Shetty’s newly invigorated acting career and huge financial rewards (hardly a pyrrhic victory!), Endemol’s share price, and Big Brother’s rocketing viewership. Unsurprisingly, Shilpa’s ‘winning’ of the Big Brother contest has not translated into real gains for anti-racism. Hasn’t the opposite has been true? Jade Goody emphatically did not learn her proverbial lesson. Rather, for her ‘apology’, she approached the popular Asian women’s magazine, Asiana, and asked to pose in a sari as their cover girl with a "desert backdrop of camels and palm trees”

Goody not only rehashes imperial exoticizations of Asian, but does so thinking that her Orientalist PR attempt will endear her to Asians. Notwithstanding the offensiveness of her supposed gesture of reconciliation, Goody’s behaviour subsequent to her eviction from the Big Brother house has exemplified the cultural ignorance and outright racism found within some segments of Britain. Of course, the British National Party (BNP) has known this all along and has been converting this ignorance and hatred into political capital.

So has this been just another ‘race row’ in multiracist Britain? Perhaps not. Shetty’s notoriety awakened some of the more complacent of British South Asians to the changed, but real racisms of Britain. DJ Kayper’s comment at the beginning of this article exemplifies this discourse. Moreover, there are few, if any, opportunities for Asians to gain prominent national coverage of the kind of racism they have continuously experienced. Big Brother inadvertently gave voices to Asians who are normally invisible in public political discourse. CNN, Sky News, and the BBC all featured reports with comments by Asian passer-bys, who remarked that the racism and exclusion experience in their everyday lives is finally being aired on television. Notably, Keith Vaz, an Asian Labour MP for Leicester East, was given significant television coverage on his opinions of the row and racism in Britain. Usually, ethnic minority politicians are relegated to the sidelines, (though are often reeled in for their expertise on all matters concerning race). However, what is disconcerting is that a failing reality television show was the vehicle that brought about a recognition of everyday anti-Asian racism, a sentiment echoed by Bobby Nihal, a BBC Asian Network DJ, when he states:

"Where else is it [racism against Asians] being addressed? It is more of a sad indictment of our [national] discussions about race that it has to be Big Brother that opens it up to us."
We can safely say that Big Brother raised the visibility of racism towards British Asians during the media spectacle surrounding the issue (an argument made by various staff on the BBC Asian Network). However, this 'outing' of racist Britain has not resulted in any kind of lasting triumph for anti-racism. Not that it is supposed to of course. But Jade Goody’s ridiculous PR exercises and the vocal public response on websites such as YouTube and MySpace, which claim that the row was an example of political correctness gone too far, disturbingly leave a lack of consensus on what the incident has actually changed (if anything?). On MySpace for example, there are numerous sites set up as 'campaigns' to prove Goody did not make racist comments and was 'forced' to apologise. Awareness of racism is, of course, important, yet Big Brother is hardly the best vehicle for such transformations. So Shilpa appears to slide into celluloid history as (an)other victim of entrenched British racism (while uniquely becoming immensely more wealthier along the way). One is left with little doubt as to whether ordinary British Asians are any better off.

Notes

1. ↑ The Hype Show, Broadcast on BBC Asian Network 17th January 2007. DJ Kayper commenting on the racist comments made by Big Brother participants towards Shilpa Shetty

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Damn Correctness, Let’s Talk Politics Please!

Posted By Angshukanta Chakraborty On 7 May 2007 @ 10:15 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

Interrogating the Britain that made and unmade Jade Goody.

When I looked up Wikipedia to ‘research’ Jade Goody [oxymoronic as it might sound] I was partly stunned by her stated ‘occupation’ on the webpage: Reality TV Contestant! Having come to UK only a few months back I was of course unaware of the fan following Goody enjoys, neither was I know that in UK, as also in USA perhaps, you could actually make your living as a TV contestant. Precisely the reason I was alarmed to the circumstances that might have contributed to the rise and fall of this once ordinary British woman.

Two things had seriously intrigued me. First among them being, is Jade really indicative of a wider Britain, a Britain that is constantly naging its inhabitants with heavyweight words like multiculturalism, cohesion, integration and the rest? If so, then how come the Jades of Britain are not embracing such ideas? Surely, then Jade, who is famous for her amazingly ill-informed questions and declarations, is not a part of that Britain that claims to be politically correct? Surely, it’s the population of Britain comprising the Jades and the likes that the BNP finds a fertile ground for breeding more xenophobia? And, surely again, it is this section of British population that is severely dissatisfied with the parties emphasising political correctness, viz. Labour, Conservatives and the Liberal-Democrats. If we dig a bit deeper then, can we really hold Jade responsible for what she had said in the CBB house, given her ‘untutored’ background?

Secondly, what I found disturbing was the declaration of Jade as a ‘national disgrace’ by almost the whole of the British media. As a reality TV contestant Jade was subjected to a sudden unprecedented hype, money and glamour which was not only an artificial media concoction, but also as flimsy and short-lived as an air-bubble. Jade has been constantly listed amongst Britain’s top ten worst ‘celebrities.’ Yet it’s the same voyeuristic media that once had a reciprocal parasitical relationship with Jade that became her nemesis. Shall we ask of a media then, what kind of a political correctness it is talking about? Is it only on camera, is it that superficial? When David Blunkett claimed on BBC Radio Asian Network that he thought it was a ‘breakdown of decency,’ something he would expect in a Saturday night pub [of course he meant the cheap ones where the British white and non-white working class throng and have indecent brawls after heavy drinking], I, who was simply absorbing all the hullabaloo at my university lecture hall, was terribly offended. What class-bias! Mr, Blunkett, here’s an open question to you. What do you mean by decency? Is it only a prerogative of the upper class men and women with whom you ‘get along’ and do the business of being ‘politically correct’ before the hungry cameras? What ‘decency’ are you talking about, given the rising unemployment and termination of quality education amongst the British working class? Aren’t we passed an age which considered decency as a matter of self-imposed or domestically bred morality? How can the British working class be content with your flimsy decency when it’s being continuously neglected by the major political parties in Britain? If Goody was racist, which she clearly was, how was she to make a difference between what was racist and what was not? Had she been taught at school the origin of racism in the imperial Britain’s colonial past? Does Jade even know the word colonialism? Does your curriculum at the school level talk about it at length, or does it figure as an inconspicuous little footnote at the end of a long chapter on British glory and empire?
Then, should we hold Channel Four completely responsible for letting this happen, as does Trevor Phillips? Or as Sonia Deol of BBC Radio Asian Network opines, we should actually be grateful to C4 for bringing the national debate out in the open having become a ‘diplomatic nightmare’? Where are we to locate the prejudices both inside and outside of Britain? Shall we take Shilpa as more of an ‘organic celebrity’ who has been around long enough to deal with the harshness of the media glare, its rapid turning the tables on Jade, its making and unmaking of the so-called ‘celebrities’? What ‘clash of cultures’ were the C4 people talking about? Clearly, as we have ourselves seen, Shilpa wasn’t the incomprehensible alien here; she was rather the fluid global citizen who’s at ease in most civilised places in the world, notwithstanding her eating with hands. Perhaps we ought to ask what had made Jade the alien in her own country? Why wasn’t Jade made aware of the changing relations with the world at large? So, perhaps, we need to realise that it’s the infrastructural weakness in Britain after all, that needs to be ashamed, so as not to make an ‘escape goat’ [in Jade’s own lingo] of the erstwhile instant celebrity who was mercilessly gotten rid of when she didn’t suit the purpose.

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Does Shilpa Shetty’s victory indicate the triumph of anti-racism?

Posted By Parm Kaur On 7 May 2007 @ 10:14 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

I was first made aware of Jade Goody’s racist remarks by friends - white friends - keen to get my point of view. Momentarily, all other aspects of my identity - as a poet, writer, artist and educationalist - were suspended. I was merely a South Asian woman who became a spokesperson on all things to do with race. It was not the first time this had happened of course. But the ferocity and persistence that friends, acquaintances and even strangers interrogated my views on the events in the Celebrity Big Brother (CBB) household, and made comments such as “she’s not really racist - she's just white trash”, and “this is political correctness gone too far”, was surprising. Was it that liberal England and the media were shocked at the racism that was expressed on CBB? Or merely that they were shocked that they it had been expressed so publicly?

Even if we put to one side the increasing manipulation by television companies of so called ‘Reality TV’ shows, which have played an integral part in the construction of the age of the celebrity that we live in, (or as others say in the ‘the elevation of the mediocre’), the wider geopolitical and economic context was one of the main reasons why the CBB ‘race row’ appeared to become such a huge global issue. If Gordon Brown had not been in India during the show and witnessed first hand the Indian reaction to the mistreatment of one of their Bollywood actress, would this have been taken up by the media in this way at all?

Shilpa did ‘win’ the contest, with the mainstream British media condemning Goody’s racist remarks as merely the hostile expression of an underclass, and thus no reflection on British society as a whole. A media that any of us who have stepped through its doors remains a bastion of the white middle-classes. It’s much easier for established journalists and commentators to pour disdain on the racism of ‘white trash’ from a distance, rather than actually acknowledge the racism that runs throughout British society, including the whiteness of their own institutions. Although institutional racism has been legally recognised since the Stephen Lawrence case, no systematic whole hearted attempt has been made to address the racism that pervades other major British institutions, other than the Metropolitan police force and the tokenistic ill-thought out schemes scattered throughout the cultural and arts sector.

A general ‘anti-racist’ indignation being aired still did not result in Channel 4 admitting that Jade’s remarks and actions had been racist (the commercial sponsors thought otherwise, withdrawing all future involvement). The public debate in Britain was significantly devoid of any serious consideration of the political, social and cultural roots of racism in this country. The ensuing debate failed to inform those of us who are British Asians anything much that was new - very few non-white British citizens I’ve known have escaped without name calling, and blatant discrimination be it at work, in their experience of public services or indeed in their social interactions. So the indignation expressed in the media, had perhaps less to do with the rise of anti-racism than plain old economic. India - as a global economic player - must not to be upset.

The question that has to be raised now surely is what, if any will be the tangible consequences of this media spectacle? Will public policy address the erased histories on Britain’s former colonies and its history of colonisation that are taught in our schools? Will more resources be made available for better housing, and services for the most poorest in British society or has the label ‘white trash’ now become just a dumping ground for all the ills of society that the
middle-classes wish to ignore? Will there be a heroic quest to root out all traces of racism in all British institutions, from football teams to the Cabinet Office?

Or was this, as is more likely, merely a small beginning of the recognition that India and indeed many ‘non-white’ cultures who are present here and abroad, have an economic clout that has to be acknowledged, recognised and respected as ‘Britain’ continues to negotiate its economic and cultural position in a post-colonial world?

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Bollywood Brother - the days in which Britain was out-Britished?

Posted By Safi Rowland On 7 May 2007 @ 10:13 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

Reality TV is now a well-established point of interest for cultural and social theorists, consternation for ‘traditionalists’ over the loss of ‘higher forms’ of entertainment, and gossip for the audiences. Its role for projecting the real issues of the day is readily debatable, but none more so when the volunteers are picked from the small sphere of celebrity lifestyles with their own agendas to serve the agenda of production companies such as Endemol. In the melee of media feeding media after Celebrity Big Brother, racism has once again been a hot talking point. Racism of the masses rather than racism of the politicians and the fundamentalists. I refused to watch Celebrity Big Brother initially being of the opinion that seeing celebrities on a 24:7 basis, who have signed up for environmental manipulation in a manner not unlike the guinea pigs in the Egg adverts, was not really entertainment. To me, such overt puppetry and acting reveals little of a political unconsciousness but the relative skills of each low-lister to work their way towards a more sturdy wage packet. The idea that norms are more recognisable when a given community is thrown into a state of anomy is only viable when the community has established a momentum of its own, gone through cycles of growth and decline. Something that not even a run of Big Brother can achieve in its pseudolongitudinal format. But nevertheless, I ended up following an unprecedented amount of others who tuned in to the show to see what the media hype was all about.

I recently completed a dissertation on how celebrities might use their ethnicity to market themselves within a growing local/global context. The idea was that each celebrity is now pitched as a product to two markets, the national and the global, and that they must retain popularity as a local success story whilst appealing to the ever growing global masses. The balance is a fine one and adheres to different criteria according to the genre of media; music being potentially the most complex of all with the idea of authenticity and identity bound firmly in the local. The study also considered the Hollywood system, a system in which stars are established more as a point of aspiration over accessibility. Their giddy heights of uniqueness are then reconfirmed by the plethora of status-building programmes such as MTV: Cribs and THS.

Shilpa Shetty would seem, at first glance, to come from that same level of cultural esteem in Bollywood. By name and structure, the system similarly establishes stars who are perceived almost as cultural royalty and as significantly an elite, inaccessible minority. I would therefore have expected her to be created on similar facets as the age old Hollywood system as defined classically by Richard Dyer. It was therefore fascinating that she was placed into the Big Brother house as a promotional platform in the UK, as the programme works on an entirely antithetical dynamic, that of making personas accessible. It is the house in which celebrities are criticised for being ‘fake’ or ‘acting in role’ in front of the very cameras which established them as familiar faces to us in the first place. It was therefore a situation which ran counter to Shilpa Shetty’s star persona and was always going to be problematic.

The little that I did see of her confirmed her as Shilpa Shetty the Bollywood actress. Relatively immaculate at all times, handling herself with poise, her persona was built more on her acting successes and financial acumen rather than her innate Indian-ness. She was therefore revolving her image around the more traditional markers of glamour, traditional femininity and decorum. However, in the ensuing episodes and coverage, she was brought to bear the weight
of race and current racial issues, to the point where she placed herself as representative of Bollywood and India.

Certainly Shetty is one of the more positive representations of Asian ethnicity that Britain has been privy to for a while. Boundaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are still classically being fought in the political arena over what constitutes ‘Britishness’ and how to inculcate the youth of this nation with its values to ward against the ‘outsiders inside’ threat of terrorism. Shetty with her lilting accent and Indian fashion was a safe depiction of the more colonial India, the one that could exist side by side, with similar attributions but on a more exotic and beautiful level.

Of serious interest to me then was her interview with Richard and Judy once Endemol had rushed through the end of the series. In their introduction which would directly undermine all claims that hers was a ‘victory for anti-racism’, Shetty was defined as perhaps embodying the traditional English virtues more than the other English members of the household: the household which included key British faces of pop, gay and football culture. But this discourse was mistaken. To bring her into the nationalist discourse was not what it was about, nor would it have been the intention of her publicist. “More British than the British” was nothing short of a shameful extension of the ‘noble savage’ discourse of an imperialist nation acknowledging the success of one of ‘our’ colonies. Not an acknowledgment of her own Indian heritage, nor the industry in which she operates but an attempt to sideline the ‘us’ with the more complimentary version of ‘reality’. As her own website confirms, she was acting within her own ethnic brand not as an advocate of traditional British values: “India is full of very tolerant and cultured people and everyone is welcome.”

Incongruities of the household to create controversy is the formula upon which the BB programme revolves. This time its potential battlegrounds could have been gender or class or ethnicity. As it was, the ensuing furore covered all bases but the Asian problematic was the most compelling in a society which has now banned religious clothing in schools, if it can be deemed a security threat, and where we are still trying to place blame for the two most Baudrillardian spectacular terrorist attacks of recent times.

The Endemol reality was unrecognisable to those in the household, who when confronted with the edited lifestyle which we were shown, reacted with confusion and horror, including Shilpa Shetty herself. As a reality show, this series had to bow to the real reactions of the general public by entirely reformulating the eviction process. But as the promotional platform for the celebrities, it paid its way confirming all brands: “Shilpa will now be doing a balancing act between Bollywood and the West. ‘Big Brother’ hasn’t changed her. Instead, its (sic) taught her, how important it is to be dignified in any situation.”

Shilpa is now the local and the global Bollywood star as was planned. Movie stars still reign over television stars, the cultural divide of low and high still exists and all returns to the same hierarchy as before. Bhagwager, her spokesperson, as well as Bollywood figures have noted the renaissance of her career which Endemol appear to have sponsored knowing that she would potentially have to handle such derisive comments on an international stage. Have we genuinely got to a point where even racism can be a marketing tool for the astute star who craves that status of ‘diva’?

**Notes**

Racist overtones and class undertones in UK Celebrity Big Brother

Posted By Jimmy Kinvera On 7 May 2007 @ 10:10 pm In Issues, 1-Celebrity Big Brother-May07 | No Comments

Big brother is essentially an annual ‘reality’ television programme broadcast on Channel 4; it’s renowned for its diverse concoction of personalities and pious tabloid coverage. However this year’s Big Brother was not extolled for its intercontinental assortment of contestants, but rather for its potentially detrimental ramification on both race and diplomatic relations.

There were over forty thousand complaints and public furore in both England and India. This prompted a statement from both the UK chancellor (Gordon Brown) whilst on his visit to India and the Prime Minister (Tony Blair), as well as other Indian dignitaries. This year’s Celebrity Big Brother contestants included Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, former contestant of third UK series of Big Brother Jade Goody, former singer of the pop group S Club 7 Jo O’Meara, glamour model and former Miss Great Britain: Danielle Lloyd, boyfriend of Jade Goody: Jack Tweed, mother of Jade Goody: Jacky Budden, American actor: Dirk Benedict, and lastly former singer in The Jackson 5: Jermaine Jackson.

I am interested in the polemical debates and complaints which arose from the ghastly behaviour towards Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty by Jade Goody, Jo O’Meara and Danielle Lloyd. The infamous trio subjected Shilpa to bullying and verbal abuse, which were fuelled by her ethnicity, class and gender. The response to the recent events in the Celebrity Big Brother house once again alludes to the intricacy of race, class and gender. It divulges the variable nature of this logic of identity in a post-modern world, yet concurrently reiterating derisive sediments of historical discourses about the ‘Other’. This conduct surely functions within the democratic virtues of autonomous expression and choice, which are also often contradictory. Big Brother’s deportment as a prism for social reality develops a dual symbiosis; in which the social reality endorses the stereotypes in social representation and social representation endorses the social reality hence becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The rapport between Jade’s gang and Shilpa Shetty crudely represented an anxious encounter between white working class and Indian middle class femininity. Class and racial thinking manifested in the entire process of interaction, namely language, dressing and etiquette. Shilpa’s middle class decorum incensed the above contestants who somewhat felt inferior to her eloquent demeanour, which refused to adhere to their expectations of Indian femininity, showing a profound sense of confidence and pride in her ethnic identity. Shilpa’s race and embodiment of middle class superiority exasperated the trio who remarked that she wants to be white. This assumption also illustrates their ignorance of India’s callous class and caste system. Shilpa’s characterisation was in fact evocative of the belligerent class relations, which had historically dominated England hence prompting further contempt towards her chiefly because she is not white. This amalgamation of race, class, intelligence and aesthetic beauty augmented the communal array of cruelty towards Shilpa; among the names calling and comments were “dog”, “dick”, “wanker”, “fucking cunt” she should “fuck off home”; reminiscent of the racist chants against non-whites, “You need elocution lessons”, “Indians were thin because they undercooked chicken”, “They eat with their hands in India, don’t they. Or is that China?” “I’ve seen how she goes in and out of people’s arseholes” as well as saying “She makes me feel sick. She makes my skin crawl”. Additionally Jack Tweed’s suggested that Shilpa should remove objects from the toilet with her teeth.
The focal source of the decry obviously became her nationality and auxiliaries such as culture, accent and other elements of the white cultural imagination. Jade incessantly referred to Shilpa as ‘Shilpa Poppadom’. The above remark is almost equivalent to calling an Italian individual Bolognese. When viewed in this context, this mode of address becomes visibly preposterous and demeaning. Not to mention Jackley Budden’s predilection to referring to Shilpa as the “The Indian” rather than her name. The vilification of South Asian cuisines has a long legacy in the Occidental world, one recurring element being the presumption that every South Asian cuisine is curry infested. This hypocrisy of course has an ambivalent blend of disavowal and fascination since Indian cuisines have successfully become a popular aspect of non-Asian British culture. This impertinent attitude is often overlooked and discounted as a mere insult based on class and cultural differences. Channel 4 similarly advocated this position when they issued a statement repudiating the presence of any ‘overt’ racist conduct; however this insinuates that covert racism is acceptable and should thus be tolerated. It also raises another question as to what constitutes racism and when does ignorance end and racism begin? Dirk Benedict’s comments are subtly racist despite his amicable rapport with Shilpa: “There are millions of Indians. Millions. And they’re breeding fast. They are having four or five kids when the Brits are having one. The average British woman has 1.3 children and the Indians are having 3.5. The Brits, the natural-born, are already in a minority. There will be a Nehru as Prime Minister soon.” It’s therefore certainly not surprising that Hertfordshire Police saw no merit in pursuing the case on grounds that there has not been any ‘overt’ racism. This seemed at odds with the definition of a racist incident in the 1999 Macpherson report, which defined a race hate crime as any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. Both the victim, the public, (anti bullying organisation call Against Bullying and Big Brother sponsors (Carphone warehouse) held the same views, despite Shilpa’s belated self-effacing effigy i.e. her change in statement from her conversation with Rocos, who said, “I don’t think there’s anything racist in it”, but Shilpa replied, “It is, I’m telling you” to her diary room public announcement that “People make mistakes and we’re all human beings, we’re all fallible...Jade is not racist”. We assume this hasty transition was a result of some presage, remunerations and calculative far-sightedness of a prosperous career in England; case in point, meeting the Queen of England and procuring a modelling contract with Marks & Spencer.

Lastly, Shilpa’s predicament once again illustrates that the white British public will tolerate ‘covert’ racism on reality television by simply distorting the delineation of racism itself. As exemplified by Shilpa they reward the victim with veneration and a possible monetary inducement to assuage their own guilt and of course perpetuate their global neo-liberal façade, wretchedly they are betrayed by the harsh reality.

Notes

1. [1] Celebrity Big Brother 2007 (UK)
2. ↑ A Poppadom is a thin wafer, which is sometimes described as a flatbread
3. [2] Racism, ratings and reality TV: now Big Brother creates a diplomatic incident”

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