Role of Misinformation and Hate Speech on Social Media in Communal Violence: The Indian Context

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Abstract

Communal violence, or violent conflict between different religious groups, is a major threat to social harmony and human rights in India. This paper investigates how social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, facilitate the spread of false or misleading information and hateful or inciting messages that exacerbate communal violence in India. We used the concept of a conflict triangle to analyse the behaviour, attitudes, and context of different cases of communal violence that occurred in India from 2016 to 2022. We found that social media platforms play a dual role in communal violence: they trigger or escalate violence by manipulating people's emotions, perceptions, and actions; and they reflect the underlying factors that influence communal violence, such as historical legacies, ideological differences, and political interests. We conclude that enhancing media literacy among the public and promoting interfaith dialogue among the religious leaders are essential steps to prevent or reduce communal violence in India. We also discuss the limitations of our study and suggest directions for future research.

Keywords: *communal violence, India, misinformation, religion, social media*

1. Introduction

Communal violence in South Asia is rooted in historical enmity, differences in faith, malpractice of politics and politicization of religion (Tambiah, 1990). Communal violence on the Indian sub-continent is frequently regarded as a consequence of British colonization, and is also acknowledged as a distinctly contemporary occurrence. This assertion possesses partial validity; nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge an additional aspect. During the precolonial era, the emergence of Hindu and Muslim identities occurred, and the progression of both religious communities was significantly influenced by acts of violence. As an illustration, while considering a dataset including a duration of nine centuries (1000-1850 CE), an approximation of the quantity of intercommunal violence between Hindu and Muslim polities at the district level may be observed. It is evident that the occurrence of postcolonial Hindu-Muslim rioting is intricately linked to religious violence. However, this correlation can be traced back just to the Mughal-Maratha struggle, which commenced around the latter half of the 17th century (Verghese & Foa, 2018).

Since the time of the British colonial period, the intercommunal violence in the sub-continent, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, has become more of a result of structural effects. The range of ethnic violence was not as visible as in the colonial period. According to some researchers the ethnic groupings were poorly defined before the colonial period and conflict was quite uncommon due to permeable boundaries between different neighbourhoods which helped to encourage peace and tolerance. Afterwards, colonial administrators "constructed" contemporary ethnic groups through the methods used to create states, such as censuses, maps, and the construction of museums. Finally, systems of ethnic partiality were implemented by colonial powers. This is the 'divide-and-rule' policy that eventually led to interpersonal conflict (Verghese & Foa, 2018). In fact, the British colonial authority first used the term 'communalism' to describe how it struggled to control Hindu-Muslim riots and other forms of violence between different ethnic, religious, and racial groups in its colonies. After independence, India has become the biggest democracy of the world (Teitelman, 2019). The electoral system, development of a successful mechanism for dispute resolution, cultural diversity and

so forth have made India a perfect candidate for a successful democratic country. However, the communal tension, lack of tolerance and rising extremist ideologies keep the society of India divided enough to be a fertile land for communal violence.

Instances of communal violence in India in the 21st century can be traced from the Gujarat riots, which are considered one of the worst riots since independence. The riots started on February 27th, 2002, when 59 Hindu pilgrims were slain while returning from Ajodhya by train after it was set on fire. Hindus accused Muslims of igniting the pilgrim train. Hindus started to take retribution after Hindu pilgrims were killed in a train that passed through Muslim areas and through Muslim homes, shops, and commercial buildings. Thousands more people lost their lives during the riot (Datta, 2014). In parliament, the Indian home minister stated that between 2004 and 2017, there were 10,399 incidences of communal violence in India, resulting in 1,605 fatalities and 30,723 injuries. According to a different survey, from 2014 to 2017, communal violence in India increased by 28% (Monitoring Desk, 2018). At this same period of time, smart phones and different social media platforms become more available in the region. Misinformation circulated through social media and played a big role behind this spike of violence.

A report on communal violence in 2018, published by Buniyaad, a Gujarat-based human rights organization, shows that 46% of episodes of communal violence in rural Gujarat in 2018 were sparked by the dissemination of hate messages through social media (TNN, 2018). In the past, communal unrest was confined to cities. But the report claims that in the past couple of years, it has been clear that communal animosity and violence are spreading to rural communities, and this trend has persisted in 2018. According to the study, social media platforms are used to foment religious hatred. In other words, social media is playing a pivotal role in communal violence in India. According to Banaji & Bhat (2019), there have been more than a hundred lynchings since 2015. Owing to claims of cow slaughter, cow trafficking, and cattle theft, many of these instances target members of marginalized communities (Dalits, Muslims, Christians, and Adivasis). Despite the fact that the victims are targeted for various reasons, these episodes have one thing in common: vigilante groups who use social media to propagate false information about the victims and to mobilize, defend, and in some cases, to record and disseminate images of their actions. These findings uphold the importance of social media in the context of communal violence.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse the role of misinformation and hate speech on social media in communal violence in the context of India. The paper has tried to address three specific objectives. To address the first objective, we discuss the root causes of communal violence in India and the misuse of social media in this context. In the second objective, we analyse the types of misinformation that motivate people to engage in communal violence. For the third objective, we present three case studies to show how social media is playing a role behind mobilizing people for communal violence. This study was carried out using a qualitative methodology, and data were gathered from secondary sources such as books, journals, pertinent reports and websites.

2. Social Media and Communal Conflict in India

Almost every adult in India now owns a personal electronic device. Even before becoming an adult, many children own mobile phones, laptops and other devices. On those devices, they use the internet and, with that, various types of social media apps also. Overall, two out of three Indians who have a mobile phone use some kind of social medium. Indian users downloaded over 19 billion apps in 2019, representing a 195% lead in the number of apps downloaded by users in any other nation (The Global Statistics, 2022). More than users in China and the US, the average Indian social media user spends 17 hours per week on the sites. The number of social network users in India is predicted to reach 448 million in 2021, up significantly from the expected 351 million in 2019. The most used social networking platform in the nation is Facebook. In 2019, there were around 270 million Facebook users in India, making it the nation with the highest global Facebook user base (Rao, 2021) (see Table 1 below).

Social Networking Site	Monthly Visits	Mobile Traffic Share	Desktop Traffic Share
Facebook	1.6 billion	99.3%	0.8%
YouTube	1.2 billion	60.0%	40.0%
Qoura	215.8 billion	98.9%	1.1%
Instagram	191.1 million	99.0%	1.0%
Twitter	125.2 million	97.8%	2.2%
Pinterest	49.8 million	98.4%	1.6%
LinkedIn	29.9 million	91.0%	9.0%

Table 1: Social Media Profiling- Indian Context; source: Rao, 2021.

From the above chart, we can understand that mostly Facebook or Meta posts are helping to spread all forms of information, while YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter also play vital roles in the spread of news. Though people in India use Quora, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, these are quite different. Quora aids in knowledge acquisition, Pinterest keeps people informed about the world, and LinkedIn is primarily used to find a suitable job. As a result, it is claimed, these media outlets are less likely to spread false information about any given issue. The introduction of WhatsApp to the Indian digital market increased app adoption, which has recently doubled in rural areas as well. WhatsApp (534.30 million active users), Instagram (503.37 million users), Facebook (491.53 million users), Telegram (374.40 million users), and Facebook Messenger (324.39 million users) are the top five social media platforms in India for messaging (The Global Statistics, 2022).

Social media is being utilized as a tool to control society and the individual. On a community level, it is steadily attempting to achieve psychological dominance over the individual. Many of the people who use these platforms of social media do not have media literacy. So, hoping for fact-checking protocols in them is a luxury. The people of India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have a tendency to be emotional, so, whenever they see anything negative about their sensitive issues like religion, people can react vigorously. For example, when people of any religion see that there is a post roaming in the Facebook newsfeed portraying their holy person in a negative way, they may find it very offensive. At that moment, they do not need to establish the truth behind it. They do not want to see that this can be a trap and that someone may be benefiting from such activities, which can cause chaos, riots, and conflicts between the two communities. Though a newspaper is also a kind of social medium, there are some differences in using social media like Meta or Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Anyone can post or share any content in these platforms. The problem is that youngsters mainly use such social platforms as information sources and can get triggered easily. They rarely read newspapers for information and are highly dependent on social media. With such social media platforms, there are inadequate central monitoring systems. By contrast, newspapers maintain some rules and there are specific authorities to monitor all the news they publish. It is also very easy to take action against any newspaper agencies if they spread false or misinformation. In case of social media in most of the cases people who spread gossip, misinformation, false or fabricated news to create communal grievance among people stay far away from giving any explanations. One major problematic side of these platforms is that such false or fabricated news can go viral in the blink of an eye. When sensitive issues like religion, race and identity go viral it becomes really difficult to punish or track all the people who were involved in dissemination. The number might be huge and it becomes quite difficult to find out each and every one. As a result, they avoid punishment, which emboldens them and others to do such things again and again.

India, the most populated nation in the world, has an extremely high proportion of young people who are well-connected with social media. Social media were initially used to connect with people online, form connections, conduct commerce, and communicate with the public, but more lately, they have been used to organize youth for uprisings and riots. In 2011–2012 and 2013, India saw a variety of agitations and road protests in places like New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore (Datta, 2014). Social media was fully utilized during the anti-corruption movement and the mass mobilization against the Delhi gang rape to organize people, bring them together, and raise awareness of injustice and the broken system that leads to high-level corruption and poor law-and-order conditions in urban areas. However, in certain other instances, as during the ethnic conflicts in Assam in 2012 and 2013, during

the communal riots in Muzaffarnagar, they also served as a means of spreading rumours, distributing false information, and causing panic and mayhem among the general populace. Non-state actors who are domestic and international anti-elements have abused social media to undermine law and order by disseminating rumours and posting misleading information and photographs online (Datta, 2014).

2.1. Ruralization/Decentralization of the Conflict

According to data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Gujarat had 10.06 million internet subscribers in rural areas as of December, 2018. This availability of the internet as well as social media affects the rural people in different ways. The sociologist Gaurang Jani remarked that social media has given the rural population a forum to express their ideas (TNN, 2019). However, rural residents typically have extremely traditional mindsets, which makes it very easy for fabricated information or messages about interfaith weddings to become viral and cause strife. For instance, a brawl between two communities broke out at Fatehpura in Vadodara following a claimed incident of stone-pelting during a Ram Navami parade. Locals claim that unknown criminals threw stones at the parade, brushing the Lord Ram monument atop an open vehicle. Then, provocative WhatsApp messages spread, igniting the rioting. The triggering point of communal conflicts in this area include different religious festivals, processions, rallies, inter-religious romantic affairs, offensive/controversial music, eve-teasing (i.e. street-level sexual harassment) and hate speech.

3. Framework of the Study

As mentioned above, this research has tried to address three objectives. In the context of the first objective (root causes of the conflict), we follow the ABC triangle developed by Galtung (1969). Three elements of a conflict situation are highlighted by the triangle: B, which stands for behaviour (people's actions, words, insults, etc.); A, which stands for attitude (which includes feelings, prejudices, and beliefs); and C, which stands for contradiction or context. Arguments based on economic, geographical, or inequality issues can define the final one. The triangle is divided into two sections, one upper (with side B on top) and one below (with sides A and C hidden), similar to an iceberg.
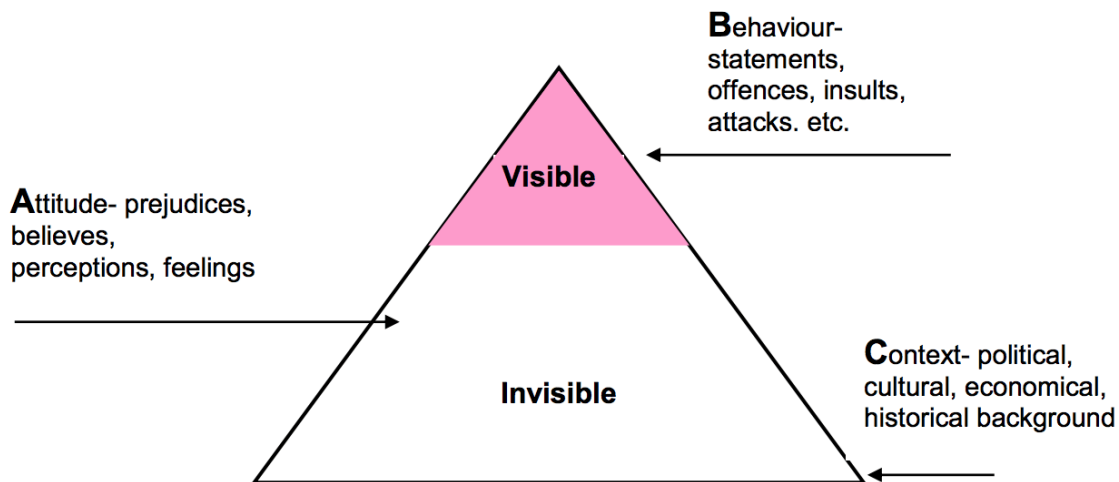

Figure 1: ABC Triangle; source: adapted from Galtung, 1969

In the context of identifying types of the misinformation, this study adopts the framework developed by Wardle (2017). Wardle identifies seven types of mis- and disinformation, which are satire/parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false connection, false context and manipulated content (see Figure 2).
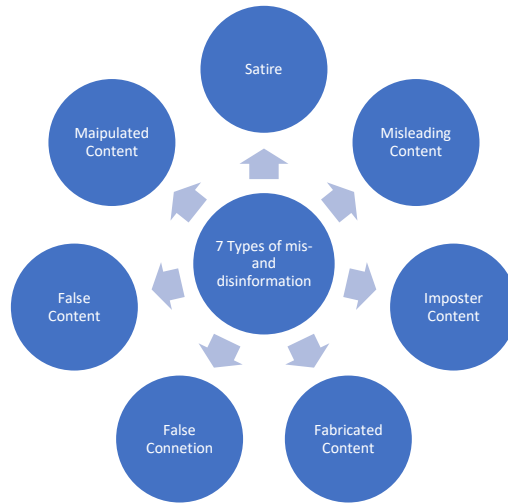
Figure 2: Typology of Mis/Disinformation; source: adapted from Wardle, 2017

Wardle also identifies the factors behind producing different types of mis/dis-information by developing a matrix. For example, people try to assert political influence through misleading information, false context, manipulated content or fabricated content. On the other hand, people distributing propaganda through misleading content, false context, imposter content, manipulated content and fabricate content.

	Satire	False Connection	Misleading Context	False Context	Imposter Content	Manipulated Content	Fabricated Content
Poor Journalism		Yes	Yes	Yes			
To Parody	Yes				Yes		Yes
To Provoke					Yes	Yes	Yes
Passion				Yes			
Partisanship			Yes	Yes			
Profit		Yes			Yes		Yes
Political Influence			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Propaganda			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Misinformation Matrix; source: adapted from Wardle, 2017.

To expand the scope this study also consider the typology of misinformation developed by Wu *et al.*, (2019) which are: urban legend, fake news, unverified information, rumour, hate speech, cyberbullying, spam and trolling. In particular, hate speech is important for our study and it refers to offensive, xenophobic and threatening content on social media that targets particular groups of people.

For the third objective of our study, we develop a framework based on the work of De Juan & Hasenclever (2015). In the process of mobilization, first of all there must be a triggering event which may activate the underlying communal hate. Often time, the incident becomes viral through the social media. So, social media also plays a role to activate a dormant conflict. In the second stage, there should be some elements that motivate people to engage in violence. In our study, it is the misinformation in social media. In the later stage, there should some organizing actors who have credibility in the society to lead the mobilization. In addition, there should be some institutional resources, such as a favourable political situation. Sometimes, religion itself becomes a great institutional resource, if the majority are from the same religion. In the final stage, a violent demonstration may take place if all the conditions have been fulfilled (see Figure 3).
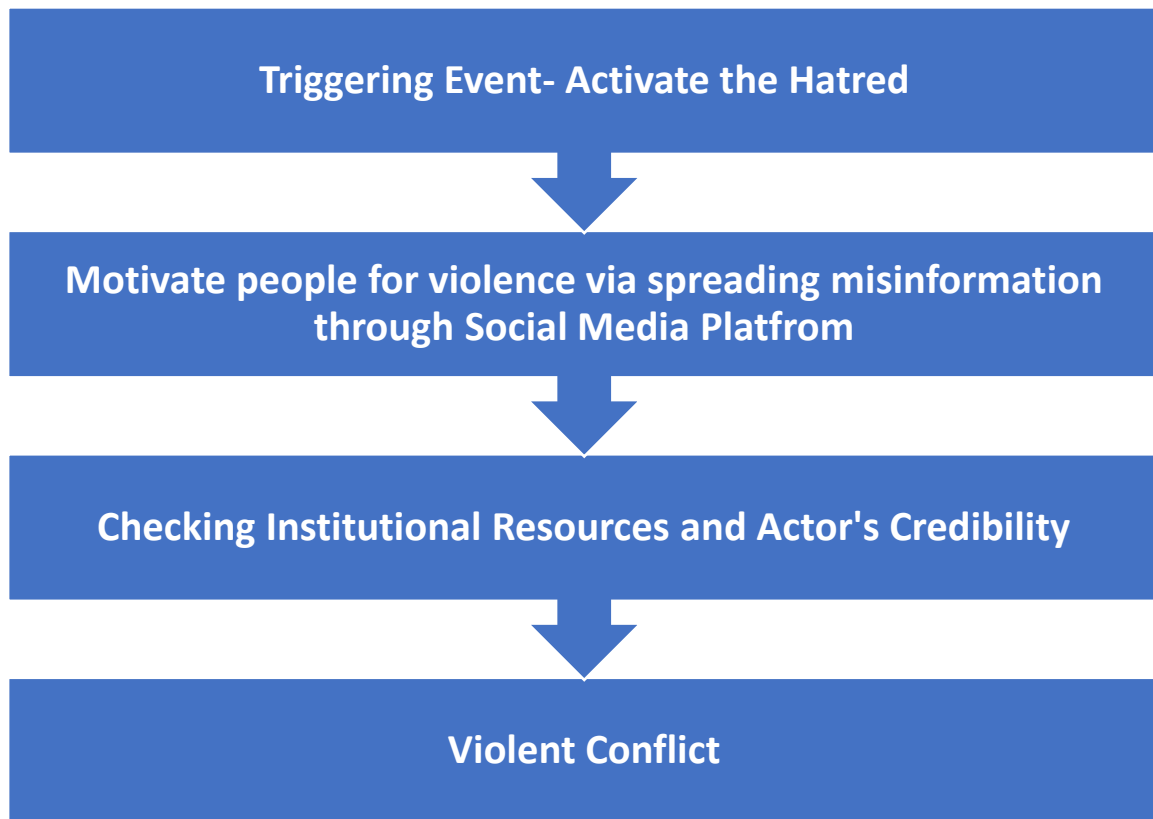
Figure 3: Process of mobilization for communal violence (developed by the authors)

4. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to examine the role of social media platforms in misinformation, hate speech, and communal violence in India. We used secondary data as our main source of information, as primary data collection was not feasible due to ethical and practical constraints. We collected secondary data from various online sources, such as newspapers, blogs, reports, and websites, that reported or analysed the trend of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms in India, as well as three recent cases of communal violence that were triggered or mobilized by social media platforms. We searched for these sources using keywords such as "social media," "misinformation," "hate speech," "communal violence," "India" and the names of specific incidents or locations. We also used snowball sampling to find additional sources by following the references or links provided by the initial sources.

We used two methods to analyse the secondary data: literature review and case study analysis. For the literature review, we reviewed and synthesized the existing literature on the topic of misinformation, hate speech and communal violence in India. We identified and discussed the main concepts, theories and frameworks that are relevant to our research question. We also highlighted the gaps and limitations in the current literature and explained how our paper contributes to filling them.

For the case study analysis, we selected three cases of communal violence that occurred in India from 2016 to 2022 and that were influenced by misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms. These cases were:

- The Tripura anti-Muslim riot in 2016;

- The violence related to love jihad in Rajasthan in 2017 and

- The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) remarks row.

We used a multiple-case study design to compare and contrast these cases in terms of their context, causes, consequences and responses. We used the concept of a conflict triangle (Galtung, 1969) as our analytical framework to examine the behaviour, attitudes and context of each case. We used a thematic analysis method to identify and code the themes related to these aspects in each case. We also compared and contrasted the themes across the cases to find similarities and differences.

One of the limitations of our methodology is that we relied on non-academic sources that may not be reliable or accurate. We tried to overcome this limitation by using multiple sources for each case and cross-checking the information for consistency and validity. We also acknowledged the biases and perspectives of the sources and considered them in our interpretation of the data. Another limitation is that we could not access some sources that were blocked or deleted by the authorities or the platforms due to legal or ethical reasons. We tried to overcome this limitation by using alternative sources or proxies that could provide some information about the missing sources.

5. Root Causes of Communal Violence in India

This section of the paper discusses four root causes of communal violence in India from the lens of conflict triangle mentioned above, which are: historical aspect (context of the triangle), ideological aspect (attitude), political aspect (behaviour), and technological aspect (context of spreading misinformation through social media).

5.1. Context: Historical Legacies

The root of communalism can be traced back to the history of Indian tradition, which was then intensified by the manipulative colonial policy of "divide and rule," and a mixture of caste and sect loyalties (Fox, 2006). Divisions and tensions caused by colonialism and decolonization, migration of populations, institutional choices made by the first leaders of the independence era and historical violence amongst groups all contribute to the causes of modern violence (Jaffrey & Slater, 2018). Some behaviour of the colonial masters also deepened the division between Hindu and Muslim communities. For example, they were the first to introduce the concept of census in this area, which led to the formalisation of a Hindu majority and a Muslim minority, first as demographic data and subsequently as political designations. Again, when Persian was being supplanted by English in higher courts and Urdu in lower courts in the late 19th century, there was one of the earliest systematic divisions between Hindu and Muslim elites. Urdu was rejected by significant portions of society in favour of Hindi. Elite Muslims, however, favoured Urdu. Two communities were further divided as a result of this (Sahai, 2020). These behaviours of the British colonizers created a negative attitude between two communities (Verghese, 2018). When the All-India Muslim League was founded in 1906, the demand for Muslim communal representation also served as a prelude to communal tension. The integrity of the Muslim community was a priority for the League. The democratic structure India sought under British rule was considered as inherently incompatible with the Islamic model of social organization. According to the Muslim perspective, political institutions must be ingrained in the "community make-up of society (Sahai, 2020)."

While attempting to reach a constitutional agreement in the 1940s, the dispute between the Congress and the Muslim League grew more intense (Nandy, 2002). The League was concerned with the sharp ideological split between Muslims and Non-Muslims and considered numerical arrangements to be irrelevant, whereas the Congress supported majority rule for political representation. The Muslim minority perceived the individual representation required by the new politics as a threat because it went against the Islamic understanding of the "… relationship between the individual and his [sic] communal group (Sahai, 2020)," the nature of political consensus, and the distribution of power in society. This posed a threat to their unity as Muslims. This manifested in Muslim separatism, which ultimately resulted in the creation of Pakistan while also leaving lasting psychological scars on the Muslims who remained and their non-Muslim neighbours (Sahai, 2020). This led to further violence against minorities which has been sparked in part by ongoing interstate competition. Minorities are frequently accused of acting as fronts for hostile states due to historical legacies. Gujarat's proximity

to Pakistan and a lengthy political narrative of terrorist infiltration over the border can both be used to explain some of the anti-Muslim riots that occurred there in 2002 (Eckert, 2009).

5.2. Attitude: Ideologies

Communal violence in India has also been fueled by radical beliefs. In this setting, Hindutva supremacism, which is connected to right-wing Hindu nationalist organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), has taken the lead. While the RSS claims to be apolitical and to be concerned with the strength and integrity of the Hindu country, in reality, this results in vehement rhetoric directed at Muslims and undocumented immigration (Wilson, 2017). Muslims are seen in Hindutva discourse as Pakistani agents and a danger to the unity of the Hindu nation. Violence is encouraged by this rhetoric in many contexts. The Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, which is thought to have been constructed on the former location of the Ram Temple, was demolished in 1992 under the leadership of the VHP and RSS by hundreds of people. The demolition sparked months of unrest that resulted in almost 2,000 fatalities (Eckert, 2009).

The idea of aggressive Hindu nationalism is based on a collective historical interpretation that places nationalism in the Aryan kingdoms that were founded and sustained on Vedic principles. The Golwalkar-Hedgewar tradition, which Savarkar promoted in the Indian political discourse as "Hindutva," is characterized by the retelling of history to distinguish between Muslim and Hindu monarchs as the invaders and defenders, respectively (Wilson, 2017). Their core argument is that the dynasties that rebelled against Mughal rule were the first nationalists and that Indian nationalism must turn back to ancient empires for its foundations. This brand of nationalism was placed and built on the foundation of a never-ending confrontation with Islam. Hindutva revivalism offers Hindus a sense of pride through the concept of a great old Hindu culture and this shared sense of glory has been an excellent instrument to form a community (Brass, 2005). In addition to blatantly creating the perception of Muslims as the "other," revivalist beliefs also sought to glorify old Hindu culture, which would have produced an in-group. In the post-independence era, this manifested in two ways: a more moderate form of Hindu pride, supported by the Congress's nationalist movement, and a more militant one, promoted by groups like the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha (Jaffrelot, 2008).

5.3. Behaviour: Political Demonstration

The connections between politics and communal violence in South and Southeast Asia have been shown in a large body of literature (Brass, 2005). Attacks on minorities frequently result from political power struggles between factions of the majority. The riots in Gujarat in 2002, which were previously discussed, offer a more recent illustration. Following the anti-Muslim violence, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state administration called for a state election, which it easily won and performed best in the regions with the worst violence. Leading political parties frequently have profitable affiliations with militant groups that carry out atrocities against minorities. Sometimes there is little distinction between a movement's militant and political strands. The Gujarat case is just one illustration of how closely the BJP is linked to right-wing nationalist groups like the VHP and RSS (Wilson, 2017).

The revival of Hindutva in the 1980s was designed by years of methodical, coordinated and creative political initiatives. One of these political tactics was the long-running debate over the Babri mosque in Ayodhya and its destruction. It is the desire of Hindu nationalists to alter Indian culture so that it can stake a claim to being a more advanced but still ancient Hindu civilization (Sahai, 2020). The politics of reproduction and conversion emerged to aid in the mobilization of Hindus as electoral politics began to turn into a numbers game. One of the most troublesome political challenges in the new India was the rise of the Muslim community. The difference between Muslim and Hindu reproductive rates contributed to the development of the relationship between religion and sexuality. Muslims are perceived as sexual predators who pose a threat to Hindu bodies (Teitelman, 2019).

By presenting itself as a defensive response to Muslim dangers to the safety of both individual Hindus and the community, Hindu nationalism normalizes a politics of fear and hatred. Political leaders take advantage of social inconsistencies rather than placing the responsibility for the system's inability to realize development objectives. They instil a sense of fear in the minds of the community members by continuously bringing up the subject of backwardness and relative deprivation, which enhances their identification as a collective, not as individuals (Sahai, 2020). The processes of urbanization, industrialization and migration make social groups more aware of their class and communal identities, which furthers their contribution. The combination of politics and religion in a society is seen to promote communalism (Tambiah, 1990).

Democracies appear to be becoming more and more susceptible to commonplace types of violence like vigilantism as they grow older. Hindu-Muslim unrest peaked in India in the middle to late 1990s as the nation moved from decades of Congress Party dominance to more of a multiparty democracy. Local electoral variables in India had a considerable impact on subnational patterns of violence (Jaffrey & Slater, 2017). Additionally, it is connected to the rise of vigilantism as a significant form of communal violence. Since 2010, more "cow protection group" members have attacked innocent bystanders who have been accused of eating meat. Although the immediate goal of these attacks is to stop the sale of cows for slaughter and the eating of beef, the majority of its victims have actually been members of India's vulnerable Muslim minority (Teitelman, 2019).

5.4. Lack of Media Literacy: Context of Spreading Misinformation through Social Media

The capacity to comprehend information offered to us and respond properly is known as media literacy (FutureLearn, 2021). It includes identifying fake news, rumour, misinformation, disinformation, fabricated news, satire and so forth. Traditionally, television and print media are the main sources from which the mass gets most of its information. Consequently, media literacy was then limited to the skill of analysing and evaluating information properly from TV and print media (Teitelman, 2019). However, in this age of the internet, the skill of media literacy expands to the capability to access the internet through gadgets like cell-phones or computers. It encompasses using websites and applications, finding material there and, to some extent, comprehending how and why someone posted that content online. In the age of social media, media literacy means learning how to analyse critically the information given from a technical, cognitive and emotional standpoint on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter (McNulty, 2021).

In 2006, Facebook and Twitter were made available in India. India has the second-largest Facebook viewership in the world by 2017, and there were over 112 million mobile users there. In terms of active users, India became the Twitter market with the fastest growth in 2018, rising at a rate that was about five times faster than the worldwide average (Rao, 2021). With more than 200 million active monthly users, India's favourite chat app, WhatsApp, which is currently owned by Facebook, was launched in 2009. By March 2018, YouTube, which was started in 2005, had over 180 million Indian mobile users, with a rise of 70 million users over the previous two years (Teitelman, 2019).

A volatile mix has emerged in India as a result of the low cost of mobile phones and the engagement-driven businesses that are in turn driven by users' fear and rage. The majority of Indian people is from the villages or has access to inexpensive data but lacks a formal media literacy (McNulty, 2021). There is a sizable portion of the public whose media literacy is close to zero and who do not know what to believe, according to Pratik Sinha, founder of the fact-checking website Alt News (Teitelman, 2019). Rumours are being fed to them easily.

Figure 4 (below) is a diagram that shows the different factors that contribute to communal violence in India, based on the concept of a conflict triangle. As mentioned above, the conflict triangle is a model that explains how violence is influenced by three interrelated aspects: behaviour, attitudes and context. The figure illustrates these aspects as three levels of a pyramid, with the most visible and direct causes of violence at the top, and the most hidden and indirect causes at the bottom. The figure also divides the pyramid into two sections: visible and invisible. The visible section is on the left side

of the pyramid and represents the aspects that can be easily observed or measured, such as behaviour and some attitudes. The invisible section is on the right side of the pyramid and represents the aspects that are more hidden or difficult to measure, such as some attitudes and context.
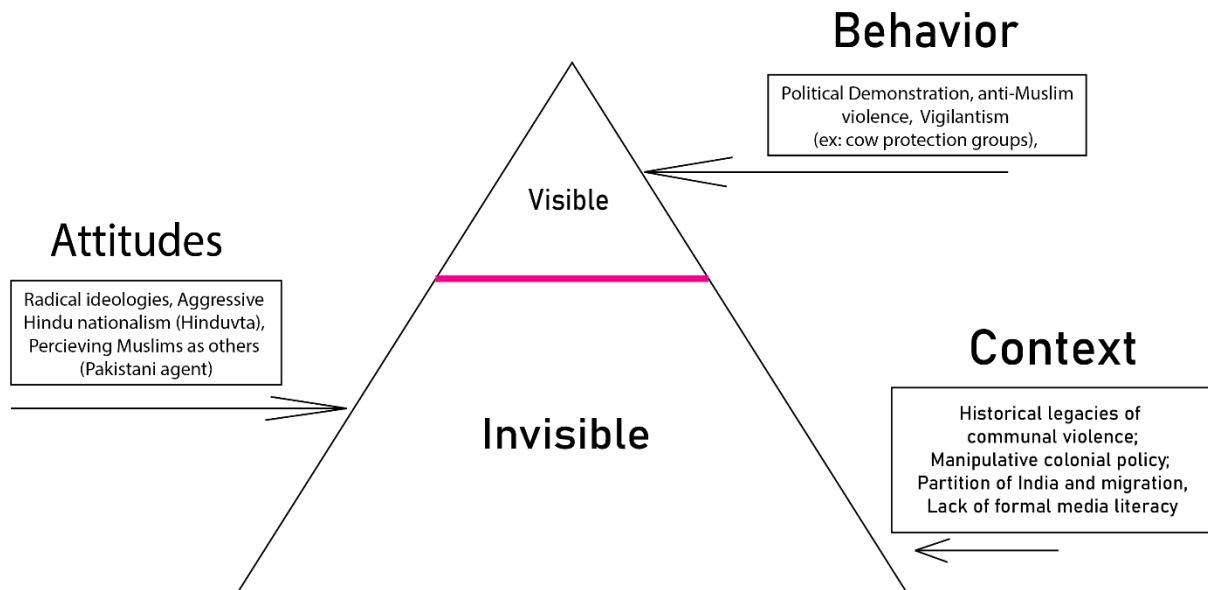
Behavior

Political Demonstration, anti-Muslim violence, Vigilantism
(ex: cow protection groups),

Visible

Attitudes

Radical ideologies, Aggressive Hindu nationalism (Hinduvta), Percieving Muslims as others (Pakistani agent)

Context

Historical legacies of communal violence; Manipulative colonial policy; Partition of India and migration, Lack of formal media literacy

Invisible

Figure 4: Root Causes of Communal Violence in India- A Conflict Triangle

Context is the bottom level of the pyramid, thus the most invisible part of the conflict, and it refers to the structural and environmental factors that create the conditions for communal violence to emerge and persist. Some examples of context are historical legacies of communal violence, such as manipulative colonial policy, the partition of India and migration, and the lack of formal media literacy. These factors shape the social, political and economic realities of different religious groups and influence their perceptions and expectations of each other. *Attitudes* is the middle level of the pyramid, comparatively more visible than context, and it refers to the beliefs and emotions that shape how people view and relate to each other across religious lines. Some examples of attitudes are radical ideologies, aggressive Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) and perceiving Muslims as others or Pakistani agents. These factors affect how people interpret events and situations, how they express their identity and interests, and how they respond to perceived threats or opportunities. Finally, behaviour is the top level of the pyramid, the most visible part of the conflict and it refers to the actions that trigger or escalate communal conflicts. Some examples of behaviour are political demonstrations, anti-Muslim violence and vigilantism by groups such as cow protection groups. These factors are the most visible and direct causes of violence, as they involve physical or verbal aggression, coercion or provocation.

6. Types of Misinformation Fuelling Communal Violence in India

This section of the study particularly addresses the types of misinformation which are spreading through social media and fuelling communal violence. Most items of misinformation are divided into misleading contents, manipulated contents, false context/connection and hate speech.

6.1. Misleading Contents

This type of content includes events such as pictures or videos of accidents, dead bodies, natural disasters, unexplained violence and so forth. In the majority of cases, these images or videos depict violent incidents against children, such as a man exploding while handling explosives carelessly, a child being abducted with voiceover added, a kidney being snatched, a braid being cut or a person being brutally lynched by a mob. These materials cause consumers to experience unsettling emotions

(shock, awe, disgust and perverse curiosity), which interrupt everyday routines and erode faith in mainstream, non-sensational media. Users have the impression that the true news, which is only available on Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media, is hidden by the mainstream media (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

6.2. Manipulated Content, False Context/Connection and Hate Speech

This kind of false material frequently includes nationalism, religious themes or ethno-religious intolerance, such as statements, banners or videos that are hostile to Pakistan, Kashmir, Muslims, Dalits, Hindus, the BJP, Modi, the Congress, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi or meat consumption. For instance, these can include making fun of Pakistan's military prowess or memes that doubt Kashmiris' devotion to India, moving pictures, written texts, contents purporting to show Muslims praising Modi and the BJP (including women praising the Triple Talaq Bill), excerpts from speeches by Rahul Gandhi taken out of context and bracketed with commentary from the Hindutva movement and notes claiming that the Gandhi family has a hidden Muslim heritage are all examples of this. These kinds of materials foster a militant nationalism that forbids dialogue or questioning; a sense of false victimhood coupled with a conspiratorial exaggeration of Muslims' resources, abilities and motivations. It also contributes to verbal and physical abuse of marginalized groups, as well as to bullying and intimidation of anyone who dares to challenge the status quo (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

Most of the disinformation in the context of religious issues relates to Hindutva/Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, for instance, images or videos of Hindu gurus defending their brand of Hinduism or mocking other religions, insulting lower caste communities, oppressing Muslim women, defending and honouring Dalit and Adivasi leaders, images or videos that appear to show Muslims slaughtering cows, defiling Hindu idols or engaging in violence against Hindus or Muslim men seducing and luring Hindu women into marriage and conversion to Islam, still and moving images of Muslims and so forth. Grandiose illusions regarding the moral/ethical and historical superiority of one religion over others may be shown in these items. Additionally, they give people a sense of authority and strength within their own religious community as well as a religious or spiritual framework for interpreting many parts of daily life. It causes users to feel agitated, angry, anxious, disgusted and other emotions, which they subsequently share with others or express through participating in violence (either immediate or anger builds up for violence later) (Mirchandani, 2018).

6.3. Manipulated Contents and Gender

This type of content often carries misinformation or disinformation related to sexual violence, misogyny, patriarchal dictates and so forth. For instance, there can be still and moving depictions of males abusing women; pictures of dead women and ideological metaphors with misogynistic undertones. Meanwhile, conflict between India and Pakistan is portrayed as a man raping a woman, in jokes, pornography, written rumours about the unreliable nature of women and the like. These kinds of materials encourage intimidation and self-censorship, dread of using technology, family monitoring of technology use, rape and blackmail, sadness and withdrawal, as well as possible suicide (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

6.4. Miscellaneous

This kind of false information is spread by the same individuals that spread false information that causes violence but it does not itself contribute to violent results. It also includes spam text messages requesting individuals to click links or forward messages to others in exchange for money, as well as notes with photographs of different types of vegetables and recipes that can treat both minor and significant health issues. It acts as the foundation on which people build their online sociality (forwarding entertaining content to friends, religious content to family, motivational content to colleagues and so forth). Additionally, it encourages people to forward communications carelessly without reading the material first (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

7. Instances of Mobilization for Violence

This section of the paper presents three recent case study of communal violence in India. The first one is about the anti-Muslim riot in Tripura state, the second one is about a violent incident related to Love Jihad and the third one is about controversial remarks about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and its aftermath.

7.1. Case 1 - The Tripura Anti-Muslim Riot

The Tripura state did not witness any major Hindu-Muslim riots since partition. However, in late October 2021, a wave of anti-Muslim riots took place. The riots broke out through vandalism of "mosques" in the state, which began on October 20th, 2021. Following many protests held by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) from October 21st to October 26th, the situation worsened (Bhaumik, 2021). During these gatherings, some miscreants broke into a tiny mosque and a few shops and homes owned by families from the minority Muslim population. Around 19 violent incidents took place across five districts of Tripura. Muslims-owned businesses were allegedly burned down or destroyed, along with at least 15 mosques (Daniyal, 2021). The anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh prompted the organization of these riots in Tripura. The week beginning October 13th saw attacks on Durga puja pandals all around Bangladesh. Right-wing organizations including the VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS and Hindu Jagran Manch organized rallies in Tripura among other places throughout the nation. Notably, the Comilla region of Bangladesh, which borders Tripura directly and has been a substantial source of post-Partition migration into the northeastern state, was the epicentre of this violence. Different rumours about the "genocide" of Hindus in Bangladesh were repeatedly brought up in posts on social media and in WhatsApp groups, inciting this outbreak of religious rioting (X, 2021). Political parties like TMC and CPI(M) said that BJP and its allies were attempting to polarize the electorate in advance of the municipal elections in the state in November 2021 by utilizing the recent unrest in Bangladesh and Tripura (Bhaumik, 2021).

Analysing the Case
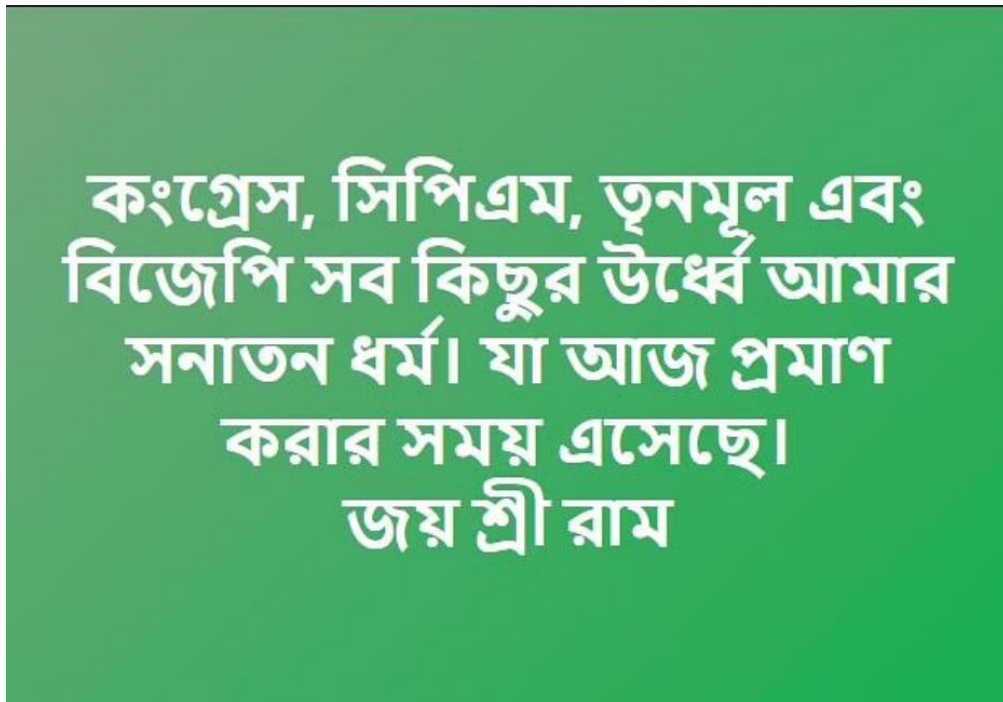
Triggering Event - Activate the Hate

The Tripura riot is the spillover effect of the communal violence perpetrated against the Hindu minority in neighbouring Bangladesh. In fact, communal violence in both countries has affected each other in recent years. The extremists from both Bangladesh and India use the other country's incidents as a pretext for attacking the minority in their own country.

Motivation for Violence: Framing through Rhetoric

In the context of this case, to motivate the people to mobilize, the actors mainly used different attractive and nationalistic rhetoric. For example, by stating something along the lines of "If you are a true Hindu then you must act now," several posts attempted to evoke "Hindu pride." Additionally, the posts emphasized the importance of putting politics aside because "being Hindu is above all."
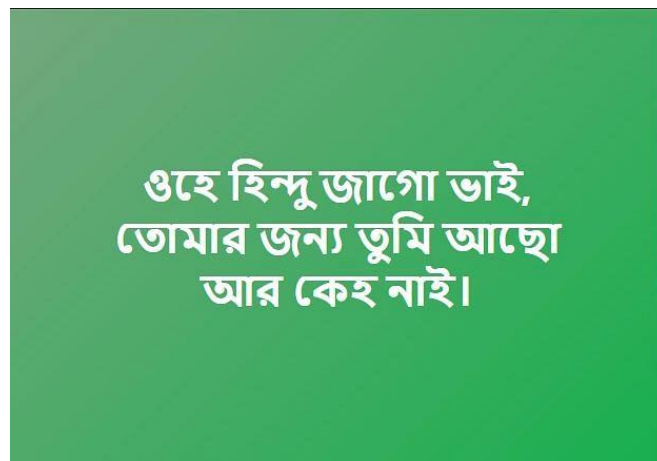
In some posts, Hindus were urged to "unite" in circulars sent on WhatsApp groups. It was stated that even though they followed many "gurus," they were still "Hindu at the end of the day," and as such, it was their duty to uphold the dignity of their religion. These posts, which were primarily published between October 17 and 21, urged people to gather for "Hunkar rallies."

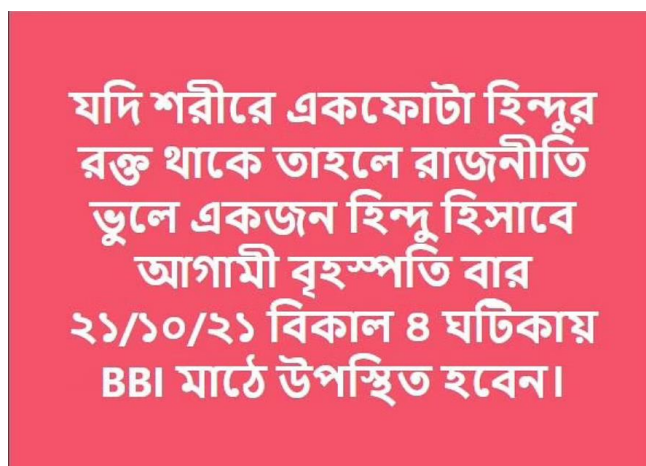Figure 5: A Facebook post which speaks about the importance of demonstration (collected from The Quint)

Translation: My Sanatan religion is above all the political parties (Congress, CPM, Trinamool and BJP). It's time to prove that today. Jai Shri Ram

Figure 6: A Facebook Post containing a Passionate Rhetoric (collected from The Quint)

Translation: O Hindu, wake up brother, you are there for you and there is no one else.

Figure 7: A Facebook post/Whatsapp message containing a Call to Action (collected from The Quint)

Translation: If there is a drop of Hindu blood in your body then forget politics and appear as a Hindu at BBI ground next Thursday 21/10/21 at 4 PM.

Even a controversial tone was present in some posts. In this particular post, for instance, the author discusses how "… there are many Hindus, but the only difference between them is who has a spine and who doesn't."

Figure 8: A Facebook post/Whatsapp message containing an edited image use for Call to Action (collected from The Quint)

Translation: Do you also want something like West Bengal and Bangladesh to happen in Tripura?

WhatsApp groups have seen posts highlighting the unrest in Bangladesh that ask, "Do you want the same to happen in Tripura?" Additionally, the groups frequently received posts that featured unreliable films critical of the minority religion over topics like "Love Jihad" and "how Pakistan treats Hindus." The most concerning piece of evidence was a photo of guns with the statement, "I am preparing a few of these quickly," that was discovered in one of the user's profiles. This was published during the same timeframe as the protests (The Quint, 2021).

Figure 9: A Facebook post containing image of Sharp weapon (collected from the The Quint)

আমি একটা রেডী করতাছি অতিসত্বর কয়একটারে।😠😠😠

Translation: I am preparing my weapon.

The emotion permeated both rallies and social media. Following the viral video of the demonstration in Tripura when disparaging slogans against Muslims were sung, some rallies saw the chanting of such epithets, but some went farther and demanded that the Bangladeshi government arm the Hindus. Other rallies featured signs warning against the Taliban administration (in Bangladesh) and urging Hindus to band together in the battle against Jihadists. The aforementioned statements and trends do make suggest why mosques and businesses owned by Muslims were burned or trashed, even though a direct call to violence could not be found (Dutta, 2021).

Institutional Resources and Actor's Credibility

The existing political environment in India is the biggest resource for communal tension as the Bangladesh card became important in Indian radical politics from 2013–14 (Daniyal, 2021). Two important events occurred in the period. Assamese citizens had to certify that they were not Bangladeshi migrants when the Supreme Court began updating Assam's National Register of Citizens in 2013. They frequently have to present official records from decades ago in order to do so. Secondly, the BJP worked hard to court Hindu Bangladeshi migrants the very next year as it launched its 2014 Lok Sabha campaign in an effort to gain a foothold in West Bengal. Narendra Modi, for example, said at a rally in Bengal, India, in May 2014, that India would only accept Bangladeshis who worshipped Durga. On the other hand, the BJP linked a new proposed law dubbed the Citizenship Amendment Act with a National Register of Citizens during the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign. The purpose of the Citizenship Amendment Act was to grant citizenship to non-Muslims who had entered India illegally from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; nevertheless, the BJP exploited it as a tool to intimidate Indian Muslims by connecting it to the National Register of Citizens (Daniyal, 2021).

As a continuation of this politics, many of the VHP rallies in Tripura were held with the administration's approval. The extremist groups in Bangladesh see this anti-Bangladesh discourse in India as a great opportunity to regain lost momentum. In order to incite majoritarian feelings within Bangladesh, news of the communal situation in India is now often reported on Bangladeshi social media, which the government has limited control over in contrast to newspapers and TV networks (Daniyal, 2021). Islamists in Bangladesh instigated rioting during Modi's visit to the nation in March 2021. Thirteen people lost their lives in the ensuing rioting, which also witnessed attacks on Hindu

institutions. Additionally, in October 2021, Bangladeshi majoritarian elements invoked India as excuse for the violence. In both of the case, social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, played major roles. In a similar vein, extremists in India have tried to use the bloodshed in Bangladesh to foment polarization within their own country in states like Tripura and West Bengal (OpIndia Staff, 2021).

Actor's Credibility

The VHP, also known as the World Council of Hindus, is a right-wing Hindu organization that was formed on Hindu nationalism in India (Jaffrelot, 2009). "To organize, consolidate the Hindu society and to serve and safeguard the Hindu Dharma," is its proclaimed goal (Jaffrelot, 2008). It was founded to deal with issues of cow slaughter and religious conversion, as well as to build and maintain Hindu temples. The VHP has come under fire for its role in the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid due to the Ayodhya dispute, which is the most notable instance of how it contributed to violence against Muslims in India (Hansen, 1999). The Sangh Parivar group, an umbrella name for Hindu nationalist organizations led by the RSS, is thought to include the VHP.

7.2. Case 2: Violence Related Love Jihad in Rajasthan Led to Mobilization

Mohamed Afrazul, a Bengali Muslim migrant laborer, was killed with a meat cleaver on December 6th, 2017, in Rajsamand, Rajasthan. His body was then set afire nearby. Shambhulal Regar, the defendant in the murder case, had the entire assault captured on camera and posted online along with a speech condemning the "entrapment" of Hindu girls by Muslim men. Many people voiced their disgust at the horrifying act of violence and the impunity with which the video was distributed as soon as it went viral. Regar, meanwhile, gained admirers for his deed, particularly from the VHP, who hailed him as a hero for taking action to stop the "love jihad," which is a divisive term for the union of a Muslim man and a Hindu woman that gained popularity on social media and was unquestionably accepted by many in the mainstream (Mirchandani, 2018).

Analysing the Case

Motivation for Violence

Despite the fact that there were a number of inflammatory tweets about 'love jihad' posted on different social media platforms across India in the months prior to the attack, none of them were geotagged within a hundred kilometres of Rajsamand. This suggested that it was improbable for the internet content that radicalized Shambhulal to have been produced within his community. Instead, divisive tales created elsewhere were broadcast and then propagated far afield. According to the chargesheet filed against Regar, "He gathered information related to videos of Hindu extremists, love jihad, Section 370, Islamic jihad, the state of terrorism in Kashmir, the rise in Muslim population, Ram Mandir, Padmavati, PK (the movie), the division of castes in the Hindu religion, and reservation, among other topics. He had five films on his phone about social and religious issues ready before the murder. The crime was described by authorities as a "merciless killing (Mirchandani, 2018)."

Mobilization in Support of the Murderer

Regar was honoured with a tableau during Ram Navami, a Hindu festival where followers commemorate the birth of Lord Rama, an avatar of one of Hinduism's holy trinity, Lord Vishnu, nearly five months after the attack and even as Regar awaited trial in Jodhpur Jail. This shows a reverse effect of communal violence that how the violence may mobilize group of supporters and then further intensifies the division of society (Mirchandani, 2018).

7.3. Case-3: The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Remarks Row - A Counter Mobilization?

The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Remarks Row controversy started on May 27th, 2022, when Nupur Sharma, a spokesperson for the BJP, the government of India, made contentious comments regarding the Islamic prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during a *Times Now* debate on the Gyanvapi Mosque controversy (Mallick, 2022). The remarks were directed at Muhammad (PBUH) and the age of his third wife, Aisha, at the time of their nuptials and marriage. Mohammed Zubair, the co-founder of the fact-checking website Alt News, posted the video of her remarks on social media a day later (Pandey, 2022). When Delhi BJP media chief Naveen Kumar Jindal made statements on Twitter supporting Ms. Sharma on June 1st, the situation heated up. By the fourth of June, all of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and Turkey had trended the remarks among the top 10 hashtags on social media. Internationally, the remarks received vehement condemnation. Numerous police cases were opened in India against Sharma and Jindal. Protests in several regions of the nation turned violent, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries (PTI, 2022). Homes of several alleged rioters were demolished as punishment as a result of the unrest in Uttar Pradesh. Numerous Gulf nations, including India's allies and partners, strongly condemned the incident and threatened to boycott Indian goods (Saaliq, 2022). The Indian government responded to the incident by claiming that the remarks were made by "fringe individuals" and did not reflect the beliefs of the government. The BJP suspended Sharma and kicked Jindal out of the organization.

On June 28th, 2022, a tailor who had purportedly posted on social media in support of BJP spokeswoman Nupur Sharma, who had been placed on administrative leave, was brutally murdered in his store in Udaipur, India. Local tension has been brought up by the incident. The two suspects have been detained in Rajsamand (Star Digital Report, 2022). They are accused of filming the murder and boasting about it on camera on social media. They entered the tailor's store and pretended to be clients. The other person used a mobile phone to record the tailor taking one's measurements as it happened. One of the individuals assaulted the tailor with a sharp object as he was taking the measurement, killing him instantly. The assailant and his accomplice made their getaway and then produced a second video in which they admitted to slitting the tailor's throat and also threatened Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to our New Delhi correspondent, they disseminated the films on social media, which led to communal conflict in Udaipur town (Pandey, 2022).

Motivation for Protest and Violence

According to critics, Ms. Sharma and Mr. Jindal's remarks represent the extreme religious division the nation has been experiencing over the past few years. Since the BJP took office in 2014, hate speech and assaults against Muslims have drastically increased (Maizland, 2022). Their remarks, especially Ms. Sharma's, incensed the nation's minority Muslim population and sparked occasional demonstrations and violence in various areas. Notably, the remarks went viral through different platforms of social media. In other words, the protest against the remarks is an outcome or demonstration of grievance from the Muslim community (Swinnen, 2021).

Institutional Resources and Credibility of Actors

One of the exceptional matters about this case is the involvement of international actors. The involvement of different Muslim countries, especially those who are the major trade partners of India facilitated the domestic protesters and imposed challenges to the ruling party of India. The condition imposed by those countries ultimately made the authority to take step against Ms. Sharma and Mr. Jindal. At the same time, the involvement of these actors indirectly encouraged some violent incidents and mobilization. In other words, once it showed how divided the society and how social media had been playing a big role behind this division.

8. Discussion

The paper argues that social media platforms have become an integral part of the new civilization and technology, but they also pose new challenges and risks for communal harmony. As Table 1 shows, a huge number of people uses different types of social media platforms in their everyday life. In this

context, the hypothesis Huntington's (1993) hypothesis of the clash of civilizations is relevant, which suggests that the core of the new world's conflict will not be about economic issues, but about cultural issues (Huntington, 1993).

This paper contends that India is facing such cultural conflicts or communal violence among different religious groups, and that social media platforms are playing a catalytic role in this process. The dissemination of false information, the creation of manipulated and provocative imagery, and the unthinking propagation of hate speech via popular social media platforms such as Meta, Instagram, and WhatsApp has become increasingly effortless in contemporary times. The newspaper can also be regarded as an alternative form of social media, although one that is quite antiquated. The readership of newspapers is experiencing a gradual decline, with a majority of newspaper readers being individuals with higher levels of education. It is important to note that traditional media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television employ a team of individuals that actively monitor and strive to deliver news that is somewhat more reliable compared to the content found on various social media platforms. The reason for this is that individuals are provided with an opportunity to provide an explanation. The observation of such behaviour is not evident in the context of emerging social media platforms. Various factors contribute to the emergence of disputes within societies, including instances of community violence. This work effectively explores the concept of shifting conflict patterns and the factors that contribute to these dynamics.

This paper identifies two main ways in which social media platforms contribute to communal violence: by spreading misinformation and by promoting hate speech. The paper defines misinformation as false or misleading information that is intentionally or unintentionally disseminated through social media platforms, such as fake news, fabricated sensitive images or rumours. The paper defines hate speech as any form of expression that incites hatred, violence, or discrimination against a person or a group based on their religion, ethnicity, race, gender or other identity markers. The paper illustrates how misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms can trigger or escalate communal violence by manipulating people's emotions, perceptions, and actions.

The existing literature and discourse on the present issue also reflect some of these factors highlighted in this paper. For example, Mirchandani (2018) examined the impact of majoritarian hate speech on social media in India and found that religion and religio-cultural practices related to food and dress were the most explicit basis for hate speech online. Mirchandani (2018) also argued that social media platforms provide both tacit and overt sanction for rising incidents of majoritarian violence as identity-based, populist politics dominate the country's landscape. However, Mirchandani (2018) focused more on the political and ideological dimensions of hate speech, while this paper also considers the psychological and emotional effects of misinformation and hate speech on individuals and groups. Yaraghi (2019) discussed how social media platforms should combat misinformation and hate speech in general and proposed two approaches: blocking such content outright or providing counter-speech to challenge it. Yaraghi (2019) also suggested that social media platforms should focus on a limited number of topics that are deemed important with significant consequences, such as the anti-vaccination movement or the Flat Earth theory. However, Yaraghi (2019) did not address the specific challenges and opportunities of dealing with misinformation and hate speech in a diverse and complex context like India, where multiple factors such as history, culture, religion, politics, and media literacy influence people's susceptibility to such content.

This study proposes media literacy as a potential solution to the problem of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms. It defines media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and communicate information using various forms of media. The study emphasizes the importance of media literacy for preventing or reducing communal violence, as it can help people to filter or cross-check the information they receive or share on social media platforms, especially on sensitive issues. It also suggests that media literacy can also foster critical thinking, tolerance, and dialogue among different religious groups. The paper contributes to the literature on communal violence in India by adopting a different lens to understand its causes and consequences. The paper highlights the role of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms as a new dimension

of communal violence that has not been adequately addressed before. The paper also offers some practical recommendations for enhancing media literacy as a way of preventing or resolving communal violence.

9. Conclusion

Indian civilization is quite old, with more than a thousand unique cultures originating from various faiths, castes, tribes and ethnic groupings. However, during the colonial period, the divide and rule tactics of the colonizers seeded a culture of hatred between the major religious communities. The bitter history set the context of communal conflict in this country. Gradually, extremist ideologies and organizations become mainstream and openly spread the extremist ideology among the people. The spread of these ideologies ultimately set the attitude of rivalry between the members of different community and reduced the scope of tolerance. The feelings of hatred and "Us vs Them" propaganda are further utilized by some vested interest political actors to gain power. The combination of vote politics, populism, instilling fake fear, distorted historical facts and politicization of religion promotes communalism. Again, the lack of media literacy intensifies the situation and allows the spread of misinformation and hate speech on different social media platforms.

After the introduction of social media and availability of smart phone, different studies show that the number as well as the intensity of the communal conflict in India. It is because the flow of (mis)information has fewer barriers, and people can get news through social media platform within a very short time. The problem is, as there is a lack of media literacy, some people cannot differ between authentic and inauthentic news. Misleading contents, manipulated contents, false connection/context and hate speech thus spread easily containing elements of hatred. People find information via these contents which they do not find in the mainstream media. Eventually, these contents manipulate the viewers to engage in communal violence.

Social media has been used as a primary tool for mobilizing people in the context of recent cases of communal violence in India. People use the different platforms of social media to broadcast the violence, to post a call to action, to post controversial statements and to post controversial hashtags. The impact of this kind of use of social media can be severe and it might push society to its breaking point. To reverse the situation, media literacy is the most important option because it will create awareness of dangerous side of social media. Again, frequent inter-faith dialogue may help the people to re-evaluate the similarity among different religion instead of differences. In that way, dialogue may increase mutual respect and tolerance. Most importantly, political culture should not promote communalism and visible political will is needed to reduce communal conflict.

Fieldwork including a diverse array of activities has the potential to elucidate the genuine encounters associated with communal violence, which can be traced back to the dissemination of misinformation or false news through social media platforms. One of the primary constraints of the study is the aforementioned limitation. Case studies are insufficient to determine the extent of the misuse of social media and its role in inciting communal conflict. Insufficient financial resources and limited time availability were additional noteworthy challenges encountered over the course of this study. Maintaining objectivity in scholarly writing can be challenging, particularly when attempting to mitigate the influence of religious biases. Managing prejudice was a significant difficulty as well. The utilization of the data presented in this work will enable future researchers to depict effectively the adverse consequences experienced by individuals as a result of the inappropriate utilization of social media platforms. This article aims to explore the correlation between the misuse of social media and the incitement of communal violence. Additionally, it has examined the primary platforms utilized for the dissemination of communal hatred. This paper focuses on the topic of social media literacy, which has gained significant relevance in contemporary society due to the widespread use of social media platforms. Given the ubiquity of social media usage in modern times, there is a compelling need for further academic exploration and research in this area.

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