

# Spectacle of Violence: Representation Patterns and News Narratives on Indian Television During Primetime

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## ABSTRACT

Violence is not merely a physical act but a socially constructed and culturally reproduced phenomenon, often learned through media experiences. Television news, as a primary source of information and public perception, plays a critical role in shaping narratives around violence. This study investigates how Indian television news channels represent violence during primetime broadcasts. Using content analysis as the primary methodology, a total of 42 hours of news content over seven consecutive days of February 2020 from Republic TV and Times Now were examined. The findings reveal that violent content is not only prevalent but often sensationalized, with representations marked by aggressive panel discussions, hate speech, abusive language, blame games, violent behaviour and biased framing. Rather than acting as a moderating or peace-building role, these news channels tend to reinforce and reproduce violent discourse and misinformation through dramatization and spectacle. The research suggests that such portrayals contribute to the normalization and legitimization of verbal and symbolic violence in the public sphere. This raises significant ethical and professional concerns regarding the role of news media in a democratic society.

**Keywords:** Violence, Representation, Television Media, News Narratives, Primetime

## INTRODUCTION

Violence is not a new phenomenon and it is in our society from the ancient era. However, people have taken violence as a source of pleasure and that is the reason violence has never gone from our society and culture (Jewel et al., 2011). We are witnessing violence in different forms such as war, physical injury, beating people, terrorism, psychological torture, sexual harassment, domestic violence, to name a few. Human beings are not violent by birth and that is the reason aggression, abuse and violence are considered to be learned behaviour (Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012). And getting pleasure from violence has become a matter of practice (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004). So the question arises that, if violence is learned behaviour, then how do we learn violence? The answer lies in our society, culture and daily life. The mass media become a significant apparatus enabling the portrayal of our society, culture and day-to-day life (Hodkinson, 2017), and creating our social and cultural identities (Bonfadelli, 2017).

Media overflow might have turned violence into a common scenario for our society. Unless the causes of violence are isolated or solved, the situation will not change. Many law enforcement officials suggest that enforcing tough laws will be an effective way to reduce violence, but they discount the impact of physical punishment, violent films, and TV programs on our society that indicates that physical violence is normal (Prescott, 1975). Violence has been an inherent part of our global culture long before television was invented. But the history of media violence began in the 1950s when TV started to dominate other available media and the major networks sought a simple but successful formula to increase their revenue (Reissler, 2006). Thus, the

over-portrayal of violent content on television channels could be a potential danger, especially for children and teenagers.

For the sake of competition with digital media, television channels are expanding the gamut of entertainment. But to win the rat race, television media consciously or unconsciously provide violent content in their programs to attract the youth (Ybarra et al., 2008). In India, television news channels provide violent content through their talk shows, discussions, and news telecasts, especially during primetime. So, primetime is a pick hour for every news channel, because media obtain the greatest number of audiences during this period of time. For that reason, it is important to study the representation of violence in the television news channels because, television plays the role of spectacle for the society (Debord, 1990).

Television and violence have a symbiotic relationship between them and it manipulates the audience. From the early morning to late at night, movies, news, soap operas, reality shows, and sports programs on the television are presenting violence as a source of pleasure. Nevertheless, the news is something people take seriously and watch with a conscious mind. So, it needs a thorough analysis on how the news channels are portraying violence. Are news channels depicting violence for the sake of news or to frame something else? Hoijer (1996) suggests that before watching television, we need to ask some questions to ourselves—how much violence can we store in our head? How can we handle violent images every day? And what is the impact of violence on our psychological aspects, especially for women and children?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The most important and controversial thing about violence revolves around questions of how to define and elaborate the violence and how to test theories about them (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1998). In medical terms, violence refers to any accidental or intentional injuries. This “injury” has been defined as the damage or wound caused by trauma, and the “trauma” refers to an accidental or inflicted injury caused by harsh contact with the environment (Stedman, 1982). Kazdin (2000) has defined violence in different dimensions like extreme form of aggression (e.g. assault, rape or murder) while Watson et al. (1991) have defined violence in a form of violent action or physical force or threat; whether the action caused injury or not. Violence has different categories as well. It could be direct or indirect violence where direct means physical violence and indirect means psychological violence (Schlack, et al., 2013), or it could be physical, verbal, cultural, private and collective violence (Galtung, 1969). Furthermore, abusive words, hate speech, defamation, decry, and maligning comes under indirect violence or psychological violence (McGee & Wolfe, 1991). However, if we consider the cultural history of Indian subcontinent—political violence, religious violence, domestic violence and psychological violence are also very important aspects (Vidal et al, 1994).

In 2004 the effect of the 9/11 attack and Iraq war was going on and news coverage was full of violent content which affected the children’s physical, mental, and emotional growth (Van-der-Molen, 2004). Focusing more on television media, Huesmann & Taylor (2006) finds that the violence in television news is causing behavioural effects, social miscreants, and acts of aggression, especially for the teenaged audience. Nevertheless, there is a correlation between depression and frequency of violent news viewing hours (Hafeez, 2017). Additionally, age, gender and socio-economic level are the key factors for media representation of violence and violent behaviour in real life (Bassett & Shuker, 1993). Furthermore, there is a relationship between representing suicidal news and increasing of suicidal incidents (Stack, 2000).

Watching violence on screen can contribute to increased aggression and desensitization of crime. If the culprit of any violent act gets a reward or remains unpunished and if the viewers feel that the aggressive action is justified, then it may also lead the people toward violent behaviour (Brown, 1996). Nevertheless, excessive portrayal of media violence led to the probability of women accepting domestic violence (Bhushan & Singh, 2014). Furthermore, hatred in digital media leads to real life violence in India due to populist politics dominate the overall media and political landscape of India (Mirchandani, 2018). Research also finds that there are several negative impacts on the physical, psychological and social development of children because of spending a good portion of time viewing violent content in the media (Agarwal & Dhanasekaran, 2012).

Most of the studies are focused on the effects and impacts of media violence on people of different age, gender, and socio-economic background, however, there are some gaps in how the violence is portrayed in the television media. So, this study tries to fill the gap and to present a comprehensive analysis on representing violence in primetime news in Indian television media.

### Objectives of the Study

This study has been carried out on basis of two major objectives.

To understand the trends and ways of representing violent content on Indian news channels.

To understand how popular discourse about violence is being set.

### Materials and Methods

For this study, Content Analysis method has been used for presenting an in-depth understanding of the nature of representation of violent content in primetime news in India. According to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FICCI) report, the total numbers of satellite channels are 885, among them 43% (380 channels) are classified as news channels (FICCI, 2019). For this study, the researcher attempts to target a small part of this voluminous data to present a comprehensive analysis after furnishing evidence. Two English language television news channels among 380 news channels have been selected for this study on the basis of top TRP.

1. Republic TV

2. Times Now

One-week's primetime news of both the channels from 21 February 2020 to 27 February 2020 has been considered as final data. The reason behind choosing these dates is the fact that India faced two big issues during this period of time, firstly the then president of United States of America, Donald Trump's visit in India and secondly the 2020 Delhi Riot was also going on simultaneously (Ellis-Petersen & Rahman, 2020). Republic TV and the Times Now consider 7 pm to 10 pm (3 hours) as their primetime. So, a total of  $\{2(7 \times 3)\} = 42$  hours of news has been examined for this study.

During the primetime, both the television channels normally shows the panel discussion or talk shows. For Republic TV, mostly one panel discussion takes place during primetime commonly known as 'The Debate with Arnab Goswami'. But for the Times Now, 7 pm to 8 pm is scheduled for the 'Nation Wants to Know', 8 pm to 9 pm is planned for the 'India Upfront' and from 9 pm to 10 pm is scheduled for the 'Newshour Debate at 9'.

To understand the picture completely, it is necessary to understand the TV channels' background. The Republic TV was launched in 2017, co-founded by Arnab Goswami and since then, he has come to own the channel (Narasimhan, 2019). It has a negative critical reception for practicing biased news in favour of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government and the concept of Hindutva (Madan, 2019). On the other hand, Times Now was launched in 2006 with the help of Reuters and owned and operated by The Times Group (Thussu, 2008). The Times Group has a soft corner for the BJP and all the media owned by The Times Group portray news in favour of the party (Ninan, 2019).

For this research, images, video footages, languages, and behaviour were the units of analysis. Furthermore, the Representation theory (Hall, 1997), the Issue Attention Cycle theory (Downs, 1972), and the Framing theory (Goffman, 1974) are largely applicable to this study to understand the theoretical aspects of news narratives and representation.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Violence is an Inevitable Element for TV News

Violence has been portrayed on both these television channels in different formats (e.g. feature news, breaking news, investigative news and live reporting). However, there are some pieces of news during this period that do not portray violence at all. So, a thematic segregation has been coded in Table-1 to represent the data where ‘Neutral News’ does not have any relation to violence, ‘Representing Violence’ refers to the violent activity or news or direct violence portrayed in the primetime, and ‘Related to Violence’ refers to those incidents which are not violent in nature, but has a direct connection towards violent incidents (e.g. police’s press briefing after violence, accused person or victim’s statement, and people’s reaction on violence).

Table-1: Thematic Segregation of Republic TV News

<b>21 Feb</b>	18	2	10	30
<b>22 Feb</b>	16	3	14	33
<b>23 Feb</b>	22	2	7	31
<b>24 Feb</b>	5	15	9	29
<b>25 Feb</b>	6	21	10	37
<b>26 Feb</b>	1	12	13	26
<b>27 Feb</b>	2	9	15	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>212</b>

If we pay close attention to Table-1 and Table-2, it is clear that both the television channels focus on violent content. Both Republic TV and Times Now have presented a total of 107 (64+43) news items that represent direct violence, and broadcasted a total of 121 (78+43) news items that are somehow related to violence. This lends an understanding that violent content is essential for television channels. And both the channels provided highest number of violence news on 25 February 2020, the day Delhi riot 2020 turned into “communal riot”.

Table-2: Thematic Segregation of Times Now’s News

<b>21 Feb</b>	7	0	4	11
<b>22 Feb</b>	8	2	4	14
<b>23 Feb</b>	7	0	5	12
<b>24 Feb</b>	6	6	3	15
<b>25 Feb</b>	2	14	9	25
<b>26 Feb</b>	3	9	11	23
<b>27 Feb</b>	1	12	7	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>120</b>

## Violence Related Breaking News Gets Priority

Both Republic TV and Times Now are significantly keen on providing breaking news. Their breaking news also contains news on violence. Even their predisposition to providing breaking news is competitive. The common terms used by both the television channels while providing breaking news are ‘News Breaks Here First’, ‘Exclusive Update’, ‘Breaking News’, ‘Only Our Channel Got the Update’, ‘Super Exclusive’ and ‘Biggest Story’. These terms are mainly used for grabbing the audience’s attention.

Table-3: Breaking News in Republic TV and Times Now

	<b>Total breaking News</b>	<b>Violence related breaking news</b>	<b>Total breaking news</b>	<b>Violence related breaking news</b>
<b>21 Feb</b>	3	3	2	0
<b>22 Feb</b>	8	5	3	2
<b>23 Feb</b>	6	3	4	2
<b>24 Feb</b>	8	7	4	4
<b>25 Feb</b>	10	10	12	12
<b>26 Feb</b>	5	5	4	4
<b>27 Feb</b>	5	5	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>

Table-3 depicts the idea of portraying violence through breaking news. It has been observed that the news channels provide breaking news by interrupting programs. If a panellist is discussing an issue or a report is being played, it normally gets interrupted to give breaking news a priority. And if breaking news is about any violent incident, then that is even more highly prioritised. It has been observed that on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 26<sup>th</sup> February, and 27<sup>th</sup> February, breaking news were given by interrupting pannelists’ discussion on serious matter. Whenever the anchor receives the breaking news, the discussion is paused immediately.

## Live Coverage Makes Sensational News

“Anything happens, go live!” is another discourse to represent violence. Table-3 and Table-4 indicate that live coverage and breaking news go hand-in-hand. Breaking news means live coverage. Whenever any breaking news comes, the anchor in the studio goes live to the reporter immediately. And violence related live reporting also gets priority.

Table-4: violencet related live reporting in TV news

	<b>Total live</b>	<b>Violence related live</b>	<b>Total live</b>	<b>Violence related live</b>
<b>21 Feb</b>	4	3	2	0
<b>22 Feb</b>	6	3	4	2



23 Feb	4	2	4	1
24 Feb	7	7	3	3
25 Feb	9	8	9	9
26 Feb	5	5	6	6
27 Feb	6	6	7	6
Total	41	34	35	27

Showing violence live on the television is a common occurrence in news channels. Even the media use sensetional words like ‘Bloodthirsty Mobs’ and ‘Muslim Terrorists’ to get the attention of audience (Figure-1).



Figure 1: Live Reporting and Sensetionalization

(Source: Republic TV

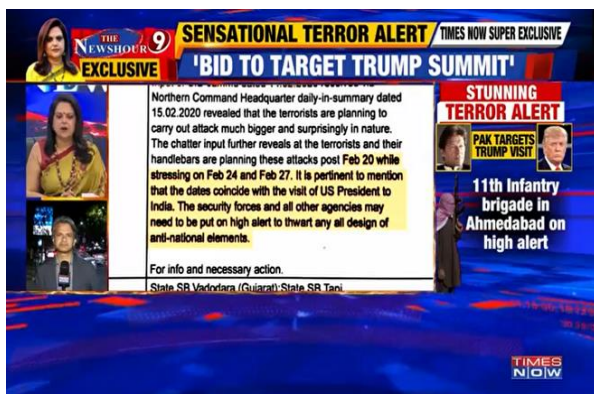


Figure 2: Disinformation in live reporting

(Source: Times Now

However, due to the lack of time and investigation, reporters add their own comments in the live reporting, leading to misinformation or disinformation. For example, the Times Now on 21 February in the ‘Newshour at 9’ program gives breaking news where the reporter says, “Pakistan is planning for a terror attack on India during Trump’s visit”. But, if we pay close attention to Figure-2, the source of the information clearly revelas, “The terrorists are planning to carry out a much bigger and surprising attack in nature”. Nowhere in the document mentions the name of Pakistan but the reporter Nikunj Garg intentionally spread the disinformation. Furthermore, the Times Now put up a picture of the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and a terrorist with a gun in the news item, as if Imran Khan was planning to carry out the terror attack on US President Donald Trump.

If visual representation concept of media [34] is taken into consideration, it clearly gives an idea that news channels are providing wrong information to create the ‘Anti-Pakistan narrative’, because anything against Pakistan or anti-Pakistan sentiment in any form is immensely appreciated in India (Kumar, 2011).

### Panel Discussion or Theatrical Stage of Violence?

A total of 27 panel discussions took place from 21 February to 27 February 2020 where 8 panel discussions were in the Republic TV and 19 panel discussions were in the Times Now. Unfortunately, each and every panel discussion turned into verbal fights, abusive words, or insulting each other. As both the television channels are biased in favour of ruling BJP government (Madan, 2019; Ninan, 2019), so the fights in the panel discussions normally take place when someone from opposition criticises the BJP led government or the party or their activities. Nevertheless, almost every panellist shout at each other without making any sense. Not only the panellists, but also the hosts shout at the panellists, especially Arnab Goswami, the host of ‘The Debate’ program in the Republic TV, and Navika Kumar, the host of the ‘Newshour at 9’ program in the Times Now, shout at the panellists in an erroneous manner and high tonality of voice which itself depicts violence.



Figure 3: Arnab Goswami is shouting on a panelist angrily

(Source: Republic TV)

For instance, Arnab Goswami in the debate of 27 February 2020 shouts at the former IAS officer Arun Bhatia in an aggressive voice. Eventually, Arnab stands up from his chair and continues shouting as Arun Bhatia was criticising the BJP for the Delhi riot 2020 (Figure-3). Navika Kumar on 25 February 2020 shouts at all the panellists who were in opposition in the debate. These panel discussion is a three-dimension fight where the hosts shout at the panellists, the panellists shout at the hosts, and the panellists shout at each other. If the highest TRP holder mainstream media portray these concept of ‘shouting at each other’, ‘stopping others to express their thoughts’ and ‘abusing each other’, then it can lead to a possible violent behaviour in the audience. These acts of violence could directly affect the audience and their psychological behaviour (Bassett & Shuker, 1993).

Examining the panel discussion illuminates the nature of argument and leads to a realisation that this is not a debate program; rather, it is a theatrical stage where violence is been performed and the hosts and the panellists play the role of performers. Borrowing the power of spectacle theory (Debord, 1990), one may posit that verbal fights in the panel discussions have a negative impact on society, because mass media is like a spectacle and audience explore the world through this spectacle.

### News Channels Create “Versus (vs.) Discourse”

Television news channels do not make a bridge between two different thoughts or ideologies, instead they accentuate the divide. This tendency has been observed in both the news channels studied from 21 February to 27 February 2020. The news channels have deepened the divide between BJP and Congress, Hindu and Muslim, and Right-wing politics and Left-wing politics. It has been observed that both the news channels have invited spokespersons and leaders from BJP in their panel discussion but not a single spokesperson or higher leader from Indian National Congress is represented. Both the channels have criticised Indian National

Congress without even letting them clarify their point of view. This also shows that both the channels are supportive of the BJP government.



Figure 4: Versus discourse by news channel

(Source: Republic TV)

If we look closely at Foucauldian discourse analysis (Given, 2008) and relate it with the Republic TV and the Times Now's tendency, it unravels the media's power relation and its affinity to manufacture discourse in favour of the BJP.

When the Delhi riot turned into the deadly 'communal riot' on 25 February 2020, Republic TV in their 'The Debate with Arnab Goswami' program segregated the panellists based on their religion. On one side of the panel, it was Sambit Patra, Prafulla Ketkar, Ishkaran Bhandari, and Shubrastra Sikha while on the other side of the panel; it was AN Shamsheer, Feroze Mithiborwala, Maulana Syeed ul Qadri, Junaid Ali Khan and Danish Rezwani (Figure-4). The program depicts that 'Hindu panellists are pro-BJP' and 'Muslim panellists are anti-BJP' which create another false binary, indicating that all Hindus are pro-BJP and all Muslims are anti-BJP. Throughout the debate, communal comments from both ends of the panellists were broadcast. Shubrastra Sikha, a pro-BJP political strategist and author says the 'grandmothers' (the elderly women protesters) of the Shaheen Bagh Protest as 'Islamic Terrorist' while Islamic scholar Maulana Syeed ul Qadri replied that "Hindutva politics of BJP provoked the Delhi riot". This debate eventually turned into a communal debate about Hindus versus Muslims, rather a discussion about the Delhi riot, nevertheless, no solution came from the discussion.

On 21 February 2020 during the 'Newshour at 9' program in the Times Now, a journalist from the United States of America Katie Hopkins says, "Trump's visit in India is a massive win for Modi and a massive win for Hindu population of India". The host Navika Kumar did not condemn or say anything to Katie Hopkins for her communal remark, as India is a democratic and a pluralistic society. Hopkins's statement is provocative and depicts a faulty portrayal of India. However, it seems Times Now's Kumar did not seem to object to it. This 'versus discourse' and othering of the minorities mirrors the divide-and-rule policy of the BJP (Seshia, 1998).

## Trends of Hate Speech and Abusive Language

Hate speech and abusive language come under psychological violence (McGee & Wolfe, 1991). As violence is learned behaviour (Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012), programs or news full of hate speeches and abusive language can lead the audience to behave violently. Nevertheless, the portrayal of hate speech and abusive language in both the news channels is very common. On 21 February 2020 in the Times Now, panellist Amit Raina, an activist from the Roots in Kashmir, insults another panellist and political analyst Ravi Srivastava during 'Nation Wants to Know' program and says, "You are facing Austin Syndrome (a disease)." On the same day during the 'India Upfront' program, lawyer and civil rights activist Shehzad Poonawalla refers to the Muslim community and says, "They want communalism to spread like the coronavirus is spreading." At 'Newshour at 9' program, a journalist from the USA Katie Hopkins calls anti-CAA protesters as 'Islamist' and 'terrorist'.



BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra criticises the Congress party on 22 February 2020 on Republic TV and says, “Don’t they believe in India’s progress? Congress party is showing grumpiness and prickliness.” On 22 February 2020 in the ‘Newshour at 9 Special Edition’ program, lawyer and civil rights activist Shehzad Poonawalla says, “Anti-CAA protest is an anti-India and pro-Pakistan movement.” BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia says on 23 February in Republic TV, “After this meeting, there is no Indianess (patriotism) left in the Congress party. They should name the party Pakistani National Congress”. He was referring to Congress leader Shatrughan Sinha’s courtesy meeting with the President of Pakistan Arif Alvi.

Tushar Gupta, senior editor of Swarajya magazine, on 25 February 2020 on Time Now’s ‘Nation Wants to Know’ program says, “Anti-CAA protesters are lunatic stupid and mindless people.” On the same day at ‘Newshour at 9’ program, panellist and author Dr. Anand Ranganathan says “stupid” and “idiot” to another panellist named Aiqur Rahman, who is an Islamic scholar. During ‘The Debate with Arnab Goswami’ program on 25 February 2020, a panellist and pro-BJP political strategist Shubhrastha Sikha says, “The daadies and naanies (grandmothers) of Shaheen Bagh are jihadi (terrorist) elements.”

Unfortunately, news channels are a theatrical stage to perform violence. The discussion also shows that the news channels changed the main issue of Delhi riot and focused on other issues like abusing, blaming and hating each other. This issue attention cycle by the media is constructed purely for hiding the truths from the audience (Downs, 1972).

### **Host Provokes to Act Violently**

Analysing the fight among the panellists, it is also found that panellists do not fight with each other intentionally. It is mainly the anchor who orchestrates the fight and provokes the fight to create a sensation. On 21 February 2020 at 9:25 pm in the ‘Newshour at 9’ program, the anchor Navika Kumar provoked a panellist and political analyst Tehseen Poonawalla by saying “Now” in a very slight voice to counter another panellist and political analyst Dr. Suman Sriramanam who was making his points. Suddenly Tehseen Poonawalla started quarrelling with Suman Sriramanam.

On ‘The Debate’ of 24 February 2020 at 9:14 pm, Arnab first says to a panellist and former commissioner TR Kakkar for making his point. When he was speaking and everyone was listening, and then suddenly Arnab Goswami softly with a low voice says “Tauseef, Tauseef” and a panellist from the opposition and social activist Mohammad Tauseef Rahman started shouting at TR Kakkar. Then quarrelling eventually started among all the panellists. On the same debate on 24 February at 9:16 pm Arnab softly takes the name and says, “Vivek, now” and Vivek Srivastav, leader of the Communist Party of India (CPI), started shouting at TR Kakkar. On 25 February in the ‘Newshour at 9’ program at 9:27 pm, the host Navika Kumar provoked Nishant Verma, a political analyst, by softly saying “You go on” and Nishant Verma started quarrelling with the BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia.

These slight provocations are a pure depiction of psychological violence and performative violence (Manzi, 2014). It means the depiction of performance has a huge impact on the audience. Understanding the nature of all of these slight provocations, it is clear that the host provokes the panellists to fight each other and to shout at each other. It also shows that the studio anchor actually plays the provocateur’s roles in the performative violence. All these fights may have been pre-planned and if the panellists forget their role, the host encourages them through slight provocations to fighting.

### **Violence Means Blame-Game for Politicians**

The blaming culture among the political parties is a common tendency for any violence related issue. It has also been observed that the ‘versus discourse’ is a part of political blame-game. Each and every day from 21 February to 27 February 2020, leaders of different political parties e.g. BJP, Congress, Aam Admi Party, and AIMIM blame each other for violence related issues.

On 21 February in Times Now’s ‘India Upfront’ program, a pro-BJP political analyst and civil rights activist Shehzad Poonawalla pointed to the AIMIM party leader Waris Pathan and says, “When BJP does something,

you want an answer but when Owaisi (president of AIMIM) and his party does anything then it is internal? Owaisi, Waris Pathan, AIMIM everyone is a hypocrite.” Even the host of the program Rahul Shivshankar took the BJP’s side and asks, “Is Shaheen Bagh agitation becoming a launch-pad to campaign an attack on the Modi government?”

On the 24 February, while pro-CAA and anti-CAA protesters got involved into a deadly clash in Delhi, an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy (BJP leader) blames the Congress party for the violence while the Congress leaders blame the BJP and the Delhi Police for the violence. On 25 February in the Times Now’s ‘Nation Wants to Know’ program, BJP spokesperson Neeti Jain blames Congress and Aam Admi Party (AAP) for the Delhi riot and says, “What we saw in Delhi is just an extended version of politicisation”, while political analyst Prof. Rizwan Kaisar blames BJP and Delhi police for the riot.

On 26 February, in a press briefing, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi blames the Home Minister Amit Shah for the Delhi Violence. The AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi and Aam Admi Party leader Gopal Rai blame blames Delhi Police for the riot. The Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar (BJP leader) on 27 February criticises the Aam Admi Party and Congress Party for the violence and says, “When Delhi is burning, they are busy criticising BJP and Home Minister. Actually, they are provoking the people for over two months after the Citizenship Act has been passed.”

All the information suggests that violence and blame-game walk hand-in-hand, because blame-game is a political strategy to hide or distract from other important issues (Weaver, 2013). In politics, tearing down the opponents is considered political and policy success, however, the concept and expression of blaming is the result of two elements — perceived negative experience and an attribution of the responsibility for this experience (Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Hood, 2005). So, such blame-game, amounting to a diversion, is not a new phenomenon in the politics because, political parties need to hide their weakness and this tactic serves as an important tool in that process.

### **Media are Biased towards BJP Government**

It is an obvious fact after examining both the television channels that both are biased in favour of the ruling BJP government. The study finds that both the television channels criticise the Congress party and other anti-BJP parties for their standpoint, press briefing, hate speech, and viewpoint. But they do not criticise BJP for the Delhi riot. Neither Republic TV nor Times Now unravel the roles of the Home Minister and Central Government in the riot in Delhi. And Republic TV is far ahead in broadcasting its bias than Times Now. The Times Now only on 27 February criticises some of the leaders from the BJP for their hate speech, while Republic TV mostly lays the onus on anti-BJP faction. When both the television channels were investigating the reason behind the violence—Times Now attempts to provide balance and says, “It is not any single political party who spread hate speech. People from all the political parties have provoked the people for violence.” On the other hand, the Republic TV holds only the anti-BJP parties and anti-CAA protesters responsible for the riot.

Political Performative Theory explains how power emerges within a dialectical relation between control and agency (Butler, 1997). It means, ‘performativity’ gives an idea of a culturally-scripted character of identity, which is nurtured and circulated by power at its will. So, media play the role of mediator between power and society, however, media align with power and generate identities as per the requirement of power. Nevertheless, media manufacture consent and circulate propaganda based on five filters including ownership, advertising, news sourcing, flake the critics and establishing common enemy (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). As both Republic TV and Times Now are sponsored and owned by pro-BJP powers, it can be said that these TV channels were serving the purpose of their owners by creating common enemy.

### **CONCLUSION**

The discussion above shows that the media is orchestrating both performative and psychological violence in their programs. If we consider media effects on the public, it has been proved that psychological effects can lead to physical acts of violence (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Blame-game, hate speech, abusive words,

politicisation, misinformation, shouting, verbal duels and provocative statements are commonly found in news channels. But news channels manufacture and broadcast such content to create sensation (Bhargava & Balhara, 2017), because, sensational content gives them TRP and TRP gives them advertisements which they need to survive.

However, power relations, politicisation of violence, dividing people based on their religious and political identity, and bias attitude in favour of a particular political party cannot be the ideal characteristics of any news channel. The divide and rule politics was a key tool when India was a British colony (Farooqui, 2015). Being the fourth estate, news media must not forget their fundamental duty of showing news as it is. But due to the filters like ownership, advertisement, bureaucracy, flak and common enemy television channels frame the news to set an agenda instructed by power (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Such portrayal promotes separatism, because the main purpose of the power is to rule, and for that, dividing is crucial.

So, the study outlines that the 'versus (vs.) discourse' is dangerous for the public, especially in a country as diverse as India. Consequently, television news channels end up circulating violence in society through their representations of violent events. Debates and panel discussions cannot be a theatrical stage of violence. Contrarily, they need to serve as conflict resolution mediums not provocateurs.

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