Social Media Reels Usage Towards Religious Minorities And Political Mind-Shift in India- An In-Depth Content Analysis

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Abstract

Short video clips or reels have become the most convenient medium of sharing information on social media platforms. However, these can also be potentially misused for circulating content that is false, unverified or carries bias. Literature affirms that media consumed in any form, has the potential to form or alter mass opinions. This research sought to unravel the intricate dynamics between online content, religious bias and political perceptions. The study undertook an in-depth examination of the content within 50 reels circulating in social media, focusing on their intended effects on perception towards religious minorities and political mind-shift among Indian users. By adhering to ethical considerations and transparency in reporting, a rigorous content analysis methodology was employed. The findings are suggestive that visual elements in the reels are intended to provoke religious divide towards minorities, often with exaggeration of false information as true, and associating Indian political figures with religious ideologies, thereby having the tremendous potential to drastically shape public opinions. This study not only aligns with the current zeitgeist of digital communication but also underscores the broader implications of content dissemination on social media platforms.

Keywords: Social Media, Short Video Clips, Reels, Digital Psychology, Religious Minorities, Political Mind-shift, Public Opinion, Content Analysis

Introduction

a) Reels and short-form videos- a new mode of communication

In the arena of social media platforms, reels are short, engaging video clips that users create and share on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and other similar apps (Hong, S. 2022). These videos are typically set to music and often involve creative editing, transitions, and various visual effects. On Instagram, for example, reels are features that allow users to create and discover short-form videos on the platform. Users can record and edit 15- 60 seconds multi-clip videos with music, text and other creative elements (Szeto et al., 2021).

TikTok on the other hand, is a dedicated platform for short-form videos, and its popularity has grown rapidly especially among younger audiences (Montag et al., 2021). Reels provide users with a platform to express themselves creatively, showcase their talents, and connect with a wider audience through engaging and easily shareable content (Patel et al., 2020). This format of communication has become a significant part of social media culture.

b) Reels with a positive aspect

Reels being the powerful tool for propagating ideas, offer a quick and engaging way to communicating messages, share information and express opinions. For instance, users can create short educational reels to explain complex concepts, share quick tips, or provide tutorials on various subjects (Yeo, D. 2016). This format is particularly effective for delivering information in a concise and visually appealing manner.

Reels can be used to raise awareness about important issues or advocate for a cause. Activists and organizations often leverage short videos to convey their messages and encourage viewers to take action (Aini, K., & Soegiarto, A, 2022). Compelling stories can be told in a short time frame using reels. Whether it's personal narrative, a testimonial, or a fictional story, the format allows for quick storytelling that can capture attention and convey messages effectively (Ur, C. P. 2023).

Reels are an excellent way to promote upcoming events, campaigns, or initiatives. The dynamic nature of short videos makes them shareable and helps spread the word quickly. Artists, designers, and creatives can use reels to showcase their work, whether it's visual art, music, dance or any other form of creative expression. This can help in promoting artistic ideas and gaining recognition (Kuncoro, A. R. 2022). Comedy and satire can be a powerful tool for conveying ideas. Reels allow users to create humorous content that can make serious topics more approachable and shareable.

c) A new medium of sharing religious teachings

Also, reels can be used to provide commentary on current events, social issues or cultural phenomena (Aini et al., 2022). Users can share their perspectives, opinions, and insights in a succinct and impactful way. For the purpose of this research, sharing religious point of view through reels has been considered. Reels can be used as a tool for sharing religious messages (Barfield, A. 2023). Many individuals and religious organizations leverage short-form videos on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and others to communicate their faith, share teachings, and connect with their community.

Likewise, users can create short reels featuring scripture readings or reflections on religious texts (Marwantika, A. I. 2022). They can help convey key messages from sacred texts and provide insights into their interpretation. Reels can be used to share prayers, devotional messages, and moments of spiritual reflections (Morehouse et al., 2021). This can foster a sense of community and provide followers with a source of inspiration.

Religious leaders or educators can use reels to deliver short lessons, teachings, or explanations of religious concepts (Nabila et al., 2023). This format is effective for conveying information in a concise and visually engaging manner. Reels can showcase the celebration of religious festivals, rituals, and traditions. This allows followers to share in the joyous moments and fosters a sense of belonging within the religious community (Meidina, A. P. 2023).

Individuals may use reels to share personal stories of faith, spiritual journeys, and experiences related to their religious beliefs. This personal touch can create a connection with viewers (Majid, Z. A. 2023). Reels can be a platform for engaging with the religious community. This can include shout-outs, messages of encouragement and invitations to participate in religious activities or events.

d) Reels being a mode of false & misleading religious information

It becomes essential to approach the use of reels for religious messages with sensitivity and respect for diverse beliefs. Considering the platform's audience and cultural context is crucial to ensure that the messages are well-received and align with the values of the religious community being addressed. However, like any forms of media or communication, short-form videos, including reels, can be used to

propagate false information or misleading messages, including those related to religion (Guo et al., 2023). In the age of digital media, there is a risk that misinformation can be spread through various platforms, intentionally or unintentionally (Bhuchakra et al., 2023).

Individuals or groups might create reels that misinterpret or manipulate religious scriptures to convey messages that deviate from the actual teachings of a particular faith (Beckham et al., 2023). Reels could be used to spread false prophesies, predictions, or claims about future events, exploiting the emotional and spiritual concerns of viewers (Fahmi et al., 2023). People may create reels depicting fake miracles, supernatural events, or religious experiences to deceive viewers and gain attention (Kgatle, M. S. 2018).

e) A way of propagating religious divide and hatred among communities

Reels could be used to promote sectarianism or extremism within a religious context, fostering division and misunderstanding (Scrivens et al., 2020). Individuals might create reels impersonating religious leaders or figures, spreading messages that may not align with the actual beliefs of the represented faith. It's uncertain if users approach content on social media with a critical mindset and verify information from reliable sources, especially when it comes to religious messages (Bruns et al., 2020). Additionally, it is unknown how much vigilance users practice in reporting and flagging content that may be misleading, as social media platforms play a key role in moderating and addressing the spread of misinformation (Vaidhyanathan, S. 2018).

Unfortunately, social media platforms can be misused to propagate hatred towards religious communities (Hutchinson et al., 2023). The ease of sharing content on these platforms can sometimes result in the rapid spread of divisive or inflammatory messages (Lajevardi et al., 2022). Reels can be created to spread hate speech, discriminatory remarks, or derogatory content targeting specific religious communities (Matamoros et al., 2021). This can contribute to the amplification of negative stereotypes and fuel animosity.

Misleading reels may be produced to promote false narratives or conspiracy theories that unfairly target certain religious groups, fostering distrust and animosity (Castaño et al., 2021). Reels can take statements or actions out of context to create a false impression of a religious community, leading to misunderstandings and prejudiced views (Kulkarni et al., 2018). Some individuals or groups may use reels to incite violence or promote harmful actions against members of a particular religious community (Tripathi, V. 2017). This poses serious risks to social harmony and can have real-world consequences.

Reels might be used to promote sectarianism and intolerance by emphasizing differences between religious groups and fostering a sense of superiority or disdain (Marwantika, A. I. 2022). Social media platforms have policies in place to address hate speech and harmful content; however, they rely on users to report such content. Hereby, users are expected to become responsible and critical thinkers when engaging with content, and they are supposed to report such instances of hate speech or discriminatory content they come across (Reisach, U. 2021). However, the abundance in which such content is created and shared makes it impossible to report all the sources. At the same time, it cannot be overlooked that these contents have extreme potential to impact and influence the thinking pattern of users about other religious communities on whom hate is directed in such reels.

f) A vicious combination of political agendas and religious ideologies

The lack of initiatives that focus on interfaith dialogue, education, and collaboration make it more difficult to counter the negative effects of hate speech on social media. Adding to the situation is reels being used to portray political figures having an affinity towards a specific religious ideology (Abdel-Fadil, M. 2019). Content creators often use these platforms to share their perspectives on political

figures, and such content may include snippets of speeches, public appearances, or actions by politicians that are interpreted to suggest a connection to a particular religious ideology (Larkin et al., 2008).

Creators may leverage creative editing, captions, music, and other elements in reels to shape the narrative and convey their message about a political figure's perceived affinity towards a religious ideology. This can be a form of political commentary, satire, or expression of personal opinions on the relationship between politics and religion (Winston, D. 2007). The portrayals of political figures in this manner can be subjective, and interpretations may vary among different viewers. Additionally the context, intent, and accuracy of the information presented in such reels can have significant implications for public perceptions and discussions surrounding political and religious issues (Conrad, B. 2018).

g) *Reels charged with politico-religious content having potential to create political mind-shift*

The portrayal of political figures favoring a particular religion in reels has the potential to influence political mind-shift among users (Zaharna et al., 2013). Social media content, including reels, can play a significant role in shaping public opinion, as it reaches a broad audience quickly and often engages users emotionally. Such reels can be persuasive in shaping how users perceive political figures (Zaharna et al., 2014). By highlighting moments that suggest an affinity towards a specific religion, content creators can influence viewers' perceptions of a politician's values, beliefs and potential biases (Ross et al., 2014).

Short-form videos are effective in evoking emotional responses. If the content portrays a politician's connection to a particular religious ideology in an emotionally charged manner, it can impact users emotionally, potentially influencing their attitudes and opinions (Duncombe, C. 2019). Reels that align with users' pre-existing beliefs or suspicions about a politician's religious affiliations may reinforce confirmation bias. Users might be more likely to accept and share content that aligns with their existing political perspectives (Rieger et al., 2021).

Social media content, especially if it is visually engaging and emotionally compelling, has the potential to go viral (Al-Rawi, Ahmed. 2019). As more users share and engage with the content, it can reach a wider audience, contributing to a broader political mind-shift. Reels can spark discussions and debates within the online community (Lai et al., 2020). The conversations generated by such content can further contribute to the shaping of political attitudes and opinions among users.

Some of the above literature is speculative, about how reels can be used for some positive purposes such as showcasing talent and activism. At the same instance, a great amount of literature is indicative that reels might be used in such a way that cause or increases religious divide and political misunderstanding and mind-shifting among users. However, there exists a lack of research bodies, which could have studied the content of the reels and evaluated the exact nature of how such reels intend to manipulate or impact the perception and thinking capacity of the users.

Rationale of the Study

This study was an attempt to understand *the intention of using social media reels with Indo- religious-politico content*, and *whether its purpose is to influence public perception and attitudes towards political figures with religious contour for minorities.* The investigation was to decipher the *intention* of such visual content in shaping opinions, especially in the context of religious affiliations, to identify patterns, themes and commonalities in the portrayal of political figures with supposed religious bias. Hence this research explored whether the presented content intended to influence political mind-shift among users. Also, *the study was undertaken to address the inter-sectionality of politics and religion in the digital age and to provide insights into the effectiveness of current content moderation policies.*

Aim of the Study

The research aimed to conduct a meticulous content analysis of 50 social media reels, examining the portrayal of statements and images towards religious minorities and its potential impact on political mind-shift. By unraveling the content's nuances, the study aims to provide in-depth insights into how such portrayals may influence political perceptions, contributing to understanding of the intricate dynamics between social media content, religious bias and political attitudes.

Research Methodology

Data Collection- A purposive selection of 50 reels was done randomly from a pool of 250 reels from a popular social media platform (Facebook) with a running duration of minimum 20 seconds to 1 minute 45 seconds.

All the reels exhibited statements or images pertaining to anyone of the following:

a) Religious and/or political elements or phrases with remarks or questions made to the audience/users
b) Famous Indian political figures or film stars in the background with statements,
c) And had a reach of at least 1000 likes at the time of selection.

Following is the reel data (all 50 reels chosen for the study) represented in image format:
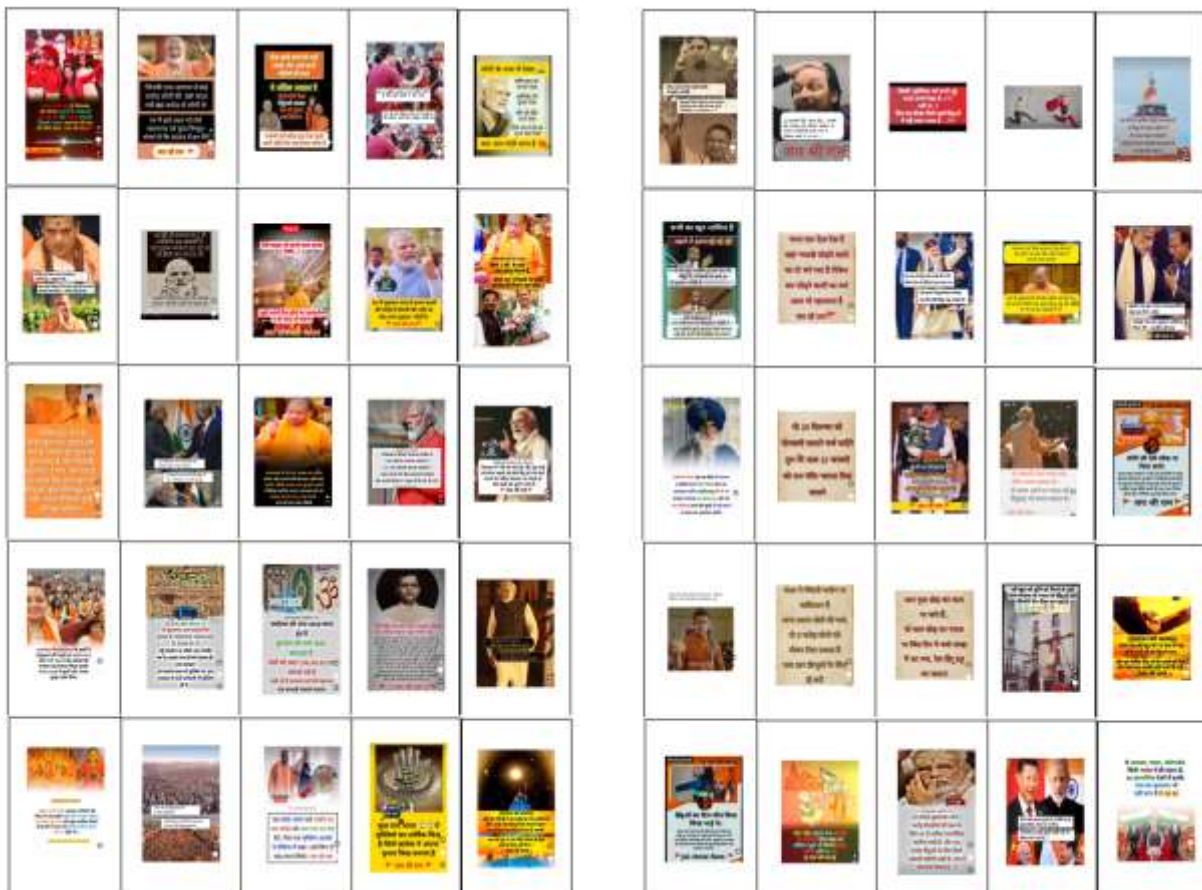
Inclusion Criteria- Recent reels (in circulation on social media since last 4 months) with visual elements depicting statements in Hindi vernacular towards religious minorities, religious phrases and featuring of political figures either directly or indirectly, with at least a reach of 1000 likes, and a focus on their potential connection to religious bias were included for the study.

Exclusion Criteria- Reels that do not contain any relevant information or elements related to religious bias or political figures, such as personal or entertainment related content, in languages other than Hindi, sourced from non-social media platforms, and in circulation for less than 4 months or more than 5 months were discarded from the study.

Data Analysis- A comprehensive coding framework was utilized to systematically categorize and analyze various aspects of the selected content. For generation of the themes from the content, the raw data was structured into codes and themes as per the method adapted from the framework model to ease data evaluation for the current exploration (Pope et al., 2000).

The codes and themes were generated as per the steps as follows-

- To get accustomed with the data, the researcher read the content statements multiple times- familiarization
- A thematic framework was followed to support the theory-based strategy of reels intended impact on users' mind-shift and perception- Identification of thematic framework
- Additional sub-codes and sub-themes were derived from the data- Indexing
- The quotes from the content of the reels were assigned under the codes, which were rearranged to the right theme- Mapping
- Finally, the process was completed with the analysis- Interpretation

The thematic categories were induced from visual elements, language used, political figures depicted, religious phrases or insinuated messages, and potential themes of hatred and comparisons. Identification of patterns, recurring themes, and specific elements were focused that contributed to the portrayal of hatred towards religious minorities and any potential impact on political mind-shift.

It was ensured that each reel's content was accurately documented and coded through systematic management and organization, that the confidentiality and anonymity of the content creators was maintained and potentially sensitive content was ethically handled.

Findings

Theme	Sub- Theme	Verbatim
1. Critique of other Religion	Making Comparisons with other religious festivals/historical assets to downgrade their ways of celebration/expression and establishing Superiority for one's religious faith.	Reel 1- "अपने बच्चो को 25 दिसंबर को जोकर बनाने से अच्छा है 22 जनुअरी को श्रीराम बनाओ जिससे उनका आचरण श्री राम जी जैसा होगा! जय श्री रामा" Reel 14- "ताज महल से सो गुना अच्छा राम मंदिर बनेगा और बनाने वालो के हाथ नहीं काटे जायेंगे, बल्कि उनका नाम सुनहरे अक्षरों में लिखा जायेगा।"
	Building distinctions between religious practices to activate disgust among majority.	Reel 16- "अपनों के अंतिम संस्कार पर नहाते हो, और क़ब्रों को चूमने जाते हो " Reel 30- "भारत संतो की भूमि है, सांता का नहीं।" Reel 45- "आप पूजा छोड़ कर काम पर जाते है , वो काम छोड़ कर नमाज़ पर। जिस

		दिन ये फर्क समझ में आ गया , देश हिन्दू राष्ट्र बन्न जायेगा।"
	Complaining that issues of minor communities got highlighted while the issues of majority only got forgotten and ignored.	Reel 12- "मस्जिद टूटा याद है, मंदिर भूल गए। 2002 दंगे याद है, जलता ट्रैन भूल गए। मुग़ल याद है, वीर शिवाजी भूल गए। 1971 जंग याद है, 25 लाख हिन्दू लाश भूल गए।"
	Criticizing majority (Hindus) for adopting inter-faith actions.	Reel 16- "तिरपाल में श्री राम पड़े है और तुम साई को सोना चढ़ाते रहे" Reel 29- "किसी (मुस्लिम) को कभी सांता बनते देखा है? नहीं ना? फिर यह कीड़ा सिर्फ मूर्ख हिन्दुओ में क्यों पाया जाता है?"
	Condemning today's minority (Muslims) for denouncing and taking objections on saying national slogans, while mentioning instances of the past where the same slogans were used by the same minority community in their work.	Reel 18- "जो मुस्लमान आज कहते है की इस्लाम में "वन्देमातरम" बोलना हराम है , वो देख ले- ये उर्दू अख़बार 14 अप्रैल 1931 लाहौर का है। इसका नाम ही वंदे मातरम है इस अख़बार को चलने वाला भी मुस्लिम था , इस अख़बार के सरे कर्मचारी भी मुस्लिम ही थे।"
	Depicting and appealing to circulate unverified differences about religious holy texts to claim the greatness of one's religious faith over others.	Reel 19 – "बाइबिल को आये 2020 साल हुए है , कुरान हो आये 1400 साल हुए है , वेदो को आये 1960553121 वर्ष हो गए है ,यही तो है सनातन धर्म की महानता यह सच्चाई सबको बताये।"
	Generalizing unfortunate historical events on all Mughals, putting allegations on them and framing them as thieves and plunderers who did not contribute to any positive formations within India.	Reel 22- "जोहर करने वाली 16000 रानियों की चिता से अल्लाउदीन खिलजी ने सवा चौहत्तर टन सोना लुटा था और कुछ जाहिल बोलते है मुघलो ने भारत का निर्माण किआ। मुग़ल चोर थे, लुटेरे थे।"
	Expressing discontent and criticism towards Sai trust for prioritizing funding for Muslim religious purposes over Hindu religious causes, implying a sense of injustice and unfairness.	Reel 26- "साई ट्रस्ट शिरडी ने 35 करोड़ का दान हज कमिटी को दिया है, जबकि इस साई ट्रस्ट ने राम मंदिर निर्माण के लिए कोई भी पैसा नहीं दिया। जय श्री रामा"

	Expressing antagonism and retaliation for the gesture of good will and cooperation from the minority religious group.	Reel 31- "राम मंदिर से मुस्लिम मिट्टी देना चाहते है, तो हिन्दू भी मक्का मेडिना में गंगा जल चढ़ाना चाहते है। कोई है जो इस भाईचारे का बढ़ावा दे ? जय श्री राम।"
	Implicit critique of the allocation of land for cemeteries primarily associated with religious minorities.	Reel 44- "भारत में जितनी जमीं पर कब्रिस्तान है, अगर उसपर खेती की जाये तो ८ करोड़ लोगो को भोजन मिल सकता है। सारा ज्ञान हिन्दुओ के लिए ही क्यों?"
	Sarcastic Remarks against God of religious minorities.	Reel 46- "जो खुद की मूर्ति को गिरने से नहीं बचा सकता, वो भारत के हिन्दुओ को बीमारी रोग ठीक कर रहा है।"
2. Exaggerating the power, impact and capacity of political leaders	Making false, unverified or baseless claims over politician's personality, actions and intentions.	Reel 2- "जिनकी एक आवाज़ से 60 करोड़ लोगो की DP बदल गयी 80 करोड़ से लोगो के घर में झंडे लहर गए…" Reel 2- "….ऐसे महामानव को" Reel 7- "आँखों में खटकता हु मैं क्युकी सालो से जो हराम मलाई खा रहे थे वो मैंने बंद करवा दी" Reel 5- "मोदी के राज में देखा - पाकिस्तान को घबराते देखा, अमरीका को झुकते देखा, चीन को पीछे हटते देखा, मोदी राज में देश का सूरज चढ़ते देखा.." Reel 8- "मेरी सड़क भी कभी जा करके देखो ! तुम्हे अपने पैदा होने पर अफ़सोस न हो जाये तो कहना - जय श्री राम" Reel 13- "जब पाकिस्तान कहता है की सारे देश मोदी के इशारे पर काम करते है" Reel 34- "70 साल में हिन्दू नहीं समझे की गाँधी परिवार देश में मुस्लिम राष्ट्र चाहता था" Reel 41- "जो आदमी 500 साल बाद मंदिर बनवा सकता है। वो समय आने पर भारत को हिन्दू राष्ट्र भी बनवा सकते है। जय श्री राम।" Reel 34- "10 साल में मुस्लमान समझ गए की मोदी हिन्दू राष्ट्र चाहते है।" Reel 42- "योगी जी ऐसे शॉक ना दिया

		करो। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने उर्दू और फ़ारसी पर बड़ा फैसला लिया है।..”
	Attaching the governmental actions and strategies to just one leader, with statements that appear to be exaggeratedly aggressive in frame.	Reel 9- “घर में घुस कर मारा है , कमर सालो की तोड़ी है, दिल्ली की गद्दी पर बैठा बाप तुम्हारा मोदी है - जय श्री राम”
3. Derogatory, downgrading, challenging, unverified, defamatory and insulting remarks against people in opposition/religious minorities	Claiming that opposition is unintelligent has no capacity to see the impact and influence of the political leader, and thinks of defeating the leader in the upcoming election.	Reel 2- “..कुछ चिरकुट सोचते है की 2024 में हरा देंगे।“
	Anyone who is in support of opposition is tagged as a sycophant.	Reel 3- “…चमचो को छोड़…” Reel 15- “और चमचे मोदी पर भड़क रहे है , जय श्री राम!”
	Opposition leaders with Indian citizenship are being portrayed as anti-Hindu, with racist comments, misleading and false claims.	Reel 4- “पुरे 20 वकील लगाए थे राम मंदिर रोकने के लिए भूरी काकी ने”
	Opposition statements were countered with statements and out of context remarks from leaders in power that were derogatory.	Reel 6- “मैं हिन्दू धर्म को भाजपा से बेहतर जानता हु- राहुल गाँधी बाप दादा अँधेरा में मर गए और बेटे का नाम जनरेटर रख दिया - योगी आदित्यनाथ”
	Asking to uproot people in opposition and tagging them as anti-national	Reel 7- “उधेड़ दो गद्दारो को”
	Criticizing Hindus for remembering the atrocities on minorities, and asking them to be mindful to keep own issues on priority.	Reel 12- “हिन्दुओ, कुछ चीज़े खुद याद रखो, वर्ना इतिहास तुम्हे भी भूल जायेगा।“
	False belief or conspiracy theory about the Indian National Congress party using religious symbols associated with Muslims as their election symbol.	Reel 25- “कुछ याद आया! ये मुस्लिमो का धार्मिक चिन्ह है जिसे कांग्रेस ने अपना चुनाव चिन्ह बनाया है। जय श्री राम।“

	Warning minority to remain as passive and submissive, and not challenge the position of the majority, implying that majority perceive themselves as dominant and superior.	Reel 32- "….कान खोलो, सुनो चुपचाप शेरू बनकर रहो, शेर बनने की कोशिश मत करना।"
	Perpetuating harmful stereotype and generalization by contrasting the visibility those who burst firecrackers, with the supposed mystery surrounding the religious identity of those who detonate bombs without explicitly stating it.	Reel 33- "भारत एक ऐसा देश है जहा पटाखे फोड़ने वालो का तो धर्म पता है लेकिन बम फोड़ने वालो का धर्म आज भी रहस्यमय है। जय श्री राम।"
	Challenging the historical context in which Mughals became known to the Indian masses while showcasing that they are not recognized within Islamic states.	Reel 53- "ये अकबर, बाबर, औरंगज़ेब सिर्फ भारत में ही महान है, 56 इस्लामिक देशो में इनके नाम का मूत्रालय भी नहीं बना है।"
4. Using specific religious phrases with photographs of Political leaders.	Statements with photos of the leaders in the background ending with specific chants to signify that the leader is associated with the specific religious ideology.	Reel 2- "….ऐसे महामानव को कुछ चिरकुट सोचते है की में हरा देंगे। जय श्री राम।" Reel 14- "अगर आप इस बात से सहमत हो तो फॉलो करके जय श्री राम ज़रूर लिखे।" Reel 36- "2047 तक हम भारत को इस्लामिक राष्ट्र बना देंगे : PFI 2030 तक हम तुम्हारा अस्तित्व ही मिटा देंगे : अजीत डोभाल , जय श्री राम " Reel 50- "बेटा नरेंद्र 2022 तक सबको घर मिलेगा ऐसा कहा था, लेकिन मुझे भी मिलेगा ऐसा सोचा नहीं था। जय श्री राम।"
	Direct statements claiming the politician belonging to specific religion.	Reel 3- "मोदी योगी जैसा हिंदूवादी शासक देश को दुबारा नहीं मिलेगा।"
	Political activities done by the leader in each term chosen, had religious connotation and motives.	Reel 21- "पहले चुना तो धरा हटा, दोबारा चुना तो राम मंदिर बन रहा है, इस बार भी चुन कर देख लो, एक दिन हिन्दू राष्ट्र भी बन कर रहेगा।"
5. Future is doomed if	Encouraging masses to be	Reel 3- " चिंता मोदी योगी की नहीं अपने

political leaders with religious affinity are not re-elected.	concerned about their future.	और आने वाली पीढ़ियों की करो।"
	Highlighting statements on part of muslims, reflecting the apprehension and perception of religious intolerance and aggression for the potential destruction of the Ram temple in case specific politicians are not re-elected.	Reel 24- "जब मोदी- योगी चले जायेंगे तब राम मंदिर को लात मार कर तोड़ देंगे, ऐसा एक मुस्लिम आदमी ने मीडिया में कहा। इसके लिए दो शब्द ज़रूर लिखे। जय श्री राम।"
6. Portraying Hinduism in need of collective protection.	Entire nation except those in opposition are claimed as desirous of getting the leaders elected for one more term, who are perceived as protective of Hinduism.	Reel 3- "….चमचो को छोड़, पूरा देश तुम्हे जाने नहीं देगा ये हमारा वादा है" Reel 7- "चमचो को छोड़कर पूरा देश आपके साथ है मोदी जी"
	Circulating justification of heinous acts of murder of historical figures because they were committed as a retort towards perceived religious deprivation.	Reel 20- मैंने गाँधी को क्यों मारा - नाथूराम गोडसे का अंतिम बयान- तुम चाहते तो लाल किले पर भगवा लहरा सकते थे,… तुम चाहते तो दो धर्मों में इतने टुकड़े ना होते .. मुझको मेरी रगो में बहते लहू ने ललकारा था इसलिए मैंने गाँधी को दिल्ली जाके मारा था। जय श्री राम। "
	Expressing wonder that Hindus have only one ruling party defending them, however, minorities are getting protection from all other political parties.	Reel 51- "20 करोड़ मुस्लमान और 7 करोड़ ईसाइयो की रक्षा के लिए 52 से अधिक राजनीतिक पार्टिया खड़ी है, और 100 करोड़ हिन्दुओ के लिए सिर्फ अकेली बीजेपी खड़ी है। सच में सोचनीय विषय है।"
7. Protecting and cherishing Hinduism is the ultimate goal.	Participation of opposition leaders in Hindu festivities is portrayed with false statements of forceful action.	Reel 4- "..पुरे 20 वकील लगाए थे राम मंदिर रोकने के लिए भूरी काकी ने"
	Justifying that making any one forcefully practice Hinduism is an indication of all achievable.	Reel 4- "..और आज राम जी का तिलक करने पर मजबूर है"
	Identification/Recognition of acts that overturn other cultural signifiers and ones that uphold own cultural or religious markers.	Reel 17- "उत्तरांचल विश्वविद्यालय के छात्रों ने ग्रेजुएशन की पढाई पर काले गाउन और टोपी पहनने की अंग्रेज़ो की परंपरा को समाप्त किआ। इसके बजाये छात्रो ने कुर्ता और भगवा दुपट्टा पहन लिया।"

8. Call for supportive action towards leaders with religious ideologies.	Inciting statements to immediate action as if there are no chances after this.	Reel 3- "ये अंतिम अवसर है"
	Posing questions for action to show faith towards the leader after showing what has been achieved by the leader.	Reel 5- "क्या आप मोदी के साथ है ?"
	Asking viewers to choose the same leader again in the next term, as the leader has the potential to surely transform the country into the desired religious dominant nation.	Reel 21- "पहले चुना तो धरा हटा, दोबारा चुना तो राम मंदिर बन रहा है, इस बार भी चुन कर देख लो, एक दिन हिन्दू राष्ट्र भी बन कर रहेगा।"
9. Inflated critique of opposition.	Overgeneralization of corruption incidents to all in opposition and past leaders.	Reel 10 – "सिर्फ १ बन्दे के पास 350 करोड़ निकले है , सोचो सब ने मिलके 70 साल तक देश को कितना लूटा होगा !"
	Twisting historical, constructive, situational requisite events and unverified information to reframe them as allegations towards the opposition.	Reel 15- "कड़वा है पर सत्य है, पाकिस्तान किसने बनवाया: कांग्रेस ने , JNU किसने बनवाया : कांग्रेस ने , 370 धारा किसने बनाया : कांग्रेस ने , पत्थर बाजो को कौन बचता है :कांग्रेस, और चमचे मोदी पर भड़क रहे है , जय श्री राम" Reel 28- "77 इमरजेंसी 84 सिख 90 कश्मीरी हिंदी नरसंहार तक संविधान सुरक्षित था। 9 वर्षों में 4029 आतंकी मरने से संविधान खतरे में आ गया?" Reel 40- "बिहार - पहले दीपावली होली या शिवरात्रि की छुट्टिया घटा कर ईद, मुहर्रम, की छुट्टिया बढ़ाई, अब जुम्मे को भी स्कूल बंद रखेंगे नितीश बाबू जय श्री राम।"
	Circulating metaphorical statements on part of ruling leaders against leaders in opposition as a criticism as well as satire.	Reel 27 – "मंदिर बनने से रोटी थोड़ी मिलेगी- असदुद्दीन ओवैसी बिलकुल मिलेगी, मंदिर के सामने कटोरा लेकर बैठ जाना, रोटी के साथ सब्जी भी मिलेगी। जय श्री राम।"
10. Exaggerated satisfaction with supporting leader.	Expressing undeserved support to the leader over unverified claims and reports.	Reel 13- "जब पाकिस्तान कहता है की सारे देश मोदी के इशारे पर काम करते है, तो कसम से मन करता है की मोदी जी को 1 की

		बजाये 5-6 वोट कर दूं"
11. Circulating false information	Using names of other nations to falsely claim that the entire nation has a religious nationalist ideology and is advocating for the establishment as a nation primarily based on Hindu culture.	Reel 23- "नेपाल देश को हिन्दू राष्ट्र बनाने के लिए लाखो लोग, सड़को में उतर गए है और उनका एक ही नैरा है की हिन्दू राष्ट्र बनाओ।"
12. Perpetuating us-versus-them narrative.	Confronting the notion of India belonging to all with the assertion of partition suggesting that all Indian Muslims belong to Islamic nations such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.	Reel 32- "सभी का खून शामिल है इस देश की मिट्टी में, ये किसी के बाप का हिंदुस्तान थोड़ी है? लेकिन जिनके अब्बा ले चुके है बांग्लादेश और पाकिस्तान अब उनके बाप का हिंदुस्तान थोड़ी है"
	Merging nation's scientific achievements with religious symbolism, implying one's religion could become universally recognized and celebrated, while portraying religious minorities as helpless.	Reel 35- "चंद्रयान 3 ने जिस जगह पर लैंड किया है उस स्थान का नाम शिव शक्ति पॉइंट के नाम से जाना जायेगा। तब तो मुसलमानो को शिव शक्ति को देख कर ईद माननी पड़ेगी। एक कदम हिन्दू राष्ट्र की और। हर हर महादेव।"
	Asking the readers to not forget their own religion and choose Hindu religious observance as others would be practicing their observance.	Reel 43- "क्या हुआ क्रिसमस है तो, अपना धर्म नहीं भूलना चाहिए।" Reel 39- "वो 25 दिसंबर को मोमबत्ती जलने चर्च जायेंगे तुम मेरे साथ 22 जनवरी को राम मंदिर चलना दिया जलाने।"
13. Feelings of inclusivity for Sikhs	Highlighting the promises of the Sikh community, that reflect solidarity and interfaith harmony for Hindus	Reel 38- "2047 तक हम भारत को इस्लामिक राष्ट्र बना देंगे : PFI 2030 तक हम तुम्हारा अस्तित्व ही मिटा देंगे : अजीत डोभाल , जय श्री राम" Reel 49- "आसान कहा है हिन्दुओ को जगाना ? श्री कृष्ण जी को भी 18 अध्याय बोलने पड़े अर्जुन से शस्त्र उठाने के लिए।"

Deliberate statements with the intention to validate that acts of killing are justified as retorting, and to provoke Sikh Community against the Muslims.	Reel 47- "सनातन धर्म आरम्भ- साला पता होते हुए भी 70 साल से पढ़ा रहे है गाँधी जी को किसने मारा। और गुरु गोविन्द सिंह जी के बच्चो को किसने और क्यों मारा इसकी कोई चर्चा ही नहीं। जय श्री राम।"

Discussion

As per the Preamble of the Constitution, India is a declared secular nation, where all religious faiths are expected to co-exist and support each other with respect and dignity. Indian subcontinent is known worldwide for its rich heritage of different cultural variations, and yet able to hold the central ethos of co-existence. It has been seen celebrating festivities of each other that has always resulted into the warm cultural exchange and enhanced cohesiveness among all communities (Tarkunde, V. M. 1995).

However, this research is suggestive that there are elements within the current socio-cultural context of the country which are not psychologically content with this notion of secular coexistence. Social media being one of the powerful tools of communication, over which exist the facility of reels or short video clips with the potential to get easily circulated and go viral, is being used by these elements to express their discontent through numerous kinds of messages.

Most of the reels target upon the Muslim community, some target Christian and Persian sects, while there are reels that reflect solidarity and acceptance for Sikh community. Creators asked the readers to not forget their own religion and choose Hindu religious observance as others would be practicing their observance.

The above data analysis table is reflective that fourteen major themes became apparent from the reel data. Further sub-themes emerged as deeper analysis was done, that have been highlighted with the data represented in the verbatim section. From theme one, it is reflected that many of the reels have statements that have intentions to criticize other religious faiths. The sub-themes are reflective that statements have been framed to portray one's own religion superior over other communities.

Also, there are trials to make comparisons between the festivities of one's own religious faith and the minorities prevalent within the nation. Indian historical artifact with which Indian tourism generates revenue on the international platform, and which is considered as a world heritage site, such as the Taj Mahal (Singh et al., 2012), is now criticized, as it was constructed by a ruler who belonged to the minority faith.

Differences exist between all religious communities in how they practice last rites of their loved ones, and it is an observance that comes with deep sorrow and bereavement with the passing of someone (Howarth, G. 2016). Unfortunately, these practices have been disgusted upon within the reels. Another related sub-theme revealed that reels content went to the extent of criticizing the allocation of land for cemeteries, and instead proposing that the land could be utilized for the purpose of grazing crops that would feed millions.

Deliberate statements have been made to claim the nation as belonging to Hindu saints, rather than to the legendary figure Santa, who is associated with a 4th century Christian saint, Saint Nicholas (Siefker, P. 2006). Observing prayers at any time of the day is a personal choice as per the religious practices warrant that one follows. However, data is suggestive of critique against Hindus who consider work over worship, and this is stated against the Muslims who choose to worship in between work hours. Hindus

have been encouraged to understand this difference, with which creators expect irrationally, that the nation would become a Hindu nation.

One of the reels was intended to reflect on how only the issues of the minority got highlighted over the years, while the majority was always sidelined, forgotten and ignored with their issues. Taking anecdotes of Indian history as evidence, for every act of violence that Hindus did on Muslims, the creator presented violent acts of Muslims over Hindus which they perceive have been forgotten. Another sub-theme revealed that some reels projected criticism over Hindus for their practice of interfaith activities, to the extent of insulting Hindus by calling them stupid for celebrating festivities of other religions.

One of the reels intended to condemn the Indian Muslims of today, for denouncing and taking objections on saying national slogans, while mentioning past instances where the same slogans were used by the people of same minority in their work without any objections back then. Unverified information that depict differences about the various religious holy texts were depicted and the users were appealed to circulate these to claim the greatness of Hindu religion over all other faiths.

Tragedy events from history that give only the partial picture of how Muslims ruled over the Indian subcontinent, were represented in twisted manner over reels, with the intention to generalize those incidents and put allegations on all Muslims, framing them as plunderers and thieves. A probable explanation for the above finding would be to portray that Muslims did not contribute to any positive development within the Indian subcontinent.

Acts of cooperation and gesture of good will from the Muslim community were sarcastically discarded, with intended question to the users for expressing antagonism and retaliation against gesticulations made by the minorities. The criticism of minority religion went to the extent of making sarcastic remarks against the messiah within their faith, to dishonor the credibility of the messiah being a savior.

It was also revealed that many of the reels intended to exaggerate the power, impact and capacity of political leaders who were in power when these reels were in circulation. For this purpose, the reel creators didn't hesitate in making, false, unverified or baseless claims in consideration to the politician's personality, actions and intentions. Any governmental action or decisions regarding policy changes are taken after much deliberation among the legislature, the executive and the judiciary (Levitt, A. 1924).

However, this study found that reels were intended to portray those governmental actions and strategies were solely the decision of a single leader, framing the statements with aggressive tone as the actions were directed towards the minorities. Some of the reels had themes of derogatory, downgrading, challenging, unverified, defamatory and insulting remarks against people in opposition and religious minorities. Likewise, one of the reel remarked that the opposition which was unintelligent and had no capacity to see the impact or influence of the leader in power, but were thinking of defeating the leader in the upcoming election.

Some reels tagged anyone who was in support of the opposition as a sycophant. One reel went to the point of portraying opposition leaders with Indian Citizenship as anti-Hindu, with racist comments and writing false and misleading information about them. Another reel intended to contrast between the statements of two leaders, whereby statement of an opposition leader was countered with statements that were out-of-context remarks from the leaders in power, which were also, in-fact derogatory. There was one reel that pleaded to the leaders in power, to uproot the opposition who were also tagged as anti-national.

Interestingly, the criticism and insults were directed towards the majority community also, that is Hindus who were in support of the minorities, were told through the reel to be mindful not to remember the atrocities on the minorities, rather focus on priority basis over the mayhem faced by the Hindus caused by the minorities. Some reels were made with the intention to circulate absolute false beliefs and conspiracy theories about the leading opposition, which is Indian National Congress party, using religious symbols associated with Muslims as their election symbol.

The intention to psychologically terrorize minorities was also apparent through the reels; as one reel was found with a warning message for the minorities to remain passive and submissive, and not challenge the position of the majority, implying that the reel also intended to portray that majority perceive themselves as dominant and superior. A seditious reel was intended to perpetuate harmful stereotype and generalize that detonation of bombs as part of terrorist activities was carried out probably by minorities without explicitly stating so and that it yet remains mysterious. However, a contrast was apparent, whereby the creator complained that bursting firecrackers gets more visibility and is identified with the Hindu religious festival.

The historical context in which Mughals become known to the Indian masses were challenged in an insulting fashion in another reel, showcasing that the Mughal Rulers were not recognized within the Islamic states, associating them with the purposes such as human excretion. Within the Indian legislative, every politician is expected to serve the nation without any religious bias or personal faith interfering with their duties (Beri et al., 2022). However, some reels had the theme of portraying political leaders having religious affinity.

Likewise, reels with statements ending with specific religious chants and photographs of leading politicians from the ruling party, were intended to signify that those leaders were associated with specific religious ideology. Direct statements were also made which claimed that the politicians were rulers who belonged to specific religion. It was also claimed by one of the reels that decision making done by these politicians had religious connotation towards the majority.

Some reels thematically intended to depict that future Hindu generations are doomed if political leaders with Hindu religious ideology were not re-elected. Viewers were encouraged to be concerned about their future. One of reel creator was apprehensive and perceived religious intolerance from minorities, as the particular reel highlighted statement from a Muslim, declaring potential aggressive destruction of the Ram temple, in case specific politicians were not re-elected.

An illustration of Hinduism in need of collective protection was apparent from some reels. For instance, one reel stated that entire nation, except those in opposition were desirous of getting the leaders in power to be re-elected, as they were perceived protective of Hinduism. It is unfortunate to report, that there were reels which circulated statements justifying heinous acts of murder of historical figures with reasoning that they were committed as a retort towards perceived religious deprivation, such as the murder of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mehmood et al., 2021).

Also, a related reel expressed wonder that Hindus have only one ruling party defending them, whereas, for the protection of minorities, all other political parties are jointly together. Consequently, some reels were also intending to voice that protecting and cherishing Hinduism would be the ultimate goal. In this connection, pictures of opposition leaders participating in Hindu festivities were portrayed with conviction that they were forcefully made to participate.

Therefore, for protecting Hinduism, making anyone forcefully practice Hinduism was intentionally justified within the reel, as an indication of all achievable. Also, some reels intentionally recognized acts

that overturned other culture signifiers and ones that uphold own cultural or religious markers as desirable. Some of the reels called for supportive action towards leaders with religious ideologies. For instance, there were inciting statements directing towards taking immediate actions, with the intention to build fear among Hindus, as if this would be the last chance to save Hinduism. Questions were posed to the viewers for indirectly asking them if they would cast vote to the particular leader, which would be taken as an action of faith towards the leader.

In one of the reels, viewers were given the option to get a Hindu Rashtra if they vote for the leader in power, as the creator believes that the leader has the potential to surely transform the country into the desired religious dominant nation. Reels with themes of inflated critique towards the opposition were also found. This was expressed with statements that over-generalized corruption incidents on all in the opposition and past leaders. Major historically constructive, situational, requisite events along with unverified information were reframed and presented in a twisted fashion to put allegations on the opposition.

Metaphorical statements made by the ruling leaders were circulated as criticism as well as satire, against leaders in opposition, who also represent the minority communities. A few reels intended to exaggerate the satisfaction Hindus have in supporting the ruling leaders. Likewise, the creator expressed undeserved support to the leader over unverified claims and reports. In this context, there were reels that were particularly circulated for propagating false information, wherein names of other nations were used to falsely claim that the entire nation had a religious nationalist ideology and is advocating for the establishment of the nation primarily based on Hindu culture.

A major theme identified was the perpetuation of us-versus-them narrative. For this, reels containing statements confronting the notion of India belonging to all with the assertion of partition suggesting that all Indian Muslims belong to Islamic nations such as Pakistan and Bangladesh were circulated. One of the reel went to the extent of merging nation's scientific achievements with religious symbolism, implying one's religion could become universally recognized and celebrated, while representing religious minorities as helpless.

Lastly, and surprisingly, some reels intended to depict feels of inclusivity for Sikhs, by highlighting the promises of solidarity and interfaith harmony towards Hindus made by the Sikh Community. Some reels made deliberate statements directed towards Sikhs, inciting them with justification and validation of the intention or acts of killing and retorting towards Muslims.

A hypothetical explanation open to challenge with further investigations, regarding this affinity towards the Sikhs lies in the historical context of the Sikhs. Since the initial Sikh Gurus were Hindus in origin and the atrocities borne by some of the Gurus were committed by the rulers of the Muslim community (Sandhu, A. H. 2014), this historical anecdote is being utilized by the content creators to express to the Sikhs as well as inculcate among the Sikhs the feelings of unity with Hindus, while animosity towards Muslims.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics between social media reels, religious bias, and political perceptions in India. The analysis of 50 reels circulating on popular platforms reveals a troubling trend of content intended to provoke religious divide and shape political ideologies. Reels often exaggerate or misrepresent information, perpetuating stereotypes and fostering polarization. Despite India's secular principles, there are elements within society leveraging social media to promote intolerance and

division. This underscores the urgent need for greater awareness, critical engagement, and regulatory measures to counteract the harmful effects of online content on societal cohesion and political discourse.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge several limitations of this study. Firstly, the sample size of 50 reels may not fully represent the diversity of content circulating on social media platforms. Additionally, the study focused primarily on reels in Hindi vernacular, potentially excluding content in other languages and platforms. Furthermore, the analysis was limited to the content of the reels and did not capture the perspectives of social media users or their responses to the content. Future research could benefit from larger sample sizes, broader language inclusion, and incorporating user perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for policymakers, social media platforms, civil society organizations, and the broader public. It underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks to address the spread of hate speech and misinformation on social media platforms. Platforms must take proactive measures to moderate content, enforce community standards, and promote media literacy among users. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for digital rights, fostering inclusive dialogue, and promoting tolerance and understanding. Lastly, individuals must critically engage with online content, seek out diverse perspectives, and actively resist narratives that promote division and prejudice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge for stakeholders to mitigate the negative impact of social media reels on societal cohesion and political discourse in India. Policymakers should enact and enforce legislation to hold social media platforms accountable for moderating harmful content and promoting digital literacy. Platforms must invest in AI technologies and human moderation teams to identify and remove hate speech and misinformation effectively. Civil society organizations should collaborate on campaigns to promote media literacy, critical thinking skills, and interfaith dialogue. Individuals should prioritize diverse sources of information, engage in respectful online discourse, and advocate for responsible social media use within their communities.

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