

Media Coverage of the Anti-CAA/NRC Protests

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*Not all battles are fought for victory, some are fought to tell the world that
someone was there on the battlefield*

- Ravish Kumar

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Esha Mishra

Chapter 1- Introduction and Methodology

The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (CAA) is an act of the Parliament of India which seeks to grant Indian citizenship to refugees from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian religious minorities fleeing persecution from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who entered India before 31 December 2014. The bill looks over Muslims and other communities who faced persecution in neighbouring countries like–Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Tibet.

The passing of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act led to one of the biggest ever movements in Indian History history. The protests began in Assam, on the 4th of December and later spread over to the entire country.

The proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) is an official record of all legal citizens of India. Individuals would need to provide a prescribed set of documents before a specified cutoff date to be included in it.

According to the 2011 census the proportion of muslims in India is 14.2 %, making it the second largest religion in the country , however the muslim population also accounts for more than 19 percent of inmates across Indian jails, reports the Times of India.

The anti/caa-nrc protests were covered extensively by both mainstream and independent media channels, while some held debates and wrote inflammatory articles, polarising the protesters, the rest showcased true journalistic prowess by factual and credible reporting.

A report by Campaign Against Hate Speech titled “Wages of Hate: Journalism in Dark times” finds that the reportage of the nationwide protests and demonstrations against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), has been deficient in journalistic ethics.

The report found that the reporting vilified 'dissenters' based on gender and religious stereotypes. It locates such coverage within the proliferation of corporate-run media outlets which have made newspapers and television news channels beholden to vested economic interest

This dissertation will give a detailed account of the anti-caa/nrc protests, and analyse its coverage in the mainstream and unorthodox channels, with testimonies from journalists– who covered the protests and are experts in the field, with testimonies of protesters from individuals conferring to a particular ideology.

Aim of the dissertation-

1. To analyse the anti-caa/nrc protests and provide a compulsive, balanced account of the occurrences.
2. To study and explore the media coverage provided to the protests.
3. To uncover the fake news circulated.
4. To study the impact of social media and its role in the protests.

Purpose of the study-

To analyse the media coverage of the anti-CAA/NRC protests, along with providing a compulsive account of the occurrences. The study will also bring forth the loopholes in the coverage of the mainstream medium, along with highlighting the importance of social media. The study will also explore fake news and its aspects.

Sources for the study-

The dissertation is based on various primary sources along with manuals from JSTOR.

The following is the list of interviewees -

1. Shadab Moize– Award winning journalist, The Quint.
2. Natasha Narwal– Student activist, former Jawaharlal Nehru University student, Pinjra Tod founding member.
3. Alishaan Jafri- Correspondent, The Wire.
4. Arbab Ali- Independent journalist, former student Jamia Millia Islamia.
5. Prabhaskar K Dutta– Associate editor, India Today.
6. Shubhendu Shekhar- National Spokesperson, BJP.
7. MD Shankar- Spokesperson, RSS.
8. Meghnad Bose- Correspondent, The Quint.
9. Aarushi Dutta- SFI Member, Delhi University.
10. Anonymous correspondent- International news agency.
11. Mausif Rehman- Student, Jamia Millia Islamia.
12. Harsh Datt, mass communication student.

The research methodology is as follows-

News articles/ news programmes starting from the 4th of December will be considered. They will be analysed thoroughly. The following parameters will be considered for analysis-

1. Credibility of facts
2. If the political leaning of the channel/newspaper jeopardised the true sense of journalism.

The dissertation is primarily based on research and primary sources.

Chapter 2- The Anti CAA/NRC- An Overview

“The police had forcefully entered the premises on the 15th of January, there was panic all around, students were running and screaming and that’s when a tear gas bomb landed 20m’s away from me,” said Mausif, a student of the Hindi department at Jamia Millia Islamia University.

A video released by the student’s body conducting protests confirmed that the police and CRPF personell forced their way inside the university library and started beating students with laathis fired tear gas cannons.

The Indian Express reported that more than 100 students were injured and various ended up in hospitals. No FIR has been registered so far on the complaints registered by the university and students.

A Delhi court further dismissed a complaint by Jamia Millia Islamia University, citing ‘official duty’. The complaint was seeking action and an FIR against Delhi police officials for using excessive force while breaking into the campus without permission and assaulting students.

“A student of the university lost his sight in one eye, while another had his hand amputated because a tear gas bomb exploded right on his hand; usually these bombs are fired away from the protesters or towardss their lower bodies, this time they were fired with the intent to hurt” said Shabad Moizee, senior journalist from The Quint, who was on ground for covering the protests.

Some people who associate themselves to the hindutva ideology, completely defy the claim of police being brutal and justify the CAA-NRC

“CAA is not harmful for any muslim of the coutry, the movement still gained momentum despite not causing any harm to the existing muslims of the country; it was all propaganda and funding came from the outside.” said Shubhendu Shekhar, national spokesperson of the Bhartiya Janata Party.

“We don’t know if the police were brutal, what you see in the media is one side, the media is dual; most just fuel a single narrative; you cannot call something an attack when it’s from both sides; the police was only retaliating” said Prabhash K Dutta, Associate Editor India today.

“It is wrong to say that media covered the protests in a wrong light, because the viewer has access to the opposite ideology as well and if they want they can watch that, so stop blaming the media; the media are the eyes of the nation, so demeaning them for their coverage is wrong”

A self proclaimed ‘ram bhakt’, who didn’t wish to be named and took part in the pro-caa rallies vehemently supported the government and the police.

“The police is just making sure that no terrorist activities take place, we shouldn’t believe what the anti-india channels are putting out, there are videos of the students being violent but they won’t talk about that” he said

He also extended his support for the muslims in “his” country.

“It is the government’s responsibility to protect the rights of each and every citizen, CAA doesn’t impact existing muslims, this is for infiltrators. Infact we want each and every muslim to be safe in our country”

The citizenship amendment act was passed in the parliament on the 12th of February, post that violent protests broke out in Northeastern states of Tripura, Assam and Manipur. They were followed by protests in the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh on the 15th of January, in Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University, respectively.

“The attack came after a protest march by the university's students against the CAA ended in a battle with the police, vandalism and torching of vehicles. The police, which used batons and tear gas to contain the violence, later barged into the university and detained around 100 students” reported ndtv.

According to The Wire, a fact-finding report had accused the Uttar Pradesh police of severe brutality against students protesting against the crackdown on Jamia Millia Islamia students. Protests were also held at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) following the violence which erupted at Jamia Millia Islamia.

The implications of the protests were not just limited to damage to life or property. The brutality ended up being a deterrent in terms of education and careers as well. Campuses were shut and classes were stalled for months; the impact on mental health was also colossal.

A team led by human rights activist Harsh Mander came out with a report which confirmed foul play. The permission to enter the campus was given later, as per his report. Their report also said that Uttar Pradesh left the protesters “with shattered bones, grave injuries, deep bruises and severe psychological trauma.

“The students were paraded like criminals, their personal space was violated and they were humiliated by the police” added Moizee

“My friend and I were scared to go to college after everything ended, the memories of being heckled and screamed upon for no fault of our own took a toll on us; it was very hard for us to go back” said a female- SFI member from the Jamia Millia Islamia University, who didn’t wish to be named. With the protests being covered extensively by mainstream and independent media, it reached the masses and more people came out on the roads to support or undermine the movement.

Protesters, mostly women, started their demonstration in Shaheen Bagh of North East Delhi. The Shaheen Bagh protests started on the 15th of December 2019 and went on till the 24th of March’ 2020. The protests were organized by student groups, with help from local civil society groups, women's groups and community members of Muslim faith predominantly.

The Shaheen Bagh protests, which were led by women, stood for empowerment beyond genders and other boundaries like class, caste, socio-economic backgrounds. Most of them were simple homemakers who worked as domestic helpers in houses so as to add to the household income of their husbands—who mostly worked as construction labourers, carpenters or did other measly jobs.

Not everyone viewed Shaheen Bagh as a symbol of women empowerment, some believed that it was part of a larger conspiracy.

“The women sitting there don’t even know why they are there, if you ask them about protests they may not have an answer, some even brought their infants along to Shaheen Bagh. ” said Harsh Datt, a mass communication student at the Indraprastha University.

“Most of them don’t even know what they’re protesting for, they were given money on a daily basis” Said Shubhendu Shekhar, National Spokesperson of The Bharatiya Janata party.

The claim that the women took money to protest was widely criticised, by journalists, scholars and protesters widely.

“The implication of women taking money is much larger, the ruling party and the supporters of the CAA have forgotten what it means to make such a big statement” said Arbab Ali, an independent journalist.

While protests broke out across the country in support of JMI and AMU, Kanhaiya Kumar too joined the movement. The movement gained momentum and support started pouring in from bollywood celebrities as well. Other political parties like the Trinamool Congress and the Indian National Congress joined in and supported the movement.

Protests had reached every state of the country, including Uttar Pradesh. Violent protests broke out in Meerut which killed five men. The men were not engaged in any acts of violence, when the bullets hit and killed them, said the families. They also held the police responsible for the death of their family members. The police however denied the claims and said that they open-fired to contain the crowds, but did not kill anyone. No FIR’s have been registered so far, even when the families have provided a detailed account.

Wasim Malik expressed his anguish and remorse over the helplessness, after his complaints were not even registered. He has not been able to file an FIR, a first information report, which is the first step to the police investigation, reported article 24.

An international correspondent who reported on the ground, confirmed the police brutalities, “The police used excessive force to stop protesters, they even went inside homes and destroyed them, even cars were smashed; the police was holding up a gun and shooting”

Further, there were over 11,000 complaints of human rights violations against police officials, with 5,388 reported from Uttar Pradesh alone, according to the Home Ministry, in the fiscal year of 2020-2021.

The international correspondent also added that her news organisation found a lot of evidence of destruction and misbehaviour by the police.

The Bharatiya Janata Party also organised pro-caa rallies, which raised a question about what the priests and BJP followers were protesting for, since the bill was already approved in the parliament. “The pro-caa rallies made no sense, how can someone protest for something that has already been legitimised?” wondered Shadab Moizee

“The pro caa protests were held against the anti-caa/nrc protesters, so they were anti-anti caa/nrc protesters” explained Alishaan Jafri, a correspondent of The Wire.

Chapter 3- Social Media and its impacts

“There weren’t many mainstream media channels present in the beginning, it was only through social media that opinions were being formed even in the heads of the journalists” said Arbaab Ali.

Social media became an important tool during the protests for even disseminating news because of the lack of mainstream media presence.

“Everyone is a journalist with their smartphone now; and because of that a lot of the breaking news which required real press freedom is broken by civilians on social media” added Arbaab.

The number of [social media users](#) in India was 518 million in 2020, with the advent of technology, it is all set to increase in the coming years. The power of social media is staggering, and it is only growing. Social media allows for an open exchange of ideas and opinions.

Social media has played a key role in helping protesters across the country organise, convey ideas and opinions, and gain support.

Social media is a tool for modern information-age warfare. It builds on analysis of three distinct topics: social networking, propaganda, and news and information sharing, according to

The anti-CAA/NRC protests saw social media playing an important role in circulation of details and unification of protesters. Due to the vast availability of the internet and social media, it became easier to spread the word far and wide. The protests saw social media harbouring activism.

Social media activism refers to activism that utilises online platforms for a cause. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter amongst others played a major role in the protests and activism through social media came to light especially during these protests.

The anti-CAA/NRC protests saw a large number of celebrities coming out in support of the anti-CAA/NRC movement. While some steered clear of controversies by sticking to carefully crafted tweets by their public relations team, some went out and called out the government for the discriminatory nature of the bills.

While artists like Richa Chadha, Sayani Gupta, Swara Bhasker, Huma Qureshi and Anurag Kashyap have been on the forefront in their expression of discontent with the government and support for the protesters, many like Vicky Kaushal and Ayushman Khurrana stuck to safely crafted tweets for social media. Parineeti Chopra, Pulkit Samrat and Manoj Bajpayee also called out the government for the discriminatory nature of acts that threaten to erode the unity of the nation.

In the Malayalam film industry, filmmakers and actors like Rajisha Vijayan, Aashiq Abu, Parvathy, Anarkali, Sarjano Khalid, Amala Paul, Divya Prabha, Muhsin Parari have been sharing posts supporting the ongoing resistance.

Instagram influencers also came out and openly expressed their support for the protests, however they received the quick counter of the BJP IT cell. A video was released which accused Instagram influencers and “urban naxals” of spreading misinformation about the CAA and NRC. The video which

went live on the party's official twitter handle had two young women in conversation, attempting to clarify the government's intent by clearing the 'misconceptions' surrounding the law.

The video suggests that the woman speaking is a 'former protestor' who is no longer going to the protests because she has now read up well about it. She states that the people protesting are doing so because they don't have the complete knowledge. The video is focussed at influencers who are taking to their social media to express their opinion about the protests, and are wrongly influencing their followers.

The video also moves on to people with an "islamic mentality" whose aim is to ruin the democratic system and only reinstate themselves in positions of power.

[The video posted on the official BJP handle calls out muslims openly for existing](#) and following their desired religion. The short clip is meant for the protesters however is openly propagandic.

However when the mainstream media speaks the same tone, the lines between a party handle and being the watchdog becomes blurry.

Social Media has become an equaliser for political action and activism, allowing for the voices of minorities to be heard; it has exacerbated the presence of discussion forums and added to them. Activism from the insides of one's homes may be looked at as a convenience stance, but sometimes it's the most someone can do.

There was a steady flow of tweets that was maintained by protestors, disseminating information about change in venues, police announcements and other necessary details. The Hindu reported that Sakshi Rawte, a political science student, included tips like carrying water, informing people who weren't at the protests for her own safety, putting contact numbers of lawyers in case of detentions, in her tweets. Others put out information about being detained, their whereabouts amongst tips to avoid being detained/arrested and amplify protester voices, including the disempowered ones.

"Social media became an SOS tool during the protests, whenever we would sense danger, our requests would get amplified after that; most news would also break on social media first" said Arbab Ali, an Independent journalist and then Jamia Millia Islamia student.

Facebook was the most popular social media tool in 2020, with over 78 percent traffic. The platform was also responsible for birthing an anti-NRC group which marched on the streets of Kolkata on the 19th of December, 2019. The group encompassed various intellectuals— including national award winning director and actor Aparna Sen, along with actor Kaushik Sen. The formation named 'No NRC Movement' made by students marched to Esplanade from the Ramlila Maidan in Central Kolkata. The group also organised several protests across Bengal; they had appointed members in district and state-level coordination committees for their campaigns against the NRC, CAA and the NPR.

There are several other groups on varying platforms that aided the unification and planning process of protests, explained Alishaan Jafri, The Wire correspondent. "The good part about social media is it unifies and mobilises protestors, the not so great part is that it also may be used as a tool to criminalise and incriminate the same people"

The government had decided to put jammers in place while the protests were in full swing; internet access was restricted in a number of states like– Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and New Delhi. The justification of issuing such orders was “controlling violence and misuse by any anti-national elements through the internet”

India is a democratic country, as said by the constitution, however it faced the most number of internet shutdowns in the entire world. Nearly 70 percent of the global internet lockdowns were in India, according to a report by access now, a global non-profit that works on digital rights and online freedom. The report stated that there were 155 total disruptions, out of which 109 took place in India. The next was war torn Yemen with only 5 such instances, reports The Times of India.

The longest ever internet shut down during the protests was in Yogi Adityanath led– Uttar Pradesh. The most number of hours the internet was down on a single day in the state was 175 hours. The total number of hours of the shut down were 6,315.

Chapter 4- The role of media

“Media has an important role to play in the legitimization of the protests, especially for people who aren’t an active part of the protests and are passive news consumers. The media is responsible for building those narratives” said Natasha Narwal, a student activist, formerly from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the founding member of pinjra tod, a women’s collective to fight patriarchal hostel norms.

Roger Waters, English songwriter and founding member of progressive rock band, Pink Floyd, recited a verse from Aamir Aazi, at activist’s poem ‘sab yaad rakha jayega’ at a London event. The prowess of the media and its ability to shape the world reinstated itself.

Waters introduced Aziz as a young poet, who was fighting against the Indian government and their “fascist” and “racist” Citizenship laws. The protests reached the global stage, and the recitation was extensively covered by the press, nationally and internationally.

The anti-caa/nrc protests stemmed from a fear of losing identity and ownership in a country which is ‘home’. The laws discriminated on the basis of religion, and demoted the muslim community to a lower standard, and demoted them to a second grade hold over society.

Media's role in society continues to expand and becomes more and more crucial to shaping public opinion and setting the national agenda. The mainstream media play a large role in shaping perceptions of public opinions on key issues, as well as providing context for individuals' lives. By producing "truths" about certain subjects, the media are able to define reality for the larger population. Improper contextualising also leads to misinformation being spread.

The mainstream media, and some channels in particular, have propagated hate and islamophobia in the name of coverage and reportage, which has affected the harmony between the citizens of the country, and created an environment of dysphoria.

Cricketer Mohammed Shami, was subjected to mass trolling when India lost from Pakistan in a T20 world cup match, he was called a traitor and was asked to ‘go back to pakistan’. He was the only one in the playing eleven who was at the receiving end of such scorn, he later received support from his team mates.

Zee news prime time anchor, Sudhir Chaudhary referred to as the narrative of Shami being trolled for his religion as ‘false’ in the show titled DNA: Indian Cricket Team को मिली हार, फिर सिर्फ Mohammed Shami क्यों शिकार?” He expressed his qualms about the other media networks not talking enough about other cricketers like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma being trolled. Chaudhary completely denounced Shami’s religion as a basis for the online bullying.

Shahrukh Khan was seen offering ‘dua’ at Lata Mangeshkar’s shrine when she passed away on the 22nd of february. He blew near her shrine which is an islamic custom; this was portrayed as him being disrespectful to her because he ‘spat’ near her corpse.

The BJP state-in-charge of Haryana, shared the video saying ‘Kya isne thuka hai (Did he spit?)’ Another BJP leader made the same allegation.

This incident was covered by the mainstream media channels like– Sudarshan News, which bashed Shahrukh, the show's title was “शाहरुख ने लता दीदी पर थूका हैं फूँका है या क्या किया हैं? अंत्येष्टि पर शाहरुख खान विवादों में (Has shahrukh blown or spat at lata didi's shrine?) The show's anchor speaks of how disrespectful Khan was to the mortal remains of Lata Mangeshkar, and the monologue went on for 56 minutes. It has over 107,993 views and over 5 ,000 likes. The channel has over 1.37 million subscribers.

Zee news also had their two cents on Shahrukh Khan, in a show titled “DNA: Lata Mangeshkar Funeral - शाहरुख खान की 'दुआ' पर विवाद क्यों? (Why is there a controversy on Shahrukh Khan's 'dua'). The anchor Sudhir Chaudary went on to discuss the controversy and speak about Mohammed Rafi singing 'Bhajans' being a muslim. He ends with a statement 'was it right for shahrukh khan to offer prayers in islamic fashion when the last rites were held in accordance with hindu customs?'

While the media continues to be the primary source for vital information, channels like Sudarshan News and ZEE news can completely colour the opinions of an average viewer.

The media coverage of the tablighi jamaat has been detrimental to the islamophobia that has seeped into our everyday lives. A statistically large number of words like 'violating', 'crime', 'spitting', 'jihaad', and 'terrorist' were associated to stories on the web. These stories fell to the islamophobic narrative, later fact-checking websites like Media Scanner debunked over a hundred instances of islamophobic fake news and hate speech during this period.

Muslim students have had to face the brunt of the brutal reportage that has criticized islam and its practices.

“There is a shift in the way an average citizen looks at us, now we're the community who gave rise to corona jihad and cause destruction, the media has portrayed us as threats to the others, which has led to exclusion and an air of discomfort between us and the others” said Nafisa (name changed), a 22-year-old student.

While the students suffer because of portrayal in a poor light, some mainstream media journalists defend the coverage, Prabhash K Datta, associate editor of India today said- “Media is not an island, it is a part of our society and every journalist comes from a different background, so it is a wrong to expect the reportage to not have a leaning”

“There is space for everyone to express what they perceive, so you cannot hate on a particular news organisation for their understanding of events” he added

The media representation however has caused harm to protesters from across religions.

“The male guard checks my bag every time I want to enter campus, I have been flashed by the authorities because I attended regular protests” said Aarushi Sharma, a 19-year-old third year Delhi university student.

Disha Ravi, a 22-year-old climate change activist was arrested in connection with a tool-kit case. She was accused of being a 'Khalistani sympathiser' and charged with trying to incite violence on the streets of Delhi on Republic Day, 2021.

Media reports quoted police sources saying [Ravi](#) had edited a toolkit created by the Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg, and used it to design the contours of a protest movement of the farmers. The police alleged that Disha sourced items such as these from her partners into the global networks she is plugged in, many with dubious backgrounds, reports [downtoearth.org](#).

Her private chats were leaked and she was portrayed as a serial conspirator on television debates.

The Delhi police is yet to hear back from their sources, google and zoom; and no chargesheet has been filed yet. She had no criminal records yet her character was assassinated on national television, with her privacy being paraded, as her chats were on air for thousands to see.

The media continues to be a primary source for which the public turns to for vital information, however the current ecosystem is dependent on propagating a single narrative, there are independent media outlets trying to depend on customer-based revenue models, but their viewership is far less if compared to the mainstream.

Chapter 5- Media Analysis

“In the age of populism, since one of the worst concerns of common people is regarding security, immigrants and minorities tend to be held responsible for crimes, poor levels of safety, and any deterioration of urban and social environment. Moreover, research has shown that media coverage can negatively affect attitudes towards immigration and immigrants (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009)” argues Andrea Cerase and Claudia Santoro in racial hoaxes to media hypes: Fake news’ real consequences.

India currently has a 14% muslim population, and The Bhartiya Janata Party believes the CAA/NRC is imperative because there are various people “disguised” as Indians, who commit crimes and run away when it comes to take accountability.

“The Seeta-Geeta who come to work in your house may not be Seeta-Geeta indeed, they are illegal muslim imigrants who come to our country and then loot us and commit other crimes” said Shubhendu Shekhar

“Caa-Nrc is to make sure that these people stop hiding in our country and we remain safe,” he added.

The BJP’s goal has been to crack down on all illegal-muslim- immigrants, and they have an issue with the “islamic mindset”, which is just another way of life.

The media has been responsible for peddling that narrative, in accordance with the whims of the ruling government.

Prabhash K Dutta, Associate Editor, India Today argues that the media are the eyes of the nation and their intent cannot be questioned during times of crisis. “The media is the eyes and ears of the people, journalists risk their lives to bring out the news, so questioning them about their coverage is unjustified” he said

Wayne Errington in the book titled Abbott's Gambit, however argues that agenda setting is an indulgence of the media, which is also influenced by external sources- “An increasingly media-savvy public is aware of the role of the media in setting and framing the agenda. Agenda-setting, though, is a complex process. It is not the exclusive domain of the gatekeepers inside media organisations, as political leaders, interest groups, voters and other actors also attempt to influence media content”

The national and international media covered the anti-caa/nrc demonstrations extensively.the credibility of various news organisations came under the scanner for wrongful portrayal and vilification.

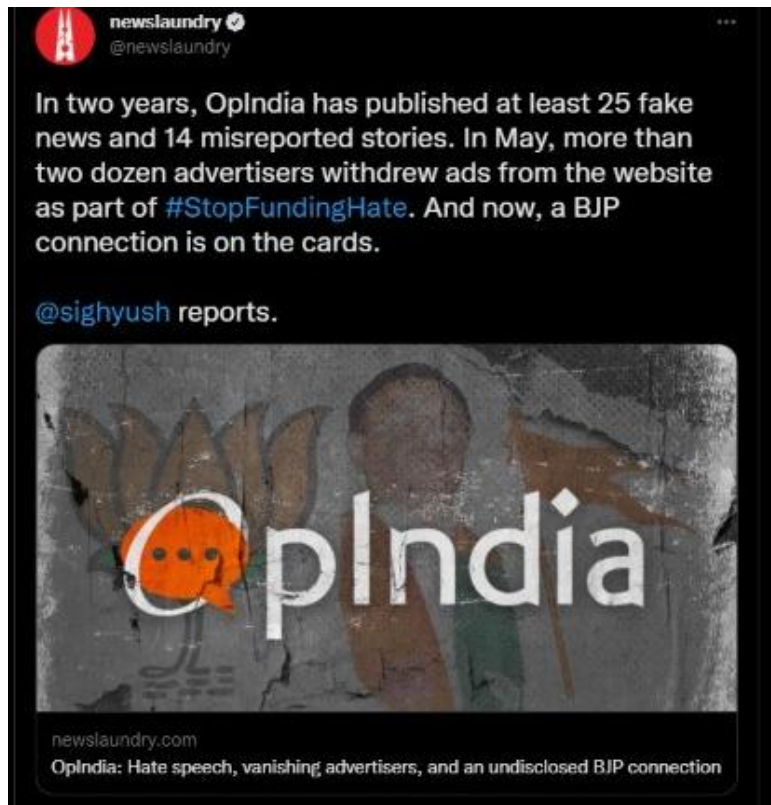
“The success of a failure of a protest depends on what the people who aren’t involved in them think about them. The media dehumanised the protesters, and rendered them as brainless. A certain section of it claimed that people who are on the ground don’t know what they are talking about and they’re here because they have ulterior motives” said Natasha Narwal.

“Context is extremely important, and the media contextualised the narrative in a way which defamed protesters” said Meghnad Bose, principal correspondent, The Quint.

Case study-1

OP India/Swarajya-

According to a report published by Newslaundry on the 23rd of June, 2020, fact checkers and news outlets have recorded at least 25 instances of false news and 14 cases of misreporting on OP India since the last two years. One of the founding members of the portal, Rahul Raj was quoted saying that he had distanced himself from the portal, since it turned into a blind mouthpiece of the Bharatiya Janata Party.



The organisation's twitter handle says “bringing the right side of India to you. This in itself is a problematic statement to make, right and wrong can be variable for different communities and people. The coverage is strictly pro-Modi and not even once has it questioned the ones in power. The articles and opinion pieces are strictly propaganda for the government. Apart from that the portal is hateful towards muslims and has been spreading fake news to adhere to their pro-hindutva narrative.

The portal has lost out on over two dozen advertisement losses, the firms allege that “insidious content” and “hateful sentiments”

Op India has constantly complained about the media’s dishonesty and distortion, but ironically has never stated its links with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The website is also blacklisted on wikipedia along with Swarajya and the TFIpost, which is a blog and the editorial arm of The Frustrated Indian

The Bihar police charged the website in May with fabricating a communal aspect in the death of a 15-year-old boy in Gopalganj district. OpIndia published a series of claims suggesting that the youngster was slain in a "human sacrifice" rite, under the influence of a mosque.

The police while investigating however claimed that there was no mosque in that area. OP India's CEO said that the website was being subjected to "abuse" and a concerted campaign by the usual suspects," and that the website's editors' "only fault" was "to be on the wrong side of the ideological divide." reported Newslandry.

They have also published articles for the hindu's who have been convicted and are currently under jail for being a part of the anti-CAA/nrc riots.

Father passed away, mother unwell: Dinesh Yadav is the first convict in Delhi anti-Hindu riots, family says persecuted for not paying bribe

"If anything happens to a Muslim, everyone gets united for him. But Hindus lack unity. That is why Muslims are dominating us", said the family of Dinesh Yadav

The article tries to sympathise with a 25-year-old hindu man who attacked the house of an old muslim women, and set it ablaze. Despite the court's order and conviction of the rioter, the portal has still published a story, seeking sympathy for him and providing space to his family for voicing out their displeasure with his conviction.

Is the anti-CAA protests a test case for Muslims to find their true political worth in India?

Muslims, wearing their religious identities on sleeves and chanting communal slogans, like 'la-ilaha-illallah', have hit the streets throughout the country daring the governments with an amorphous call to azadi – more specifically, a 'jinnah wali azadi', intending to seek 'freedom from the Hindus' in the Jinnah style.

This article was published on the 4th of February, 2020 on the web portal of OP India. It speaks of the anti-CAA movement being a separatist movement and mentions "jinnah wali aazadi" as the "azadi" which was being chanted by the protesters. The author has added these words on his own accord, without having any backing for them.

The article also refers to muslims as illiterate and unaware. The movement is also referred to as a muscular mask event using CAA as a face for something else. Krishna Kumar, the author, alleges the community is peddling lies and projecting themselves as "victims" because they were unable to vote Modi out of power. He claims that this is the tactic of the muslim community to bring the BJP to the negotiation table, so that they are returned some of the privileges they enjoyed in the past. He also adds that the muslim leaders are being "tough customers" and asking for too much.

The author's understanding of muslims in the country is limited to them being "infiltrators" and unwelcome guests in India.

The article glorifies the Modi-Shah government by stating the political wins, the muslim community is shamed and dehumanized.

Scars of how Islamists and Left came together to burn the country a year ago: From the ides of December to end of February

In December 2020, as we approach one full year of the violence unleashed by Islamists and Leftists, Hindus of this nation, right-thinking citizens of India, need to remember the cycle of violence and the role of the media.

The article written by Nupur J Sharma, published on the 17th of December, refers to the North-East Delhi riots as anti hindu riots. The author states that the Muslim community planned every cluster of violence and the "left- liberal" media helped them in the execution.

Anti-CAA protesters were being referred to as "muslim mob" which rampaged through the streets of the national capital. The attack on the Jamia Millia Islamia University's library, which has been looked at on page- of this research, is called a move to flush out miscreants from the University. The author blames the "vast network of radical islamic organisations" ' for the riots, she adds that everything that happened was an attempt to recreate the events of the Khilafat movement. The CAA is also explained as a law which just fast tracks citizenship for the hindu's of the other countries who have faced persecution.

The article calls barkha dutt as a propogandist, as she allegedly supported those who wanted to wage jihad against the Hindus. There is no mention of police brutality and the pro-caa mobs.

The article claims that Kapil Gujjar, the man who shot at the protesters, had links with the Aam Aadmi Party, and had nothing to do with the BJP, however he was admitted into the BJP for a few hours, the local leaders had processed his induction, and there were visuals of him in BJP offices. The article also highlighted the intention of the muslim community to malign the reputation of the country on the international front. Anurag Kashyap was called a "propagandist" just for showing solidarity with the protesters.

'Sanghi snake': Liberals and Islamists slam Arvind Kejriwal led AAP for claiming anti-CAA Shaheen Bagh protests were sponsored by BJP

Liberals and Islamists are displeased with the AAP for claiming that the protests at Shaheen Bagh were backed by the BJP. They claimed that it was utterly preposterous to suggest that the protesters were funded and backed by the BJP.

Propagandist Anurag Kashyap reaches Shaheen Bagh and Jamia to support Islamists against CAA

Prior to this, Anurag Kashyap had also joined the 'Mumbai Bagh' anti-CAA protest on February 5, which the Islamists in Mumbai have launched on the lines of Shaheen Bagh of Delhi.

Various other articles, were written which were absolutely defamatory towards the muslim community and touched upon sensitive topics without any empathy.

After taking life of a baby at Shaheen Bagh, liberals using unborn child for propaganda

In the last few days, you must have come across this image of one Safoora Zargar, who has been arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Who is Safoora Zargar and why do Indian laws not apply to her?

Watch: Muslim teacher from Saharanpur goes on a toxic rant at Shaheen Bagh, gets suspended by school authorities

The concerned Muslim teacher has stated that the viral video had projected her wrongly by editing away the 'good things' she said. She also claimed that she is being targeted. The school management has stated that her allegations of being taunted and being the only Muslim teacher in their school are wrong.

The national BJP spokesperson, Shubhendu Shekhar, was appreciative of Op India's coverage—
“There are very few media organisations which don't have a narrative to fuel, OP India works for the nation, they are the true nationalists”

There are other portals like Swarajya and Tatva, which peddle the same kind of news for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Their take on the anti-CAA/NRC echoed the sentiments of the ruling party.

Case Study 2- Republic TV, Sudarshan News.

CAA-NRC: Busting 10 Big Lies Peddled By The Left To Provoke Protesters Into Burning Down Delhi

by Yaajnaseni - Feb 25, 2020 05:33 PM



Mohammad Shahruckh, pointing a gun straight into the face of a policeman. He has now been detained
(Source: @Soumyajit_Dutta/Twitter)

Kapil Gujjar had open fired from the police side, while screaming “ye lo azaadi”, his bullet had injured a student from Jamia University, but the website chose to not mention that. The visual which is the display picture for this article isn’t fake, Mohammad Shahrukh had pointed a gun at a cop, but this visual was not it, the protests encompassed various events and leading with a visual, which only villainized the minority community, selectively.

The portal says that there is no discrimination between a muslim and a non muslim indian, while the entire pretext of the caa-nrc is looking down on the minority community. The article mentions that there will be no discrimination against muslims repeatedly while trying to come up with defences for the caa/nrc.

10. CAA negates Nehru, Gandhi and other freedom fighters’ vision. This is the first time that religion has come up as a criteria

Both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of India, who are excluded, will be treated equally. Under CAA-NRC, there is no discrimination between a Muslim and a non-Muslim Indian.

This tweet by the Bhartiya Janata Party puts their “no discrimination” in perspective–



Case Study 2- TV News Media

Sudarshan News has been in the light for being the BJP mouthpiece and spreading communal hate. Their programs are anti-muslim and only adhere to the narrative of islamophobia.

A journalist from the channel referred to as “Sudarshan ki sherni” was a notorious entity who would be at all protests and try to find islamophobic content.

“She came up to me once when we were protesting. I was holding a poster which said sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab humare dil mein hai, written in Urdu. She forced me to answer why I'm using a pakistani language; This is just one example, they would present the language in a way that villainized us more. Even Umar Khalid from the stage had said that we don't speak to her” said Arbab Ali.

Editor in chief of Sudarshan News, Suresh Chavankhe, runs the channel and peddles outright lies and makes islamophobic statements. He hosts the show called “bindas bol” where he gives himself the platform to present his opinions in the name of a news show.

Jamia Millia Islamia had even filed a case against him for maligning the reputation of the university. His channel has been stopped from airing shows by the Supreme Court as well. The programs on the channel are sponsored by the Uttar Pradesh government too. Ministers in the Modi government have applauded his coverage.

His coverage during the protests was venomous and toxic on various fronts, he was condemned by news organisations like The Wire and Newslandry.

Republic TV, which is run by Arnab Goswami has also been involved in vilification of muslims through the course of their debate shows. Protesters on the ground have refused to interact with journalists from Republic TV.

“Republic TV had come to the campus of Jamia, we as protesters had decided to not interact with a channel which calls us on our shows and doesn't even give us the opportunity to speak,” said Arbab Ali.

“The journalists forced us to speak to him and when no one spoke, a hateful program was telecasted” added Arbab.

Republic TV runs in English and Hindi, and also has an app along with a YouTube channel with 5.2 million subscribers.

Programs which depicted the students in a substandard light, were telecasted. Venom was spewed under the garb of journalism.

The program was titled– It's Arson and Rioting and not a protest against the CAA, in the course of the 52 minute long programme broadcasted on the 20th of January 2019, he selectively pulls up visuals out of context; which only defame and vilify the muslims. Further, he doesn't give the panellists defending the protesters a chance to even speak in a civil fashion.

A 11 minute long program, telecasted on the 17th of January 2019, uncovers the mystery behind the “violent” jamia attacks. The show was one sided and lacked context.

There were several other shows produced laced with islamophobia that Republic TV telecasted.

Zee news too ran programs which were called Jafrabad Protest: प्रदर्शन के नाम पर Delhi पर Torture क्यों, in december 2019, where the anchor asked politicians why the students were “blacmailing” the government, the show was one sided and only spoke from the side of the government.

While the pro-hindutva channels picked a narrative, newspapers like The Hindu, Web portals like– The Quint, Firstpost, Telegraph, Mojo, News Channels like– NDTV, stuck to the events and reported on facts.

Chapter 6- Fake news and its impacts

“Media is just not about coverage, there is also an angle of fact-checking which is important. There is a plethora of content available, to make sure which is credible and which is imperative” said Arbaab Ali.

Fake news in India refers to false information, hoaxes and disinformation. It has been a problem that is particularly prevalent in India in recent years. While the media showed a dual character reporting for the anti-CAA/nrc protests, some went on with unverified claims.

“The BJP IT cell is smart with backdoor entries and circulating messages that they can’t officially, the message/video is leaked on whatsapp and then it’s forwarded through-out and people believe them” said the international correspondent who didn’t wish to be named.

Whatsapp brought out an amendment in their policies by limiting the number of people to which the same message can be forwarded to, as a result of WhatsApp's increased forwarding limitations, the number of "extremely forwarded" messages has decreased by 70%, reported The Verge.

Fact checking company Alt news came out with a report which said that the Asian News International (ANI) coverage was questionable, abroad.






ANI reported a pro-CAA demonstration in Edinberg, but left out the plethora of Anti-CAA demonstrations taking place around the same area. News websites like The telegraph, Times now, Business Today, The Hindu and India Today, reported the occurrences in the state too, and all of them spoke about the anti-CAA protests. The percentage of the anti-CAA protests was much higher in comparison with the pro-CAA protests.

According to a Hindustan Times [report](#) from January 27, 2020, “The anti-CAA protests in at least 30 US cities were organized by recently formed Coalition to Stop Genocide, comprising several organizations like Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), Equality Labs, Black Lives Matter (BLM), Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR).”

ANI has only published stories and tweeted about a few pro-CAA marches, despite large-scale anti-CAA rallies throughout the world. ANI's partiality has the ability to serve as fodder for incorrect information magnified by the mainstream media as a wire agency that delivers updates to other news agencies in South Asia.

The exclusion of anti-CAA stories from the ANI stream provides the appearance that the law has been broadly supported by the Indian diaspora living overseas, whereas in truth, the legislation has been widely opposed, reported Alt news.

OP India also shared various news stories, which were poorly contextualised, the articles were one sided with absolutely no fact-checking.

 <p>NEWS REPORTS</p>	<p>Delhi Police opposes bail plea of sedition accused Sharjeel Imam, say he may threaten witnesses, re-engage in riot-like activities</p> <p><i>Opindia Staff - 3 March, 2022</i></p> <p>Delhi police said that if Sharjeel Imam is granted bail, he may evade the process of law and jump, threaten witnesses</p>
 <p>NEWS REPORTS</p>	<p>'This is just trailer, movie is still left', prosecutor reveals what Sharjeel Imam said during Shaheen Bagh protests, opposes bail plea</p> <p><i>Opindia Staff - 10 February, 2022</i></p> <p>The prosecutor, opposing the bail plea of Sharjeel Imam, said the plan of the Delhi riots accused was to overthrow the govt and throw the country into complete anarchy.</p>
 <p>NEWS REPORTS</p>	<p>'Blood has to be shed, ready to ignite fire', prosecutors provide WhatsApp chats as more evidence to oppose Umar Khalid's bail plea</p> <p><i>Opindia Staff - 2 February, 2022</i></p> <p>Opposing the bail plea of Umar Khalid, prosecutors said that lathis and red chili are not used in peaceful protests</p>
 <p>NEWS REPORTS</p>	<p>'Umar Khalid was remotely supervising the Delhi riots like 9/11 conspirators,' prosecutors cite US terror attack to oppose Khalid's bail plea</p> <p><i>Opindia Staff - 29 January, 2022</i></p> <p>Delhi police opposed bail application of Umar Khalid by drawing parallels between Delhi riots and 9/11 terror attacks in the USA</p>
 <p>LAW</p>	<p>Cow protection, bringing 'Hindustan to knees', anti-Brahmin rants, more: Analysis of order framing sedition, other charges against Sharjeel Imam</p> <p><i>Nupur J Sharma - 27 January, 2022</i></p> <p>Delhi Court has found sufficient grounds to proceed against Sharjeel Imam for offences in the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1949 (UAPA) and sedition</p>

OP India is infamous for picking out words from a longer version of a speech and building its narrative around that. The speech that Sharjeel made was longer than 40 minutes and the portal has quoted a sentence from his speech, completely out of context, reported The quint.

Several cryptic tweets were also put out by Bharatiya Janata Party's IT cell head, Amit Malviya.



In this tweet, which has still not been deleted, Mr. Malviya is claiming that the students are chanting “Hinduon ki kabr khudegi, AMU ki dharti par”, however in clearer videos the students can be clearly heard while they were chanting “Hindutva ki kabr khudegi, AMU ki dharti par”.

Later old images of police brutality also surfaced, which were more than a decade old. While police brutality did take place during the protests, old pictures display the police in a poor light.

Republic TV too faced criticism for their reportage, and running fake news, they also faced a defamation case.

Kapil Gujjar had open fired standing from the police side, his bullet had injured a protester. Op India put out a cryptic article, which was far from the real picture.



Republic TV within minutes of the occurrence started blaming the students for the mayhem. The channel's political editor and host went on to say that the gunman was aided by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Rahul Gandhi of the Congress, and that this showed the true face of anti-CAA demonstrations.

Arbab Ali, was present at the site when Republic journalists spun the narrative and broadcasted it.

“I was right there when Shadab got shot, republic blamed another student of the university without any substantiation, we also filed a defamation case against him” he said.

The 17-year-old wasn't a protester but was there to take “revenge” from the protesters. He had also posted this on his facebook page as well. He wrote “Azaadi de Raha Hu” a dig on the slogans raised by the students.

Chapter 7- Conclusion

The anti-CAA/NRC protests have proven to be discriminatory on the grounds of religion. The Bharatiya Janata Party themselves have not shied away from accepting the religious bias they operate on. Their ministers like Anurag Thakur have gone on record to call for violence, with chants like “Desh ke gaddaro ko goli maro saalo ko”. The variations of this slogan was chanted by pro-CAA mobs in forms of “Jamia/JNU ke gaddaro ko goli maro saalo ko”. Despite huge media coverage, action is yet to be taken. The media proved to have a sense of duality with the contrasting coverage.

The media still has the power to influence the masses, especially with social media coming in and accessibility being significantly increased.

With the current government leading the forefront with religion on their sleeve, the media has also been influenced, some have blatantly turned into mouthpieces of the party.

If there are organisations like OP India and Republic TV, there are also portals like The Quint, The Wire and the NDTV along with several independent journalists who still stand for journalism for the masses, and not for pleasing a particular party.

The anti-CAA/NRC protests saw people from various backgrounds, diverse in terms of class, class, creed and even religion coming together. The protests are testimony to India’s multicultural fabric which still thrives on unity.

Appendix

1. **Natasha Narwal– Founding member Pinjra Tod, Former student- Jawaharlal Nehru University.**

Q1) What were the ground realities at the protest site?

Answer) I have never seen a more spontaneous mobilisation of people, there were no such organisations who were organising these protests, it was just a collective feeling of being wronged which brought people together, on the streets

The community which has been subjected to a lot since the regime has come, finally stood up for their rights and especially muslim women. These women came from weaker sections but chose to fight the system in democratic ways. There was a churning in them to feel legitimate anymore.

Q2) What unified the protesters?

Answer) The protests stemmed from feeling like a second grade citizen in the country you've been for years. The muslim community had been made to feel like the country doesn't belong to them and they are having to prove their indianness, they were tired of feeling like less of a citizen.

Q4) What was the role of the media in these protests?

Answer) The success of a failure of a protest depends on what the people who aren't involved in them think about them. The media had an important role to play, especially to give a sense of legitimacy to protesters. The media had to not set a narrative in this case but just report, which didn't happen. The media dehumanised the protesters, and rendered them as brainless. The media which was serving the government claimed that people who are on the ground don't know what they are talking about and they're here because of ulterior motives.

Q5) A lot was said about you too when you were in jail, how did you deal with it?

Answer) I went to jail under the UAPA, under which the process is the punishment. We were inside when the media had things to say about us, so we didn't find out, but when we did, it wasn't the nicest feeling.

2. **Meghnad Bose- Principal correspondent, The Quint.**

Q1) You've been in the industry for 7 years, how has the media ecosystem been? How has it changed, for better or worse?

Answer- Well, I think you know, the answer to that question. I don't think the media ecosystem at large just got better over the last few years. I think it's been a downward slide, largely in the

mainstream media. The space for doing strong editorial coverage— that is critical of the government has undoubtedly been shrinking over the years. And I think it's a truth that's accepted far and wide. Right now. And I don't think that's in dispute at all, as I'm sure you'd agree as well.

Q2) What would your take be on the anti CAA NRC protests and their coverage?

Answer- Well, look, I think we saw how the mainstream media is used to defame and dehumanise and vilify protesters. A year before the farmers protests began, the farmers protest began at the end of 2020. But in 2019, we've already seen how the mainstream media and the government will go to any lengths to defend protesters. And that is something we saw happen. But we also saw that public resistance could counter that both. In the instance of the farmers protest for the farm laws were repealed. And in the instance of the CNRT protests where the government has since the protests not spoken publicly about a nationwide NRC, and that I think is the power of people's movements, and public participation, public political participation. The protests sprang up not just at Shaheen Bagh, but at Shaheen Bagh like sites across the country. And that, I think, is what made the difference. Now the mainstream media could be doing the government line and defaming and dehumanising and vilifying those protesters. But at the end of the day, if there are enough people protesting for their rights in this country, then their voice will effectively definitely be heard, regardless of which way the mainstream media then wants to spin that voice. Context is extremely important, and the media contextualised the narrative in a way which defamed protesters

Q3) The state government in Delhi despite coming across as a liberal party didn't take a stand for the protesters, why do you think that happened?

Answer- Well, look, the Aam Aadmi Party and its ideological position is obviously one that has attracted a fair degree of conversation in political circles. The point being that the Aam Aadmi Party does not want to be seen as antagonising the BJP core voter on issues pertaining to Hindutva and Hindutva sentiments, they don't don't want to be seen as a party that is anti Hindutva. And I consciously say Hindutva because Arvind Kejriwal and his Amami party do not take positions against a rabid examples of even when they occur in his own, in his own state now agreed that the Delhi police does not report to Mr. Casey, while reports instead from Mr. Machar, who's the home minister. But questions have repeatedly been raised about whether I've engaged you all was as critical about police about how the police were complicit in the rights of Delhi 2020 in February 2020 in Delhi, whether they made that a strong talking point against the BJP in Delhi or not, and the answer is that they didn't try it. So I get where your question is coming from. Be the core political reason tinging behind that is that he will feels that BJP voters will not switch over to the app or continue to support the Aam Aadmi Party in say, for example, Delhi will answer by elections, if he antagonizes, the core BJP vote bank, or the Hindutva supporting BJP vote back.

Q4) How was the media coverage of the anti-caa/nrc protests?

Answer- only a section of the alternative media digital media was reporting the protests at the scale that they were being held at and being without the spin that the mainstream media was trying to apply by labelling them with all sorts of derogatory terms such as anti national, anti India, etc. The scale of the protests were obviously huge, the resistance, the peaceful resistance was massive. In fact, at that point of time, it seemed fairly unlikely that such a nationwide protest would happen after the CAA was passed, because there'd been mob lynchings earlier that being hate crimes arise massive rise in

hate crimes soldier in the past in the few years before that, but nothing had sort of got such a large nationwide protest such a long, large sustained nationwide protest. So it was surprising, but yeah, it did happen. And for those of us who are fortunate enough to be on the ground reporting the realities of this protest movement across the country against the CAA NRC and also the NPR. We're just trying to do our job to get the real picture to as many readers and viewers as we can

Q5) The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act is an infamous tool that the ruling government has been using. Whenever somebody is booked under that the media frames them in a particular light. How do you think the media spins that?

Answer 5) Given the evidence against the people who currently have UAPA against their name, they are unlikely to be convicted on these charges. But the problem is that the process in these cases is the punishment. The process is so time consuming. And that bail is so difficult to get in these cases, that the process of being incarcerated for months on end, for years also for some is what is the most taxing bit of the entire problem. And the point is that it's not the mainstream media's burden, it is actually the government which has been doing it and and you'd be surprised to go back in the parliament records, and see how many of the opposition parties supported the amendment to the API, which made it even more stringent, which was brought on brought in by the Modi government. So the point is that these laws, these draconian laws, such as the UAPA exist so that unjust unlawful incarcerations can take place and not be called unlawful, because they'll be happening in the letter of the law. It's not in the spirit of the law.

Q6) Do you think journalists are scared to voice their opinions and speak truth to power?

Answer) Yeah, absolutely. And I don't think that any journalist who wishes to continue speaking, truth to power will look, the reality is that a lot of journalists are under pressure. And a lot journalists, journalists are being pressured to not be speaking to, and not just pressured, it's just that the ecosystem they work in, especially if it's in the mainstream media, that ecosystem doesn't allow for speaking truth to power beyond the point of it's certain truths that need to be spoken about. So the point is that those of us who have the editorial space to do so, those of us who are working for nations or independently, that allow us to do that, speaking of truth to part should strive to continue to do so. And hopefully, there will be enough of those within newsrooms that are, that are going the government line day in and day out, to decide if it's if it's financially viable to do their own thing not to work for organisations that actually the limited the few organisations that actually trying to speak truth to power, in as honest, a manner as possible. And I know it's difficult and idealistic. And a lot of people have to sustain themselves and their families, and it's difficult to just leave a job and get out of something that's paying you well. But yes, this question remains, because the mainstream media is and won't change itself overnight. There's a reason why the term Modi media has become so popular, it's it's, it's people reacting with disdain, and how untruthful sections of the media can be and how subservient they can be to the powers that be. And my only hope would be that those in the position to leave those who would be able to leave and financially sustain themselves get the opportunities to do more honest work. If they could do that, this is not me preaching to anyone. This is just something I hope as a journalist who's worked in the mainstream media and seeing those constraints firsthand.

3. Arbab Ali- Independent journalist, Activist AISA, former Jamia Millia Islamia student

Q1) What happened at the protest site, and what was the role of the media, especially the ones which have become mouth-pieces for the government?

Answer) I understand you're speaking about a few news channels, but there were a lot of them. And media isn't just restricted to the mainstream, journalism is more than just your TV screen, it is also your phone screen. Social media channels like facebook, twitter, instagram had an active role to play. Not just the right-wing journalists, even the ones who claimed to be liberal or free of a political bias also put out hateful tweets, for instance Nidhi Razdaan, she tweeted against the government. A lot of journalists had formed their opinions on the basis of images being circulated on social media.

Q2) Any particular channels that further added fuel to the fire?

Answer) Sudharshan news, and i'm sure you've heard of Sudarshan Ki Sherni, she would go on ground at the protest sites, she used to force people to talk. She came up to me once when I was at a protest. I was holding a poster which said sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab humare dil mein hai. She came to me and asked me why I'm using the language of pakistan. This is just one example, they would present the language in a way that villainized us more. Even Umar Khalid from the stage had said that we don't speak to her. They said things like the women of Shaheen Bagh took money, the implication of women taking money is much larger, the ruling party and the supporters of the CAA have forgotten what it means to make such a big statement.

Q3) What was the role of social media?

Answer) When everything changed on the 15th, I remember social media had a different role and the concept of SOS turned out to be impactful, but before that we saw how they blamed and vilified us. The mainstream media was running a one sided version of the police. Even when the library released the CCTV footage, we saw that news channels hadn't covered this. In fact NDTV and other independent organisations did break the news. That night the mainstream media completely blamed us for whatever that happened. There weren't many mainstream media channels present in the beginning, it was only through social media that opinions were being formed even in the heads of the journalists. Republic TV used to get in touch with students of Jamia university and call them during debates at prime time. One of my friends went there two times and he was humiliated both times, his mic wasn't even pulled up. The channel would also offer incentives. 1500-2000 was offered to students, and they were just called there to get humiliated. Post that we saw Shaheen Bagh happened and that's when these channels started coming to cover, before that they believed we were substandard, in fact international organisations like The Vice and BBC came. They only came when Shaheen Bagh became famous. They even spread fake news that they were attacked, but the truth was that the protesters were even more well behaved when they came, so that they could show that their demands are legit and they deserve to be heard without any violence. Everyone is a journalist with their smartphone now; and because of that a lot of the breaking news which required real press freedom is broken by civilians on social media

Fact checking websites also came up, media is not just news but also the countering of fake news.

Republic TV had come to campus, and we had the policy of not speaking to them, one of their journalists forced us to talk to them. And later when he was met with resistance the channel ran an entire show about how Jamia students are super violent.

4. Prabhash K Dutta, Associate Editor, India today.

Q1) What would you like to say about the media coverage of the anti-caa/nrc protests?

Answer- I should not be judging myself, ask somebody else to judge me or my agenda, because as long as I'm in or I'm part of the media, I should not be commenting on the medium or how it behaves or how they function. Although I can speak on nitty gritty of the functionality or how it works.

Q2) How did the anti-caa/nrc protests flare up?

Answer) This is a different question than how the media covered it. Any person who isn't a part of the protest or is on the outside knows anything about any protest, not only the anti-caa/nrc protests, they know it through the media; and to say that the media did not cover something or media covered it in particular light is wrong to say when there is coverage of the exact same ideology. How did the people know about what was happening in the protest? It was through the media, so the media's intent should not be questioned. There is space for everyone to express what they perceive, so you cannot hate on a particular news organisation for their understanding of events

Q3) The media has been divided into two, and both are functioning with their own thought processes, what is your take on that?

Answer) Media is not an island, it is a part of our society and every journalist comes from a different background, so it is wrong to expect the reportage to not have a leaning. People who work in the media, they come from a family, they come from a society, they come from school, college, they have been taught by some set of teachers. So, they reflect in a way what society is. So, when they voice their opinion, they voice their opinion based on the way they perceive things, how they perceive things, they perceive things, based on their own education, their own perception of things, their own way of looking at things. After that, they say certain things. And no society would want a media or or a news industry to say the same thing. There must be differences of opinion and or the presentation of different sides of a story for you to see whether it is divided into two sides or or different sides or many side

Q4) What is your take on the attack on the students of Jamia university?

Answer 4- Why are you using the word attack? Use the word when the other side is not doing anything and somebody goes up to them and beats them up. Then it can be termed an attack. Students of Jamia also were involved in violence, it was not just the police. They also took a lead in launching the attack and then the police responded with more vigour, because of the power they had. What the police did was not an attack but a retaliation.

5. Shubhendu Shekar- National Spokesperson Bharatiya Janata Party

Q1) What was the BJP's stance at the anti-CAA/NRC protest?

Answer) Before the anti-hindu riots, there took place a demonstration which was intentionally held, CAA is not harmful for any muslim of the country, the movement still gained momentum despite not causing any harm to the existing muslims of the country. The international media went and covered it, we were shamed on the global stage. The protests were held by anti-india forces to dismantle the spirit of India. Funding came from outside india, which came from outside india. Trump was about to come and that is why the protests took place. The people who understand CAA-NRC will never protest against the CAA. We are willing to grant citizenship to other hindus from different communities and countries. We made this law for the people who were being mistreated in their own countries, and those were hindus.

Q2) What about NPR?

Answer- The people who are living in India, there should be a count, what's wrong with having a count. The Seeta-Geeta who come to work in your house may not be Seeta-Geeta indeed, they are illegal muslim immigrants who come to our country and then loot us and commit other crimes; NPR is for people like them who need to be sent back to their country. And also for people who don't even have a single proof of residence. If they've lived here for so many years, they should have a proof, if they don't they should be asked to leave.

Q4) What about the media coverage of the protests?

Ans- There are 2 types of media, one which propagates the truth, like OP India and Republic TV. They are the media which show the mirror to the nation while others like NDTV are a blot on the nation. These people have gotten funding from outside to malign the reputation of the country.

India will indeed become a hindu rashtra, because we are not shying about being true to our culture. It's also written in the Veda's, this is the time for the Hindu's to live peacefully.

6. Mahafuaz, student, Jamia Millia Islamia

Q1) What were the realities at the protest site?

Answer- The police had forcefully entered the premises on the 15th of January, there was panic all around, students were running and screaming and that's when a tear gas bomb landed 20m's away from me. A couple of my friends and everyone was really scared.

Q2) Where were you when there was an attack on the library? ‘

Answer- I was in the canteen when the attack on the library took place, my mother had called me all panicked and she wanted me to come home. I was scared because my senior was also in the library. Then I moved out of the campus. There were loud noises, and we heard that the police had forcefully entered. Then we found out that lathi-charge had taken place and people were running here and there.

Many students who didn't even have anything to do with the protests were attacked, they weren't even saying anything. The police weren't listening to anyone, they were just harming us. Our protest was completely peaceful, only when there were too many people joined in, the police started getting violent.

Q3) Did you witness anyone getting hurt?

Answer- Post 15th December, all we would see around were people being injured or detained. The police forgot that we were just students. Many were rushed to the hospital because of the wounds.

Q4) What were the mental health impacts on you personally?

Answer- We felt defeated, we didn't know any of this would happen so we were just deflated, none of us wanted to return to campus. We were scared we'd be brutalised again. Our education took a major back seat, as we dealt with the mental health implications.

7. Harsh Datt, mass communication student, IPU

Q1) What are your views on the CAA/NRC?

Answer- CAA is a necessary evil, and we have needed it for a while. The congress party had completely wrecked the nation and now Modi ji is saving us. CAA is good for the muslims too. Now we have someone in power who understands the worries of the minorities.

Q2) What are your views on Shaheen Bagh?

Answer- Some women brought along their children, which is inhuman. A lot of them were paid by foreign firms or anti India forces who wished to break the nation. Most of them don't even know why they're here.

Q3) What do you think is the role of the media?

Answer- The media has played a conducive role during the protests, especially channels like republic and times now. We needed someone to show us the truth, and they did that unabashedly, without worrying about the implications of the left-brigade.

8. Alishaan Jafri, correspondent, The Wire.

During the Delhi Riots, more than the women of Shaheen Bagh, my interest was particularly at the PRO- CAA Protestors – what they were doing, what they were saying and how the media was covering them and what led to the riots in North East Delhi.

Q1) The Protests in Jamia against CAA were peaceful, what events led to that bus being burnt down?

Answer- Violence and a call to violence were coming from much before. But it is difficult to ascertain what led to that bus being burnt down. Whether or not the protestors burnt down the bus is something

that should be independently investigated. However, that does not mean that the police will intrude inside a university, inside a library and hit students so mercilessly and do what it did.

The first week of the protest was a spontaneous protest started by the students of Jamia, AMU (Aligarh Muslim University), Lucknow, and other places. It started in 3-4 places which were Nadwa College Lucknow, Jamia and AMU. Similar types of violence took place in Jamia and AMU.

Thereafter people (mainly Muslims) came onto the streets. The visuals coming out of Jamia were barbaric. They shocked the Muslim community across India. Compared to an ordinary Muslim who is heckled on street the students of Jamia were relatively sheltered. This spontaneously led to the protests at Shaheen Bagh along with other major marches.

During one such march, around 17th December 2019, 23 people were gunned down in Uttar Pradesh. There were other reports of such incidents across various states. Post 17th-18th December larger gatherings assembled around Jantar Mantar, Connaught Place and Western U.P. These crowds were chanting slogans like “desh ke gadaaron ko...goli maro saalon ko”. After these slogans it was claimed that these people were PRO CAA Protestors which means they were protesting against those people who were protesting against CAA. This in itself makes no sense since the CAA had already been passed. Possibly a better explanation would be calling these PRO CAA Protestors, ANTI – ANTI CAA Protestors.

These people were essentially protesting against Muslims. A pattern can be observed today as well. There are numerous protests against Namaz, such as in Gurugram. Similarly, protestors say they will wear saffron shawls to protest the hijab.

Q2) What about the pro-caa rallies?

Answer- Firstly pro-caa rallies don't make sense, you can't just sit there and tell the people who are protesting to go back. It is against the constitution. Everyone should have the right to protest and the hindutva groups thought it was okay to ask the other part of the society to not protest.

The pro caa protests were held against the anti-caa/nrc protesters, so they were anti-anti caa/nrc protesters, which makes no sense.

9. Aarushi Sharma- SFI student

Q1) What do you remember from the protests?

Answer- I remember being detained for being an active part of the protests, my muslim friends further faced more and more discrimination.

Q2) What have been the long term implications of it?

Answer- The male guard checks my bag every time I want to enter campus, I have been flashed by the authorities because I attended regular protests.

10. Shadab Moizee, Editor, The Quint

Q1) What was the origin of these protests?

Answer- When the parliament started talking about the issue, at that time cap was in rule, which started the entire thing, however, in delhi, the protests started from Jamia on the 13th december, it got a little violent as the police tried removing the students. But very minor and a few students were detained. A few Aligarh Uni students also joined the protest, and a few miles away from Jamia, there is a place called shaheen bagh which became a protest site on the 15th december covering one side of the road.

However on the 15th night, people who were protesting marched towards Jantar Mantar and a few boys who were not a part of the protest got into a quarrel with the police. Suddenly, someone lit the bus on fire.

Q2) sir, the fire on the bus became such a big controversy. The right wing has its own story, so what was the reality?

Answer- I can't say who lit the bus on fire, if it was a student or the police since the videos were not clear enough. A lot of students got back to the campus since things were heating up, and that's when the police entered the campus and a lot of shots were fired inside the campus.

Q3) But there was no unrest inside the campus during the protest, right?

Answer- Yes yes, they got into the library and beat up so many students, and they pelted the students, threw gas shells. They made students raise their hands as if they were criminals and threatened to shoot them if they didn't cooperate. There are photos which show all of this. The police even made the kids kneel down for no reason, this situation could've been handled better, there was no need for the violent actions that the police took. At the same time, in AMU, while the students were protesting, the ruckus and the panic that was created in AMU at the same time was that the police killed a boy in the room, which created a lot of panic and an important thing to note is that the AMU protest took place inside the campus and had no impact on the population outside of the campus.

The police entered amu too, since i was in delhi on the 15th night i rushed to Jamia to see what had happened. The same night, from what I remember, I left for AMU. In Aligarh, I noticed a lot of students were injured. A lot of students told me that the police had thrown the tear gas shell directly on the students which fell on one student's hand, his condition was so bad, he probably had to cut his own hand later on. I could see the tear gas shells thrown outside the hostel and rooms, and as I explored more I saw the windows of the hostel rooms cracked and shattered and burnt bed sheets due to the tear gas shell that was thrown from the outside.

Q4) what was the scene like in Delhi after 15th?

A lot of people had come to protest at shaheen bagh and in front of gate number 7(main gate) of JMI. There was no violence but proper protests had started, even injured students participated.

After a few weeks, this protest started in north east delhi as well. There were two incidents like this, one was RAM BHARAT GOPAL who was also arrested and the same guy who was made a social media hero, he fired around 100 meters away from the campus.

Q5) What were the issues with the media coverage?

The issue with the media is that it will never go against the government. If you try to defame a protest it means you are supporting the govt rather than just broadcasting information. For eg so many media houses said the women of shaheen bagh sit with money, which is absolute rubbish. I understand the hatred you have against the community, but on one hand you talk about women empowerment and on the other you're defaming them just because they belong to a certain community.

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