
Marketed Governance: the Construction of 'Visual Hinduism'

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Abstract

In India, in 2014 the government led by BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) with N. Modi as its Prime Minister came to power. Right from BJP's campaigning style to their governing models, it displays unique panache and flamboyance. One of the important aspects of this government is their extensive use of visuals including hoardings, social media, television/cinema theatre advertisements and Newspaper advertisements.

The paper studies the changing political processes in India since 2014 especially with the use of visuals and its implications for the changing concepts of altruism, nationalism, disgust discourse, Hinduization, and India's economy.

This paper mainly looks at the campaigns initiated by Modi Government- 'Bharat Swachhata Abhyaan' (campaign for cleanliness), 'Give It Up' (voluntarily surrendering the subsidy for cooking gas) and Demonetization. These events have consolidated middle classes in India on moral guidelines. The paper looks at the government's visual and social media propaganda for 'Digital India' and the politics of exclusion. Simultaneously, the government uses the 'power of branding' to appropriate marginalized identities into national iconicity. I explore how religion has shaped public sphere post-2014. With huge cut-outs, posters, visuals of muscular Gods, and arches Hinduism has become hypervisible and a spectacle. As Sandra Freitag argues, civil society's informal activities often challenge the action of the nation-state. But in the Indian case, the paper hypothesizes that it rather supports the State's Hindu hegemonic ideology.

Thus this paper will analyze these campaigns and 'Digital Hinduism' through the visuals to study the changing contours of the public sphere, nationalism, and moral economy.

Keywords: Visual Hinduism, Digital Hinduism, Forced altruism, Demonetisation, Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan

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