

MAPPING HINDUTVA AND ANTI-BENGALI HATE: A CULTURE-CENTRED ANALYSIS

PROF MOHAN J DUTTA
Dean's Chair Professor
Director, CARE, Massey University



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Mohan J Dutta - Director
Center for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and
Evaluation (CARE)
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Room 3.46, Sir Geoffrey Peren Building
Massey University Manawatū Campus
Private Bag 11 222
PALMERSTON NORTH 4442
New Zealand
T: +64 06 951 9282 ext 86282
E: m.j.dutta@massey.ac.nz
W: www.carecca.nz

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PROF MOHAN J DUTTA

DIRECTOR

CENTRE FOR CULTURE-CENTRED
APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND
EVALUATION (CARE)



ABOUT CARE

The Centre for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand, is a global hub for communication research that uses participatory and culture-centred methodologies to develop community-driven communication solutions to health and wellbeing. Through experiments in methods of radical democracy anchored in community ownership and community voice, the Centre collaborates with communities, community organisers, community researchers, advocates and activists to imagine and develop sustainable practices for prevention, health care organising, food and agriculture, worker organising, migrant and refugee rights, indigenous rights, rights of the poor and economic transformation.

Prof Mohan J Dutta is the Director of CARE and author of books such as *Neoliberal Health Organizing*, *Communicating Health*, and *Voices of Resistance*.

This white paper may include images and texts around topics such as sexual violence, physical violence, identity-based discrimination and harassment, and genocide. I encourage you to care for your safety and wellbeing while reading this paper.

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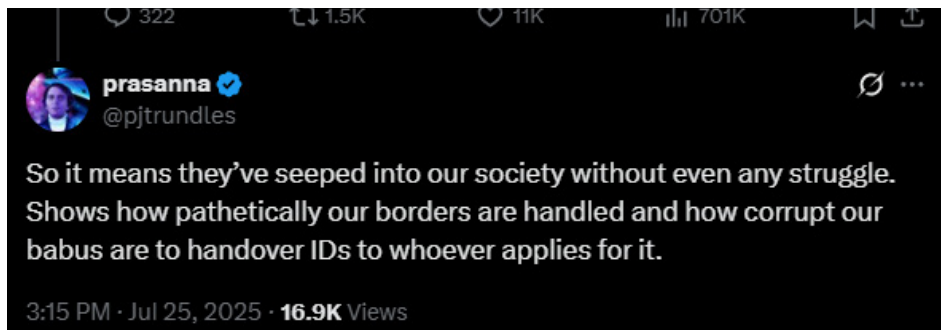
MOHAN J DUTTA
CARE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The far-right ideology of Hindutva mobilizes through multi-layered tropes of othering. Its narrative project around the construction of a monolithic Hindu sanskriti organizes around Hindi and the desire to establish the hegemony of Hindi culture as the representation of India, while simultaneously continually erasing the diverse cultural, political, and social traditions of India.¹ This white paper identifies the discursive tropes of Hindutva that construct Bengalis as the other, legitimizing an infrastructure of violence targeting Bengalis. At the heart of this trope of this production of the Bangladeshi other is the communicative process of othering, simultaneously dehumanising Bengalis from Bengal, and then deploying the rhetoric of the Bangladeshi infiltrator to create panic around Bengalis as a linguistic community. Also, critical here is the intersection of anti-Bengali hate with anti-Muslim hate, specifically directed at Bengali Muslims.² This discursive infrastructure of hate underlies various forms of violence that is directed at Bengalis across spaces where Hindutva is circulated.³ This white paper maps the discursive strategies and offers some critical recommendations for community, activist, and political movements of resistance against the hate mobilized by Hindutva. It demonstrates the interplays of vigilante and state violence targeting Bengalis under the guise of removing illegal immigrants. The discourse of legality and migration are the center of the marginalization of Bengalis, and particularly Muslim Bengalis.

FEAR OF THE BANGLADESHI INFILTRATOR

The Hindutva ecosystem organizes hate around the fear of the Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrator. Bangladeshi Muslims polluting the purity of India must be rounded up, incarcerated and then removed from Indian soil. The fear of the Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrating every layer of caste-privileged pure Hindu society is reiterated across discursive registers.



The Bangladeshi Muslim other is rhetorically constructed as destroying the cultural heritage of India. The detention of Bangladeshis is narrated as protecting the cultural heritage of India, erasing the complex cultural history of the sub-continent, British colonialism and partition, instead imposing the Hindutva construction of India as a Hindu nation.



Consider further the following post:



The identification and marking of the Bangladeshi forms the communicative infrastructure targeting hyper-precarious workers that do the dirty, dangerous, and demeaning work in India's hyper-capitalist hubs. The construction of the illegal infiltrators stokes fear and anxiety, crafting the great replacement narrative of Hindu death.



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The rhetoric of the Muslim rapist and murderer is circulated across the discursive architecture, tying the fear to national security. The threat of the Muslim takeover forms a critical infrastructure in the Hindutva ecosystem of hate.



BENGALI AS BANGLADESHI

The processes of surveillance deployed to target the Bangladeshi is one of identifying the use of Bengali. The Bengali language, its uses, and the script stand in as signifiers of the infiltrating Bangladeshi other. Consider here the following statement by Delhi police:

23567
29-7-25


**OFFICE OF THE STATION HOUSE OFFICER, POLICE STATION LODHI COLONY,
SOUTH DISTRICT, NEW DELHI**
Tele. 011-24620283, Mob. 8750870829, 7065569299, Email: sho.lodhiclny@delhipolice.gov.in

FIR No. 51/2025
u/sec. 318(2)/319(2)/337 BNS,
14 Foreigners Act & 34 Aadhar Act
Police Station Lodhi Colony,
South District, New Delhi


To,
The Officer-in-Charge
Banga Bhawan,
Diplomatic Enclave, Pandit Uma Shankar Dikshit Marg,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

Sub: Translation of documents containing text written in Bangladeshi language-regarding.

Sir,
It is respectfully submitted that a case vide FIR no. 51/2025 was registered u/s 318(2)/319(2)/337 BNS, 14 Foreigners Act, 34 Aadhar Act, at Police Station Lodhi Colony, South District, New Delhi.

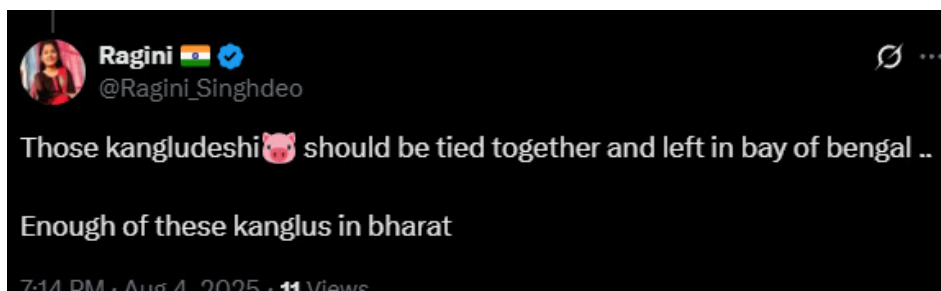
During the course of investigation, eight (08) persons strongly suspected to be Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in India without any valid passport or visa, were arrested. Upon enquiry, copies of National ID cards, birth certificates, bank account details etc. were found from these suspected Bangladeshi nationals. The suspected Bangladeshi nationals were arrested and remanded to judicial custody on the order of the Hon'ble Court concerned.

The identification documents contain texts written in Bangladeshi and are needed to be translated to Hindi and English. Now, for the investigation to proceed further, it is requested that an official translator/interpreter proficient in Bangladeshi national language may kindly be provided for the aforesaid purpose. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the requisite report would be a pivotal piece of evidence for successful prosecution of suspected Bangladeshi nationals facing trial. Expeditious disposal of this letter is desired as the same is required to be submitted before the Hon'ble Court in a timed manner. Any bills raised against the translation service shall be payable by the department and a quotation for the same may be communicated beforehand.

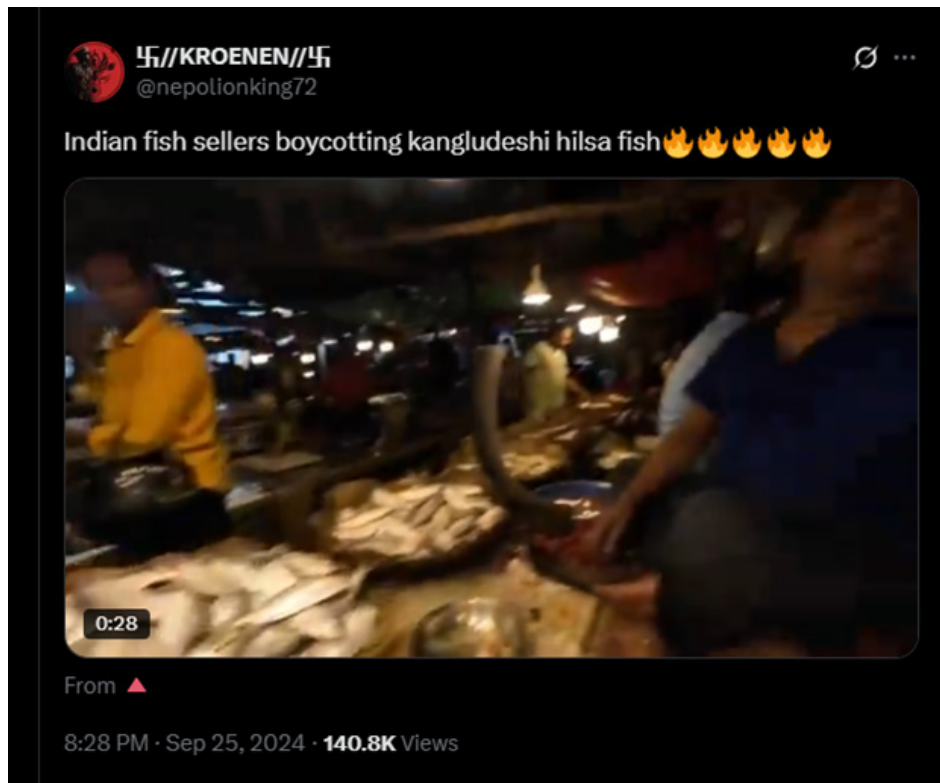

Inspector Amit Dutt
(Investigating Officer)
Police Station Lodhi Colony
South District, New Delhi

1/2

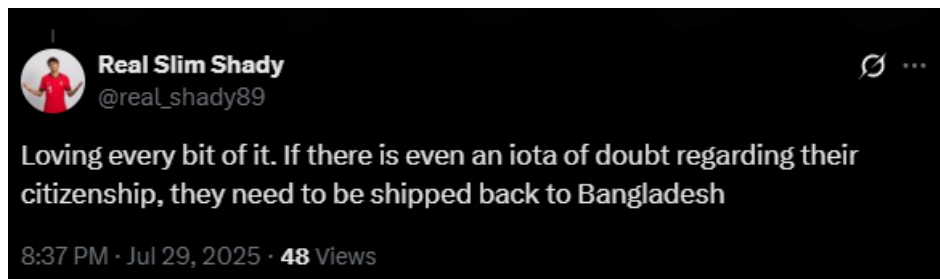
Note here the conflation of Bangladeshi as Bengali. The use of Bengali in identification documents forms the basis of categorization as Bangladeshi to disenfranchise and incarcerate mostly working class migrant workers. This process of othering, dehumanization and incarceration on the basis of the questioning of citizenship of Bengalis is unfolding across Assam, New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The national convenor of the Information Technology (IT) cell of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political arm of Hindutva, is noted as stating there is no language called “Bengali.” The erasure of language is a critical element in the infrastructure of cultural genocide, the erasure serving as the basis for legitimizing violence.



It is critical to note the demonization of the term Bangladeshi as Kangludeshi, with the dehumanizing image of a pig. Consider further the construction of the nation state as Bharat from which Bangladeshis must be expelled through the use of state violence. Any doubt regarding identity is mobilized to incarcerate and deport. The discursive construction of Kangludeshi is deployed to target cultural practices of Bengalis (such as eating fish).



This attack on Bengali cultural practices is materialised into vigilante violence across brick-and-mortar spaces governed by Hindutva.



Analogies are drawn celebratorily to the Trump infrastructure of deporting those surveilled and categorized as illegal immigrants.

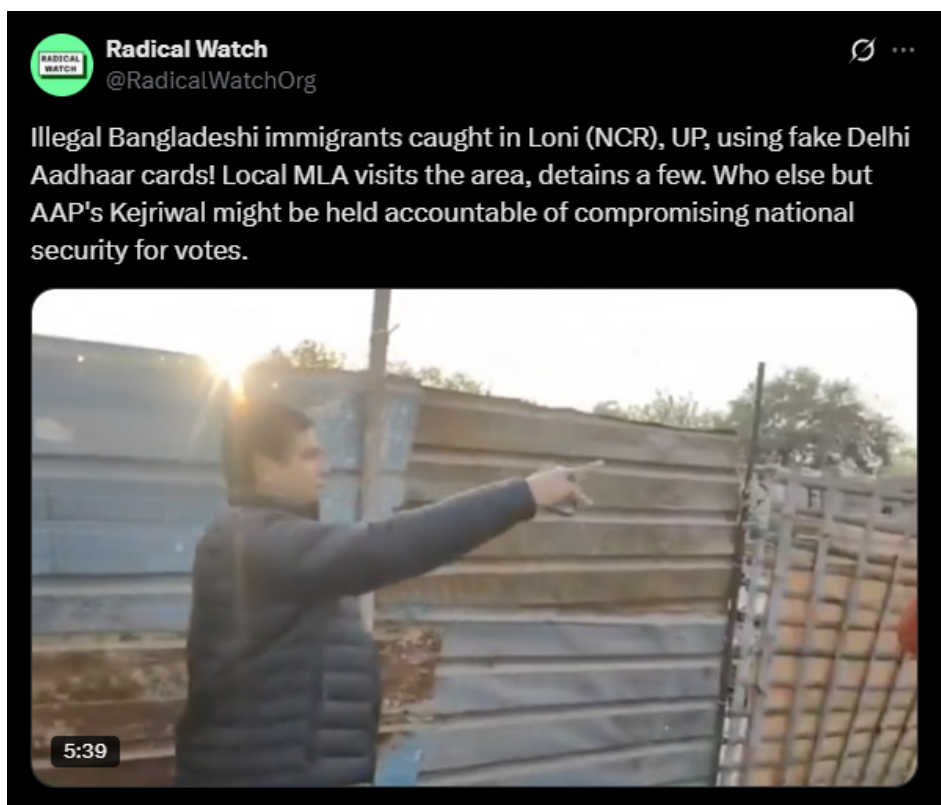


DEHUMANISING LANGUAGE

The digital Hindutva ecosystem is replete with dehumanizing language that reduces the targeted Bengalis and Bangladeshis into “less than human” characteristics. Comparisons drawn to animals serve as key features of the narratives in the Hindi-Hindutva ecosystem.



The post above renders visible the violent tropes of “lungi clad” (draped in lungi, a traditional clothing worn in many parts of South Asia, but in Hindutva discourse attached to Muslims), “smelly” and “dwarf” that are tied to the depiction of the community. The dehumanization serves as the basis of vigilante violence, organized as the cleansing of the community spaces from Bangladeshis.



Here, a local politician (without authority) is shown as visiting a community (from the image of hyper-precarious workers) and detaining residents. Media are depicted targeting communities, organized around the vigilante narrative of Bangladeshi infiltrators, asking for community members to show their documents. These mediatized spectacles then are deployed to further circulate hate and fear in the digital ecosystem.



The narrative offered by the interviewed communities that we or our ancestors were born on this land becomes the target of violent discourse, is ridiculed and becomes the subject of conspiracy theories of Bangladeshi Muslims changing their documents to appear as Hindus.

CONCLUSION

The discursive infrastructure of anti-Bengali hate, intersecting with anti-Muslim hate, deployed by Hindutva across digital and material spaces forms a key element in the ongoing marginalization, dehumanization and vilification of Bengalis. Hindutva's Hindi imperialism and its project of constructing the impure other is critical to establishing the Hindu nation based on a cultural monolith. Resistance to this monolithic narrative is critical to securing the plural, polymorphic and diverse practices that form the democratic infrastructure of India. This white paper wraps up with the following recommendations for challenging the hate politics of Hindutva.

- Build voice infrastructures at the Bengali “margins of the margins” that document and witness the violence of Hindutva.
- Build class-based politics across spaces that foreground Hindutva's targeting of the working classes and hyper-precarious workers.
- Build connections of solidarity across working class, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist movements that critically interrogate the cultural nationalism of Hindutva.
- Build connections of solidarity across diverse spaces, creating a global infrastructure for challenging Hindutva.
- Build community-led culture-centered public pedagogies on diversity and pluralism of India and the diverse registers of cultural practices (including around practices of eating fish, eggs, meat etc. that challenge Hindutva's caste-based organizing around vegetarian purity). These plural registers are central to challenging the monolithic and hegemonic narratives constructed by Hindutva organized around the Hindi-ization of cultural spaces. The public pedagogies are at the core of building critical literacy around the othering strategies of Hindutva.
- Build culture-centered community led grassroots initiatives that center values of love, connection, and community, and that challenge the disinformation and dichotomies crafted by Hindutva.
- Build political and policy infrastructures for challenging Hindutva's marginalizing practices around caste, religion and citizenship.

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2. [Data Reveals Rising Hate and Violence Against Bengali-Origin Muslims in Assam; Detained and Tortured: Bengali-Speaking Muslim Migrant Workers Targeted by Delhi Police](#)