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RESEARCH ARTICLE

“TRENDING” CULTURE OF RESISTANCE IN THE NEW MEDIA: AIB.

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Abstract

Time has brought the world to a state whereby anything and everything has turned out to be a medium of expression. Any expression has an inherent bias towards a particular orientation. The difference in orientation could be defined by the politics of culture. It is the dominant ruling culture of a state or, on a more general basis, of the world, that defines, in the literal sense of the word, anything and everything. But a lot of definitions increase the possibility of a counter definition. Anything stated unnatural could turn out to be the most natural at some point of time and this is what ‘counter-definitions’ do. These counter-definitions use the same medium of expressions as those used by the ruling.

Now-a-days a word much in use is the word ‘trending’. Anything that is trending is alive is the new generation parameter. The focus of this paper is the trending Indian channels on YouTube which also share the space with other visual media. These channels like *AIB*, *Dice Media*, *Girliyappa*, *TTT (Terribly Tiny Talkies)*, *Filter Copy* etc creates and post videos on YouTube that create healthy and unhealthy criticism on anything and everything that is part of the so called mainstream. These trending videos are anything and everything in a nutshell as each video is not more than twenty minutes. So the point of argument of the intended paper is that the trending YouTube channels mark the new generation tactic against the cultural strategies of the mainstream politics. The paper is also likely to present how far is this tactic a medium of resistance.

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“What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer”, so begins Sir Francis Bacon his famous essay “Of Truth”. Everyone wants to know the truth behind everything, be it the origin of species or a recent harassment, or murder that took place in the neighbourhood, or the incredulities found in the election, or the budget of the nation. But as Bacon says, no one would stay for an answer. This indeed seems to be paradoxical but deny it or not this is what happens with all of us as long as things do not affect us on a direct basis. In the name of the ‘truth behind’ we listen, see, and browse many things, including the speech of a Minister of Parliament or of some eminent personality, statements and court verdicts. Now-a-days even the trolls on the social media are of much importance. There was a time in the history of India when people used to look onto the west as the absolute, and later came an era, which is of this day, in which we look onto the west with one criticizing hand, and the other filling some foreign university application form. All these make us narrow down to a point that we live in a world of paradoxes, and it is impossible to make out truth amongst these paradoxes.

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What we have now are not truths but versions, and the noticeable part is that each of these versions has considerable number of supporters. Amongst these versions there is always a mainstream version which is propagated by the dominant structures by means of power. Michel Foucault in his three volume work *The History of Sexuality*, presents power as knowledge when he says that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Lemert 475). So in association with the mainstream version which is organized by power we can say that the remaining versions are all versions of resistance, and the coexistence of the mainstream and resistance is unavoidable.

The Czech theorist and philosopher Michel de Certeau in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* presents how the common man formulate tactics against the strategies of the dominant and how these tactics formulated within the boundaries stated by the strategies operate against the strategies. This he says forms a trajectory of tactics. Certeau says that the tactic involved

...trace the “indeterminable trajectories” that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written and prefabricated space through which they move. They are sentences that remain unpredictable within the space ordered by the organizing techniques of the systems. Although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, the supermarket or city planning), although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes... these “traverses” remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of different interests and desires. They circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain.... (Certeau 34)

Tactics, operate within the space created by the strategy, but against it. The focus of this paper is on the tactic of resistance which operates within the space provided by the mainstream strategies for establishing power. Strategy of the dominant, according to Certeau, is manipulative and it isolates the subject of will into the delimited space of the ‘other,’ and it is this space of the other which is the space of tactic. Operating within the territory of the enemy, tactic makes use of all that is available within the “visible and objectifiable space” (37) of the dominant.

One such space available in the contemporary world is the online space where the New Media operates. Being the site where all sorts of ideas are broadcasted, the New Media, notable for its possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device and also for its interactive and participatory mode, is the contemporary medium of strategy formation and also of the operation of tactics. This is because, be it the election or the budget or an atrocity that has occurred, a huge amount of video-logs and podcasts are aired via the New Media and these act as sources of various versions of a single event. The New Media was initially beneficial for those who were either part of or supporters of the mainstream ideology because these were initially mere storages of what is going around. But gradually these sites turned out to occupy materials of resistance and came to be known for their sarcasm and exaggeration of events and practices by either trolling them or by enacting them.

The new, younger generation prefers to express their opinion and vision on anything and everything through the various dimensions offered by the New Media. One such prominent medium of expression is the YouTube Channels comprising many videos that are mostly based on trolling. But there are many of them which are serious and present an alternate attitude to the prominent mindset. These channels include *All India Bakchod (AIB)*, *Terribly Tiny Talkies (ttt)*, *Girliyapa*, and many more. The importance of these channels is that they present things in such a manner that one would definitely be brought face to face with the paradox regarding truth, mentioned in the early part of this paper. The paper intends to present these channels as the new generation and technologically funded tactic of resistance against the dominant political structures and the social attitudes. The mainstream strategies referred to in this paper, is not merely the politicized version of the mainstream but also the prominent notions and attitudes that preoccupy the minds of the people and the society.

The examples stated in this paper are some of the popular videos broadcasted by *All India Bakchod (AIB)*, a national comedy group that began in 2013 and stepped onto the popularity with their satirical videos. On 19 September 2013, AIB aired a video on the cause of rape, titled, *Rape: It's Your Fault*, featuring one of the prominent yet not so mainstream female actor of Bollywood Kalki Koechlin, and Juhi Pandu. In India, after every sexual assault, there is a regular and stupid practice of accusing women as the cause for rape. India is such a nation where marital rape is not even considered as an instance of rape. “No women, no rape” this is what the two females in this AIB video says. The actress says with a smile fixed on her face that scientific study suggests that “women who wear skirts are

the leading cause of rape... Because men have eyes,” and presents before us women wearing shorts and skirts to women wearing a Purdah or even wearing an astronaut’s fully covered costume as provocatively dressed. Even when Juhi Pandu is shown as being grabbed by someone to be assaulted she goes down saying “It’s my fault”. The smile that these ladies hold permanent on their faces, and the repetition of “it’s my fault,” definitely make one think how can a woman be a cause for the violation of her own body. Also we see a Police officer questioning Kalki who acts as a rape victim. We see the officer blaming her in either of the cases when she says she was out without boys’ protection and also when she says she was out with a couple of her friends, that in the end she admits it’s her fault. The video ends with a number of women belonging to different age groups looking into the camera and saying “It’s my fault”. The very act of presenting the video with smiling female faces admitting rape as their fault is the tactic of resistance here. The resistance or the tactic involved here is against the dominant patriarchal society that acts as pseudo protectors of the nation and blames the victim and women each time a rape occurs. The video marks resistance against the instance of the juvenile rape convict when the woman in the video says that it is women who are the statutory rapists as the juvenile wards are easy to slip off. No matter whoever gets raped or whoever rapes, the fault always rest on the part of the woman. It is to these hypocritical standards of the Indian society that this video presents itself as a resistance. The video mirrors the average Indian psyche that prefers to double victimize the rape victim by leaning onto the patriarchal ideology. It also forces the audience to hear how their blames sound with the character’s repeating, “it’s my fault.”

On October 13, 2013 AIB aired another video titled *Congress vs BJP*. Throughout the video we see people belonging to various social tiers of the nation fighting over the two major political parties in India, Congress and BJP, when the elections were one year away. As they fight many things happen around them that go unnoticed. The video presents how futile the present day debates turn out to be. The video shows doctors fighting over the political parties as they conduct operations, fire squad workers fighting when a severe fire is happening behind them, security guards fighting over the parties without realizing that the house they are guarding is being looted, and also there are traffic police officials fighting over the political parties when they are on duty and not realizing what is happening on the road. Each of the party supporters has no valid claim to support their party but have many blames against one another. We see in the video how the BJP supporter traffic police officer collects bribe from a traveller as he abuses the Congress supporter officer by accusing the Congress party of corruption. The fight is evidently presented in an exaggerated manner, but it is in this exaggerated presentation of the fight the tactic of resistance against the current day political debates which comprises of incomplete and invalid claims and numerous blames can be traced. Amidst all the drama one can clearly find that no political party has a clear good record or a proper supporter. In a more correct sense this video presents how we have debates these days but not politically correct debates. The video begins quoting Nietzsche and how Indian reaction would be to this. “Those who cannot understand how to put their thoughts on ice, should not enter into the heat of debate” says Nietzsche. Response to this is given as an abuse. This can be marked as another tactic to represent how trivial and abusive are the contemporary debates.

The Times of Boobs is the title of another video aired by AIB. This was aired on 24th September 2014. This video is clearly an exaggeration, and the exaggeration begins right from the title. The video presents an editors’ meeting of a newspaper, coordinated by a head, who is also present at the meeting to discuss how their newspaper could be more commercialized. Here the word ‘boobs,’ an immature addressing of the female breasts stands for the strategy of commercialization which is part of every mainstream newspaper and media. Anything that interests the market value is made into news to be sold. The real and the virtual are skillfully designed by the media strategists that often neglect the actual concern of the world. We see the man acting as head of the meeting giving sexist version of the real news so as to increase the rating of his newspaper. For instance, from the news of Sania Mirza’s ice bucket challenge the editor cooks up the headline “Wet Pakistani girl caught on camera in an Indian bathroom”. Everybody ignores when the only female staff present there calls the headline sexist. We even see how the journalist who asks to report on Ebola is abused by the head and others. Again we see how the editor encourages the journalist photographer to take pictures of costume malfunction of actresses and models. We also see how the female journalist violently reacts to the sexist and moneymaking motives of the newspaper, and her video being shot by one of her colleagues going viral. This again is used by the officials of the newspaper for popularity. All these instances and news headlines presented in the video can be addressed as tactic against the commercialized motives of the mainstream newspapers that fill and sell columns for the sake of the rating of the newspaper.

The Great Indian Media Circus aired on 14th April 2014 by AIB is a critique of the present day sensationalizing media that blow up any tiny issue in such a magnitude that it could lead to a massive chain reaction. The video presents how a tweet from a girl on the delay of chicken roll delivery turns out to be a media circus. As the title

suggests the issue is being taken up by a reporter who presents herself as an “over-concerned journalist looking for a story desperately”. This description is actually a slap on the face to all those journalists who cook up stories from trivial instances just for the sake of creating sensation. The reporter makes a story out of the girl’s tweet, and organizations and parties take up the cause within minutes. By the end of the video we come to know that the delivery was delayed only by five minutes, but the story and its after effects has reached nowhere. There happen hunger strikes, news debates, and we even see a random politician of the satirical party, Samaj Ujaad Party, saying, “What is the need to call for this phallic symbol type roll”. We see how people are shouting in the name of peaceful protest and also declare the nation as a vegan nation. There are protests seen on the social media as well. Later things go out of control and the Government declares Bharat Bandh for no reason. Like the previous video this one takes up exaggeration as the tactic of resistance against the extravagant and overblown media circus. The video confronts the contemporary media that focus on petty things around the world, sensationalizing them rather than focusing on the genuine development of humanity.

AIB aired *The Day India Resigned* on August 13, 2016. The video presents a conversation, an exit interview, between the Great Britain and India on the eve of Independence, before the British leaves India. The British ask India about India’s relation to the British and we see India saying that British were nice people except that they used to “hang us...shoot us...otherwise really polite”. For the British the wars for which they had sent the Indians were “amazing offshore leadership programmes”. Pakistan appears as infiltrating into the conversation again and again that we see British request Pakistan not to infiltrate and Pakistan leaves saying “No infiltration, Sir”. This infiltration comment can be seen as presenting Pakistan’s infiltration into the Jammu and Kashmir ever since independence. When India says that “I am starting my own country”, Britain mocks India by asking how would India become a great nation “with your 100 ethnicities, your 1000 religions, your million languages and caste and God”. Then we see India saying,

I will not divide and rule on the basis of religion, ethnicities and skin colour. I will be fair and lovely. I will not muzzle the media. I will let people say whatever they want! Whenever they want! ... I for one will not put my students in jail just because they had an unfavourable opinion of me. And shooting your own civilians? What kind of an insecure regime does that?

With this speech delivered by India, AIB presents a critique of intolerance in India. This speech directed against the British actually points to the current situation of intolerance in the nation that could also lead to the standards of divide and rule, once practiced by British to rule India, in the near future if this situation of intolerance prevails.

On December 4, 2016, a few weeks past the declaration of demonetization, AIB aired a video named *Demonetization Circus*. The video presents the situation after the declaration of demonetization. The sudden change of law, banking, lack of money, deaths on queues are all dealt with in the video. The Prime Minister is being criticized with the radio announcements with him asking for three days first for development and then three weeks, then fifty days, then six months and finally saying time is just the feeling of the mind. We see people wondering what would happen with the sudden change, but nobody is actually bothered about what could really happen. Each and every one is actually bothered about their own business that even deaths do not matter. A man says some people would die, but it is ok “My dog died”. To stop the argument on sacrifice for the nation people take the name of soldiers on the border. When the tea vendor asks why RTI cannot be applied on the funding of political parties so as to eradicate black money, we see the other man talking over there silencing him. Even the various invalid news regarding the new notes are being addressed in the video. The whole event of demonetization which has lasting effects till now is being satirically presented in the video. The video ends with the man being asked even to dance naked to get the money but he does not get. In the end we also see a dead man standing on the queue. At first people gather around him but once the banker declares “Rs. 500” people run away from the dead man. The video, thus, is a resistance against the sudden change of law, manipulation of the law in banks during demonetization, drama based on Indian culture, fake Indian nationalistic feelings and also against the postponement of development despite the sudden change in laws.

YouTube, along with avenues offered by the New Media agrees a potential repository of knowledge for the contemporary world. With the diversity of content and the various modes of distribution it also invites what Henry Jenkins terms as the “participatory culture,” where consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of the new content (Burgess and Green 10). The aim of the different contributors may vary according to

their contexts, but these mediums delve into cultural politics of a country to take on the political power for the project of emancipation and democracy.

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