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ARTICLE

Performing the “Roots” and “Routes” of Cultural Identity: A Study of YouTube ‘Patriotism Pop’ in India

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ABSTRACT

Following the abrogation of article 370 in 2019 Indian public sphere became a hotbed of debate. Various mediums were deployed to make public voices heard. Opinion of the civil society expressed through newspapers, television news channels verbally opposed, and sometimes supported, the act. Marches and processions were organised against, as well as for the act. The masses were believed to be untouched by the events that unfolded. Days within the publication of the act, a series of pop songs set to folk or raunchy tunes began to flood Youtube. These songs received millions of hits every day. Songs encouraging the North Indian youth to bring brides from Kashmir became quite a YouTube sensation as did songs meeting out warnings to supposed national traitors and most importantly to the frontier arch enemy- Pakistan. Scores of comments online encouraged these online social media productions In this paper, I would like to engage with the textuality, performativity (production) of the idea that the act of abrogation propagated, and how it has had a nuanced reception (consumption) in the lives of people thereby developing a space to look at popular culture as something more than just a commercial wasteland. Another aspect of Indian political economy that I would like to interrogate through a semiotic analysis of the patriotic pop genre is the linguistic resonance that current political lingo had in the lyrics of the songs, thereby interrogating popular songs as “sites of memory” to reinvent the “roots” and the “routes” of cultural/national identity.

Keywords: Patriotism Pop; YouTube; Popular Culture; Article 370; Indian Popular Culture; Somatic; CAA/Citizen Amendment Act; National Identity; Majoritarian Politics

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1. Introduction

Cultural identity in the Indian subcontinent began its journey towards the acquisition of a status of a national community, rising above narrow ethnic, religious, and gender identities, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though political formed a part of the pre-nationalist vocabulary of protest, it did not quite acquire a national character. The rite of passage from a fuzzy community to a more enumerated national community required the presence of a liminal phase of colonialism^[1]. The liminality that the presence of the colonial 'other' provided was sorely missed once India became independent, and a new scapegoat became quintessential for keeping the collectivity alive. The ideologues attempted to hold the act together with the idea of secular nationalism for some time until right wing ideology began promoting the idea of a Hindu nation mobilised into action by the Ramjanmabhumi movement that began in 1949 with the sudden appearance of the idol of Ramlalla [infant Rama] in the age old Babri Mosque at Ayodhya that they claimed to be the site of birth of Rama, hero of the epic Ramayana. The wheel that was put to action in 1949 proceeded it crushed under its weight the 200 year old edifice, demolished by a frenzied mob in 1992 turning Ayodhya into a performative space of a cultural identity that a section of the Indian population vied to acquire^[2]. The turned wheel gained acceleration towards a rightist collectivity in 2014 when one of the triumvirates- Bharatiya Janata Party (henceforth BJP), Viswa Hindu Parishad (henceforth VHP), and the Bajrang Dal- won a popular mandate in Lok Sabha elections leading to the creation of a single party ruled right wing government in India. As I argued for the Ramjanmabhumi movement leading to the demolition of the Babri Mosque, the ensuing turn of events in the form of lynching and escalating hate crimes against members of non-Hindu religion was not the mere outcome of a top-to-bottom discourse of Hindutva ideology (promoting the idea of Hindu supremacy). It was a bottom-up process as well where people internalized the ideas in their daily world view giving it a more personalised touch. Social media has played a crucial role in providing a virtual space to such voices who have now begun to flex their muscles on a daily basis, something that happened just once at Ayodhya in December 1992. I will use the aftermath of the decision taken by the BJP led Union Government in August 2019 to abrogate Article 370 ending the special status

enjoyed by the state of Jammu and Kashmir, henceforth J&K, to argue the case to the point.

On 4th of August 2019 J&K was in the thrall of public paralysis as the Centre of the Indian Union imposed serious restrictions on free movement in the region^[3, 4]. Since Independence in 1947 J&K has been a major bone of contention between India and her neighbour Pakistan (that gained independence and was formed into a nation state immediately with her). When the erstwhile ruler of J&K Hari Singh joined the Indian Union it was done on the condition of allowance of special status to the state that was formally guaranteed under Article 370^[5]. But the escalating tensions with Pakistan and rampant infiltration of terrorising miscreants created a political unrest in the region that needed constant attention of the Central government. Armed Forces Special Powers Act was brought to force in 1990 to extend to any part of the region which the Governor of the state deemed 'disturbed' and required intervention of the armed forces for the safety and security of the civil population. But the continued un-peace in the region erupted not merely from terrorising activities but also from the ongoing movement in the region for independence from the Union of India. This served as a catalyst for staging mass exodus of Kashmiri Pundits from the valley fearing lack of security and discontent amongst Indian public for being denied rights to freely move or buy property in J&K. So, special status granted to J&K under Article 370 has been a matter of distrust and distaste amongst the majority of Indians who considered it to be a mere outcome of an electoral policy of the political parties to garner minority votes, especially that of the Muslims. Hindutva ideology based electoral politics that gained momentum under the political party BJP since independence and became more majoritarian in nature since BJP's claim to single party victory at the Centre (Lok Sabha) in 2014 made way for a more pronounced demand to bring the entire nation under one law that translated to abrogation of any special status granted to any state under the Union of India. So, when J&K was brought to a sudden standstill after a major deployment of ten thousand armed forces to the region, and all the major political leaders were put under house arrest on the 4th of August 2019 speculations ran high that what would be the next move of the BJP-led government. And putting all speculations to rest the very next day Home Minister Amit Shah declared that Article 370, granting special status to the state of J&K,

will be abrogated. Amendment of the Indian Constitution, particularly a part that related a sensitive part of the Indian polity, sparked a major movement both in favour and against the decision of the Union government. The capital city of India witnessed civil protest against the move of the Union Government^[6, 7] and also in its favour. Amidst such mixed feelings and response, when media reportage were cautioning against sudden eruption of a festering volcano in J&K, a series of popular Hindi songs appeared in social media, particularly YouTube, that directly addressed and celebrated the abrogation of Article 370. For quite some time there has been a growing popularity of ‘patriotism pop’¹ songs that promoted Hindutva ideology (ethno-religious identity of Hindu Indians)^[8] but the ones that made their appearance after the Act was abrogated not just bared the ‘root’ of the cultural identity that the nation has built, but also highlighted the ‘route’ it has steered into, that in some ways was inherent in it. In this paper, I will argue that cultural identity in the Indian subcontinent has fragmented into segmentary identities owing to the postcolonial infraction of dystopic globalisation/virtualisation.

2. Study Method and Material

The webbed analysis of performative ritualization of our daily lives stands upon a three-step authentication process-rehearsal, performance and reception. This process replays itself in a non-stop loop where the engaged parties keep appearing in altered roles. A question often placed before performance studies’ scholars is - does performance studies deal with theatre, drama, alone? No point denying it - of course it does, but the drama, metaphor and ritual that the studies deal with is present everywhere- ubiquitous and often

ephemeral; the drama called life, visible and audible around the corner ever since human evolution. Like any other ritualistic process it has its own set of rules and norms of practice; a highly hierarchized process. Played out in the social setting- a gathering of *people*- it limits the space and temporality of movement, conduct, language, etc. The degree of association with such norms ensures the position of the participants in the practice, and of the practice itself, within the ritualistic nomenclature. Popular culture/mass culture, associated with the rise of consumerist culture, has not only been regarded as the bastard of capitalism, but also as a commercial wasteland. Relegated to the lowest of the lowbrows within the hierarchy, from Mathew Arnold^[9] to T. S. Eliot^[10], and from Adorno and Horkheimer^[11] to Jurgen Habermas^[12], it has always been the dumpyard of mindless people whose imagination remains stunted, either circumstantially or forcibly. Rise of new media has added a newness to popular culture and to the idea of popular per se. Rise of a new genre of songs referred to as ‘patriotism pop’ in South Asia that made its appearance right after the decision to abrogate Article 370² was made public can serve as a site to unearth the layer of newness emergent in public sphere, and the possibilities of the collectivity that it offers to engender.

Within the broad field of cultural studies performance theory, critical textual analysis theory and audience-response theory, in the light of virtual ethnography has been applied to understand the larger implication of the YouTube based patriotism pop genre in the context of abrogation of the special status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir assured by article 370 and the rising tide of populism or religious ethnographic turn of collective political identity in Indian democracy post-2019. The paper is divided into two broad sections to make the process of peeling back the onion easier for the read-

¹‘Patriotism’ is an epithet used by these variants of songs appearing in new media, particularly YouTube and Tiktok especially popularised by news media. The term has not been coined by me. <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/india-patriotism-pop-songs-hindus-claim-kashmir-8528125/>; <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/india-makes-pop-songs-about-settling-with-fair-kashmiri-girls/>; <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/modi-sarkaar-starts-dreaming-of-fair-kashmiri-girls-in-parliament/>; <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/modi-sarkaar-starts-dreaming-of-fair-kashmiri-girls-in-parliament/>; <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/indias-patriotism-pop-songs-urge-hindus-to-claim-kashmir/>; <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/8/30/20834145/kashmir-patriotism-pop-dhara-370-youtube-hindu-government-india-tiktok-facebook-twitter/>; <https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=618652>; <https://newsd.in/bhojpuri-songs-on-kashmir-now-a-rage/>; <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/patriotism-pop-sub-standard-music-videos-promoting-jingoism-is-the-new-music-trend-in-india>.

²Conceived and executed as temporary provision with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir the Article came into force on 17th October 1949, almost 2 years after India became independent. It formed the cornerstone of Jammu and Kashmir’s accession to the Indian polity. It granted special privileges to the State in terms of making laws except in matters of finance, defence, communication, and foreign affairs. The state of Jammu and Kashmir could also have separate constitution and flag. Moreover, by the terms of the article Jammu and Kashmir could bar outsiders from settling or buying lands in the region. Article 35(a) in terms of the state prevented the female population from property ownership.

ers. In the first section rehearsal of the specific pop genre will be discussed through a semantic analysis unravelling the textuality of the process of alternate collectivity. In the second section somatic analysis of the performance will be undertaken to understand the stages of ritualization of the new media popular culture and offering a space to perform the *rite of passage* to the new collective identity.

The material used for the study can be divided into two categories: a discography of the YouTube patriotism pop songs have been done in the order of popularity of the channels (gauged through the number of subscriber each channel has) wherefrom a textual analysis of the lyrics can be done; newspaper, blog, online public or discussion forums (provided by blogs as well as YouTube) comments has been used to analyse audience response and the repercussion the songs have made; videos of the YouTube patriotism songs has also been analysed as a text of performance to understand how the somatic expression of the songs has created a conducive medium to disseminate a discourse favouring the abrogation of the Article 370.

3. Root of Patriotism: Recasting the Illusion of Collective/Cultural Identity

The world is an illusion, but it is an illusion, which we must take seriously, because it is real as far as it goes, and in those aspects of the reality which we are capable of apprehending.

-Aldous Huxley^[13]

Following the abrogation of Article 370 (granting special constitutional privileges to the state of Jammu and Kashmir) by the government led by BJP in 2019, the Indian public sphere has become a hotbed of debate. Various media were deployed to make public voices heard. A surge of demonstrations rocked the campuses of the leading universities of India. Opinion of the civil society and the elites expressed through newspapers, television news channels verbally opposed (and sometimes spoke in favour of) the act. Marches and processions were organised against, as well as for, the act. Just when the civil society of elites (always in the minority)

decried the atrocity of the government's act of abrogating the Article, a number of songs crudely produced and released flooded the online website YouTube³. The products in this case were a large number of songs in direct response to the incident. Most of these outrightly supported the decision of abrogation celebrating it as an act of nationalism. Some of these went as far as describing it as the new independence of India. Such songs have become the talk of the netizens as 'Patriotism Pop' genre.

Emergence of 'patriotism pop' genre (as well as other medium like historically themed soap opera, sloganeering in the Ram Janmabhumi Movement etc.) has come at a time when a major political change is afoot in India. After decades of coalition government Indian citizens received a single party ruled government under BJP in 2014 that won an astounding mandate from the people. Ever since, a significant change in political lingo has occurred from *parivarvaad se rashtravaad* i.e., dynastism to nationalism (from the point of view of BJP) and from liberalism to 'Hindu terror' (from the view point of Congress, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samajwadi Party, Left Front, Trinamool Congress and other regional parties). Understandably the change in lingo has also impacted the cultural media. Apparently, there is no singular change in the way political or ideational lingo is presented within the cultural praxis. But when observed through the lens of popular culture changes become visible. These can be identified as one-step-forward to ordaining a new world understanding ethics. The 'Patriotism pop' genre has served to be a similar vessel in the process of ordainment.

The role played by the linguistic pattern of patriot pop text has been analysed within the larger context of political change visible in India. The majority has voted and given its mandate. This assertion, I believe, is as important democratically, as it is linguistically. The importance of the word 'majority' has suddenly become a symbolic representation of oneness, strength, credibility,- to put it more simply, it has become synonymous to power and collective identity. But what we need to understand is that the public sphere functions in a mysterious way. By that I mean, legitimacy has not just been cultivated but engendered through a constant appeal to personal ethics/world view of the masses. I will

³A popular online platform of videos YouTube commands a varied audience pull. It has become not merely a mine of online audio-visual but also a means of showcasing and promoting one's singing, acting or even dancing talents. Riding on a mixed review it has become for the people an evil and a boon, one at the same time. Singers of little national recognition has started uploading videos to the platform to garner support and appreciation of the Netizens easily quantified through two marked features 'view' and 'subscribe'.

demonstrate this point through a narration of the ideas of ‘patriotism pop’ singer Kavi Singh who generously agreed to a telephonic interview for this paper. Hailing from Alwar, Rajasthan, the twenty-four year old singer, is presently based in Rohtak, Haryana. Incidentally we had the conversation on 26th of January and she lamented the fact that people in India have limited patriotism to a daylong celebration⁴. She stated, “humare liye har ekdin deshbhakti ka din he”⁵ [For me every day is dedicated to the expression of patriotism]. It was evident from her discourse that the youth of the country is being misguided by the negative use of social media. She further stated that though social media has a degenerating impact, it has several positive usages too. For her part, she subtly clarified, she has adopted the media to dilute its negative impact and to use it as a means to reach out to the youth of the country who have been laid astray by its negative discourse. She claimed it to be her (and of many like her) duty to cleanse the youth of such negative influences through *prachar* or dissemination for *janheet* or betterment of the people. She further added that not everyone is influenced by her singing (suggesting modestly that she wasn’t the only patriotic singer in the net sphere) or by that of other singers either, thereby dividing her audiences into two categories- one who were influenced by the disseminated patriotism of songs of such genre, and others who were immune to patriotism. Her words brought to my mind lines from her song that categorically stated:

*Jo sachcha Hindustani he humko unse bair ahi
Haat gayi 370 he aab gaddaro ki khair nahi*^[14]

[We are not antagonistic towards true Hindustani, But abrogation of article 370 will remove the protection that traitors of the country had had so far]

A clear division appears to run through the understanding of the singer who places them in juxtaposition- positive

vs negative, and *Hindustani* (Indian) vs *gaddar* (traitor). Not just her songs, other compositions of the ‘patriotism pop’ genre use similar juxtapositions. They simultaneously use antonyms like *doodh vs paani*^[15] [milk vs water], *baimani vs himmat*^[16] [treachery vs bravado] in their songs marking out patriots from those who are not [as they have remained untouched by the ideas disseminated through these songs]. Can such juxtaposing be referred to as Manicheanism, an alterity of Jekyll and Hyde, within the framework of internalizing cultural/national identity? Scholarly engagement with the idea of engendering cultural/national identity argues it is a discourse given to people from the above—a gift of the intellectuals to the rest through the culture of language, religion, art and pattern of social organisation⁶. Superimposition of ideas and its acceptance by the people make them stand out as mindless sponges. To understand the process, the singers of the song needed to be probed. When asked about her inspiration to compose the song written by her father, Kavi Singh said it was *obvious to have such feelings* because even prior to the formal abrogation was effected and post-Pulwama attack⁷ she had sung a song where she had specifically warned the nation that article 370 was the root cause of the plight of the soldiers who secure the border of the nation^[17]. In the song lyricist Azad Singh Khanda Kheri pronounced that the nation needs to identify the traitors who remain protected by the specific article and help the enemies of the nation to destroy the peace and security of the country^[18]. Thus, she stressed, the Article that diseased the health of the nation was finally uprooted and she was ‘prasanaa’ [immensely happy] (Telephonic interview of Kavi Singh by Mimasha Pandit, on 26th January, 2023 at 12PM). According to her, Kashmir as a part of the nation, has received second class treatment like an adopted or a stepchild (excerpts from telephonic interview conducted on 26 January. 2023 by Mimasha Pandit at 12PM).

⁴Telephonic interview with Kavi Singh on 26th of January 2023.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca: Cornell Publishing, 1983; Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Hutchinson: Hutchinson Publication, 1985; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and State*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, NJ: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 1988; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991;

⁷On 19th February 2019 a convoy carrying Indian security personnel was attacked at Lethopara, Pulwama district, on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway that led to the death of almost forty Central Reserve Police Force. This attack became a point of India-Pakistan military standoff and led to a surgical air raid by Indian warplanes on 26th February 2019 on alleged terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan. What is noteworthy in her narrative is the identification of Article 370 as the hideout used by traitors because the suicide bomber held responsible for the Pulwama attack was a Kashmiri youth from Pulwama district by the name Adil Ahmad Dar.

There are elements of similarity between the lingo used in the public speeches and the Parliament by BJP leaders to garner support in favour of abrogating Article 370, but the popular lingo, as it developed in ‘patriotism pop’ songs, did not emerge as a mindless repetition of the words of the intellectuals. It adopted a lingo of its own where the youth is either encouraged to marry Kashmiri girls as a show of national unity⁸ or else draws a prescription of its own for the *ideal way* of expressing nationalism⁹. Practice of nationalism in everyday life acquires a new meaning as demonstrated by the semantic analysis of the pop songs where nationalist discourse stands changed.

It is a normal affair for opinions to contest with each other in public sphere before a consensus can be reached, and once reached it acquires the gravity of reality. Albert Einstein once said, “Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one”. So, a consensus once reached over one becomes the undeniable hardcore fact that can be challenged (as proven historically) but unsuccessfully. The public sphere of the subcontinent, especially in the twenty-first century, stands in stark opposition to this simplistic evaluation of the public sphere. The illusion engendered as reality seldom goes uncontested, hence the need of flexing propagandistic muscle. The illusion of reality stands diluted, palpable, even vulnerable. What once remained relegated to the periphery of the public sphere has suddenly taken the front stage, primarily due to the onslaught of the world wide web. Social media has created a new condition in which different versions of nationalism are being reproduced by the masses. Easy accessibility of the media allow people not merely a space to recast the national narrative but also to broadcast such recasting. Social media as a site of popular culture has allowed routine manifestation of nationalism^[19] and has combined both the narrative of the intellectual domain and of the popular recasting to form a broader quotidian tradition^[20]. YouTube has provided a similar space to patriotic songs of the popular sphere allowing them to recast and broadcast a national

narrative that is not a repetition of the state promoted nationalism, but a reformulated and reworked tradition that derives substance from it but in ethos remains inadvertently popular. The illusion of reality is constantly being intercepted and remodelled in the popular space creating a stronger ‘root’ of real nationalism.

4. Popular Route of Patriotism: Somatic Representation of Nationalism

The quotidian tradition as a mixture of the elite and the popular understanding of nationalism breaks the barrier of *restored behaviour*. *restored behaviour*, as Schechner pointed out, is a second self that stands aloof from ‘me’ and its origin is unknown (can be distorted or mythicized too). It is a material or a strip of behaviour that makes the process - the process of performance. Feeling nationalistic or patriotic has a similar prescribed behavioural pattern. This is achieved through constant rehearsal or practice where the behaviour is either pulled over as a cloth worn or is tailored suitably to meet the requirements of the ensuing performance. Celebration of Independence Day or Republic Day or even the birthdays of the national heroes, freedom fighters serve as the occasion and stage for donning the tailored behaviour and performing nationalism. Schechner grants that *restored behaviour* is a stand-alone character, seemingly eternal, because as he points out, “The original ‘truth’ or ‘source’ of the behaviour may be lost, ignored or contradicted-even while this truth or source is apparently being honored and observed^[21]”. There are subtle differences observable in the behaviour that is mostly an outcome of the need of the performance, primarily required by the need to adapt to the changing spatiality of the performance. It is a rehearsed behaviour that finds an outlet in assigned space. But I would like to differ with Schechner on this point using the performative change that

⁸Khusboo Uttam, Bhaui Kashmir ki Layenge [Bring our Sister-in-law from Kashmir], Khushboo Uttam Official site in YouTube, 9th August 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v54MmUVCqz4&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA>; Praveen Samrat, Dhara 370 pe Bana Sabse Pehla Gaana [The First Song on the Abrogation of Article 370], Rang Music Official in YouTube, 5th August 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKHV_5syU3E&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=11.

⁹Kavi Singh, Dhara 370, directed by Ramkesh Jaunpurwala, Kavi Singh Official Channel on YouTube, 23rd April, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U44ZDZsRn2Y&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=5>; Sandhya Tanwar, Kashmir me 370 ka asaar khatam [End of the influence of article 370 in Kashmir], Keshu Music Official, 5th August 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw2EF0H0dU&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=4>; Touchwood girls, Ye Kashmir Humara He [Kashmir Is Our’s], Touchwood Bharat, 9th August 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEbpdPKNrEc&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=10>.

has become visible in the subcontinental culture of identity as an example. Rise of ‘patriotism pop’ genre using the volatile space of social media does not conform to the prescribed occasion or rehearsed behaviour. It recasts the rehearsed pattern into a new mould that remains palpable to regular remodelling of the source. Every performance makes it out anew that undergoes further transposition once it leaves the space of performance and reaches the performative space of the audiences.

Rehearsed pattern of nationalistic behaviour even during the nationalist movement remained a conglomeration of performative discourse and performative reception, each informing and altering the other, thus, making culture of nationalism an outcome of a *felt bond*^[22]. The bond conceived in a liminal space of performance in gestural movement or expression assumed different forms, making nationalism a nuanced body of emotion. ‘Patriotism pop’ with its somatic representation has added a whole new layer to the body that has come to overhaul the existing set of pattern associated with the expressionism of nationalism. This newness can be identified as an *emotion of excess*. A part of the idea of melodramatic imagination underscored by Peter Brooks^[23], *emotion of excess* emerges as a somatic form of the affectation that silenced populace undergo. To put it more simply, audiences/public bodily enact feelings and emotions that they either cannot express or are wary of expressing in words. Such expressionism requires qualification. It is not merely a gestural excess as demonstrated through action, it is a guttural excess as well visible in the hyperbolic delivery of the discourse. In this section, the ‘patriotism pop’ songs will be discussed under the two categories of gestural excess and hyperbole to understand the reason behind their virtual popularity.

4.1. Gestural Excess

Sandhya Tanwar in her ‘patriotism pop’ song on Article 370 pushes her elbows forcefully to both corners to stress a specific line of her song *Arrey dhara 370 ka tanne rog kaat diya Modiji* [Dear Modi Sir you have exterminated the

disease of Article 370]^[24]. Then she repeats the same line by gesturing a hand action of scissoring through the air in the most forceful manner. The line would have perhaps remained a simple informative discourse had it not been for the bodily action of the singer. The audio-visual effect of the song could have remained restricted to a warm welcome to the act of abrogation or its criticism amongst the public. But the comments to the songs resounded with cries of *Haar Haar Mahadev* [Praise to Lord Shiva], *Modiji ki Jai Ho* [Praise be with Narendra Modi], where some even commented “Very nice and beautiful Desh ke uper bane gane Ko mere teraf se thankyou Jai Hind our me ek baat khane chata hu ki Modi hai to mumkin hai aabki bar Ram mendir par mere sab se perathna hai ke Modi ka pure he Jan se samerthan karo”¹⁰ [A heartfelt thanks to those who have composed and sung this nice song on the nation and would like to say that with Narendra Modi everything is possible. So, if possible this time, do support Narendra Modi in his effort to reconstruct the Ram Mandir]. It is interesting to note here the varying degrees of appreciation that commentators show on the idea presented in the video. In fact, the comments do not always follow a cogent path; remarks of appreciation vary in their expression. For instance, the first comment posted on the video resounds praise to Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity. Commonly chanted during religious festivals like Shiv Ratri or during holy pilgrimage to Kedarnath, Badrinath, Varanasi, it is also a common salutation amongst many from the northern part of India. Use of the chant on a song that discourses on a legal policy of the Government does seem strange and quite out of place. But the gradual intermixture of secular with the temporal lingo since 1992¹¹ in the Indian political scenario can be used as a factor to contextualize the use of the religious chant in a so-called patriotic song. The rallies of BJP resounded with the cries of *Har Har Mahadev* (recently with that *Har Har Modi*) that has turned into a battle cry for the masses who supported the populist idea of associating religion with nationalism. Perhaps the next response to the song can be analysed through one such expression of hailing the ideological foundation of the Modi led BJP

¹⁰Comment section of the song produced Keshu Music Official, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw2EF0HOdU&list=PLP4aiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=4>.

¹¹In the year 1992 India witnessed the biggest mass rally to Ayodhya when the Babri Masjid was demolished. The act was preceded by the propaganda Rath yatra undertaken by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to garner support for the cause of Ramjanmabhumi movement that claimed Babri Masjid was built on the site historically proven to be the birth place of Lord Rama, an incarnate of Lord Vishnu, another of the Hindu holy trinity, and a move to reclaim the lost birthland (also a holy space for the Hindus) of the Lord.

government. The last comment sums up well the general feeling of the masses expressed through this popular media where the discourse of the song gives them the assurance that they are in a space of like-minded people, be it the performer or the audience, and they may express their opinion without any inhibition. However, it would be wrong to say that the comments that poured in were only in favour of the song. Some of the commentators are seen taunting the singer for her husky voice calling her out of tune. But in response to such comments, we find other commentators engaging with them and declaring that Kashmir belongs to us and is not their paternal property. Then immediately he corrects himself by saying that it belongs to the Kashmiris. It is interesting to note that the commentators who voiced their opinion against the song where Muslims while those defending the singer (rather gallantly) were Hindus. The comments should be treated as the opinion of the audience expressed while or after hearing and watching the performance in the new age virtual public sphere. If that is treated in context of the performer's bodily action then a common link emerges between the two informing and exciting the other- excess, whether in favour of it, or against it.

The excess observable in the gesture of the singer and the comments of the audiences is not restricted to the songs of Tanwar alone. Other 'patriotism pop' songs express the emotion of the song through pronounced bodily actions. In another song sung by Puja Shrishatav she stresses, *Jo sattar saal me nahi hua Modiji ker ke dikhaye he, Itahaas ke panno se 370 hataye he*^[25] [What had remained inconceivable for the last seventy years Narendra Modi has made that possible. He has removed Article 370 from the pages of Indian history]. The words she uses in the song are of the same informative nature as that of Sandhya Tanwar but the action that accompanies it speaks louder than words. The video shows a graphical representation of the number 370 placed on the right palm of the singer being meticulously shooed by her left hand. As the song moves in a fast paced rhythm the song and its accompanying action, as one of the commen-

tators points out, makes it a "josh bhar dena wala song" [a song that can imbue one with energy]¹². The tempo used in the song is indeed energetic but along with that the bodily action that Shrishatav uses in the song makes it more so. The excess of tempo and action, as rightly noted by the commentator, reaches a further point of exaggeration when another commentator engages in a thread of comment (something that can be considered a virtual process of dialogue). One of the commentators declared that not just in Kashmir but the Indian flag shall fly high in Lahore as well¹³. To this another commentators Gurjar shows appreciation by declaring that every Hindu should be this brave. The idea of extending the effect of the act of abrogation into a neighbouring nation-state is indeed far-fetched making it evident that similar trait of exaggeration is visible in the action and subsequent reaction of the audiences in this particular 'patriotism pop' song, as well.

4.2. Hyperbole

Blowing out of proportion, as the common saying goes, is what a hyperbole, as a figure of speech does. 'Patriotism pop' songs in their performance delivery use similar mechanism to propagate their narrative more convincingly. Khusboo Uttam, one of the 'patriotism pop' singers, in her song repeatedly uses the word *theek he* that literally means "is that alright". Does she use it to seek permission from her audience. Contrarywise, she uses it to lay stress on her hyperbolic claims that she makes in the song. She stresses,

Patna se chalke jayemge,

Dal jheel me Chhath manayenge^[26]

[Will walk all the way to Daal Lake in Kashmir

And celebrate Chhath Puja¹⁴ there]

In a similar hyperbolic manner Uttam claims, *Bhai ki shaadi rachayenge, Bhaiji Kashmir ki layenge*^[27] [Will arrange my brother's wedding with a girl from Kashmir and bring home my sister-in-law]. Ds Narwaniya in a song of similar import declared, *Chhor ke Katihar, Bahu Kashmir se*

¹²Comment by Raju Sir Lakshya Institute 3 years ago on the song sung by Puja Shrishtava, Aab Kashmir me Tiranga Lehayega [Flag of India will fly high in Kashmir], Sonotek Channel in YouTube, 5th August 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKtMwjV8Ow&list=PLP4aiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=12>.ation.

¹³Comment threat started by @entertainment skbk 3 years ago on the song sung by Puja Shrishtava, Aab Kashmir me Tiranga Lehayega [Flag of India will fly high in Kashmir], Sonotek Channel in YouTube, 5th August 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKtMwjV8Ow&list=PLP4aiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=12>.

¹⁴A popular festival in Bihar and Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh is dedicated to the worship of the Sun God celebrated through offering of fruits to the Lord and taking a holy dip in the nearest river bodies.

lani^[28] [Will marry a girl from Kashmir and not from Katihar (a region in Bihar)]. Thus, the primary narrative or the context of the performance acquires an overblown proportion where tall claims like walking to Daal Lake, or marrying a Kashmiri girl is put across to the audiences. Excess in this case serves the purpose of ratifying or even legitimizing the action narrated- in this case the act of abrogation. The language of excess assumes the status of performative utterances that not only describes what is visible (unity of the nation) but also attaches meaning to the visible. Performative utterances refer to words in which one does something, that can be done on an emotional plane. The hyperbolic summations resound like promises made to the listeners that the act of abrogation will ensure. It builds up a reality with which private/community emotion is closely associated. It becomes the foci of all the hidden emotions of the people that gathers around such performative utterances and assumes the form of a community linked with each other through the language and gesture of excess.

5. Results and Discussion: Melodramatizing Cultural/National Identity

The study shows that public sphere of the Indian sub-continent has gradually acquired a new age structure rapidly digitizing people's life through the use of mobile internet connection. Virtual ethnography is gradually gaining scholarly attention primarily due to this newness of public sphere, rather virtual sphere. It is where a wider range of people meet, discuss and debate over various issues. This voluntariness of coming together and discussion instantly forges them into a virtual public sphere. Exchange of ideas in the virtual space where physical social life is absent mimics the performative space where audiences sit in darkness and are seldom fully aware of the physicality of all present in the arena. Nonetheless, at the moment of expression and the nature of the particular expression inciting performance bring people together in a community binding them together under a blanket communitarian identity.

But the new virtual sphere where the audiences are engaging with the performance of 'patriotism pop' is not a space without any meaning, rather a space without any ascription. It has turned into a space loaded and charged with emotionalism that is loud, hyperbolic and exaggerated. It would be

wrong to say that the virtual sphere has been affected by it alone in India. The performance of political speeches since 2010 has undergone a significant change where the language of excess has crept in slowly but steadily. So, the offline public sphere is not free from the influence of excess either. Everything in public/virtual sphere has acquired the form of a livewire melodrama where every word and action is exaggerated. This has laid a strong influence on the way people feel a oneness with each other, feel a common self.

6. Conclusions

The performative schema of the 'patriotism pop' songs show the world view of the people and the ethos that make them feel a bond with the ideas disseminated in the virtual sphere and which is marked by a mode or an emotion of excess. True melodramatically charged lingo, gesture has not crept into the practice of the entire population; it is visible in the majority of them. Either the majority practices such excess in their daily exchange and expression of 'self', or else they conform to such practices or expression. As the comments, something that I have treated as the direct response of the audience to this particular form of narrative of patriotism visible in popular media, suggest response of the audience is not homogenous but heterogeneity hardly finds a space due to the imbalance observable in the nature of the responses. A popular saying in India is Janata Janardhan [People as the Supreme Authority]. Voice of the people in a media, that in erstwhile cultural narrative hardly found the place of honour due to the changing topography of public space and availability of mobile internet, becomes a weapon in the hand of the masses. It has become the livewire performative response of the people appearing every day, 24 hours, like the prime time soap opera. The chagrin observable is no longer limited to political rallies, mass gathering, nor is even occasional. With the genre of 'patriotism pop' and many such other popular media present in the virtualscape, melodrama has now entered the present encompassing the people's life everyday everywhere. This is what is making the people move beyond their constrained self and encouraging them to become a part of a larger 'self' guided by an emotion of excess that has melodramatized the root and rerouted cultural identity to a melodramatic cultural identity.

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Data Availability Statement

I hereby am providing link to all the data I have used that are present in the public domain.

<https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/india-patriotism-pop-songs-hindus-claim-kashmir-8528125/>;
<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/india-makes-pop-songs-about-settling-with-fair-kashmiri-girls/>;
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<https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/indias-patriotism-pop-songs-urge-hindus-to-claim-kashmir/>;
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/8/30/20834145/kashmir-patriotism-pop-dhara-370-youtube-hindu-government-india-tiktok-facebook-twitter/>;
[https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=618652](https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=618652;);
<https://newsd.in/bhojpuri-songs-on-kashmir-now-a-rage/>;
<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/patriotism-pop-sub-standard-music-videos-promoting-jingoism-is-the-new-music-trend-in-india>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v54MmUVCqz4&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA>;
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKHV_5syU3E&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=11;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U44ZDZsRn2Y&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=5>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw2EF0HOdU&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=4>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEbdpPKNrEc&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=10>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw2EF0HOdU&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=4>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKtMwjIV8Ow&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=12>.at
ion;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKtMwjIV8Ow&list=PLP4aiiiRtTWX9-Dbi1kz4u0qEZvAd4EUA&index=12>.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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