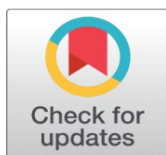


# INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA AND LITERARY NARRATIVES: AN ANALYTICAL EXPLORATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex relationship between media discourse, political ideology, and global conflict as reflected in Indian responses to international crises. It explores how acts of large-scale violence are interpreted and reframed within domestic political contexts, revealing the interplay between global narratives and national priorities. The analysis highlights the role of media in constructing simplified binaries that often align with prevailing ideological agendas, while also acknowledging the presence of critical voices that challenge dominant interpretations. By situating media representations within broader historical and geopolitical frameworks, the study demonstrates how international events are appropriated to reinforce internal political strategies, reshape national identity, and negotiate positions within global power structures. At the same time, it underscores the tensions that arise from competing perspectives, particularly in a diverse and pluralistic society, where alternative narratives continue to question the ethical, political, and humanitarian implications of war and terrorism.

**Keywords:** Media, Fundamentalism, Geopolitics, Terrorism, War, Cultural Identity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of global crises is never a neutral process. Media institutions and political actors play a decisive role in shaping how such events are understood, remembered, and mobilized within national contexts. In India, the response to international acts of violence has revealed a layered and often contested field of discourse, where global narratives intersect with domestic concerns. These interpretations are deeply influenced by historical experiences, regional conflicts, and ideological commitments that inform the country's political landscape. One of the most significant features of this discourse is the tendency to frame complex geopolitical events in simplified moral or civilizational terms. Such representations

often draw on pre-existing narratives that link security threats to particular identities, thereby reinforcing broader political agendas. At the same time, these narratives are not merely imitations of global media frameworks but are actively reshaped to reflect India's own strategic concerns, especially in relation to neighboring regions and ongoing territorial disputes. The study also considers how shifts in international alliances complicate these narratives. Changing geopolitical priorities expose the tensions between ideological alignment and strategic interests, prompting both political leaders and media commentators to reassess their positions. This dynamic creates space for critical engagement, as various segments of the media question the consistency and legitimacy of global power structures. In doing so, they draw attention to the uneven application of principles such as democracy, sovereignty, and justice in international relations.

Equally important is the role of dissenting voices within the media. While dominant narratives often emphasize security and nationalism, alternative perspectives seek to broaden the conversation by incorporating historical context, humanitarian concerns, and critiques of militarization. These interventions highlight the diversity of India's media landscape and its capacity to host competing interpretations of global events. By examining these overlapping layers of discourse, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how media narratives function as both reflections and instruments of political power. It situates the Indian experience within a broader global context, offering insights into the ways in which nations interpret and respond to the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world.

## **2. MEDIA NARRATIVES AND POLITICAL STRATEGY**

In the immediate aftermath of a major international act of violence, political rhetoric and media narratives often converge to produce simplified explanations of complex events. In India, the response to such an event revealed how quickly ideological frameworks can be mobilized to interpret global crises through domestic political lenses. Certain political groups and affiliated organizations rapidly constructed a narrative that linked acts of terror to a broader civilizational conflict, presenting violence not as the product of specific geopolitical conditions but as an inherent feature of a particular religious identity. This framing positioned the event as part of a larger, ongoing struggle between opposing cultural and ideological systems, thereby transforming a singular tragedy into evidence supporting pre-existing political claims. The national media, particularly sections aligned with dominant political ideologies, played a crucial role in reinforcing this interpretation. News coverage frequently drew parallels between international incidents and internal security concerns, effectively merging global and local discourses on violence. Headlines and reports often suggested that the same forces responsible for attacks abroad were also active within India, thereby legitimizing heightened vigilance and security measures at home. This tendency to align external threats with domestic conflicts contributed to a climate in which complex regional issues were reinterpreted through the prism of global terrorism.

Political leadership further amplified this connection by emphasizing the universality of the threat and advocating for a unified international response. Such statements framed participation in global anti-terror efforts as both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity. At the same time, these positions were closely tied to longstanding regional disputes, particularly those involving contested territories and cross-border tensions. By linking domestic conflicts to a broader global struggle, the state sought to strengthen its geopolitical stance and garner

international support for its policies. This convergence of global and national narratives also had significant implications for internal social dynamics. Public discourse increasingly scrutinized minority communities, often casting them under suspicion through generalized associations with external threats. Media portrayals of religious leaders and community figures sometimes reinforced stereotypes, depicting them as representatives of a broader ideological danger rather than as participants in a diverse and pluralistic society. Such representations contributed to an atmosphere of mistrust and heightened communal tension, raising concerns about the erosion of social cohesion. At the same time, the global repercussions of the attacks introduced a more complicated dimension to these narratives. Incidents of racial and ethnic discrimination in other parts of the world, particularly against individuals of South Asian origin, highlighted the dangers of broad generalizations based on identity. Reports of such experiences compelled sections of the Indian media to acknowledge the indiscriminate nature of prejudice, which often failed to distinguish between different religious or cultural groups. This awareness created a tension between external calls for inclusivity and internal tendencies toward exclusion.

Despite the dominance of certain ideological perspectives, the Indian media landscape remained diverse and contested. Many journalists, scholars, and commentators offered more nuanced analyses that situated acts of violence within their historical and geopolitical contexts. These voices emphasized the role of international power dynamics, past alliances, and regional instability in shaping contemporary conflicts. They also warned against the dangers of reducing complex issues to binary oppositions, arguing that such simplifications could exacerbate existing tensions and lead to unjust outcomes. Critical perspectives further highlighted the risks associated with militarized responses and the potential humanitarian consequences of large-scale interventions. Advocates of restraint called for approaches that prioritized dialogue, justice, and the protection of civilian populations. They also stressed the importance of maintaining democratic values and safeguarding minority rights, even in times of crisis. Through editorials, essays, and public discussions, these voices challenged dominant narratives and sought to broaden the scope of public debate. Ultimately, while certain narratives gained prominence by aligning with broader global discourses on security and civilization, alternative viewpoints persisted, reflecting the pluralistic nature of the country's media and intellectual traditions. This dynamic underscores the importance of critical engagement with dominant narratives and the need to recognize the complexity inherent in discussions of violence, identity, and global conflict.

### **3. DISCOURSES ON WAR AND POWER**

The portrayal of the conflict in Afghanistan within Indian media environments has often been shaped through stark oppositions, frequently presenting the situation as a struggle between democratic values and extremist violence. This framing, however, cannot be reduced to a simple replication of Western broadcasting narratives. Instead, it reflects a distinctly Indian perspective, one that is deeply influenced by regional geopolitics and longstanding tensions with neighboring states. Within this context, the idea of democracy is not only invoked as a moral principle but also as a strategic identity through which India positions itself in contrast to regimes it considers authoritarian. The recalibration of international alliances following the global crisis introduced a sense of unease within Indian political and media circles. The decision by the United States to deepen its engagement with Pakistan generated a perception of strategic marginalization.

India, which had projected itself as a cooperative and ideologically aligned partner, suddenly found its expectations unsettled. This shift prompted a wave of critical commentary, as media narratives began to question the reliability of global partnerships and the criteria by which alliances are formed. The tension between ideological affinity and geopolitical pragmatism became a central theme, exposing the complexities of international diplomacy. This moment also created space for a broader critique of global power structures. Indian media discourse, cutting across ideological divisions, increasingly challenged the uneven application of principles in international relations. Commentators highlighted how definitions of terrorism and legitimate military action appeared to shift depending on the interests of dominant global actors. Such critiques resonated strongly in a national context where experiences of regional conflict and internal unrest had long shaped public consciousness. The perception that certain forms of violence received global attention while others were marginalized contributed to a growing skepticism toward international norms.

At the same time, domestic debates began to intertwine with these global concerns. Incidents of violence within India, particularly in regions marked by political instability, were frequently interpreted through the lens of global counterterrorism discourse. Media discussions often called for assertive responses, reflecting a broader sentiment that national security should be addressed with the same urgency displayed by powerful nations. This alignment of domestic and international rhetoric reinforced a form of assertive nationalism, one that sought recognition and parity in the global arena. Yet, this dominant narrative did not go unchallenged. A significant segment of the Indian press, particularly within print and intellectual circles, offered a more critical examination of both international interventions and domestic political strategies. These voices drew attention to the historical roots of conflict in the region, emphasizing the role of external powers in shaping the conditions that led to contemporary crises. By revisiting past interventions and alliances, they highlighted the unintended consequences of geopolitical maneuvering, including the proliferation of armed groups and the deepening of regional instability. Such critiques also extended to the humanitarian dimensions of war. The impact of military campaigns on civilian populations became a focal point of concern, with commentators questioning the ethical implications of large-scale violence carried out in the name of global security. Discussions frequently underscored the disproportionate suffering experienced by economically vulnerable communities, drawing connections between structural inequality and the persistence of conflict. This perspective challenged the reduction of complex political struggles to simplistic narratives of good and evil.

Another important dimension of this discourse involved the role of historical memory. In contrast to more distant or selective recollections elsewhere, Indian media often engaged with a more immediate awareness of past international interventions in the region. This historical consciousness informed contemporary critiques, reinforcing the idea that present conflicts cannot be understood without acknowledging their deeper geopolitical origins. By situating current events within a broader temporal framework, these narratives resisted the tendency to treat crises as isolated or unprecedented. The diversity of perspectives within Indian media reflects the broader pluralism of its society. While more dominant outlets often aligned with nationalist and security-oriented viewpoints, alternative platforms provided space for dissenting opinions that emphasized dialogue, accountability, and social justice. These debates reveal an ongoing struggle to balance competing priorities, including national sovereignty, economic aspirations, and ethical responsibility in global affairs. Ultimately, the representation of the

Afghan conflict in India illustrates the intricate relationship between media, politics, and international power. It highlights how global events are interpreted through local concerns, and how narratives of war are shaped not only by external developments but also by internal dynamics. In navigating these complexities, Indian media continues to serve as a site of negotiation, where competing visions of identity, security, and global order are constantly contested and redefined.

#### 4. FOCUSING INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

Unlike Western narrative paradigms that often privilege linear realism or individual-centered heroism, Indian narrative traditions frequently operate through cyclical time, moral ambiguity, collective identity, and mythic intertextuality. As A.K. Ramanujan observes, Indian storytelling traditions are “context-sensitive,” meaning that narratives transform depending on cultural, religious, and performative settings rather than remaining fixed textual objects [Ramanujan \(2024\)](#). This fluidity continues into contemporary Indian media, where literature, cinema, journalism, and digital storytelling interact to produce hybrid narrative forms. A key foundation for understanding Indian literary narratives lies in their deep engagement with epic traditions such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. These texts are not merely religious or mythological artifacts but living narrative systems that continue to inform modern storytelling. As Wendy Doniger notes, the Mahabharata in particular resists moral simplification, presenting characters such as Karna, Duryodhana, and Arjuna as ethically complex figures whose actions cannot be reduced to binary notions of good and evil [Doniger \(2023\)](#). This moral complexity has profoundly influenced modern Indian literature, where character psychology often emerges through ethical ambiguity rather than rigid moral categorization. This tradition is evident in R.K. Narayan’s fictional universe, particularly in *Malgudi Days*, where everyday life in the fictional town of Malgudi becomes a site of subtle moral inquiry. Narayan’s narratives avoid dramatic moral polarization and instead focus on ordinary human dilemmas shaped by social norms, economic constraints, and cultural expectations. The absence of overt heroism in Narayan’s work reflects a broader Indian narrative tendency to privilege situational ethics over universal moral archetypes.

In postcolonial Indian literature, writers such as Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy further complicate narrative form and identity construction. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* employs magical realism to reconfigure national history as a fragmented, subjective, and performative narrative. The protagonist Saleem Sinai’s telepathic connection with other children born at the moment of India’s independence symbolizes the entanglement of individual identity with national history. As Homi K. Bhabha argues, postcolonial narratives often exist in a “third space” of enunciation, where identity is neither fixed nor purely oppositional but continuously negotiated through cultural hybridity [Bhabha \(2024\)](#). Rushdie’s narrative structure embodies this hybridity through nonlinear temporality, metafictional commentary, and linguistic experimentation. Similarly, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* challenges linear narrative logic by presenting time as recursive and emotionally layered. The novel’s fragmented chronology reflects the psychological impact of caste, family structures, and forbidden love in Kerala society. Roy’s narrative strategy illustrates how Indian literary texts often encode social critique within aesthetic fragmentation, allowing form and content to mutually reinforce each other. Indian media narratives, particularly in cinema, further extend these literary traditions into visual culture. The Bollywood film industry, for instance, has historically blended melodrama, music, mythology, and

social commentary into a distinctive narrative form. Films such as *Mother India* (1957) construct national identity through the figure of the sacrificial mother, linking femininity, morality, and nationhood. As Ravi Vasudevan argues, Indian popular cinema operates through “excessive” narrative modes, where emotion, spectacle, and morality are amplified to produce collective affect rather than individual psychological realism (Vasudevan).

Contemporary Indian cinema, however, increasingly challenges these conventions. Films such as *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) by Anurag Kashyap adopt nonlinear storytelling and morally ambiguous characters to reflect the fragmentation of contemporary social realities. The film’s portrayal of violence, power, and generational conflict resists traditional heroic frameworks, instead presenting crime and politics as interwoven systems of survival and inheritance. Television and digital media have further transformed Indian narrative landscapes. The rise of streaming platforms has enabled more experimental storytelling structures, as seen in series like *Sacred Games* (2018), adapted from Vikram Chandra’s novel. The series blends crime fiction with political critique, religious symbolism, and historical memory, illustrating how Indian media narratives increasingly operate at the intersection of global genre forms and local cultural specificity. A significant dimension of Indian narrative traditions is the persistence of oral storytelling forms, including folk theatre such as Yakshagana, Jatra, and Kathakali. These performance traditions emphasize embodied narration, improvisation, and audience participation, challenging Western notions of fixed textual authority. As Stuart Blackburn notes, oral narratives in India function as “living texts” that adapt to social change while preserving cultural memory [Blackburn \(2022\)](#). This adaptability continues to influence contemporary media, particularly in regional cinema and vernacular digital storytelling. Indian narrative practices somehow resist singular interpretive frameworks. Instead, they align with what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes as the “subaltern” challenge to dominant epistemologies, where marginalized voices and alternative narrative forms disrupt colonial and elitist knowledge systems (Spivak). Media and literary narratives in India therefore operate not only as aesthetic expressions but also as sites of ideological negotiation, where questions of caste, gender, language, and power are continuously reworked.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Indian media responses to global conflict reveals a dynamic and often contradictory interplay between ideology, politics, and representation. Dominant narratives have frequently sought to align international events with domestic concerns, framing them in ways that reinforce national security priorities and existing political agendas. These interpretations tend to simplify complex realities, constructing clear divisions that resonate with broader ideological frameworks. At the same time, the study demonstrates that such narratives are neither uniform nor uncontested. A wide range of critical voices within the media has consistently challenged reductive interpretations, emphasizing the importance of historical context, ethical responsibility, and the lived experiences of affected populations. These perspectives highlight the limitations of viewing global conflicts through narrow lenses and call for more nuanced and inclusive approaches to understanding violence and its causes. The shifting nature of international alliances further complicates these narratives, exposing the tensions between moral claims and strategic interests. In navigating these complexities, Indian media discourse

reflects broader questions about the role of power in shaping global norms and the extent to which these norms are applied consistently across different contexts.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

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