

Understanding Riot in the Age of the Digital

MANISHA MADAPATHI

ABSTRACT

This paper tries to locate the impact of new media technologies within the phenomenon of mass mobilization, focusing on riots in India. The cases I examine are from the recent past, dating not more than five years ago. These technological innovations have generated new vocabularies in which one can perceive riots in the subcontinent. I try to correlate concepts of digital with traditional social sciences resulting in a hybrid discourse on the current day riots in India.

South Asia, comprising a large arbitrary landmass, is home to a multitude of cultures, races, languages, ethnicities, and religions. This region on the geographic map is celebrated for the diversity it tolerates, which itself also throws challenges at its communities to keep them intact within the milieu of differences and the fear of alienation. The characteristic of coexistence of the various societies in a place, whether peaceful or otherwise, is peculiar to the South Asian region. One that has been the subject of colonization for the powerful Westerners, South Asia has been in conflict with its occupiers and sometimes with its own people.

South Asian societies, India in particular, have been threatened by the lack of cultural homogeneity and the absence of institutional mechanisms for the managing of differences. Therefore, a strong state is understood as a necessity to ensure order in society and to proclaim a new order based upon rational and scientific principles of management. (Das, 1990)

This said, the conditions of unrest between communities has mostly been a sporadic phenomenon, and not a constant threat to the harmony of everyday life. These high tensions, more often than not, translate into collective violence or riots. Case studies from India will be taken as the vantage point from which further theories in the paper will be analysed. With the case of India, one must keep in mind not only the religious conflicts but also the strong communal identities that they proliferate. Collective violence arising out of ethnicity or

non-religious sentiments can be observed repeatedly in Maharashtra, Assam and other parts of the North-East. Ashish Nandy, in his essay 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', makes a distinction between religion as faith and religion as ideology, which is analogous to the distinction made between syncretic popular religion and communal ideology.

Within this context of uncertainty to life in communities, I would like to introduce another very crucial concept with regard to information systems. Contrary to popular belief, riots are not a spontaneous occurrence, there is a great deal of planning and a systematic dissemination of information that function methodically. Spreading rumours and delivering inflammatory speeches in areas already torn by communal differences have been tools of the old trade. What is of immediate concern though is the coming of newer forms of communication with the changing *mediascapes*¹ and advancing media technologies. By this, I am referring to the omnipresent information systems in the age of the digital. Digital technology has made life as easy in some aspects as it has made it complex in other. The nature of the binary world has its own characteristics, so radically distinct from previously existent media that controlling authorities are at a loss when outbursts caused due to information circulation on new media occur. Such is the pervasive nature of the technology.

To analyse technology in isolation would defeat the purpose to validate my observation of how digital technology is involved in instigating riots. Hence, I want to locate the new media practices within societies. Societies, in other words, could be understood as networks that contain nodes² that are interconnected to form a web of networks. The ability of networks to be able to communicate between each other depends upon the shared communication protocols and the access to connection points (switches). (Castells, 2004)

The above jargonized concept basically borrows from Manuel Castells' theory on 'Network Societies'. This seminal work on the digital information circulation,

and the society will help us connect the dots between the advent of new media and the civil unrests along communal lines that have played out recently.

Let's look at what some of the leading media scholars have to say about how media technologies are convoluted with the cultural practices of people. McLuhan's idea of how all media embodies cultural meaning and can be read in his popular phrase, "the medium is the message". Even so, no technology-culture effect can be established because the technologies themselves are also cultural artefacts, and there is no way of breaking into the circle." Technologies have immediate impact on cultural practices, their "effect" can be described only as observable patterns of consequence emergence. As new means develop, individuals as well as institutions may create new cultural forms and meanings. This interchangeable usage of the concepts of technology and culture show the inherent dialecticality of the two, the way each one effects the other in the process of cultural meaning making. (McQuail, 2010)

The above reinstates the idea that the medium of information reception is tied with our ability to make meanings differently with different media. Now let us go back to Castells and establish a deeper understanding of how new age digital media has changed the generation of meaning by virtue of its novelty and singularity.

The pre-electronic communication technology age, has been characterized by historical superiority of vertically hierarchical organisations over networks. The time lag of feedback in communication process made the system a very one-way flow of transmission of information and instruction. Under such conditions, networks were extensions of power concentrated at the top of vertical organisations. But, electrically based communication technology developed around vertical production organisations, like the state, without offering any autonomy to networks. Autonomy here refers to multi-directionality, continuous flow of interactive information processing. Proper technology was not just a sufficient condition but a necessity.

The network society came into being in the 1970s as a result of two independent processes. One being informationalism, which is a new technological paradigm that constitutes the material basis of twenty first century societies. Informationalism is based on the augmentation of the human capacity of information processing and communication made possible by revolutions in microelectronics, software, and genetic engineering. Secondly, a new social structure emerging out of the ashes of feudalism, one where each individual forms the unit of the society, retaining their autonomy. Both these phenomena combined together make the emergence of a network society possible.

Talking about networks, Alexander Galloway says, "Networks oscillate between two related but incompatible formal structures. On one side, the chain of triumph; on the other, the web of ruins." Galloway makes an important statement, which makes us weary of the power of networks, and rightly so. We are familiar with Arab Spring, in which social media networks were used as a tool to change the course of governance in North Africa and Middle East. Individual citizens came together to overthrow dictatorship through a structurally bottom-up framework made available by digital infrastructure, and shared digital literacy. While this may be an optimistic way to look at networks, Galloway is quick to warn us of the double faced nature of it. He calls the web of ruins, a nonlinear mesh, unlike the linear chain of triumph. He says, "it is designed to ensnare and delimit even the most intractable opponent. It is commonly characterized as a swarm or pack of animals, unknowable in quantity, and innumerable in form. Less concerned with connectivity, the web brings with it a flood of insatiable persecution." This paper talks about the web of ruins that networks can be, with reference to violent mob attacks that resulted in deaths and mass destruction.

Digital networks are global. Therefore social structures whose infrastructure is based on digital networks is by definition global. Which in turn means that network societies are global societies. But this does not mean that everybody gets to be a part of the network. Specific societies, defined by current boundaries of nation-states, or cultural boundaries of their historical identities, are deeply fragmented by the double logic of inclusion and exclusion in the global networks. Inclusion in the network also depends upon the ability of the social actor to act on programs and modify them to suit their interests. Networks have dominance over people who are external to it. Which means, the global overwhelms the local. All these shortcomings show the 'imperfect globalization' of the network society, which is a highly significant feature of its social structure.

In the communication realm, network society is characterised by a pattern of networking flexibility, recombination of codes, and ephemeral symbolic communication. Cultural expression are enclosed and shaped by this inter-linked, electronic hypertext, formed by TV, radio, print press, films, video, art, internet communication, in the so called multi-media system. Even though this system is characterised by oligopolistic concentration, it is not a system of one way messages to a mass audience. Media in the network society provide a large variety of channels of communication with increasing interactivity, which is inclusive of a wide range of cultures and social groups. The much required autonomy of audience equipped with internet is growing.

There are two theoretical remarks that Castells makes regarding networks. Firstly, structures (networks) do not live by themselves, they always express the interests, values, and projects of the actors who produce the structure, while being conditioned by it. Secondly, the connection of telecommunication networks does not guarantee the incorporation into dominant networks or counter-dominant networks. This is the binary logic on which networks work, either inclusion or exclusion, there is no partiality that is permitted or can be achieved. This, in another theoretical paradigm, maybe be known as the digital divide. Therefore, power in networks operates by inclusion and exclusion. Those within a network are powerful, and those outside are powerless. Within a network, power plays out in two ways; in global capitalism, the global financial market holds power, and in the state-military power, the apparatus able to harness technological innovation in pursuit of military power, which has the material resources to invest in technology and know-how, holds the power. In this paper, the focus is largely on the latter form of power yielded not only in the digital networks by the state but also in maintaining everyday civil order in society.

It is imperative for us to understand networks to understand crowds, because crowds do not just materialize out of any passive pools of people. They arise out of networks that function on a common dictum. Networks are a precondition for the cultural lives of the digital world. One where understanding a certain vocabulary makes you eligible to be a part of a network. Hence, networks of people and relationships that already exist have to be mobilized in the creation of crowds. Since these networks identify with a certain protocol, it is only within that programme that people can be activated. This is the reason why everybody who is exposed to inflammatory speech, images or voice recording doesn't go ahead to become a part of the rioting mass. Because not everybody subscribes to that interpretation of speech that cajoles them into taking up arms. These networks are not inescapable, if one changes their outlook one may dissociate themselves from it and attach to other networks. People are always a part of one network or the other, nobody can live in isolation away from flows of information.

In his essay, Nandy briefly mentions about how in the 1980s, Indian villages and small towns can take credit for having avoided communal riots. According to him, more than 90 per cent of the riots emerge in urban India, in and around the industrial area. This view of the riot as an urban phenomena, in the contemporary sense does not seem to hold true anymore. If it were so, then how would we justify the riots that took place in the fringes of Uttar

Pradesh in Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur, which are far from being urban spaces? There is something that is far more pervasive, crossing spatial boundaries of distance and development that is at play here.

One reading of what Nandy is saying could be the distinction he is making of resources for initiation of a riot being available in an urban set up and its absence in rural areas. The reason for such resources to be available in an urban city is the ingression of modernity that is first experienced by the cities, and only much later by the suburban areas, smaller districts and finally the rural. Modernity in terms of development of technological communication has been far more tangible than in areas of civic development, in the rural villages of India. The changes brought about by radio, television, and cinema were felt by the people more strongly than say the introduction of modern transportation like the car. If we are to look at this in terms of digital communication, Nandy could be understood as pointing towards the digital divide that separates the urban from the rural.

But to think that is true would be a skewed idea of understanding digital technology. Of course, the digital is not all encompassing, but even with the caveats, it has managed to transgress social, political, and economic borders. We access digital technology through computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc., in varying degrees. But the phenomenon that has hit the rural with a resounding positive reception is the mobile phone.

A report by IAMAI (Internet And Mobile Association of India)³ and KPMG in July 2015 has found that "...rural growth story in the coming years is likely to be through 2G mobile technologies. 3G and 4G may continue to be primarily an urban phenomenon for the next few years. Increased internet enabled device penetration, decreasing handset prices and data plans tariffs are helping create a suitable environment for a rapid growth of mobile internet in India, with rural India set to take the lead. As of June 2014, nearly 50% of the Active Internet Users (AIU) in rural areas accessed internet using mobile phones, community service centres (CSC) and cyber cafes. 38% of the AIU use mobile phone as the main access point."

In India, the number of people who own mobile phones is far greater than the number who own personal computers. India has the third largest Internet user base in the world out of which more than 50 per cent are mobile-only internet users. All the above statistics point to a very specific construction of a public that belongs to an abstract idea of an online community that not only consumes information on the internet but is a member that identifies with the functioning protocols of the virtual space.

What should be noted from the report is also that,

“SMS, email, messaging and social networking apps are the most popularly used apps, while video streaming and banking services are the least used apps.”

The objective of bringing the two observations to the table, that of the network society and the mobile phones, that construct and maintain the mobile phone ecology, is to bring context to the numerous examples I am going to cite further in this paper.

The circulation of falsely attributed images, incendiary texts, doctored videos, call to action on mobile applications like SMSs, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter have been platforms through which a number of riots have allegedly began. For example, the exodus of north-east migrants, both student and workers, from the southern cities was due to the dissemination of a threatening SMS among the community to leave the city to save their lives. There was no way for the police to track down the source of the message, by when railway stations were being flooded and in no time people were being siphoned off to their home states.⁴ And in July 2014, in Saharanpur, where the inflammatory and hate inciting tweets of BJP national executive member C.T. Ravi where he uploaded a video link that said, “How Congress leaders made 1000s of Muslims attack the Gurudwara and cause the Saharanpur Riots- watch this Sikh speak” come under the usage of social media as a tool for inciting communal violence.⁵

Veena Das in the introduction to her book, *Mirrors of Violence* brings our attention to a very key idea this paper tries to pursue- the form of the riot. She asks, “What is the web of signifiers through which such ideologies such as communalism and ethnicity are organised and communicated? Have these symbols remained constant through history, or, if they have changed, what does this change signify?” (Das, 1990) Das says there are three kinds of implicit categories of symbolic structures that can be analysed when talking about the formality of the riot. They are: the organization of symbolic space, the temporal structure of riots, and finally, the repertoire of symbolic actions that is called upon in the case of ethnic or communal conflict. This machinery is not just employed by the crowd, rioters, or the mob, but also to the state in its stronghold over collective behaviour.

Spatiality

The control of sacred spaces and their protection has always been a concern not just of the state but to the general mass of people, as history tells us these are symbols around which communal conflicts are bound to happen. To understand what a riot leaves behind, one should examine the space in which it has taken place. There is a peculiar observation Das makes about the works of authors of communal riots. She says that

there is progressive diffusion of violence from ‘spaces of traditional configurations’ to new areas where it may have spread. The difference between the two spatial entities is that in traditional spaces patterns of violence become routinized as they follow expected paths and are somehow less traumatic than new patterns of violence. A rise of novelty is signalled when violence spreads into areas that is not the traditional.

In the Hindu-Muslim riots that occurred in September 2014 in Vadodara, Ahmedabad, *Mirror* reports⁶, “a photoshopped image of Ambe Maa on Kaaba, the cube structure in Mecca, caused much furore and sparked communal tension. Furious, people pelted stones at the house of one Sanjay Raulji, who posted the photograph on social media.” In another incident in June 2014 in Pune, a Pune *Mirror* article⁷ blurb reads this: “Defamatory post morphing photos of Chhatrapati Shivaji, Bal Thackeray and others on Facebook sparks violence across the city; special forces deployed to maintain peace; many injured in stone pelting, property damaged in several areas.”

In the examples above, what is striking is the ‘digital’ alteration of religious symbols, deities, political figures – the blasphemous act to which the riot is attributed to. The abstruse space into which the sacred has been projected is the digital. This, one can say constitutes of a ‘new’, non-traditional space which demands an unpredictable reaction. For one to also examine the space of the digital would be of interest. It is one that is not bound by the physical dimensions of our immediate surroundings. It cannot be geographically located, hence the impact of it may also not always be specific to locality. The organisation of the symbolic space that Das talks about is now represented in by an abstract entity – the digital.

Appadurai understands ethnoscape, as the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world. It is the constitution of this and the co-existence of such diverse groups that the harmony of a place depends upon. The modern city is quite different in character from the traditional city. The modern city has a large number of new migrants who live on the margins of the city, whose integration into the economy and polity is of a special kind. Generally, such migrants constitute the floating populations which the natives of the city are constantly apprehensive about.

This also brings about a new narrative on spatiality, which moves along a different tangent. The lynching of the alleged rapist which was done in Dimapur, had more to do with the man being a Bangladeshi immigrant than that he was a rapist. Both of which are allegations.⁸ What the natives of the city have towards the outsider is complete abomination. The feeling that they are not what

the city ought to shelter, and provide them with a means of livelihood. A different understanding of space can be extrapolated in the Dimapur incident. The symbolic space here could be that which is according to the natives is 'forcefully' taken by immigrants what is not rightfully theirs.

Temporality

Now there are two ways of looking at temporality. One is the event structure or the narrative sequence of the riot and the other being the ritual or political calendar. The first classification corresponds to the determination of the sequence of the riot, what triggered it, and what were the events that followed. To fix the 'origin' of riots is not easy. The precise sequence of events within which it is to be placed remains one of the most contested sites in the interpretation of violence. To understand this better we can look at Muzaffarnagar in 2012. Whether the seed for the riot was planted when Shahnawaz was killed by the two Jat brothers, Sachin and Gaurav; or whether it began with the motorcycle collision between Shanawaz and Gaurav; or when the misattributed video of two boys being beaten up by the mob was circulated on social media, cannot be determined by anybody.⁹ This is only one of the many such events in which the chronology of events occurred can be almost impossible to trace. If we are to dig up the archive of the early articles on the riot, the inconsistencies are pronounced. This approach to temporality gives us the inconsequent, and incongruent nature of a riot and the discourse around it.

The form of the imaginative institution of narrative sequence is given by two rhetorical devices; metonymy and mimesis, and the use of metaphor and resemblance (Das, 1990). The killing of Shahnawaz by the Jat brothers is understood to be the first in order of the progression of events. Which was followed by the killing of the two brothers by the other community. This violence is in which the bodies of the dead mimetically display the wounds to the whole society, both literal and metaphoric. In making each of the members of the two communities repeat the fate of the dead persons, one can perceive the mimetic nature of violence.

In yet another incident, an innocent Mohsin Sadiq Shaik was bludgeoned to death in Pune because of the obviously religious markings on him. The Pune riot that began because of the morphed images of Shivaji and Thackery took the life of a person not even remotely involved in it, but because he represented or resembled a person of the community that the alleged 'wrongdoers' belonged to. In a Firstpost report¹⁰, Shaik's friend Riyaz is quoted to have said, "Mohsin was targeted because he was wearing a skull cap and had a beard". In another

report by *The Hindu*¹¹ the police have said that Shaik was targeted because he "looked Muslim". The metonymic signifiers on a man took his life, for no fault of his. An immediacy in deploying hatred over anything that even closely represented their target faced their outlet of resentment.

The second way to look at temporality is by mapping the occurrences of riots around the religious and political calendar of the place. This simply refers to those riots that occur with a definitive intention of happening at that given point in time. The riot that was contained immediately in Mumbai in January 2015, as a result of the foresight of the Police commissioner Rakesh Maria is one such example. This riot that resulted in torching of multiple motor vehicles in Lalbaug, Parel, and Kalachowkie is believed to have begun with a rift between a group of youth returning from the Eid-e-Milad processions and members of 'another community'.¹² The social set up is ripe for a communal riot during religious festivities, because the very spirit of celebration is built on heightened fervour and reverence. It is in moments of such sensitivity that a blow will have the most savage impact. It has been observed in the past how civic disturbances clash with important dates like August 15, January 26, October 31, January 30, etc. Here, the same can be said when feelings of nationalistic jingoism are thick in the air, and even a slight instigation can be explosive. This is the same reason RAF personnel are deployed on the streets in the capital on these days, to avoid or curb any social unrest.

Another aspect of interest is how many scholars when speaking of collective action, be it protests, riots, religious gatherings, or concerts, almost always cloud the specificity of the individual. Or their discourse identifies the individual at the beginning but tends to move away from that line of thought progressively. Sudhir Kakar, in his essay "Some Unconscious Aspects of Ethnic Violence in India", asks whether one's experience in crowds leads to a lowering of normal defences, so that 'the crowds assault on the sense of individuality, its invitation to transcend one's boundaries and its offer of a freedom from personal doubts and anxieties is well-nigh irresistible'. He goes on to argue that "the need and search for self-transcending experience, to lose oneself in the group, suspend judgement and reality testing, is I believe, the primary motivational factor in both assembly and violent mob, even though the stated purpose is spiritual uplift in one and mayhem and murder in the other. The image of the crowds as emotional, capricious, temperamental and flighty has dominated the literature of mass psychology" (Kakar, 1990).

Here I wish to not necessarily oppose the de-individualisation of the crowd, but offer an alternative outlook. Since our study is situated in context of virtuality,

the identities that people acquire here are different from, say, a public gathering. Behind your screens, although you are transient to your fellow netizens, the individuality of the person is heightened. Because the computer screen is essentially an interactive medium, without the person's navigation there is no change that is assumed at all by the device. Now imagine you are viewing a mob lynching video on a webpage. The keywords here are 'you' and the 'webpage'. 'You' are the decision-making unit of the activity, you may continue to watch it till the end, or may want to close the window because of the grotesque and perverted nature of the video. Here you are playing two roles, one of yourself and the other as the member of resultant mass of people viewing the video. These two identities sometimes are opposing each other and at other times complying. The second identity is made more obvious when looked at from the 'webpage' perspective. You are one amongst the many who is on this webpage with intentions of being there, may match with most other people viewing it. This makes your second identity more pronounced.

I propose to look at this also in another manner, one that runs almost parallel to the traditional view. It is nothing but the emphasis on individual mobility that results in collective mobility, and how collectivity doesn't emerge out of vacuum. A measured importance must be given to the unit that comprises of the large magnitude of people called the crowd.

With the coming of virtuality, the images of the riot become objects of permanence. This preservation can be for an eternity, unless it gets tampered with, but its afterlife post riot is a long one. This indestructible documentation of the riots has been made possible only by the digitization of technology. Long after the event is over, the images of it stay alive. A new character to the riot is brought because of the novel nature of its afterlife. Events would stay alive in people's memories earlier by oral accounts of those who have lived through it. This unverified, non-systematized virtual archive of events also has a very different affective quality as opposed to oral narratives. It is almost a first-hand experience where one relives the event through the archives of texts, in opposition to second hand narratives.

Lastly, let us examine the internet blackouts that are imposed so often now in almost all instances of civic unrest. The very recent one being the week long mobile internet ban in Gujarat due to the Patidar reservation stir. *The Times of India* article¹³ about the Vadodara riot noted the police commissioner E. Radhakrishna saying that the decision to block internet (2G and 3G) and messaging (bulk SMS and MMS) services was necessary as there was a lot of rumour mongering on those platforms. "If the

situation remains peaceful, we may allow the services to continue before Tuesday," he said. The police attributed the communal tensions to images and messages being spread on SMS, Whatsapp, and Facebook. *The Indian Express* article¹⁴, on the incident, said, "On Friday, gory images of persons belonging to a particular community being hacked to death were seen doing the rounds on social networking sites, with mobile phones playing a major role in their spread. This led to another flare-up in communal clashes."

The Azad Maidan riots of Mumbai, fake MMSs did the rounds, many of which were posted on social media, showing pictures that purport to show that Muslims were being slaughtered by the hundred. A Pakistani journalist-blogger – Faraz Ahmed, investigated these pictures and found that many of them were bogus, and possibly morphed by mischief-monger to enrage Muslims everywhere. One SMS¹⁵ was circulated that made every Muslim feel hunted and victimized.

In the NE exodus, the government claimed a bulk of the doctored incendiary videos and horrific clippings of atrocities allegedly committed on Muslims in lower Assam and Myanmar were uploaded on various blogs in Pakistan in a bid to incite the minority community in India.¹⁶ As many as 250 websites were blocked and some other blogs got deactivated as a result.¹⁷

In most other recent cases of communal violence, the state has held the internet responsible for inciting violence. Be it Akhilesh Yadav during Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur or the Maharashtra government during the Pune riots. They have been quick to point fingers at social media and the internet.

In an article that arose after the Vadodara internet blackout, Nihkil Pahwa the founder of Medianama, and an important commentator on new media asks the hard hitting questions. He says, "Information and misinformation can spread virally, and people can react and riot", but also believes that the fault isn't with the medium, but those posting and sharing messages inciting violence. The questions he asks is that, should my freedom be curtailed by the state's inability to curb violence and maintain peace? Why isn't the police using the Internet to identify the individuals who might be inciting violence instead of shutting of the medium? Can't the police counter misinformation by using the same medium to share information?¹⁸

Almost as a counter to Pahwa's questions, in the riots that ensued in Trilokpuri, under police instruction residents of the many blocks were to be in direct touch with them through a Whatsapp group. If residents came across any suspicious or mischievous activity, they could directly post a message to the group which would

instantly alert the police. This model was adopted in order to reduce response time in case of any suspicious activity that may cause tension. The residents were urged to join the groups for their own safety and so that they could directly post their grievances on the group and that it is a platform for them to voice their anger. As reported by *The Indian Express*,¹⁹ an officer is quoted to have said, "By making these groups we have cut down the entire chain of the public first approaching the police station with a written complaint and moving up the police ranks. Now the public just have to type in a message to register their grievance".

The small scale riot that took place in Parel also allegedly emerged out of spreading rumours on Whatsapp. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Dhananjay Kulkarni said that, "As soon as we got to know about the false news being spread, we sent out a message on behalf of the Mumbai police assuring citizens that the city was safe and everything was under control."²⁰ Mumbai Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria who was commended by the media for the swift action that was taken place to curb the simmering riot said, "We are treating peace on the ground and in cyberspace as equally important."

There is at least some understanding by state apparatuses about how the cyberspace works and how it may be controlled if necessary. The archaic ideas about the new technology must be done away with, by increasing our understanding of the unknown. But what we have is a case of xenophobia. Only when we overcome this, will we be able to face the problems arising out of it head on.

What this paper tries to do is to find the link between collective mobility in violent forms and the new age media that has been a facilitator. This does not mean that before the coming of digital technologies riots did not happen, but the relationship that has evolved between the two is an interesting matter of study. The connection is very much perceptible but is invisible for us to be able to discern its actual impact which is contentious. I hope to have established at least some basic principles that I think can be identified with this new phenomenon.

Notes

1. Arjun Appadurai, who coined the word mediascape in his essay, "Disjuncture and Difference in Global Cultural Economy", defines it as that which indexes the electronic capabilities of production and dissemination, as well as "the images of the world created by these media".
2. Where curves intersect in the network society theory proposed by Manuel Castells
3. IAMAI is a not-for-profit industry body registered under the Societies Act, 1896. Its mandate is to expand and enhance the online and mobile value added services sectors. It is dedicated to presenting a unified voice of the businesses it represents to the government, investors, consumers and other stakeholders. The association addresses the issues, concerns and challenges of the Internet and Mobile economy and takes a leading role in its development.
4. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Northeast-issue-Exodus-subsides-in-Bangalore-no-let-up-in-Chennai-Pune/articleshow/15546059.cms>
5. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/social-media-used-to-ignite-violence/article6255146.ece>
6. <http://www.ahmedabadmirror.com/ahmedabad/crime/Communal-tension-in-Vadodara-shops-torched/articleshow/43458135.cms>
7. <http://www.punemirror.in/pune/crime/FB-post-shuts-down-Pune/articleshow/35911896.cms>
8. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/dimapur-lynching-on-social-media-first-rape-then-bangladesh-man/99/>
9. <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/the-mystery-of-kawwal-were-muzaffarnagar-riots-based-on-distortion-of-facts-534608>
10. <http://www.firstpost.com/india/pune-muslim-techie-killed-by-rightwing-mob-over-morphed-fb-posts-1555709.html>
11. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/founder-of-hrs-charged-with-pune-techies-murder/article6101990.ece>
12. <http://www.firstpost.com/india/curfew-like-situation-central-mumbai-following-clashes-eid-procession-2029507.html>
13. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vadodara/Internet-services-blocked-in-Vadodara-after-riots/articleshow/43674499.cms>
14. <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/after-rumours-stoked-communal-embers-uneasy-calm-in-vadodara-2/>
15. SMS read thus: "Burma, Assam, Gujarat, Kashmir ke bad na jane kahan? Burma mein Musalmano ke qatl-e-aam or zulm ke khilaf Azad Maidan me Sunday ko rally hai. America me 5 Sikho ka katal hua to media or sarkar me hadkam hai, or lakhon Musalmanon ki zindagi ki koi keemat nahi. Sab ki ankhen band hai. Is SMS to Sunday se pehle Hindustan ki har Musalman or mantriyo or media tak pohchao..".
16. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Videos-doctored-in-Pakistan-sparked-NE-exodus-Government/articleshow/15550503.cms>
17. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/newdelhi/ne-exodus-govt-blocks-250-websites-for-triggering-panic/article1-916568.aspx>
18. <http://www.medianama.com/2014/09/223-gujarat-government-internet-kill-switch-vadodara/>
19. <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/whatsapp-in-trilokpuri-a-message-group-that-keeps-police-at-fingertips/>
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