

## Media Portrayal of Rohingya Refugees

Biswajit Mohanty

**Abstract:** Media has an important role in shaping and influencing public policies and mood in the modern nation states. The mass media has acquired its power and control over people's opinion through the consensus making through symbolic representation of events. In the realm of ethnic relations the media plays an important role by mobilising symbolic resources to build consensus or create rift by discriminatory portrayal and/or prejudiced discourses. Reproduction of public image of an ethnic group influences the idea of the public and politics. This paper deals with the intersectionality of discourse and ideology to understand the building of image of refugees. The paper taking the case study of the Rohingyas, who have taken shelter in India after driven out from Myanmar, tries to explain how media and the state together have been constructing image of Rohingyas for a political purpose. The Rohingyas have been portrayed as the other. There is an internal orientalism within the Orient. The construction of the orient is an outcome of the politics at the domestic sphere as well as the geo-politics shaping the contemporary South Asian region.

Key words: media, mediatisation, public sphere, trust, stateless, ontological security

### Media, Refugee and the “Othering”

The image of the floating body of Aylan Kurdi, a three year Syrian boy clad with bright red T-shirt, lying face down on sand not far off from Turkey's resort town of Bodrum became an icon image. The image went viral with a hash tag of “humanity washed ashore”. The image made global headlines and was circulated extensively across the world. Following this image, there was a shift in the discourse on the refugee crisis in the media through-out Europe. (Bozdog and Smets, 2017) The images are visual “quotation” (Sontag, 2004: 22) that provides the window to understand media, and media representation of refugees especially when politics in the contemporary world is becoming more mediated and mediatised. In the era of mediated politics what matters is the role of mass media, irrespective of its form, as a trusted source of information and communication between people and the political actors. Television news and reporting have become preeminent source of information and knowledge not only of things happening within a country but also of the world outside.

It is a global phenomenon that the visual media is very much trusted as a source of information. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report 2019, 49% of the global population trusts the “owned” media and 65% of the population trusts the traditional media for the news and general information. There are only 43% of the global population who trust the social media for news and general information (Edelman Report, 2019: 50). In India, the CSDS Lokniti NES study 2019, conducted for all India level with respondents from varied social and economic background, found that 51% respondents have trust on television news, 52% of respondents

stated they trust the print media and only 37% trust the social media like what's app and face book.

Print media an important source of information and knowledge before the invention of the television readership was restricted to a handful of educated persons. Benedict Anderson (2006) argued that the sense of a national community developed among people through the development of a common language. It was possible because of the printing press and presence of a large number of readers who used mutually understood language to communicate with each other. The question is when the readership among the community is restricted to a limited few, especially in the Indian context, then how sentiment of a national community did emerge? It can be argued that the contemporary mass media, and especially the electronics media, bridged the hierarchy between the readers and non-readers of the print media by reducing everyone into viewers/audience.

Words have authority over imagination in the print media. In the visual era, the power of visual representation of an event along with narrative allows images to enjoy "authority over imagination". (Moeller, 1999: 47) The media orchestrates participation of viewers, who could not be part of the event organized out 'there'. By abrogating distance and framing events into one narrative it democratizes participation and creates a community of television viewers. It produces a sense of oneness through "mediatisation of modern culture." It enables millions of people by "virtue of their participation in a mediated culture, a common experience and a collective memory." (TSaliki, 1995: P 347) Thus, the collective memory constructed and reconstructed through symbols, images and meanings could bring the disparate groups together to achieve nationhood. The mass media including the electronic media has become an important means of the construction of an "imagined community."

Edward Said argued that the knowledgeable community of writers, novelists, theorists, economists and administrators also constructed the image of the "other", the "Oriental", both ontologically and epistemologically. (Said, 1979: 3) The "other" is constructed through the cultural differences. The "othering" is a process of domination and subjugation of a community or peoples in an asymmetric power relationship through cultural hegemony. The asymmetric power does not correspond to the "raw power" directly. It rather interacts with "power political", "power intellectual", "power cultural" and "power moral" in an "uneven exchange" relationship. (Said 1979: 12) Domination is achieved through retaining "flexible positional superiority." (Said, 1979: 7) The in-group can become the out-other but the reverse does not hold true. The "other" is differentiated through categorization and discriminatory practices of the dominant groups. The differentiating markers are constructed through several stereotypes and stigmas, finally, relegating them to the "margins of humanity". In broader sense, it can be labeled as "orientalism in discourse": a cultural mindset that manipulates, manufactures and masters the "other" and structures segregation through the construction of binaries of "us" vs "them", "insider" vs "outsider", "we" vs "they", "white" vs "black" and the list goes on. It differentiates the essentialised Orient from the essential Occident (Said 1979: 3)

As Said states "the category of lesser being" is extended to include "a lot of new people" in the contemporary world. (Said 1989: 207) There are new entrants to the list of the colonized and deprived: minority communities living within the state, refugees, stateless persons, migrants and

so on. The phenomenon of stateless though occurs locally the ramifications are global. The departure from the country of origin and arrival into a new juridical space contains and dispossesses the stateless. The spectral people – disenfranchised, unpaid, miserable, dispossessed, and disempowered— are “produced” as stateless and they are also “jettisoned from juridical modes of belonging.” The state binds and unbinds them through the nation by invoking sorted belonging. (Butler and Spivak, 2007: 18 and 4) The isomorphism of the nation conflates “citizenry, sovereign and solidary group” within it and “entail a congruence of the corresponding boundaries.” (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003: 583) Migrants become “antinomies” in the host country as they are extrinsic to society – who would destroy the “shared loyalty” to nation and “shared rights” guaranteed by the government – and become a blotch on the social fabric, who would be detrimental to the nation-building project. (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003: 584-85) Cultural differences are highlighted for measured steps to be taken for assimilation and/or non-assimilation into the national society.

In this context, the pertinent questions are: do the media by creating a community of television viewers also create the “other”? Are citizens and non-citizens, nationals and non-nationals represented equally without any biases? Are refugees, the immigrants and stateless persons within the given territory provided equal space in the media? Does the media construct internal orientalism within the Orient?

The article tries to grapple with the issue of idea of refugee as constructed by the Indian media with the case study of the Republic TV. There are two reasons for undertaking the study. The first reason is that it is an under-researched topic and as such, very few theoretical and empirical researches have been undertaken in India on electronic media to understand its nature from the perspective of the refugees. It is especially true of the stateless Rohingyas. The first ever study that I could trace on print media’s portrayal of Rohingyas in India is conducted by Madhura Chakravarti in her chapter written in the extensive report of Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group prepared by Ray Chaudhary and Samaddar. (Ray Chaudhury and Samaddar, 2015) She has also contributed another article in a latest book edited by Ray Chaudhury and Samaddar. (Ray Chaudhury and Samaddar, 2018) In both the articles she has devoted just a subsection to the portrayal of Rohingyas in the national dailies. (Chakraborty, 2015; Chakravorty, 2018) In both the essays, through her reading of the newspaper articles and reportings, she argues about the idea of “calculated hospitality” she writes:

“the absence of the national security issue when the focus was on other countries, made it possible to sympathetically portray the Muslim ‘others’ who once within the borders represented a threat to sovereign integrity” and “this dichotomy in reportage is a manifestation of the “calculated hospitality” that Samaddar talked about”. (Chakravarti, 2018: P 123) Between both the MCRG’s report of 2015 and Ray Chaudhury and Samaddar’s 2018 publications another report from the Hindu group of public policy was published by Mudasir Amin. (Amin, 2018) The findings on the media reportage of Rohingyas in this article is different from the conclusion of Chakraborty’s both the publications. Amin examines the newspaper articles, reports, the manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party of 2014 elections and the Rajya Sabha questions to conclude that unlike “calculated hospitality” shown to the other refugees, for instance, to Tibetans and Chakmas, the Rohingyas are facing hostilities from all the quarters. In this chapter, taking the case study of the Rohingyas, the stateless community from Myanmar entered into the

Indian Territory and settled in various parts of the country temporarily, and observing discussions about them in the news channels I have tried to grapple with the issues of media representation of the stateless.

The major limitation of Madhura's as well as Amin's article is that both have not attempted to understand the nature of the Indian print media. In my present chapter I have made a modest attempt to bridge this gap.

vanDjik was the first theorist to theorise the relation between news and portrayal of refugees. He used the news paper articles and editorials on Tamil refugees in Dutch press to understand the nature of the Dutch media. He in the study examined how the Dutch print media became the medium for successfully constructing, propagating and finally reproducing racism in Dutch society. Many studies have been undertaken, subsequently, on the media discourse on refugees. Take for instance, Lynn and Lea have examined the letters written to the British print media and come to the conclusion that the newspapers' "elite" discourse is employing the idea of citizenship, identity and nation-hood in socially constructing the image of the asylum seekers and contributing to the idea of "new apartheid" (Lynn and Lea, 2003) Similarly, Kaleda (2014) in an essay compares the grassroots news paper published by refugees and the western media to conclude how the western news papers trivialize what is important for the grassroots news paper run by the refugees themselves in Kenya. Blieker et.al. (Blieker et.al. 2013) have examined the role of print media in dehumanizing the refugees in Australia and influencing the policies. The Brookings institute of Governance in its report *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate: democracy in the age of new media* examines the impact of the television reporting about immigration and its impact on immigration policy in America in 2007. (Suro et.al. undated) In the Southern Asian context, there is hardly any literature on television portrayal of Rohingyas: hence the essay in the book.

A set of guidelines has been published by the UNHCR and the National Union of Journalists in Ireland and the Irish Refugee Council for the journalists reporting the migration and asylum issues. It highlights, first, the significance of truthful reporting to avoid harming refugees. The guideline issued highlights the importance of the best practices of interviewing the refugees. The report should be bereft of bias to maintain accuracy of reporting. Second, it is important that the journalist should also be aware about the national and international laws to provide correct definition to the concepts that they are using to report conditions of refugee and stateless persons in any country. Third, it is pertinent to "show humanity" by reporting individual and collective stories with a sensitive background information regarding the reasons of mass migration and their entry into the destination country. Fourth, the reporters should not speak for the refugees rather should "talk to" them to provide a platform and an opportunity to "speak for themselves". Finally, the guidelines specifically advises journalists to "challenge hate" to avoid conflict of interest and potential conditions of violence committed on refugees and migrants. The second reason to study the media reporting is to find out are the best practices of ethical journalism are followed for reporting in television channels while discussing stateless persons in India? The essay in the process would address a deeper issue of exploring the politics of news reporting and visual images of Rohingyas in the news channels. For this purpose I have taken one "owned" channel, the Republic TV, as a case study to analyse the refugee portrayal in the news channel.

## Media and Trust

The vast expanse of the media has enabled people to see, hear and remember events of their choices. It has become integral part of the everyday life because of its “emotional significance”, “cognitive significance”, its “spatial and temporal significance”, and “political significance”. (Silverstone, 2003: 3) The content of experience in everyday life cognitive processes, and national and political identities building are being mediated by mass media. (Stevenson, 2000: 1) The media is increasingly structuring our daily life through what Luhmann calls “transcendental illusion” or “doubling of reality” (Luhmann 2000: 4) manifested at the level of observation: at the level of “self-reference” and at the level of “other reference”. Thus the question arises could we trust the media that operates at both the levels for the construction of reality?

There are several theories those explain the growing trust on media. Discussion on the issue of trust is beyond the scope of the essay. A brief summary is presented to give a theoretical dimension to the issue of why is it that the public trust media for news and information?

Trust has a major role to play in the modern society because it “increases the ‘tolerance of uncertainty’” of the future. (Luhmann, 1979: 15) It is because of its capacity to manage “indeterminate complexity” that there are enhanced possibilities for experiences and actions, augmentation of social complexities and possibilities of reconciliation within the structure. (Luhmann, 1979: 8) Complexities and specialization make people rely on the system and public authorities. He further states that trust ‘is to behave as though the future were certain...through trust time is superseded.’ (Luhmann 1979: 10)

Anthony Giddens subsequently builds on the conception of uncertainty and risk that the globalised society faces. To explain the importance of trust in modern society he first theorises “ontological security” to understand the life in the modern world. He explains it through “abstract systems” consisting first “of face-work commitments” i.e. trust activity in “circumstances of copresence” and “faceless commitments”, which is trust in “symbolic tokens or expert systems”. (Giddens, 1991: 80) Day to day civil interaction in modern society is characterized by “civil inattention”, which is a “carefully restrained and controlled social rhythms.” Trustworthiness is not always established in face to face interaction. For Giddens “disembedded mechanisms” can also be trusted. From this basic background he argues that “*the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract system.*” (Giddens 1990: 83 italics original) He further relates mechanisms of trust with “ontological security, which is to do with the “being-in-the-world”, “rooted in the unconscious” and emotional world. (Giddens 1990: 92)

He further argues that not everyone is located within high ontological insecurity state. It is because they have received “dosages of trust” in early life. They have been “emotionally inoculated”. (Giddens 1990: 94) To explain this point he borrows from Erik Erikson and D W Winnicott. Quoting Winnicott he states that the trust between individual begins at the infant stage where the child and the caregiver develop “potential space” between them. (Giddens 1990: 96) Crucial to development of trust for child is absence of mother. The feeling of reliability is predicated on the premise that absence of mother does not mean withdrawal of love. Giddens thus concludes that a sense of trust and psychological security is firmly bound up with routines

of day-to-day life. The continuity of secure routine life is possible with constant vigil of the parties involved i.e. through face-work engagement: “chronic monitoring of the gaze, bodily posture, and gesture, and the conventions of orthodox conversation.” (Giddens 1990: 99)

Modern society is characterized as a risk society and abstract system transforms intimacy through different means. The face to face interaction has been attenuated. There is decreasing reliance on kinship relations for support. In the absence of this in modern times people have become more reliant on “relational networks and mechanisms” mediated by abstract tokens or the expertise of others, whose presence cannot be part of immediacy of the routine life. Giddens concludes that we trust the symbolic authority from a distance. Media becomes the part of the distance authority and trusting media hence becomes important to secure our ontological insecurity.

The argument does not tell us the exact process of reposing trust on the television and news. Silverstone, drawing extensively from Winnicott’s idea of “transitional object” and sequencing has argued about the reposition of trust on the media. Silverstone argues that the sequencing happen through the following stages. First, the transitional object is identified and related to for having ontological security. In the second phase the attempt is made by the subject to destroy the transitional object through “constant flow and switching off”. (Silverstone, 2003: 15) Despite its attempts it cannot be destroyed leading to the situation of “invulnerability and its dependability”, making television a primary level of acceptance and trustworthy. This can happen to any technology. The difference between technologies and television is that the attachment to television is “over-determined” by its “schedules, genres and narratives”. (Silverstone, 2003: 15) The news as a genre is the prime example of articulation of anxiety and security along with the creation of trust. It is this characteristic of televised news that the television becomes a transitional object and is trusted from a distance.

How does trust at the individual sphere becomes a trust of the public? The relationship between media, state and people can be established within the public sphere. Habermas’ (Habermas 1989) account of public sphere has been widely used as a yardstick of measuring a democratic society. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere developed from the yoke of a feudal system to rationally and critically discuss the matters of public interest. The public sphere is the critical intermediary domain between the state and the civil society (Habermas, 1974; 50) where a critical and rational reflection on the public and the practices of the state is encouraged. The participants of the public sphere were though small but it brought into the public domain the importance of universality of reasonable argument. The public sphere, through its principle of publicity established the importance of public use of reason. It provided the cultural ground for critique where better argumentative reason could establish authority over the status quo and less articulated argument. (Silverstone, 2003: 49) Since the best communication can occur without coercion, public sphere becomes the ideal site for free and critical analysis of the state and the public. The citizens when are given freedom of expression of opinion behave as a “public body.” In the public body, like the modern nation-states, the mass media acquires a critical importance to transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Television becomes one of those medium of transmission in the public sphere. (Habermas, 1974: 49) Media becomes an independent forum for citizens for public debate, discussion and engagement with fellow citizens and the state authorities. The independence of media becomes the reason for trust in the public

sphere. (Bakir and Barlow, 2007: 19) To become a full citizen, the members of the political community should have the free access to the media to form an informed opinion and political choices on the state and its policies.

There are major critiques of Habermasian conception of public sphere. For our purpose I would pick two. The first critique is against his distinct division between the public, consisting of politically structured systemic world and its attendant bureaucratic regulations and the life-world, consisting of “horizon” where citizens would realize their projected goals. According to Baker and Blaggard, the public sphere and the life-world are not two distinct spheres mediated by the media to discuss and debate, rather is an organic whole where “both the public and systemic discourses intermingle and interact.” Hence public sphere is a discursive sphere. (Baker and Blaggard, 2016: 04) Secondly, though Habermas laments that the forces that brought the public sphere into prominence became the very agents of its decline and destruction, (Silverstone, 2003: 50) he rarely discusses the role of media, especially the televised news and its relation in dealing with the issue of non-citizens in the public sphere.

The major question is then when the non-citizens like refugees and immigrants have become a reality in many Asian, European, African and American countries then how do we link public sphere, media and non-citizens? There are several related questions as well. Like citizens, can non-citizens become part of the public sphere in expressing their ideas? Do media give them adequate space to express their views? Whether media speaks for them or the non-citizens have their voices to speak for themselves? How do media, especially visual media deal with the non-citizens in different Southern Asian countries where religious nationalism is at its height right now? Can non-citizens trust media in depicting their condition, their history, and true story of the context of refugees?

### **Rohingyas and News in India**

The question before delving into the Rohingya discourse is when and why did the news channels start articulating the Rohingya issue in a big way? The Rohingyas have been trickling into India through the porous border of Bangladesh and Myanmar since 1970s. According to the UNHCR’s October 2018 report, there are about 18,000 Rohingya refugees in India. But the informal sources claim it to be roughly around 40,000. Of them, about two-thirds are residing in the cities of Hyderabad and Jammu, where there are large Muslim communities. In Jammu, the Rohingya shelter has been declared as official camp where the concentration of Rohingyas could be noticed. According to the Jammu and Kashmir government, there are about 5,700 Rohingya Muslims living in and around Jammu. However, the central government maintains that there could be around 10,000-11,000 Rohingyas in Jammu. (The live Mint, 2017) The rest are scattered in Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh in the North and Rajasthan in the West, and Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Andaman Nicobar islands in the South. They have taken shelter in the North-Eastern states as well. They were staying in Assam fearing prosecution hence fled to the other North-Eastern states. They have been supported materially and financially by many NGOs, like ‘Shikawat’, ‘Daji’ and Zakat Foundation, from time to time.

Demanding recognition of refugee status, home, better life and Long Term Visa from the Indian government in April 2012 about 3000-4000 thousand Rohingyas had held a demonstration in

front of the UNHCR Indian office. This demonstration was also supported by Indians sympathetic to their cause. They mainly had come from Rajasthan, Jammu, and various parts of Uttar Pradesh. The event was reported in the print media and some in visual media. Sumitra Mahajan, a BJP MP raised the issue of Rohingyas in the Parliament by labeling them as “illegal migrants”, who are a “security threat” to the Indian state. (Basavapatna, 2015: 32)The timing of the protest coincided with a series of attacks on Rohingyas in Myanmar. Since then the Rohingyas gained public attention and have become part of the politics of media debate in India. But Rohingya issues have become more prominent in the last three years. Almost all print and visual media carry Rohingyas as news item.

The year 2017 was the decisive moment for Rohingyas for two reasons. First, a Public Interest Litigation was filed in Jammu to identify the Rohingyas and Bangladeshis and deport them to their respective countries. There are other refugees from the Tibet and Afghanistan who have been residing in India. The Rohingyas have become the targets in the recent times because of their Muslim identity, public confusion over the mistaken identity of Rohingyas with Bangladeshis and prevalence of divisive anti-Muslim sentiment in the country. Second, there was a case filed by two registered Rohingya immigrants under the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR), Mohammed Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, pleading before the Supreme Court against refolement. The plea was that India may not be a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, but has been the signatory to many other conventions those protect rights of the refugees and are against deportation. To that effect the Central Government filed a counter affidavit in the Supreme Court citing unverified reports of link with the Pakistani terror groups. The newspaper and news channels picked this point and the media spin started thereafter. The most enthusiastic channels for repatriation of Rohingyas in the country were the Times Now and the Republic TV. There were other Hindi Channels who towed the same line. But the current study is base on the analysis of the Republic TV’s reporting and news-hour discussions. The limitation of the article is that a comparative study of the Television channels could not be conducted for two reasons. First, it is a tremendous task to gain full access to the news items on Rohingyas of all the television channels over the internet to do the content analysis and subsequent theorization. Secondly, given the limited space an extensive study would become impossible: a project has been left for future.

### **The Republic TV News and Portrayal of Rohingya Refugees**

The lead statement in the episode Debate with Arnab Goswami in the Republic TV on 18 September 2017, the anchor Arnab Goswami pronounces "Why People Fighting for Rohingyas and not for Assamese? India is for Indians. Those philosophically inclined and those pseudos who insist that India is for Myanmarese and India is for Bangladeshis, I want a poll carried out among the Indians to ask if the idea of *Atithi Devo Bhava* (Guest is God) means that the armed Bangladeshis can attack the state of Assam. *Atithi Devo Bhava* means that Rohingyas can threaten Indian security and we still say they have equal rights as us. The fact is that they don't have equal rights as us. India is for the Indians first. Amnesty International should ask Donald Trump to accommodate Rohingyas in Texas. The Amnesty international should ask Theresa May to take one lakh Bangladeshis since they have so many, forget Brexit and settle them down in



East London. This is such hypocrisy. I want to ask if there is a greater International design behind this.”

He further states, “as part of our campaign that you must join, as # tag tonight appeals me, and all of you , that we have taken this rubbish prolong enough to and we need to hit back. The # tag is India for Indians and I have posted many questions on my twitter. Here are many questions. Why did the Rohingyas come via Bangladesh, an Islam dominated state where the Muslims are happy, and choose to settle in Hindu dominated Jammu, in India where according to the pseudo brigade Indians are unsafe in. That is my first question to the pseudos. It makes no sense to me.”

“The second question is why don’t the people who are fighting for the Rohingyas fight for Assamese who are run over by Bangladeshis violent infiltrators who have run away from their own soil.”

“Third, are we the only dumping ground of the world? Why don’t the Rohingyas go to Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, which are self-professed peaceful state, which are much safer for them. Are we the moral dumping ground for waste?”

“Fourth, why do you pay taxes viewers? Do you pay taxes to subsidise Rohingyas who will come into our India and threaten our own security?”

“Fifth, are Rohingyas our problem or Myamar's problem? My view is that the problem is for Aung San Syu Kyi to sort out not for Narendra Modi to sort out. What do you think: Do you agree with me?”

“You get the exclusive report on the state of Assam. You would be shocked to know that what is happening in Assam which is India. Don’t let your brother and sisters of Assam suffer any more.”

The channel announces the headlines. “The government files a tough affidavit on the Rohingyas in the Supreme Court. The stand is very clear. India is for Indians there is no compromise. He further states,

“40000 Rohingyas are here. Why do political parties want India to be the dumping refugee dumping ground.” The clip shows the movement of people and with caption it states that Many Rohingyas part of Inter Service Intelligence of Pakistan’s design. A headline scrolls which reads “Pandits thrown out, Rohingyas throng in.” Another caption reads, “Identity of the Assamese is under threat.”

The channel shows two interviews of Assauddin Owassi and Kiran Rijjuju. The subtitles of the interview show that Owasi is speaking in favour of Rohingyas in terms of humanitarian issue and Kiren Rijjuju is justifying the draft based on the ground data.

The Republic in a visual clip shows that people are crossing the border surreptitiously. Arnab Goswami announces “the people of state of Assam have been run over by illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh.” He further states “the government and some politicians are trying to hide secret

documents that say that 15 districts of 33 districts of Assam have been dominated by the Bangladeshi infiltrators.” Then the debate continues.

For Ignatief news is like stories. It is a “genre” where they have the structure and content, and involve the expectations of the audience of what they want from the news "stories". The news thus involves a kind of standardisation of narrative and pattern of presenting according to the demands of audience, what they like to listen, and like to watch. As an "imagined community" the viewers through their news construct their national or international collective identity. It constructs "we" vs "them" narrative through the “ventriloquist” news reader. Through the circuitous route it becomes the authority. (Ignatief 1998: P 71)

News is not genre of stories. It is a process about production, marketing as well as consumption. It is an "*institutional discourse*" that feed into and form generic structure. The institutional discourse is manifested through cognitive practices and textual conversations. (van Dijk, 1988). Discourse involves a micro and a macro processes. The micro-process is about the structure of the sentence that the news anchor or reporter utters on the television set. (van Dijk 1988a: 81) Discourse, in its micro-process form, also involves the role of the lexical order of words. The use of words to describe the event in the frame of "rhetorical strategies" is an important element of comprehension processes of the audiences. Since media is dependent on socially shared knowledge and beliefs, the script is organised around social psychological dimension of persuasion. The rhetoric of terror attack and security threat to the nation constitutes the rhetoric of political script. News reporting is shared knowledge that indicates the socio-political ideology at play in the production houses. The political scripts which have evaluative and normative beliefs of social groups the news script is qualified as social attitude. (vanDjik 1988: 13) Thus, news events or reports are shared knowledge scripts that would indicate the socio-political ideology at play in media production houses. Ideologies, according to Althusser (1971), has the material basis in the form of Ideological State Apparatus which albeit others include communications. But it is not limited to it alone. It includes system of meanings: the connecting link between the real world and the imaginary relations in which people live. Ideology is thus a “tangible ‘lived experience’ rather than an ‘intellectual’ one; rooted in social mechanisms and practices.” (Lynn and Lea, 2003: 426) The news becomes a practice: a discourse where social reality is not empirically depicted rather social reality is constructed. (Fowler, 1991: 2) Meanings are part of the “ideological sphere” and discourse, which is one of ideology’s specific forms, can be viewed as “knowledge in the service of power.” (Burr, quoted in Lynn and Lea, 2003: 427)

The ideology of the Republic TV could be discerned from the statements made above. It is an “ideological consensus”; a nationalist ideology where India is meant only for Indians. He conflates the Hindu with Indian and Indian nationalism with Hindu identity. Bangladesh is a Muslim state and Jammu is Hindu dominant area clearly manifests the Hindu nationalist ideology. By addressing any contrarian voice as “pseudos”, the Republic TV has labeled them as enemy within. The presence of the “pseudo” and their support to the Muslims is therefore disruptive and threat to the nation. Both become anti-nationals, should be closely monitored and reprimanded in public.

Vocabulary is integral to the image depiction. Images without words become polyphonic and polysemic. Images are indispensable for televised news but depiction of acceptable and unacceptable, favourable and non-favourable, friends and foes are done through chosen vocabulary. Categorisation is part of discourse. The identity markers of the community are provided through words or vocabulary. Vocabulary which is taxonomically organized provides the “sense relation among words.” becomes the ideology of the community and “instrument of handling discrimination”. (Fowler 1991: 91) Republic TV’s language categorised and by categorising it particularized the Rohingyas as well. TV’s through reiterated vocabulary of discrimination assigned a particular status and image to the Rohingya community enabled the it to construct the image of the “Other” as terrorists and their supporters as harbingers. It “locked” the identities in the cycle of stereotypes. The construction of the “other” precluded the ‘group’ to be part of the larger political community The Republic TV when announced that Rohingyas are part of the larger design it appealed to citizens and the ruling power not to allow Rohingyas to be assimilated and/integrated into the Indian polity.

The Republic TV instead of examining the complexity of differences created simple binary of legal citizens versus the illegal migrants. It successfully constructed the image of the Muslims whose image is generalised by public as a potential threat to "our' national security as they are automatically shown to have connections with Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Inter Service Intelligence or Al Qaeda. Thus all Muslims are homogenised as the harbingers of terrorism, hence should not be allowed to enter into the country. The language in which the refugees are represented through the media has a critical impact on their identity to the general public. Since, subject is not able to represent themselves and also lack power to voice their concerns, the Republic TV as the dominant power has taken representation in its own hands where "the culture of power remained within the culture of representation”. Portraying Rohingyas as terrorists and criminals made them undesirable elements thereby distorting the image of real condition of Rohingyas. By reporting a xenophobic rhetoric it tried to fuel a negative stereotypical and prejudiced image of them By showing this one sided picture of the Rohingyas it created a "moral panic" and spread a message of crisis.

Through the creation of positive in-group versus negative out-group dichotomy the Republic TV created a process of the “othering”. It tried to create a strong differentiation between host country citizens and impoverished image of immigrants who are a drain on and competitors for resources. It by doing so dehumanised the Rohingyas in particular and the minority community in general.

The TV channel also tried to emulate the "CNN Effect", where the underlying assumption is that the news can make and change policies. It tried to influence domestic and the foreign policy of the government: a hawkish foreign policy where the government should start a war against terrorism, terrorists and the countries sheltering the terrorists.

It is evident that the Republic TV apart from trying to affect the CNN effect also tried to manufacture consent. Two implicit versions of the manufacturing consent paradigm can be discerned in relation to the Republic TV’s portrayal of Rohingya imagery. First, the executive version: this insists that news media reports conform to what might loosely be called the official agenda. (White, 2007) The second elite version of the manufacturing consent paradigm claims

that news media coverage conforms to the interests of political elites, where elites are defined broadly as members of the executive, legislative or any other politically powerful group. (van Dijk, 1988) The Republic TV it seems has committed to both the versions of manufacturing consent as is quite evident from the above episode. In its totalising version the channels, it seems, is operating on the basis of a set of ideological premises, depending heavily and uncritically on elite information sources and participating in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests. It rarely produced coverage in the deviant sphere it rather reflected the elite consensus. In this sense, the channel has been trying, to paraphrase van Dijk, to establish Elite Communalism. It played a crucial role in reproducing the communal politics symbolically through the reproduction of negative image of the Rohingya Muslims.

## **Conclusion**

The refugee problems are extremely political. Refugees are not just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status: they represent a culture, they are identities and are thus part of a community. Refugees confront several arrays of responses when they travel across the boundaries of nations. As fugitives they remain under the constant gaze of the state surveillance systems, they are sometimes cared for and at other times identified as threat to social fabric and denigrated as enemies of the nation. In the mediatised and mediated world media plays an important role in constructing the image of the refugees. Rohingyas have been depicted as potential terrorists. By doing this the Republic TV did not play a responsible role. The ethics of journalism was not followed by the Republic TV. The channel created not only binaries but constructed a negative image of the Rohingyas by depicting them as terrorist, threat to nation and potential destabilizing forces. It by bring in the question of identitarian politics and resource constraint argument tried to set the communal political agenda of the elites. The TV lacked the basic journalistic ethics of protecting human rights of refugees by not reporting sensibly and truthfully about their living conditions. Thus the objective depiction of issue got reduced to conflict of interest that had the potential for commencement of violence against the Rohingyas. It tried to construct a negative image of refugees and appealed to the citizens to treat the refugees as the “other” and tried to influence the government to repatriate them as they would become a burden on nation’s scarce resources. It is evident that the construction of image was shaped by the religious nationalist ideology of the host nation and channel’s role was restricted to the ideological mouth piece of the party in power. It did not provide the platform for the “other” voice to speak for them. This had a deep and lasting impact on refugees. As seven Rohingyas have been deported to Myanmar the future of the refugees has remained very uncertain and thus precarious.

## **Bibliography**

Althusser, Louis (1971) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation, in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, Monthly Review Press,

<http://www.csun.edu/~snk1966/Lous%20Althusser%20Ideology%20and%20Ideological%20State%20Apparatuses.pdf>

Amin, Mudasir (2018) 'Nobody's Children, Owners of Nothing': Analysing the Indian State's Policy Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis, Chennai, The Hindu Center for Politics and Public Policy

Anderson, Benedict (2006) *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York, Verso

Baker, Mona and Bolette B. Blaagaard (2016) *Citizen Media and Public Spaces: Diverse expressions of citizenship and dissent*, New York, Routledge

Basavapatna, Sahana (2015) Where do #ibelong? The Stateless Rohingyas in India, in Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ranabir Samaddar eds. (2015), *Rohingyas: The Emergence of a Stateless Community: A Report by Calcutta Research Group*, Kolkatta, MCRG, pp 30-45

Bauman, Zygmunt (1998) *Globalisation: The Human Consequences*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Bleiker, Roland, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison and Xzarina Nicholson (2013) The Visual Dehumanisation Of Refugees, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 398–416

Bozdog, Cigdem and Kevin Smets (2017) *International Journal of Communication* 11(2017), Understanding the Images of Alan Kurdi With “Small Data”: A Qualitative, Comparative Analysis of Tweets About Refugees in Turkey and Flanders (Belgium)

Brenner, Yermi.(2019) *Rohingya migration to India: patterns, drivers and experiences*, *Mixed Migration Studies*, New Delhi

Butler, Judith and Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak (2007) *Who Sings Nations States? Language, Politics, Belonging*. Calcutta, Seagull Books

Chakravarti, Madhura (2015) The Limits of Belonging: Rohingyas in Bangladesh and India, in Ray Chaudhury, Sabyasachi Basu and Ranabir Samaddar eds. (2015), *Rohingyas: The Emergence of a Stateless Community A Report by Calcutta Research Group* Kolkatta, MCRG, pp – 70-86

Chakravarti, Madhura (2018) *Rohingya in Bangladesh and India and the Media Planet*, in Ray Chaudhury, Sabyasachi Basu and Ranabir Samaddar eds. (2018), *The Rohingyas in South Asia: People Without State*, Oxon and New York, Routledge pp – 109-133.

Edelman Trust Barometer 2019, [https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019\\_Edelman\\_Trust\\_Barometer\\_Global\\_Report\\_2.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report_2.pdf) accessed on 25.06.2019

Entman, Robert M. (2007) Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power *Journal of Communication* 57, PP 163–173

Fowler, Roger (1991) *Language in the News Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London and New York, Routledge

Habermas, Jürgen, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox (1974) *The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article* (1964) *New German Critique*, No. 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 49-55

Habermas, J (1986) *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and Rationalisation*, UK, Polity Press

Hall, Stuart ed (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Delhi, Sage Publications

Ignatief, Michael, (1998), *Is Nothing Sacred? The Ethics of Television*, *Daedalus*, Vol 114, No 4, *The Moving Image* (Fall, 1985), pp. 57-78

Kaleda, Collen (2014) *Media Perceptions: Mainstream And Grassroots Media Coverage Of Refugees In Kenya And The Effects Of Global Refugee Policy*, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 94–111

Kock, Christian, (2018) *Rhetoric in Media Studies The Voice of Constructive Criticism* [http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/134\\_103-110.pdf](http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/134_103-110.pdf) downloaded on 9 October 2018

Liza Tsaliki (1998) *The Media Construction of an ‘imagined Community’: The Role of Media Events on Greek Television*, *European Journal of Communication* Vol 10(3): 345-370

Luhmann, Niklas (1979) *Trust and Power: Two Works by Niklas Luhmann*, New York and Toronto, John Wiley and Sons

Luhmann, Niklas (2000) *The Reality of the Mass Media*, Translated by Kathleen Cross, California, Stanford University Press

Lynn and Lea, (2003) *‘A phantom menace and the new Apartheid’: the social construction of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom*, *Discourse & Society* Vol 14(4): 425–452

Moeller, S. D. (1999) *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. London, Routledge

Müller, Philipp (2016) *National identity building as a mediated process A two-level model of its functions and dysfunctions* in Jürgen Grimm; Leonie Huddy; Peter Schmidt; Josef Seethaler (eds.) *Dynamics of National Identity: Media and Societal Factors of What We Are*, London and New York, Routledge Pp321-333

Nannicelli, Ted and Taberham Paul (2014) *Cognitive Media Theory*, New York and London, Routledge

Ray Chaudhury, Sabyasachi Basu and Ranabir Samaddar eds. (2015), *Rohingyas: The Emergence of a Stateless Community A Report by Calcutta Research Group* Edited by Kolkatta, MCRG

Ray Chaudhury, Sabyasachi Basu and Ranabir Samaddar eds. (2018), *The Rohingyas in South Asia: People Without State*, Oxon and New York, Routledge.

Said, Edward W, (1979) *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Book

Said, Edward W. (1989) *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors*, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 2 pp. 205-225

Schiller, D. 1981. *Objectivity and the News - The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press

Silverstone, Roger (2003) *Television and Everyday Life*, London and New York, Routledge

Sontag, Susan (2003) *Regarding the Pain Of Others*, New York, Straus and Giroux

Stevenson, Nicholas (2002) *Understanding Media Cultures*, 2nd edn, London, Sage

Suro, Roberto, Tom Rosenstiel, Martin Kaplan, E.J. Dionne, Jr. and banu akdenizli (undated) *A Report on the Media and the Immigration Debate: democracy in the age of new media* [media%20and%20immigration%20study%20imp.pdf](#)

The Live Mint (2017), *Government Exploring ways to deport 10,000 Rohingya Muslims from Jammu*, 4 April

vanDijk, Teun A (1988) *News as Discourse*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, New Jersey

vanDijk, Teun A (1988a) *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press*, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associate.

Wright Terrence, (2002) *Moving Images: The Media Representation of Refugees*, *Visual Studies* 17:1, Pp 53-66

White, P.R.R. ( 2000) 'Media Objectivity and the Rhetoric of News Story Structure', in Venetola, E (ed.) *Discourse and community: Doing functional linguistics*, Tubengen, Gunter Narr Verlag, PP 379-90

United Nations High Commission on Refugees, (2017) *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf>

Wimmer, Andreas and Nina Glick Schiller, (2003) *Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology*, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3, *Transnational Migration: International Perspectives* pp. 576-610

