

Constructing the Muslim “other”: A critical discourse analysis of Indian news coverage of the tablighi jamaat congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the representation of Indian Muslims in national news coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. By deploying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the paper examines how hegemonic news discourses in four Indian daily newspapers published in English and Hindi constructed the image of a Muslim “other” across various discursive moments in relation to the news coverage of a Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) congregation and its link to the spread of COVID-19 in India. Describing the congregation’s Muslim participants as anti-nationals, insensitive to the suffering of their compatriots, disrespectful of the law of the land, super-spreaders of the virus and jihadis, the image of the Muslim “other” was constructed and conveyed to the public by using such appellations. These conformed to many beliefs of Hindutva, the right-wing Hindu ideology, that seeks to infuse in public discourse feelings of the “other” – an other which needs to be criminalized and ostracized. The mediated reality produced is embedded in the power structure and is an ideologically driven exercise. The way hegemonic power operates is clearly reflected in

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