



**INSIGHT UK**

~ SOCIAL MOVEMENT OF BRITISH HINDUS & INDIANS ~

**B B C**  
**NEWS**

# BRITISH MEDIA AND PERCEPTION

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**SPOTLIGHT ON  
THE BBC**

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**FEB 2024**

# British Media and Perception

## Spotlight on the BBC

Published February 2024

**INSIGHT UK**

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# Why the BBC?

From November 2022 to February 2023, INSIGHT UK conducted a survey asking Hindus and Indians living in the United Kingdom what they thought of the British media. The survey report can be downloaded below.

<https://insightuk.org/british-media-and-perception>

INSIGHT UK aimed to further substantiate its survey data by directly researching topics that affected the BHI community, and how or if the BBC reported on these areas, with a focus on their English language coverage on BBC India and BBC World sections.

The BBC was chosen as it was highlighted in the survey as the least reliable outlet by respondents, with claims of bias. It also received the highest number of complaints.

Various topics were researched and analysed for balanced views from the BBC, and if they were not found, other media houses were looked at to see how they reported on the same issue.

The main findings point to grave and serious omissions from reports on a wide range of topics from the BBC, specifically with regards to Indian and Hindu news reports.

INSIGHT UK's research made various observations around BBC narratives, and found balance was lacking.

Research on BBC articles found various conjectures about Hindus, often with denial, obfuscation or moral equivalence to discredit any narrative that Hindus are victims. Denial of atrocities on Hindus could be leading to more Hinduphobia as the survey results suggest, or making young Hindus develop self-hate if they are only perceived by the media as villains, or perpetrators and never victims.

## **Key Analysis Findings**

Given the overwhelmingly negative feedback received in the survey, it became imperative to conduct a comprehensive analysis specifically focusing on the BBC's reporting of BHI communities. The analysis revealed the following key findings:

- A lack of balanced reporting on a range of topics, such as Hindu persecution, Hindu festivals, Kashmir, Indian women's rights, and cow smuggling.
- Hindus are frequently portrayed inaccurately as villains, perpetuating false stereotypes.
- News stories highlighting Hindus as victims often receive inadequate coverage. There were numerous cases found of selective coverage, using solely opinion. Facts build stories but views shape the stories and narrative. Selective views can risk creating selective outrage.
- News articles often reference dubious, unreliable, or controversial sources.
- There is an urgent need for improved, balanced, and accurate reporting.
- Fair representation of programmes related to BHI communities is crucial.
- There is an imbalanced focus on ideology, religion, and "caste".

In summary, the analysis underscores the necessity for enhanced reporting standards that address these issues and provide fair and accurate representation of the topics affecting BHI communities.

## **BBC constitution, funding and complaints process**

The BBC Royal Charter [11] states that the Mission of the BBC is to “act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain”.

However, the INSIGHT UK survey, representing over one million Hindus and Indians in the UK, indicates that they don't feel it is serving them impartially.

The BBC benefits almost entirely from the TV Licence fee, around 10% of which goes to the BBC World Service [12][13]. It would seem the BHI community feels it is not getting fair value for its contribution.

The BBC “Empire” Service was launched in 1932. It was later, perhaps carefully, renamed to the BBC World Service. A large number of articles covering India and Hindus are published under BBC India and the BBC World Service.

The question is whether the BBC and the BBC World Service can claim true impartiality, editorial independence, and autonomy from government direction when it comes to issues regarding India.

The BBC World Service for example receives tens of millions of pounds in funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

This is a government department, so its funding is coming from the taxpayer. The FCDO claims it helps the BBC World Service build on “upholding global democracy through accurate, impartial and independent news reporting”. “Upholding global democracy” is incredibly loose terminology, that could equate to pretty much doing anything [16].

The fact it receives direct funding from the FCDO means it is hard to distinguish between independent and unbiased media, and state influenced or state-controlled media. It could be argued that it is not possible to be truly independent if the Licence fee is collected by the government, then topped up by the FCDO with a specific vision in mind.

The INSIGHT UK survey found that the majority of complaints from the BHI community, across all outlets, were against the BBC, with many also complaining with the UK's communication regulator, Ofcom. According to the survey there were high dissatisfaction rates for both complaints procedures.

Ofcom has been accused in the past of bias towards the BBC with many ex-BBC employees working there. Ian Paisley, the MP for North Antrim, has previously accused the BBC of "marking their own homework" [21].

Only 25 complaints of bias were upheld by the BBC over a five year period, in a time when they received hundreds of thousands of complaints of bias [312]. The INSIGHT UK survey also indicated a high dissatisfaction rate for the complaints process.

The organisation runs "BBC Verify" and "BBC Reality Check" sections on their website. Reality Check is described as a "BBC News service dedicated to clearing up fake news and false stories to find the truth".

It is quite common for the mainstream media to have fact check articles. But who fact checks the fact checkers? With Ofcom being the only alternative or next step after a direct complaint to the BBC (as well as other media houses), it would appear dissatisfied complainants are left with few options to hold the media to account.

Bizarrely, BBC's own disinformation reporter was accused of lying on her own portfolio [350].

## Current and previous editors

The mainstream media's coverage of religious affairs plays a large role in society's attitudes to religion. Below, we present BBC's previous religious affairs editors, over the last few decades:

- 2009 – Aaqil Ahmed
- 2016 – Martin Bashir
- 2022 – Aleem Maqbool

Aaqil Ahmed is known to have helped bring productions such as *Ottomans: Europe's Muslim Emperors*, and *The Life of Muhammad* [22].

Martin Bashir's career highlight has been the 'Diana interview'. He used deceitful methods to secure the interview, a matter of controversy to this day. The BBC insisted they played "*no part in her decision to take part in the interview*" [23]. It could be questioned why BBC editors did not heavily scrutinise how such a high profile interview was arranged.

Aleem Maqbool was appointed to the role in 2022 [24]. In 2022, a group called Voice for Justice UK started a petition calling to stop his appointment due to claims of anti-Christian bias. The petition garnered over 8,000 signatories.

Their website states "*Maqbool succeeds Martin Bashir and, before that, Aaqil Ahmed. Two of these men are overtly Muslim, and one is of Muslim heritage. In Ahmed's promotion of multicultural programming, there were numerous complaints of anti-Christian bias and calls for his removal.*" [25].

Data from the INSIGHT UK survey also suggests claims of bias. Also, there have not been any Hindu religious affairs editors, or editors from other religions, for many years.

The trend appears to be the same at the radio station BBC Asian Network, which hasn't had any Hindu representation at the Head of the station, despite it calling itself an "Asian" radio station.

The current and previous heads include:

- Ahmed Hussain
- Arif Ansari
- Husain Husaini

Ahmed Hussain has been heading the station since 2020 [26]. Hussain was overseeing the radio station when a caller was allowed to make disgusting and misogynistic remarks against the Indian Prime Minister's mother live on air, making crass references to women's genitalia.

As a result, the BBC faced backlash in India [27]. It must be considered as having very poor editorial standards, for a radio station to have no live delay system, despite it being a live event. An immediate apology was also not given, from the host or staff, who would have clearly understood the language being spoken.

In 2018, the previous head Arif Ansari, was charged under the Sexual Offences Act (1992) after a reporter named a victim of a child sex grooming scandal during a news bulletin. He was the first BBC editor to be tried under the legislation. He was later cleared [29][30].

In 2021 Apache Indian, an iconic British Indian music star from Birmingham branded the BBC Asian Network as *"a disease"*. He stated, *"This station is riddled with problems and accusations such as sexual harassment, mistreating staff, accepting bribes and much more"*.

He further claimed bias against other religions on the radio station, saying *"They have nearly lost their licence three times over but still are operating. I will go further to say that they have even employed more Muslim presenters and got rid of others with lies and scandals, which have ruined lives. The British people have been fooled"* [31][32].

The only evidence found of editors chosen by the BBC with Hindu names or Hindu backgrounds, often do not represent Indian or Hindu views.

For example, the BBC's previous media editor, Amol Rajan, self-professed as being preferred to be called a "Bounty" [33]. A term that when suggested in jest,

implies that he considers himself white on the inside. Amol Rajan identifies as an atheist and has made no efforts to represent Hindus or Indians in any way.

Rajan, during his term as an editor at the Independent newspaper, made a call to keep referring to the city of Mumbai as Bombay to counter nationalism in India [34]. A rather odd link, when Bombay was the name given to the city after brutal Portuguese and British invasions.

Samir Shah was announced as the government's choice for BBC chairman in 2023, at the time he was CEO of Juniper TV [328][379]. Samir Shah, is of Indian origin and married to Belkis Bhegani who is a director at Juniper Communications Ltd.

Juniper TV has produced shows like "The Indian Miracle" [379] which covers the same recurring questionable themes that the BBC also produce, which have been analysed and questioned later in this report. For example, the rise of Hindu nationalism, apparent discrimination against Muslims and a "caste" system.

Samir, despite being a BBC head with Indian origin, has been part of a production house that has a history of producing anti-Hindu rhetoric.

In 2023 the BBC's India offices were raided by Tax officials and it was later accused of "tax irregularities" [313][314]. A flurry of articles on the BBC and Guardian made references to the raids occurring after a documentary on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [315][316], as if to link the two events.

However both outlets did not later report that the BBC admitted to underreporting its taxes [317][318]. They had created a narrative of "free speech under threat" at the time of reporting but failed to correct themselves later when the BBC was to blame.

A few months later, the BBC said it was restructuring its operations in India to comply with the country's foreign investment rules [364]. The article skirted being directly accountable for any previous scrutiny on tax.

The inaccurate reporting of events in India by the BBC has been previously called out and documented by some publications like the Organiser [352].

### **Observation: Kashmir coverage lacking balance**

The BBC has a dedicated “Kashmir” tag for articles about the state [36]. It appears to have a keen focus and interest in the region which was fractured during partition, after Britain drew the partition line and quit India.

The vast majority of articles seem to only focus on what the BBC calls “Indian-administered Kashmir”. There is some, but overall very little, focus on the Pakistan occupied territory.

Out of dozens of articles in the last few years, only a tiny handful are dedicated to Hindus and Sikhs who have been murdered by Islamist extremists.

There have been numerous incidents where non-Muslim Kashmiris have been lined up and shot dead, including a Sikh secondary school teacher [40][41]. The victims are nearly always Hindu or Sikh [50][85][86][129], with occasional Muslims being shot who are perceived by Islamist militants to be “traitors”.

When India democratically removed Article 370 in Kashmir, the BBC’s coverage lacked balance on the reasons for the removal. Commentators say the abrogation of Article 370 allows more investment and gives women rights to land and education.

Women in Kashmir cheered the move [42], however the narrative and commentary of the BBC’s coverage appeared at odds to the ground reality, heavily swaying towards highlighting the views of a smaller number of separatists and protestors.

The BBC failed to balance views in Kashmir with interviews from Muslim women and women’s rights activists in the region, who were one of the key beneficiaries of the change.

There are many female Kashmiri Muslim activists who supported the abrogation of Article 370, including Syed Tehmeena [43][44] and Yana Mir [45]. But very few Muslim voices who supported the abrogations of Article 370 made it to BBC articles or programming [207][211].

Shehla Rashid is another Kashmiri human rights activist with over 800,000 followers on X (formerly Twitter), she describes herself as a Muslim. Rashid posted stating that she feels that the human rights record in Kashmir has improved under the Narendra Modi government [338].

Much of the BBC coverage ignores these voices when they promote a positive story. Instead they promote the narrative that it is Muslims versus the government, completely ignoring the voices of the Muslim activists who are democratically lobbying and working with the government to make a change in the state.

In 2022, *The Kashmir Files* became one of the highest-grossing Hindi films of the year [48]. Based on real-life incidents, it told the story of how Kashmiri Hindus were brutally butchered and forced out of Kashmir in the 1990s by Islamist terrorists. These atrocities were recognised by the International Commission for Human Rights and Religious Freedom (ICHRRF) as a Kashmiri Hindu Genocide [195].

The exodus was just one of many previous massacres that have slowly eradicated the Hindu population in Kashmir, making it a Muslim majority after decades of persecution against native Hindus.

The director, Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri, received death threats [49]. Normally if the media is suppressed or threatened around topics of India or Kashmir, the BBC are very quick to report on it. But, in Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri's case, they seemed absent in supporting the free right to expression, with people questioning whether this was because he was a Hindu film director showing the plight of Hindus.

BBC Hindi at one point released a very peculiar video of Hindu Kashmiris claiming the film was a stunt [46]. Many fact checkers spotted that the people being interviewed were members of political parties, including the current opposition party, Indian National Congress (INC, or popularly the Congress).

A later tweet forced the BBC to clarify this glaring partiality [47]. No apology was issued. Whether this was intentional, or just ignorant source-checking, it is indicative of incredibly poor journalism.

It would have been better journalism if the BBC had quoted more mainstream voices of Kashmiri Hindus, some of whom had congratulated the director for making the movie [104]. Or the voices of Muslim social media content creators who recommended people watch the film [103], including Muslim Bollywood actor Aamir Khan who urged people to watch The Kashmir Files [105].

During the height of the MeToo movement a Kashmiri Muslim journalist Fahad Shah, had been accused sexual harassment whilst studying in the UK. With claims that it was not just one woman who had faced harassment [341]. However the BBC didn't cover this or balance their article on Shah in 2023 after he had been arrested for terror-related offences [342][346].

Pakistani separatists also get rare coverage. For example, in Gilgit-Baltistan, some groups want freedom from Pakistani occupation [37]. With Shia Muslims also protesting against the Pakistan government and wanting to open roads to India [347].

There were accusations from an India Today journalist that the BBC's Urdu service is less sympathetic to separatists groups in Pakistan, including for Balochi freedom fighters who also want to break away from Pakistan [38][39].

The BBC does cover militancy in Balochistan but rarely covers local voices or views from those affected with the same intensity [283], including the Balochi diaspora.

**Observation: Crimes against Hindu women are not covered in the same way as crimes against Muslim women**

The BBC has lacked balance in this area.

The BBC covered an article specifically about Muslim women receiving rape threats on the Clubhouse app in India [51]. It also gave coverage on an app that was apparently there to put a small list of Indian Muslim women up for sale in what appeared to be an online trolling case [52].

INSIGHT UK's research team found a plethora of vulgar links in India set up on Telegram, Reddit and other websites insulting Hindu women.

Some carried grotesque images of Muslim men abusing Hindu women or using deep fake images to humiliate Hindu women. Some of these have since been taken down [63][64][65][66][67]. An Indian journalist received similar messages [84]. Nothing was found on the BBC covering this.

Not a single BBC article on Muslim grooming gangs in India could be found despite the well-documented harassment of Hindu women by Muslim males in India.

There are numerous reports available online where Muslim males have dismembered Hindu women and put them into suitcases and fridges or doused them in petrol. This is often for refusing to convert to Islam [212][213][214][219] and cases exist where the Muslim male has hidden their identity and posed as a Hindu, sometimes to exploit what news sites described as "Dalit" women [380].

A more high-profile case was of Indian actress Tunisha Sharma. Sharma's mother said there was pressure from her Muslim boyfriend for her to convert to Islam and that she was forced to do many things against her will [53].

The BBC did cover the same event but without those views from her family. Instead, they stated in their coverage that *"love jihad angle - a term radical Hindu groups use to promote a baseless accusation that Muslim men are converting Hindu women by marriage"* [54].

Whatever the term is (love jihad, grooming, or manipulation), to call it a “baseless accusation” is denial and effectively victim-shames Hindu women.

Cases of Hindu women who have come forward to describe their ordeal are widely documented [354]. One Indian news site documented and referenced over 150 cases of what they call “love jihad” [362].

This way of silencing Hindu concerns is very similar to what the UK witnessed against white British girls in a nationwide grooming gang scandal, where men of largely Pakistani-Muslim heritage abused young vulnerable children. Few organisations would provide it with the coverage it deserved at the time [55].

The grooming sex abuse scandal is now well reported on in the UK. The narrative that only Muslim women are harassed and almost no reports on Hindu women, in a country with over 200 million Muslims, simply cannot be true.

Hindu men have also been lynched by Islamists for marrying Muslim women [221][222], and Muslim women harassed just for being seen with a Hindu boy [310][311].

In 2023, a Whatsapp vigilante group with hundreds of Muslim members was caught by Police in India. The group were harassing Muslim women who had chosen a Hindu partner [344][345]. Such serious organised harassment of Hindus by Muslims is rarely covered on the BBC.

In another strange article of two Hindu girls being found hanged, five boys with Muslim names were arrested. The BBC felt it important to mention their caste and its relationship with Hinduism, something which didn’t factor into the crimes, but they did not mention the faith of the accused [275][276].

The killing, forced marriage, and conversion of Hindu women in Pakistan by Muslim males is also rarely covered. In 2022, Pooja Kumari was shot dead after she resisted abduction for alleged forced marriage and conversion [61][62]. This was covered at a much smaller scale by the BBC compared to when alleged cases of harassment happen to Muslim women in India.

The BBC's lack of reporting on Hindu issues gives a false narrative of what is actually happening in the Indian subcontinent.

The BBC did cover one article in 2019, running the headline *Pakistan police investigate 'joint suicide' of sisters-in-law* [68]. Almost no mention of the word Hindu is made, until right at the end of the article where the reference is made that the region has low-caste Hindus and that they are looked down upon by some upper-caste Hindus and Muslims.

The reference appears to take away from the plight of Hindu girls in Pakistan and instead make it a caste issue, which there is no evidence of. In comparison, the same article in India was reported by Swarajya with a direct reference to them being Hindu in their headline, *Two Hindu Sisters-In-Law Commit 'Joint Suicide' In Pakistan's Poorest Thar Region, Police Begins Probe* [69].

Another new story that receives low coverage is when Indian Muslim women are harassed by Islamists. These are hard-line Muslims who advocate fundamentalism and cannot accept that a Muslim woman respects or takes upon another faith.

BBC India does not present both sides of the story and seems unwilling to cover Muslim men abusing Muslim women openly online in India.

For example, Sara Ali Khan, daughter of Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan, was mercilessly shamed and abused online for visiting Hindu holy sites [56][57][58]. Comments on her posts suggest this is not what a Muslim woman is expected to do.

One Indian Muslim Television actress, Urfi Javed, stated *"I am a Muslim girl. Most of the hate comments I receive are from Muslim people. They want to control all the women in the community"* [59][60]. Pakistani actresses too have been trolled by conservative Muslims [166].

Indian Muslim women have also been physically and verbally attacked by Islamists for their political views, for example if they have supported the BJP [326][366] or simply for being educated [365].

This trend appears to indicate that the BBC exhibits a lack of interest in exploring diverse perspectives unless a Hindu individual is implicated as the villain, as none of the aforementioned occurrences have been documented in their reporting.

The Guardian was the second most complained against media outlet in the INSIGHT UK survey. Two writers cover the 1971 Bangladesh war and how rape affected women in one article [334]. The article completely evades the fact that the bulk of the rapes were committed by Muslim men against Hindu women [335][336][337]. A key omission.

**Observation: Hindu healing gurus are weird, but absurd Christian pastor conversion ceremonies and controversial Muslim imams are rarely covered**

Hindu and Indian gurus are covered frequently on BBC India. In 2023 BBC India covered a Hindu spiritual leader who claimed he had healing powers [72].

There was almost no balancing coverage of the numerous “miracle” healing events conducted by Christian Pastors or Muslim Imams in India.

Various videos are easily accessible online of the dramatic ceremonies in India where people are converted to Christianity. Worshipers fall to the ground and start rolling around, convulsing in a fit. Later they are converted or the Pastor claims they have been healed [75][76].

In reality, attendees have been manipulated. Many of these events are clearly staged, tricks designed to impress gullible masses, but never covered on the BBC India section.

One such Indian Christian pastor goes by the name of Bajinder Singh, who is alleged to have converted to Christianity whilst he was in jail for a murder case [73]. Since then, there have been allegations of rape, loot and child exploitation made against him [74].

Another example that the BBC chose not to cover was the Thanjavur student suicide case in India. A Hindu girl known as Lavanya Muruganantham tragically committed suicide. Her parents said that their daughter was forced to work by a warden after she refused to convert to Christianity [82][83].

The BBC also does not cover Muslim healers in the same way it covers Hindu gurus in any of its BBC India reporting. INSIGHT UK found various Muslim “faith healers” in India and the UK. Some had sexually exploited women and children. Research found none had been covered [77][78][79][80][81]. Though it did cover African Muslim “healers” [327].

**Observation: Hinduism, its practices and Hindu festivals are filthy and cause pollution. Other religions and their festivals are not portrayed in the same negative light.**

Some of the earliest environmentalists were Hindus. The term “tree hugger” comes from the Bishnoi branch of Hinduism. In 1730, Hindu Bishnois died while trying to protect local trees from being cut.

In the 1970s the Bishnois inspired the Chipko movement, Chipko meaning “to cling” in Hindi. In this movement they threw their arms around trees that were going to be cut down. This movement spread across India. [87][88].

The Hindu faith is very environmentally conscious, but positive stories on what the Hindu faith promotes in its literature, such as vegetarianism, animal protection, Ahimsa (causing least harm in all you do) are rarely, if ever, discussed by the BBC in any of its programming.

INSIGHT UK did find one relevant BBC article which was headed with an image of a Muslim woman [355] and it did cover a gay man feeling he was struggling with his Hindu faith [299].

Any other positive coverage is often relegated to radio [135]. Mainstream Hindu rights movements like the Indian “free Hindu temples” campaign against government control do not get any coverage.

Evidence was found of extremely derogatory language used by the BBC to describe Hindu festivals, including calling Holi a “filthy festival” [90].

In traditional Hindu culture, gifts given during festivals include jewellery which is kept for long periods of time and gains value, rather than disposable gifts. Positive practices during Hindu festivals have never been covered, such as recycling of clay pots, using leaves as plates, charity, and respect for animals, to name a few.

In one article, the BBC covers an Indian show and what it terms regressive ideas. Oddly the BBC had placed a photo of a Hindu Pandit (Priest) conducting prayers and subtitled that text underneath it that says “*The show has been called out for*

*being regressive and perpetuating biases and outdated ideas”* [89][91]. The placement would make readers think that Hindu prayers were related to regressive ideas.

Plenty of positive pieces on Hinduism can be found online, for example how Black Hindus draw many similarities to African spiritual traditions [253], but we could not find this coverage from the BBC.

When it comes to general religious programming, INSIGHT UK found evidence on major BBC programming completely missing Hindu representation.

For example, their series called “Pilgrimage” [281] put celebrities of different faiths on a journey to spiritual places. The show represented Christians, Sikhs, Muslims and even Atheists. But there was no Hindu representative, even though Hinduism is the third largest religion in the UK and the world.

Another programme called “Back in Time for Birmingham” [282] covered British Asian history, using an Indian Hindu family. There was a short clip in the four-part series covering the family’s religious belief, without any coverage of prejudices Hindus faced from a religious perspective. However, more dedicated parts of the show covered Pakistani Muslims and the problems they faced.

Even though the series also covered sensitive topics related to India (such as 1984 anti-Sikh riots), this coverage was limited to the BHI community. There was little to no coverage of grooming gangs, radicalisation and the diversity of the South Asian community. Our survey identified that 95% of respondents rejected the label “Asian” in any form.

The show was presented by Noreen Khan and Dr Yasmin Khan.

In another article the BBC covered some comments made by Sudha Murty, where she described herself as “a pure vegetarian” and wouldn’t want to use a spoon used for non-vegetarian food [329]. The narrative of the article was yet another to rake up caste and claim her comments are rooted in the caste system and her Brahmin roots.

This shows a lack of understanding of local culture and understanding what this phrase actually means in India.

“Pure vegetarian” to Hindus does not mean being “pure” over another person and is not intended to be a part of “othering” non-vegetarians, in the way words like “heathen” or “kafir” identify non-believers of other faith groups. Nor is it restricted to being Brahmin.

But instead for Hindus, being a “pure vegetarian” is a phrase that means they will only eat purely non-animal products, but milk is acceptable. The terminology is widely used in India by various communities, not only by people who are from the same background as Ms Murthy, it being more commonly known as lacto-vegetarianism.

The idea of pure also comes from avoiding contamination, so any cutlery that may have meat remnants is the same as consuming meat. Therefore it is important to ensure cutlery and utensils are clean, hence “pure” and not contaminated.

As an example, the food chain Subway makes their staff change gloves when serving vegetarians sandwiches. Does this mean they are also rooted in the caste system?

Instead of describing what “pure vegetarian” actually means in India, the article uses mostly opinions from X (formerly Twitter) users as to what they thought of her remarks. This could be deemed as scraping the bottom of the barrel to bring up caste again from any obscure angle.

In 2023, INSIGHT UK compared the articles published by the BBC on how Diwali was covered compared to Eid.

The coverage of both Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha was covered positively in BBC and focussed only on the festival itself [371][372][373][374].

However two articles [374][375] were found on Diwali that made references to the use of fireworks and pollution, despite it being well known that farmers burning crop stubble is a major contributor to air pollution during this season.

In one of the aforementioned articles, the first two sentences barely cover Diwali, the rest is purely about air pollution.

The problem here is not the fact the BBC covered both events, but it exclusively chooses to produce negative perceptions of Diwali, not other festivals. It would be better to just focus on Diwali.

However, if the BBC wants to produce “concerns” about the climate when reporting on religious festivals, it should do equally for all religions to keep a balance. For example, would they cover that during Eid al-Adha, a mass butchering of livestock takes place and meat eating is a big contributor to climate change? [376]

Mixing socio-political issues when covering Hindu festivals could make it appear as if they are only covering Diwali so that they can point-score on other issues.

**Observation: Hindu lives don't matter, Hindus can only be the villain, Islamist attacks on Hindus is their own fault**

Numerous articles covering the life of Kashmiri Muslims can be found regularly on the BBC. There is little to no coverage on the lives of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Hindus. During 2021, when Muslim extremists were rampaging through Bangladesh, killing Hindus, a very small number of articles gave them coverage.

It took almost a week for the BBC to muster an article on the issue, and even this made biased assertions. The article claimed that the rise of Hindu politics in India was angering Bangladeshi Muslims [93]. It is well documented that attacks on Bangladeshi Hindus have long surpassed recent politics in India and spans decades.

To present such a random view sets a completely different narrative. It appears that where Hindus are the victims, it is suggested this is their own fault. The narrative appears that Hindus can only be the villain.

The BBC covered Mohammad Shami, an Indian Muslim cricketer, when he was trolled online for performing badly in a match [277], without referencing claims in India that posts had come from Pakistan [278].

When Bangladeshi Hindu cricketer Liton Das was abused online by Islamists, there was no coverage [279]. The BBC also did not cover Danish Kaneria, one of the few Hindus to play cricket for Pakistan. Kaneria said that he was coaxed to convert to Islam and other cricketers like Shahid Afridi refused to eat with him [382].

In 2020, when two Hindu sadhus (ascetics) were brutally lynched, the BBC carried an article incorrectly calling them "godmen" [101]. Whether intentional or more poor source checking, terming them as godmen, a negative and cynical term, took away from the fact two Hindus were murdered.

It also fails to mention police were present and watching the incident taking place. The BBC almost vindicates the police saying *"The viral video shows the mob lynching the men as police struggled to rescue them"*. The BBC must have

seen a very different video as the same police were suspended for dereliction of duty [102].

In 2023, the BBC covered that a Muslim student was allegedly attacked for getting his times tables wrong [339]. The article gave no context as to whether the teacher told other students to slap him because the student was Muslim or because he failed his times tables.

On the exact same day another story was covered across India of Muslim teachers being accused of beating up a Hindu student for writing “Jai Shri Ram”, a common Hindu prayer or chant. This was not covered on BBC India for balance [340].

### **Observation: Muslims under attack, was this really true in every case?**

The BBC carried an article claiming Muslims were being disproportionately targeted with their homes being bulldozed [143].

The article appears to cleverly use the word “Muslim”, but fails to mention that many were Rohingya refugees [144] that had illegally settled in the area. Only temporary illegal structures had been razed.

Some were Muslim, but there is no evidence they were targeted for being Muslim. The BBC article’s portrayed a Hindu versus Muslim narrative.

The Times of India reported that a high-ranking Muslim minister said the event was being used to convert people's own prejudiced agenda of “India phobia” into “Islamophobia” [145]. Another example of the BBC providing insufficient coverage to varying perspectives of Muslim leaders.

It was worth noting that Hindu temples have also been demolished which triggered protests [274].

In 2021 the BBC covered a barely known “Hindu priest” as they termed it [231]. Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati is someone few would have known but was spotlighted on the BBC India homepage. Whilst any hate speech is condemnable, it appears obscure Hindu individuals making speeches are given big platforms by the BBC.

In comparison, in 2021, an Indian Muslim political leader, Akbaruddin Owaisi, who has a much bigger following made extremely dangerous remarks, reiterating a 15-minute violent threat against Hindus [232].

This repeat threat was not covered on the BBC, nor are hate speeches against Hindus in Pakistan. For example, a well-known Pakistani Moulana made a speech saying Hindus will not be allowed to celebrate Holi in Sindh [301][302]. Pew Research found 98% of India's Muslims say they are free to practice their religion in India, with a very small minority of Indian Muslims answering "not at all free".

This research undermines a lot of BBC articles and the politicised narratives of anti-India activists. Actual Muslims in India report that they experience very low levels of discrimination [321].

In one BBC article about a Bollywood star's comeback, the piece goes off topic, saying "activists say the frequency of hate crimes against Muslims and other minorities has increased" [384].

But the BBC does not source which activists said this, what their data gathering method was and what the actual numbers were, in comparison to the Indian population which exceeds 1 billion.

### **Observation: Cow vigilantes are a problem, not the illegal smugglers**

The BBC has dedicated many articles on its website on what it terms “cow vigilantes” and lynchings [93][94]. Some of their claims use IndiaSpend as a source of information and claim apparent lynching attacks on Muslims have been increased by cow protection groups.

The way IndiaSpend have gathered this data has been heavily scrutinised and commentators have questioned the validity of the data [95].

Their articles on the issue become more problematic because they fail to balance the story and focus only on the cow protection groups. The other side of the story is poor Indian farmers who suffer from cattle theft. Cattle livestock is their main source of income, that provides them with milk, grazing of land and manure for fuel.

Many Indian farmers reside in rural areas which can be lawless. Their livelihoods are being stolen [96] with little assistance from the police available [223]. This results in locals setting up vigilante groups to guard their livestock.

The BBC fails to cover the complex issues behind cow protection groups. We do not hear about the cow smugglers that are abusing animals and stealing cows from farmers. On occasions when the cow smugglers have been Muslim, the BBC narrative appears to show the smugglers being the actual victims.

Further balance is also missing from the BBC in coverage of lynchings in other countries. For example in Pakistan, allegations of blasphemy against non-Muslims are often used to justify lynchings. These incidents occur far more regularly and are even covered by Pakistani news outlets [97][98][99][100].

### **Observation: Islam should be treated with sensitivity, not Hinduism**

In June and July 2022, the BBC carried a flurry of articles [146][147][148][149][153] on Nupur Sharma's comments on a televised debate. The debate had caused an uproar with Islamist groups.

INSIGHT UK has seen the debate and can confirm Nupur Sharma only said what is mentioned in Islamic texts. She was replying to a Muslim man who was mocking Hinduism during the debate.

Rather than cover this angle and required context, the BBC articles instead took a very selective approach in their reporting. On the one hand, the BBC is given FCDO money to "uphold democracy" [16], but on the other side, their articles appear to condemn Nupur Sharma for her free speech rather than supporting her.

The BBC failed to cover the immense support Nupur Sharma received, with one online petition receiving over 200,000 signatures [150].

Some BBC articles claimed Nupur Sharma had damaged India's relationship with Gulf countries. However, it failed to mention that Kuwait, a Gulf and Muslim country, had actually deported Indian Muslims who protested against Nupur Sharma [151].

After the event there were incidents of Indians being attacked and killed [152][159][160], but not all were covered on the BBC.

In at least two articles, the BBC spoke of Mohammed Zubair, the man who edited the video of Nupur Sharma and spread it on X (formerly Twitter). In both it claims he is a journalist and fact-checker, with one article saying he is a "leading fact-checker" [153][154].

On the face of it, it appears that the BBC wanted to make Zubair appear like a credible source of information. But his so-called fact checking site has been questioned multiple times [156].

The BBC also failed to acknowledge that he has previously been accused of online harassment, doxing and trolling Hindu women [157][161][300]. Zubair deleted his Facebook account after he was found making hate speeches against the Hindu religion [155].

It seems bizarre that the BBC would rely on such a person, with a questionable background, as a trustworthy and reliable source, and then use his edited clip of a factual statement to produce a number of articles arguing Sharma's comments are bad for India.

Anand Ranganathan, an author and news editor, pointed out that Taslim Rehmani, the Muslim man who provoked Nupur Sharma by mocking Hinduism, is still safe and able to walk freely in India, but Nupur Sharma is not [158].

These articles and narratives by the BBC not only highlight any offence to Islam in great light, but they back it up with further headlines like *"Why does depicting the Prophet Muhammad cause offence?"* [169].

As a comparison, a Maldives minister, Mariyam Shiuna made extremely hateful comments against Hindus and Indians [387]. At the time of writing this report the BBC had not covered the event despite it being headline news across India.

There is no focus on hate speeches against Hinduism in India and how this is offensive and inciteful. The BBC itself titled a headline stating *"Jai Shri Ram: The Hindu chant that became a murder cry"* [280], a disgusting attempt to draw parallels with a prayer that hundreds of millions of Hindus do every day with murder.

Would an article titled *'Allahu Akbar: The Muslim chant that became a murder cry'*, have similarly been approved? Probably not.

The lack of fair balanced reporting by the BBC is further highlighted by their lack of coverage of Muslims that came out in support of Nupur Sharma. They were harassed or assaulted for supporting her, but the BBC did not cover this angle [162][163][164].

Pakistani Islamic scholar, Muhammad Ali Mirza, said the first culprit is Taslim Rehmani, the Muslim man who first mocked the Hindu religion in the debate with Nupur Sharma [165].

### **Observation: Attacks on Hindus and Hindu Temples are less important**

INSIGHT UK research gathered dozens of articles where Hindus have been attacked in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and around the world. Including attacks on Hindu temples worldwide, many by Muslim extremists.

Multiple incidents were found where Hindus and Dalit Hindus were attacked by Muslims. A few select ones have been referenced in this report [106][107][108][109][110][111][112][113][114][115][116][117][118][119][120][121][122][123][124][125][126][127][128][129][208].

In one incident, a Hindu lady on TikTok posted a video of their household Hindu deity being desecrated by a lady wearing a Hijab. This video received over 30 million views [328].

One thing was clear. Very few, if any, had been covered by the BBC. But there was far more coverage when Muslims were the victim.

In 2023 concerns were raised that Hindus were not reporting hate crime in the UK [367] however no articles could be found on the BBC that focussed on “Hindus as a group” facing hate. A few days later they released an article specifically highlighting that Muslims in Peterborough could be under reporting hate crime [368].

The BBC did cover a “single” event of a Hindu family facing hate and being called “kafir” without stating that this word is used by Islamists to “other” non-believers [369].

Former Democrat and US congresswoman, Tulsi Gabbard, pointed out in a repost, how one-sided false international reporting has led to more Hinduphobia [130]. The BBC has not highlighted the intense hate Hindus receive in Asia and has only focussed on a one-sided narrative, which may in fact enable more hate against Hindus.

On BBC World News, an opinion columnist called Rana Ayyub was allowed to use the word “Hindu terrorists”. She was referring to Hindu students who were

protesting at the unfairness of Muslim girls being allowed to wear a different uniform to everyone else at their school [201].

The news presenter, Yalda Hakim, did not stop or seek to correct her use of this inflammatory term. It would create fake news to call protesting Hindus as terrorists. Noteworthy, as the UK government stated that the funding for the BBC World Service would help fight fake news [203].

The BBC did not balance the issue with highlighting the story of Harsha, who had been hacked to death around the same time by Muslim fundamentalists, for apparently protesting in favour of everyone having to wear the same uniform [209][210].

Ayyub is not new to controversy, with ongoing investigations against her for illegally collecting huge sums of money from the public in the name of charity [202]. Ayyub was introduced on the show as a “prominent Muslim investigative journalist”.

Her claim to fame was a book called “Gujarat Files” where she made controversial claims that have not been supported by evidence. Her book and claims were thrown out of court as “surmises, conjectures and suppositions” adding “the opinion of a person is not in the realm of the evidence” [204][205].

When they are bringing people onto shows as “investigative journalists or experts”, the BBC do not clarify details as to why they are considered as trustworthy but present them merely as the expert on the subject matter. Nor did they censor what she said.

In comparison, the BBC was very quick to defend and shut down any criticism of Pakistan in an interview. US scholar and political scientist Christine Fair was interrupted when she explained the links between Pakistan and Taliban violence [206].

**Observation: Indian Prime Minister is anti-Muslim, but no coverage on how many Muslim countries, sects and organisations support him**

The BBC aired a documentary in 2023 called *India: The Modi Question*. The two-part series mostly revolves around previously debunked accusations that the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and his BJP government is somehow anti-Muslim.

The documentary briefly skirted over the Godhra train burnings over 20 years ago, where Muslim extremists burned an entire train of Hindus. 59 Hindus were killed when returning from a religious pilgrimage, including women, children and elderly.

It omitted a key arrest of a Muslim man wanted for starting the Godhra train burning [370].

After that, riots ensued in Gujarat where many Gujaratis of both Hindu and Muslim origin died. The programming failed to cover the Hindu plight in the same way it covered interviews with Muslims, or show any of the appeals for calm from Indian PM Modi (who was Chief Minister of Gujarat at the time) [230].

No new information that would be admissible in a court is presented. All other angles presented in the show have been dismissed from court many years ago, but it seemed to regurgitate the same narrative that India has long moved on from.

The programme also took views from Arundhati Roy, an activist pictured in images and known to be friendly with designated Islamist terrorists in India [237][238]. Indian fact checker, investigative journalist and founder of onlyfact.in, Vijay Patel, also covered why many of those interviewed were not impartial sources [239][240].

Tariq Mansoor, Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University wrote that Indian Muslims want to move on from the past and called the BBC production “biased reportage” [224]. Other Muslims have also supported him against the BBC [234][235].

Indian PM Modi has been given many awards by Islamic nations [225] with many Indian Muslims saying they feel safer in India than Pakistan [226][227]. Muslim organisations in India have also praised PM Modi for empowering women and minority welfare [236].

INSIGHT UK found many heart-warming stories of Muslims appreciating his leadership, with one Muslim woman in UP naming her son after him [228]. Narendra Modi's family also welcomed a Muslim boy to live in the same house as them in the 1970s [229] during the Indian Prime Minister's early years.

Muslim Bollywood actor Salman Khan's father once questioned that no one remembers many riots, including the Mumbai riots (1992) which took place under the opposition Congress' rule. The Sikh (1984), Gujarat (1985), Surat (1992) and Aligarh (1992) riots were all under Congress rule. Salman Khan has also come to the defence of PM Modi in the past [233].

None of these perspectives were covered to give balance to the BBC programming on the Indian Prime Minister. India actually topped the Global Minority Report as the most inclusive country for minorities [241][242].

Nor did the BBC cover that PM Modi has the highest approval ratings among global leaders in the annual Morning Consult survey [243][244].

These are all independent reports evidenced by data, and do not rely on selective views for their conclusions.

Further, INSIGHT UK found dozens of examples of Hindus helping Muslims and showing inter-faith harmony across the subcontinent; none were covered on the BBC.

A small set is referenced here [245][246][247][248][249][250][251][252].

It does raise the question, is the BBC strategy a divisive one?

It is worth adding that the BBC India offices were raided for tax irregularities [265]. The BBC itself is not immune to controversy in India and other countries.

In India, the BBC was banned multiple times during the 1970s, by the then ruling Congress party. It caused outrage amongst the Indian diaspora at the time in Britain too, who are also BBC Licence fee payers [266].

INSIGHT UK found the BBC had temporary and permanent bans in many countries worldwide [267][268][269][270][271]. The BBC has also had to set aside money to settle “irregular” tax bills in the past in the UK [272][273].

**Observation: Promoting Bollywood and Punjabi music, despite accusations of colourism and caste supremacy**

The BBC came to the defence of Indian actor Aamir Khan's film, *Laal Singh Chaddha* [170], after calls were made to boycott the film across India. The film performed miserably at the box office considering its budget and the high expectation surrounding it [197].

The BBC article uses the same recurring tropes, including various references to Hindu nationalists calling for a boycott, the film being against Hindus, right-wing protests and so forth, but it fails to balance the article with other views. For example, Sikhs including ex-England Cricketer Monty Panesar also supported calls to boycott the film [171][172][173].

It seems that on BBC India, many problems are spun to be an issue related to Hindus, India, Indians, BJP and/or Narendra Modi.

Bollywood has long been accused of colorism [174], normalising rape [175] and romanticising prostitution [176]. The same story exists if we look at regional coverage in India, for example, the Punjabi film and music industry is polluted with rampant sexism, colorism, machismo and caste supremacy.

The BBC reports on many of these issues in India, but in what could be seen as a hypocritical position. It also promotes these prejudices through the songs it chooses to play on BBC Asian Network.

The BBC reports regularly with articles speaking of the ills of the caste system, whilst at same time the BBC Asian Network plays caste supremacist songs like "Jatt Da Muqabala" [215], which has lyrics that state "tell me who can compete with a Jatt?". Jatt is used to describe a "caste" of people from parts of Northern India and Pakistan.

An example of a sexist song played by the BBC Asian Network is "Lak 28 Kudi Da" [216] which has lyrics that state "the girl's waist is 28 and weight is 48" indicating a desirable girl has a small waist and is slim.

The BBC Asian Network has also played various songs promoting colorism, with lyrics that refer to “Gori” [217][218], meaning fair-skinned, or white-skinned girl, and promoting songs with the idea that lighter skin is beautiful.

### **Observation: Glamourise invaders and Urdu, twist it to be against modern-day Muslims**

In one article, the BBC dug up a social media discussion on a Mughal ruler [196]. Specifically, they highlight a social media post where Indian PM Modi praises Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur for standing up against Mughal tyranny.

Islamic rulers like Timur, Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan are widely seen as butchers in India, in a similar light as Hitler is viewed in Europe.

The BBC article quoted Audrey Truschke, an extremely dubious Professor, who in the past has called Hindu God, Lord Ram, a “misogynist pig”, and is accused of anti-Hindu remarks [198][200]. It appears the BBC is comfortable with quoting Hindu hate-mongers.

In the article, they cover posts from Truschke claiming *"Muslims oppressed Hindus for hundreds of years so they deserve to be oppressed today, as retribution for the past"*. This certainly isn't mainstream thought in India.

The article goes further to quote Muslims who claim the rulers were not completely evil. This is an odd view to highlight considering the number of Hindus they slaughtered, almost justifying barbaric Islamist rule in India.

In another article on the Urdu language [199], BBC World journalist Zoya Mateen uses the words “so-called Islamic invaders”. One could infer this as questioning the occurrence of the invasions and effectively denying Hindu persecution at the hands of Islamic invaders.

This article also quotes Truschke as a source. It talks of the dividing lines between Hindi and Urdu, then ends with a bizarre one-sided view, stating *"This Hindi is not the language of popular speech, it is sterile and devoid of emotional resonance"*. A balanced article may have included the opinions of the hundreds of millions of Hindi speakers who would probably have disagreed with such negative statements about their national language.

### **Observation: Khalistani extremists given little or neutral coverage**

Punjab has seen a rise in Khalistani extremism. Many Hindus and Sikhs have been attacked, with little coverage from the BBC.

In multiple articles the BBC quotes the World Sikh Organisation (WSO), an organisation that has been accused of giving platforms for individuals to call for the massacre of Hindus.

In its foundation convention, the WSO hosted Ajaib Singh Bagri, who was accused in the Air India Flight 182 bombing case. In the convention he called for killing 50,000 Hindus [356]. An idea most Sikhs would never subscribe to.

However the BBC regularly uses the WSO as a source of information on Sikhs [357][358][359].

WSO supporters have also been accused of praising and defending those who use violence in the separatist Khalistani cause [360]. At the same time the BBC has refused to call Hamas a terrorist organisation despite the UK proscribing it as a terrorist organisation.

Some of its presenters are even accused of “sharing ‘toxic and anti-Israeli’ content online” [361] and the BBC itself accused of not letting its staff attend an anti-semitism rally [363].

When the BBC covered Khalistani extremist Amritpal Singh Sandhu [254][305], they chose to call him a “self-styled preacher”. In the same article they refer to terrorist Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as just a “preacher” despite his history of armed militancy and terror in Punjab.

The narratives of the articles appear to show views from Amritpal Singh and how he thinks Sikhs are being oppressed in Punjab, thus justifying the need for a separate Sikh state. This is an odd narrative to project given that the current Chief Minister of Punjab is Sikh, the Prime Minister of India has been Sikh and many Indian Army generals have been Sikh.

The only political party in India that has advocated for a separate Sikh land has never been voted into power [255], showing that the majority of Sikhs in India do not agree with views related to Khalistan and other separatist movements.

The articles failed to highlight that the killing of a Hindu leader in Punjab was enacted by a follower of Amritpal Singh's group "Waris Punjab De" [256][257], and that there was evidence that his group was exploiting ex-drug addicts to become suicide attackers [304].

Amritpal Singh has even threatened the Indian Minister of Home Affairs [260]. The BBC did not cover this or inflammatory remarks at Christians [258] who are made up mostly of Dalit origin Punjabis.

An independent review of Prevent, the UK governments' counter-terrorism safeguarding programme, detailed, *"Prevent should also be mindful of pro-Khalistan extremism emerging from the UK's Sikh communities...Such groups' narratives glorify violence carried out by the pro-Khalistan movement in India"*, and, *"concerns over how rhetoric from Pakistan is impacting UK Muslim communities when it comes to inflaming anti-India sentiment, particularly around the subject of Kashmir"* [260].

Surprisingly, the BBC did not cover the Khalistani angle in this major review in their BBC World or BBC India sections. This is despite the UK government taking this situation seriously and sanctioning additional funding to enhance its capability to tackle pro-Khalistan extremism [330]. This is odd because the BBC has an ongoing focus on Punjabi politics.

One recent example in the UK was when the owner of Instagram handle @southalls\_fineest was targeted by pro-Khalistani fundamentalists [343] for previously exposing Khalistani disinformation handle @ak\_media47, again serious incidents like this do not get coverage.

The BBC did however cover a pro-Amritpal Singh protest on its BBC Punjabi news section and X (formerly Twitter) feed [308][309].

In one article, their religion editor Aleem Maqbool writes "Lt Gen Brar had led the Indian army's attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar" [383]. Using

language like this makes it appear as if the Indian army had gone solely to attack a holy site which is misleading. The purpose of the army was to flush out extremist militants hiding in the Temple complex.

There are examples where women have been physically assaulted at the Golden Temple by fundamentalists [261]. Multiple attacks by Khalistani extremists have been logged in Canada and Australia on Hindu temples [262][263][264][332][333] and on individuals [284].

None of these events were covered by the BBC. This lack of balanced coverage, could give a BBC reader the misguided perception that the Khalistani movement is peaceful.

### **Observation: Race hate against Hindus and Indians rarely covered**

Many high-profile British Hindus and Indians have been subject to hateful anti-Hindu and anti-India attacks because of their background. Little or no coverage of this can be found on the BBC.

A Labour councillor told Rishi Sunak, to “go back to India” [131]. Sunak and Suella Braverman, both Indian origin MP’s, have suffered a barrage of racist abuse online [134].

In one social media post, Television Presenter Gillian McKeith made a random reference to the so-called caste system and Rishi Sunak [136]. The BBC did not cover this but evidence was found of BBC live reports with word clouds that described Rishi Sunak as a “t\*\*\*” and “c\*\*t” [132].

Newspaper Byline Times distanced themselves from one of their employees, CJ Werlemen, after he posted an image of Rishi Sunak wearing a Tilak (Hindu sacred mark worn on forehead) with Adolf Hitler imaged next to him [137].

The Guardian, the second most complained against outlet in the INSIGHT UK survey, carried a headline, *“Britain’s first Hindu prime minister is destroying Tories’ pitiful vision of diversity”* [140]. The Guardian used journalist Pankaj Mishra, of Indian and Hindu origin, to portray this narrative in their article.

The writer could have used a variety of terminology to describe Rishi's background. For example stating that he is of South Asian origin, or Kenyan origin roots, with his grandparents also migrating from modern day Pakistan. But he specifically chose Indian and Hindu, alleging that any negativity is a result of him being Hindu and Indian origin.

The Guardian was also accused of printing racist cartoons of Priti Patel [189]. The Guardian refused to remove the cartoon [385] however later sacked the same cartoonist over an ‘anti-Semitic’ drawing [386].

MP Preet Kaur Gill, used the words “Hindu terrorist”, referring to a man that jumped over a barrier at the Golden Temple. She had no evidence the man was Hindu, effectively “othering” many of her own British Hindus constituents

[138][139]. Gill later deleted the post on X (formerly Twitter) but did not publicly apologise.

There is evidence of Hindus facing isolation at work [178][179]. The largest type of prejudice reported amongst Indians is Hinduphobia, concluded a study by the 1928 Institute, supported by Linacre College, University of Oxford [180][181].

In 2023 a government response was received by over 18,000 individuals who signed a petition that asked for more investigation into anti-Hindu hatred [331].

Whilst none of the above stories and incidents can be found on the BBC, coverage can be found of MP's facing Islamophobia [133].

Research by a graduating senior at Rutgers University found evidence of genocidal hate memes about Hindus spread by Islamists on social media [186][187][188].

The BBC did not cover this report, but chose to publish a report on Hindus apparently creating memes instead. This was covered on a variety of its platforms including BBC Tech, BBC World and BBC India [183][184][185].

In Ireland, an Indian Hindu origin novelist made a plea for help after the Indian community faced attacks [381].

With so many major stories concerning Indians and the third largest religious community in the UK, did the BBC somehow manage to miss them all, or were they not reported on intentionally to portray a particular narrative?

### **Observation: Leicester unrest coverage and poor editorial standards**

During the 2022 Leicester unrest, Islamists rampaged through Leicester, attacking Hindus, Hindu homes, businesses, and Hindu temples. British researcher Charlotte Littlewood spoke first hand to Hindus in Leicester, some who left the area due to threats of violence from young Muslim males with an extreme anti-Hindu ideology.

The BBC carried an article stating that the Leicester Police were unaware of any reports of Hindu families having to leave the area, quoting her in their article.

Littlewood took to X (formerly Twitter) to clarify that she had interviewed a displaced person and had made an official complaint to the BBC [141]. A report she wrote for the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), later detailed evidence of people feeling unsafe to return to their homes [142][177].

INSIGHT UK spoke to Littlewood and understands that the BBC did not highlight the evidence she provided. She had provided the BBC with proof that the police were indeed in receipt of police incident reports that included descriptions of members of the Hindu faith moving out of their homes.

It is unclear why the BBC did not present this evidence or fact check the claims. They instead chose to falsely claim that there were no police reports.

This error, whether intentional or accidental, resulted in some organisations attempting to paint Littlewood and the HJS in a negative light. Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), a problematic organisation with a controversial history [306], used the information to incorrectly claim that she was the mis-informer [307].

Hindus who had their homes damaged during the attacks were not given any interview opportunities on the BBC either.

### **Observation: Use of the word 'Asian'**

The INSIGHT UK survey clearly showed a rejection of the word “Asian” to describe British Indians and British Hindus. The BBC has previously covered in its own reports that Hindus and Sikhs have rejected this word, quoting the Hindu Forum of Britain in 2006 and 2012 [190][191].

Asia is a continent with a population of over 4.5 billion people, with the largest diversity of culture and languages on the planet. Choosing to describe any specific group within this with such a wide western term descriptive denoter, aligning all Asians as one, is inaccurate, and frankly in poor taste. Especially in cases where the identity of individuals is specifically known.

In the UK, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Indian communities often speak completely different mother tongues, come from different cultural backgrounds, and have large differences in prison rates, educational attainment, and employment.

In fact, the BBC’s own Creative Diversity section states: *“Indian and British Indian communities are vastly different from Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi and other ‘South Asian’ groups. We must be mindful and recognise these differences”* [193].

But it is easy to find instances where they refer to “Asian grooming gangs” in reference to white girls being groomed by what are mostly Pakistani origin, Muslim males [193].

It would be equivalent to lumping Britain with Albania or Estonia and reporting any issue as a “European” one. Using the term Asian so sparingly is not an accurate description when used in certain contexts. As shown above, the BBC is aware of this, knows it should be ‘mindful’, but continues to use such a non-specific and erroneous term.

Ironically when a Muslim fashion designer Kazna Asker received positive coverage on the BBC, the headline explicitly mentioned her being “British Muslim” [353].

### **Observation: Obsession with Caste and making it exclusive to Hinduism**

The BBC covers “caste” issues regularly in its articles. In many, it makes a link to Hinduism [285] and calls it hierarchical, claiming that Hinduism differentiates between certain castes at the top and bottom.

The word “caste” is not mentioned in any Hindu scriptures and any mention of occupational duty is certainly not described as hierarchical in the varna-jati context.

There is plenty of evidence available to show that caste is pervasive amongst many faiths including Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism, including not being exclusive to India [287][288][289][290][291]. Whether these religions condone caste is another topic, but discrimination can be found in them too.

During 2015 and 2016, Christian Idukki Bishop, Mar Mathew Anikkuzhikkattil, said that “Inter-caste marriages will spoil the purity and characteristics of Christianity”, he was against different castes and religions marrying and he also made anti-birth control remarks [348][349].

The BBC rarely covers caste issues in other religions and when it does it will not link it with religion. Its Creative Diversity section even makes a bizarre reference to the Manusmriti [192], an obscure scripture book that was translated during the British Empire to English and won’t be found in Hindu homes.

Manusmriti was one of the first Sanskrit texts to be translated into English in 1776, by William Jones and was used to construct the Hindu law code for the East India Company-administered enclaves. Herbert Hope Risley was the first to then classify what caste even was in 1901.

In the vast majority of BBC articles there is no reference of how caste was defined, propagated and used as a tool to discriminate under British rule.

The Criminal Tribes Act was also sanctioned under British rule, where anyone born in the communities mentioned in the Act across the country was presumed a “born criminal”. Many tribal chiefs and those that the British classified as “low caste”, were the very people that revolted against the British in 1857.

We could juxtapose the language used by the BBC on Hindus, if we take the Taliban as an example. The Taliban believe in a hard-line version of Islam, and based on their Islamic principles do not have any women in roles of authority, such as in their government [286]. But in their programming, the BBC does not link the lack of women's rights in Afghanistan with Islam. So why does the BBC choose to link caste, a British creation, with Hindus and Hinduism?

### **Observation: Coverage of the CAA and COVID-19**

The BBC covered articles on the Citizenship Amendment Act legislation in India. However, it failed to balance this with sufficient coverage of the condition of Hindus in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and the need for the Act in the first place.

Thousands of Hindu girls are abducted in these countries and converted to Islam against their will, and attacks on Hindus and Hindu temples are frequent [292][293][294].

There are no stories of Muslims that need to leave India in large numbers, but plenty can be found of Hindus and Sikhs fleeing Islamic countries for safety and moving to India [295][296].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the BBC posted images of dead bodies and crematorium ceremonies in India [297]. Not only is this highly insensitive to the families involved but these ceremonies are also seen as private, publishing them is extremely disrespectful to the deceased.

You would not expect private images of graveyard burial ceremonies to be published without consent, and any such images would have been in poor taste. Note the BBC did not post any images of dead Covid 19 victims in the UK, or mass burials anywhere else in the world. That the victims in India were not given the same respect should be a matter of shame. Some cremation photos were being sold on stock image sites for hundreds of pounds [298].

## Text analytics and mining

As survey respondents stated that the BBC was considered to be the most unreliable news source for matters relating to Hindus and India, further research was sanctioned by INSIGHT UK to analyse BBC articles.

INSIGHT UK used text mining analysis on 1,000 recent BBC India articles, with the results finding some odd journalistic behaviours:

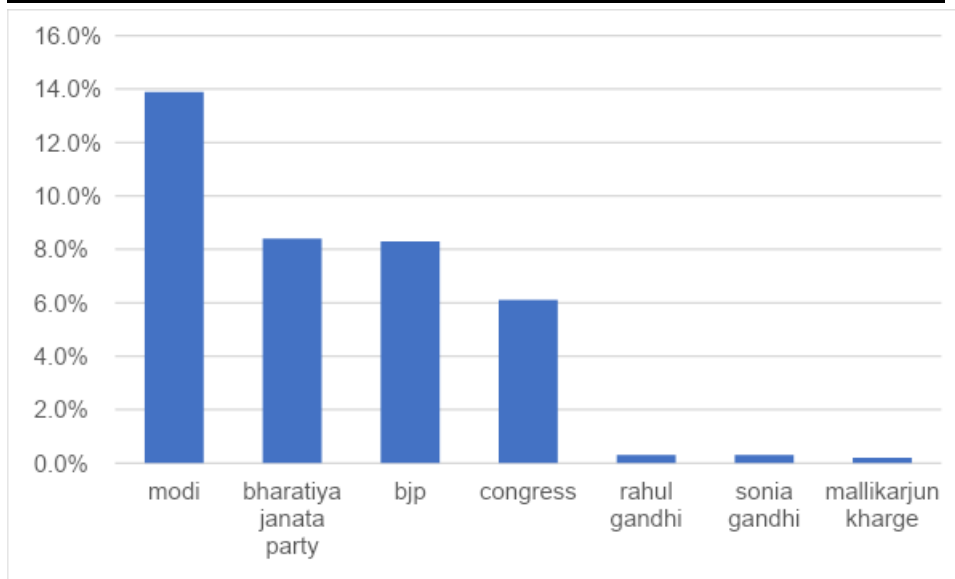
- Indian opposition leaders are barely scrutinised in any coverage, if at all covered.
- In reference to Kashmir, “Indian-administered” is mentioned almost 6 times more than “Pakistan-administered” Kashmir.
- There is a hyper focus on religion, with around a quarter of all articles mentioning religion or caste. Odd that in a country of 1.4 billion, religion is a constant topic for the BBC.
- Terms like “right wing” and “nationalist” are used heavily, with little or no reference to “left wing” or “socialist”, despite India having a diverse spectrum of political parties.

Data was gathered using text mining specifically on BBC India news articles to gauge how often key topics were focussed on, for example, the frequency of the words “Hindu” or “Muslim” in media articles. This analysis was conducted on articles spanning an extended period of many months.

Understanding common themes emerging from BBC India articles, with a particular focus on the terminology used in articles, would help analyse any noteworthy patterns that may exist.

The purpose of this exercise was to ascertain the BBC’s focus areas with regards to the BHI community. A set of 1000 articles were analysed, spanning from June 2022 till March 2023 to ensure that there was no skew in data during election periods. Data was refined to exclude any collisions, for example when searching for “Modi” for the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, any other references of similar names such as “Nirav Modi”, were excluded.

### Category 1: Coverage of Indian political parties and politicians

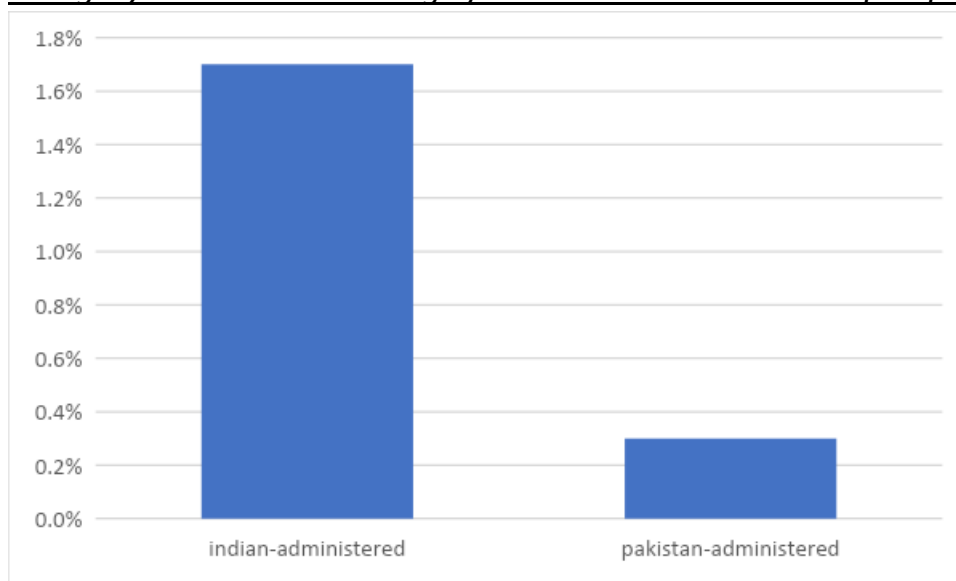


Category 1 data shows that 139 (13.9%) of the 1000 analysed articles spoke of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. In contrast, the main Indian opposition, the Indian National Congress' (INC) current President was only referenced twice during the same period. Similarly, past presidents of the INC, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi also received low coverage during this period.

If we compare this to the current UK political party leaders, Rishi Sunak (Conservatives) and Keir Starmer (Labour), we would expect the BBC to cover the main opposition leaders in the UK more equally than they have covered opposition leaders in India. The present coverage of Indian politics would be equivalent to having a disproportionate focus on the Democrat party when reporting on US politics, whilst giving little coverage to the Republican party.

Across hundreds of articles, there is a lot of focus on the Indian Prime Minister. The lack of coverage of key opposition Congress leaders suggests that the BBC is choosing not to scrutinise them to the same extent.

Category 2: Kashmir coverage from Indian and Pakistani perspectives

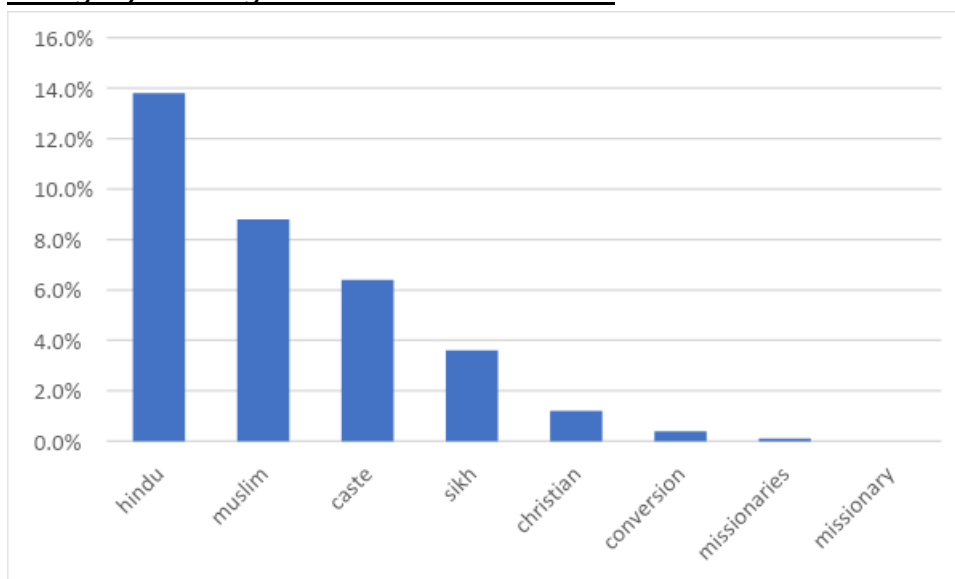


Category 2 data shows substantially more coverage of what the BBC call “Indian-administered Kashmir”. This data complements INSIGHT UK’s research on this area.

There is a lot of focus on Islamic separatists and their views in Kashmir but only on the Indian side of the disputed border. There is far less coverage of separatists in what the BBC call “Pakistani-administered Kashmir”, or the plight of Kashmiris on that side.

There is a clear lack of balance in the BBC’s reporting of Kashmir.

### Category 3: Religion and caste mentions



Data in this category shows that there is insufficient coverage of manipulated conversions and the problems associated with conversions in society.

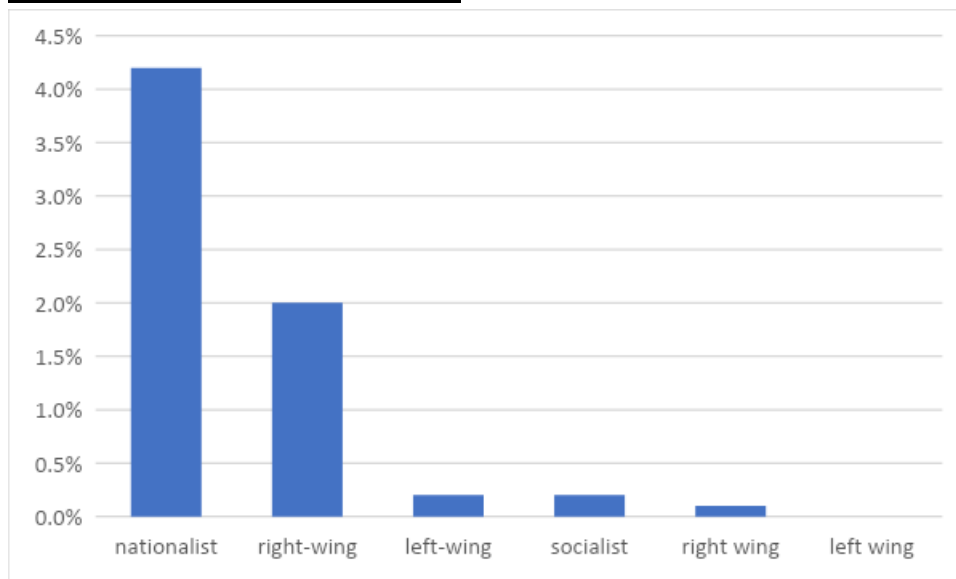
Dozens of articles were found specifically mentioning “Hindu” and “Muslim”, followed by “caste”. It is quite clear the BBC has a focus on these topics.

Some mentions of ‘Hindu’ in the data can be attributed to the BBC repeatedly referencing the BJP party as “Hindu-nationalist”, a term the party does not use to describe itself in its own constitution or on their website.

India is a vast country of over 1.4 billion people and the Hindu and Indian diaspora number hundreds of millions of people worldwide. There are various topics that the BBC could report on, and therefore it is rather suspicious that over a quarter of all BBC India articles focus only on these religious groups and terms.

Would we expect the BBC to reference religion in as many articles in their BBC England, or America sections? What is the purpose of reporting exclusively from these angles for India, when there are multiple other areas that could be covered to have a wide variety of reporting?

#### Category 4: Political spectrum



Data shows that the BBC scrutinises right-wing politics far more than left-wing notions in their coverage. India has political parties across the entire political spectrum, so this lack of balance appears deliberate.

## Conclusions

INSIGHT UK did not conduct sentiment analysis on the articles.

The BBC's coverage of Kashmir is mostly from what the BBC perceives as India's relationship with Kashmir.

Some of the above data complements both INSIGHT UK survey data and post-survey research.

The BBC seems to have a hyper-focus on religion, specifically on Hindus and Muslims. This will no doubt subconsciously shape readers' perception of India based on what the BBC covers.

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