



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## The Sonic Architecture of Nationalism: H-Pop, Algorithmic Radicalization and the Normalization of Islamophobia in Digital India

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 30(01), 2289-2301

Publication history: Received on 16 March 2026; revised on 21 April 2026; accepted on 25 April 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.30.1.1102>

### Abstract

This article examines the emergence of Hindutva Pop (H-Pop) as a “sonic architecture of nationalism” in contemporary India. Moving beyond conventional analyses of political discourse and representation, the study foregrounds the role of sound as a material and affective medium through which exclusionary ideologies are produced, circulated, and normalized. Drawing on a multi-layered methodological framework that combines sonic textual analysis, narrative analysis, and platform studies, the paper analyzes songs by artists such as Prem Krishnavanshi, Laxmi Dubey, Kavi Singh, and Sandeep Chaturvedi as primary data.

The study demonstrates, first, that H-Pop’s sonic structures—characterized by lexical minimalism, repetition, rhythmic intensification, and vocal layering—function as affective technologies that embed ideological content within embodied experience. Second, it shows how these affective forms are stabilized through recurring narratives of historical antagonism, demographic anxiety, and the construction of an internal “enemy,” thereby producing a coherent ideological framework of majoritarian nationalism. Third, the article situates these sonic and narrative dynamics within the algorithmic infrastructures of platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, arguing that engagement-driven recommendation systems amplify and normalize H-Pop through recursive feedback loops. Finally, the paper traces the extension of H-Pop into physical space, demonstrating how amplified sound reconfigures the public sphere by transforming shared environments into sites of auditory dominance and social hierarchy, thereby contributing to the normalization of Islamophobia.

By conceptualizing H-Pop as a multi-scalar system that operates across sound, narrative, platform, and space, this article contributes to broader debates on digital nationalism, culturalized extremism, and the politics of affect. It argues that contemporary forms of exclusion cannot be fully understood without attending to the sonic and infrastructural conditions that shape how ideology is felt, repeated, and embedded in everyday life.

**Keywords:** Hindutva Pop (H-Pop); Sonic Architecture; Algorithmic Radicalization; Islamophobia; Digital Nationalism; Affective Politics; Sound Studies; Platform Culture; Demographic Anxiety; Mughalophobia

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the cultural landscape of contemporary India has witnessed the rapid emergence of a musical genre that is both politically charged and technologically mediated: Hindutva Pop (H-Pop). Circulating primarily through digital platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, H-Pop has evolved from a marginal subcultural expression into a pervasive auditory presence embedded in everyday life. Characterized by its fusion of electronic dance music (EDM), devotional motifs, and explicitly nationalist messaging, this genre operates not merely as entertainment but as an ideological apparatus that shapes affect, perception, and political subjectivity. This paper conceptualizes H-Pop as a

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form of “sonic architecture”—a structured system through which sound organizes space, constructs social hierarchies, and normalizes exclusionary forms of nationalism.

The notion of “sonic architecture” extends beyond metaphor. It foregrounds the material and affective properties of sound as a medium of political power. Unlike textual or visual propaganda, sound operates at a pre-discursive level, engaging the body through rhythm, repetition, and volume. As theorists of sound have argued, sound operates not merely as representation but as a structuring force of power (Attali 1985; LaBelle 2010). In the context of H-Pop, high-tempo beats, chant-like refrains, and emotionally charged lyrics function together to produce what scholars have described as “networked affect” (Baishya 2022), enabling the rapid circulation of collective emotions such as pride, resentment, and fear. These sonic elements are not incidental; they are central to the genre’s capacity to bypass rational deliberation and embed ideological content directly into sensory experience.

At the same time, the repetitive structure of H-Pop aligns with broader theories of nationalism that emphasize the everyday reproduction of ideological belonging. As Michael Billig has shown, nationalism is reproduced not only through discourse but through everyday repetition (Billig 1995). H-Pop extends this insight into the auditory domain, where repetition is not only linguistic but rhythmic and affective. The looped chorus, the recurring slogan, and the repetitive beat function as mechanisms through which national identity is continuously rehearsed and reaffirmed. In this sense, H-Pop transforms the banal processes of national reproduction into an intensified sonic form, where repetition is both heard and felt.

Existing scholarship has begun to examine the relationship between popular culture and the rise of Hindu nationalism. Studies by Anirban K. Baishya, Mohammad Reyaz et al., and Rishiraj Sen and Shweta Jha have provided important insights into phenomena such as “violent spectating,” “Mughalophobia,” and the “Saffronisation of Muslimness.” However, much of this literature remains focused on representation and discourse, often treating music as a secondary medium through which ideology is expressed. What remains underexplored is the specific role of sound—and more precisely, of sonic and lyrical structures—in producing and sustaining these ideological effects. While we know what H-Pop communicates, we know far less about how it operates as a system of affective and spatial organization.

This paper addresses this gap by placing sonic textual analysis at the center of its inquiry. Drawing on a corpus of songs produced by prominent H-Pop artists such as Laxmi Dubey, Kavi Singh, Prem Krishnavanshi, and Sandeep Chaturvedi, the study conducts a close reading of lyrics, metaphors, and repetitive sonic patterns. Songs are treated not as illustrative examples but as primary data, enabling a systematic analysis of how ideological formations are embedded within musical form. By examining how lexical choices—such as references to demographic threat, historical conflict, and moral betrayal—are integrated with rhythmic repetition and affective intensification, the paper demonstrates how H-Pop produces a sensorially compelling narrative of majoritarian nationalism.

At the same time, the paper situates these sonic texts within a broader media ecosystem. Reports by organizations such as The New York Times and TIME have highlighted the growing visibility of Hindutva-themed music in digital spaces, often noting its role in amplifying anti-Muslim sentiment. Analyses from Columbia Journalism Review further demonstrate how algorithmic infrastructures facilitate the circulation and recommendation of such content. Building on these insights, this study conceptualizes H-Pop not as an isolated genre but as part of a platformed sonic environment, where engagement-driven algorithms and short-form video cultures amplify and normalize its ideological content. In this sense, sonic architecture is not only produced by artists but co-constructed by digital systems that determine what is heard, repeated, and made visible.

The central argument of this paper is that H-Pop functions as a multi-layered architecture of exclusion, in which sound, narrative, platform dynamics, and spatial practices converge to normalize Islamophobia in contemporary India. This process unfolds across four interrelated dimensions. First, at the level of sonic texts, H-Pop deploys affectively charged lyrics and musical structures to produce embodied emotional responses. Second, at the level of narrative formation, these sonic elements reproduce broader ideological tropes, including historical revisionism and demographic anxiety. Third, at the level of platform circulation, algorithmic systems amplify and normalize these narratives through recursive feedback loops. Finally, at the level of spatial practice, sound is projected into public environments, reshaping the auditory landscape and reinforcing social hierarchies.

By integrating sound studies, political theory, and digital media analysis, this paper offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how contemporary nationalism operates through sensory and infrastructural means. It argues that to grasp the dynamics of majoritarian politics in the twenty-first century, we must attend not only to what is said or represented, but to what is heard, repeated, and spatially enacted.

## **2. Sonic Texts: The Affective Language of H-Pop**

If H-Pop is to be understood as a “sonic architecture,” its foundational layer lies in the internal organization of the songs themselves—their lyrics, rhythmic structures, vocal textures, and affective trajectories. This section advances a sonic textual analysis that treats songs as primary data rather than illustrative examples, examining how linguistic compression, repetition, and musical intensification co-produce a sensorially embedded form of nationalist ideology. Drawing on a corpus of widely circulated tracks by Prem Krishnavanshi, Laxmi Dubey, Kavi Singh, and Sandeep Chaturvedi, the analysis demonstrates that H-Pop does not merely communicate ideological content; it engineers affect through sound. In doing so, it reorganizes the relationship between language, body, and political subjectivity.

### **2.1. Lyrical Minimalism and the Production of Moral Binaries**

A defining feature of H-Pop is its lexical minimalism—the reduction of complex socio-political narratives into short, high-intensity verbal units. Across multiple tracks, one encounters a tightly bounded vocabulary structured around oppositional pairs: “deshbhakt” (patriot) versus “gaddar” (traitor), “dharmic” versus “adharmic,” and “rakshak” (protector) versus “shatru” (enemy). These are not neutral descriptors but performative labels that assign moral status through repetition.

Songs by Prem Krishnavanshi exemplify this tendency. Rather than constructing narrative arcs, the lyrics foreground indexical naming—a practice whereby identity is fixed through reiterative designation. The semantic effect is cumulative: repeated labeling stabilizes a binary moral universe in which ambiguity is foreclosed. Political disagreement is thus recoded as ethical deviance, and dissent becomes synonymous with betrayal.

This lexical economy is further intensified through metaphorical condensation. The “Other”—implicitly or explicitly Muslim—is frequently associated with tropes of invasion, contamination, or violence. Even when explicit communal markers are absent, the semantic field is structured in ways that render the target legible through widely circulating cultural codes. Such metaphors operate within a biopolitical register, where populations are imagined in terms of threat, purity, and survival. As Jacques Attali argues, sound is never neutral but always implicated in relations of power and control (Attali 1985). Within H-Pop, this insight becomes particularly salient: the naming of the enemy is not simply descriptive but constitutive of a hierarchy embedded within sonic form.

### **2.2. Repetition as Political Technology: From Phrase to Chant**

If lexical minimalism provides the building blocks of H-Pop, repetition is the mechanism through which these blocks are assembled into a durable ideological structure. Repetition operates at multiple levels—phonetic, syntactic, and temporal—transforming discrete phrases into chants that are both memorable and performative.

Tracks produced by Sandeep Chaturvedi and others frequently employ looped hooks consisting of one or two lines repeated over a high-tempo beat. The sonic effect is one of rhythmic insistence, where the meaning of the phrase becomes inseparable from its repetition. Over time, semantic content recedes and performative force takes precedence: the phrase is no longer merely understood; it is enacted.

This transformation from phrase to chant has significant political implications. Repetition transforms language into chant, reinforcing what Michael Billig describes as the everyday reproduction of nationalism (Billig 1995). The listener is not only hearing the phrase but is invited—implicitly or explicitly—to join in its repetition, thereby participating in the continuous rearticulation of national identity.

Songs by Laxmi Dubey illustrate how repetition bridges devotional and political registers. Traditional bhajan refrains are recontextualized within EDM frameworks, where their cyclical structure aligns seamlessly with loop-based production. This fusion enables the migration of devotional language into high-energy contexts such as rallies or digital media circulation. Repetition, in this sense, functions as a mechanism of ideological sedimentation, embedding meaning through rhythmic persistence.

### **2.3. Rhythmic Intensification and Pre-Discursive Affect**

While repetition ensures persistence, rhythmic structure governs intensity. H-Pop is characterized by fast tempos, pronounced basslines, and escalating dynamic patterns that align with global EDM conventions. These features are not merely stylistic but central to the production of affective response.

These sonic structures operate at a pre-discursive level, aligning with theories of affect that emphasize bodily response prior to cognition (Ahmed 2004; Goodman 2010). Rather than engaging listeners through argument or narrative coherence, H-Pop activates the body directly, producing heightened states of arousal, tension, and release.

In many tracks by Prem Krishnavanshi, the musical structure follows a buildup–drop configuration. The buildup phase introduces a rising tension, often accompanied by spoken or semi-sung lines that frame a political grievance or threat. This is followed by a drop, where the beat intensifies and the central slogan is repeated with amplified force. The listener experiences this transition not only cognitively but physically, as a somatic release. Ideology, in this context, is not merely understood; it is felt.

Songs by Kavi Singh further intensify this process through tempo acceleration and percussive density, reducing the temporal space for reflection and encouraging immediate emotional alignment. As Steve Goodman suggests in his work on sonic warfare, sound can function as an affective force that shapes perception and behavior at a visceral level (Goodman 2010). H-Pop exemplifies this dynamic, operating as a medium through which affect is mobilized in the service of ideological formation.

#### **2.4. Vocal Texture and the Illusion of Collectivity**

In addition to lyrics and rhythm, vocal production techniques play a crucial role in shaping the affective landscape of H-Pop. Across tracks by Sandeep Chaturvedi and others, one observes the frequent use of layered vocals, echo effects, and chorus amplification. These techniques create the impression of multiple voices speaking simultaneously, even when the underlying recording may involve a single performer.

The resulting sonic texture produces an illusion of collectivity. The voice is no longer singular but multiplied, suggesting the presence of a larger, unified community. This perceived multiplicity reinforces the sense of consensus, making the ideological content appear socially validated and widely shared.

Moreover, vocal modulation—through pitch shifting, distortion, or reverb—imbues the voice with heightened emotional intensity. In songs by Laxmi Dubey, devotional vocal styles are often electronically amplified, producing a hybrid voice that merges spiritual devotion with militant assertion. This fusion collapses the boundary between religion and politics, aligning affective states of reverence with those of nationalist fervor.

#### **2.5. Integrated Sonic-Affective System**

Taken together, lexical minimalism, repetition, rhythmic intensification, and vocal modulation form an integrated system. Each element reinforces the others, producing a self-sustaining loop of meaning and sensation. The dehumanizing lexicon provides semantic direction; repetition ensures memorability; rhythm generates affect; and vocal layering constructs collective identity.

This integration is what allows H-Pop to function as a sonic architecture of power. As Attali suggests, sound is embedded within broader structures of control (Attali 1985), and in the case of H-Pop, these structures are both affective and ideological. The listener is not merely exposed to a message but is incorporated into a system that organizes perception, emotion, and belonging.

Furthermore, the modular nature of these sonic elements aligns with the logics of digital circulation explored in later sections. Short phrases, looped beats, and intense affective peaks are easily extracted, remixed, and redistributed, allowing H-Pop to extend beyond individual songs into a broader mediated environment.

#### **2.6. Toward a Sonic Architecture**

What emerges from this integration is not merely a set of musical features, but a fully developed sonic architecture of power. The elements analyzed above—lexical minimalism, repetition, rhythmic intensification, vocal modulation, and affective structuring—coalesce into a system in which sound organizes perception, emotion, and social meaning. Rather than functioning as discrete aesthetic techniques, these components operate relationally, each reinforcing the others to produce a self-sustaining loop of meaning and sensation. In this sense, H-Pop exemplifies what Jacques Attali identifies as the political economy of sound, where music is embedded within broader structures of power and control (Attali 1985).

Unlike earlier forms of nationalist music that relied on narrative coherence or symbolic representation, H-Pop operates through modularity and scalability. Its building blocks—short phrases, looped beats, and high-intensity affects—are

designed for extraction, recombination, and circulation. This modular structure enables individual sonic elements to function independently of the original composition, allowing them to be repurposed across multiple contexts. Such adaptability aligns with the logic of contemporary digital media environments, where brief, repeatable units of content are privileged by algorithmic systems that optimize for engagement and visibility (Gillespie 2018; Zuboff 2019).

Consequently, the sonic text is not an endpoint but a point of departure. The chant becomes a meme, the hook becomes a soundtrack, and the affect becomes a shareable experience. Through processes of repetition and circulation, the internal dynamics of the song are projected outward into a broader digital and social field. As Brandon LaBelle argues, sound possesses an inherent capacity to extend beyond its source, shaping spatial relations and social interactions (LaBelle 2010). In the case of H-Pop, this capacity for projection enables sound to move from an aesthetic object to an organizing structure—one that configures not only listening practices but also the conditions of visibility, participation, and belonging.

This transition from sound to structure is central to understanding H-Pop's political efficacy. By embedding ideological content within modular and scalable sonic forms, H-Pop ensures that its messages can circulate fluidly across platforms and contexts. The affective intensity generated at the level of the song is thus not contained but distributed, becoming part of a larger mediated environment. This distribution anticipates and facilitates the processes of algorithmic amplification and spatial reconfiguration examined in the subsequent sections.

In sum, the concept of sonic architecture provides a framework for understanding how H-Pop operates across multiple scales. It is not simply a genre of music but a system that integrates affect, narrative, and infrastructure into a coherent mode of political expression. By organizing how sound is produced, repeated, and experienced, H-Pop constructs a sensory environment in which ideology is continuously reinforced. This sonic foundation is essential to grasping how contemporary nationalism is not only articulated but also felt, circulated, and spatially enacted.

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### **3. Narratives of Nationalism: History, Demography, and the Enemy**

Building on the sonic mechanisms outlined in the previous section, this part examines how H-Pop translates affect into narrative coherence. If Section II demonstrated how lyrics, rhythm, and vocality produce embodied ideological dispositions, Section III shows how these dispositions are stabilized through recurring narrative frames. Across the corpus, three interlocking narratives dominate: (1) a revisionist history that casts the past as a continuous civilizational conflict, (2) a demographic imaginary organized around anxiety and futurity, and (3) a moral taxonomy that constructs an internal "enemy." Together, these narratives provide the semantic architecture that gives direction and durability to the affective energies generated by H-Pop.

#### **3.1. Rewriting the Past: Mughalophobia and Civilizational Conflict**

A central narrative axis in H-Pop is the reconstruction of history as perpetual antagonism. Songs by Sandeep Chaturvedi and Prem Krishnavanshi frequently invoke a temporally flattened past in which the Mughal period is represented not as a complex historical epoch but as a monolithic era of oppression. This aligns with what Reyaz, Laskar, and Siddiqui identify as "Mughalophobia," a narrative structure that reframes history as civilizational conflict (Reyaz, Laskar, and Siddiqui 2025).

Within H-Pop, this historical rewriting operates through selective condensation. References to temples, warriors, conquest, and loss are extracted from broader historical contexts and reassembled into simplified moral sequences. The past is not narrated in chronological or evidentiary terms but as a symbolic reservoir from which emotionally charged fragments are drawn and recombined. These fragments are then synchronized with contemporary political concerns, producing a seamless continuity between historical grievance and present-day mobilization.

Importantly, this narrative strategy collapses temporal distance. Events separated by centuries are rendered proximate—even simultaneous—through lyrical juxtaposition. The effect is a form of temporal compression that transforms historical memory into immediate affect. In this respect, the construction of a continuous historical struggle reflects the logic of imagined communities, in which shared narratives produce a sense of collective identity that transcends temporal and spatial boundaries (Anderson 2006). H-Pop extends this logic by embedding such narratives within sonic repetition, thereby transforming history into an affectively experienced present.

#### **3.2. Demographic Anxiety and the Politics of Futurity**

If the past provides a moral alibi, the future supplies urgency. A second dominant narrative in H-Pop is the construction of demographic anxiety, articulated through references to population growth, fertility, and numerical imbalance. Songs

by Kavi Singh and Prem Krishnavanshi repeatedly invoke a scenario in which the majority community faces the prospect of being outnumbered by a rapidly growing minority.

This narrative is characterized by its economy of expression. Rather than presenting statistical evidence, H-Pop relies on suggestive phrases and recurring motifs that evoke a sense of impending crisis. The absence of explicit data does not weaken the narrative; instead, it enhances its affective flexibility, allowing listeners to project their own anxieties onto the lyrical framework. The result is a form of affective futurity, where imagined demographic scenarios exert a powerful influence on present perception and behavior.

Crucially, demographic anxiety in H-Pop is not merely descriptive but normative. It frames reproductive patterns as political acts and recasts demographic difference as existential threat. The minority population is thus constructed as an agent of transformation whose growth signifies not diversity but danger. This framing aligns with broader discourses of demographic fear while remaining grounded in locally specific cultural and political contexts.

The narrative also operates through temporal acceleration, compressing long-term demographic trends into an immediate horizon of urgency. This acceleration mirrors the rhythmic intensification analyzed in Section II, linking the bodily experience of urgency with a narrative of impending crisis. The future is not simply anticipated; it is felt as imminent, reinforcing the affective intensity that underpins the genre.

### **3.3. Constructing the Enemy: Moral Taxonomy and Internal Othering**

The third and most consequential narrative concerns the construction of the internal enemy. While historical and demographic narratives provide context, it is the figure of the enemy that anchors the ideological structure of H-Pop. Across tracks by Laxmi Dubey and Sandeep Chaturvedi, the social field is organized into a stark moral taxonomy: those who belong to the nation and those who betray it.

This taxonomy is produced through iterative labeling, where terms such as “traitor,” “infiltrator,” and “anti-national” are repeatedly associated with the minority subject. As noted in Section II, these labels function performatively, assigning identity through repetition. Here, they are embedded within a broader narrative that links moral character to national belonging. The enemy is thus not defined solely by religious identity but by a perceived failure to conform to the normative expectations of the nation.

At a theoretical level, the production of the internal enemy resonates with Achille Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics, where power operates through the differentiation between those who are allowed to live and those who are rendered disposable (Mbembe 2003). Within H-Pop, the minority subject is positioned within this logic of disposability, not necessarily through explicit calls for violence but through a sustained process of dehumanization and exclusion. The repeated framing of the “Other” as threat or burden contributes to a symbolic environment in which their marginalization appears justified, even necessary.

At the same time, the boundary between external and internal enemies is deliberately blurred. Historical invaders, contemporary minorities, and political dissenters are often positioned within the same semantic field, creating a continuum of threat. This continuity allows the narrative to shift seamlessly between past and present, reinforcing the perception that the nation is under constant siege.

An important dimension of this narrative is its capacity for conditional inclusion. Certain figures—particularly minority individuals who publicly affirm majoritarian values—may be temporarily incorporated into the national community. However, this inclusion remains contingent upon the continuous performance of loyalty. Rather than destabilizing the binary, such inclusion reinforces it, providing a normative model against which the broader minority population is judged.

### **3.4. Narrative Integration and Ideological Coherence**

When read in conjunction, these three narrative strands—historical conflict, demographic anxiety, and the construction of the enemy—coalesce into a coherent ideological framework. Each dimension reinforces the others: the past provides moral justification, the future generates urgency, and the figure of the enemy anchors affective investment. Through this interplay, dispersed lyrical elements are transformed into a structured worldview that is both emotionally compelling and cognitively accessible.

What distinguishes H-Pop is the tight coupling between narrative and affect. Historical narratives derive their force from sonic repetition; demographic anxieties are intensified through rhythmic acceleration; and the figure of the enemy

is stabilized through iterative labeling and vocal multiplicity. Narrative, therefore, does not operate as an autonomous layer but as an extension of the sonic processes analyzed earlier, where meaning is inseparable from its affective delivery.

Moreover, the modularity of these narratives enables their circulation across different songs, contexts, and platforms. Individual tracks may foreground one narrative over another, yet the underlying structure remains remarkably consistent. This structural continuity facilitates rapid recognition and internalization, allowing listeners to engage with new content without requiring interpretive effort. In this way, H-Pop produces not merely isolated messages but a reproducible ideological template.

The coherence of this template lies in its capacity to integrate temporal and social dimensions into a unified field of meaning. The past is rendered as a site of unresolved conflict, the future as a domain of imminent threat, and the present as a moment of necessary action. Within this temporal structure, the figure of the enemy becomes indispensable, serving as the point around which historical grievance and future anxiety converge.

In sum, the narratives embedded in H-Pop do more than describe the world; they actively organize perception and expectation, shaping how listeners interpret both history and contemporary social relations. This narrative coherence, grounded in and reinforced by sonic form, provides the semantic infrastructure that enables H-Pop to function as a broader architecture of nationalism.

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#### **4. Platformed Sound: Algorithmic Amplification**

If the previous sections have established H-Pop as a sonic and narrative system, this section demonstrates how that system is scaled, intensified, and normalized through digital infrastructures. H-Pop's contemporary force cannot be understood solely in terms of musical form or lyrical content; it depends fundamentally on the platform architectures that organize visibility, attention, and circulation. In this sense, the "sonic architecture" of nationalism is co-produced by artists and algorithmic systems that determine what is heard, how often it is repeated, and to whom it is delivered.

##### **4.1. Recommendation Systems and the Logic of Escalation**

At the core of contemporary platform infrastructures are recommendation systems designed to maximize user engagement. Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram operate through engagement-driven recommendation systems that privilege emotionally intense content (Gillespie 2018; Zuboff 2019). Rather than functioning as neutral intermediaries, these systems actively shape user experience by curating personalized streams of content based on prior interactions, watch history, and inferred preferences.

Within this environment, H-Pop occupies a structurally advantageous position. As demonstrated in Section II, its sonic design—high tempo, repetitive hooks, and affective intensity—generates strong emotional responses. These responses translate into measurable engagement, including longer watch times, higher click-through rates, and increased sharing behavior. Such metrics are central to algorithmic evaluation, signaling that the content is "successful" and should be further promoted. The result is a recursive amplification loop, in which affective intensity produces engagement, engagement drives visibility, and visibility reinforces both affect and ideological exposure.

Journalistic investigations have documented how such content is algorithmically amplified, often beyond the intent of platform moderation policies (Columbia Journalism Review 2023; TIME 2024; The New York Times 2019). These reports indicate that even when content borders on or violates platform guidelines, its high engagement potential can enable continued circulation through recommendation systems. This dynamic underscores the tension between platform governance and algorithmic optimization, where the imperative to maximize user retention may inadvertently facilitate the spread of polarizing or exclusionary material.

Crucially, recommendation systems do not merely reflect user preferences; they reconfigure them through incremental exposure. A user who initially engages with relatively neutral patriotic content may, over time, be directed toward more ideologically explicit or antagonistic H-Pop tracks. This process reflects what scholars identify as algorithmic radicalization, whereby successive recommendations gradually normalize more extreme positions without requiring abrupt shifts in content (Zuboff 2019). The progression is often subtle, with each step appearing only marginally different from the last, thereby obscuring the cumulative transformation of the user's media environment.

#### **4.2. Micro-Content Ecologies and Sonic Fragmentation**

While long-form videos remain significant, the rise of short-form formats has transformed the circulation of H-Pop. Features such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts are structured around micro-content units—brief, rapidly consumable videos that prioritize immediacy and repetition. Within this ecology, songs are rarely consumed in their entirety; instead, they are fragmented into extractable sonic segments, typically centered on a chorus or hook.

This fragmentation amplifies the ideological efficiency of H-Pop. As discussed earlier, the genre's reliance on condensed, slogan-like phrases makes it particularly well suited to short-form circulation. A single line, repeated within a 15-second clip, can function as a complete communicative unit, detached from its original context yet retaining its affective intensity. The sonic fragment thus becomes a portable ideological unit, capable of moving across videos, users, and contexts.

Moreover, short-form platforms facilitate participatory reproduction. Users incorporate H-Pop audio into their own content, embedding it within diverse visual narratives ranging from dance performances to political commentary. Each reuse extends the reach of the original track, creating a distributed network of sonic references. The song is no longer a fixed artifact but a recombinant resource, continuously recontextualized through user interaction.

The design of these platforms further encourages high-frequency repetition. Through endless scrolling interfaces, users encounter the same audio multiple times within a single session, often across unrelated videos. This repetition reinforces the processes of affective habituation described in Section II, normalizing the content through exposure. Importantly, such normalization often occurs at the level of background listening, where audio is consumed passively yet persistently, becoming part of the ambient digital environment.

#### **4.3. Metrics, Visibility, and the Production of Consensus**

Another critical dimension of platformed sound is the role of quantitative metrics—views, likes, shares, and comments—in shaping perceptions of legitimacy. On platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, these metrics are prominently displayed, functioning as visible indicators of a video's popularity and reception.

For H-Pop, high engagement metrics operate as a form of symbolic validation. A track that accumulates millions of views or thousands of comments appears not merely popular but socially endorsed. This visibility contributes to the production of consensus, where users interpret widespread engagement as evidence of normative acceptance. In politically charged contexts, such perceptions can significantly influence user behavior, encouraging further interaction while discouraging critical evaluation.

Media reports and analytical studies have highlighted how algorithmic systems can amplify such effects, particularly when engagement metrics are prioritized over content quality or ethical considerations (Columbia Journalism Review 2023; TIME 2024). The prominence of these metrics creates a feedback loop in which visibility generates further visibility, reinforcing the dominance of certain narratives within the platform ecosystem.

In addition to numerical indicators, comment sections and user interactions contribute to a discursive environment of affirmation. Positive feedback, repetition of slogans, and collective participation in comment threads reinforce the ideological framing of the content. Dissenting voices, when present, are often marginalized by the sheer volume of supportive responses. Through this process, platforms do not merely distribute sound; they facilitate the social validation of its meanings.

#### **4.4. Feedback Loops and Adaptive Production**

The relationship between H-Pop and platform infrastructures is not unidirectional. While algorithms shape content visibility, creators actively adapt their production strategies in response to platform dynamics. This interaction produces a feedback loop in which content and algorithm mutually reinforce one another.

Artists such as Prem Krishnavanshi and Laxmi Dubey often structure their songs to align with platform logics—emphasizing immediate hooks, shortened intros, and clearly segmentable sections that can be repurposed for short-form content. These structural adaptations increase the likelihood of algorithmic promotion, further embedding the music within the platform's circulation patterns.

At the same time, user engagement feeds back into algorithmic learning processes. Through clicks, shares, and viewing duration, audiences collectively shape the parameters by which content is evaluated and recommended. This creates a

form of distributed co-production, where creators, users, and platforms jointly participate in the construction of the media environment.

Over time, this feedback loop leads to the standardization of sonic and narrative forms. Content that performs well is replicated, while less successful variations are discarded. The result is a narrowing of stylistic diversity alongside an intensification of affective and ideological features that align with platform incentives.

#### **4.5. From Content to Environment**

The cumulative effect of these processes is the transformation of H-Pop from discrete media content into a pervasive sonic environment. Through recommendation systems, micro-content ecologies, engagement metrics, and feedback loops, H-Pop extends beyond individual listening experiences to shape the broader auditory landscape of digital life.

In this environment, exposure is often incidental rather than intentional. Users encounter H-Pop while browsing, scrolling, or engaging with unrelated content, making it part of the ambient soundscape of the platform. This ambient presence contributes to normalization, as repeated exposure integrates the music into everyday experience. Over time, the boundaries between entertainment, political messaging, and background audio become increasingly blurred.

This shift from content to environment is central to the concept of sonic architecture. Just as physical architecture organizes movement and interaction, platformed sound organizes attention, affect, and perception. It determines what is heard, what is repeated, and what becomes familiar. In doing so, it shapes not only individual listening habits but also collective imaginaries.

In conclusion, the platformed amplification of H-Pop reveals the extent to which contemporary nationalism is mediated by algorithmic infrastructures. The political efficacy of H-Pop cannot be separated from the systems that distribute and normalize it. By transforming songs into scalable, repeatable, and highly visible units of content, platforms enable H-Pop to function as a distributed ideological system, extending its reach across users, networks, and environments. This platformed dimension completes the structural framework of sonic architecture, linking the internal dynamics of sound and narrative to the external mechanisms of circulation and normalization.

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### **5. From Sound to Space: Normalizing Islamophobia**

If the preceding sections have demonstrated how H-Pop constructs affect (Section II), stabilizes meaning through narrative (Section III), and scales visibility via platforms (Section IV), this section examines the material translation of sound into space. The central claim is that H-Pop does not remain confined to digital circulation or individual listening; rather, it reorganizes the spatial experience of the public sphere. Through repetition, amplification, and strategic deployment in physical contexts, H-Pop contributes to the normalization of Islamophobia by transforming sound into a medium of territorial assertion and social hierarchy.

#### **5.1. Sonic Projection and the Reconfiguration of Public Space**

Sound differs from other media in its spatial permeability. Unlike text or image, which require directed attention, sound travels across boundaries, often imposing itself on listeners irrespective of consent. As Brandon LaBelle argues, sound is inherently spatial and capable of reorganizing environments (LaBelle 2010). This property becomes politically significant when sound is used not merely for expression but for projection—the deliberate extension of auditory presence into shared or contested spaces.

In contemporary India, H-Pop frequently circulates beyond digital platforms into public settings such as religious processions, political rallies, and neighborhood gatherings. Tracks associated with artists like Prem Krishnavanshi or Sandeep Chaturvedi are often played through high-decibel speaker systems mounted on mobile units. The volume and repetition of these songs produce a sonic saturation that extends well beyond the immediate audience, enveloping entire localities.

This projection has a reconfigurative effect on public space. Areas that are legally and socially shared become acoustically dominated by a single sonic presence. The public sphere, in this sense, is not only defined by visibility or access but by audibility—by what can be heard, and by whom. When H-Pop occupies this auditory field, it effectively redefines the space as one aligned with its ideological content, reorganizing spatial relations through sound.

## **5.2. Sonic Intimidation and the Production of Hierarchy**

The projection of H-Pop into public space is not neutral; it carries with it the affective and narrative content analyzed earlier. When dehumanizing labels, demographic anxieties, and historical antagonisms are broadcast at high volume, they are transformed into collective auditory experiences that extend beyond voluntary listeners.

This process can be understood as a form of sonic intimidation, aligning with Steve Goodman's concept of sonic warfare, where sound operates as an affective weapon that shapes perception and behavior (Goodman 2010). The combination of volume, repetition, and ideological content creates an environment in which minority communities—particularly Muslims—are positioned as objects of the sonic field rather than participants within it. The sound does not invite dialogue; it asserts presence, producing a sensory field structured by asymmetry and control.

The affective dimension is crucial here. As shown in Section II, H-Pop is designed to generate heightened emotional states such as pride, anger, and collective excitement. When these affective states are externalized into public space through amplified sound, they produce a shared atmosphere of intensity that can be experienced as exclusionary or threatening by those who are implicitly or explicitly targeted. Sound thus operates not only as communication but as force, shaping how space is experienced and inhabited.

Moreover, the asymmetry of auditory power reinforces social hierarchy. Those who control the sound—who select the music, regulate the volume, and determine the timing—exercise a form of acoustic authority. Others, particularly those who cannot easily avoid or counter the sound, are relegated to a position of passive exposure. In this way, H-Pop contributes to the stratification of public space, where belonging is expressed through audibility and marginality through enforced listening.

## **5.3. Repetition, Routine, and the Normalization of Exclusion**

A key mechanism through which H-Pop normalizes Islamophobia is repetition across time and context. As discussed in Sections II and IV, repetition operates both within the song and across platforms. When extended into physical space, this repetition takes the form of routine sonic events—recurring processions, repeated celebrations, and the habitual use of the same tracks in similar contexts.

Repetition contributes to what Michael Billig terms the normalization of ideology through everyday practice (Billig 1995). What may initially appear as exceptional or disruptive becomes familiar through repetition, gradually integrating into the rhythms of daily life. The presence of ideologically charged music in public space is thus naturalized, losing its capacity to provoke critical attention or resistance.

This normalization operates at both cognitive and affective levels. Repeated exposure reduces sensitivity to the content, producing a form of affective desensitization in which listeners become accustomed to exclusionary narratives. Over time, the emotional intensity associated with the music may shift from confrontation to familiarity, enabling the ideology it carries to persist without active contestation.

At the same time, repetition functions as a form of social signaling. The consistent public performance of H-Pop communicates that certain forms of expression are not only acceptable but dominant within the public sphere. This signaling shapes expectations about belonging and legitimacy, reinforcing the perception that exclusionary narratives reflect broader social consensus.

## **5.4. From Auditory Presence to Territorial Assertion**

The cumulative effect of projection, intimidation, and repetition is the transformation of sound into a medium of territorial assertion. In this context, H-Pop functions not merely as cultural expression but as a marker of spatial control. The ability to occupy the auditory field becomes a way of asserting presence and influence, even in the absence of formal authority.

This process is particularly evident in contexts where sound is mobilized across space, such as processions that move through different neighborhoods. The movement of amplified music creates a dynamic form of spatial inscription, where territory is marked not through fixed boundaries but through auditory coverage. The reach of the sound effectively delineates zones of influence, producing a sonic map that overlays and redefines existing spatial arrangements.

Within this framework, the normalization of Islamophobia can be understood as a spatial process. Exclusionary narratives, initially embedded in lyrics and amplified through platforms, become embedded in the environment itself. Public space is reconfigured not only as a site of interaction but as a site of auditory dominance, where certain identities are affirmed and others are implicitly marginalized.

### **5.5. Sonic Architecture and the Transformation of the Public Sphere**

The movement from sound to space completes the analytical arc of this paper. H-Pop's sonic structures (Section II), narrative frameworks (Section III), and platformed circulation (Section IV) converge in the reorganization of the public sphere. What emerges is a form of sonic architecture in which sound operates as a mechanism of governance, structuring who belongs, who is heard, and who is excluded.

This transformation has significant implications for democratic life. The public sphere, ideally conceived as a space of pluralistic interaction, becomes increasingly shaped by asymmetrical auditory power. When certain voices dominate the sonic environment, the conditions for equal participation are undermined. Sound, in this context, does not merely reflect social divisions; it actively produces and reinforces them.

Furthermore, the normalization of Islamophobia through sonic means complicates conventional frameworks of analysis. Unlike overt forms of discrimination, which may be subject to legal or institutional scrutiny, sonic practices often operate in a more diffuse and ambiguous domain. They are experienced collectively yet may be difficult to regulate, particularly when framed as expressions of culture or devotion.

In conclusion, the translation of H-Pop from sound to space reveals the full extent of its political significance. Through processes of projection, repetition, and spatial inscription, H-Pop transforms the auditory landscape into a site of ideological normalization. Islamophobia, in this context, is not only articulated but embedded within everyday environments, shaping how space is perceived, inhabited, and contested. Understanding this transformation is essential to grasping how contemporary nationalism operates not only through discourse and media but through the very sensory conditions of social life.

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## **6. Conclusion**

This study has argued that Hindutva Pop (H-Pop) must be understood not simply as a musical genre or a cultural trend, but as a multi-layered sonic architecture of nationalism. By integrating sonic textual analysis, narrative critique, and platform studies, the paper has demonstrated that H-Pop operates across interconnected domains—sound, meaning, infrastructure, and space—to produce and normalize exclusionary political imaginaries in contemporary India. What emerges is not an isolated phenomenon but a systemic formation in which affect, ideology, and technology converge, reshaping both the experience and organization of the public sphere.

At the level of sonic form, the analysis has shown that H-Pop derives its efficacy from its capacity to organize affect. Through lexical minimalism, repetition, rhythmic intensification, and vocal modulation, these songs structure emotional responses in ways that precede rational deliberation. Political meaning is therefore not simply communicated but embedded within embodied experience, transforming listening into a site of ideological inscription. Sound operates here as both medium and mechanism, shaping how individuals feel, perceive, and orient themselves within the social world. In this respect, H-Pop exemplifies a broader shift in political communication, where affective intensity increasingly displaces discursive argument as the primary vehicle of persuasion.

This affective foundation is then stabilized through narrative. As demonstrated in Section III, H-Pop constructs a coherent ideological framework by rewriting history as civilizational conflict, projecting demographic anxiety into the future, and producing an internal enemy that anchors moral judgment. These narratives do not function as isolated claims but as mutually reinforcing structures that organize temporal perception—linking past grievance, present urgency, and future threat into a unified interpretive schema. Through this process, affect is translated into durable ideological orientation, making exclusionary nationalism appear both natural and necessary.

The analysis further situates these sonic and narrative processes within the algorithmic infrastructures of digital platforms. On platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, engagement-driven recommendation systems amplify and normalize H-Pop through recursive feedback loops. Content that generates strong emotional responses is privileged, circulated, and repeatedly encountered, producing an environment in which ideological intensity is both rewarded and reproduced. In this context, H-Pop demonstrates how nationalism is not only imagined (Anderson 2006) but also felt, repeated, and algorithmically reinforced (Zuboff 2019; Goodman 2010). The digital mediation of sound thus becomes

central to the reproduction of political subjectivity, linking individual experience to broader patterns of collective identification.

Beyond the digital domain, the paper has traced the extension of H-Pop into material space, demonstrating how sound reorganizes the public sphere through projection, repetition, and spatial inscription. When amplified in public contexts, H-Pop transforms shared environments into sites of auditory dominance, where certain identities are affirmed and others are marginalized. Islamophobia, in this framework, is not merely articulated but normalized through everyday exposure, becoming embedded within the sensory conditions of social life. Public space is thereby reconstituted as an acoustic field of power, in which audibility itself becomes a marker of belonging and exclusion.

From a broader theoretical perspective, these findings point to a significant transformation in the modalities of contemporary nationalism. Rather than operating solely through discourse or institutional mechanisms, nationalism increasingly circulates through affective and infrastructural channels, where sound and algorithm work in tandem to shape perception and belonging. This shift challenges conventional approaches to political analysis, which often privilege explicit statements over sensory and environmental dimensions of power. It suggests the need for an expanded analytical framework capable of accounting for the ways in which ideology is not only communicated but also experienced, repeated, and spatially embedded.

The implications of this transformation are substantial. Addressing the normalization of exclusionary ideologies requires attention not only to the content of political messages but to the structures of amplification and repetition that sustain them. Algorithmic accountability must be complemented by a critical engagement with the cultural forms that are optimized for digital circulation. At the same time, the concept of the public sphere must be rethought to include its auditory dimensions, recognizing sound as a central medium through which power is exercised, negotiated, and contested.

At a methodological level, this study has also sought to demonstrate the value of integrating sound studies, political theory, and platform analysis. By treating songs as primary data and situating them within broader infrastructures of circulation and spatial practice, the paper provides a framework for analyzing how cultural forms operate as multi-scalar systems of power. Future research might extend this approach to other contexts, exploring how similar configurations of sound, affect, and algorithm shape political life in different regions and media environments.

In conclusion, H-Pop represents more than a soundtrack to contemporary nationalism; it is a mechanism through which nationalism is produced, circulated, and spatially enacted. By conceptualizing this process as a sonic architecture, this paper has foregrounded the role of sound in shaping political realities. To understand the dynamics of exclusion in the present moment, it is therefore necessary to listen—not only to what is said, but to how it is sounded, repeated, amplified, and embedded within the environments of everyday life.

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