

# **Technology, Right Wing, and Feminism: A Discursive Study**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

*Master of Science*  
*in*  
*Exact Humanities (By Research)*

by

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June 2019

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## **CERTIFICATE**

It is certified that the work contained in this thesis, titled “**Technology, Right Wing, and Feminism: A Discursive Study**” by **Isha Mangurkar**, has been carried out under my supervision and is not submitted elsewhere for a degree.

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Date

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Adviser: Prof. Nimmi Rangaswamy

To my beloved parents, Prof. Nimmi Rangaswamy, and Late Prof. Navjyoti Singh.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking Prof. Nimmi Rangaswamy for her guidance and support in the selection, study, and writing of this Thesis. Prof. Nimmi's encouragement to explore the literature on political communication, feminism, and her expertise in HCI are of immense value to me. I thank her for engaging in long discussions with me over the past one year and a half to work out the confluence of these varying domains. I am grateful for her support through the entire process, from suggesting the related works, to suggestions on improving presentation skills.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to the Late Prof. Navjyoti Singh for his support and advice in the 4 years of my life at IIIT-Hyderabad. His words of wisdom have always guided me in my decision making. I hope to live by the ideals he envisioned for us, all my life. Thank you sir.

Next, I am immensely grateful to Anushree, my closest confidante, for being an inspiring pillar in my life. Many thanks to Sai and Andrea for being my support system outside college.

A sincere thanks to all my friends at IIIT: Shantanu, Dhruv, Swaraj, Vamsi, Reddy, Shreedhar, Tejaswini, Sneha, Riya, Tanmai, Subha, Navyasri, Aditya, Arihant, and Rahul for being such a strong support system. Also, I am grateful for the encouragement by my seniors: Abhirath, Vignesh, Amitha, and almost all of my TAs. Special mention to my juniors: Rishabh, Tanmay, Navya, Ekansh, Devansh and all others, for making cultural activities in college enjoyable.

Lastly, I am eternally grateful to my parents, grandparents, my entire family, and the wonderful people of Satyavandan Group. Your appreciation and support has always been a guiding light for me. Thank you for the unconditional love.

## **Abstract**

The general elections of India in 2014 proved to be important for the study of political communication owing to the rise in influence of right wing ideology in national politics. Twitter was employed as a social media platform, by political leaders, to improve their public image and perception conveying their campaign goals to their massive number of followers. The most strategic use of Twitter was credited to Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi. He was portrayed as a visionary leader who wanted to work for economic development, social empowerment, and good governance. Within this narrative, women's empowerment debates have also undergone a multitude of changes.

Through the thesis, we try to establish the nature of interactions between discussions on feminism, political communication, and technology. We study the discursive trajectory of women's empowerment against the backdrop of the influence of right wing Hindutva ideology of India on Twitter. We employ a rigorous qualitative analysis using Thematic Study and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis to study two important cases of women's movements since 2014: Instant Triple Talaq, and Sabarimala Verdict. By analyzing tweets surrounding these incidents, we show a rhetorical inconsistency of the right wing leaders and supporters. We study the implications of this inconsistency on suppression of voices demanding empowerment and amplification of narratives on religion and tradition. Finally we conclude the implications of amplification and suppression of voices on emergence of the phenomenon of "controlled empowerment" of women.

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## *Chapter 1*

### **Introduction**

The last decade has witnessed a overwhelming expansion in use of social media across the globe. Social networking sites have shaped users' political and social lives while communication through digital media has enabled wider dissemination of information at lightning speed. Social media affords freedom of speech, minimal moderation, and anonymity to users to express their opinions freely.

2014 saw the rise of the right wing in India after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a massive mandate in the elections for the country's highest parliament. An absolute majority of this kind was achieved after 30 years. BJP is often characterized as a traditional right wing conservative party in the Indian context. It is known to be sympathetic to the cause of the majoritarian Hindu religious community in India. The rise of right wing has been a slow project in the Indian electoral scene, gaining prominence from the 1980's when the Hindu identity started yielding political rewards and dividends [41]. Since then, there has been a steady rise in popularity of their espoused ideology. 2014 elections earmarked the effective and strategic use of social media for campaigning and dissemination of their message. This message was presented in two fold ways - establish their prime ministerial candidate as face of good governance, while simultaneously cast away any controversial religion specific narrative [41]. The reformed image disseminated during election campaign through social media channels ran into inconsistencies post elections. Since 2014, several socio-political incidents have exposed the inherent contradiction in the rhetoric of a political leadership which manages a right wing discourse as a popular staple for party popularity and a modern national discourse of people's empowerment including religious minorities, lower Hindu caste groups and women.

Through this thesis, we establish the nature of inconsistencies that are discernible in the right wing rhetoric about women's empowerment and religious minorities vis-a-vis right wing's pro-development stance. We combine two techniques of qualitative analysis - Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA) to establish dominant discourses and their transitions for two case studies: instant triple talaq case and Sabarimala temple case. The transitions between dominant discourses within each case study exposes the contradictions within right wing rhetoric on women's empowerment, which we use to articulate the implications of our study on three domains - Feminist theories, political communications, and Feminist HCI. We introduce the concept: "Controlled empowerment of women to analyze the implications on women's empowerment in the three domains mentioned above.

We first explain our motivations to conduct an inter-domain inquiry combining insights from Feminist Theory, Political Communications, and Feminist HCI, to establish the basic tenets of our project. Then, we list the three broad research questions that we seek to answer through this thesis. We explain the structure of this thesis, followed by a detailed context of the two case studies that are central to our analysis. We also briefly allude to our original contribution to the project: controlled empowerment of women.

Feminist Theory is referred to as the theorization of feminism, a movement that seeks to establish equality and social, political, economic, and legal rights for women [2]. Feminist theory uses discourse analysis as an academic tool to deconstruct the influence of power, language, and technology on gendered social relationships. In feminist studies, discourse provided women with an opportunity to expressly state standpoints and opinions about socio-political incidents that affect their position in the society. In culturally diverse countries, feminist standpoints become important to prevent marginalization and suppression of voices of women, especially those from minority communities. We use this understanding of feminism and women's movements to incorporate a careful examination of how discourses surrounding women's empowerment gets divided and marginalized based on political affiliations.

Affordance provided by Social Networking Sites (SNSs) to express individual opinions highlights the importance of social media in facilitating socio-political discussions across the world. By engaging with other users on Twitter, users express their political beliefs to amplify and suppress others' political opinions. Amplification and suppression often have serious implications on the trajectory of socio-political discourses that pan out on Twitter. Core functions such as Retweets, Favorites, and Tweeting guide the transitions between dominant discourses [48]. Users responsible for transitions in discourses on Twitter often employ abusive language towards marginalized user communities - women and minorities- in an effort to suppress demands of equality and inclusion in the discussions [8]. We use this understanding of discourses and trajectories on social media to establish transitions between dominant discourses in the two case studies through qualitative analysis of tweets. We also use political communication theories to discuss how suppression of dominant discourses surrounding women's empowerment encourages controlled empowerment under the influence of right wing intellectuals on Twitter.

In the Methodology section, we explain the two qualitative methodologies used for analysis- Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA). We collected 570 tweets using the hashtags #tripletalaq and #sabarimala. Using thematic analysis and feminist relational discourse analysis (FRDA), we identify the broad themes that users engage with, through the content of their tweets. The themes are used to extrapolate broad dominant discourses. We use our data set and the extrapolated discourses to answer the following overarching research questions:

**RQ1:** How and when does a discourse about women's empowerment transitions into a political narrative designed to appeal to religious sentiments?

**RQ2:** How does Twitter facilitate the shift in discourse from womens empowerment to focus on a political appeasement of religious identity in India?

**RQ3:** How does the rhetoric on women’s empowerment issues that plays out on Twitter contribute to expanding the current contributions in Feminist HCI?

We propose “Controlled Empowerment of women” as a concept to analyze the implications of our study. Controlled empowerment of women borrows from controlled emancipation to explain observations from a right wing worldview on feminism and women’s empowerment in India [35]. In our findings and through two case studies that represent the intersections between politics, the state and women’s agency in public and private domains, we show that there are inconsistencies and transitions between what we identify as ‘dominant discourses’ on Twitter. The findings show divided support for women’s empowerment debates in India, and suppression of discourses supporting women in both instant triple talaq and sabarimala temple case. In the discussion section, we interpret our findings, argue and suggest that divided support for a women empowerment as expressed in public and digital forums leads to and encourages controlled empowerment of women.

The following section presents details of the two case studies- instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple case.

## 1.1 Case Studies

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the government in India in 2014. BJP is associated with the conservative right wing organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which proclaims hindutva as its ideology [9]. Under the conservative agenda, the BJP was accused of being anti-muslim, anti-women empowerment, and fundamentalist Hindu party. Their re-branding for the 2014 elections campaign promotes their image as that of a pro-development, pro-empowerment leadership. Because of such inconsistent portrayal, any legislative decisions taken by the government are considered dubious in motivations and are often open to criticism. Critics target the leaders with accusations of discrimination and oppression on the basis of religion, caste, and class.

The debates in the last two years on India’s socio-political incidents Twitter were portrayed as a intersection of women’s empowerment issues and narratives related to religious groups’ rights and sentiments. For our interest, we take a look at two such online incidents: Instant Triple Talaq Case and the Sabarimala Temple Case. Both of these cases were chosen because of the presence of elements of women’s empowerment as well as religious sentiment, directed towards and against the right wing supporters of India, on Twitter.

### **1.1.1 Instant Triple Talaq Case**

The first case study is the instant triple talaq case which is about a divorce practice in the Muslim community of India. There are many laws already in place to help protect the fundamental rights of minority Muslim women in India, such as Domestic violence Act (2005), Muslim Women Act (1986), and Maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code [7]. The practice of Instant Triple Talaq is considered to be an important issue concerning the women of the largest minority group in the country [7], wherein the husband can divorce his wife by uttering the word ‘talaq’ three times through any means of communication. This practice makes the divorce final, with no scope for revoking the same. By contrast, a more common form of divorce in the Muslim community is the “talaq-ul-sunnat” within which, the husband and wife have to go through a three month period to attempt and reconcile the marriage. Failing to do so by either consummation or by explicit expression will then finalize the divorce [20].

The practice of Instant Triple Talaq is believed to precede domestic violence, sexual harassment or other severe charge of violation of fundamental rights of a woman [7]. Under the provisions of this law which was introduced and passed by the BJP government, a man uttering instantaneous Triple Talaq is liable to be imprisoned. Uttering the word “talaq” is believed to cause psychological trauma and many advocates of the criminalization bill are believed to be portraying Muslim women as devoid of rights and lacking agency, while the Muslim male is portrayed as pre-modern, lustful, and polygamous [7].

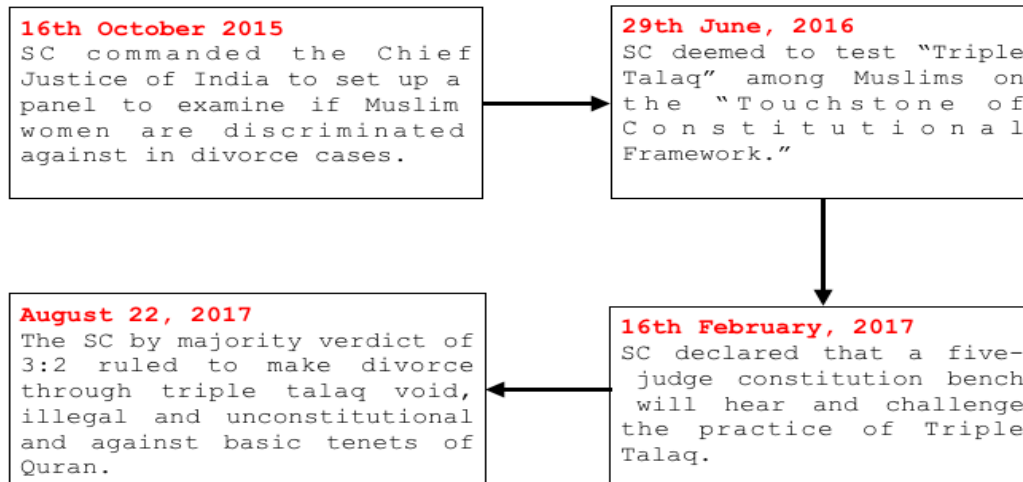
Hence, in an attempt to help empower the women of Muslim community who face the discrimination of Instant Triple Talaq, the Supreme Court of India declared the practice as unconstitutional on 22nd August 2017 [20]. Following this judgment, the Narendra Modi Government introduced a bill to criminalize the practice in December 2017, which faced major hurdles in the Upper House. Following this, an ordinance was signed by the President of India and a fresh bill was introduced in December 2018, which was passed by the lower house with strong support [20]. The bill was however not passed in the Upper House of Parliament, and hence, a fresh ordinance was approved by the President of India on January 12, 2019 again.

While this bill was being debated in the upper and lower house of Indian Government, it also faced criticism and support from activists and users of Social Media. Some argued about the bill as being a step towards greater empowerment for Muslim women. Others believed it to be a political move to polarize India’s voter population. Yet others deemed the bill as an attempt to alienate the men and women of a minority religious community, and an inappropriate interference into the personal laws of a religious group of citizens.

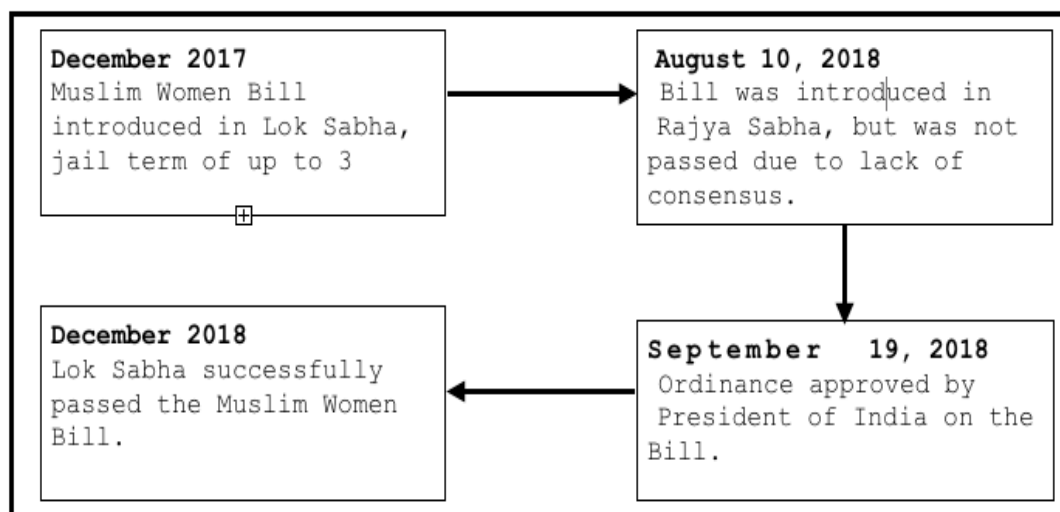
Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show the timelines of important events within the Instant Triple Talaq Case.

### **1.1.2 Sabarimala Temple Case**

The second case unfolded around Sabarimala, a Hindu temple located in Kerala, where women of menstruating age (10-50 years) have been banned from entering since it was established in the 13th

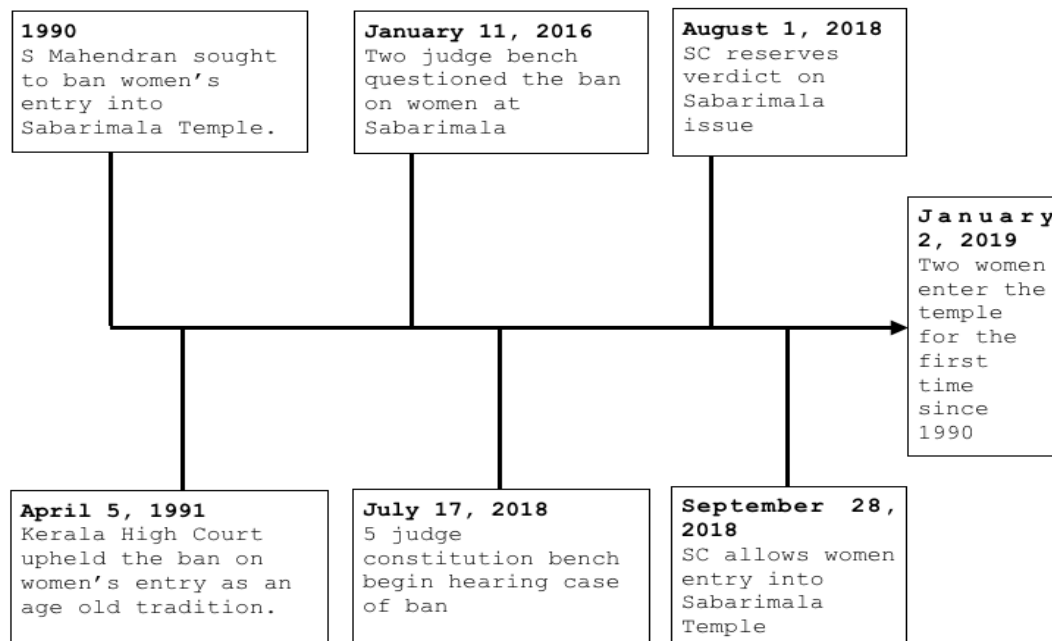


**Figure 1.1** Flowchart : Timeline of Events Leading up to the Declaration of Instant Triple Talaq as Unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Source: Outlook Magazine.



**Figure 1.2** Flowchart: Timeline of Events leading up to the issuance of a new Ordinance in January 2019 for Muslim Women Bill of the Instant Triple Talaq Case. Source: The Indian Express



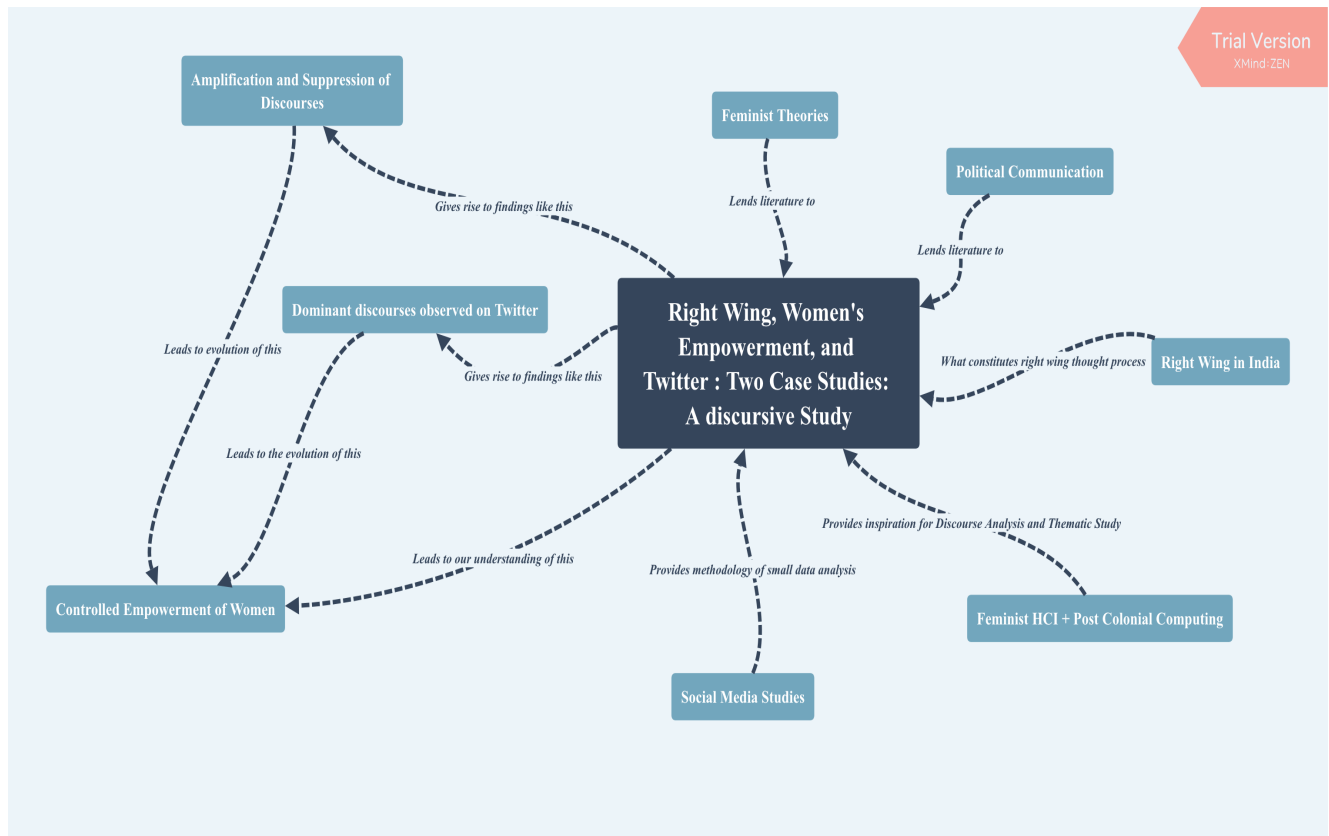


**Figure 1.3** Flowchart: Timeline of events leading up to the entry of two women into the Sabarimala shrine after it was banned for the first time in 1990. Source: The Indian Express

century. The reason behind such a restriction is the celibacy of the presiding deity (Lord Ayyappa). Presence of women is said to ‘hamper’ the celibacy of the deity, and ‘distracts’ him from his devotees’ prayers prompting the Sabarimala temple trustees banning the entry of women between the ages of 10 and 50. The discriminatory practices in Sabarimala raises important conflicts between freedom of practice of religion and right to equality and protection from gender based discrimination. Till date, the entry of women was banned as it was protected by the ‘morality’ clause in Freedom of Religion [18]. Now, the debate has ensued about whether the highest court in India, the Supreme Court, is permitted to pass judgment about a religious issue, or if the contentions must be resolved internally by the Hindu religious community devoted to Lord Ayyappa.

The Supreme Court of India declared that the ban on the entry for women of “menstruating age” within the walls of the Sabarimala Shrine was to be removed on September 29, 2018 [40]. This Verdict faced opposition from the devotees of Lord Ayyappa who believe that lifting of the ban is an infringement upon the rights of a celibate deity, who is deemed to have the constitutional right to privacy from women between age 10-50 years. The protest was also supported by women who tweeted #Ready-ToWait, a belief that violating the rights of a celibate deity is not ethically supportable for them [42]. This movement also received heavy support on Twitter with the hashtags #Sabarimala and #Ready-ToWait.

Figure 1.3 depicts the timeline of events within the Sabarimala Case since 1990 to 2nd January 2019.



**Figure 1.4** Flowchart depicting the entire summary of the thesis

In the next chapter, we will discuss related work we drew inspiration from to frame arguments and build our thesis. We draw our theoretical grounding from the domains of political communication, evolution of feminist theories over time, and from several strands of Feminist Human Computer Interaction (HCI).

For the purpose of clarity, Figure 1.4 presents a detailed flowchart with literature, methodological inspirations, and findings of the thesis.

## *Chapter 2*

### **Literature Review**

In this section, we will explain the various domains of study and theories shaping our study. We borrow from the traditional understanding of women and religious minorities as held by the Hindutva right wing supporters of India. Understanding right wing worldview about women and religious minorities helps us understand tweets supporting and opposing conservative right wing agendas vis-a-vis tweets supporting or opposing a liberal agenda.

To understand the implications of social networking sites on feminist debates in India, we borrow from literature pertaining to Feminist Human Computer Interaction (Fem. HCI) and post-colonial computing. Frameworks from these domains assist in contextualizing the use of Twitter for promoting political communication on the status of women's empowerment in India.

The study of discourses on Twitter has implications for online political communication. Twitter has become an important medium of informing and shaping public perception and political opinions of users. Its affordance is seen in the form of freedom of expression and anonymity for those who express an opinion. Both affordance and anonymity of online political communication have implications for a public debate, a social cause or a political rally. The thesis is about two such debates that rocked the political landscape of India and paved way to ponder about the nature of intersection between digital social media and the evolution of a political issue of serious import for human rights and empowerment.

### **2.1 Right Wing on Women's Empowerment in India**

A political ideology that is extremist and conservative in its beliefs and campaigns is traditionally referred to as the right wing of that country [12]. The conservative right wing leaders and supporters engage in promoting intense nationalist emotions and support for re-establishing traditions based on a majority based ethnic, religious, or social group. These are often characterized as anti-liberal and anti-democratic political opinions [17]. In India, the right wing ideology is called Hindutva, which was developed by the right wing intellectuals - V.D. Savarkar and Golwalkar [50].

Right wing intellectuals believe in highlighting specific goals and roles for citizens as well as leaders, all contributing to the formation and sustenance of a united ideological nation [45]. These roles often enforce traditions borrowed from traditions of the majority social group, and engages in suppression of

the freedoms of minority groups [17]. Golwalkar, in his elaboration on Hindutva, mentions Muslims as ‘minorities’ or ‘aliens’, who must submit to the traditions of Hindus or leave the motherland: India [25]. Through their manuscripts on Hindutva, Savarkar and Golwalkar outlined specific roles that citizens of a “Hindu” Nation are expected to play in order to restore the former glory of a Hindu Nation. The first use of this ideology was done to incite patriotism during India’s freedom movement against the British Raj. Today, the ideology has been adopted by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as its guiding principle to create a Hindu majoritarian nation [49]. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is the current ideological wing of the BJP. They preach Hindutva through organization of grassroots projects and workshops for both men and women, who each have specific roles to play within the larger project [1]. Here we outline the traditional roles underlined for Hindutva women:

Most commonly, women were symbols of worship of the Hindu goddess representing mother India. Women were expected to internalize the value systems of Hindus and teach their sons to become warriors willing to sacrifice their lives for the Hindu Nation. Women of the right wing supporter groups were also taught to detest men and women from the “other” Muslims, because the minorities were sketched as cruel, barbaric, rapists, captors, and disrespectful of the “purity” of women [46]. Ironically, women in the Hindu project were strategically provided “enough” agency to fight the battles against men and women of the other social groups. Against the men of Hindutva, women’s empowerment often weakened on grounds of traditions and rituals. Women were expected to obey and worship their Hindu husbands. The women were also expected to save their own “honor” if their husbands died in battle by immolating themselves in fire [11].

In this sense, the empowerment discourse of most eastern civilizations echoes an intersection between multiple socio-political identities based on religion, caste, class, race, ethnicity, and more [37]. Unlike the western, liberal feminist theories, eastern civilizations emphasize on multi-dimensional feminism. In India, the Hindutva project supports this assertion when Hindutva women incorporate concerns of caste and religion in their demand for emancipation or empowerment [11]. For Hindutva women, the assertion of empowerment necessarily intersects with discourses on religion based traditions, values, moralities, and agency. They would assert their power to attain power enough to legitimize their claims to public amenities of clean water, education for their children or themselves, medical care for their families, and permissions for celebration of Hindu festivals at community level in their geographical area. However similar to liberal feminist theories about accessibility for women this may seem, these women who are a product of Hindutva, will question the need for equality of rights in matters concerning religion. For instance, entry into the shrine of a God from their faith was considered an internal matter of the Hindu devotees of Lord Ayyappa [42]. This is also deeply rooted in revivalist movements of colonial India, wherein the movements to ban Sati and permit widow remarriage were aimed at reforming the image of an “ideal upper class Hindu woman” who was expected to take care of home and hearth by their male counterparts [11].

In addition to internalizing submission to Hindutva men, Hindutva women are expected to internalize the alienation of “other” women: Muslim women. Hindutva is an exclusive nationalist agenda,

thriving on emotionally, politically, socially, and economically excluding “other” communities. Lower caste groups, Muslims and Christians, and women of other religious groups are traditionally viewed as intruders, minorities, others, or as outsiders in the Hindu Nation. Savarkar asserted in his book “Essentials of Hindutva” that minorities are always outsiders to the hindu nation [45]. As a consequence, they are supposed to follow the rules and traditions of the hindu nation, or forever remain alienated to the Nation [25]. Hindutva women supporters tend to assert that Hindutva men are allowing agency to women of other communities to emerge as empowered from “oppressive, barbaric, and detrimental” traditions perpetrated by “other” men against them, internalizing the alienation of minority communities successfully. Minorities often also include liberal feminists who demand equality and freedom from traditions imposed by the Hindutva framework of life [11]. We argue that the conflict between Hindutva women supporters (also called Hindutva women) and liberal feminists gives rise to a divided support for the women as a community and has implications for controlled empowerment of women [30].

## **2.2 Right Wing on Religious Minorities in India**

India is a multicultural society with communities speaking different languages, following different religions, and following complex caste and class divisions. In an attempt at forging solidarity and equality between the diverse communities, India formally adopted Secularism as a landmark addition to the Preamble of its Constitution after independence from British imperialism [31]. However, the western notions of secularism proclaim strict separation of State and Religion, and Indias definition of the term includes responsibility of the state to enforce protection and provide equal opportunities to all religious minorities [31].

Under the purview of Secularism, India’s legislative assembly abolished many regressive practices from the Hindu Personal Laws including child marriage and untouchability. While this was empowering for Hindu Women, we suggest that similar laws to empower women of religious minorities were not implemented, with regards to personal laws. The instant triple talaq case was thus seen as a landmark judgment for the rights of muslim women.

In 1980, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the government in India, a nationwide uprising of the right wing ideology and its influence, for the first time since India’s independence, was observed. The BJP was affiliated with organizations such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Durga Vahini, and Bajrang Dal, all of which fall under the umbrella influence of Hindutva, India’s dominant right-wing political ideology [9]. The increasing influence of BJP and other pro-Hindutva organizations implied a unification of the Hindu majority population, across diversities of caste, class, and gender identities. This proved to be a difficult project, especially because of severe historical distance and hatred amongst these identities within the Hindu Nation. Hence, the right-wing organizations turned to Savarkar and Golwalkar for inspiration, leading to the Muslim community being targeted as the “others, aliens, or outsiders” [25].

According to Golwalkar, the Muslim community was viewed as mere minorities by Hindutva supporters, “claiming nothing, deserving no privileges and no preferential treatment, and who must strive to respect and uphold the glorification of Hindu race and culture” [44]. This ideology was partially adopted by the RSS, the ideological wing of the BJP, and has been promoted via routine ritualized meetings, training members for physical fitness, and reciting patriotic songs at RSS meetings. This mobilization was used by the BJP to carefully script a ‘pro-development’, ‘good governance’, and ‘empowerment of minorities’ stance during the 2014 general elections campaign. BJP ultimately won by a landslide, establishing their influence at the national level as a development oriented political party, rather than a conservative Hindu party [41]. The BJP government has strived to empower muslim women through criminalization of a divorce based practice called Instant Triple Talaq. While gratefully welcomed by women as a step towards eliminating regressive laws, the criminalization of this law has been seen as a step towards a unified civil code, a potential imposition of “one” code of personal laws, eliminating the unique minority rights as a secular feature from India.

This discourse of the right-wing Hindutva leaders and supporters has panned out not only offline and through political rallies, but also on Twitter. We now discuss the importance of understanding discourse on Twitter, implications for women’s empowerment and their relationship to a narrative on religious minorities as they evolve and establish in the two cases of instant triple talaq case and sabarimala temple case.

## 2.3 Discourses on Twitter

A discourse is a collective/ shared process of understanding the world, it is a collection of information that helps make sense of a string of discrete events/ incidents/ actions and behaviors [14]. Discourse Analysis helps researchers to understand which symbols/ phrases/ incidents are meaningful or significant in a particular time and space. These symbols often are linked to other significant symbols in another frame of time and space, thus helping us link various events and people together coherently [28].

Today, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), are becoming a primary and important platform for dissemination of political news, debates and discussions about all major incidents that occur across the world. People and news agencies not only use this medium to talk about the details of major occurrences, but also contribute to manipulation, transformation, and expression of identities forged by their users. The identities belong to religion, caste, class, or gender. The discourses surrounding these identities thus get amplified or suppressed, on the basis of the type of content users post and engage with on these platforms.

In India, the rise of Hindutva right wing in politics has influenced an interplay between discourses around women’s empowerment and narratives about religious minorities. Leaders of right wing organizations and their political fronts have claimed to be working for empowerment of women but most of these assertions have a communal angle, where Muslim women or Hindu women are prioritized as a

community deemed important for empowerment. Communal assertions in calls for empowerment render the “women” community as a non-coherent body of individuals, and their right to greater freedom transitions to a communal preference for one community over the other. A divided discourse on feminist empowerment then becomes instrumental in sidelining the broader picture of equality for women and men in favor of a legislative body that hands out preferential and biased treatment to religious communities.

Through the use of emotional appeal and indirect engagement such as ‘following back the more belligerent and extreme right wing users’ on Twitter, right wing leaders in India appeal to the sentiments of extreme and users at large who engage with specific volatile communal incidents, such as the instant triple talaq [39]. Right wing support for empowerment of “Muslim Women” is expressed through an aggressive show of strength for introducing laws that ban/ criminalize the practice of instant divorce. To convey this message, the right wing use strong emotional appeal, phrases that allude to the religious sentiments, mention of Muslim organizations that support such laws, and even allude to BJP’s pro-development pro-empowerment narrative [41].

To study the impact of Twitter on dominant discourses in the two case studies, instant triple talaq and sabarimala temple case, we make attempt to understand the significance of Feminist HCI and the theoretical strengths it offers to our study. We actively borrow from Feminist HCI and the understanding of relationships between technology and society by focusing on social media discourses through a feminist angle. We explain related work from Feminist HCI in the next section.

## **2.4 Feminist HCI Research: Characteristics**

Feminist HCI is an upcoming and relevant domain of study within the HCI community stemming from the need to evaluate the role and impact of technology in shaping discourses surrounding agency, social justice, and empowerment attained by women through use and design of technologies itself [34]. A newly developing domain of study, Feminist HCI incorporates a diverse set of theories - Feminist and Queer theories along with an understanding of how metaphors and phrases embedded in technology can affect and manipulate the assertion and identification of users with different genders [47].

Through their paper “Towards a Feminist Methodology”, Shaowen and Jeffrey Bardzell write about the relevance of Feminist Theories in the domain of Human Computer Interaction (HCI). HCI as a domain of study has traditionally focused on areas of affective computing, experience design, domestic technologies, and so on. But, as technology is increasingly being incorporated as an essential element of users’ daily lives, it has become important to establish the impact of design and interactions on social, political, and economic lives of these stakeholders. To evaluate impact of digital interactions, HCI has diversified its interest, borrowing from multiple social science domains - Feminist and Queer Theories, Epistemologies, Philosophy, Economics, Psychology, and Political Science [47]. Bardzell and Bardzell focused on the impact of Feminist Theories on HCI, bringing into forefront, the niche study commonly termed as “Feminist HCI.”

Feminist HCI borrows three philosophical connotations from Feminism as a domain of social science. First is a rejection of scientific objectivity as being value-free, second is to validate all human experiences (also known as standpoints) to be included into research practices, and the third is to commit to maintaining Gender as a relevant axis of study within the larger HCI community [10].

Bardzell and Bardzell borrow extensively from the Feminist Standpoint Theory, wherein it is believed that “all knowledge is socially situated” [21] and borrows particular characteristics from the theory. First characteristic states that every standpoint/ experience is situated in a physical, geographical location in nature and a woman’s knowledge about women’s issues is thus located within her being. Secondly, since knowledge is socially situated, the interests, goals, and aspirations of men and women are likely to be fundamentally different. The third characteristic discusses differences- diverse metaphors, symbols, and linguistic structures of discourses- which are expected to be at play on social media. Last characteristic allocates importance to the social production of knowledge, via publications and active research project [10].

Thus, Feminist HCI demands that relevant research activities show commitment to scientific as well as moral objectivity. It must explicitly borrow from Feminist Theories and models. A Feminist HCI methodology is expected to focus on motivations of the social groups being studied, and a disclosure of researcher’s personal standpoints about research goals, intellectual and political beliefs, as applicable, is expected along with a focus on methodology that arches over the boundaries of all relevant domains of study. Feminist HCI projects expect an involvement of subjects and their standpoint in analysis and implementation when feasible. Lastly, a commitment and reflection on whether the research contributes to improving the understanding of Feminism, to improve human life, and to undermine and criticize, rather than re-enforce existing gendered hierarchies is expected [10].

In the latter sections we unfold the contributions of our study to improving the understanding of Feminist HCI especially in the use of the above mentioned methodological positions laid out by Bardzell and Bardzell. We also explain the confluence of feminism and technology studies contributes to our understanding of controlled empowerment of women through a study of twitter content and the identification and transformations of dominant discourses.

While engaging in a Feminist HCI research project, there are a few fundamental arguments scholars aspire to put forth. Jennifer Rode argues about the need to investigate Gender as a “social product”, because it affects everyday interactions between technology and its users, designers, and researchers [43]. According to Rode, there are a few approaches to gender within the HCI study, which are relevant to setting a theoretical perspective on Feminist HCI [43]:

- **Liberal Feminism:** it instinctively refutes the possibility of gender based differences and argues for equality to be achieved given equal opportunities to men and women. Researchers following this school of thought thus reject gender as an affective variable from their studies, and assume technology to be inherently gender- neutral.
- **Gender parameterization for Interface Design:** here, scholars believe there to be an inherent difference in how men and women perform some tasks, in terms of mental ability, time restriction,



and body capability. This school of thought leads to “women centric technologies”, but also runs the risk of normatively assigning male-centric technology as important, and expecting women-centric technologies to enable women to ‘catch up’ with their counterparts.

- **Ethnomethodological treatment of gender:** according to this approach, it is important to engage in an ethnography with the female population of users, in order to understand and evaluate their needs, goals, and aspirations. In doing so, researchers are more likely to actively acknowledge how women and men manage their gender roles and identities in a social setting, enabling appropriate norms to technologies.

We evaluate how Social Networking Sites (SNSs) claim to be inherently gender-neutral by allowing equal opportunity for men and women users to express opinions, feelings, and thoughts. Despite the claim, the lived body experience of users from these genders seems to depict a contradiction. An article by Amnesty International on Twitter’s impact on women users [8] shows how women on Twitter face systematic abuse and suppression of opinions that they express on various social, political, and economic issues. Through our findings and discussions, we show how not only suppression but a subversion of voices on Twitter impacts women’s empowerment discourses for the two case studies in India- instant triple talaq and Sabarimala.

Breslin and Wadhwa (2014) in their paper “Nuanced Gender Perspectives within the HCI Community” discuss the need to educate ourselves- as researchers, about the risk of technologies enforcing stereotypes, abuse, and regressive gender roles as normative among its users [16]. Being aware of this risk is no easy task because it requires an active engagement with theories from Feminism, Queer Theories, Identity Politics, and their relevance to the design of technology. Breslin and Wadhwa write about the need for gender design, a technology developed by catering to the demands of minority gender groups and their inter group relationships with members from dominant sections of society [16]. Our study actively credits Feminist Standpoint Theory and Framing Theory as an inspiration for understanding inclusion and social context for inclusivity. Discourse Analysis and Thematic Studies are rigorously employed to engage with our research questions. We also explicitly strive to establish reflexivity enumerating ways in which marginalized identities get hindered in the process of technological advancements and the primacy afforded to technological innovation over and above the implications for human-computer interactions.

## 2.5 Borrowing from Post Colonial HCI

Since our case studies are based in India, a developing post-colonial nation, we employ insights from post colonial HCI in the understanding of Twitter generated discourses on religious minorities and womens empowerment.

Most of the literature on Post colonial computing centered its analysis around the problems of transferring technologies from “industrialized” to “developing” economies. Irani *et. al.*, in their seminal

work, declare that the most commonly faced challenges for design and implementation of technologies in developing nations lie within contradicting/ conflicting assumptions and practices within the diverse cultures, political, economic, and social settings [29]. To overcome these challenges and to make the technological transfer a success in countries like India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, among others, researchers in the field of HCI are now studying the different definitions of privacy, political and social identities, cultural traditions, and their consequent impacts on the use of imported technologies [29].

One of the many facets of culture studied under this umbrella domain is gender. Feminist HCI is thus closely related to post colonial computing. We choose to actively engage with understanding how definitions of privacy, shared usage, political communication, and the use of symbols and metaphors are affected by different perspectives on gender in the different cultures. In India, we see that gender and religion have a close relationship with each other, which complicates the nature of discourse shared on Twitter. This complication is most closely observed and exploited by the political voices of India, to transform users' political identities to promote and suppress certain sensitive political discourses.

## **2.6 Theories in Political Communications**

Political Communication is a very complex multi-layered study of socio-political systems, media communications, public perceptions about socio-political issues, and political cultures across the world [13]. In simpler words, political communication is about understanding how consumers of politics in a country engage with such information.

Traditionally, active consumers of politics relied on news channels and print media for political information. However, with the advent of social media platforms and the internet in general, news has become available through an exponentially large number of sources. Additionally, these sources also become centers of the “fake news” phenomenon, because validity of news is almost impossible to check. More importantly, the internet has become a primary point of contact between influential leaders and their supporters, making this platform very central to the framing of “public image.” The formation and sustenance of public images requires that leaders engage in sustained long term and real time contact with their “followers”. This also means that influential writers, political leaders, and citizens in general are expected to opine about every possible political and social incident of relevance to the society they represent.

The Framing Theory was first developed by Entman (1993) when he defined frames as: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” [19]. With this seminal definition of frames, framing theory posits that political incidents that occur in a country are subjected to certain patterns of amplified and suppressed narratives. The processes of amplification and suppression depend on dominant interpretations that are temporally relevant to the incident and to the larger political situation in place [32]. Framing theory in political communication tells us that the why, what, where, and when of a politically

significant incident will most often affect public perceptions about political leaders, government, dominant social-groups, and politically active citizens [13]. With the increasing influence of social media, understanding the applications of Framing Theory and Discursive Studies through Tweets is becoming more and more important.

Our study borrows the understanding of Frames in Political Communication. We believe a deep investigation of the effects of framing on Twitter can benefit from an engagement with Discourse Analysis and Thematic Studies. Hence, we combine the two qualitative methodologies to investigate how Twitter formulates and manipulates discourses surrounding feminism, right wing ideology, and religious traditions. We investigate how the discourse surrounding women's empowerment get maneuvered into discourse about religious traditions, based on the temporal interference of right wing leaders, in the two political incidents surrounding the legislative ban of the practice of instant triple talaq and the right of entry of women into the Sabarimala temple.

## Chapter 3

### Methodologies

In the previous section, we explain the existing and related literature that our study borrows from. In the following section, we elaborately state the methodologies used to conduct our analysis. We begin by explaining Thematic Analysis, our first qualitative research methodology. Then we explain Discourse Analysis, which inspired our second methodology, Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA).

Both methodologies employed are qualitative in nature, and are concerned with establishing appropriate socio-political context to explain the effectiveness of Twitter in facilitating the development and transition of discourses. Since establishing context requires careful and deep interactions with the data set, a feasible size of tweets set was designed. This was inspired by Small Data Analysis [38]. We explain the inspirations for small data in this section as well.

We also establish the entire process of data collection, data set construction, and extraction of themes and discourses in a detailed account in this section.

#### 3.1 Data set

The data set used for analysis consists of 570 tweets, collected from Twitter based on trending hashtags in each of the two case studies. For instant triple talaq case, the hashtag used was #TripleTalaq or #tripleTalaq. For the Sabarimala case, the hashtag used was #Sabarimala or #sabarimala.

The official Twitter API does not allow users to collect tweets beyond 7 days from the date of running the script. As we wished to scrape data that was older than almost one year, we used a python script called “Get Old Tweets Programmatically”, developed by Jefferson Henrique [27]. The queries were run in the format shown in Fig 3.1.

```
python Exporter.py --querysearch "<given hashtag>" --since  
<start date for search> --until <end date for search>;
```

**Figure 3.1** Python query format used for scraping tweets

An initial data set contained 91,979 tweets. It was not feasible to conduct a qualitative analysis on the entire data set, and so the data set was reduced to 570 tweets, using the favorites functionality as criterion for filtering.

Favorites is a core functionality of Twitter [33], alongside Retweets, Replies, and Tweets themselves. According to Meier *et. al.*(2014), favorites is used most significantly for a response/reaction or a purpose/function [33]. Based on the study, there are two main uses of the favorites function:

- **Response or reaction to a tweets content**

As a response to a tweet, the favorites function is used to express liking. This means that the user favoriting a tweet likes the content, and might find it useful or relevant to his/ her thoughts or opinions. The use of favorites might also be done to absorb relevant information or opinions by users as a form of passive engagement with the content. The author of the tweet may also be a favorite person or a preferred source of information for the users favoriting tweets, indicating agreement with the author and every opinion they present on Twitter. Lastly, favoriting could also be an emotional reaction to the tweets content. It could evoke happiness, sadness, anger, inspiration or any other emotion in the users using this feature. All of these responses are based on the study conducted by Meier *et. al.* (2014).

- **Purpose or function of a tweets content**

The use of Favorites as a function/purpose could be done for a number of purposes.

According to Meier, *et. al* (2014), some of these functions includes bookmarking [33]. Users may find tweets relevant and wish to save them, for reference at a later date. Another function of the favorites feature is to engage users in subconscious communication. Subconscious agreement is the most important message conveyed by users to the authors of tweets by engaging with this feature. Also, favorites is a more passive form of online engagement and online action that users engage in. Without conveying explicitly, the users can still support or opine about any incident, by selectively favoriting tweets based on content. Favorites would thus be a proof of user engagement in the discourse and their participation in the manipulation of trajectories of an online discourse. All of these functions are based on the study conducted by Merier, Elsweiler, and Wilson (2014) [33].

We claim that tweets in our data set, if filtered based on the favorites function, would assume the some of the above mentioned uses, such as emotional appeals, passive engagement with the discourse, subconscious communication, and more. We thus used favorites as the filtering criterion in created a subset of 570 tweets. We sorted the tweets starting from the top favorited tweets to the least favorited tweets, and then selected the following number of tweets from each date to create our required data set.

The thesis employs a combination of two techniques of qualitative analysis of tweets in order to answer the research questions: Thematic analysis, and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis. We explain the motivations and steps involved in both of these methodologies, before explaining the process of analysis used.

### 3.2 Theme Detection: Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a qualitative research methodology that forms the foundation for most qualitative analyses such as Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory Method, and many more. Thematic Analysis allows us as researchers to investigate data as a source of common themes across the entire data set. Thematic Analyses are either mere reports of people's experiences and varied realities, or a process of understanding how these realities and experiences are formed from discourses existing in society [24].

A theme is a pattern or a semi-structured response that underlines a dominant section of our data set, obtained after a rigorous interaction with the text, audio, or visual data. Most thematic studies are embedded in one of either inductive or deductive analytical methods. Within the inductive method, importance is given to allowing themes to emerge, with no pre-determined code set. Unlike the inductive method, deductive method bases its analysis on a pre-coded set of themes, which is drawn from a relevant set of research questions that are modeled by the researchers [15]. The most ideal implementation of these two distinctive methods is to conduct an initial organization of the data set into a set of broad themes. Following the initial encoding, researchers are then urged to delve into understanding the social and political theories that the themes contribute to. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), following are the steps which help to conduct a "good" thematic study [15]:

- **Data set Familiarization:** to read and understand every bit of the data and simultaneously note any initial ideas and themes that seem to emerge from this reading [15].
- **Initial Encoding:** Listing down interesting ideas that emerge from researcher's understanding of the data set in relationship with the research questions that the data is expected to answer [15].
- **Search for common themes:** Look for common and overlapping themes that your initially encoded list gives rise to. This could also include making a note of contradictory themes and elimination of similar themes by merging them into a broader idea. This stage gives researchers a hierarchy of candidate themes and their corresponding sub-themes [15].
- **Review themes:** At this stage, a roughly clear list of themes that are relevant to the research questions of the project is obtained. The task now is to re-visit the data set and find samples that strongly agree with the obtained list of candidate themes. A certain degree of quantitative analysis can be employed in order to decide the dominance and significance of themes, so that the less important ones can be collapsed into the more important ones [15].
- **Defining themes:** After drawing up a reviewed list of themes, the researchers can now name the obtained list by identifying the "essence" of each and every theme in the list. An important characteristic of themes at this stage is coherency. All themes finalized and named at this stage must contribute to the narrative/ discourse that the researcher is trying to draw from the data set [15].

- **Report:** The final stage of this rigorous process is to report the list as the collection of final themes that are obtained and that define every element in the data set the best. It is important to note vivid and supporting examples from the data set to support themes when reporting them formally [15].

Every single phase in the above mentioned process of thematic analysis requires rigorous and active engagement with the data. For the purpose of our analysis, we use this method in combination with feminist relational discourse analysis to conduct a small data analysis on Tweets. In the further sections, we highlight the significance of small data analysis, especially by using qualitative methodologies like discourse analysis. By engaging with themes and discourses derived from social media data, we seek to establish the role that Twitter plays on contextualizing information. Contexts are extremely important to understand social relations, power structures, and political communication.

Besides context, thematic study also allows authors to derive knowledge from within the text. While conducting a study about political communication, technology, and feminism, it is important to situate all knowledge within the text. Emergent coding is an important guideline for both thematic study and discourse analysis. It allows researchers to study subtle and glaring pieces of information within a text, and consequently makes the data set a richer source of insight. Inspired by this, we decided to engage deeply with the data, making the voice of users central to our study. We consider users' tweet content as the source of all insights we find, and use that knowledge to answer our research questions. After gathering emergent themes from the data set, we deduce overarching discourses using the feminist relational discourse analysis. Before explaining the methodology, let's discuss the background of discourse analysis.

### 3.3 Encoding Themes: Discourse Analysis

A discourse is an organized set of statements, or sentences that convey a coherent meaning to places, actors, and incidents in a given space and time. Discourse Analysis (DA) as a qualitative research methodology is widely used to shed light on how worldviews, identities, and opinions are shaped by the social, political, and economic incidents that occur in societies across the world. DA has been employed in understanding socio-political interactions within a community and even between individuals from multiple communities.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the most commonly employed DA techniques. According to Hussain *et. al.* (2015), CDA consists of frameworks that describe a complicated relationship between language, identity formation, and power [28]. There are seven approaches of employing CDA according to Hussain *et. al.* (2015):

- **Critical Linguistics** discusses how different biases present within a discourse can at times alter or manipulate the reality behind socio-political events that shape a discourse [28].

- **Socio-cognitive approach** discusses how individual and social cognition can directly or indirectly impact the structure of discourse by influencing the interpretations brought out by people engaging with the discourse [28].
- **Discourse-historical approach** engages with historical background that has impacted a discourse and shaped its current versions/ interpretations [28].
- **Socio-cultural Change** studies an important kind of discourse, the relationship between personal and political, within a socio-political change that occurs in a community or between communities [28].
- **Feminist approach** is the most relevant to our research, and most commonly engages with understanding how gender, identity, and power interact in society. In more recent adaptations of this approach, the relationship between these elements of a society are studied in the context of technological innovations. Studies conducted using this approach give deep insights into gendered technologies, design implications, and the impact of technology on re-enforcing gender stereotypes in the increasingly modern societies [28].
- **Multi-model approach** studies the interactions between different modalities of communications, such as texts and visual inputs [28].
- **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** [28].

For analysis of Social Media, we engage with discourse analysis as an important qualitative research methodology. However, CDA is best known for its rigorous and multi-disciplinary application, and its dependence on an element of quantitative research analysis [28]. We borrow from the broader concept of DA, the understanding that gender, identity and power are closely related. We also borrow the significance of actively engaging with discourse in order to understand the complex relationship between these elements of an individual's persona. In addition to this, we introduce the notion that Twitter as a social networking site, has significant impact on how individuals build an online personality. We use DA, specifically Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis as our guiding methodology to further Thematic Findings to explain the complicated relationship between gender, discourse, religion, and social media technology in India's socio-political context.

### 3.4 Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis

Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA) is a novel approach in DA proposed to encourage voice-oriented analysis of discourse. FRDA focuses on providing importance to the voice and agency of marginalized communities, such as women, religious minorities, lower economic classes, and so on in research concerning oppression and suppression of these groups. This is also a qualitative approach



that is focused on discourses around identity, power, and gender in construction of socio- political relationships [51].

Through our research, we use FRDA to understand the complex relationships between gender, religion, politics, and identity in India. We first highlight the basic process of conducting an FRDA on Tweets, and then, using examples, showcase how tweets represent a shift in discourse from gender to religion. We will further highlight how the shift implies the marginalization of gender issues online.

According to Thompson *et. al.* (2018), discourse and the way it is used has a significant impact on development and assertion of socio-political identity by marginalized groups of people [51]. Linguistic manifestation of identity is fundamental to understanding the evolution of discourse, and hence, essential to discourse analysis. Therefore, while conducting an analysis of discourses surrounding women's empowerment, or religion-based oppression, it is imperative to pay attention to changes in linguistic structures. The framing of sentences can reveal significant details about how discourse shifts to focus on religion-based oppression, when it is expected to focus on women's oppression. When we study our case study based tweets, we focus on sentence structure: phrases and keywords which will reveal the transformation within a discourse.

FRDA places great importance on "voice" as the central site of all meaning in a discourse. With voice as a central element of a discourse, an otherwise one-dimensional narrative can become a complex exploration of power structures and voices that are suppressed within these structures [51]. While engaging with tweets related to Sabarimala and instant triple talaq, we employ one phase out of the two described by Thompson *et. al.* (2018). There are seven steps to conduct an FRDA:

- **Reading** and re-reading each tweet in order to familiarize oneself with the data, and to note any initial, broad themes and ideas that may emerge. When we perform thematic analysis, we list out all the broad themes we observe across the data set. These are highlighted in the Findings section. There were a total of 50 themes observed when all the tweets were analyzed in the first iteration [51].
- **Chunking** the data set into sections that are classified based on incidents, changes in political stances, dates, and themes devised in step 1 [51]. For tagging the emergent themes for the data set, we chunked the data set into the following chunks, based on the dates of the incidents and labelled them accordingly. Table 3.1 shows the final data set obtained after chunking. Following this, we iteratively tagged the data set and observed that some themes arched over the entire case study, while some were specific to corresponding chunks.
- **Descriptive coding** based on the chunks obtained from step 2, for all the tweets. For some of the tweets, we labelled more than one themes, depending on all the observable dominant themes. This was done because each tweet contributed to a complex context that panned across more than one theme.
- **Identifying recurrent themes**, merging similar themes together and separating dissimilar themes. This step requires going through the entire data set again. By coding tweets for more than one

<b>Date</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Case</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Number of Tweets</b>
01st August 2018	SC Reserves Verdict	Sabarimala Case	SR1	50
28th September 2018	SC allows women entry	Sabarimala Case	SR2	100
02nd January 2019	Two women enter temple for the first time	Sabarimala Case	SR3	100
22nd August 2017	SC declares Instant triple Talaq as Un-constitutional	Instant Triple Talaq Case	TT1	100
28th December 2017	Lok Sabha introduced Muslim Women Bill for the first time	Instant Triple Talaq Case	TT-5	50
19th September 2018	Ordinance approved by President of India	Instant Triple Talaq Case	TT4	50
27th December 2018	Lok Sabha passed Muslim Women Bill	Instant Triple Talaq Case	TT2	100
12th January 2019	Fresh Ordinance approved by President of India	Instant Triple Talaq Case	TT3	20

**Table 3.1** Details of the data set used, after chunking

themes, we observed that some of the themes were repeated across multiple dates within an incident [51]. 11 themes per case were observed to pan over the entire case study. These are highlighted in the Findings section. We also observed that some of the themes were not limited to one case, but were present in both the cases. These themes were merged together to create a final list of dominant themes/ discourses.

- **Identifying dominant discourses** within the data set. This would be sets of statements, phrases, or keywords that form a coherent description of reality. It could also be a set of statements that describe a person or incident or phenomenon coherently. From the list of dominant themes, we identified three major discourses that overarched the entire narrative for both cases [51].
- **Discursive pattern recognition** implies combining the dominant discourses to obtain an overarching story that all the tweets together narrate [51]. With examples, we show how each tweets contributed to the dominant discourse, and how tweets themselves allowed one discourse to emerge as dominant, at one specific Date of Significance.
- **Discursive realms assignment** involves turning to theoretical frameworks within HCI and Feminist Theories to explain and articulate obtained discursive patterns. This will entail classification and location of our themes and patterns within a broader, theoretical and historical background knowledge [51].

Following the above steps, we arrive at dominant discourses that arch over all the dates of significance across both the incidents. These dominant discourses aid us highlight popular perceptions of the incident to users of twitter as they gain momentum on the platform. Within the dominant discourse our study endeavors to situate and interpret the more subtle and fine grained narratives that run the risk of being engulfed by broader and more visible ones.

### 3.5 Selecting main events within the case studies

In this section, we explain how we obtained the broad themes from our data set, using thematic analysis.

After collecting tweets for both hashtags, #TripleTalaq and #Sabarimala, we filtered the tweets to remove any tweets that were in languages other than Hindi and English. This was necessary because the researchers who engaged in the coding and analysis process were only fluent in these two languages. We collected the tweets by first identifying dates within each case that contained “newsworthy” information that would potentially spark debates online. Each of these dates contributed to furthering the debates on the cases, but some incidents were of more importance than others because they sparked outrage and dialogue that continued for at least 5 days after the event had occurred.

We also identify the dates as “Dates of Significance (DoS)” because the events resulted in massive reporting in newspapers across India and contributed to offline discussions as well. For the DoS, we

collected tweets for hashtags used on the DoS and for five days afterwards. For the less significant dates, we only collected and investigated tweets using the hashtag only on the date of the incident. In the instant triple talaq case, the trending hashtag #TripleTalaq was used to scrape tweets from Twitter for the dates, as shown in Table 3.2.

Out of these dates, two dates, 22nd August 2017 and 27th December 2018 are the DoS, because these two sparked massive outrage and discussions online, among communities that supported and opposed instant triple talaq. The events of these dates are important landmark incidents that introduced new perspectives and stakeholders to the case. 22nd August 2017 marked the first instance of any action being taken, against the discriminatory practice of divorce, that would give women a sense of empowerment [20]. 28th December 2018 was the day when instant triple talaq Bill was passed in the Lower House successfully, making this practice punishable by law. A jail term of up to 3 years was introduced as a provision of the bill [3].

In the case of Sabarimala Verdict, Table 3.3 shows the dates from which tweets pertaining to #Sabarimala were retrieved for analysis along with their landmark incidents.

Out of these dates, 28th September 2018 and 02nd January 2019 are the DoS, because they sparked major outrage online as well as offline. The verdict passed by Supreme Court on 28th September 2018 led to offline protests outside the shrine, and devotees threatened to physically guard the entrance to the shrine from women [6]. On 2nd January 2019, after multiple failed attempts, the first women were able to break the traditional ban and enter the shrine, amidst heavy security [22].

### **3.6 Investigation of Themes**

Our final data set consisted of 570 tweets, across both case studies. The favorites function on Twitter was used as the filtering criteria, and the following is the break up of number of tweets from each date for each case that were compiled for our data set. Table 3.4 represents tweets for instant triple talaq Case. Table 3.5 represents tweets for Sabarimala Case.

We will now refer to our final subset of Tweets as our data set. Along with tweet content, we compiled a tabular representation of the tweet information, with username, number of retweets, number of favorites, and the date and time of the tweet. We also compiled the tweets into separate spreadsheets according to the dates defined in the tables 3.4 and 3.5.

The first step towards analysis was to develop a set of common themes for each of the data set. We followed the six steps explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) to develop a list of 9 broad themes applicable for the case studies. For each of the two case studies, we developed separate sets of themes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Incident of Significance</b>
22nd August 2017	The Supreme Court of India deemed Instant Triple Talaq as unconstitutional on this day
28th December 2017	The Lower House of Parliament of India (Lok Sabha) introduced the bill to criminalize Instant Triple Talaq, following the Supreme Courts Verdict
19th September 2018	The President of India approved the ordinance for the bill criminalizing the divorce act
27th December 2018	Lok Sabha passed the bill that criminalized the practice of Instant Triple Talaq.(write provisions of the bill)
12th January 2019	The upper house of Central Government of India, Rajya Sabha, could not approve the bill in time before the President's ordinance expired. So on this date, the president approved a fresh ordinance for the same.

**Table 3.2** Dates signifying landmark incidents within Instant Triple Talaq case

<b>Date</b>	<b>Incident of Significance</b>
01st August 2018	The verdict was reserved by the Supreme Court, for lifting the ban on women between ages 10 and 50 years from entering into the Sabarimala temple shrine.
28th September 2018	The Supreme Court allowed entry for women's entry into the Sabarimala temple, for women of menstruating age (10-50 years).
02nd January 2019	The first women enter the Sabarimala temple since the ban was lifted. They were Bindu and Kanaka, and they manage to successfully enter the temple after multiple failed attempts [22].

**Table 3.3** Dates signifying landmark incidents within Sabarimala case

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Tweets</b>
22nd August 2017	100 Tweets
28th December 2017	50 Tweets
19th September 2018	50 Tweets
27th December 2018	100 Tweets
12th January 2019	20 Tweets

**Table 3.4** Number of Tweets in Instant Triple Talaq Case

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Tweets</b>
01st August 2018	50 Tweets
28th September 2018	100 Tweets
02nd January 2019	100 Tweets

**Table 3.5** Number of Tweets in Sabarimala temple Case

### 3.7 Emergent Coding

To analyze the data set rigorously, emergent coding was used. The study began by merely reading all the tweets that were collected, filtered and compiled as the final data set. While doing so, we noted the broad notions that each tweet conveyed: whether the tweet was conveying “support” or “opposition” towards the verdict, or towards the Bill (in case of instant triple talaq). It was also noted if the tweets were positive and congratulatory to the cause of women, or critical and abusive in nature. Tweets were tagged as “neutral” or merely an update about the case, if they did not convey any opinions.

Tweets that conveyed opinions were categorized based on what they discussed. Some tweets discussed the constitutional validity of the Triple Talaq Bill, some others questioned the interference of the supreme court in the matters related to the personal laws of a religious community. These were specific to the instant triple talaq case, and were not included in the wider discourse. Similarly, tweets that questioned the interference of supreme court in matters concerning Hindu traditions and the fundamental rights of a Hindu deity were specific to the Sabarimala case. They were not included in the wider discourse.

However, these tweets conveyed important information, which would contribute to a higher level of discourse: the contention between religion and women’s issues. So, they were eventually merged to give rise to a higher order of discursive patterns. To obtain this hierarchy, coders had to engage with the data set with multiple iterations, re-reading codes and matching them to their corresponding themes and discourses.

### 3.8 Usefulness of Small Data Analysis

Most twitter based analyses of political communication and impact of technology on social relationships is based on the fact that large amounts of data can be processed by computers in significantly less time [38]. However, Joyojeet Pal proposes a novel approach to a more holistic understanding of political communication using social media: small data analysis.

Joyojeet Pal and A’Ndre Gonawela (2017) say that data analysis of Tweets often include statistical studies of Retweet and Favourite networks or of frequencies of certain keyword and hashtag occurrences. On the other hand, qualitative research is often employed to provide deeper contextual understanding for the phenomena observed through social networks formed by engagement through Retweets and Favourites. Engaging with theories of political communication and feminist theories is central to our study of Twitter behavior. Small data analysis enables us to engage with socio-political contexts that are needed to holistically interpret the behaviors of political leaders, influencers, and supporters of political ideologies [38].

The proposition of small data analysis inspired the author to engage with the data set qualitatively, so as to provide a more holistic answer to each of the research questions. By engaging with the context holistically, we claim to establish and provide more convincing arguments about the complexity of

interactions between right wing ideology and feminism on social media and helps to contribute constructively to the community striving to study the intersections of Science, Technology, and Society.

## *Chapter 4*

### **Findings**

Employing Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis of tweets we offer a broad set of themes across both case studies: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple case. Using the themes, we constructed three dominant discourses:

- Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case.
- In support of women's empowerment.
- In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities.

In communications literature, 'dominant discourse' is said to be a narrative, or a particular 'way of looking' at an issue or a debate that is frequently repeated throughout the data set [4]. Since dominant discourses are born out of repeated occurrences within our data set, we suggest these discourses as acceptable interpretations of the tweets. We believe that the dominant discourses are shaped from our active reading and engagement with theories of feminism and right wing politics [4]. We claim that the three discourses arch over the two case studies: instant triple talaq case and Sabarimala temple case. In this section, we elaborate on the three dominant discourses and provide tweets that contribute to the emergence, evolution and consolidation of each. In the final subsection, we suggest a transition between the three dominant discourses in the data set. When tweets represent a shift in the 'dominant discourse' over a series of dates within a case study, we capture a 'transition'. Hence, if discourse 'X' is dominant on a date 1, and discourse 'Y' is dominant on date 2, we suggest that a transition has occurred in our discourse from 'X' to 'Y'.

For future reference, we will call the Twitter users engaging with tweets from our data set as merely "users" or "Twitter users."

#### **4.1 Broad Themes Obtained**

As the first step in our analysis, we engaged with the tweets using Thematic Analysis and observed the emergence of the following themes. We employed 'emergent encoding' for thematic study because it captured the context of the case studies comprehensively. We relied on our understanding of social and



political concepts of feminism, right wing politics, human rights, parliamentary system of India, news and latest updates in both case studies, and relationship between religious groups in India for capturing themes from the tweets. Following were the themes that were compiled for each of the case studies.

#### **4.1.1 Instant Triple Talaq Case**

We used Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis to study tweets in the instant triple talaq data set. By following emergent coding, we observed the following broad themes emerge from tweets for all dates of significance in the instant triple talaq case:

- Mere Case Update
- Communal Angle
- Feminist Angle
- General Political Angle
- Tweets about religious practices/ customs/ traditions/ rituals
- Tweets about the constitutional provisions of Triple Talaq Bill
- Tweets about the standpoint of BJP/ RSS/ Right Wing supporters
- Tweets supporting the verdict
- Tweets opposing the verdict
- Tweets supporting the Muslim Women (Protection of rights on marriage) Bill 2018
- Tweets opposing the Muslim Women (Protection of rights on marriage) Bill 2018

The themes mentioned above occurred repeatedly in the time the 'instant talaq' issue was in the political limelight. On the other hand, certain themes emerged only on specific dates during the political life of instant triple talaq case, as mentioned below.

- **22nd August 2017** (Supreme Court declared instant triple talaq as unconstitutional)
  - Tweets discussing the relationship between decision about Section 377 on Homosexuality and Supreme Courts Verdict on Instant Triple Talaq.
  - Tweet about whether declaring Instant Triple Talaq as unconstitutional is actually womens empowerment or not.
  - Tweet about offline action in favour of Triple Talaq verdict.
  - Tweets about offline actions against triple talaq verdict.

- **28th December 2017** (Lok Sabha introduced the Muslim Women Bill in the lower house)
  - Tweets proposing a uniform civil code as the next step to triple talaq.
  - Tweet about what a progressive Indian male should ideally be fighting for, which is womens empowerment.
- **19th September 2018** (President of India approved an ordinance on instant triple talaq)
  - Tweet that combines issues of economic progress and womens empowerment in an attempt to praise the right wing government.
  - Tweet discussing controlled empowerment as a motive for the Muslim women, proposed by the right wing government.
- **27th December 2018** (Lok Sabha successfully passed the Muslim Women Bill in the Parliament)
  - Tweets comparing the constitutional validity of homosexuality and instant triple talaq.
  - Real cases of women being divorced by triple talaq tweeted.
  - Tweets requesting changes in the Muslim Women Bill in its current form.
  - Tweets discussing the religious elements of the Instant Triple Talaq verdict and the Sabarimala Verdict.
- **12th January 2019** (Fresh ordinance was approved by the President of India on instant triple talaq)
  - Tweets discussing the relationship between Instant Triple Talaq verdict and Sabarimala Verdict.
  - Claims that the BJP is engaging in controlled empowerment by calling torture towards Muslim women as sympathy and empowerment.

#### 4.1.2 Sabarimala Temple Case

We used Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis to study tweets in the Sabarimala temple case data set. By following emergent coding, we observed the following broad themes from tweets for all dates of significance:

- Mere Case Update
- Communal Angle
- Feminist Angle
- General Political Angle

- Tweets about religious practices/ customs/ traditions/ rituals
- Tweets about the constitutional/ legal provisions of Sabarimala Verdict
- Tweets about the standpoint of BJP/ RSS/ Right Wing Supporters
- Tweets supporting womens entry into the shrine
- Tweets opposing the womens entry into the shrine
- Tweets about fundamental rights of the deity and humans
- Use or explanation of the hashtag #ReadyToWait

We also note the themes that emerged specifically from tweets on particular dates within the case:

- **01st August 2018** (SC Reserves verdict on Sabarimala case)
  - Tweets claiming that Sabarimala protest is a mere threat to patriarchy.
  - Tweets arguing about the necessity of rights for deity (Lord Ayappa in this case).
  - Tweets that discuss the legality/ constitutionality of the ban on women in the Sabarimala case.
- **28th September 2018** (SC Allowed women to enter the Sabarimala temple)
  - Tweets claiming equality for men in temples that restrict them from entering.
  - Using or explaining the hashtag #ReadyToWait.
  - Tweets asking devotees to participate in offline protests.
  - Tweets praising the Supreme Court for being progressive while criticizing the right wing government for opposing it.
  - Liberal Feminists versus Right Wing Feminists.
  - Tweet about womens empowerment being subject to religion.
  - Tweets about fundamental rights of the deity and human beings worshipping the deity.
  - Religion versus gender.
- **02nd January 2019** (Two women entered the Sabarimala temple for the first time)
  - Tweets discussing the stand of Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Sabarimala.
  - Religion versus gender.
  - Hinduism being branded as a fanatic/ terrorist religion.

Having generated a list of themes from rigorous readings of the data set, we now derive discursive patterns overarching the two case studies to describe the transformation of discourse on women's empowerment to a discourse on religious minorities.

## 4.2 Discourse Patterns condensed from Themes

We observe three dominant discourses emerging from tweets in reference to the two case studies: instant triple talaq case and Sabarimala temple case:

- Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case
- In support of women’s empowerment
- In support of rights and sentiments of religious communities.

We explain each of the above discourses in detail for the two case studies, with prominent examples from our data set. Every discourse is deemed dominant because it repeatedly occurs across all critical dates we had identified in the political life of both cases. We also provide examples of tweets which contribute to the emergence of the three dominant discourses.

### 4.2.1 Support or Opposition: Contents of a debate

The first dominant discourse we observe is “support and opposition” to the instant triple talaq case and the Sabarimala case. By presenting tweets expressing support or opposition, we do a close study of contents in the tweets expressing support or opposition to the practices of triple talaq and entry for women into the Sabarimala shrine.

- **Instant Triple Talaq Case**

The first significant event in this case was the Supreme Court judgment rendering instant triple talaq as an unconstitutional practice. Figure 4.1 shows the examples of tweets that have supported the verdict.

There were no tweets in our data set that opposed the Supreme Court’s verdict declaring instant triple talaq as unconstitutional. There was a large subset of tweets in the data set expressing support for the Muslim Women Bill. We suggest this transition from the previous support shown towards the Supreme Court’s verdict. Figure 4.2 shows some examples of tweets that supported the bill. The bill was introduced on 28th December 2017 and passed on 27th December 2018 in the Lower House of Parliament. Tweets from both dates show significant support and opposition to the bill, sometimes resorting to indirect and convert arguments to express support or opposition. Figure 4.3 shows the examples of tweets that have opposed the bill.

Tweets suggest divided support to the practice of instant triple talaq, but nonetheless registered a unanimous support for the Supreme Court’s verdict rendering the practice unconstitutional. However, opinion about the Muslim Women Bill, introduced by the BJP government was divided. We will analyze the main arguments put forth by both supporters and opponents in the next section. We will highlight the main arguments and discuss their implications for the transition of the dominant discourse “In Support of women’s empowerment” to one “In Support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities.”

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@gautam_rode	22nd August 2017	A verdict that I am proud of India! A verdict which was much needed! Ending # TripleTalaq shall lead towards equality! # SupremeCourt
@subhashchandra	22nd August 2017	Welcome SC verdict on # TripleTalaq Hope all political parties unanimously join to ban this when the new/changed law is tabled in the house
@Ra_THORe	22nd August 2017	I welcome the historic decision by the Supreme Court to declare #TripleTalaq <del>as</del> unconstitutional. A huge step forward for women's rights.
@SriSri	22nd August 2017	Though it has taken 70 years, it is a welcome decision by Honorable Supreme Court. # TripleTalaq (2)

**Figure 4.1** Tweets supporting the Supreme Court Verdict that deemed Instant Triple Talaq Unconstitutional

- **Sabarimala Temple Case**

The first date of significance in the Sabarimala case was 01st August 2018, when the Supreme Court of India reserved the verdict to lift the ban on women between the ages 10 and 50 years for entering the Sabarimala temple shrine. The judgment was then followed by the Supreme Court's permission to women to enter the shrine on 29th September 2018 which was a landmark change in the traditional rules of the celibate gods temple rules. Finally, the third significant date was 02nd January 2019, when the first women were able to reach the temple's inner sanctum, amidst heavy security, despite online and offline protests. We investigate closely tweets in support of and in opposition to the verdict of the Supreme Court for women demanding permission for entering the temple.

A large majority of tweets within our data set for 01st August 2018 are merely updates on the proceedings of the Supreme Court verdict. Tweets also discuss the validity of the fundamental 'right to privacy' that the 'deity is entitled to' and the 'right to pray' and 'equality to enter religious places of worship' that women are entitled to. There were no tweets in support of the petitioners who were trying to lift the ban from women's entry into the temple. As the case progressed, there was a show of support for women's entry in the temple. Figure 4.4 show tweets in support for the Sabarimala temple verdict. We suggest that the opposition for Sabarimala verdict was stronger than the support for the Supreme Court judgment. Figure 4.5 and figure 4.6 show a few examples of tweets that have opposed the verdict as well as the consequent entry of women into the shrine.

Apart from tweets that directly oppose women's entry into Sabarimala, there were significant number of tweets that relayed opposition indirectly, by appealing to users religious sentiments, respect for Hindu traditions and customs, and by abusing the communist government of Kerala.

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@rose_k01	27th December 2018	#TripleTalaqBill Passed and already MusIim Men are up in arms against it. Any of the Woke Feminists taking out SMASH Islamic Patriarchy Placards?? #TripleTalaqBillTest #TripleTalaq
@mssirsa	26th December 2018	What a shame - @MamataOfficial doesn't support #TeenTalaq Bill despite being a woman herself She has failed to take a stand for the dignity of women who have been subjected to live in misery when their husband abandons them with just THREE words! #TripleTalaq #TripleTalaqBill pic.twitter.com/5g7ILyN03o
@TarekFatah	28th December 2017	Congratulations India! India's Muslim women win big! Indian parliament Lok Sabha votes to criminalize Islamic Instant Divorce known as #TripleTalaq   @TimesOfIndia <a href="https://m.timesofindia.com/india/bill-criminalizing-triple-talaq-passed-in-lok-sabha/articleshow/62283688.cms">https://m.timesofindia.com/india/bill-criminalizing-triple-talaq-passed-in-lok-sabha/articleshow/62283688.cms</a> ...
@SirJadeja	28th December 2017	60+ Year Old PM Narendra Modi Brought #TripleTalaqBill , 40+ Year Old Youth Icons Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav And Asaduddin Owaisi Opposed It. Irony Is Rahul Gandhi Says Modi Is Taking India To Medieval Times. Hypocrisy Just Committed Suicide. #TripleTalaq #CrushProPakLobby pic.twitter.com/k0eCGChX9e
@SirJadeja	28th December 2017	If Husband Is Put In Jail Who'll Take Care Of His Family":Salman Khursid Congress Leader. Who Takes Care Of The Wife & The Children When They're Thrown Away After #TripleTalaq? Laws Are Made To Safeguard Victims, Not Perpetrators. Irony Is He Was Law Minister🙏 #TripleTalaqBill
@Being_Humor	28th December 2017	Thank you @narendramodi ji for #TripleTalaq bill. pic.twitter.com/CeTEFkBf0B

**Figure 4.2** Tweets supporting the Muslim Women Bill 2018

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@JayGalla	27th December 2018	The practice of #TripleTalaq that is prevalent in the society is against the teachings of the Prophet and Holy Quran. While I condemn the practice of instant triple Talaq, I also oppose the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill 2018 in its current form. (1/2) <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/KaFn9Cq8v1">pic.twitter.com/KaFn9Cq8v1</a>
@yschowdary	31st December 2018	We oppose the Triple Talak Bill in its current form. The Centre is trying to discriminate against Muslim men in the name of women protection. Divorce process and procedure should be equal for all. # TripleTalaqBill # TripleTalaq # RajyaSabha # AndhraPradesh # TDPforDevelopment <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/Sjh6BHKZR2">pic.twitter.com/Sjh6BHKZR2</a>
@alamgiririzvi	01st January 2019	Every religion has it's own beliefs. Same goes to for # TripleTalaq As PM you must stand for the beliefs for every religion. But Very unfortunately @ narendramodi ji u suffering in Islamophobia. U have two mouth, think for all. Not just the beliefs of every temple. @ INCIndia <a href="https://twitter.com/PMOIndia/status/1080092075511578624">https://twitter.com/PMOIndia/status/1080092075511578624</a> ...
@RazaAcademy_	30th December 2018	We reject # TripleTalaq bill <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/BGJo7g3K9l">pic.twitter.com/BGJo7g3K9l</a>
@atiyaz	28th December 2017	#TripleTalaq should be banned. Yet, increasingly I realise that this #TripleTalaqBill should be debated, thought over and if need be, modified before it is passed. I rarely agree with @asadowaisi but some points in his Lok Sabha speech are valid. #RethinkBill
@SirJadeja	28th December 2017	Congress' Stand: We Respect The Supreme Court Verdict That #TripleTalaq Is Wrong, But Jailing The Husband Is Not Right. We Agree That #TripleTalaq Is A Crime, But Criminalising The Practice And Jailing The Criminal Is Wrong. #CongressLogic #TripleTalaqBill

**Figure 4.3** Tweets opposing the Muslim Women Bill 2018

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@AartiTikoo	28th September 2018	Now the Supreme Court of India has really done it! Reaffirmed gender equality in # Sabarimala. BUT also upheld the right of the state to arrest human rights activists if their activism is in violation of law of the land. Left & "liberals" today: SC fascist or not fascist?
@gauravbh	28th September 2018	Hon'ble Supreme Court pronounces another historic judgment, allows women to pray in # Sabarimala temple It is a 4:1 majority opinion. CJI Dipak Misra J. Nariman J. Khanwilkar J. Chandrachud J. Indu Malhotra dissents <a href="http://pic.twitter.com/IRVn92YJpr">pic.twitter.com/IRVn92YJpr</a>
@DirRajivMenon	28th September 2018	All religions, all castes were allowed into # Sabarimala shrine but the discrimination of women had always been a contentious issue! Supreme Court has proved to be courageous and farsighted! Great victory for gender equality in our country
@GabbarSingh	28th September 2018	Indian Supreme Court should get a Nobel prize for the sheer number of people positively effected by its progressive decisions. # Sabarimala
@lotophagus	28th September 2018	# Sabarimala verdict today. A pivotal day in the fight against toxic semitic/leftist ideology's crusades on Indic faith. Unlike pagans of Rome, millions of Indians still keep the flame burning for our Devi/Devas. They will lead us to victory! # SwamiSharanam # ReadyToWait <a href="http://pic.twitter.com/qicBQPlHnn">pic.twitter.com/qicBQPlHnn</a>
@one_by_two	30th September 2018	I hope he realises that it's the Supreme Court which is slowly and steadily fulfilling hum sab ki Mann Ki Baat. Love you Supreme Court <3 # Aadhaar # Adultery # Sabarimala
@akashbanerjee	02nd January 2019	Notice how the REAL devotees have no issues with women present at #Sabarimala . The only ones having issues are those who use the name of God for personal fame and profit. <a href="https://twitter.com/arvindgunasekar/status/1080310310416789504">https://twitter.com/arvindgunasekar/status/1080310310416789504</a> ...

**Figure 4.4** Tweets supporting the Supreme Court Verdict on Sabarimala Temple Case in favor of women's entry into the shrine

There were also tweets that demanded offline action against women who attempted to enter the temple, and tweets that abused and threatened the welfare of women who try to enter the temple. We will analyze the tweets that expressed support and opposition in the next section. We now discuss the other two important discursive patterns observed in our data set.

#### 4.2.2 In Support for Women's Empowerment

The second dominant discourse we observe arises from tweets supporting women's empowerment in both case studies. We explain our findings for both cases below.

- **Instant Triple Talaq Case**

While examples from the data set explicitly supported women's empowerment, such support was mostly expressed with either support for Muslim women or support for punishing Muslim men who practiced instant triple talaq. We present in Figure 4.7 and figure 4.8, examples of tweets that supported women's empowerment. Most of the tweets in the above figures participate in



Username	Date	Tweet Content
@BhairaviAshar	01st August 2018	Women's wing of the Communist Party of India. What business do godless communists have poking their nose in dharmic matters? They would rather want a mandir to shut down. # Sabarimala <a href="https://twitter.com/LiveLawIndia/status/1024593037626884097">https://twitter.com/LiveLawIndia/status/1024593037626884097</a> ...
@krithikasivaswamy	01st August 2018	Fight for # Sabarimala is not subject to merely this particular temple, but reflects our readiness to stand for protecting all our ancient practices. This is a signal we are giving to ppl who try to bend Hindu religion n culture into the narrow framework of secular Constitution
@pointponder	01st August 2018	Thank you for standing by dharma n fighting it out..As our fight is to continue the sacred traditions of # Sabarimala, Swamy Ayyappa, watching all this drama, of kaliyug, will bless us...Swamiyee Sharanamayyappa!!
@anuraag_saxena	01st August 2018	Basically Indira Jaising wants the right to visit/pray to a deity... whose rules she doesn't accept. Irony just committed suicide . # Sabarimala <a href="http://pic.twitter.com/pLLxdeDxts">pic.twitter.com/pLLxdeDxts</a>
@DrGPradhan	29th September 2018	The class of people that wants exclusive passage on public roads now wants inclusiveness in private temples. Judges have become a joke. # Sabarimala
@surnell	28th September 2018	# Sabarimala I want Traditions of the Temple to be upheld & more stubborn because of the folks who want to change it. They just want to poke their nose everywhere and create nuisance. They want to reduce the holy place into another Jantar Mantar # SwamiSharanam
@iAnkitaLal	28th September 2018	Those who have zilch faith in Sree Ayyappa are dying to enter temple premises as if it's a tourist spot! Praying for the success of traditionalism over pseudo liberalism. May the efforts of all women associated with # ReadyToWait bear fruit today. # Sabarimala
@pratheesh_ahp	29th September 2018	We are blocking whole State Highways and National Highways in Kerala on Oct 2nd llam demanding ordinance by both state and central govt. Court order is not at all acceptable. AHP will fight till victory. We rqst all Swabhimani Hindus to join the protest. Swami Saranam # Sabarimala <a href="http://pic.twitter.com/TDuc0894Nm">pic.twitter.com/TDuc0894Nm</a>
@SanjeevaniPage	28th September 2018	After scrapping Section377 & Section 497, the Supreme Court now allows women of all ages to enter Sabarimala! @ RahulEaswar ji, are you OK? Shall we declare SC as 'Anti-Hindu?' By the way, heartfelt condolences # Sabarimala #

**Figure 4.5** Tweets opposing Supreme Court Verdict on Sabarimala Case

		SabarimalaVerdict
@CuriousKudi	28th September 2018	The # Sabarimala case was not for gender equality, it was to prove that Hindus are second class citizens in India and our traditions don't matter. The Vatican funded communist cabal has won. Hindus have lost
@lotophagus	02nd January 2019	Ayyapa devotees heartbroken. Many who took deeksha for makara jyothi have removed their mudra in tears. There'll be huge price to pay. Every politician who plays politics with this issue is our enemy. Prove your worth & we will vote. #OrdinanceOrNothing #Sabarimala
@pratheesh_Hind	5th January 2019	Tuesday We are going to High court agnst Kerala CM & DGP. The activists who enterd #Sabarimala publicly declared that they neither took 41days fasting nor r devotees. They says they only wantd to prove some feminist points. Govt & DGP conspired wit them. Wont leave anybdy involvd pic.twitter.com/Gfr5cm6wAa
@RahulEaswar	02nd January 2019	We condemn the Kerala CPM Govt and police conspiracy to secretly get in 2 young women into #Sabarimala by 3 am in morning Such cheap tactics are unbecoming of a State Govt.
@PrinceArihan	02nd January 2019	Sad day for Kerala, India and most of all the Hindu traditions at #Sabarimala

**Figure 4.6** Tweets opposing Supreme Court Verdict on Sabarimala Case

celebrating the government's efforts towards empowerment of women from the Muslim minority community. Some of the tweets that congratulate the BJP government's efforts towards criminalizing instant triple talaq also criticize "liberal political parties" such as the Indian National Congress (INC) claiming "liberal political parties" engage in vote bank politics through opposing the Muslim Women Bill. The tweets claim that by opposing the bill, liberal political parties such as the INC are opposing women's empowerment. We show the finding through tweets in Fig. 4.7 and 4.8.

- **Sabarimala Temple Case**

Within the Sabarimala case, women faced severe opposition from users tweeting about the the verdict supporting their entry into the temple. The arguments opposing women's entry claimed the verdict to be the violating of religious sentiments of devotees, preserving traditional values and customs, and opposing change proposed by non- Hindu petitioners and supported by a non-Hindu Communist Government. A small number of tweets supported the verdict as a step towards women's empowerment. Tweets also contested women's entry into the temple by extolling "traditional Hindu and devout women" and opposing the verdict by claiming 'they were ready to wait until 50 years of age to enter the temple'. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show examples of these tweets.

As the political life of the Sabarimala case deepened, tweets supporting women's entry reduced and the discourse morphed into an aggressive opposition against women. The opposition citing

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@SriSri	22nd August 2017	I've always held the view that gender equality is common sense. In the name of religion women should never be discriminated. # TripleTalaq
@taslimanasreen	22nd August 2017	Abolishing # TripleTalaq may be a slap to Muslim Law Board but it is definitely not women's freedom. Women need to be educated & independent.
@Ra_THORe	22nd August 2017	I welcome the historic decision by the Supreme Court to declare # TripleTalaq as unconstitutional. A huge step forward for women's rights
@neelshmisra	22nd August 2017	The # TripleTalaq ruling is a huge victory for Indian women. ALL Indian women. <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/uZ93u4rVZk">pic.twitter.com/uZ93u4rVZk</a>
@JayGalla	31st December 2018	# Abandonment is abandonment. If a husband leaves his wife after instant # TripleTalaq, it will not be considered a divorce as the practice is illegal. It amounts to abandonment. Punishment for abandonment should be the same whether they are # Hindu, # Muslim, # Christian etc. (1/2) <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/42NAAUwJs1">pic.twitter.com/42NAAUwJs1</a>
@bjparvind	27th December 2018	Modi govt has been passed #TripleTalaqbill in #LokSabha When we mean "Women Empowerment" we prove it. & for Congress who opposed the bill please note that 20 Islamic country has banned #TripleTalaq & India being "Secular" country should protect the interest of every individual
@tatvamasio	12th January 2019	Enough of patriarchal system hiding behind religious pomposity ! Just like sati pratha n child marriage was made illegal , similarly if SC has made #tripleTalaq void then it should think again @cji_sc
@KapilMishraIND	19th September 2018	After Independence, this is one single Biggest Step for Women Empowerment in India #TripleTalaq <a href="https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1042297152540565504">https:// twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1042297152540565504</a> ...
@SadhguruJV		Forced subjugation of any human being is not just archaic, regressive & obsolete but also a heinous crime. Stringent laws to deal with exploitative traditions against women. Big victory for India's women. -Sg #TripleTalaq <a href="https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/triple-talaq-or-instant-divorce-to-be-an-offence-cabinet-clears-executive-order-1918767">https://www. ndtv.com/india-news/triple-talaq-or-instant-divorce-to-be-an-offence-cabinet-clears-executive-order-1918767</a> ...
@AmarSinghTweets	19th September 2018	Without any slightest provocation treating women like commodity was a matter of rotten thoughts. @INCIndia for the sake of vote bank compulsion

**Figure 4.7** Tweets from Instant Triple Talaq Case on women's empowerment

		supported their inhuman trait at the cost of our Muslim sisters. #TripleTalaq ordinance is a matter of great pride @PMOIndia @BJP4India pic.twitter.com/QtyAVawBEed
@rsprasad	28th December 2017	Modi Government resolves to stand with women of this country and uphold their dignity, equality and justice. I want to congratulate Shayara Bano for the firmness with which she took up the cause of #TripleTalaq . #ModiGovtEmpowersWomen #TripleTalaqBill pic.twitter.com/8XnakilaSh
@jitu_vaghani	28th December 2018	Our fundamental rights are for everyone irrespective of their religion.This is about dignity of women's rights and equal opportunity in the society.Congratulations to the government led by PM Sh. @narendramodi ji for introducing historical bill of #TripleTalaq in the parliament. pic.twitter.com/UOK7sTkPrS
@BDUTT	28th December 2018	I write : Feminism Must Triumph over Faith. Why we must all welcome the outlawing of #TripleTalaq and Personal Laws that militate against Women <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/05/05/what-indias-liberals-get-wrong-about-women-and-sharia-law/?utm_term=.2a749d9be309">https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/05/05/what-indias-liberals-get-wrong-about-women-and-sharia-law/?utm_term=.2a749d9be309</a> ...
@sanjaydalmia17	28th December 2018	Both Triple Talaq Bill and 35A provisions are for giving equal rights to #MuslimWomen and anybody opposing these are anti - women! #TripleTalaqBill #Thread #TripleTalaq #WomensRights

**Figure 4.8** Tweets from Instant Triple Talaq case on women's empowerment

support for religious traditions while simultaneously disowning right of women to the Sabarimala temple precincts. The dominant discourse at this time was “In support of rights and sentiments of religious communities.”

#### **4.2.3 In Support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious communities**

The third dominant discourse emerged as “in support of rights and sentiments of religious communities.” In the case of instant triple talaq, the Muslim minority community believed that the Supreme Court’s verdict against triple talaq as well as the introduction and passing of the Muslim Women Bill were momentous and interfered in their internal and social life. In the Sabarimala temple case, the Hindu devotees of Lord Ayyappa were directly affected by the Supreme Court’s decision to lift the ban on women’s entry. Hindu devotees claimed to have been hurt and betrayed by the Supreme Court and the BJP government by the decision.

- **Instant Triple Talaq Case**

The case began with a Supreme Court verdict rendering the practice unconstitutional. This verdict received massive support and almost no opposition, and was considered an important step towards Muslim women’s empowerment in India, who were victims of the instant triple talaq practice. However, tweets expressed divided support for the Muslim Women Bill, which sought to criminalize the oppressive divorce practice. Interestingly, the bill was introduced by BJP, which is a right wing political party and BJP’s political affiliation raised doubts about possible political motivations for introduction of the Bill. The tweets also claimed that the Bill does not reflect on the reform based public image that the BJP is trying to build but more on their motivations to harass the Muslim community. Figure 4.11 is an example of tweets that questioned the communal motivations at the centre of introducing the Bill.

Tweets reflecting “In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities” also expressed divided support for the Muslim Women Bill. As we investigate the tweets from the last bunch of dates of significance, we observe the sentiment expressing support for the empowerment of Muslim women is higher and opposition based on religious discrimination, significantly less.

- **Sabarimala Temple Case**

In the Sabarimala case, there was a stronger opposition than support for the entry of women into the temple shrine. The majority of tweets show that religious sentiments of the Hindus were the most hurt by Supreme Court’s verdict to allow women to enter the shrine. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 are examples of tweets that appealed to the religious sentiments of users. An almost unanimous opposition is seen here, for the verdict as well as the subsequent entry of women into the shrine of Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala temple. While some of the arguments appease the Hindu sentiments, others attempt to bash supporters of the liberals, Muslims, and communists for trying ‘to establish authority’ in a country of the ‘Hindu majority.’

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@Kuvalayamala	01st August 2018	The women who filed PIL in SC seeking # Sabarimala in 2006. They openly condemn "Happy to Bleed" by Punjabi # UrbanNaxal represented by <a href="https://twitter.com/w68Y5TyFzG">jaisingpic.twitter.com/w68Y5TyFzG</a>
@deepsealioness	01st August 2018	So what am I going to achieve by going to # Sabarimala apart from threatening Patriarchy? Well time to look at what some inspiring women who challenged society, laws, even risked their lives to bring much needed change to society- Thread # WomenPower
@People4Dharma	01st August 2018	38. Justice Indu Malhotra points out that the practice is not based on the alleged seductive quality of women, but on the requirements of the 41-day vratham. # Sabarimala
@PaulOommen	01st August 2018	The # Sabarimala issue is not a Woman Vs Man differentiation issue, it is a Woman Vs Woman classification issue,' says @ lotophagus on @ TimesNow speaking about # SabarimalaTwist. Well structured arguments put across crisp and clear. You have come a long way, ma'am
@People4Dharma	01st August 2018	28. Ms. Jaising submits that the central question is whether there is discrimination on the basis of gender or not in this case. # Sabarimala
@deepsealioness	01st August 2018	This asshat has an entire thread on gaslighting women to not go to # Sabarimala Never seen more men whining on my TL than on this topic. Why does me entering a temple unnerve you so much, losers? Go fly a kite <a href="https://twitter.com/GhorAngirasa/status/1021046773165404162">https://twitter.com/GhorAngirasa/status/1021046773165404162</a> ...
@mvmeet	28th September 2018	YES Women's rights must now be given to even the "Muslim and Christian" women Muslim women should be allowed to offer NAMAAZ Christian women should be allowed to become POPE Let us start a revolution to ensure justice to these women # Sabarimala
@BDUTT	28th September 2018	My minor crush on the Supreme Court could become major at this rate :-) Thank you . Menstruating Women can no longer be barred from # Sabarimala - Bleeding is not a blot. # StopSexism # Period. # SabarimalaVerdict p.s curious dissent by

**Figure 4.9** Tweets from Sabarimala Temple Case on Women's Empowerment

		lone female judge on bench <a href="https://twitter.com/barandbench/status/1045543726561382401">https://twitter.com/barandbench/status/1045543726561382401</a> ...
@DhonusKRojo	28th September 2018	The sole woman on the bench disagreed to the Sabarimala verdict, while 4 men decided what's good for women. When was the last time you found Feminists cheering for Mansplaining? # Sabarimala # ReadyToWait
@im_saiganesh	28th September 2018	The only judge who gave judgement against the entry women in # Sabarimala is a woman. Talks a lot about how some genuine women view an issue and how men who are living under the illusion of pseudo-feminism view an issue in western lens. # SabarimalaVerdict
@hiyer	28th September 2018	I repeat, women have menstrual fluids flowing every month for 4-5 days. Men can have sperm coozing everyday every time and at will. Let us ban all men in # Sabarimala # SabarimalaVerdict
@NSMlive	02nd January 2019	#Sabarimala closed for purification? Is this Kerala or some place in cow land? Women are new Dalits? Bindu and Kanakadurga only followed the SC ruling. #RemoveSabarimalaThantri for misogyny and serious contempt of court

**Figure 4.10** Tweets from Sabarimala Temple Case on Women's Empowerment

Username	Date	Tweet Content
@rishibagree	22nd August 2017	PM Modi spoke against # TripleTalaq which NO other PM did in the past 70 yrs, as they didn't want to antagonize their vote bank & maulvis <a href="https://twitter.com/Nidhi/status/899892868525019138">https://twitter.com/Nidhi/status/899892868525019138</a> ...
@padhalikha	22nd August 2017	Peaceful and progressive Muslim men at JNU welcoming # TripleTalaq verdict by respectfully talking to a woman reporter. Learn manners Sanghis pic.twitter.com/O6rMj0uuhx
@advmonikaarora	27th December 2018	1956 Hindu Marriage & Divorce Act was passed. Earlier Hindu man could have more than one wife. Now only one wife rule was made. Those violating were jailed. Congress never questioned it but passed this bill. Now why oppose jailing those men who give #TripleTalaq #TripleTalaqBill
@Ish_Bhandari	31st December 2018	Spending so much energy on # TripleTalaq is good, but more needed is spending time on Ram Mandir & getting it done in next month
@ANI	27th December 2018	AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi on #TripleTalaq Bill passed in LS: Yeh kanoon sirf aur sirf Muslim mahilaon ko road par lane ka hai, unko barbaad aur kamzor karna hai or jo Muslim mard hain unko jail mein daalne ka hai. Yahi is Kanoon ka ghalat istemal hoga, aap dekhna. pic.twitter.com/bOouelKMCX
@ArnazHathiram	27th December 2018	On #TripleTalaq @sushmitadevmp asks @rsprasad : If a Hindu woman in "Gujarat" approached HC asking them to put her husband behind bars for deserting her, will Government do it? pic.twitter.com/EuOhIAPpyO
@Ankith3658808	12th January 2019	Is my prime minister @narendramodi secular.! His govt passes bill against #TripleTalaq for women equality and on the other hand his party opposes women entering into #Sabarimala . Why does my mother and sister don't go to temple. @BJP4India @INCIndia #ismyprimeministersecular
@BhaavnaArora	19th September 2018	Gay sex is a sin in Islam and Modi government made it legal. Muslim men enjoyed liberty of #TripleTalaq , Modi government made it illegal. Clear sign that BJP is anti Muslims, and want Hindu Rashtra. #LiberalLogic
@BDUTT	28th December 2017	I support a uniform civil code, welcome legislation outlawing #TripleTalaq but do not quite agree with jail for men who try & divorce using it. Secular divorce laws, yes. Alimony yes.No to prison terms except for abuse and violence

**Figure 4.11** Tweets from the Instant Triple Talaq Case about Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities



Username	Date	Tweet Content
@krithikasivaswamy	01st August 2018	Fight for # Sabarimala is not subject to merely this particular temple, but reflects our readiness to stand for protecting all our ancient practices. This is a signal we are giving to ppl who try to bend Hindu religion n culture into the narrow framework of secular Constitution
@Gopalee67	01st August 2018	@ jsaideepak Shud b suitably feted by Hindusama j. My humble suggstn2 Saideepak ji wud b2 lead yung Hindu lawyers who wud b ready2 fight4Hindu causes that plague our society at large4quite long time.After winning this # Sabarimala case,he can take up decontrol of govt 4m our temples
@KapilMisra_IND	29th September 2018	Q. Was the petitioner a woman who wanted to worship Lord Ayyappa ? A. No Q. Was the petitioner a hindu who has faith in Lord Ayyappa? A. No Q. Can it be done only to Hindus in India? A. Yes # Sabarimala
@ggiittiikkaa	28th September 2018	Supreme Court opens doors of # Sabarimala to women of all ages. Great for gender equality! Now over to other religions. Can women go inside all Mosques? Are women allowed to become Church Heads, rather than just cleaning and serving the Father? Reforms are meant only for Hindus!
@surnell		# Sabarimala I want Traditions of the Temple to be upheld & more stubborn because of the folks who want to change it. They just want to poke their nose everywhere and create nuisance. They want to reduce the holy place into another Jantar Mantar # SwamiSharanam
@rishibagree	28th September 2018	No Hindu men has ever restricted any woman to enter # Sabarimala But women themselves may not come due to their strong Belief System. Also # Sabarimala is unique exception rather than discrimination. These sensitive topics are blown out of proportion to malign the name of temple
@ggiittiikkaa	28th September 2018	Why Muslim women are getting excited about # Sabarimala ? Pehle Burqe ke baahar qadam toh rakh lo Begum! pic.twitter.com/A03wDxsvDR
@CuriousKudi	28th September 2018	The # Sabarimala case was not for gender equality, it was to prove that Hindus are second class citizens in India and our traditions don't matter. The Vatican funded communist cabal has won. Hindus have lost
@rishibagree	02nd January 2019	Covered in Burkha from top to bottom and sneaking into Sabarimala Temple at 3:45 AM in the morning alongwith police protection is

**Figure 4.12** Tweets from the Sabarimala Temple Case about Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities

		neither chivalry nor is it any form of activism, this is cowardice followed by deceit and immorality of the worst kind. #Sabarimala
@vibhor_anand	02nd January 2019	Are We Hindus really in Majority??? #Sabarimala
@mvmeet	02nd January 2019	They standing for Triple talaq or save Sabarimala...? They stood unitedly to break other religion's belief .. Can they stand unitedly to break their own religious belief....? #Sabarimala pic.twitter.com/hBwxWHYhiv
@PrinceArihan	02nd January 2019	I am standing for the truth. I cannot understand what a wall of Muslim and Christian women have to do with the traditions of #Sabarimala . These people don't come out for atrocities in their own religion. <a href="https://twitter.com/k_krahul/status/1080347675742982144">https://twitter.com/k_krahul/status/1080347675742982144</a> ...
@AMISHDEVGAN	02nd January 2019	'Finally History made at #Sabarimala ' but why the hell We don't want to make History in #TripleTalaqBill ? Any answers ????
@Payal_Rohatgi	03rd January 2019	#IndianMuslim women (liberals) dont want to say #BharatMataKiJai as its communal, they believe in #monotheism - One God. But desperate to take blessings of Lord Ayyappan #Idol in #Sabarimala . Such pathetic losers . Get equality in your divorce cases first #thursdaythoughts pic.twitter.com/Y5Lsfdb5f9
@Ethirajans	02nd January 2019	Bindu and Kanakadurga entered #Sabarimala sannidhanam early this morning and had Darshan, without IRUMUDI! Hindu hating Communist atheist liberals have won over what GOD fearing devotees consider a sacred tradition!

**Figure 4.13** Tweets from the Sabarimala Temple Case about Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities

### 4.3 Transition between Discourses within each Case Study

In the previous section, we discussed the three dominant discourses we observe across all the tweets for both the case studies. We state them here:

- Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case.
- In support of women's empowerment.
- In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities.

In the previous section, we discussed the three dominant discourses we observe across all the tweets for both the case studies. There is a statistically significant difference (ANOVA  $F(4,319)=17.09263$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) in user engagement between all five dates of significance in the instant triple talaq case. There is also a statistically significant difference (ANOVA  $F(2,247)=6.6949$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) in user engagement between all three dates of significance in the Sabarimala temple case. A significant user engagement in both cases indicates that Twitter users who engaged actively with either the instant triple talaq case or the Sabarimala temple case contributed to amplifying the dominant discourse on any given date of significance in both cases. In other words, user engagement is directly related to the emerging transitions between discourses in both case studies. We show these results in Tables 4.1 through 4.4.

By showing the transition of discourses between the three dominant discourses for each of the two case studies, we will answer our first research question: How and when does a discourse about women's empowerment transitions into a political narrative designed to appeal to religious sentiments?

For the instant triple talaq case, the discourse begins with a unanimous support for the Supreme Court's verdict declaring the practice as unconstitutional. There are very few tweets discussing the issue as 'concerning only Muslim women.' There were even fewer tweets that rendered the verdict as unfair or oppressive to the Muslim community. Rather, tweets praised the Supreme Court's efforts towards empowerment of women irrespective of their religion.

When the bill was introduced in the Lower House, it proposed criminalization and jail term for perpetrators of instant triple talaq. The bill was introduced by a political party predominantly supporting the Hindutva right wing ideology [49]. BJP has been known to have spoken out explicitly against the Muslim minorities in India [25]. We suggest that there was a divided support for the Muslim Women Bill from 22nd August 2017 onwards because it was introduced by a 'right wing' government in the attempt to secularize the personal law of a minority community. Tweets around the dates when the Bill was introduced and passed rendered the "support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities" as the dominant discourse. We observe that on 12th January 2019, tweets reflect a divided support for the Muslim Women Bill and for the freshly approved ordinance on the case.

We conclude that the dominant trajectory at the beginning of the political life of instant triple talaq was "In support of women's empowerment" and transitioned in the course of time into a divided support for "women's empowerment" and a more vociferous "in support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious

Calculation of	TT1	TT2	TT3	TT4	TT5	Total
N	100	100	24	50	50	324
Summation	220773	61124	313	74197	36354	392761
Mean	2207.73	611.24	13.0417	1483.94	727.08	1212.225
Variance	1136667725	155860872	34291	179873343	52942286	1525378517
Std.Dev.	2560.8958	1094.0585	36.2413	1193.2587	735.5412	1802.358

**Table 4.1** ANOVA for Instant Triple Talaq Case

Source	SS	df	MS
Between-treatments	185194029.1441	4	46298507.286
Within-treatments	864069663.4083	319	2708682.3304
Total	1049263692.5525	323	

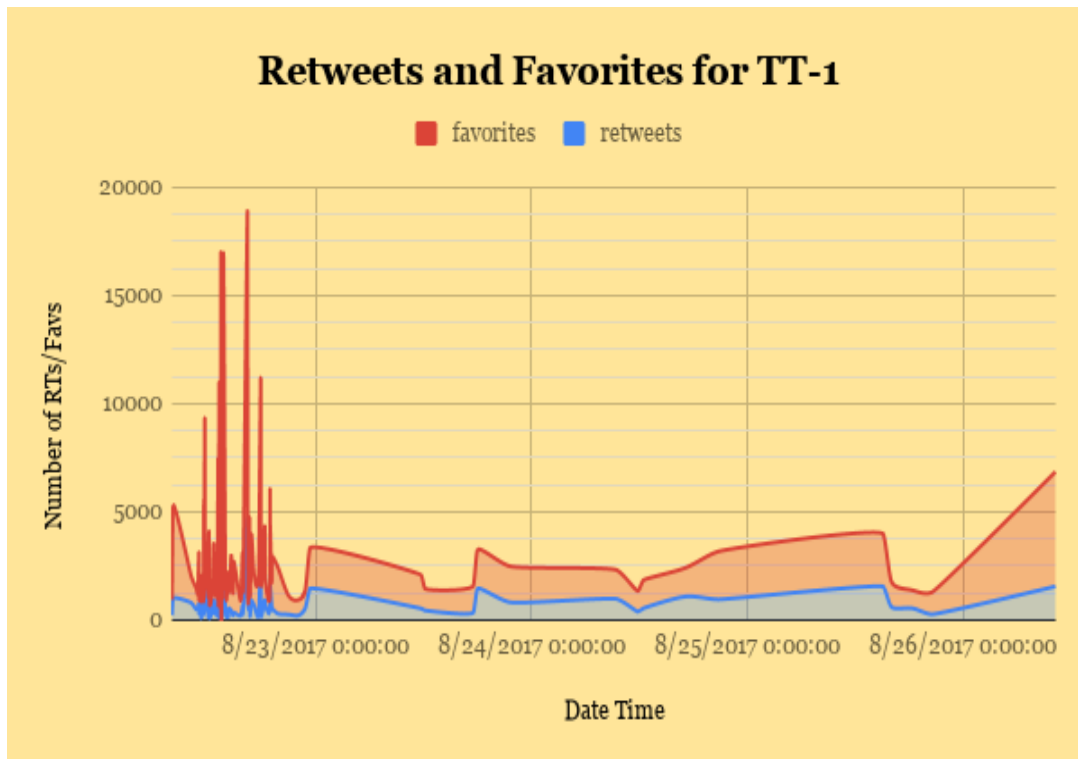
**Table 4.2** ANOVA for Instant Triple Talaq Case

Calculation of	SR1	SR2	SR3	Total
N	100	100	24	324
Summation	220773	61124	313	392761
Mean	2207.73	611.24	13.0417	1212.225
Variance	1136667725	155860872	34291	1525378517
Std.Dev.	2560.8958	1094.0585	36.2413	1802.358

**Table 4.3** ANOVA for Sabarimala Temple Case

Source	SS	df	MS
Between-treatments	185194029.1441	4	46298507.286
Within-treatments	864069663.4083	319	2708682.3304
Total	1049263692.5525	323	

**Table 4.4** ANOVA for Sabarimala Case

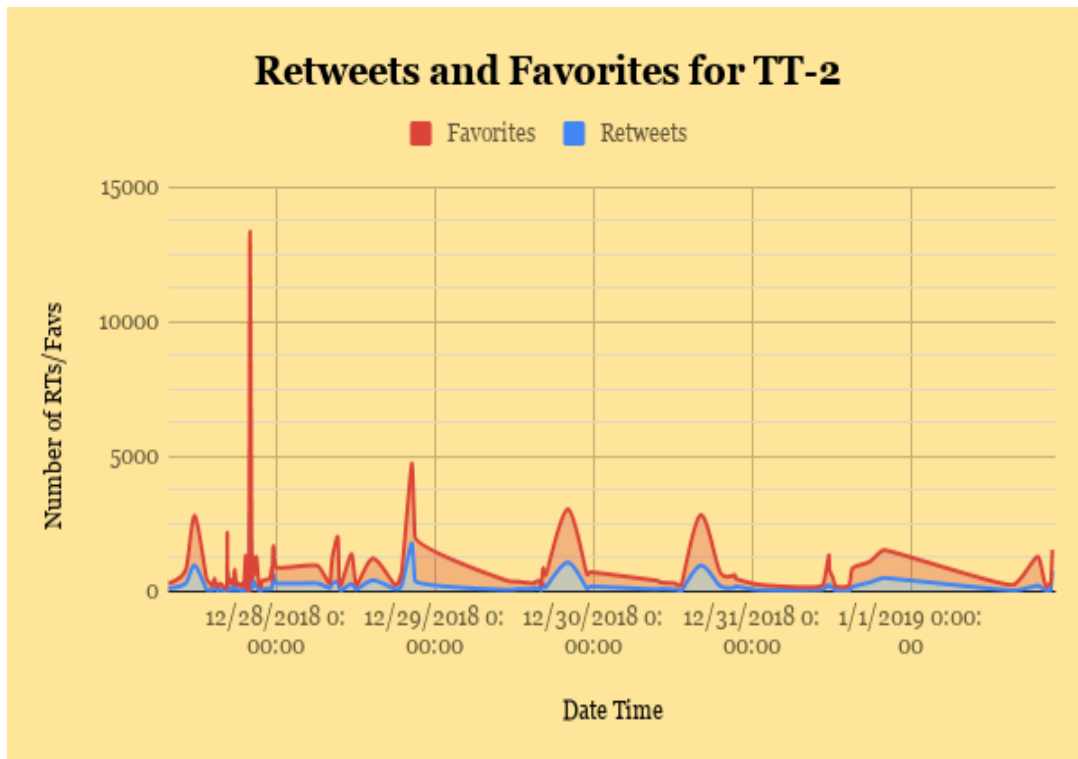


**Figure 4.14** Tweets with Retweets and Favorites Peaks for Instant Triple Talaq Case

Communities.” Figures 4.14 through 4.18 depict user engagement with Tweets related to the instant triple talaq case, on the dates of significance, as specified in Table 3.1. The peaks indicate a high engagement with the tweets on Twitter that directly contributes to emergence of dominant discourses we had identified.

We present graphs in Figures 4.19 through 4.21, to depict the peaks in Favorites and Retweets for the Sabarimala case. Dates of significance are again borrowed from Table 3.1. We suggest the high peaks indicate higher user engagement with the Tweets in our data set. We also suggest that higher user engagement contributed to the emergence of dominant discourses especially on dates we mark as significant.

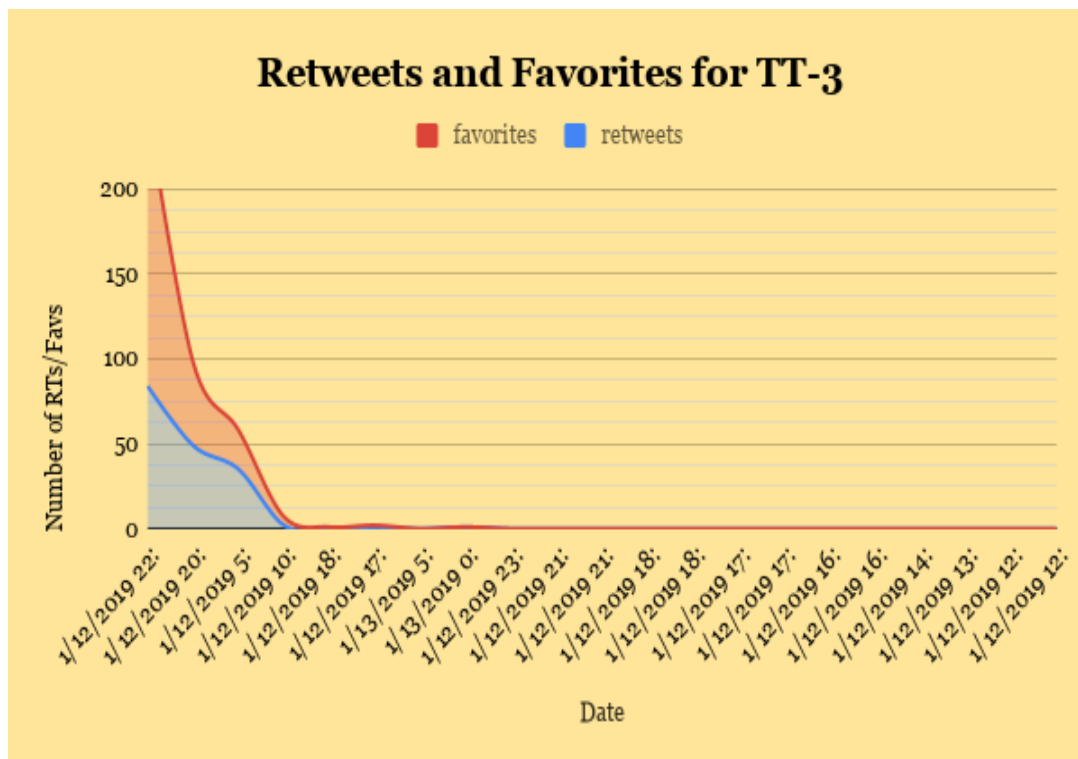
It is important to note that in the Sabarimala case, women’s empowerment is considered equivalent to the support for entry for women in the temple shrine. Our timeline for Sabarimala begins with the reservation of verdict by the Supreme Court on 01st August 2018. Tweets suggest an almost unanimous opposition to women’s entry into the temple shrine on 01st August 2018. A large subset of the tweets from 01st August were, however, mere updates about the proceedings in the Supreme Court on the Sabarimala verdict. After the verdict was reserved, the ban was lifted on 28th September 2018, marking this day as significant to Hindu female devotees who were fighting for gender equality via the right of entry to Sabarimala. After the verdict, we observed a division in support for womens entry and a large number of tweets criticizing “liberal” women for their demand to enter the temple. Tweets also



**Figure 4.15** Tweets with Retweets and Favorites Peaks for Instant Triple Talaq Case

claimed that the true women devotees of Lord Ayyappa would never contradict timeless customs and traditions of the temple and hence, would not enter the temple before 50 years of age. We observed tweets opposed Muslim petitioners for demanding equality in the entry to a Hindu temple, and few “liberal” feminist tweets criticized the ‘woman judge’ [5] for opposing women’s entry in Sabarimala. We claim that the dominant discourse at this stage was “In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities” while an equal number of tweets maintained “support for women’s empowerment” the other dominant discourse in the three we has identified. However, when the first women entered the shrine on 02nd January 2019, support of ‘rights and sentiments of religious communities’ emerged as the single dominant discourse. Tweets refereed to the fundamental rights of deities and humans as an important theme in the Sabarimala temple case. We claimed that devotees of Sabarimala placed higher value on the rights of the presiding temple deity, Lord Ayyappa, and opposed the entry of women into the temple as women’s empowerment. Users who participated in the #ReadyToWait movement opposed women’s entry into the temple and proclaimed willingness to ‘wait till 50 years of age to enter the temple’.

We suggest that the first dominant discourse: “Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case” provides insight into the other two dominant discourses: “In support of women’s empowerment” and “In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities”- While the former is



**Figure 4.16** Tweets with Retweets and Favorites Peaks for Instant Triple Talaq Case

expressed by appealing to the sentiments of women and their empowerment from timeless and oppressive traditions, the latter is expressed by appealing to the religious sentiments of Twitter users.

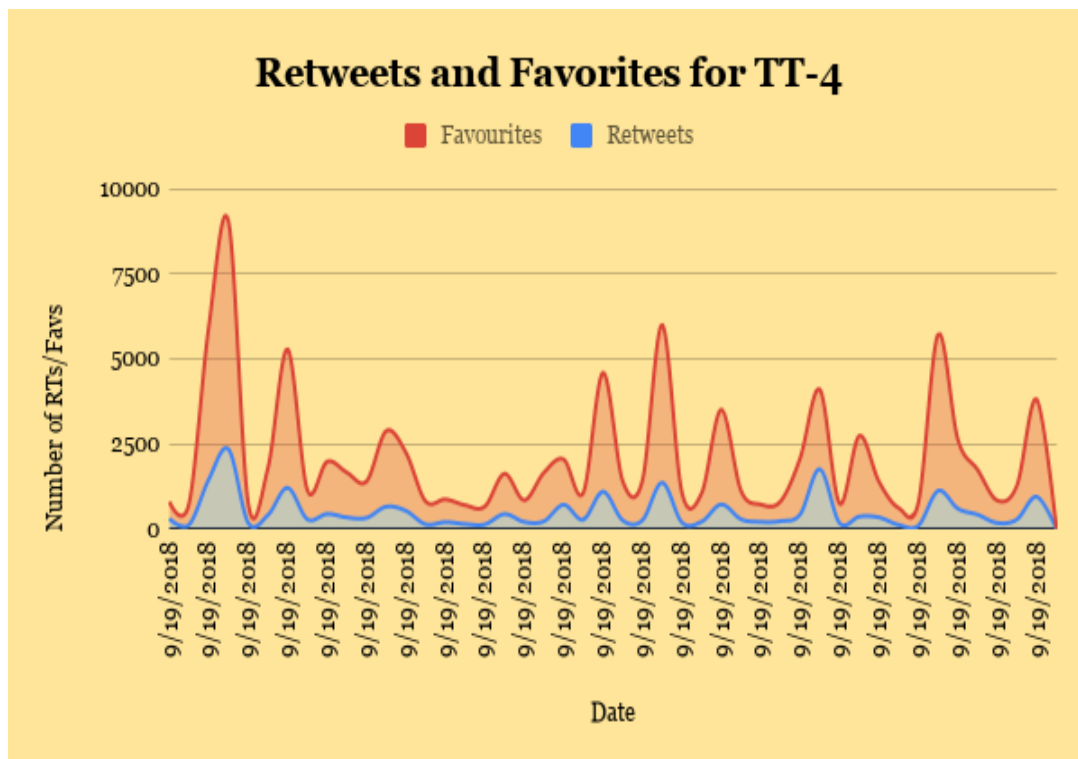
- **Instant Triple Talaq Case**

- **Arguments supporting and opposing the verdict**

The arguments in the case of instant triple talaq verdict unanimously supported the Supreme Court’s verdict declaring instant triple talaq unconstitutional. The tweets supporting the verdict congratulated the Supreme Court for being liberal and progressive. They claimed that the Supreme Court of India was concerned with the women’s empowerment and well-being especially Muslim women. They also claimed that the verdict was a historic incident in Muslim women’s rights and freedoms in India. We conclude that the main discourse following the Supreme Court verdict was thus “In support of women’s empowerment” and “Support/opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case.”

- **Arguments supporting and opposing the bill**

Following the Supreme Court’s verdict, BJP introduced the Muslim Women Bill 2018 in the parliament that proposed criminalization of instant triple talaq. Tweets expressed divided support for the Bill. Tweets expressing support claimed that the bill was a successful step towards emancipation of women from oppressive practices within Islam. Tweets also



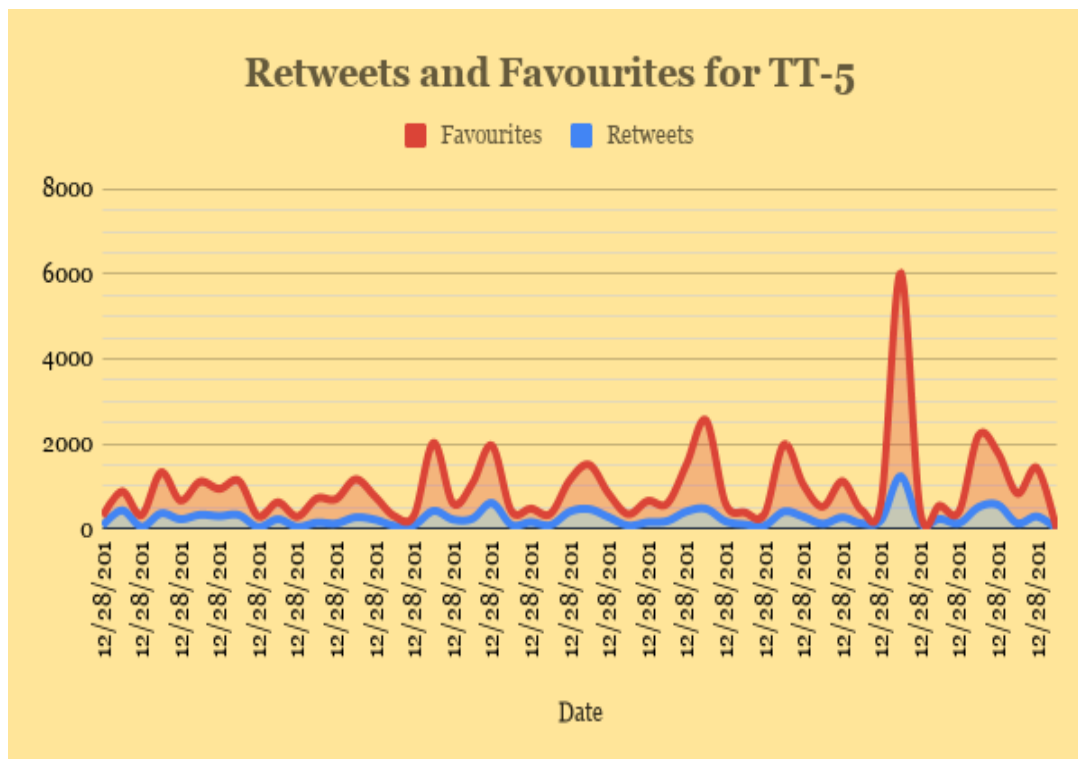
**Figure 4.17** Tweets with Retweets and Favorites Peaks for Instant Triple Talaq Case

claimed that the political parties opposing the bill are doing so as to appease the Muslim community. Thirdly, the tweets also indicated divided support for the bill among women. Tweets claiming division in support among women criticized the right wing government of alienating the Muslim women from their community and of polarizing India.

On 22nd August 2017, instant triple talaq was declared as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Tweets from our data set discussing the verdict reflected “in support of women’s empowerment” as the dominant discourse. Out data set reflects unanimous support expressed through congratulatory tweets about the Supreme Court. In the case of the Triple Talaq, the Muslim Women Bill was introduced in the Parliament on 28th December 2017. Tweets discussing the Bill reflected a divided support for the Bill and its provisions for reform. However, tweets opposing the Bill suggested a closer inspection of the provisions of reform in the bill. Tweets also demanded reconsideration of jail term for persons practicing instant triple talaq as a clause in the Bill. Contrarian tweets suggested that instant triple talaq is fundamental to the practice of Islam and ‘should not be legislated upon’ by the government.

The tweets stating reasons for supporting or opposing the Supreme Court verdict and the Muslim Women Bill reflect on two different dominant discourses. The dominant discourse for the Supreme Court verdict in our data set was “In support of women’s empowerment”.





**Figure 4.18** Tweets with Retweets and Favorites Peaks for Instant Triple Talaq Case

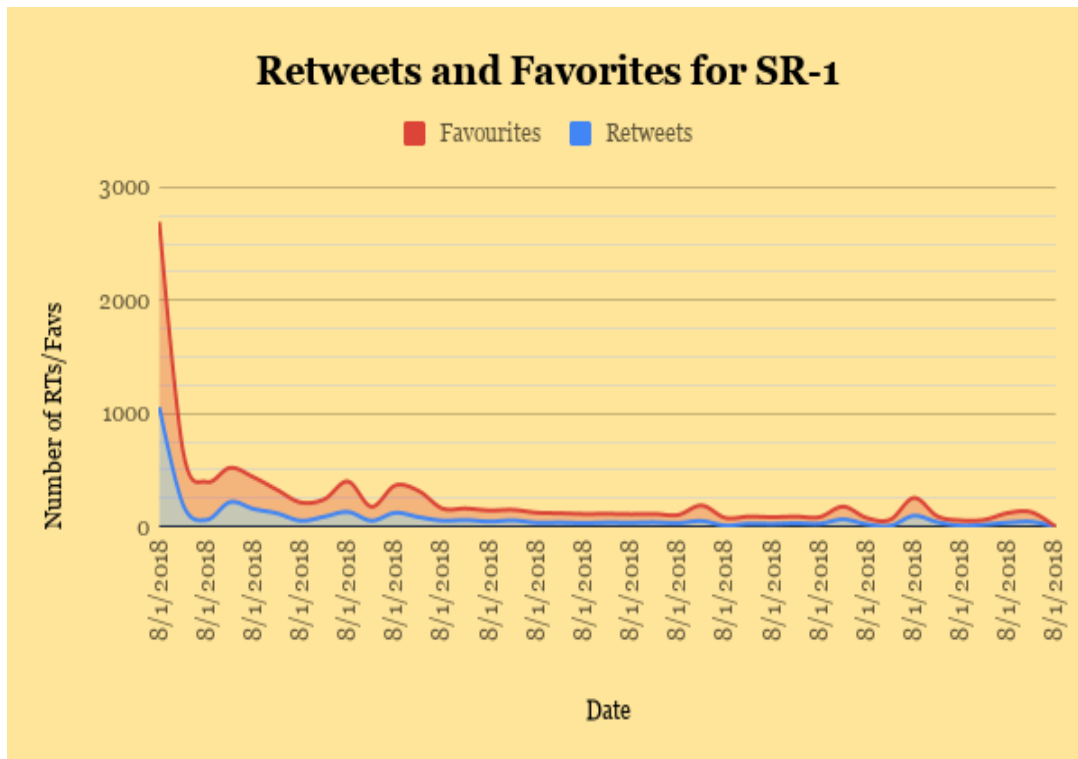
The discourse transitions “in support of rights and sentiments of religious communities” when BJP introduces the Muslim Women Bill in parliament.

- **Sabarimala Temple Case**

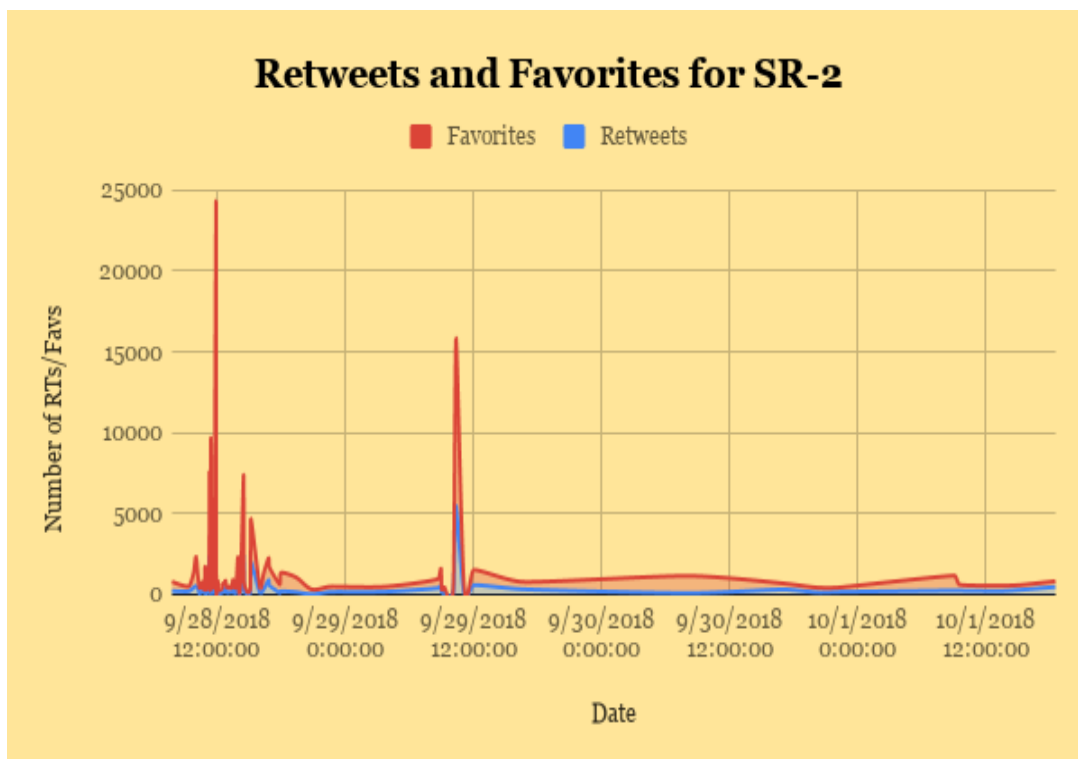
- **Arguments supporting and opposing the entry of women in the shrine**

Tweets from 01st August 2018 in our data set reflected strong opposition to the entry of women inside Sabarimala temple. A smaller group of tweets from 01st August 2018 and 28th September 2018 were mere congratulatory of the court’s progressive decision and claimed that the verdict was a positive step towards womens struggle for gender equality. Tweets opposing the verdict claimed that sentiments of devotees were hurt by the disruption of their traditional ban on women’s entry.

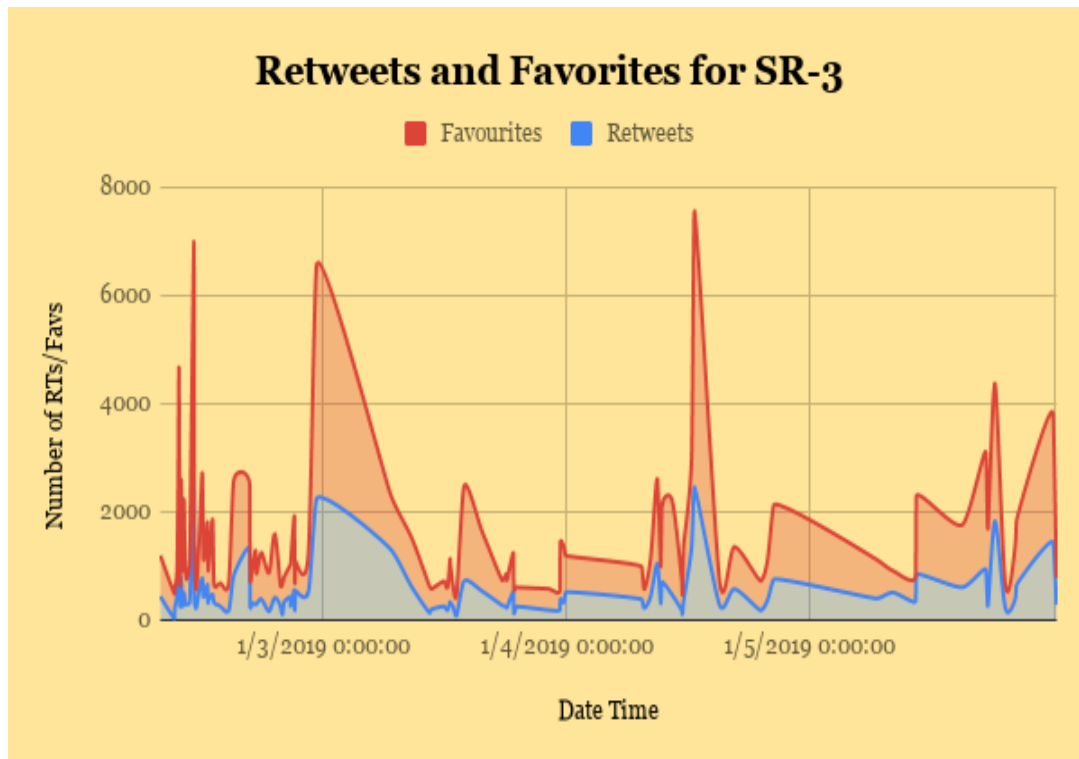
The opposition to women’s entry and Supreme Court’s verdict on Sabarimala was strong and tweets supporting Sabarimala devotees, women included, were hurt by the Supreme Court’s decision to ‘meddle’ in the religious affairs of a Hindu temple. Devout believers of the Hindu religion and devotees of the deity at Sabarimala claimed that the leftists and liberals were trying to destroy traditions and rituals of Hindu temples under the pretense of feminism and progressive ideals. Other tweets claimed that the Supreme Court judgment is disrespectful of rights of the presiding deity of Sabarimala temple because Lord Ayyappa is a celibate



**Figure 4.19** Tweets with Retweets and Favourites Peaks for Sabarimala Case



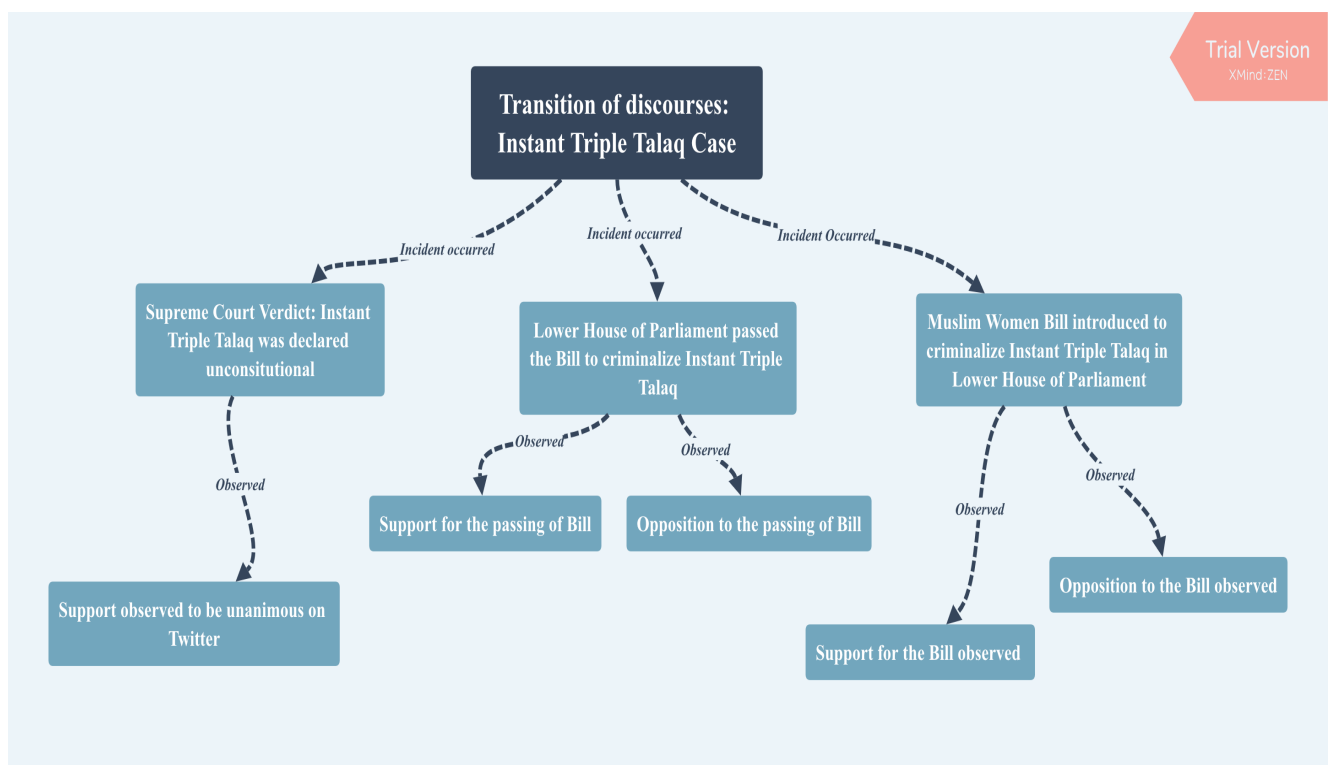
**Figure 4.20** Tweets with Retweets and Favourites Peaks for Sabarimala Case



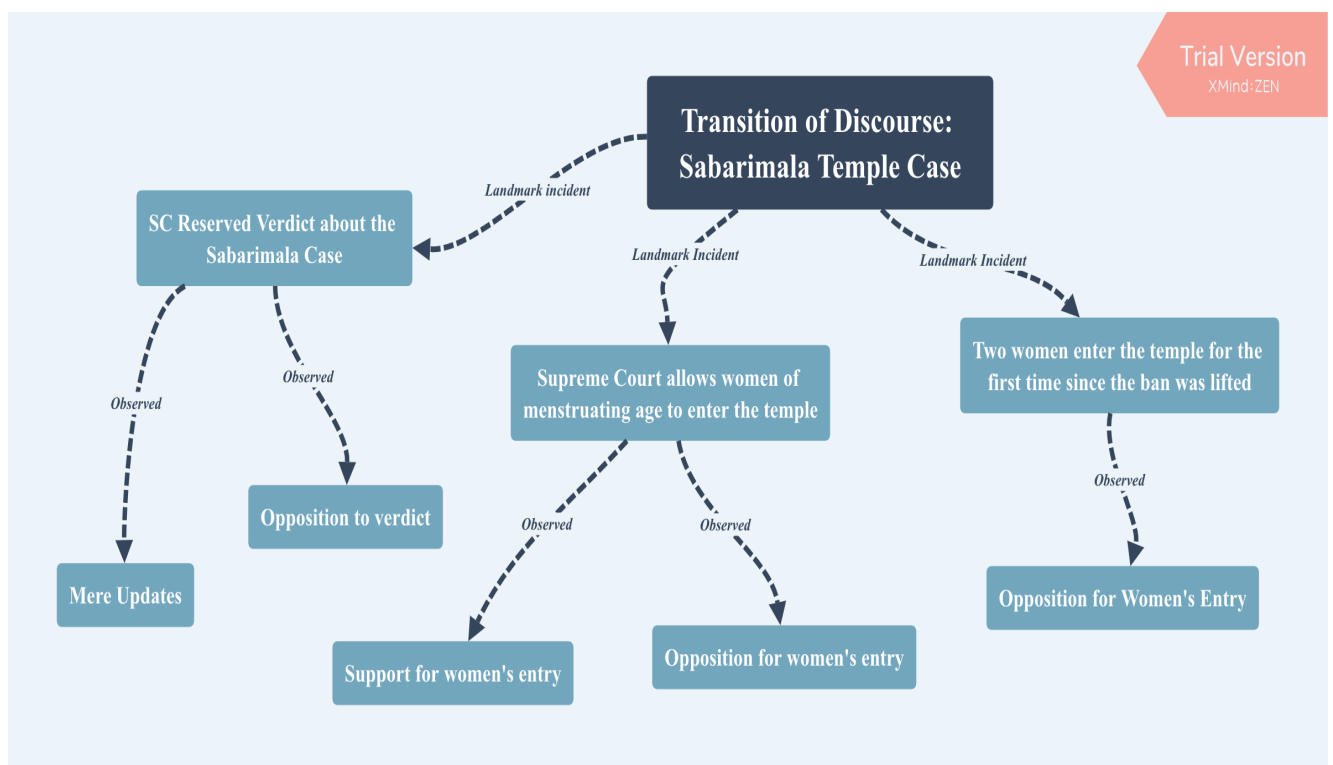
**Figure 4.21** Tweets with Retweets and Favourites Peaks for Sabarimala Case

god. The tweets suggest that women of 10-50 years of age entering Lord Ayyappa's shrine are believed to distract the God's meditation. The dominant discourse, when the Sabarimala verdict was reserved, was "in support of women's empowerment" and congratulatory of Supreme Court's progressive judgment. As the case deepened, the opposition to women's entry grew stronger and transitioned from "in support of women's empowerment" as the dominant discourse, to "in support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities" as the dominant discourse.

Continuing with our study of tweets figures 4.22 and 4.23 qualify the dominant discourses within the instant triple talaq case and the Sabarimala temple case. The flowcharts trace dominant discourses during three significant events within each case study. For instant triple talaq case, initial unanimous support for the verdict transforms into divided support and opposition for the Muslim Women Bill when it was passed in the Lower House of Parliament, as seen in Fig. 4.22. For Sabarimala temple case, the unanimous opposition to the Supreme Court's verdict transforms into a divided support when the ban on women's entry is lifted. However, we show this divided support and opposition, soon transforms into a unanimous opposition to women's entry, as shown by the flowchart in Fig. 4.23.



**Figure 4.22** Instant Triple Talaq Case: Dominant Discourse of Support and Opposition amongst the Tweets



**Figure 4.23** Sabarimala Temple Case: Dominant Discourse of Support and Opposition amongst the Tweets

## *Chapter 5*

### **Discussions**

In this section, we inspect the three dominant discourses from the findings section and situate them within specific theories from our previous literature review. The three dominant discourses are stated here:

- Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case
- In support of women's empowerment
- In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities.

To study the implications of the dominant discourses, we borrow from studies in Political Communications, Feminist HCI, and Feminist Theory. By employing Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis, we suggest “Controlled Empowerment of Women” as a phenomenon we observe in both case studies. In this section, we explain the concept of “Controlled Empowerment” and its interplay with Political Communication, Feminist HCI, and Feminist Theory through an analysis of the three dominant discourses identified in the earlier section.

Women in India have sought more visibility in the public spaces and the agency to express their political opinions more freely than ever before [11]. To avail the agency to speak of and about socio-political incidents in India, women have sought to hold positions of power in the government and journalistic careers. Besides these traditional positions of power, women have demanded visibility and voice on social media. Their endeavours have seemingly disrupted traditional gender roles and removed them from merely taking care of home and hearth. By opposing instant triple talaq case, women have demanded empowerment from oppressive divorce practices sanctioned by religious beliefs. Through struggles for gender equality in the Sabarimala case, women have demanded empowerment from oppressive traditions in opposition to the ‘the right to pray’ and the ‘the right to public places of worship.’

We propose the phrase “controlled empowerment of women” as a concept explaining the struggles of women demanding social empowerment, especially challenging a conservative right wing socio-political setup. “Controlled empowerment” alludes to the idea that right wing leaders manipulate a seemingly pro-women stance surreptitiously serving the demands of a rightist, socially conservative agenda; the term also aids in situating the threat posed by women demanding freedom and emancipation

from conservative religious hierarchies in a conservative socio-political incident or discourse. In our study, the two conservative hierarchies are as follows:

- Oppression imposed by the practice of instant triple talaq against muslim women. The Hindu men were portrayed as “heroes” who were rescuing muslim women from the shackles of a regressive divorce practice of their own religion.
- Denial of equality imposed by the ban on womens entry in sabarimala temple. The Hindu men were seen as “tradition obeying true devotees” who were protesting against the entry of women in Sabarimala in an effort to protect Lord Ayyappa’s privacy. Women demanding entry into the temple were portrayed as disrespectful of the traditions of the Sabarimala temple who were not true devotees of Lord Ayyappa. Moreover, Hindu women who participated in #ReadyToWait movement were seen as true devotees by the Hindu men, and “anti-feminists” by women who were coming to the Sabarimala debate to lead a fight for a feminist/women’s empowerment cause.

We argue that “Hindutva feminism” as an ideology and practice of feminism stemming from “right wing” beliefs in India, leads to controlled empowerment of women. Hindutva feminism situates empowerment of women within the definition of Hindu culture, religious symbols, traditions, and rituals [53]. Women participating in the Hindutva project of creating a unified Hindu Nation claim their power as emanating from Goddess Kali for strength [53]. However, Hindutva feminists view their position as lower in the hierarchy, to that of the nation and hindutva men [35]. By placing themselves lower in the social hierarchy, Hindutva women assign unconditional importance on traditions and culture and give up the task of women’s emancipation in ‘the hands of Hindutva men’, thus participating in controlled empowerment. We call Hindutva women as right wing feminists, and their specific struggles and paths for greater visibility and participation in public spaces as an example of right wing feminism [11]. We have elaborated on how ‘Durga Vahini’, a right wing outfit, trains women in the art of self defense towards the Hindutva nationalist project, in Section 2.1. Right wing feminists have faced criticism for their appropriation of Hindu religion in the demand for women’s empowerment, most commonly from the left and liberal feminists [53].

We began this section by pointing out the broad implications of controlled empowerment of women on political communication and right wing feminism in India. We move to explain how ‘controlled empowerment’ as practised by right wing political parties in India unfolds on digital platforms such as Twitter, using the affordances of digital formats for both case studies: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple case. Through our previously identified set of dominant discourses we expand on how transitions in these discourses switch the course of a liberal feminist agenda to that of a conservative one driven by customary religious sentiments.

In the section discussing “implications on feminist theory”, we will explain the disagreements between liberal feminists and right wing feminists. We will also explain how the contention is contributing to the exercise of controlled empowerment of women on social media.

## 5.1 Political Communications and Right Wing Feminism

Right wing feminism is a newly emerging women's empowerment narrative in global feminist thought [53]. Also called as conservative feminism, right wing feminism emphasises on providing women with the agency to create niche spaces of self expression within traditional narratives of religion or of family values [26]. In India, the disruption of traditional gender roles was a sign of progressive legislation and became central to the government's policies on equality and empowerment. All political parties were expected to subscribe to notions of women's empowerment. When the BJP was campaigning for general elections of 2014, they underwent a transformation of their image from that of a regressive conservative party, to that of a progressive, pro-empowerment party. The BJP adopted the perception of working for emancipation of women through activities organized by the Durga Vahini, BJP's women's wing. Through training in self defense, counselling facilities, hymn recitation sessions, boarding schools for women, and self-help centers, Durga Vahini was successful in carving niche spaces for women in rural and urban India [35]. The grassroots engagement with women's empowerment transformed public perception about the BJP as being oppressive towards gendered social groups. It also helped women become stronger and more fierce, allowing them to even show and use power to achieve their goals.

On the other hand, the Durga Vahini promoted Hindutva as the primary belief system, and a united Hindu Nation was the primary goal for all women of the Hindutva project. Traditions, and family values were not to be abandoned and public spaces carved by women for themselves were to be used to promote a unified Hindutva oriented India. We suggest that the notion of 'feminism' subverted to serve the needs of a rightist political agenda supports the earlier reference to the notion of 'controlled empowerment' - where in women were exhorted to take charge of political action/agency but only insofar as they confirmed and confined to the politics of the right.

Social media has become an important source for political communication across the world. Leaders such as Donald Trump in the United States, Narendra Modi in India, and Nigel Farage in the UK, and Geert Wilders in Netherlands [52] have taken to the social media sites (SNSs) such as Twitter to express their opinions. In India, Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister leading a government formed by the BJP, a right wing national political party. His persona on Twitter is carefully crafted to imply a 'harbinger of hope, development, empowerment and prosperity' to the country. On the contrary, his political party is known to be affiliated with Hindu nationalist organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Bajrang Dal, and Durga Vahini. The above organizations have been known for urging the Hindus in India to fight for a majoritarian population, trying to further a conservative right wing agenda at grassroots. The campaigns by these organizations as well by the BJP in the past, have been oriented towards the Hindu nationalist agenda, marking religious minorities in India as others or aliens [25]. Due to the conflicted and controversial array of historical events, the Narendra Modi campaign for development and empowerment is met with uncertainty and doubt about its political intentions.

In the tweets from our data set, the instant triple talaq case was considered a victory for the BJP government for successfully empowering the Muslim women. On the contrary, the BJP was criticized



for accepting the Sabarimala verdict on women's entry into the temple without a fight because the verdict hurt the sentiments of Hindu Devotees of Sabarimala, broke the age old tradition of the Hindu Temple and "polluted" the shrine. We observe that Twitter users viewed instant triple talaq case as an important step towards women's emancipation from oppressive religious practices. On the contrary, the Sabarimala temple case violation of the Hindu temple's sacred rituals and traditions.

Within the theories of political communication, it is widely known that packaging of information, and public perception is often key to a successful campaign [36]. For the BJP, the public perception during 2014 election campaign was of a pro-development, pro-empowerment political party [41]. The introduction of the Muslim Women Bill was thus perceived as a pro-empowerment initiative by the right wing political party trying to rescue Muslim women from the shackles of religious oppression [30]. The BJP was thus packaged as a conservative party nonetheless bringing change and freedom to the lot of women especially socially marginalized women.

On the contrary, the public opinion about BJP as pro-development and pro-empowerment of women was not favorable to the Sabarimala case. By the virtue of being a right wing political party, BJP was expected to advocate for the rights of Hindu devotees, their religious sentiments and traditions opposing women's entry in Sabarimala. BJP's public image of a pro-development and socially progressive party contradicts the expectations of pro-Hindu populations and is reflected in the tweets from our data set. Tweets suggest that BJP's non-involvement in trying to overturn the supreme court verdict hurt the sentiments of devotees.

However, we also suggest that the right wing has used social media platforms such as Twitter to make bold statements that encouraged supporters to voice opinions against women demanding entry in the Sabarimala temple. For instance, Narendra Modi is known to follow back some of his followers on Twitter. When an influential and powerful leader such as Narendra Modi follows any account on Twitter, it is interpreted as the leader engaging with and endorsing the political activity of such accounts [6]. This encourages users of the Twitter account to express their political opinions in the hope that their voices are heard by authorities/leaders who may influence decisions on instant triple talaq and the Sabarimala temple case. We call this form of engagement with supporters of the right wing ideology on Twitter by BJP leaders as - indirect engagement.

We argue that indirect encouragement has evolved as the communication strategy of the right wing in India vis-a-vis women's empowerment discourse. It exposes the inherent contradiction between their pro-empowerment image whilst providing tacit support to oppressive practices such as ban on women's entry in Sabarimala. Through this indirect engagement, BJP endorses political opinions of its supporters which are rightist and conservative in nature while maintaining the reform oriented pro-empowerment image through their own official channels of communication.

Discourses affect public opinion. Today, discourses on social media inform opinions of a large number of people, who consider it their main source of factual and political information [14]. Dominant discourses thus contribute significantly to shaping public opinion. In our study, we show that the dominant discourses on Twitter for both case studies were divided in their support for the right wing government's

involvement in them. We suggest that the divided support laid bare the inherent contradictions between “support for women’s empowerment” and protecting/caretaking the “rights and sentiments of religious communities” of right wing politics to the forefront. One of our contributions in this thesis is etching out the idea of “controlled empowerment of women” as a consequence of this contradiction practised by the political right in India - particularly in issues concerning women’s rights and pitting them as subservient to community rights, religious or social. Nonetheless, political discussions on digital and print media made an overt linkage with the discourse of empowerment of women in the case of the triple talaq- which initially catalyzed and ultimately receded in intensity- to the propensity of the Hindu right in criminalizing a social practice of the muslim minority community in India [? ].

The dominant discourse in Sabarimala case, on the contrary, remained void of direct engagement from right wing leaders despite the overt flagging of the empowerment of women’s card. The case was positioned in opposition to the supreme court’s verdict declaring the shrine open to women and in support of the the right to religious practice, in this case a practice customarily endorsed by the dominant Hindu community denying the right to enter and pray in a public space for women. The debates on Twitter were successful in enlisting women as supportive of BJP’s endeavors towards empowerment of women in the instant triple talaq case. On the contrary, the debates also enlisted women as supporters of the #ReadyToWait movement. The move to garner support for #ReadyToWait is suggested as an example of right wing feminism. We claim that for the women supporting #ReadyToWait, the tradition of women not entering the shrine until they reach 50 years of age was unconditional and renders the breaking of tradition for achieving gender equality as a ‘diabolical’ act of treason against Hindu tenets.

## 5.2 Discussing Feminist HCI Literature

We have suggested that one of the dominant discourses across both case studies has been In support of women’s empowerment. Feminist HCI is a domain of study that encourages us, as researchers, to engage actively with feminist theories, their study on social media, and implications on social relationships [16]. We thus actively engage in Feminist HCI literature and explain how our study contributes to the expansion of Feminist HCI. We also answer the third research question here: “How does the rhetoric on women’s empowerment that plays out on Twitter contribute to expanding the current contributions in Feminist HCI?”

Our study uses two core functionalities of Twitter as important contributors to the emergence of dominant discourses in both case studies. Favoriting was used to measure user engagement, and Tweeting behavior was used to perform Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis. The analysis shows emergence of the three dominant discourses discussed in our study.

Feminist HCI researchers have typically studied digital interaction between users on social networking sites (SNSs) and its implications on social relationships, and understanding of power relations and socio-political hierarchies. Bardzell and Bardzell claim that feminist HCI attempts to apply theoretical knowledge of feminism and queer theories to understanding the purposes and effects of technology as a

medium of communication [10]. Our study attempts to answer similar questions about the effectiveness of Twitter as an SNS that has significance for political communication. We recall the methodological considerations outlined by Bardzell and Bardzell which we explained in Chapter 2.4 and employ Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis rigorously.

We incorporate the Feminist Standpoint Theory to understand dominant discourses on women's empowerment and their intersections with right wing feminism on Twitter. The Feminist Standpoint theory emphasizes the need to engage actively with voices of minority social groups and to treat their point of view as an important contribution to the discourse [10]. Bardzell and Bardzell claim that the use of Feminist Standpoint Theory is an important addition to Feminist HCI studies bringing multiple points of view to foreground analysis. As we engage with dominant discourses, we explain how public opinion about right wing leaders is shaped by a transition between three dominant discourses. We show how the dominant discourse "in support of women's empowerment" transitions "in support of rights and sentiments of religious communities." The transition between discourses is based on our understanding of the content of tweets that expressed support and opposition in both case studies. By reflecting on the dominant discourses, the tweets provide insights into the relationships between liberal and right wing feminism, political leadership of BJP, and right wing ideology. The relationship between the right wing and feminism is complex. We argue that complexity of the relationship leads to contradictions in rhetoric on case studies concerned with women's empowerment. As a result, the cases of instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple thus alluded to divided support for women's empowerment. The support for religious traditions was manipulated and forced into the discourse on feminism, exposing the practice of 'controlled empowerment' of women.

For instance, Tweets that supported the entry of women in the shrine of Sabarimala temple were severely countered by tweets that claimed destruction to the Hindu religion and timeless traditions of the temple. Tweets that opposed the entry of women congratulated them for being true devotees of the lord, for opposing the lifting of ban and for criticizing liberal feminists for demanding entry into the temple. We suggest the tweets under study aimed to enforce the belief that women's empowerment lies within the scope of religion and traditional values of right wing Hindutva ideology.

The dominant discourses of instant triple talaq case rival the interpretations in the Sabarimala case. The concern in instant triple talaq case is to free muslim women from the shackles of 'regressive and barbaric' practices preached by Islam, where Hindu men are the harbingers of freedom and empowerment. On the other hand, the concern in Sabarimala case is to protect the rituals and traditions of Sabarimala temple and the sentiments of Hindu devotees, rather than buttressing women's right to equality of worship. We use the standpoint theory to highlight the contradictions in dominant discourses between the two cases. Exposing the contradictions suggests that when the right wing government was involved in legislating over the Muslim divorce practice of instant triple talaq, the support for women's empowerment was divided and controlled by expressing the issue as oppressive to Muslims rather than as empowering women. Controlled empowerment was thus exercised by amplifying "in support of rights and sentiments of religious communities" as the dominant discourse. We explained not only the con-

tribution of Feminist Standpoint Theory, but also the effectiveness of the Twitter platform functionality, towards the emergence of our three dominant discourses.

We presented the effects of the Twitter's functions, Favoriting and Tweeting, contributing to the reaffirmation of traditional beliefs. We show how these beliefs can encourage amplification of a dominant discourse through transition between discourses during the political lives of both case studies. We acknowledge that the ability of the Twitter platform to encourage 'transitions' between dominant discourses could amplify controlled empowerment of women. We also hope to present this work as inspiration for future content analysis from multiple perspectives and theoretical leanings to understand the digital and social structures and functions of social media networks.

### **5.3 Implications for Feminist Theory**

We suggest that the instant triple talaq case and Sabarimala case are both distinct examples of movement for women's empowerment in India. Our study of dominant discourses on Twitter suggests that both case studies transition from "support of women's empowerment" to "support of rights and sentiments of religious communities." The transition can be interpreted as a contention within feminists from liberal feminism, and right wing feminism [37] [53]. We explain the contention between these two schools of thought by stating them here.

According to Sagarika Ghose, a liberal feminist is a woman who questions the validity of traditions and rituals that seem oppressive towards women [23]. In India, liberal feminists criticize traditional roles of women - homemaker, and child bearer, particularly participating in rituals that places a demand to 'fast for the husband's good health' - and relate to them as oppressive tools to control her everyday life [23]. As Ghose states, liberal feminists are portrayed as being against Hindu practices and customs when they question the "oppression" and "silencing" that come by practicing them [23]. In our study, tweets claimed that the Sabarimala case was a demand by liberal feminists against gender discrimination in the religious laws of the temple.

Right wing feminists, on the other hand, are women who have empowered themselves albeit within conservative traditional settings. Many women, trained in self-defense, proved their mettle by participating in the Hindutva project for a unified India through public protests and aggressive stances on social media [53]. In our study, we observe that the participation of right wing feminists in the #Ready-ToWait hashtag on Twitter in the Sabarimala case, is in support of the ban on women's entry and for not forsaking 'tradition' for 'gender equality.'

We argue that the contention between liberal and right wing feminists imposes controlled empowerment on women. In both case studies, we show how the transition of dominant discourses on Twitter leads to divided support for women's empowerment. This divided support, within feminists, emerges from a difference in how "empowerment" is viewed by liberal feminists and right wing feminists. With disagreements between the two types of feminists, "in support of women's empowerment" as the domi-

nant discourse in both cases gets suppressed in favor of “in support of rights and sentiments of religious communities.” This, in our view, is controlled empowerment of women.

In this study, Tweets suggest that liberal feminists support both the supreme court verdict declaring instant triple talaq as unconstitutional, and the muslim women bill criminalizing the Talaq practice. Similarly, liberal feminist tweets on Sabarimala case also supported women’s entry into the temple on grounds of gender equality. However, liberal feminists tweeted strongly opposing the #ReadyToWait movement and claimed that right wing feminists ‘did not understand the true meaning of equality and empowerment.’

On the other hand, right wing feminists supported the verdict in the muslim women bill in the instant triple talaq case, claiming that oppressive religious practices needed legal intervention. Tweets also suggest a strong opposition from right wing feminists to women’s entry into Sabarimala temple thereby discarding the lens of empowerment which fuelled the earlier tweeting behaviours in support of legal intervention in the triple talaq and Muslim Women Bill. For right wing feminists, the Sabarimala Issue was a threat to the integrity of Hindu traditions and religion, and not in the least pertaining to gender equality. Because of the perceived threat to Hindu traditions and rituals, right wing feminist tweets supported the #ReadyToWait movement, simultaneously decrying liberal feminists of betraying/destroying their cultural and traditional roots.

Tweets have shown the contention between the two feminist groups. The Twitter platform facilitates and offers agency both feminists groups to flourish and garner support on the platform. This agency is crucial to expanding narratives about feminism, with support for either liberal or right wing feminism. However, the contention between liberal and right wing feminism must be closely studied and we must strive to amplify the voices of pro-women’s empowerment Twitter users. We hope that by amplifying their standpoints on social media in cases such as instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple, we could control the controlled empowerment of women by not allowing voices of the right wing to suppress the voices of feminism.

## *Chapter 6*

### **Conclusions**

The thesis attempts to understand the intersection between political communication of the right wing supporters in India as a contribution to women's empowerment discourses in the country. We use a combination of two qualitative research methodologies: Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis (FRDA). Because social media such as Twitter has increasingly begun shaping public perceptions and informing users of political, social and economic happenings of a country, we consider tweets a rich source of discursive information in our study. we investigate two cases- instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple case to find three dominant discourses emerging as a result of our study:

- Support/Opposition: instant triple talaq and Sabarimala case.
- In support of women's empowerment.
- In support of Rights and Sentiments of Religious Communities.

These dominant discourses are central to all narratives about women's empowerment related to the two case studies and have important implications for political communication studies. Besides implications on political communication, dominant discourses also inform our understanding of the effectiveness of Twitter functionalities such as Favorites and Tweeting behavior, to amplify and suppress narratives supporting women's empowerment. We stress that manipulation of narratives as a consequence of Twitter activity re-enforce gender stereotypes, compromises agency of women demanding empowerment, and alters perceptions about incidents related to gender empowerment in India.

This study is a confluence of insights from multiple domains of study- political communications, right wing politics, feminism, and social media analysis. We set up a socio-political context for understanding two case studies- instant triple talaq and Sabarimala temple case as social media phenomena. The study is guided by the principles of Feminist HCI methodological principles outlined by Bardzell and Bardzell [10] and our overarching discourses employed Thematic Analysis and Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis to propose the idea of controlled empowerment of women. Through the concept, we establish the implications of our study on political communications, the practice of right wing feminism in India, and on Feminist Theory as a domain of study. We hope ensuing future work will focus on and propel the central ideas in our thesis about the unfolding of controlled empowerment via online and

media discourses. We hope that our work is a step towards inclusion of diverse opinions surrounding women's constitutional rights and ensuing empowerment in the annals of mainstream Twitter narratives.

## Related Publications

- Isha Mangurkar and Nimmi Rangaswamy. "**Technology and Right Wing Feminism**". Abstract under review at International Communications Association Regional Conference 2019.
- Isha Mangurkar and Nimmi Rangaswamy. "**Technologys contribution to furthering womens empowerment: a discourse set in the rise of right wing leadership in Indias political frame.**" Abstract accepted (Manuscript to be submitted) for "Special Issue on Feminist HCI" for the Feminist Theory Journal, 2019.
- Shantanu Prabhat, Aditya Motwani, Isha Mangurkar, and Nimmi Rangaswamy. "**Frames in Collective Action: Case of Online #Boycott**". Accepted at Twenty-fifth Americas Conference on Information Systems, Cancun, 2019.



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