

This poster examines the effects of the ideologies of a right-wing State on young people's nationalistic and political attachments. Focusing on a context like India where right-wing dogmas are currently framing the contours of nationalism, I show that elements of fun and humour are emerging as valid and productive ways of engaging with the political sphere for young people. Drawing upon interactions from a brief period of fieldwork in Gujarat, India in December 2023 and secondary literature, I demonstrate how young people – irrespective of their political allegiances tend to define their ideologies by doing 'masti'. Masti, an equivalent of several terms from the English language such as fun, playfulness, light-heartedness, humour, or mischief, is not only a mode of political engagement for young people but also a responsive approach to the all-pervasive Neo-Hindutva discourse in contemporary India.

The Neo-Hindutva discourse in India has been defined as the "idiosyncratic expressions of Hindu nationalism which operate outside of the institutional and ideological framework of the Sangh Parivar" (Anderson, 2015). This definition has brought forth the various ways in which Hindutva has begun to permeate newer spaces. Through an intensified and far-reaching focus on forming the Hindu nation, the Neo-Hindutva discourse diffuses its logic of Hindu nationalism in an organized covert fashion leading to, what is termed as the 'banalization of Hindu nationalism' (Jaffrelot, 2018). As the crucible of the Hindu nation, children and youth have been entrusted and/or have taken on the responsibility of disseminating, reproducing as well as resisting such right-wing ideologies in and through everyday practices and ways of being. I will be presenting the various ways in which youth across a broad political spectrum are responding to this 'everyday nationalism' by engaging in masti. This poster builds upon Udupa's argument of fun as a meta practice shaping right-wing mobilization (Udupa, 2019) and responds to Jeffrey's call to examine humour as a tactic adopted by young people in political and economic contexts (Jeffrey, 2012). I argue that masti, with all its connotations, has emerged as a coping, mobilizing as well as radicalizing strategy in the face of the meditative yet normalized version of the Hindutva discourse in contemporary India.