

In the month of February, the world saw an absolute carnage suffered by the civilians in a particular part of the globe following a devastating Nerve Gas attack. This led to many being homeless and igniting persistent fear travelling undercurrent. The repercussions can still be felt in the midst of catastrophic Corona outbreak. What sets this attack different from the list of recent ones is the sheer quality of Intelligence present at the desk of Agencies preceding the attack and a comparatively long gestation period before the Gas showed the first effects on the victim.

Now to rescue you from the state of bewilderment that how were you unaware of such a tragic incident, I'd say you need not worry about your General Awareness. Disclosing the location of the attack in the style of some hugely followed Pharisaical Instagram admins - 'This is not Syria but our very own India', though this time not to the absolute joy of the users. Now before you label this as 'Fake News', the Gas used was neither Sarin nor any of the banned substances listed under 'Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons'(OPCW) convention. It was unleashed from some of the TV News studios based in Noida and Mumbai. Though it avoided the general olfactory sensation and direct contact with the masses, the audio-visual route in no way undermined its potency. It is still being released throughout the country in the middle of a pandemic when the entire world is coming together, the corporate media in India decides to embarrass themselves by covering the Virus in a Religious raiment.

Most glaring is the similarity that this yet to be named substance, which affected the Indian Capital a few weeks ago ensuing communal riots, bears to Sarin (a very potent nerve gas) in its mechanism. Sarin, odourless and colourless, affects the functioning of an enzyme called Acetylcholinesterase, whose function is to demolish the neurotransmitter Acetylcholine after it has done its job and delivered the message to the subsequent neuron. On exposure to Sarin, the enzyme does not function and this leads to accumulation of Acetylcholine in the cholinergic receptors. So the neurotransmitter stays and keep giving its message, say the message was to regurgitate something one ate, now the person would keep on ejecting uncontrollably or the message was to release water onto the eyes owing to its dryness, the reiterated message would make the eyes get swollen owing to repeated flow of water into it. We get killed by the repeated action of our very own neurotransmitter. Exposure to a high quantity of Nerve gas results in an acute cholinergic crisis which affects the Peripheral and Central Nervous System. The most common symptoms include visual darkness, nausea, muscle weakness and palpitations. Even lesser exposure to it has the potential to alter Acetylcholine which bears a direct correlation to cognitive capabilities.



Aftermath of Delhi Riots/ Image: HT

On a very similar front, the toxicant which is in the air of most Indian TV studios has no odour and hence does not get detected at that moment. The toxicant drawing similar comparison to Sarin affects the functioning of a social enzyme called 'Compassion' whose function is to demolish prejudices and biases, inherent in each one of us. On exposure to such vitriolic speeches made at public platforms, the component of Compassion does not function and results in accumulation of stereotypes metamorphosing into hatred in societal receptors. The major consequence of such exposure is the dissociation of cognitive capabilities and Amnesia, where people get oblivious of certain antecedents and indulge in repeated actions, which poses grave danger to the structural fabric of any civilised society. [Riots in North East Delhi](#) were a manifestation of such Amnesia. It would not be any more shocking if now we see social or economic exclusion or worse carnal attacks directed at a particular community because some members of Tablighi jamaat, out of sheer

irresponsibility, participated in a congregation which put the lives of many others in jeopardy as a large number of them were asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19. But to label it as 'Corona Jihad' or 'Corona Bomb' on national prime time leads to an 'accustomed' quandary that ultimately has to borne by around 200 million people in the country. It, however, would be wrong to assert that these newsrooms are the primary source of such poison, but they not just selectively excuse such toxicity emanating from the mouth of certain office bearers in power but also amplify the effect by giving them more camera time, thus exacerbating the situation.



Image: AP

The comparison might come to you as defying scientific rationale, but it is essential to underscore the level of vicious coverage that has been in practice for some years now, manifesting itself in events that has full potential to crumble the basis of world's largest

democracy. The continued vilification of universities and its students, the only functioning opposition, and non-reprimanding of acts of certain politicians who garland lynch mobs and incite masses to give the rioters the audacity to come to university gates and shout slogans like “*Goli maaro gaddaron ko*”(slay the traitors). It is not to say that protestors are necessarily right each time but do they deserve death at the hands of mob just because they ask some hard questions about the ‘Chronology’ of government actions? The definition of treason and identification of traitors are done at mainstream tv newsroom, making a mockery of the entire legal system of the country because such judgements pronounced by TV journalists are more accessible to the general population rather than actual Court statements and no wonder people buy such statements coming from their favourite Anchor who just reaffirms their already developed prejudices. The religion of victims has become another playground for many TV Godmen. Also, it is very common to find people dressed as Hindu deities sitting in Newsroom condescending another set of believers and if this does not sound alarming, then nothing will. The TV debates are designed in such judgemental words that to take sides on such issues reduces communication to farce. Insistence upon an outright ‘yes or no’ undo the knots but in the process ruin the rope. It is not as if the yellow journalists are not aware of their sanguine hands, the *raison d’etre* for their complicity goes beyond monetary factors which is a matter of another detailed research.

In words of SI Hayakawa, late American academic and US senator, “the tragedy is not only that many of us are innocent enough to be deceived by systematic confusion in levels of abstraction in the news; a deeper tragedy is that, in many communities, certain newspapers and television provide us with almost no extensional materials for discussion partly because the sensational, two-valued utterances of extreme partisans make livelier stories than the testimony of extensionally minded experts”. What television news loses in-depth and specificity, it often gains in brevity, emotional immediacy and affective power. Sarin still has an ‘atropine’ to alleviate the effect but unfortunately, there is no such counterpart to the audiovisual carcinogen. Such is the time that ‘Fake News’ (the likes of [GPS nanochip on a currency note](#)) has become way more desirable than ‘Hate News’ which call for the obliteration of mental faculties and incite Mephistophelean communal riots.



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