



# Tweetology: Ideological Discourse Analysis of The Tweets of the Key Twitter Users Politicians of India with Special Reference to Shashi Tharoor and Subramanian Swamy

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**Abstract:** The current research paper investigates the tweetology of twitter's posts of two prominent politicians bearing the opposition parties in India to examine how ideologically conflicting ideas are interpreted and represented on microblogging sites. Key-concern of this study was to examine the ideological patterns of politicians that motivate them to pick out the subjects of constructing the discursive argument and calculate the spirit of democratic participation of people in the discourse that takes shape micro-blogging site Twitter. The study has employed the Three-Dimensional model of CDA developed by (Fairclough, 1995); to analyze the Discourses. The Purposive-Non Probability Sampling technique has been used to select the Social Networking Site (SNS) twitter to study the online discourse between politicians and the public. The major findings of Tweets analysis show that Subramanian Swamy shared his personal opinions on Twitter in his own quotations with attaching an online news-article link in his 2nd Tweet; the contexts of Swamys all Tweets are Social and Political: Hinduism, Triple Talaq, student unions clashes ABVP & AISA, Ayodhya land-dispute, ISIS and India. Future studies can analyze Political Discourse on Twitter using the tool of Intertextuality to examine the recontextualization of the Subject matter in discourse.

**Keywords:** *Twitter, tweetology, contextual-analysis, hegemony, public-discourse, discursive practices, patterns*

**Received:** 20 November 2017; **Accepted:** 23 February 2018; **Published:** 13 April 2018

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As the use of Twitter has become more commonplace throughout many nations, its role in political discussion has also increased. This has been evident in contexts ranging from general political discussion through local, state, and national elections (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Representatives of a democratic world are to be rewarded with various features of democracy like freedom of speech to express their concerns whether positive or negative in all matters of public affairs. The process of expressing concerns will encourage the likelihood of discourses among the insiders of democratic society to develop the understandings of different surfaces of the world. Since the advent of social networking sites, the communication patterns among people have radically transformed as people are seemingly more extrovert than earlier years of 21st century. The notion has been presumed that almost every member of a society seems concerned positively to certain political ideology and follows her/his ideal politician(s). It has also come into consideration that social media are the ultimate source of propagating the political beliefs; people, despite of having internet and its millions of web-services to cross check the information, tend to put blind faith in their political ideals (Biju, 2016). It has become necessary to analyze the status of logical argumentative behavior: how users of twitter are reacting, responding, criticizing or complementing the personal views of their ideal politicians.

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News details construct that present insight into the deeper system of ideological reproduction in public discussion and dialogue. A loud, optimistic fanfare has accompanied the greater circulation of information and opinion in the political sphere via 'new media', proclaiming the potential of such media, and online communications tools generally, to reactivate Habermas's public sphere in a new incarnation. The inherent promise of this is increased accountability from politicians and a consequent move towards greater democratization (Candon, 2012). Residing in a wired-society, social networking sites are one of the most fashionable facilities advocates the role of SNSs as an 'online public sphere' in boosting the participatory involvement of masses in discussing the political and societal issues.

### ***Twitter: A Micro-Blogging Site***

The number of mobile internet users is estimated to reach 478 million by June 2018, according to a report titled *Mobile Internet in India 2017* by Internet and Mobile Association of India. The power of social media, especially Twitter and Facebook has been proved by its successful application during recent US presidential elections. Further it discusses the twitter activities of Indian politicians against the politicians all over the world (Rajput, 2014; El-Den, Adikhari, & Adikhari, 2017). Among so many SNSs, twitter is observed as the most preferred social networking micro blogging platform by the celebrities, or public figures like 'public intellectuals': authors, philosophers, scientists, politicians, and actors etc. These professionals utilize the twitter to connect with the people who are also considered (philosophically) as 'civic intellectuals' (Dahlgren, 2012). Twitter allows its users to share personal opinions with the online social community; short posts on twitter are called Tweets which are limited to 140 characters. Americans are taking an active role in online political discourse, with 20% of internet users contributing comments or questions about the political process to social networking sites, blogs or other online forums. From these tweets they isolated two networks of political communication the retweet network, in which users were connected if one has rebroadcast content produced by another, and the mention network, where users were connected if one had mentioned another in a post, including the case of tweet replies (Conover et al., 2011).

In the era of quickly changing values of the societies of the world, the practice of discourse has become more essential in shaping the landscape of a society structured on the pillars of democratic political system. In Indian scenario, most of the politicians have their twitter handlers to share their ideas and opinions regarding any social, legal, economic, or political concerns of national and international importance. During the times of elections twitter is often used as a tool to propagate the political agendas to persuade the voters. Indeed, the politicians are somehow engaged in polishing their positive images among followers via twitter but another fact that cannot be declined is that, such attempts of persuading them reinforce the public to resist the infusion of opinions in their minds. Social networking sites provide the platform for people who want to contribute their ideas, provide valuable suggestions, appreciate their favorite political party or want to criticize the moves of government against the spirit of democracy. Such incredible discourses have to be studied to provide the valuable suggestions for further designing of more enthusiastic framework of online 'discursive actions'. Discourse studies have since the 1980s been increasingly applied in the field of communication in general and of mass communication in particular. The news is imbued with ideologies. A detailed study of such ideologies in the mass media and other forms of public elite discourse contributes to our insights into their very reproduction in society.

### ***Research Problem and Relevance for the Current Study***

Present study was aimed to investigate the political discourse on twitter among the Indian politicians and people and analyzing the hegemonic ideologies of politicians. The study attempted to detect the discursive patterns on the twitter discourse. Key-concern of this study was to examine the ideological-patterns of politicians which motivate them to pick out the subjects of constructing the discursive argument; and to calculate the spirit of democratic participation of people in the discourse which takes shape on micro blogging site twitter.

### ***Shashi Tharoor and Subramanian Swamy @twitter***

There were two factors behind go for Shashi Tharoor and Subramanian Swamy to study the discourse analysis of their tweets:

Shashi Tharoor, a member of parliament in lower house Loksabha; associated with Indian National Congress. Shashi Tharoor appeared to be influenced with the liberal school of philosophy. He usually refrain himself from promoting the religious philosophies among public. Joined the twitter in July 2009, and posted 54.8K tweets; having 4.12 million followers on twitter during the analysis of data.

Subramanian Swamy, a member of parliament in upper house Rajyasabha; associated with Bharatiya Janata Party. They both held excellent academic and professional records and having active-positive political careers and proactive on twitter. Swamy is a devoted Hindu and promoter of Hinduism and Nationalism. The official twitter handle of Swamy is - @Swamy39. Swamy has described himself on twitter as “Rajya Sabha MP, Former, Union Cabinet Minister, Harvard PhD in Economics; Professor, BJP National Executive member, I give as good as I get”.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fairclough, defines the discourse as the use of language in a communicative event which could be a newspaper article, film, an interview or a political speech. The use of language in a discourse performs three major functions in the society (Fairclough, 1995); changes the existing order of discourses between the powerful and powerless sections within a societal-structure. The three functions of discourse that Fairclough suggests are:

### ***A. Construction of the Identities or ‘Identity’ Function***

The words do not have their own meanings and they are defined, and re-contextualized to generate new interpretations about the identities of people, signs and symbols, places and the values of a societal structure. This concept is believed to take shape within a running discourse by involving the participants to share new and personal insights about the subject-matter of discourse.

### ***B. Relations Building ‘Relational’ Function***

Participants tend to get involved in cognitive-relationships with extending and receiving the discursive arguments and claims about the concerning communicative event in the progressive discourse.

### ***C. Constituting Knowledge and Meanings ‘Ideational’ Function***

It is presumed in the viewpoint of Fairclough, that discourse brings the changes in the socio-political surroundings of a society. Discourse is expected to radicalize the already existing discourses and stereotypes among the people of a societal-framework.

To assess the political discourse among twitter users, a study titled “Political Discourse Among Key twitter Users: The Case of Sejong City In South Korea”, was designed and conducted by Hsu, Park, and Park (2013). It was a time of political unrest among the people of Sejong city of South Korea; patterns of investigating the political discourse among key twitter users in Sejong city, methods of time series analysis, content analysis, and cluster analysis were employed. As per the finding of this study, among several twitter users had a close relationship with media outlets that were posting their tweets relating to the political unrest in their city, and somehow were influencing the other users. This study demonstrated that twitter provided a useful, real-time tool for interested parties to communicate with one another which had developed ‘political discourse’ on twitter.

A study conducted in Netherlands, titled “twitter Links between Politicians and Journalists” by Verweij (2012); to assess the ‘social network analysis of 150 Dutch journalists and politicians.’ The study suggested that networks of twitter have an underlying structure that is more detailed than one would expect from a simple list of followers and following. The bridging function in twitter network was clearly identified and presented how important a person is as a networker. This study suggested the vast network of twitter and how an individual gets the connectivity to the gigantic world around him. The journalists were following links to get the news and their followers to spread the news. The discourse among journalists and politicians projected the utility of twitter to use it as news or information receiving and sharing platform.

Another study was undertaken in Australia; titled “The Use of twitter Hashtags in the Formation of Ad Hoc Publics” by Bruns and Burgess (2011). The study assessed the popular hashtags of 2010, like ‘#ausvotes’ for 2010 Australian

elections, '#Londonriots' for the coordination of information and political debates around the unrest in London in 2010. This study found that all these tags and many other similar, were created to form the ad hoc publics to mobilize the political and social support.

A research study had been done to analyse the role of twitter in promoting the political discourse about Indian general elections 2014. The study titled "Modeling Indian General Elections: Sentiment Analysis of Political twitter Data" by [Singhal, Agrawal, and Mittal \(2015\)](#). Adjectives of likes and dislikes, positive and negative, sad and joyful connotations were used as research codes (variables) to analyze the support of public for the general elections Prime Ministerial candidates. The researchers of this study claims that via sentiment analysis on twitter, the possible outcomes of the elections could be predicted (to certain limit).

Another study was conducted to analyze the biased presentation of Iran Nuclear Program, Iran Sanctions, and Syria Crisis in the Western newspapers, entitled "A CDA Approach to the Biased Interpretation and Representation of Ideologically Conflicting Ideas in Western Printed Media"; was conducted by [Shojaei, Youssefi, and Hosseini \(2013\)](#) in Iran. The study analyzed the highest circulation newspapers in Western nations Daily Mail, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and more newspapers which presented the Iran as a threat to world peace and development. The study employed the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method to analyse the intertextual aspect of defaming Iran; also used [Van Dijk \(2001\)](#) Ideological Square to examine how ideologically conflicting ideas are interpreted and represented in western media. Major findings of this study suggested the patterns of lexicalization and collocational patterns, presuppositions, intertextuality and modality were the items with the highest frequent of use in the representation of news stories about Iran Nuclear programme, and bans/sanctions imposed by Iran.

### ***Research Gaps/Lacunae***

Having dearth of relevant literature and after reviewing the available literature, it was evident that research studies on Political Discourse on twitter in Indian context, have not been conducted with specific intent to explore the role of twitter as a public sphere. How twitter acts as the tool to encourage the democratic participation of people in debate, discussions relating to the management of their own (publics) affairs. Thus the present study seems fit to critically analyze the political discourse among Indian politicians and public (twitter followers of politicians) on micro blogging site twitter.

### ***Objectives of the Present Study***

The objectives of the current research-work were:

1. To analyze the ideological issues posted on twitter between prominent politicians in India.
2. To explore the role of twitter in encouraging the democratic participation of people in discourses of public and political affairs in India.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research into the use of Twitter in such political contexts has also developed rapidly, aided by substantial advancements in quantitative and qualitative methodologies for capturing, processing, analyzing, and visualizing Twitter updates by large groups of users ([Bruns & Burgess, 2011](#)). Present study is designed to explore the discourse on twitter between politician(s) and to analyze the democratic participation of people on twitter was of qualitative and exploratory in nature. The study was limited to the number of analyzed tweets of politicians and public comments/responses are limited, the small-duration of this study, centered around the political discourse on twitter. Drawing on ([Van Dijk, 2001](#)) socio-cognitive approach and ([Fairclough, 1995](#)) approach of intertextual analysis of news discourse and within the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an issue of importance ([Shojaei et al., 2013](#)). The study have employed the Three-Dimensional model of CDA developed by ([Fairclough, 1995](#)); to analyze the Discourses between Shashi Tharoor and his followers on twitter; and Subramanian Swamy and between his followers on twitter; and to explore the democratic participation of people who follow these politicians on twitter.

**Textual Analysis:** The uses of vocabulary, phrases, and clauses were to be examined in this analysis that coherently constructs the meaningful sentences.

**Discursive Practice Analysis:** According to Fairclough, this was the practice or process in which texts (writing, speech, or visual image) were produced and absorbed by the participants of a discourse.

**Social Practice:** The texts and discursive practices in a discourse were to be analyzed in the contexts of social practices and communicative events. Fairclough (1995) suggests that texts cannot be analyzed in isolation instead they need to be examined within the context they were used in.

### **Sampling Design**

The Purposive-Non Probability Sampling technique has been used in selection of the Social Networking Site (SNS) twitter to study the online discourse between politicians and public. Five tweets of Indian politician Subramanian Swamy and equal five tweets of Indian politician Shashi Tharoor were selected applying Purposive sampling technique. **Tweets & Public Comments/Responses Selected for the Study:** Total 20-20 Tweets of Swamy and Tharoor both were selected purposefully, out of the all Tweets they posted in February & March 2017; and five Tweets of each politician were finally chosen to be analyzed on the grounds of national importance issues covered within these Tweets. Five selected Tweets of Subramanian Swamy: Tweet-1: Self assertion by Swamy about democratic, secular, and self correcting features of Hinduism; Tweet-2: The debate over unconstitutional status of Triple Talaq practice in India; Tweet-3: Ideological clashes between All India Student Union (AISA) and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP); Tweet-4: Ayodhya land-dispute; Tweet-5: ISIS and national security of India. Five selected Tweets of Shashi Tharoor: Tweet-1: Ideological clash between AISA and ABVP; Tweet-2: Discourse about ‘freedom of creative expression’ in Films vs Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC); Tweet-3: A proposal suggesting Presidential system of governance in India; Tweet-4: A petition seeking British apology to India; Tweet-5: Racist violence against African students in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India.

**Context:** Socio-Political; The alleged ideological perfection has been signified to persuade the people about Hinduism and its socio-political framework.

**Probable-Intentions behind this Tweet:** Praising (Boasting): Swamy is known for his absolute devotion towards his religion ‘Hinduism’. The determination of spreading the **religious supremacy** could be traced from the above tweet of him; the incorporated words in the text ‘**intrinsically**’ ‘**democratic**’ ‘**secular**’ proposes a **claim** about the very nature of **Hinduism** of being the **best** among all others.

**Context:** Socio-Political & Legal.

**Probable-Intentions behind this Tweet:** Criticizing the existing practice of ‘**Triple Talaq**’ among Muslim community in India. The practice is allowed on the grounds of ‘Sharia Law’ by the ‘All India Muslim Personal Law Board’. The phrase ‘**unacceptable inequality between men and women**’, highlights the denunciation of Triple Talaq.

**Context:** Political; The text is written about the violence took place in the campus of Ramjas college in Delhi; a clash of ideologies that turned into violent act between ABVP and AISA.

**PProbable Intentions behind the Tweet:** Subramanian Swamy is associated to and a Member of Parliament in Rajyasabha from the Bhartiya Janata Party; ABVP is the student union of BJP. The violent act in Ramjas College was ignited by the ABVP against the alleged **anti-nationalist** speakers. Here, Swamy is **justifying** the act of ABVP with **criticizing** a past violent act carried-out by the ‘left-wing’ activists against ABVP. Here, Swamy is accusing the media for being biased in representing the issue.

**Context: Socio-Political;** the above mentioned issue of Ram-Janamabhoomi and Babari Masjid dispute is also under the court proceedings in Supreme Court of India, which adds this issue in category of Legal matters.

**Probable Intentions behind this Tweet:** The motive behind this Tweet appears overtly, to propagate the Hinduism ideology and to **gain** the **support** of Hindu population in favourably shaping the issue for majority population of the country. Since BJP is the only political party that reinforces the idea of constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya; it becomes an issue of political interest too. The terms and phrase ‘**Hindu Muslim amity**’, “they (Muslims) will accept to rebuild the masjid across Saryu”, makes the intentions of Swamy explicit.

**Context:** At first glance, it appears as a matter of **national security** of India, but undoubtedly, the matter is interconnected to national and **international politics**.

**Probable Intentions behind this Tweet:** Indeed, the **intentions** behind posting this Tweet are not merely political but also present the spreading concerns of international terror group ISISs intrusions in Indian Territory. A common threat to all the nations has been shared here and a **probable solution** has been **proposed** to collaborate with U.S. and Israel to combat the terror group.

**Context: Socio-Political;** The issue was about **freedom of expression** in an event at Ramjas college Delhi. Alleged anti-nationalist Umar Khalid was invited by the organizers (AISA) to speak in the event, and it was not



acceptable to ABVP.

**Probable-Intentions behind this Tweet:** Here, Tharoor is **criticizing** the violent act of BJP's student union ABVP. There was an ideological clash between right and left wing supporters in the campus of Ramjas college Delhi. Tharoor was tagged in a Tweet by Hasan Aman, a person from the victimized community in DU college. His response in form of criticism covertly targets the central government of India.

**Context: Socio-Political, and legal;** The issue is about **freedom of expression** with artistic-representation in Indian cinema. CBFC has the legal authority to certify or not to certify a film for public screening.

**Probable Intentions behind the Tweet:** Tharoor is **opposing** and **criticizing** the decision of CBFC for not certifying the film 'Lipstick Under My Burkha' due to alleged controversial representation of a community in this film. Shashi Tharoor is **advocating** the artistic 'freedom of expression' of Indian filmmakers. Here, Tharoor is holding the central government of India, **responsible** for such censorship.

**Context: Political & Legal;** The Tweet is directly criticizing the practice of making Prime Minister of India a promotional face in the election rallies of State Assembly elections in India.

**Probable Intentions behind the Tweet:** Tharoor is a Member of Parliament from Indian National Congress. During the BJP's election rallies in Uttar Pradesh, there have been few incidents when PM of India used certain type of words which were not liked by the competitors. Here, Tharoor is wisely **correlating** such incidents, **criticizing** the government of India and BJP, and **proposing** the representative - democratic system to be replaced with the presidential system of administration in India.

**Context: Socio-Political and Personal;** The post promotes the notion of self-respect and patriotism among the Indians. A proposal that seeks Britain's apology for its brutal colonial rule in India.

**Probable Intentions behind the Tweet:** Shashi Tharoor has written a book titled "Inglorious Empire: What the British did to India" about the cruel and exploitative colonial rule of Britishers in India. In his book, Tharoor has made many **accusations** about British atrocities to Indians; based on historical facts, in his interview with BBC he demanded the official apology from Britain for its inhuman treatments to Indian farmers and employees (during the colonial period). Shashi Tharoor has **criticized** the claims of British of erecting the infrastructure of development in India and in this Tweet; he is proposing the idea of seeking an apology from Britain, to his twitter followers by enclosing the websites link to sign the petition.

**Context: Socio-Political (International Relations) and Personal;** Shashi Tharoor here, is referring to the rising racial-discriminatory violence against African students in India; particularly he is mentioning the incident that took place in Noida Uttar Pradesh on March 27, 2017.

**Probable Intentions behind this Tweet:** In this Tweet, Tharoor is not only **criticizing** the violence in the name of race and creed but he is also clandestinely minimizing the credits of Delhi and North India in context of being extrovert and broad-minded with African people. Whereas, he is also inviting them to visit the South-India for study purposes because his home-state is Kerala in South region of India. Thus, here, Shashi Tharoor is **criticizing** the racial discrimination of Africans in North India, inviting the Africans to South-India and promoting his culture and his political **ideology**.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The research design of this study provides the framework to explore the Discourse on twitter between politician(s) and public; along with analyzing the democratic participation of people in the discursive arguments on twitter. Another interesting objective of detecting ideological patterns that encircle the Tweets of politicians, is also included in this research. The analysis have been done with making use of Codes designed for this study and employing Faircloughs model of exploring the discourse and discursive practices within the social contexts of arguments, presented by the participants of a discourse. Following are the major findings of Tweets analysis:

Subramanian Swamy shared his personal opinions on twitter in his own quotations with attaching an online news-article link in his 2nd Tweet; the contexts of Swamys all Tweets are Social and Political: Hinduism, Triple Talaq, student unions clashes ABVP & AISA, Ayodhya land-dispute, ISIS and India. Tweets-1: boasting about Hinduism & 4: proposing Muslims about Ayodhya land-dispute; are influenced by his religious sentiments. Tweets-2 & 3 are criticizing Triple Talaq and Left-wing activists; and in Tweet-5 Swamy is proposing to consider bonding with U.S., Israel & China. Shashi Tharoor extended his individual judgements about the Political and Social affairs on twitter with short descriptions (and enclosing online-news article links in Tweets- 2, 3 & 5) in his Tweets-1 to 5: criticizing

ABVP & AISA in DU, Film Certification & CBFC, Election campaigns by PM of India, and Racist violence in Noida; proposing Presidential system for India, and a Petition seeking British apology. In Tweet-5 Tharoor shared personal beliefs with boasting about Southern India.

The analysis presents the initiation of discourses by politicians and follow-ups by the public; with the motives of reinforcing, complementing or opposing, questioning the probable intentions and prejudices behind politicians tweets. Comments analysis projects that people selected certain words and phrases used by the politicians in their Tweets; to advance the progressive discourse on twitter. However, some comments/responses were constituted upon the sentimental grounds while avoiding dialectical argumentation with the members of online discourse. An ideological analysis of politicians Tweets exhibits that both Subramanian Swamy and Shashi Tharoor shared personal opinions about different social and political concerns with structuring the sentences to make positive self presentations; and to devalue the opponents. Fairclough (1995) shared three functions of discourse: Identity function, Relational function, and Ideational function. The discourse on twitter among politicians and public, encourage individuals to get an online identity in a virtual-sphere by engaging in the running discourse. twitter facilitates the participating members of online discourse to establish cognitive relationships with one another; such relations generate the meanings by extending the distinct opinions without the fear of isolation from majority opinion holders.

### ***Suggestions for Further Studies***

An analysis of Political Discourse on twitter with using the tool of Intertextuality to examine the Re-contextualization of the Subject matter in Discourse. Another comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of the discourse between an Indian Politician and her/his twitter followers; and between an foreign Politician and her/his twitter followers.

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**APPENDIX**Table 1 *Factors for the Analysis of Politicians Tweets*

Code	Description
Context of the Tweet- Probable Intentions behind posting the Tweet-	Political, Social, Legal, Economic, Personal Sharing news/views, Boasting/Self praise, Criticizing, Proposing something