Gastvortrag

AI and Generating a Phantasmagorical Image: Staging Enmity Through “Cultural Imaginaries”

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The inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on 22 January 2024, led to a large-scale generation of AI-produced ‘devotional’ imagery on Twitter (now X). These generated images were affectively charged, fictionalized visual worlds that merged Hindu religiosity with the algorithmic infrastructures of digital platforms. Through the lens of Roland Meyer’s “platform realism” (2025), this presentation investigates the practice of Generating, sharing and resharing of these images as “cultural imaginaries”. I argue that generative AI models produce mythic depictions that are optimized for virality and that such practices demonstrate how far-right religious-political movements aestheticize power through the infrastructures of generative technology.

These images crystallize into three affectively charged imaginaries that transform devotion into ideological performance: Hegemonic Masculinist Imaginaries, Restorative Imaginaries, and Techno-utopian Imaginaries. Through ethnographic research on the circulation of these images on twitter (now X) I analyze these imaginaries through critical discourse analysis, affordance theory, and affect theory and situate AI-generated Hindu imagery within broader debates on affect and Hindu Nationalist digital culture.

Quelle: X, @protosphix, geteilt am 22. Januar 2024

Rishika Rai is a Doctoral Scholar in the Graduate Programme for Transcultural Studies at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, University of Heidelberg. Rishika’s research focuses on the rise of Far-Right digital communities in India and the effect that digital visual culture has in accelerating and reproducing cultural and social capital of the Hindu Right or Hindutva in India. Her PhD research examines how global Far-right formations shape both the visual language and ideological substance disseminated by the Far-right Hindu Nationalist digital spaces.