

A Study of Power and Perception in Web-Series Delhi Crime: An Analytical Review

Vandana Yadav

Assistant Professor, Department of Media & Communication Studies, Jagannath International Management School, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

Adarsh Kumar

Assistant Professor, School of Journalism & Mass Communication, Noida International University, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract:

This review paper critically examines the portrayal of power dynamics and societal perceptions in the web-series "Delhi Crime." Through an analytical lens, it investigates how the series navigates the complexities of law enforcement, media influence, and public opinion following the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case. Key themes include police procedural accuracy, gender roles, cultural representations, and the ethical implications of depicting real-life events. By analyzing narrative strategies and character development, this study offers insights into the broader socio-cultural impact of the series on viewers' perceptions of justice, gender relations, and institutional power dynamics in contemporary India.

Keywords: Delhi Crime, web-series, power dynamics, media influence, public opinion, gender roles, cultural representations, socio-cultural impact

Introduction:

The entire Indian nation was shocked by the awful "Nirbhaya" gang rape event that took place in Delhi in 2012. Due to the horrible nature of the crime and how many people it has affected in

India, numerous movies and documentaries on it have been made. Delhi Crime (2019), which is based on one of the series that was inspired by this crime, is a cop-focused series that centres exclusively on the case of Nirbhaya while reflecting Delhi's societal issues and portraying the police force. The hyper-masculine police force is typically portrayed inaccurately in cop-centric movies, and women are rarely included. In 2012, the vicious gang rape of Jyoti Singh (Nirbhaya) on a bus in New Delhi made headlines throughout the world. It was a historic case that earned the name "Nirbhaya rape incident" and prompted the Indian government to change the country's current rape and sexual assault laws.

The rape also contributed to the media environment being a place for social activism. Despite this, popular cultural depictions of the episode have come under fire for using rape myths as inspiration. Utilizing textual analysis, examine how Richie Mehta challenges the idea of gender binary opposites in his representations of his instrumental characters based on social constructs of power and gender.

Literature Review:

A horrifying case of gang rape in Delhi in 2012 shook the entire country of India. Jyoti Singh, 23, was brutally beaten and gang-raped by six guys inside a moving bus. When the incident happened that evening, she was with her boyfriend, and they were meant to be travelling home. This episode caused such a stir throughout the nation that riots and protests broke out. People were fighting for her justice because they were outraged by the absence of safety and protection in the nation. Justice for Nirbhaya-themed signs and banners could be seen all over. The victim's real name is not published because of Indian rape laws that forbid doing so; instead, the moniker Nirbhaya, which means "fearless," is used (TOI-Online, 2019).

About 91 alleged rape incidents per day are recorded in 2018, according to India's National Crime Records Bureau. That amounts to over 33,000 cases that were documented in that year. The number of reported rape cases has increased since 2012. People began reporting rape incidents with the expectation that something would be done by the government as a result of the Nirbhaya case, which resulted in legal revisions and more severe penalties for rape (JHollingsworth, Swati and Manveena, 2020).

Due to victims' ongoing stigma and fear of being exposed to it, many more incidences of sexual abuse go unreported even after harsh measures have been implemented. Women lack the self-assurance they require due to the brutality of the assault and the blatant male entitlement in the nation (Geeta, 2020). The economic and social inequality structures in India have made rape a persistent problem, and a lack of effective government participation has made it worse.

Analysis and Discussion:

The Nirbhaya case prompted some local and even foreign film directors to create movies about or inspired by it because of its influence on society and how it has affected many people in India. Since 2013, a lot of movies and documentaries about this horrible murder have been launched.

To encourage viewers to become aware and realise things, many versions are produced. Two of the most popular documentaries on the crime and its aftermath were released in 2015. It is a BBC documentary titled *India's Daughter* (2015), directed by Leslee Udwin, and it is titled *Daughters of Mother India* (2015), directed by Vibha Bakshi. These two documentaries covered the issues of poverty and misogyny and how they relate to the actual sexual assault that took place. Another adaptation of Nirbhaya's story, *Anatomy of Violence* (2016), which dramatizes the lives of the rapists, was directed by Deepa Mehta in 2016. The *Delhi Crime* is a seven-episode series that Richie Mehta created in 2019 on the Netflix series. (2019). The case of Nirbhaya served as the primary inspiration for this series, but it also raises issues related to gender inequality, rape culture, and sexual assault in India.

A sort of dramatization that somehow penetrates into reality may be seen in *Delhi Crime* (2019), a series based on the true story of Jyoti Singh, who was violently raped on a moving bus in Delhi in 2012. This series is cop-focused even though it is totally on the Nirbhaya's case and how Delhi society is reflected in it. Several male actors frequently performed the part of a cop in crime-themed television shows or motion pictures, which is a true depiction of the profession in real life where men are frequently employed as police officers. Yet in *Delhi Crime* (2019), female police officers are portrayed, which is different since in reality, while we do see women in the workforce, they might not always be in senior positions or high-ranking positions.

The police force is not accurately portrayed in many other films that feature them. The majority of it is completely fictionalized, as in *Dabangg* (2010) and *Singham* (2011). They place more

emphasis on displaying the hyper masculine police force, in which policemen are frequently physically appealing, tough, well-built, and equipped with powerful muscles. In a strange way, this implausible portrayal is the exact opposite of how the police forces are portrayed in the Delhi Crime (2019). The majority of the police officers are middle-aged, poorly built, and several of them suffer with both family and health concerns. Delhi Crime (2019), in contrast to all of these overtly male Hindi movies, reveals a another side of the police, where even if they are making every effort to solve in contrast to all of these excessively masculine Hindi movies, Delhi Crime (2019) reveals a another side of the police, one where they must balance their personal life while doing their best to solve ongoing cases. Each of these personalities faces a unique set of problems, so their transitions are not always easy.

These erroneous, excessively masculine depictions lead us to the goal of this study, which is to investigate, through the lens of Richie Mehta, the director of Delhi Crime (2019), how the characters are humanized based on the social construction of gender and power and to examine the gender binary system, to determine whether it supports or refutes the idea of the binary gender relationship.

We play a critical role in educating those who are interested in researching the films of filmmakers who put a real-life emphasis on those concerns. In this instance, Richie Mehta discusses the status quo, female inequality and discrimination in numerous forms, as well as the ongoing rape culture in India. The purpose of this study is to educate the audience about the injustice and inequality that exist in modern society, particularly in India, the country where this series is set.

The fact that each character in this series, whether they play a prominent or supporting part, is presented as having depth draws viewers in. This series raises issues related to the social construction of gender and power as a whole. Typically, only the male characters are viewed as the alpha characters in films or television shows. Nonetheless, Delhi Crime (2019) was able to portray both genders in such a way that their power and gender were fully portrayed in the series, but not evenly and with some important points being stated. Also, it is the way Mehta is able to make women the protagonist of this tale and persuade the audience that, in the end, we must also have faith in women's ability to influence and improve the world. People from many social backgrounds who fight for justice are shown in this series. Although they are portrayed in this series as being powerful, these folks actually struggle with societal issues and daily living in Delhi.

It also demonstrates how they defend their own convictions and the fact that ultimately, it counts. In *Delhi Crime* (2019), Richie Mehta used the social construction of gender and power to give the major characters a human face. Richie Mehta decided to write a progressive story about India's societal problems. According to a recent interview, it took him six years to complete a drama series, including four years of research. During the course of developing the series' plot, he also had to meet every single person connected to the Nirbhaya case. He believed that this was an opportunity and a chance for him to revisit this whole situation and craft a story through the eyes of those who do not have a voice when more people are apprehended as a result of the rape crime and more knowledge is disclosed in the case.

Mehta chose to shape and humanise the characters by giving them past stories, in contrast to other typical hyper masculine cop-centric movies.

The narrative structure and the character analysis of this series' content were both thoroughly examined. The narrative framework was the main topic of this study's first section. The story's content, the way it is told, and how the plot is implemented in a film are all part of the narrative structure (Reich, 2017). The series' narrative was examined scene by scene to determine how the characters were shaped by the plot and whether any reversal dynamics were present.

Analysis of the *Delhi Crime* (2019) series, which looks at the humanization of the main characters and examines the gender binary system, been able to obtain some interesting findings. Four key characters in the series, Vartika Chaturvedi, Bhupendra Singh, Vinod Tiwari, and Neeti Singh, have been examined in terms of narrative structure and character analysis. The idea underpinning this research is called "Binary Opposition" and it is based on Claude Levi-Strauss' analysis of the gender binary opposites.

The examination of these four traits has demonstrated that the idea of this gender binary is under attack. While the back stories and character development of the characters may vary depending on the plot, there are also commonalities that link the characters together. For instance, all of the characters share characteristics and features like being strong, aggressive, committed, vulnerable, and empathetic. Vartika and Neeti are portrayed as strong female characters with masculine qualities. *Delhi Crime* (2019) is based on real-life police officers for all of its roles. Mehta interviewed each of the major police officers before starting to make the show, and he then

attempted to model the characters in his show after these real-life policemen by drawing on their personal experiences. Based on the societal construction of power and gender, all three of the characters are being positively humanized, with the exception of Vinod Tiwari, who has undergone a negative humanization. Vinod Tiwari is shown in this series as an unreliable officer who is also sexist and always looking for an explanation.

According to the analysis's conclusion, while being based on real-world individuals, none of these characters have been developed exactly as they would be in real life. One of Mehta's goals in creating this series is to draw attention to the inaccurate portrayal of the police in the media.

So, he humanized the characters that challenge the idea of gender binary and distort the gender binary system. He focuses on a female officer who, simply because she is a woman, is not adequately represented in the media. The majority of his characters' humanization symbolizes the underrepresented. He depicts the lives of the police force as a whole, including how society views them poorly and how they carry out their jobs while dealing with other hardships in life. He also represents the women police officers whose competence is questioned.

Even though she is aware that her son is at blame and that he is a criminal who has perpetrated such a horrific crime, one of the perpetrators' mothers continued to support him throughout the series' climax. This in and of itself is merely a reflection of how some Delhi women approach justice and empowerment. It only demonstrates that women do not favor challenging the patriarchal system. Women in Delhi are being sexually harassed, traumatized, and degraded on a daily basis, and as the number of cases rises, they are unable to do much more than ignore it and carry on.

Conclusion:

Because of the broken legal and justice systems, some of these voices are not being heard. They appear to be reacting to it in the same manner as the perpetrator's mother, as though it were a given and had become standard. So, the presence of two powerful female characters in this series goes beyond simple representation. It is based on the fact that these women are still battling for their rights and dismantling gender stereotypes thanks to their aptitudes and feminine-masculine

characteristics. That being said, feminine and masculine attributes do not define genders; rather, they define how the features are perceived and used. These characteristics specify their gender- and power-related abilities. Films are a dramatic portrayal of life's reality, and through them, we have influenced society's opinions and perspectives on various issues, including how we regard women in light of all the representation of them that has been presented over the years. It would be wonderful to have more Hindi films that promote the positive character development of women by presenting an alpha female character that is powerful, complex, and based on the portrayal of real-life, inspirational women. The rape culture, marriage, sexual harassment, and domestic violence are just a few of the social topics that filmmakers and directors should address in more of their work.

The bulk of us use Netflix as a platform to view series and movies, especially the younger generation. Hope Netflix releases more socially conscious programming in the future like *Delhi Crime* (2019), which examines social issues. The fact that contemporary events are being dramatized and turned into movies is positive.

References

- Agrawal, N. (2016) Inequality In India: What's The Real Story? World Economic Forum. Available from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/inequalityin-india-oxfam-explainer/> [accessed 13 April 2020].
- Allen, M. (2017) *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Available from <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-ofcommunication-research-methods/i14636.xml> [accessed 13 April 2020].
- Ayurshi, D. (2018) Locating Patriarchy in Violence Against Women in India: Social, Legal and Alternative Responses. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2). Available from <https://grdspublishing.org/index.php/people/article/view/1405> [accessed 10 November 2019].
- Bhatnagar, A., Mathur, A., Munasib, A. and Roy, D. (2019) Sparking The #Metoo Revolution In India: The 'Nirbhaya' Case In Delhi. *Ideas For India*. Available from <https://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/social-identity/sparking-the-metoo-revolution-in-india-the-nirbhaya-case-in-delhi.html> [accessed 1 May 2020].

Crossman, A. (2019) What Is Qualitative Research? ThoughtCo. Available from <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555> [accessed 26 November 2019].

Crowell, M. (2014) In India, Public Kissing Is Becoming A National Movement. TheWorld, 19 November. Available from <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-11-19/india-public-kissing-becoming-national-movement> [Accessed 3 May 2020].

Das Gupta, M. and Li, S. (1999) GENDER BIAS IN CHINA, SOUTH KOREA AND INDIA, 1920-90:effects of war, famine and fertility decline. *Development and Change*, 30(3) 619 - 652. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227700381_Gender_Bias_in_China_South_Korea_and_India_1920-1990_Effects_of_War_Famine_and_Fertility_Decline [accessed 12 April 2020].

Ghaznavi, J., Grasso, K. L. and Taylor, L. D. (2016) Increasingly violent but still sexy: A decade of central female characters in top-grossing Hollywood and Bollywood film promotional material. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 23–47. Available from <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4673> [accessed 3 May 2020].

India Today. (2019) Netflix Series Delhi Crime In Legal Trouble, Then SHO Of Vasant Vihar Police Station Plans To Sue Makers. 1 April. Available from <https://www.indiatoday.in/television/web-series/story/upset-with-the-makersof-netflix-series-delhi-crime-says-then-sho-of-vasant-vihar-police-station-1490742-2019-04-01> [accessed 19 April 2020].

Kumar, A. and Hans, S. (2019) ‘Delhi Crime’ Review: Netflix’S Take On The Nirbhaya Case Is Cop-Centric But Gut-Wrenchingly Effective. *Brown Girl Magazine*. Available from <https://www.browngirlmagazine.com/2019/03/delhi-crime-netflix-review/> [accessed 6 April 2020].

Neha, C. (2019) How gender-based violence in India continues to rise. YourStory Media Pvt. Ltd. Available from <https://yourstory.com/socialstory/2019/09/gender-violence-india> [accessed 10 November 2019].

Ramasubramanian, S. and Oliver, M. B. (2003) Portrayals of sexual violence in popular Hindi films, 1997–99. *Sex Roles*, 48, 327–336. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022938513819> [accessed 3 May 2020].

Reich, J. (2017) 3. What Are the Mechanics of Story and Plot?. Milne Publishing. Available from <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/exploring-movieconstruction-and-production/chapter/3-what-are-the-mechanics-of-story-andplot/> [accessed 26 November 2019].

Sarkar, S. (2012) An analysis of Hindi women-centric films in India. Master. University of Louisville. Available from <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2264&context=etd> [accessed 12 October 2019].

Tina, P. L. (2015) Impact of the “Nirbhaya” Rape Case: Isolated Phenomenon or Social Change? Undergraduate Research. University of Connecticut. Available from https://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1458&context=srhonors_theses [accessed 10 November 2019].

TNN. (2020) Delhi crime rate is 4 times of other metro. *The times of India*, 10 January. Available from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/delhi-crimerate-is-4-times-of-other-metros/articleshow/73179559.cms> [accessed 10 February 2020].