

INDIAN MEDIA FRAMINGS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2012 DELHI GANG RAPE CASE: POST NIRBHAYA

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate media narratives which outlined four high profile rape cases in past three years, starting with 2012 Delhi Gang rape. By content analyzing the English and Hindi language articles of print media, I have tried to study the popular trends that are visible amidst the intensifying national debates surrounding the Indian women's role and place in the republican society. Mass media is not entirely blameless as it frames out the certain beliefs like 'rape exceptionalism', constructions of the 'victim' and the 'rapist' and politics of the 'blame game' which move around these cases of sexual violence against women and girls.

Keywords: Media, Rape, Victim, Sexual violence

INTRODUCTION

The legal definition of rape is "sexual" penetration of a person by force and without that person's consent". About 91% of rape victims are female; while 99% of perpetrators are male thus there is a gender disparity in this crime. Due to the stigma attached to it, rape is vastly underreported in our society. As per the national data, female rape occurs every 22 minutes and violence's rates are continuously increasing thus raising the hackles of the public. A feminist and journalist scholar Ammu Joseph's analysis points out that media reports on sexual violence are generally calculated for maximum impact. Initially, the 2012 Delhi gang rape's coverage seems to confirm this analysis.

The entire Indian state expressed its shock, anger, fear and repulsion on the heinous crime committed in the capital of India on 16th December 2012. Not only the victim was raped and her friend beaten, but also her internal organs were impaled with an iron rod, and these two victims were left for dead on the roadside. The public activism reached its peak as the large scale demonstrations galvanized the people of all age and class groups into protests. The BBC documentary "India's Daughter" brought back this case into spotlight after two years. This documentary's excerpt presents an emotional farewell to the Delhi gang rape victim of 2012 with her name revealed i.e. Jyoti Singh.

AIM

The aim of this research is to investigate media narratives which outlined four high profile rape cases in past three years, starting with 2012 Delhi Gang rape. The aim of my thesis is to thoroughly investigate the question about the dominant media narratives and patterns in high profile cases of rape and sexual violence against women, in the aftermath of the gang rape case of 2012.

RESEARCH DESIGN

By analysing the English and Hindi language media Outlets, I will take a look at the way the cases are framed and also investigate how these dominant factors contribute to national debates surrounding role of females in India. For this firstly, I shall try to contextualize the 2012 gang rape while also focusing on South Asian feminist movements so far. Secondly I shall seek to establish patterns that have emerged out of media coverage which surround the high profile cases of rape in the last few years by piecing together media timelines of certain cases. Thirdly, I will analyse frames that manifest in new content after December 16, 2012 incidents. Finally, I shall discuss the implications of these frames in the wider context of social change in a neoliberal Indian society of today.

Indian media usually follows a pattern while dealing with these cases, as I found during my analysis. The three major framings that emerged from my research were rape exceptionalism, rising criminality in urban India and the construction of the “rapist”. All these are connected by the politics of blame game.

The common image of journalism is that of watchdog of the society maintaining media and journalism’s integrity. The several theories of communication, within the analysis of my thesis aims at exploring the thing called agenda setting theory through which the filtration of information takes place and selection of news is done. The agenda determining what newsworthy is placed here determining how much space and attention are allowed for which case. As per the psychological definition fame is a scheme of interpretation, collection of anecdotes and stereotypes that individuals rely on to understand and respond to events (Cisel 67).

In order to analyze the frame within new stories through different methodologies, I conducted a textual analysis of print newspaper articles which served as unites, texts etc and gave meaning to the interactions between “media, culture and society”. This textual analysis deconstructs the process of encoding (where the author instils meaning into the text) and the decoding (where the audience understands it in a certain way). India has already crossed 65 millions in terms of Face book users and over 35 million Twitter accounts holders. Delhi gang rape took the form of a national debate and people’s outrage was vented through the twitters platform. A number of grass root level, down to earth level demonstrators organized protests through twitter following the “Nirbhaya Gang Rape case”.

Women who dress up or think differently are viewed as threats to culture and tradition and are harshly condemned. Throughout the world history, rape has been used as an instrument of terror and a weapon of war. During the partition of India and the Bangladesh war of independence, mass rape was an atrocity committed regularly on women. These were seen not only as crimes of violence against women, but also related to their nationalistic identity. Rape is the ugliest and most brutal expressions of masculine violence towards women. Rape and the historical ‘discourse’ around it reveals the social relations of reproduction and recreation. It also exposes the social mindset in which woman’s body is seen as representative of community and society. The Indian history has seen many high profile rape cases which have acted as a cementing factor between media outlets and women’s right activists.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research methodology consisted of gathering news articles as a sample of media response to rape and sexual violence and crimes against women. After trying and testing various databases and adjusting my search terms, I relied on pro Quest News and current events as a source of my news reports and articles. I decided to use the

algorithm JSU (“General Interest periodicals – India”) which narrowed down my search to major, National English and Hindi language media sources in India which consisted of 33 Media outlets. The news papers selected here had both the highest number of articles on sexual violence and also with the highest readership rates and were immensely popular.

The majority of articles used in my research and analysis were published by the Times of India, Danik Jagran, The Hindu, Amar Ujala, The Hindustan Times, DNA; Daily News & Analysis, Asian News International, The Pioneer, IANS English, Indian express, etc. My focus was on the key words “rape or sexual violence” while exploring these media outlets broadly and signalled out articles published between the timeline of December 16, 2012 (the night of Delhi Gang Rape) and December 31, 2014.

Through the readings I found certain patterns in which the stories were presented and received by the public. I discovered that four cases stood out – 2012 Delhi Gang Rape, 2013 Mumbai Gang rape, 2014 Badun case and 2014 Uber rape and received the highest volume of media coverage. Although other cases also reached national and international levels of coverage, these cases served as samples for media analysis and played a major role in formulating my analysis. I made media timelines surrounding each of these cases and counted the number of articles published in the days following the event to determine when the media coverage reached its zenith and when it dropped & reached its lowest point. An archive of reporting was collected by adjusting the search terms and date ranges specific to the individual events/incidents.

My focus was on the rhetoric used in these articles which acts as persuasion and coercion in the encoding of these pieces, using volatile/highly influencing words and their impact on the readers. Using the three major mechanism of persuading the reader as common to the Greek drama-ethos, pathos and logos. Ethos defines the credibility of the journalist as it uplifts his/her reputation, emotions or pathos are used to emphasize upon something and logos utilize the logic and statistics to influence and persuade the reading public.

These tools are heavily employed by the media in describing the incidents surrounding rape and sexual violence with the intention of media to garner public attention and to challenge the traditional thought process surrounding ravishing.

Literature Review

Evolving gender roles and the discourse surrounding modernity

The world history’s study reveal the ways in which women’s issues are navigated and become a part of the discussion in the society and later on becoming an instrument for the wider societal transformation. We find that a theme relevant is common here. Integral to a contemporary discussion to rape is the way in which women’s roles are heavily tied to the conceptions of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity in every society. The British rule witnessed the reimagining of women’s roles as a part of a ‘civilizing’ mission, with an aim of uplifting women from the clutches of indigenous/native “barbarism” and protecting them. Sati-the practice of burning a widow alongside her dead husband in his funeral pyre had gained epidemic proportions in Bengal and can be used as an example here. It was justified by certain Indian Public figures using Bharamaic scriptures as a part of Hindu tradition to the general public. Although practiced earlier, it increased sharply amongst upper – caste Hindu communities and many women were burned alive as “sati” around the colonial Calcutta of that time (Mani 119). Although the popularity of sati was at an unprecedented high rate at time, the discussion surrounding it linked it to an ancient tradition. The concepts of traditions were being invented in contract to a superior, imperial modernity (Man 119). The newly formed debate on modernity and traditional practice now focused on the role of women. The feminist scholar Lata Mani believes and describes that during the colonial trials, law making and public discussions on Sati, “Women became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated”, (Mani 118).

Along with the freedom struggle the reimagining and reshaping of women’s role also continued. The elites/richer class of Indian society tried to define the nation via authentic cultural identity and citing our differences from the western culture through the women’s conduct. They sought to secure the Indian traditions through the traditions followed by present day women which represented these differences (Roy 5). Women became the

personification of motherhood, community, the nation and traditional Indian values. Instead of being treated as “individuals”, they became the embodiment of “Indian tradition and cultural values.

Even today, Lata Manis analysis on sati echoes in a neoliberal Indian nation as females continue to be regarded as the grounds of tradition and the identity markers of nations progress through their roles. More of more women of middle – class families and urban backgrounds are highly educated and financially independent economically empowerment today, they are acquiring autonomy, privacy and are being seen as individuals and not mere extensions of patriarchal family relationships (some man’s mother, daughter or wife). The new Indian woman is “an object of desire, characterized as young (and) financially independent,” (Ray 183). But she is still loaded with Indian values. An analysis of Indian Dating sites (online) by Maitrayee Chaudhary shows that Indian men still seek partners having a blend of both the traditional and modern aspect of Indian culture, an ideal woman judiciously blending the traditional qualities of domestic skills, knowledge of religious rituals and practices along with the education and employment opportunities acquired through modern life (chaudhari 192). Despite being called “new” the Indian woman is defined by men’s and overall society’s expectations for women, thus revealing that patriarchy still prevails in the name of modernity in India.

With the passage of time, the concepts of tradition and modernity have also acquired different meanings with the growing GDP, enhancing industrial sector and ever widening middle class urbanization has become a dominant pattern of development (Sinha and Bhattacharya). The rapid urbanization has lead to rapid development which is helped by migration from villages to cities caused due to the MNC’s and private sectors growth and new employment opportunities there. The determination to built a “new Chicago every year” was echoed by the Indian Prime Minister embodying trend of development, thus envisioning a new and vibrant India (Ramachandran) But due to lack of proper efforts to allow for the sustainability of expanding cities has led to “visibly tiered urbanism” (Hedge 184). Not only urbanization has lead to increasing urban poverty, but also to commercial sex working, environmental pollution and crime rates which have sky-rocketed. Sadly, this modernization has lead to division of people over both the means of development and its end results to the masses/consequences of this rapid growth.

Developing and expanding role of females has created a negative mindset in which modernism is seen as an antonym to tradition. Women who dress up or think differently are viewed as threats to culture and tradition and are harshly condemned. (Chaudhari 194). Srila Roy, a feminist scholar avers that globalization of India has led to renewed angst about the loss of cultural identity and sovereignty that are frequently show by continually and violently regulation of women’s bodies (Roy, 6). This is evident in national debate surrounding women’s roles as they enter new workspace and urban night space in increasing numbers. The people who dislike/reject these changes view young, urban Indians as free spenders with questionable sexual morals with a western worldview and lack of respect to Indian culture and traditions (Hedge 182). Such people view dating and pre-marital relationship as western interventions and imported attitudes from the European culture. Roy feels that this archetypal woman becomes the easy target for violence and is considered to be eligible for it people perceive her as “easily available” due to her “modern” attitude and behaviours (Roy, 183). Jyoti Singh was characterized as a modern woman in “India’s Daughter” documentary as a symbol of “new aspirations” in an increasingly upwardly mobile segment of society (Udwin). Therefore, her rape was defended as she had gone out with a male friend, showing attitudes of “putting women back in their place” through enabling sexual violence and justifying it.

Organized resistance against gendered violence through the Indian women’s movement.

Throughout the world history, rape has been used as an instrument of terror and a weapon of war. During the partition of India and the Bangladesh war of independence, mass rape was an atrocity committed regularly on women. These were seen not only as crimes of violence against women, but also related to their nationalistic identity. Rapes against women were seen as assaults on their nations such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and not just assaults on individuals.

Rape was the most protested against crime as the National Indian Movement grew in the 1970s. For example, the atrocities committed during the emergency period such as forced sterilization of lower caste/lower class women infused a new energy in the women’s movements. Three reasons were cited by scholar Radhe Kumar for the

contemporary feminist movement latching onto the issue of rape. Firstly, rape is the ugliest and most brutal expressions of masculine violence towards women, secondly rape and the historical 'discourse' around it reveal/centre around the social relations of reproduction and recreation and thirdly it exposes the social mindset in which woman's body is seen as representative of community and society (Kumar 128). So, addressing rape was more than talking about a crime, it was also questioning the ingrained attitude of society towards women which treated them as commodities. The focus was on police rape as institutional violence was questioned repeatedly, especially those involving the lower class and lower-caste women coming from backgrounds which were marginalized from the society (Kumar 128).

Just like any other thing, media also has dual face, especially in context of social issues. In our republic, the media is both a proponent of activism, and supporter. Yet it can also propagate rape culture and promote insisting regarding sexual violence and crimes against women. The Indian history has seen many high profile rape cases which have acted as a cementing factor between media outlets and women's right activists. Together, they joined hands to address the systematic problems and demand justice and parity at the highest levels of government. With the rapid expansion of print journalism, newspapers became the proverbial rapes reporting vehicles.... many of them are continually devoting the space of several pages every day, to report of rape gathered together an unprecedented manner (Dreze and Sen 227). The Mathura rape case of 1972 was the first high profile rape case which saw wide scale media coverage. The rape of a teenage girl in Mathura, Desaijanj Police Station Gadchiroli District Maharashtra by two policemen went unpunished for several years. Only when the case was re-opened several years later then the culprits were punished of their crimes (Kumar 129). The campaign by women's organizations gained the national stage, partially thanks to the support of the media which facilitated national discussions and debates which raised this issue and ultimately led the culprits to be punished/brought to the book (Kumar 129)

The juxtaposition of Indian journalism and women's movements has been at a greater level since the entry of women journalists since 1990s. These women journalists have brought in more feminist perspectives and have tried to shape discussions regarding sexual violence and rape (Joseph 20-25, 2000). On the heinous rape of two nuns in Gajraula rape case in 1990, journalist Usha Rai feels that the movement (feminist) as brought above very important changes like the amendments in the rape law by being together. Mass protests followed the Gajraula rape incident and the Shah Bano case. Organisations like National perspective plan for women and the National Commission for women have become a fact because of the collective movement. The journalists cannot stay aloof from the discussions taking place at the women's networking level and became a part of it invariably press reporting of such incidents become almost mandatory (Jha 95).

Jumping on the bandwagon and riding the popular wave of national outrage and nonstop, continuous news coverage the activists have always pushed institutional transformations. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 was passed in April 2013 which enacted stringent punished of rapists (Nundy). It has been viewed as progressive by some activists and media outlets although it did not address the crime of marital rape in its articles/passed acts/enactments.

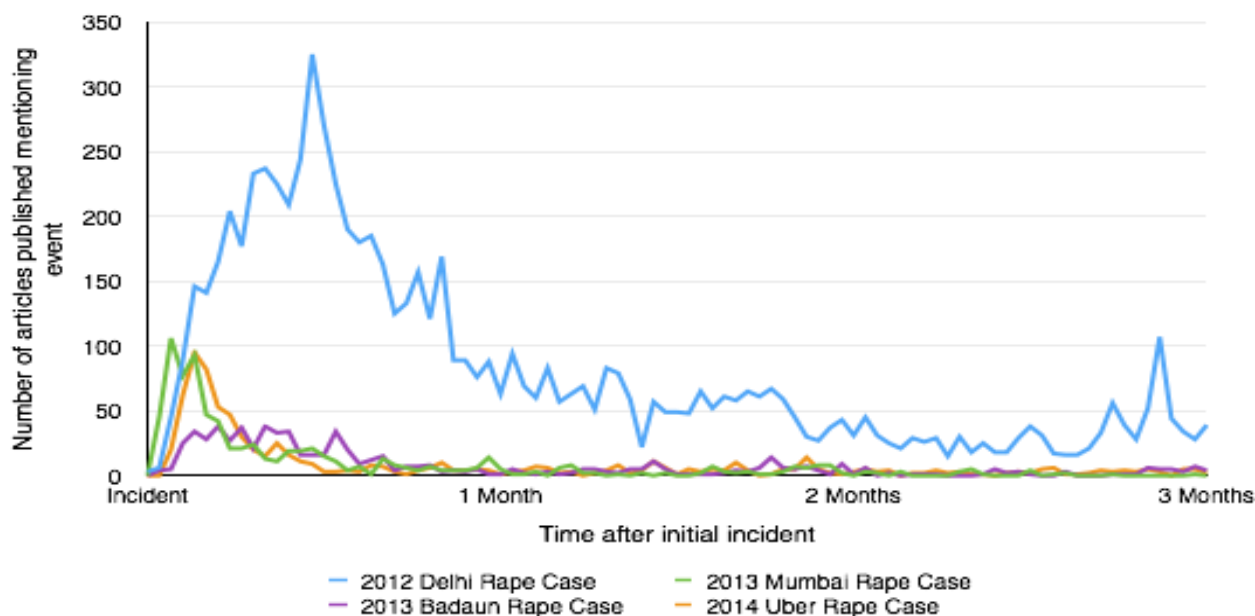
The recent decade has seen an escalation in reporting on rape and sexual violence in a dramatic manner. As found by the study following the Delhi Gang rape case, media coverage surrounding rape rose about 30%, a huge leap (Drache and Velgic 2).

Media Timelines

I pieced together media's presentation of timelines surrounding each case and found some ongoing pattern like coverage material, dates etc. These were presented by media in each individual case. I had to find out if narratives had changed over time or not. By utilising the database Pro-quest news and current events, for three months after every event. I collected the number of articles published each day and charted the data into a timeline series consecutively. This enabled me to compare the point at which the case gained high attention, reached its Zenith and then reached its lowest point; finally fading away from mass media consciousness and public became

oblivious to it. This resulted into the study of stories took shape, revealing certain frames which were analysed in detail in next section of my research.

Figure 1: Timeline of Indian national, English-language print media coverage for several high profile rape cases
Source: Pro-quest News & Current Events



2012 Delhi Gang Rape–Nirbhaya Case

Due to the dominance of media coverage, the 2012 Delhi gang rape is the point of departure in my analysis. The study of figure 1 shows it to be a giant roaring above other cases which were dwarfed by its stature, although other cases also got considerable popularity and coverage. The Delhi case incident occurred on December 16, 2012 in a private bus departing from Munirka, in the south-west part of New Delhi. The 23 year old woman was going home after a movie that she watched with a male friend around 9 pm.

The couple were assaulted by five men who assaulted the male friend and then assaulted and raped the woman. At Mahipalpur, they both were thrown on the road side, they were rescued/found by a passerby and taken to Safdarjung Hospital about two hours later, i.e. at 11 p.m. at night. The very next day, using CCTV footage, the Delhi police tracked down the assailants by using the license plate of their suspected vehicle. They were identified as Ram Singh, Mukesh Singh, Vinay Sharma, Pawan Gupta and Akshay Thakur.

The media was on fire by Dec 18 and the social media became a force to reckon with, resulting into organising of mass protests and large scale media attention to the case and crime. Several acronyms/pseudonyms were used to describe the female victim, such as Nirbhaya Damani and the Delhi brave heart too. At first, the media narratives were highly emotional focussing on shock, anger, fear and helplessness in the aftermath of this heinous outrage.

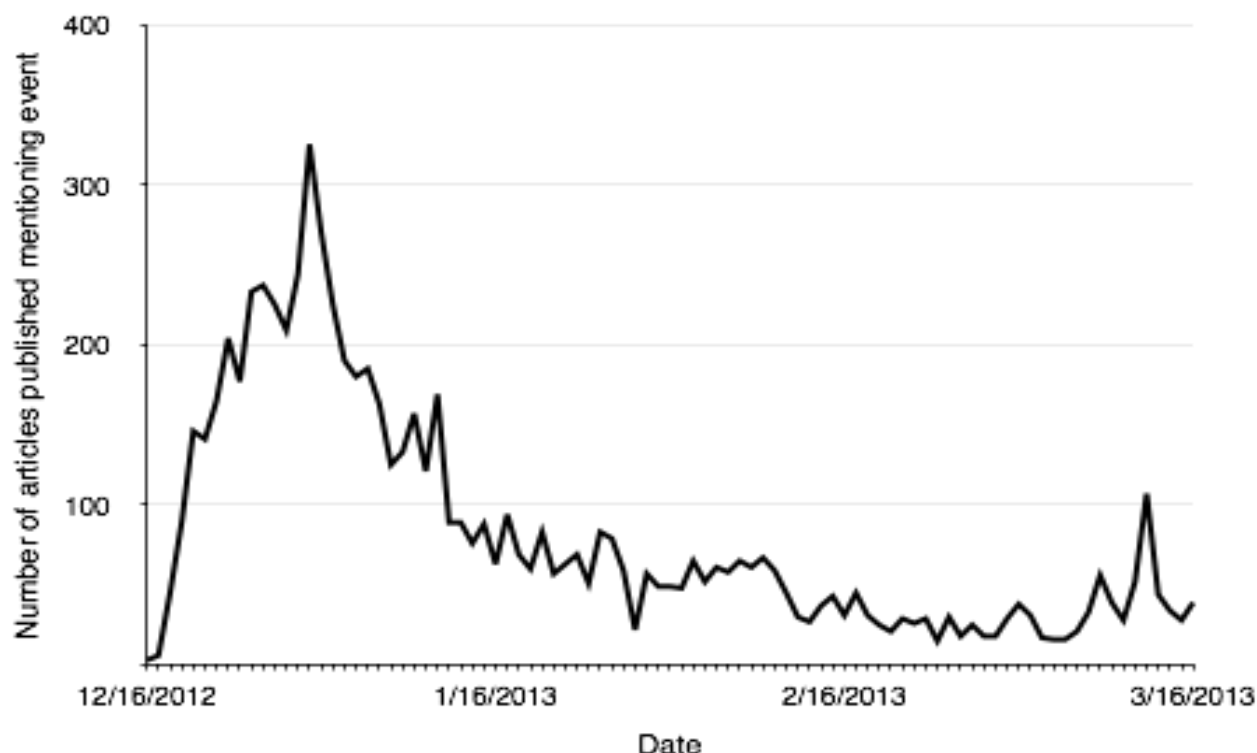
The demand rose for justice through fast-track court and death penalty for accused/culprits. The whole media presented the victim, widespread protests and demands for justice in an admirable and sympathetic manner. The reports on women’s injuries and medical status veered into sensationalism while accounts of the sheer violence of the assault shook the nation’s consciousness to the core.

Not only this brought up articles that reflected the rapid escalation in sexual violence against women across India but also led to emphasizing Delhi’s notoriety as the “Rape Capital” throughout the world. As the rape victim passed away, the next day this country saw an unprecedented leap in the National Media coverage on Dec 30, 2012. The assailants arrest on Jan 3, 2013 the added fuel to the fire. They were charged with “murder, gang-rape,

attempted murder, Kidnapping, unnatural offenses, dacoity, hurting in committing robbery, destruction of evidence, criminal conspiracy and common intention under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)". Although the quantity of coverage steadily declined, it still remained a prominent topic in the period that followed the crimes.

The coverage spiked up with the development in the story which reached its peak on March 12 when one of the assailants. Ram Singh committed suicide and his dead body was found in his cell in the jail. Even today, this case haunts the media consciousness and is often cited as an example in reference to other rape/sexual violence cases.

Figure 2: Number of articles mentioning 2012 Delhi Gang rape over 3 month period after incident Source: Proquest News & Current Events



2013 Mumbai Gang Rape

This incident took place on August 22, 2013, when female photojournalist and her male colleagues visited the Shakti Mills Compound near the Mahalaxmi railway station in Mumbai in the evening for taking pictures for a story. Around 5pm they met two men who advised them on taking an easy and secure path for this purpose. But when they went inside the mill, the men's demeanour changed. Joined by three more men, they threatened the photo journalists. The woman was gang-raped and her male colleague assaulted.

They were photographed during the assault, and under the threat of release these pictures in media, these people (victims) were taken to the railway station where the assailants left them. Just two days after the crime, the story peaked on August 24, 2013. However the following months saw articles in response to updates in the trials and the later criminal proceedings of the case which followed subsequently. Later they were taken to Jaslok Hospital and the hospital called the police by 8 pm. The story got high attention by media and the suspects' sketches were shared by a large number of twitter and media followers. The leads acquired by the police using these sketches, led to the questioning of mill workers and the people who worked around the Shakti Mills.

Within a week, these rapists were identified as Mohammad Qasim Shaikh, Mohammad Salim Ansari, Vijay Jadhav, Siraj Khan and Mohammad Ashfaque Shaikh and were arrested by Mumbai police. Fresh enquiries

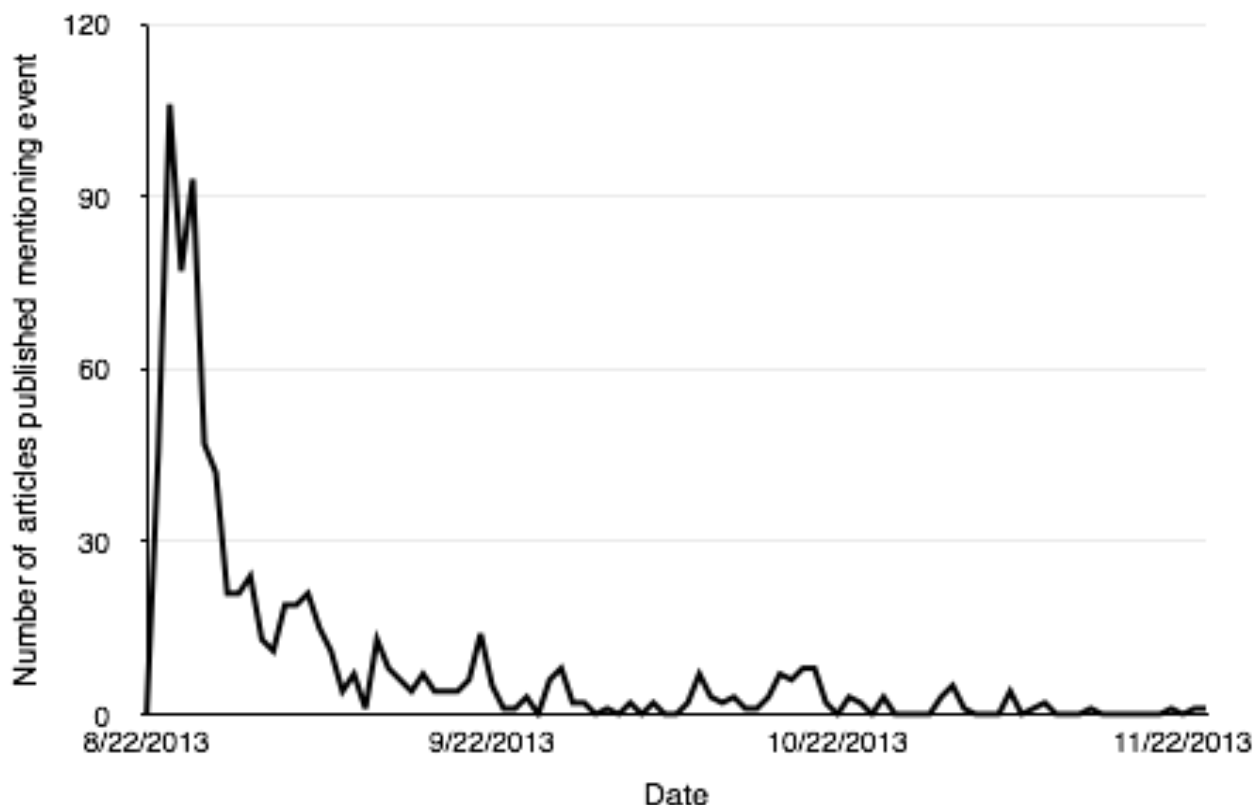
revealed that another woman had also been raped by these people last July in the Shakti Mills compound, thus establishing that these criminals were habitual offenders and had been committing a serious of gang rapes and violence in the area since some time. The journalist's case was not an isolated one.

This case raise serious discussions and tarnished Mumbai's reputation as progressive and safe for women, because the middle of the business part of this metropolitan city saw this heinous crime against humanity in general and women in particular. The way the photojournalist was deceived by these men was described in very detailed accounts. The conversation was widely reported. Once the identity of the suspects was revealed, their family members were interviewed. The findings shocked the people as it was found that one of the perpetrators unsuspectingly came home and ate pav bhaji while another watched cartoons, unfazed and totally composed. The "Shakti Mills" was described as "Spooky" surrounded by "shady Figures" and overall as an "anomaly" in the so-called civilized city which got journalists attention on a large scale with a special concentration on the woman involved in this case.

Figure 3: Composite sketches of suspects, widely shared on social media Source: Tehelka.com (connected Mumbai's Shakti Mills case, August 22, 2013)



Figure 4: Number of articles mentioning 2013 Mumbai gang rape over 3 month period after incident Source: Pro-quest News & Current Events



2014 Badaun Rape Case

This heinous crime took place in Katra village in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh. Here the two girls who had gone to relieve themselves in the nearby fields the night before, did not return. Their family members filed a missing report about them, but the response was delayed. The next morning, their bodies were found hanging from a tree, heavily injured and wearing torn clothes, hinted towards physical assault/attack.

Two brothers from the village were suspected and four other men along with two constables were also believed to be co-conspirators. The grisly photos of the girl's dead bodies hanging from the tree were widely circulated on social media thus escalating the awareness at all levels in the next few days. The police investigation saw many twists and turns and many speculations on media level – caste revivifies, a possible honour killing, political conspiracy etc.

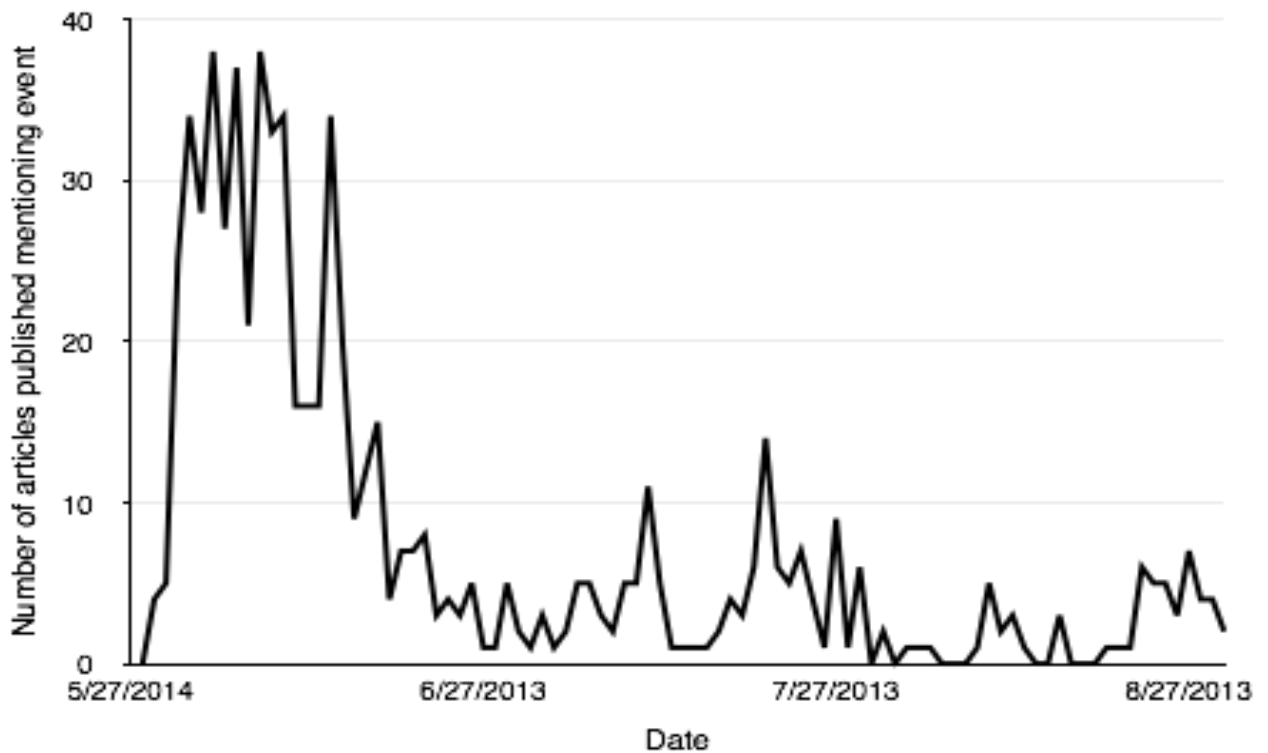
To explain and to make sense of this tragedy, the media jumped from the conclusion to conclusion. The result was a plethora of inconsistencies in reporting. The caste of these girls became debatable as from being Dalits of U.P. to Shakyas OBC (Other Backward, Caste). The controversial and wrong details were continuously reported by mainstream media. The consistency of coverage lasted from May 31st to June 8th and a pattern was observed in the nature of the police and governmental investigation here.

The attention given to this case could not hold a candle as compared with the other cases such as Delhi rape case December 2012.

Figure 3- one of the many images circulating around this case (censored due to graphic content) Source: newsreporter.in



Figure 4: Number of articles mentioning 2014 Badaun case over 3 month period after incident Source: Proquest News & Current Events



2014 Uber Rape Case

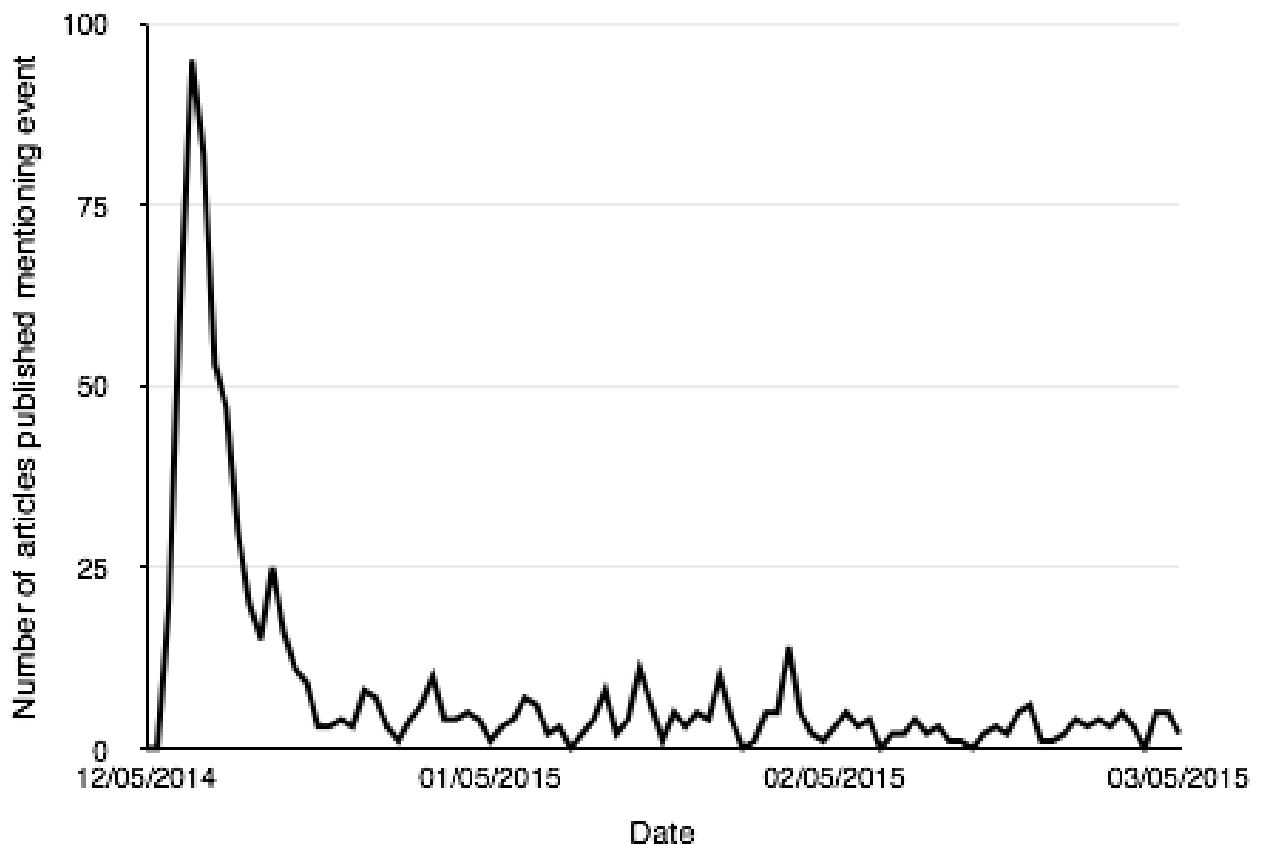
The assault on the night of Dec. 5, 2014 of a 25 year old woman who boarded a cab in Delhi that was associated with the San Francisco based company uber brought the media attention to this case. The woman had briefly fallen asleep during the ride and was woken up by the driver's sexual assault on her. The Delhi transportation department banned uber from operating in city, thus inviting further greater media coverage. Later it was revealed that the assailant had a history of rape charges.

Uber received universal condemnation and was blamed for being casual about their operations in India and not doing enough to ensure the safety and security of woman passengers. Uber was openly vilified for not running detailed background check on driver's previous records

The rapist was characterized as a "sex maniac" and explored his criminal background ("Uber probe blows the lid off a sex maniac"). Since this case happened in a metropolitan city, the media was flooded with articles that focused on the rise of sexual violence, persuading the reader with many nationally procured data and various statistical records. This case also cited Nirbhaya case again and again. The disenchantment and disappointment was reflected in headlines like "So it's another December, and there's another rape in Delhi....". The period following the assault shares a sharp peak in media interest leading to the banning of uber in the city following the incident by Delhi Transport Department. The rise/fall (blips) in media coverage which continued through the following months indicating a progression in the trial and criminal proceedings of the case are clearly seen in the graph.

Table 4: Number of articles mentioning 2014 Delhi Uber rape over 3 month period after incident

Source: Pro-quest news and current events



ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Extremity of Cases

The 2012 Delhi Gang rape case took place in a posh area of New Delhi, so it was deemed to be astonishing. The sheer level of violence was shocking and unusual. The lurid details were described in every story, covering the first few paragraphs. The readers were “hooked” in by the intimate details of sexual violence. While the woman was moved to safdarjung hospital, the majority of articles detailed her injuries. The doctors described it as “probably the most grievous” rape care handled at the hospital. The victim, a paramedic student was subjected to extensive torture before she was raped, leading to several life – threatening injuries. According to the doctors, they had never seen a victim of sexual assault subjected to “such brutality” she was covered in blood, but conscious and her pain and agony was beyond imagination. The extremely graphic details were reported and the imagery was shocking. The violence was the primary detailed and presented here in the stories. The language was highly emotionally charged and became the integral and focal point of many reporters who wanted to get across to readers by doing this.

The examples were citing the incident as unthinkable and was bracketed as the most brutal rape ever committed in NCR as [“prowling rapists had set out for gruesome deed”]. The articles demanded not only death penalty but complete eradication of rape through medieval methods of punishment through penalties like solitary punishment/confinement, flogging and castration. This crime was dubbed as completely inhuman, debilitating, humiliating and shameful. Rape scars the soul of the victim permanently. The headlines went on to give out stern warnings such as “Delhi, please, stop raping you women.

Sensationalism was the language used to describe the Mumbai Gang rape such as “brutal, shocking and unbelievable” (Times of India, 8/25/2013). It was pointed out that the Shakti Mills is an abandoned compound in the middle of Mumbai. The reports expressed the feeling that the crime happened right under people’s noses which was astounding. It was also shocking because Mumbai had a better reputation than Delhi regarding the women’s safety and security.

As reflected in the report by Sonam Nair titled (“Mumbai (un) safe for women) this crime was brutal, shocking and happened in daylight, the victim wasn’t even alone. It pleaded for extra caution by girls when they were out for work, or on the road as Mumbai was no longer deemed to be safe haven for woman. The people/media mobilized the public support through by using its shocking nature.

The images of the lifeless bodies of the girls hanging from a tree were widely circulated. The uber case shocked the public consciousness by highlighting the betrayal of the women as the security of the mobile app was breached. This breach of safety was reflected international headlines like “Uber Betrayal” which blamed the company (transportation) for its lack of verification (background) of the drivers in India.

The strong worded editorials by journalists have combated complacency by focusing on most extreme details of these rape crimes. By appealing and pricking the public’s conscience and that of law-making bodies they have compelled changes in society.

One of the examples is the newspaper DNA which has a section named. “Enough is Enough” which specially deals with cases of sexual violence and its aftermath. The catastrophic aspect of the rape cases are focused on catastrophe means the dramatic events that bring out fear and anger. The articles focus on the extremism of these cases thus following some patterns. The commonly quoted statistics is that a woman is raped in India every 20 minutes. The stories are framed and lead to highlighting of extreme details. Usually rapes take place at night, in public spaces, and are committed by strangers. These types of stories are more likely to be picked up in terms of sexual violence’s discussions in order to invoke and provoke the public’s reaction and the government’s legal action.

An Increase in Crime

The enhanced crime rate is presented as an ingredient too and rape and sexual violence are also its parts. The trend is that rape is a result of a rising criminality and something particular is going on this moment in India history in bringing this transformation.

The times are cited as dangerous, the transition is bitter and each passing day makes the future seem bleaker as expressed in the articles like “Delhi, please stop raping your women”. The consequence of each rape case is reflected here and each report follows the articles describing the escalating rate of sexual violence, increasing crime rates, rapes by minors/juveniles and so on. The article “give us a safe city, not police protection” dubs Mumbai as a mutating and uncertain city which is eating into woman’s consciousness every day. It is no longer the safe city of Maharashtra where women could assume safety and security.

The “financial capital of India deteriorates into the “rape capital instead” as described in the article name, “Gang rape Mire Sucks glitter off maximum city” following the Mumbai gang rape. The Shakti Mill incident was followed by articles proclaiming that Mumbai was safer for woman ten years earlier while violence against woman was a common phenomenon in Delhi even then. The standards of safety were continually questioned in the articles, drawing similarities between Mumbai and “the rape capital Delhi and lamenting that Mumbai was turning into another “Delhi” – the unsafe place for females.

Politics of Blame

The chief factor on which the journalists focus while reporting on sexual violence is trying to fix the accountability of the crime as reflected in many articles which dig out the root causes of increasing crime rates and hikes in sexual violence throughout India. Every high profile rape case starts fresh case round of “blame-game” and the attention-hungry non-media actors like public officials and celebrities, utilize such opportunities to draw out their own conclusions of the “blame-game” and fix the persons accountability for this crime. The brunt of these issues is fixed on the person / people accountable or responsible for such crimes. Even the high profile ranking leaders like the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are not immune to this malady.

Following the Delhi gang rape case he blamed the large number of loose young men who come to urban areas from rural areas in search of jobs, in search of livelihood strategies and if they do not get well absorbed in the process of development in rural areas, they can become a menace to society in the article titled “PM Warns of Footloose migrants from Rural Areas” This statement revealed a very casual attitude. It shows that the marginalised people who have very little chance of defending oneself in public eye become easy targets for/in the blame game.

Blaming the Victim

The common belief is that the women who are raped/experienced sexual violence were “asking for it “or” deserved it and due to this attitude victims are commonly blamed for being assaulted. However, the English-language print media debunks this belief. It rejects victim blaming of finding women at fault for being assaulted.

It rejects victim blaming of finding women at fault for being assaulted. This point was emphasized upon further by pointing out that rape is not a parenting or law and order failure it is a human failure. Raping is a man’s fault, but being raped is not a woman’s fault in article “Being raped is not a woman’s fault”.

Blaming the subaltern/marginalized or “outside” people

The media also aims to “make” an image of the rapist by associating with a subaltern identity of the same. The powerless people who are not the part of any power group as per the post-colonial theory of hegemonic power play.

In our country this power structure is defined as neo-liberalism and subaltern group which consists of rural, lower class, lower caste and migrants who move from place to place to find work. The individuals of rural backgrounds are usually blamed for problems related to overpopulation and urbanization. Migration has a history in India and is equated with sexual deviance and crimes as well.

The English media which usually reflects middle and upper-class attitude showing fear of migrants often linked to sexual violence in the articles like “why you shouldn’t call Delhi our rape capital” .The articles highlighting men’s background and characterizing their poverty and illiteracy/lack of education is quite common. The media filters these subaltern identities by describing young people and linking these incidents to hike in juvenile crimes.

In the article “Delhi horror visits Mumbai” describes the five assailment as jobless and habitual drunkards and drug-addicts who visited to mill for committing crimes, two of them had robbery cases filed against them in the police station. The article “It All Boils Down to Family” clearly suggests that not only the rapist, but also his entire family/parents were too blamed for his crime.

In the Delhi Uber case the accused was described as a lecher who was always on the lookout for prey even going to the extent of offering free transportation to women waiting for transportation at nights in lieu of sexual favours/physical intimacy.

“Otherization” of Rural India

It is common to sensationalize the news regarding rape, especially in rural India as clear from the reports surrounding the Badaun case which presents the lurid details at every turn. Rural sexual violence is perceived as that of a very unique variety and at times it determines the framing/perception of such heinous crimes. Not only these rural cases reporting’s rake out caste based issues but also place the blame on rural police universally.

Lack of access to toilets was also characterized in the blame game in Badaun Case. In this case two cousins were found hanging from the mango tree in Badaun which is situated near U.P. The rural India is treated as the “other India” by the media. Villages are shown as “rigid and unchanging and thus narratives of modernity and sexual violence are juxtaposed together by “authorization” of rural India. The women who are at the receiving end of Indian journalist’s biased attitudes are usually young, rural, lower caste women and this narrative contributes to their victimization. They are made to be an object of pity by focusing on their utter powerlessness and helplessness.

As per Naqvi, the incident in Delhi is a feature of daily life in rural India. This adds up with the previously established narratives of the construct of the “rapist” of rural India. The issue of sexual violence is handled as one which originates into rural areas and then spills into cities through migrant workers.

The stereotypes of seeing village men/rural men as sexual predators are reinforced through these narratives and framings.

Conclusion

To establish the ground realities, studies must focus on finding out the exact reasons for escalating sexual violence. Data base and statistics have been cited by reporters in all cases. Since the scope my research was small – consisting of 3 urban cases and 1 rural case, I cannot draw too many conclusions comparing how sexual violence portrayed in these two different backgrounds. What is more, rural cases rarely receive national media coverage in the first place, the result being that the framings of Badaun case were unrealistic and cut off from real life situations. Not only the rates of crime and violence are seeing a hike, but also the rape case seeing a hike, which may have a larger impact with regards to the safety of the public.

The “men” are being presented as archetypal rapist monsters and rape is becoming the factor which remaps women’s safety with an aim to activate the common man and emotionally stay the public to bring out societal

changes and rape-preventing/related legal reforms. India is associated with extreme sexual violence and this sentiment is shared by all types of media.

As the rape reporting intensified, India's image received a backlash and was tarnished on the international front and remains to be smirched even today. The news reporting today contributes to the trend of rape exceptionalism in media and in the public psyche as well. The measure of violence decides the rape of reporting – which is dangerous and harrowing.

The “high profile rapes” are reported in a way calculated of incited anger and trigger media report, with a focus on extreme violence, extreme innocence of the woman involved and the extreme guilt of the perpetrator. The coloured version of the rape – stories, the sensational language and the lurid details add to the disgusting entertainment value, but divert our attention through biased reporting. A free, fair and impartial point of view is required here for the real and authentic reporting and an unbiased attitude for bringing real and permanent change.

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