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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

**KES' SHRI JAYANTILAL H. PATEL LAW COLLEGE.**

**FACT VS FICTION: HOW TV SHOWS AND MOVIES SHAPE  
IDEAS ABOUT LAWYERS AND JUSTICE IN INDIA.**

AUTHORED BY: MISBA SAYYED

Roll No-41

Div-B

Class-FYBA PC-24

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*“The gap between the courtroom of reality and the and the courtroom of fiction is where public perception is born”- Harish Salve*

## Abstract

In India, popular media such as TV shows, films, Books, and social media has a big impact on how the general public views the lawyers, the legal system and the idea of justice. The reality of the Indian Judiciary System is very different from these representations, which are frequently exaggerated for entertainment purposes. This research investigates the conflict between reality and fantasy in the representation of lawyers and justice in Indian media. Using examples from Bollywood films, Indian television shows, literature, social media narratives, and real-life situations, the study investigates how these depictions affect society's concept of law and justice. The media's influence is twofold. On the one hand, it creates exaggerated expectations of speedy justice and flawless attorneys, leading to public dissatisfaction. To bridge this gap, ethical storytelling, public education campaigns, and legislation to prevent sensationalism are required, as well as a realistic and nuanced understanding of the judicial system.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The legal profession has always been a source of intrigue in Indian cinema, television shows, books and social media. From dramatic courtroom moments to fierce legal fights, these representations frequently blur the boundary between fact and fiction. Bollywood movies, TV series, legal thrillers and viral social media posts often present the law in ways that both entertain and inform. However, these representations are typically simplified, sensationalized, or exaggerated, which can lead to audiences having incorrect expectations about how the judicial system works. While such depictions can draw attention to significant social concerns, they frequently mask the complicated reality of legal practice in India, where judicial delays, budgetary constraints, and institutional inefficiencies are daily barriers. This research looks at how the Indian media shapes public perception about lawyers and justice, how far they depart from truth, and how this impacts public faith in the legal system. This article also investigates the media's portrayal of lawyers and justice in India, measuring its impact on public awareness and contrasting these representations with the realities faced by legal practitioners across the country.



## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The representation of lawyers and the legal system in Indian media has changed dramatically over time, reflecting the country's shifting social and political conditions. From the early days of Indian film to modern television series and social media, how justice and legal practitioners are portrayed reflects society values and problems. In the post-independence era, Indian films often highlighted themes of justice and morality as the country strove to define itself. <sup>1</sup>*Awaara* (1951) was a film that probed the interaction between law, criminality, and morality, connecting with a newly independent India dealing with poverty and institutional inequity. The courtroom plays of this era frequently portrayed lawyers as moral arbiters seeking to maintain justice in a developing democracy. The emergence of socially aware films occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, a period characterized by political turbulence and the Emergency. Movies such as *Shakti* (1982) and *Andha Kanoon* (1983) highlighted the public's growing distrust of institutions, particularly the court.

These films depicted court disputes as struggles not only against people but also against corrupt systems, emphasizing common man's grievances. The 1990s saw economic liberalization and a shift in cultural narratives.<sup>2</sup> Films such as *Damini* (1993) emphasized women's rights and the pursuit of justice in patriarchal settings, whereas *Mohra* (1994) sensationalized legal thrillers. This historical trajectory demonstrates how the media's image of lawyers and justice has been changed by India's changing social, political, and cultural environment, serving as both a reflection of and an effect on public opinion.

## **MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF LAWYERS AND JUSTICE**

### **Bollywood Movies**

Indian cinema has always depicted lawyers and courtroom dramas. Films like *Damini* (1993) portray lawyers as heroic defenders fighting for justice. Here Sunny Deol's character is portrayed as a fearless lawyer who delivers powerful statements that sway the court. Such scenes minimize the painstaking efforts real lawyers must do to prepare a case, while films

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<sup>1</sup> Filmigeek. (2008, January 1). *Awara* (1951). Filmigeek. <https://www.filmigeek.com/2008/01/awara-1951.html>  
Zee5. (n.d.). *Shakti*. Zee5. <https://www.zee5.com/movies/details/shakti/0-0-320309> IMDb. (n.d.). *Andha kanoon*. IMDb. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085165/>

<sup>2</sup> YouTube. (2011, June 5). SCMyuYZEYO. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCMyuYZEYO>  
AmazonPrimeVideo. (n.d.). *Damini*. AmazonPrimeVideo. <https://www.primevideo.com/region/eu/detail/Damini/0FBAX7Z9OH13A8D369ETEV11RK>  
Disney+Hotstar. (n.d.). *JollyLLB*. Hotstar. <https://www.hotstar.com/in/movies/jolly-llb/1000007132>  
Netflix. (n.d.). *Inside Edge*. Netflix. <https://www.netflix.com/in/title/80017218>

like *Jolly LLB* (2013,2017) address the flaws in the judiciary while maintaining a comic tone. *Court* (2014) is a rare realistic depiction of the sluggish and complicated judicial system. In *Kyon Ki Main Jhuth Nahin Bolta* (2001), the protagonist uses flashy ways to obtain confession from the witness. While these films raise important problems, they simplify legal procedures for entertainment. Structural issues including caste discrimination and gender inequality were brought to light by movies like *Pink* (2016) and *Article 15* (2019). Although these movies have sparked heated discussions, they usually portray the legal system as being easier than it actually is.

### TV Shows and OTT Platform

Tv series like *Adaalat* (2010-2016) glamorize lawyers by portraying them as great heroes who solve problems quickly, often bending the rules to ensure justice. Recent over the top programs [OTT], such as *Criminal Justice* (2019) aim to give a more realistic representation while still using dramatic storytelling. While shows like *Guilty Minds* (2022) tackle challenging themes like class action lawsuits and humanitarian challenges, they also run the risks of reducing complex legal processes for entertainment purposes<sup>3</sup>. *Crime Patrol* strives to educate viewers on crime prevention while simultaneously revealing the harsh realities of criminal activity. However they may glorify crime solving techniques that are impractical in real life.

### Books and Social Media

Legal thrillers like Ravi Subramanian's *The Bankrupt*, shapes reader's perception of lawyers as clever and strategic. Social media platforms have an important role in changing public opinion on legal problems. A more realistic portrayal of the difficulties faced by the legal profession is found in books about actual judges and lawyers such as Justice Leila Sheth's *On Balance*. Viral videos, memes and discussion about high profile cases have the potential to change public opinions on justice. The term "trial by media" has gained popularity in india, particularly

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<sup>3</sup> Netflix. (n.d.). Inside Edge. Netflix. <https://www.netflix.com/in/title/80017218> Amazon Prime Video. (n.d.). Kyo Kii... Main Jhuth Nahin Bolta. Amazon Prime Video.

<https://www.primevideo.com/detail/Kyo-Kii-Main-Jhuth-Nahin-Bolta/0GHV0TGKW5THQ9Q4KPAM3OI4W>

Amazon.(2020).Pink(2016).Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/PINK-Amitabh-Bachchan/dp/B08HTWVS6C>

Netflix.(n.d.).TheTrial:Pyaar, Kaanoon, Dhokha. Netflix. <https://www.netflix.com/in/title/81154455>

Sony LIV. (n.d.). Adaalat. Sony LIV. <https://www.sonyliv.com/shows/adaalat-1700000091>

Disney+Hotstar.(n.d.).CriminalJustice.Hotstar. <https://www.hotstar.com/in/shows/criminal-justice/1260004267>

AmazonPrimeVideo.(n.d.).GuiltyMinds.AmazonPrimeVideo.

<https://www.primevideo.com/detail/GUILTY-MINDS/0HISWE48Q92245MLS6OLMBVNZZ>

following events such as Jessica Lal's murder trial, *Nirbhaya gang rape case* and *Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide case*. Social media transforms real life cases into public spectacles, adding excitement to court trials. On social media sites like Twitter and Instagram, individuals acted like judges and jurors in discussions. This raised awareness and also resulted in oversimplifications and in some cases false information. Media coverage can alter public opinion before a verdict is made which affects both jury members and judges.<sup>4</sup>

## **Reality of Indian Legal System<sup>5</sup>**

### **Judicial Delays and Backlogs:**

As of January 2025 more than 50 million cases are pending in the Indian judiciary. Due to lack of judges, India has only about 20 judges per million people, ineffective procedures and poor infrastructure, family matters, property disputes, customer grievances such cases can take years or even decades to conclude. Media rarely depicts these delays while Movies and television programs, on the other hand, usually depict cases being settled in a manner of days and weeks.

### **Financial Challenges:**

High litigation expenses frequently discourage people from seeking legal help. While free legal aid programs exist, they are frequently understaffed and underfunded, which limits their usefulness. The media frequently portrays the judicial system in terms of spectacular courtroom confrontations and lavish lives, neglecting the financial constraints that both plaintiffs and lawyers endure. Ordinary people frequently find it unreasonably expensive to obtain justice. Legal bills, filing fees, and lengthy court proceedings can deplete financial resources, particularly in vulnerable populations. In India, where many cases last years or even decades, the cost of several appearances, transportation, and documentation adds to the hardship. Many plaintiffs, unable to bear the fees, quit their lawsuits or settle for unjust results. The media rarely covers these financial hardships, instead concentrating on high-profile cases or wealthy lawyers. Recognizing these limitations in narrative will create a more realistic portrayal of the legal profession and promote empathy for people facing financial obstacles in their quest of justice.

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<sup>4</sup> Sony LIV. (n.d.). Crime Patrol: City Crimes. Sony LIV. <https://www.sonyliv.com/shows/crime-patrol-city-crimes-1700001472>

Subramaniam, R. (2015). *The Bankruptcy*. Penguin Random House India. ISBN 9780143421382 Sheth, L. (2011). *On Balance*. Penguin Books India. ISBN 9780143101390

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India. (2025). Judicial statistics. Retrieved from <https://legallaffairs.gov.in>

### Systematic Challenges:

Corruption and bureaucratic barriers are prevalent, although they are frequently exaggerated for dramatic effect in the media or entirely overlooked. The presentation of judges and lawyers as always ethical and heroic (eg. *Adaalat*) provides the false information of the profession.

The media also underrepresents topics such as gender disparities in the legal profession and a lack of sensitivity when dealing with cases involving minorities, women, and children. Additionally, institutional corruption and political influence, while rarely presented, are frequently exaggerated rather than addressed in a thoughtful manner. Highlighting these structural issues would lead to a more realistic and empathic view of the justice system. It would also promote public conversation and policy measures targeted at improving access to justice and increasing judicial efficiency.

### Challenges Faced By Lawyers:

Lawyers, particularly in lower courts face obstacles such as restricted access to resources, insufficient fees, and inadequate infrastructure. Young lawyers sometimes spend years establishing their career before achieving financial security, a reality that is overlooked by glossy depiction of wealthy lawyers in films such as *Jolly LLB*. Lawyers frequently have to spend time educating their clients about basic legal procedures and concepts. Additionally, people have unrealistic expectations and there are times when the client is not cooperative. Lawyers sometimes face problems between their professional and personal moral standards. For example, representing a client that they feel is guilty might lead to turmoil within them.

### <sup>6</sup>Landmark Cases and Everyday Realities:

The ability of the court to enforce justice, promote social change, and interpret the law creatively is frequently demonstrated by landmark decisions in the Indian legal system. These cases frequently deal with important social, human rights and constitutional problems. However the dramatic storylines seen in media depictions are considerably different from the everyday realities of the court system. Examples such as:

- 1) *Vishaka vs the State of Rajasthan*: This case established rules for prevention of sexual harassment at workplace, which are now defined under the *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013*. It was an important turning point in women's rights in

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<sup>6</sup> Indian Kanoon. (n.d.). Case document: 72221982. Indian Kanoon. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/72221982/>  
Indian Kanoon. (n.d.). Case document: 257876. Indian Kanoon. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/257876/>



India, emphasizing on the importance of workplace safety and equality.

- 2) *Kesavananda vs State of Kerala*: It established the “*Basic Structure Doctrine*”, which restricts parliament’s ability to amend the constitution. It ensures the protection of fundamental rights and constitutional values. Complex constitutional issues are rarely covered in depth in movies and television shows. When they are featured, they are oversimplified, with a focus on drama over legal arguments. This case promoted the notion of constitutional primacy and judicial scrutiny, which helped build modern Indian democracy.

## **The Impact of Media Portrayal**

### **Unrealistic Expectations:**

Clients expect their lawyers to deliver similar dramatic performances, believing this approach will grant favourable results. While in reality the arguments must be precise, logical and supported by prior legal decisions. Judges are more influenced by sound evidence and sound legal reasoning than by feelings. Cases often involve multiple hearings, documentation and procedural delays. Many believe that lawyers have a glamorous lavish lifestyle earning significant wealth early in their career. But in India, lawyers struggle for years before becoming financially stable.

### **<sup>7</sup>Empowering Public Opinion:**

Movies and television programs have a significant impact in shaping and empowering public perceptions, particularly when they address socially important subjects. In India, entertainment depictions of the judicial system frequently go beyond mere amusement, becoming catalysts for public awareness and advocacy. By highlighting crucial social issues, these media tales motivate people to pursue justice, question society conventions, and engage in meaningful debate. The film *Pink* (2016) is an excellent illustration of how media may shape society beliefs. The movie, which focused on the issue of consent, emphasized the significance of recognizing and respecting a woman's autonomy. The film, with its strong narrative and the memorable slogan “*No means no,*” sparked extensive debate in India regarding gender-based violence and women's rights. It motivated many women to speak out against harassment and abuse, urging them to pursue legal action and demand justice. Another powerful film, *Section 375* (2019), tackled the sensitive topic of false sexual harassment charges. By showing a

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<sup>7</sup> Amazon.(2020).*Pink*(2016). Amazon. <https://www.amazon.com/PINK-Amitabh-Bachchan/dp/B08HTWVS6C>

complex courtroom discussion, the film investigated the potential abuse of laws designed to safeguard women. It asked listeners to think critically about striking a balance between ensuring justice for victims and limiting the abuse of legal measures.

#### Increased awareness and advocacy:

On the positive side, the media has effectively focused attention to crucial socioeconomic and legal concerns, fostering public debate and activism. For example: Films such as *Mulk* (2018) focused on religious persecution and the biases that underprivileged people experience. *Article 15* (2019) addresses caste based violence and systematic oppression, igniting discussion regarding caste inequality.<sup>8</sup>

#### Encouraging Legal Awareness:

The media plays an important role in teaching the public about legal systems, assisting individuals in understanding their rights and the laws that protect them. Traditional media such as newspapers and television, make difficult legal ideas more understandable by incorporating legal jargon and concepts into public conversations. Civil rights, employment safeguards, and police actions are frequently covered in media coverage, providing citizens with the knowledge they need for handling legal issues. Social media has transformed this position by providing interactive forums for public debate. High-profile court cases, such as those involving police accountability or movements like *#MeToo*, can become viral on sites like *Twitter* and *TikTok*. These talks offer real-time involvement, allowing people to learn about court procedures, contribute their thoughts, and access legal resources. This democratization of knowledge enables people to comprehend not only their rights, but also wider social concerns about justice and fairness. The media must be accurate and unbiased in its reporting. Collaborations with legal specialists, as well as public legal education efforts, can assist achieve this aim. By addressing these issues, the media may continue to play an important role in developing a better educated and legally aware society, allowing people to advocate for themselves and interact meaningfully with the court system.

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<sup>8</sup> Amazon Prime Video. (n.d.). Section 375. Amazon Prime Video. <https://www.primevideo.com/detail/Section-375/0IIHFS0KO74NS8TYVIF3P8T1G2>

Amazon Prime Video. (n.d.). *Mulk*. Amazon Prime Video. <https://www.primevideo.com/detail/Mulk/0SG8V32AG9YYO157VZIHV7RJAK>

The Journal of Social Media in Society. (2018). The Journal of Social Media in Society, 7(2), 69-91. <https://thejsms.org>

## **Balancing the Influence of Media:**

Media, in its many forms, has a tremendous impact on public attitudes of legal professionals, the legal system, and the notion of justice. The representation of legal processes in films, television shows, and social media frequently swings toward drama and sensationalism, creating unreasonable expectations and misunderstandings. While the media may inspire and educate, its effect must be balanced to guarantee a fair and accurate view of the legal system.

### Responsible storytelling:

The authors and creators of books and films, television dramas, and online series wield considerable power in molding popular conceptions of justice. However, their need for amusement frequently overshadows the complexities of real-life legal processes. *Guilty Minds* (2022) is a pleasant departure from dramatic courtroom spectacles, presenting a nuanced view on the moral quandaries faced by lawyers<sup>9</sup>. Such portrayals assist audiences in understanding the complexities of legal systems, as opposed to simplistic depictions in which trials are settled in a few dramatic minutes.

### Public Legal Education:

Misconceptions created by the media can be addressed by programs targeted at educating the public about the judicial system. Workshops, seminars, and legal literacy initiatives can assist people grasp their rights and the complexities of the court system. Public service announcements with simpler explanations of legal topics help dispel prevalent fallacies spread by sensationalized media. Governments, legal institutions, and non-profits could all play an important role in supporting legal assistance campaigns. These programs can help individuals navigate the court system, find cheap legal services, and comprehend the judiciary's restrictions. When individuals are informed, they are better able to distinguish between fictional depictions and real-life legal situations.

### Media Regulation:

The control of the media, particularly its portrayal of ongoing trials, is critical to maintaining public faith in the judiciary. Sensationalized reporting and media trials frequently undermine the impartiality of court procedures, resulting in bias and disinformation. Journalistic principles

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<sup>9</sup> Amazon Prime Video. (n.d.). *Guilty Minds*. Amazon Prime Video.  
<https://www.primevideo.com/detail/GUILTY-MINDS/0HISWE48Q92245MLS6OLMBVNZZ>

stressing fact-based reporting can help to address these concerns by ensuring that media coverage does not jeopardize judicial credibility. Social media platforms have an important role in changing public opinion. Stricter control and implementation of ethical rules can help to minimize the spread of disinformation. Furthermore, when depicting delicate legal issues, particularly in high-profile cases that impact public debate, multimedia providers must adhere to ethical norms.

## Conclusion

To summarize, while the media plays an important role in raising awareness of legal concerns and stimulating public discourse about justice, it frequently distorts the realities of Indian law. Movies, television programs, novels, and social media depict the law in ways that are entertaining and engaging, but may not correctly represent the issues that legal practitioners face. The realities of delayed justice, budgetary limits, and institutional inefficiencies are rarely represented on film, but attorneys are frequently portrayed as larger-than-life heroes with rapid answers to difficult situations. To close the gap between media depictions and the realities of legal practice, it is critical to continue encouraging public legal education and ethical storytelling in the media. By doing so, we can keep the public informed about the true character of the judicial system, allowing them to interact with it meaningfully and realistically. Finally, while media portrayals of the law can inspire and promote important conversations, they must strike a balance between amusement and truth to prevent propagating misunderstandings and unreasonable expectations.

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