

The IHC South Asian Religions and Cultures Research Focus Group Presents

Cybercrime in Digital India: Jamtara's Youth and OTT Production Cultures

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<https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/86876312534?pwd=bTdyRjdESmhMYlcrMVdqem5Yd0dMz09>

Continuing a trend set by Bollywood cinema since the mid-2000s, small towns and villages in India are being mined for their performative excess, comic potential, and cultures of violence by platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. I trace this trend to *Jamtara: Sabka Number Aayega* (Jan 2020–), an over-the-top (OTT) crime drama from Netflix/Tipping Point that portrays real-life mobile phone phishing scams conducted by teenagers in the state of Jharkhand. The reliance on concept development based on localized research within an OTT production culture ensured that the innovative story and subject matter of *Jamtara* intrigued audiences. However, the later episodes, instead of focusing on the forensic and infrastructural intricacies of phishing, depicted gratuitous violence instigated by a local politician figure. The theme of cybercrime provided *Jamtara* a way to inflect earlier registers of crime with discourses around digitality and social mobility, but the show succumbed to representing physical violence.

Rahul Mukherjee is Dick Wolf Associate Professor of Television and New Media Studies at University of Pennsylvania. His research on environmental media and mobile phone cultures has been published in his recent monograph *Radiant Infrastructures: Media, Environment, and Cultures of Uncertainty* (Duke University Press, 2020) and in journals such as *Media, Culture, and Society* and *Asiascape: Digital Asia*.