

Representations of Vithiya Sivaloganathan's Rape, Murder and Protests against Its Violence

Upeksha Jayasuriya¹,

Incidents of rape become highlighted in a nature ad hoc and are replaced with other current news or dominant narratives while the issue remains dormant until another rape incident is reported by media. In such a context, the current study ventures to conduct a multimodal discourse analysis on media representations of rape, murder of Vithiya Sivaloganathan and protests against its violence in online newspaper articles, photographs and web posts. In so doing, it aims at examining whether discourses that underwrote the representation of Vithiya's rape, murder and protests against its violence are mere representations of the gender issue or it caters for other agendas. The study unravels that most of the media representations deviate from portraying the gender issue for prominence is given to other dominant narratives and ideologies that overpower representations of the rape incident. While certain articles in newspapers and websites represent Vithiya's rape as a 'Tamil problem', others bring into focus the culture of impunity in Jaffna as the root cause for such atrocities. It was also discovered that media solely catered contemporary political agendas whereas the dearth of articles representing rape as a gender issue too, either victimize the victim further or erase the perpetrator from the act of rape. Thus, cultural, political and other dominant narratives seem to submerge the act of rape as a gender issue. Although today's visual media, in conjunction with new technology, emerges from a consumerist culture and thereby claim to be lacking a truth value, the current study provides an insight into how dominant ideologies overpower diverse representations of rape.

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¹Department of Languages, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka.
upekshajayasuriya@gmail.com