

Simulation and Solidarity: How an Indian Subaltern Music Video on YouTube Simulates Solidarity

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Abstract

On October 31st 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi applauded a four-year-old girl from the state of Mizoram for singing a contemporary version of the national song *Maa Tuhje Salam* from A.R. Rahman's album "Vande Mataram". The music video uploaded on YouTube caught the attention of the nation as it crossed 10 million views as of September 2021. Ironically, the music video was produced from Mizoram in the Indo-Myanmar border region populated by minority hill people whose tragic experiences of socio-political conflict with the postcolonial Indian government translates into an instrument of disengagement from the larger Indian mainstream society till today. In this context, the paper problematizes the simulation of solidarity in the music video on YouTube. It attempts to derive possibilities of simulating the *absence* of solidarity in everyday life as *presence* in the music video, which *hides* the oppressive experience and the socio-cultural, historical and political struggles of the subalterns in India. The simulacra conceal the fact that there exists none. It feigns what one hasn't: it feigns to *have* solidarity. Using content analysis, the study looks at both the content of music videos and the user's negotiation in YouTube comment sections. It argues that through simulation the notion of solidarity is corrupted against its conventional understanding, which takes place only in the hyperreal world. The study argues that it is the correlation between the signs in the music video and users' negotiation of the signs that kills solidarity, rather than producing it.

Keywords: content analysis; hyperreality; India; signs; social media users