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# **HEROISM V/S VIGILANTISM: THROUGH THE LENS OF LAW, MORALITY AND JUSTICE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Movies hold up a mirror to society and provide insight into ideas and aspirations that are at play. Ideas of law, morality and justice are foundational for the existence of a society and can differ in the way they influence a certain group of people. A hero is a self-driven individual with attributes that set him apart from the general public. This article analyses the idea of a hero, by examining their ideas of justice that is prevalent among superheroes as compared to police officers and the scope vigilante justice as represented in movies and its real life implications. The introductory part of this article explains the dilemma of the 'hero' by drawing a parallel between the portrayals of superheros and cops in cinemas and the glaring theme of morality, justice and law being in crossroads in everything that they deem just. The next part traces the interconnected jurisprudence of the concepts of law, justice and morality and the implication of not being able to strike a balance between them. The next two parts of the article discusses a cop movie and a superhero movie respectively, to explain how the plot of these movies juxtaposes law, justice and morality through their actions and the concept of vigilantism is introduced. The article then goes on to discuss the conflict between the two 'heros' - cops and superheros in movies and the changing perspective of the police force in the real world towards the need to uphold justice and morality often crossing the legal boundaries in the process. In conclusion, the article discusses what gives rise to the phenomenon of vigilantism and supports the correction of the root cause to deal with the problem of unchecked vigilantism.

## Introduction

*“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”*

*- Joseph Cambell.*

The idea of a hero is one that most people are familiar with, given the massive array of films and TV Shows that are available today. Superheroes as a genre have been a prevalent part of pop culture since the 1930s when the first Superman comic was released. With the films and movies that were made based on these comics, the genre has stayed alive and relevant with stories that have started to subvert the expectations of what it means to be a hero and the trials and tribulations that it comes with. An example of the same is Spiderman, a superhero who struggles with helping the people around him and the responsibilities that come with it. His moral dilemma influences his decisions and the way he views himself and the people close to him. On the other hand, Superhero stories like that of Deadpool subverts the expectations of the audience by being upfront about how he uses his powers for personal reasons while grappling with ideas of the greater good or helping the people around him. However, it is interesting to see how superhero stories concentrate on the ideology of the hero in question and how that ideology is tested by the society that the superhero lives in. These philosophical inner dialogues are what make the superhero genre relatable while being fantastical in nature. Police Officers are a group of people that could be possible compared to superheroes as they are most often titled “heroes” who face dangerous scenarios to bring the greater good to the people. However, being a protector of the law doesn’t raise one above the law, and this ideology is seen to be prevalent in police officers who see themselves above the law. Movies like Singham for example, portray how Police Officers sometimes perceive themselves to be above the law and act on their ideas of justice to impart this. This idea of what it means to be a hero and the nuanced understanding of it, with respect to Superheroes in the reel world as compared to the Police Officers in the real world will be explored in this paper. It will look at the ideology of superheroes and police officers through the ideas of law, justice, and morality and finally investigate the consequences of the interaction between these two groups.

## **Relationship between law, morality, and justice: The jurisprudence**

The ancient concepts of law, morality and justice are intrinsic to the survival and welfare of a society. Laws are an enforceable set of rules regulating behavior of individuals in a society. Morality can be defined as the behavior, intentions or decisions which are socially considered

as just or proper. Justice is also a concept closely related with both law and morality, occupying the center stage in discussions of ethics, legal and political theory. Justice is seen both, as a legal outcome and as an intrinsic human quality in connection with our sense of morality<sup>1</sup>. Ancient societies did not make much distinction between the force of law and its reliance on strong societal morals. Over time, as different thinkers and philosophers pondered deeper into an understanding of the two concepts separately, differences of opinions and how they are to be viewed and understood have come about. Positivists such as H.L.A Hart believe that there necessarily need not be a connection between morality and law<sup>2</sup>. That, an “immoral” law is still law at the end of the day and does not get invalidated just because it does not conform to morality of the society. Despite this, he did believe that the two concepts are bound to intersect at some point since there can be no denial that law is, and has been profoundly influenced by morality; which is why, according to Hart, distinction needs to be made between what law is and what it ought to be. However, on the opposite spectrum are the naturalists, who are on the idea that laws, which morality cannot be considered as laws at all and therefore moral acceptability is a necessary condition for a law to validly exist<sup>3</sup>. In between, the views of Ronald Dworkin suggest that moral principles are indeed components of law, disregarding Hart’s strict division of law and morality<sup>4</sup>.

Even though it is now clear that there definitely exists distinctions between these three ideas, yet they are interconnected with each other. A modern democratic society has to maintain a balance between these three concepts in order to sustain. Society will collapse in the absence of anyone of these ideas or in the situation when there is over dependence on any one concept. Justice is the end goal of both law and morality and also the relationship between law and morality. Law and morals mould each other, the phrase “the name of ‘justice, ‘equality’, ‘good faith’, and ‘conscience’” have in filtered the fabrics of law.

Heroes and superheroes are not just the ordinary reasonable men. Heroes are heroic because they possess noble qualities and possessing such noble qualities allows them to do heroic acts. It is only natural therefore, that some of these qualities, intrinsic to the survival of society is what a hero is known to possess. Not merely possess, but strongly stand by it even situations of grave troubles which might make most, question their values. The desirability of the

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<sup>1</sup> Yang Guorong, ‘Morality and Human Existence from the perspective of Moral Metaphysics’ (2012) 43(4) *Contemporary Chinese Thought* <https://doi.org/10.2753/CSP1097-1467430402> accessed May 1, 2022

<sup>2</sup> H.L.A Hart, ‘Positivism and the separation of Law and Morals, (1958) 71 Harvard Law Review 593

<sup>3</sup> Lon Fuller, ‘positivism and Fidelity of Law-A reply to professor Hart’ (1958) 71 Harvard Law Review.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Dworking, ‘The Model of Rules’ (1967) 35 University of Chicago Law Review 14.

existence of a superhero who will save the day when circumstances of adversity arises. Even when laws and the legal system in place prove to be inadequate to regulate actions of individuals in a society and a state of anarchy sets in, the core intrinsic human qualities of justice and morality prevails. Plato, the great Greek philosopher considered justice, built on moral foundations, to be the essence of a good life, which is the goal or aim of all individuals, conducive to human happiness. According to him, human beings want to lead a good life and justice is an essential requirement to that good life. Mere survival is not the intention as meeting of one's basic needs is only possible in a just society<sup>5</sup>. The implication therefore being that each individual in a society possess a sense of justice, moulded by law and morality. In Rawls' "The Sense of Justice", Rawls talks about people being rational beings having their own end and capable of a sense of justice. This sense of justice is the moral capacity that would enable trust among each other, within a society and therefore, act in support of the basic structure of society<sup>6</sup>. The lack of a sense of justice would therefore be associated with the lack of essential and fundamental human characteristics. The argument therefore is this- when important societal values of law, morality and justice are threatened, law and legality often takes a back seat to ensure that justice and morality still prevail. A hero or a superhero, being an individual of strong values, is not the most "honest law abiding citizen", but he does make sure that the aim of law maintained: justice. What exactly is therefore, the implication of putting *justice* above the law and often even morality, is going to be discussed later on in this paper.

### **Cops and justice in movies**

"Life imitates art and art imitates life". Movies are not just imaginary, made up worlds, they are share a complex tie and can even be said to be a reflection of the 'real world' and its aspirations. The vigilante film genera made an introduction during the 1970s, against "the backdrop of a growing dissatisfaction at the breakdown of the legal system, state corruption and recognition of the collapse of traditional lifestyles"<sup>7</sup>. Since then, police vigilantism as a sub-genera of films has gained much attraction and praise, almost never missing praise among the audience. In the cop vigilante universe, the cop-protagonist, the hero with strong morals and a sense of justice, exists in a brutally corrupt system where politicians and gangsters have

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<sup>5</sup> Plato, *The Republic* (first published, 1943)

<sup>6</sup> John Rawls, 'The sense of justice' *The philosophical Review* (1963) Vol 72 No. 3 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2183165> accessed May 1, 2022

<sup>7</sup> Kaushik Bhaumik, 'A Brief History of Cinema from Bombay to 'Bollywood' (2004) *History Compass* 2(1) Kaushik Bhaumik (2004). A Brief History of Cinema from Bombay to 'Bollywood'. doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2004.00087 accessed May 1, 2022

their way around, supplemented by a complacent judiciary and heavily censored media. The dutiful, morally just officer is tasked with the job of ensuring that justice prevails against all odds. This section is a discussion of the depiction of cop vigilantes in movies and a hero's conflicting ideas of law, morality and justice.

Bajirao Singham, the protagonist of the blockbuster Bollywood movie, *Singham*<sup>8</sup>, is a down-to-earth, "ordinary citizen" who also is a police officer with strong values such as honesty, being anti-corruption and also views himself as gatekeeper of justice as a police officer. An analysis of one of the movie posters itself provides a premonition to what's to unfold in the movie. It is a depiction the hero, Singham, wearing the police uniform and him facing/looking three ways, in the fashion of the national emblem. A sense of patriotism, the implied idea of *Satyamev Jayate*, an officer's duty of standing by the truth and therefore, justice is not so subtle.

As an introduction to the hero of the movie, both the films gives us a small instances where our morally righteous hero is seen displaying his finest qualities- being just, reasonable, helpful and approachable with a down-to earth personality etc. From the get go, the film moulds our understanding of the character as being a hero. It is very evident that the hero, who is a police officer, is not just a figure responsible for enforcing the law and maintain public order and safety, but also a figure responsible for ensuring justice, anticipated both by the expectations of the other characters in the movie and himself as well. His style of resolving most of the problems in his town is to find a solution, personally, without filing charge sheets or registering any complaints as per the procedure established by law. He being an honest, hardworking police officer with a strong sense of justice and efficiency in resolving conflicts earns him much reputation and love from the villagers. The test of Singham's values of justice, truth and everything that he believes in comes to be challenged when he crosses paths with the antagonist/villain of the movie, Jaikant Shikre a goon who had previously levied false corruption allegations against another honest police officer and as a result of the humiliation and damage to his reputation, the police office had taken his own life, leaving his family vowing to get revenge, for justice to be served. The film takes us through various attempts by Jaikant Shikre to destroy Singham's career and life and Singham's unbroken confidence in his honesty and duty to get out of every situation created by Jaikant. However, it's not just about Singham and his life. The clash is between the good and the evil, the outcome of which affects the entire society as a whole. Singham is therefore not just motivated by saving himself and his dear ones,

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<sup>8</sup> Rohit Shetty, *Singham* (Reliance Entertainment 2011) .

but also strives to achieve political and social justice as Jaikant Shikre gears up for contesting in elections and Singham is denied of support to take care of Shikre both institutionally and politically. This is demonstrated very clearly in the movie where in one scene Singham reflects upon his actions and contemplates backing down. However, in a true heroic fashion, our hero Singham is reminded of his morals, values and his duty as a police officer to ensure justice, by any means necessary. It is from this point on, the film has a drastic change in mood. It is no longer just about keeping the evil away, but about destroying it in totality. The honest dutiful police officer overrides everything that is lawful to bring about his version of justice and thus the notion vigilante officer comes to fruition to risk it all for the greater good. Jaikant is 'served justice' by the end of the movie as Singham, along with his entire police team decide to disregard rule of law, shown symbolically in the movie as him and his colleagues discard their uniform before going to settle scores with Jaikant. They use methods that would not pass scrutiny in a court of law to confront those in breach of the law, toss the rule book aside to extract confessions and, finally, punish the guilty by adopting extra-judicial means. As Aditya Mani point out, "essentially, the hero's vigilantism, driven by a strong sense of justice, is proposed as a 'cure' for the same 'system' that these film insist is broken beyond repair"<sup>9</sup>. Such rise of vigilante justice films is not a concept unique to India as evidenced by the movies like Dirty Harry, Fargo, Watchdog etc. which show the relationship of the breakdown of rule of law and the rise of police vigilantism.

### **A Superhero's guide to Justice**

The Superhero genre is inescapable, from kids who watch Marvel movies to seniors who have grown up reading the superhero comics the movies are based on, the genre has been loved by most of the population around the world. The genre and its link to the idea of Vigilantism, as portrayed through cops in movies, has been addressed by The Dark Knight<sup>10</sup>. It is the second part in the Dark Knight Trilogy and hence becomes an excellent point in the narrative arc of Batman to analyse his ideologies while looking at the ramifications of the events that transpired in the first movie. It also acts as a precursor to the final part of the trilogy. Batman's "Origin Story" or the moment that shaped him into the Superhero he is, is shown in the first part of the trilogy, where his parents are murdered by a mugger in an alley right in front of him. This

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<sup>9</sup> Aditya Mani Jha, 'The Indian Dirty Harrys in Khaki' *OpenTheMagazine* (July 9, 2021) <https://www.mid-day.com/news/india-news/article/democracies-do-not-applaud-singham-style-justice-15550167> accessed May 1, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (Warner Bros 2009)

moment in Batman's life is time and again shown to be the one moment that lead him into the path of Vigilantism, in various versions of Batman movies and comics, and has hence shaped his ideology regarding morality and justice.

The Dark Knight begins with the introduction of the Joker, the "Villain", who robs a bank with a gang of criminals while manipulating them into murdering each other, to get a higher share himself and escapes. In the aftermath of this robbery, Batman, District Attorney Harvey Dent and Lieutenant Jim Gordon form an alliance to rid Gotham of Organised Crime. The Vigilante, the lawyer and the police officer, three different sects of people linked to the idea of justice, hence go on to work together to impart it. Batman, impressed with Dent and his idealistic view of the justice system, offers to help him excel in his career. His underlying motive here is his belief that Dent would be the protector of Gotham and Batman could give up his life of Vigilantism and lead a normal life. The Joker has been threatening and holding the city of Gotham hostage, with the condition that Batman reveal his identity. However, in the process, the Joker after severely burning half of Dent's face and killing his girlfriend, Rachel, convinces Dent to seek revenge. Dent then goes on a killing spree, murdering anyone who was responsible for Rachel's death. Gordon and Batman face Dent who is attempting to kill Batman and Gordon's son, blaming the both of them for Rachel's death. Batman then tackles Dent off a building to his death and then persuades Gordon to hold him responsible for Dent's killing spree to maintain his heroic image, as he believes that Dent is the hero that Gotham needs. The Batman is once again the subject of a manhunt by the police and Gordon reluctantly takes down the Bat Signal.<sup>11</sup>

The Movie has many interesting character-arcs to follow, each of which is built with nuance and the ideologies of the characters which interact and influence the city of Gotham as a whole.<sup>12</sup> The Batman, The Joker, Harvey Dent, and Jim Gordon are all fleshed out characters and the ways in which the different ideas of justice and different morals interact with each other. However, the main relationship between Jim Gordon and Batman will be explored further in the paper when dealing with how the vigilantism in cops and superheroes differ. Batman will be the focus to understand superhero vigilantism.

In Batman Begins, Bruce Wayne transforms himself into the Batman, who is a crime-fighter who exists above the law and whose actions violate the judicial standard of proportionality and

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (Warner Bros 2009)

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (Warner Bros 2009)

due process and hence accepting the “irreconcilability of justice and law”, and crowns himself the arbiter between them.<sup>13</sup> In the Dark Knight, his dilemma is much more complex and nuanced. The movie, in a way critiques itself by asking where the distinction between heroes and villains lie if they both act outside of the legal system. This dilemma is posed through the lens of the public. The public’s reaction to Batman’s modus operandi, be it for the greater good, influences him to look at Dent to carry the torch and be crowned as Gotham City’s protector. Batman is hence to be shown to interact with people who differ in their morals and act above the binds of the law, i.e., the Joker and Dent in the later half of the movie. Batman’s idea of justice is shown to be very easily substitutable with his plan to avenge his parents death, that revenge and justice are sometimes the same thing. However, he realises that it is the system that is broken.<sup>14</sup>

The morality that is reflected by Batman is a very skewed one. It is understandable that in order to make Batman a superhero who is a “good guy” while also ensuring his ruthless nature, the creators of the character gave him morals that would reflect the same. The Batman has a strict “No guns” policy due to the death of his parents. His sense of justice, rooted in child-hood trauma, hence takes centre stage in his ideology while morality and the law take a backseat.

The comic Watchmen, released in 1986 directly critiques Batman as a superhero and his ideals. The Watchmen is a series that is placed in 1980s America, in an alternate universe where Superheroes exist, but are masked or costumed vigilantes rather than individuals with superpowers. The superhero from the series that prima facie seems comparable to Batman is that of Rorschach. He is a vigilante that lurks in the shadows, beats up criminals like Batman but unlike Batman, Rorschach is a “weirdo” that roams the streets holding a sign stating “the end is nigh”.<sup>15</sup> The critique offered here is that the kind of person who is a costumed vigilante is an asocial violent sociopath with a very extreme world view. His view is that all of society is sick and filthy and one that does not deserve any kind of mercy. He poses as someone who has a very black and white view of morality, where something is either extremely right or extremely wrong and grey areas don’t exist, and that he never compromises when it comes to the imparting of justice through punishment of others. However, he is shown to be hypocritical

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<sup>13</sup> Todd Walters, ‘The Dark Knight’ 2009 Philosophy Now  
<[https://philosophynow.org/issues/73/The\\_Dark\\_Knight](https://philosophynow.org/issues/73/The_Dark_Knight)> accessed 1st May 2022

<sup>14</sup> Todd Walters, ‘The Dark Knight’ 2009 *Philosophy Now*  
<[https://philosophynow.org/issues/73/The\\_Dark\\_Knight](https://philosophynow.org/issues/73/The_Dark_Knight)> accessed 1st May 2022

<sup>15</sup> Watchmen Explained (Original Comic) (Alt Shift X 2019)  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJmg0uc3CjY&t=244s>> accessed 28th April 2022



and has compromised his world-view and idea of justice when it comes to his personal life.<sup>16</sup> Batman similarly, aims to impart justice impartially but does have flawed moral values, for instance his stance on guns mentioned above.

Hence, although Superheroes can be shown to be idealists who are moral and just, there will always be a power imbalance that would cause the vigilante superhero to go overboard with his power. The concepts of morality and justice do shine bright through the characters in these superhero stories but law often takes a backseat as represented by law enforcement and police officers who are portrayed as mere pawns of a broken system.

### **Cops and Superheroes: the conflict**

In the Dark Knight, we are introduced to Batman as a vigilante running from the law. It is shown how the police do have a warrant against him for his actions. This is an attempt to show that the police are still working under the authority of the law while a vigilante like Batman, is above the law. In the recent years, there have been some major changes in the way in which the public view the police. The genre of Superheroes most often showed us these masked vigilantes are working with police officers to show that though Superheroes are acting above the law, they are only doing so due to the shortcomings of a broken legal system that is caught up in bureaucracy and corruption. However, with a new view of the police, especially in the United States, there has been discourse regarding the ways in which the police are to be held responsible for their actions.<sup>17</sup> In the present climate, police actions are being deemed excessive and even cruel and the superhero genre must be ready to tackle this version of the police in their head, when they have a history of portraying the police as the lawful sidekick to the vigilante. Hence, what united the police and the superheroes were their general idea of attaining justice while what divides them are the moral values they hold and the law that govern the modus operandi of them obtaining that justice.

### **Conclusion**

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<sup>16</sup> Watchmen Explained (Original Comic) (Alt Shift X 2019) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJmg0uc3CjY&t=244s>> accessed 28th April 2022

<sup>17</sup> Brandon Zachery, 'DC and Marvel Superheroes Vs. the Police May Be 2022's Most Important Fight' 2022 CBR <<https://www.cbr.com/dc-and-marvel-superheroes-fighting-police-2022/>> accessed 3rd May 2022

Vigilantism is often understood to mean to “take the law into one’s own hands” in common parlance and scholarly studies on this phenomenon has existed since the nineteenth century. It is a reaction which stems out of an attitude of distrust between the state and its machinery and its citizens<sup>18</sup>. Vigilantism maybe defined as any act done by an individual against the wrongdoers in a crime when they are the victim themselves or a witness to that event, involving a disregard for existing state-machinery set in place for the wrongful act and meting out extra-legal punishments, having lost faith in the institution of judiciary. Vigilantism, although is an action or reaction based on the core principle of justice, it goes against the entire established socio-political order of the society. Heroes, being an ideal member of society, often have the strong desire to take matters into their own hand, undermining the state and its machinery to either maintain society’s order or bring about radical changes in how it functions. The problem with this sort of thinking is that it is conflicting between an individual’s conception of justice and how a society should function, as against the common agreement between all the different stakeholders- in the form of state and its regulatory machineries are also challenged, threatening the sustenance of a society.

Real life however, does not have superheroes who makes an appearance in the face of grave injustice and incidence which threaten the collapse of society. What we do have, is the police. The machinery of the state which is responsible for our safety and upholding the law. The flip side of the novel aims of the police machinery is the possibility of the abuse of power given to them the use of excessive violence in order to bring about “justice”. Police brutality is the most common form of vigilantism that we often think of. Police vigilantism is a routine occurrence in countries with inadequate laws or legal mechanism, where various form of discrimination is present, where societal and class inequalities are also stark. Police are law enforcement officers who are entrusted with power and the responsibility to maintain law and order but often people within the system themselves, are deeply unsatisfied by how it works. Custodial deaths, encounter killings, custodial violence etc. are forms of police torture, endemic to India. In fact, they are an integral part of policing culture, but not limited to India. The United States of American has been seen in the limelight several dozens of times on account of its high rates of police brutality often in connection with other form of societal evils like racism, class inequality etc., evidenced by the most recent case of the murder of George Floyd by a cop and the out pour of anger and solidarity to end racial bias as evidenced by the slogan ‘black

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<sup>18</sup> Parika Bhardwaj and Virinda, ‘Understanding The concept of Vigilantism in India’ (2018) 6 *Supremo Amicus* 290 <<https://supremoamicus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/A31.pdf>> accessed May 1, 2022

lives matter' and police brutality. The counter movement of 'blue lives matter' advocating non-violence against law officers. In India, even though high rates of police violence is prevalent, it is often state enabled and even publicly supported in many cases. Torture is treated as a necessary rite of passage to initiate new officers into 'real and practical' policing. Former DGP N.C. Asthana believes that there is perpetuation of such police practices because there hardly exists any deterrent, punishment mechanism against such actions and secondly that police power is also wide and unchecked, and often incentivized by the state in the form of gallantry and promotions of those officer who conduct such operations of encounter killings<sup>19</sup>, and media praise by terming such officers as 'encounter specialists', making its "coercive arm, that is the police, can kill you anytime anywhere"<sup>20</sup>. This mechanism of incentivization was put to a stop by a judgement of the Supreme Court in a 2014 judgement. However, despite there being such directives, there has not been much of an improvement. N.C. Asthana also sheds light on how the culture of violent policing is not only taught but is also expected of the new recruits who join the police force. Extrajudicial killings, termed as encounter killings in India are supposed to be an act of self-defense when a suspect or criminal turn violent and hostile towards the police and they find their lives to be in danger. However, it most commonly used as an excuse by the police to take matters into their own hands, to bring about 'justice' in a more efficient, speedier manner, going against the principles of due process and rule of law. Most recent controversial incidence of encounter killing is that of the death of Vikas Dubey, who had a track record of being a highly sought after criminal, by the Uttar Pradesh police. Public reactions to these encounter killings have been conflicted with concerns of abuse of human rights in the hands of the police and support for a speedy justice measure<sup>21</sup>. However, there are several who allude such police reaction and pop culture and its depiction of police as hero and savior of society has a lot to do with it. Just like in the movies, in real life, rogue with utter disregard to legal mechanism in place, based on self-declared sense of morality and justice readily adopts, as they have done in the past, the very tactics which our heroic police officer, Singham uses to settle matters, discard political opposition and punish those who do

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<sup>19</sup> Tarini Mehta, 'Vikas Dubey and the problem of 'encounter killings' in India' *The Diplomat* (July 17, 2022) <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/vikas-dubey-and-the-problem-of-encounter-killings-in-india/> accessed May 1, 2022

<sup>20</sup> N.C. Asthana, 'Why police Brutality and Torture Are Endemic in India' *The Wire* (December 13, 2022) <https://thewire.in/government/why-police-brutality-and-torture-are-endemic-in-india> accessed May 1, 2022

<sup>21</sup> Beatrice Jauregui, 'Just War- The Metaphysics of police Vigilantism in India' (2015) *Conflict and Society*, Vol 1  
<[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299997329\\_Just\\_War\\_The\\_Metaphysics\\_of\\_Police\\_Vigilantism\\_in\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299997329_Just_War_The_Metaphysics_of_Police_Vigilantism_in_India)> accessed May 1 2022

not give in to extortion or stand up for their rights, posing a threat to the existence of the innocent. Data shows over a thousand instances of extra-judicial killings between 2002 and 2013 which Uttar Pradesh leading among all the other states in India.

Subjective morality and an idealistic sense of justice without any legal bounds is bound to be catastrophic for the society just as much as laws without any moral backing is destined to do the same. If a broken justice system is the reason for extra-judicial killings and police brutality, there is a need to attempt to fix the system. Loopholes in the criminal justice system need to be fixed, and trust in the state machinery must be restored. Lastly, discussions about police reformation must be prioritised and acts that deviate from the rule of law and due process must be discouraged and penalised. In conclusion, unchecked vigilantism is a threat to society and is counter-intuitive to the very purpose of the phenomenon.