



## Unmasking Toxic Masculinity: Deconstructing Gender Narratives in Bollywood Songs

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### ABSTRACT

Bollywood songs has a big impact on Indian culture, shaping people's beliefs and behaviors. This effect also extends to how women are portrayed; a number of well-known item songs have been criticized for having lyrics that dehumanize women. These songs successfully reduce women to sexual objects by emphasizing their attractiveness, sensuality, and appeal. The damaging assumptions that are promoted by this objectification help to normalize the idea that women are primarily objects of desire. It is important to recognize that different people will understand these lyrics differently, and that the backdrop of the entertainment industry as a whole and society awareness have a big role in how these lyrics are received. The need for more responsible and respectful depiction of women in Bollywood has come to light in recent years, and a few artists and filmmakers have made an effort to address these concerns.

**Keywords:** Bollywood, Item Songs, Gender Roles, Masculinity, Objectification, Society etc.

Bollywood songs are an important part of Indian popular culture that often express societal attitudes and values. Still, there has been a growing backlash against the way that many Bollywood songs depict toxic masculinity in recent years. The detrimental and constrictive expectations that males should adhere to traditional gender roles—such as the notion that men should be aggressive, domineering, and emotionally repressed—are collectively referred to as toxic masculinity. This paper will examine the harmful effects that toxic masculinity may have on women and society at large, as well as how it is depicted in Bollywood music.

**Bollywood Songs' Portrayal of Toxic Masculinity:** Objectifying and sexualizing women is a common way Bollywood songs depict toxic masculinity. Bollywood music videos and lyrics often depict women as objects of desire that men should pursue. Women are frequently seen dancing provocatively, wearing skimpy attire, and having sex with males. These representations support the notion that males have the right to rule and control women's bodies and that women exist only for the pleasure of men.

Men are portrayed as aggressive and violent in Bollywood songs, which is another way that toxic masculinity is represented. Bollywood music videos and lyrics frequently promote violence, especially towards women. Men are portrayed as being strong and powerful, and the capacity to exercise domination over others is frequently associated with being a man. The notion that males need to be violent and aggressive in order to be seen as "real men" is strengthened by this.

Bollywood songs often show males as emotionally repressed, which is another way that toxic masculinity is portrayed. The lyrics and music videos of many Bollywood songs prevent males from expressing their feelings, especially those of vulnerability and sensitivity. Men's emotional health is frequently associated with their strong, tough personas which also says that you are not a "real man" unless you have repressed your emotions.

**Negative Impact of Toxic Masculinity in Bollywood Songs:**

The perpetuation of toxic masculinity in Bollywood songs can have a negative impact on women and society as a whole. Firstly, it reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates gender inequality. The objectification and sexualization of women in Bollywood songs reinforce the idea that women exist solely for the pleasure of men, and that men have a right to control and dominate women's bodies. This perpetuates gender inequality and reinforces harmful gender stereotypes.

Secondly, the glorification of violence in Bollywood songs can have a negative impact on women's safety. When men are portrayed as being aggressive and violent, it can make women feel unsafe and vulnerable. This can lead to a culture of fear and intimidation, which can make it difficult for women to assert their rights and participate fully in society.

Thirdly, the portrayal of men as emotionally repressed can have a negative impact on men's mental health. Men are often socialized to believe that expressing their emotions is a sign of weakness, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This can have a negative impact on men's mental health and wellbeing.

Here are some common themes of misogyny found in some Indian songs:

**Objectification and Sexualization:** Songs that objectify women, treating them as mere objects of desire, often focusing on their physical appearance or sexual appeal.

**Normalization of Violence:** Songs that portray violence against women as acceptable or even romanticize it.

**Stereotypical Gender Roles:** Songs that reinforce traditional gender roles, portraying women as submissive, dependent, or in need of protection.

**Blaming and Shaming:** Songs that blame women for various societal issues or portray them in a negative light, contributing to victim-blaming culture.

**Disrespectful Language:** Songs that use derogatory language or slurs to refer to women.

**Invasion of Privacy:** Songs that invade a woman's privacy or glorify stalking behaviours.

**Dismissal of Consent:** Songs that downplay the importance of consent in romantic or sexual interactions.

**Promotion of Double Standards:** Songs that promote different standards of behaviour for men and women, often holding women to stricter moral codes.

Item Song Name	Movie	YouTube Views (approx.)
"Munni Badnaam Hui"	Dabangg	Over 200 million
"Sheila Ki Jawani"	Tees Maar Khan	Over 100 million
"Fevicol Se"	Dabangg 2	Over 600 million
"Chikni Chameli"	Agneepath	Over 300 million
"Baby Doll"	Ragini MMS 2	Over 200 million
"Laila Main Laila"	Raees	Over 200 million

Please keep in mind that the interpretation of song lyrics can vary from person to person, and what one person considers objectification, another might perceive differently. Here is an analysis of the lyrics of the songs in question:

"Munni Badnaam Hui" from Dabangg: This song contains lyrics that describe the female character (Munni) in a suggestive and objectifying manner. The lyrics emphasize her physical appearance and dance moves, often in a manner that reduces her to a sexual object.

"Sheila Ki Jawani" from Tees Maar Khan: The lyrics of this song focus on a woman (Sheila) flaunting her body and dancing seductively. The lyrics objectify her by emphasizing her sensuality and desirability.

"Fevicol Se" from Dabangg 2: The lyrics of this song make references to a woman's "fevicol-like" physique, suggesting that she's so attractive that she sticks in one's mind like glue. This can be seen as objectifying by reducing a woman to her physical attributes.

"Chikni Chameli" from Agneepath: The lyrics of this song describe a woman (Chameli) in sexual terms, using phrases like "chikni" (meaning smooth) to highlight her physical appeal. The song objectifies the woman by emphasizing her attractiveness.

"Baby Doll" from Ragini MMS 2: This song contains lyrics that compare the female character to a "baby doll" and describe her as "sizzling." These descriptions focus on her appearance and sensuality, contributing to the objectification of women.

"Laila Main Laila" from Raees: The lyrics of this song contain suggestive and objectifying references to the female character (Laila). They emphasize her seductive qualities and sensuality.

It's important to note that objectification in song lyrics can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to the normalization of viewing women primarily as objects of desire. However, it's also important to consider that Bollywood songs often exist within the context of the broader entertainment industry, which has been critiqued for its portrayal of women. While some songs objectify women, others aim to empower and celebrate them. Viewer interpretation and societal context play a significant role in how these lyrics are received.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for more responsible and respectful representation of women in Bollywood, and some filmmakers and artists have made efforts to address these issues in their work.

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## Conclusion:

Toxic masculinity is a pervasive problem in many societies, and Bollywood songs are no exception. The objectification and sexualization of women, the glorification of violence, and the portrayal of men as emotionally repressed all contribute to a culture of toxic masculinity that can have negative consequences for women and society as a whole. It is important for Bollywood to take steps to address this issue by creating songs that promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender stereotypes. By doing so, Bollywood can play a positive role in promoting a more just and equitable society.

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