



From Tube Top to Dupatta, Which Feminism Is Mine?

Lavanya Dahiya, Interdisciplinary Research Platform, Digital Humanities, Indian Institute of Technology, India,
lavanya.lavanyadahiya@gmail.com

Technological determinism and its contestational dialectic with social-cultural realms have reified that technologies are not passive apolitical tools but radical interactive systems modifying human cognition (Dascal 2006). In contemporary times, the institutionalization of content creation on social media platforms like YouTube has provided an independent space for content but also facilitated digital social spaces where offline misogyny and sexism are regularly reproduced. Scholars have analyzed how societal internalization of such systemic gendered processes—including promoting normative identities, policing women, and crafting hegemonic masculinity and femininity—is operationalized through parasocial relationships in and on social media platforms (Chen 2014). However, there is relatively sparse scholarship on how the nature of gendered polarization in the digital age distinguishes offline and online cultures, especially in the Global South. Bookended by digital humanities on one hand, and politics of popular music on the other, this project unpacks how intersectional identities are mediated through dominant cultural productions on digital platforms. This project critically analyzes the video aesthetics, lyrics, and extracted comments built around the music video “Lahu Di Awaaj” by Simiran Kaur Dhadli. The 1.3 million views on the song, alongside the content of reactionary videos, brings forth the production and reproduction of the dominant culture, as well as the positionality of women in our society. Using digital ethnography as a research methodology, this project highlights how the new media spaces contribute to cybercultures through what I would like to call existing techno-habitus. It further shows how, in a patriarchal society like ours, misogyny is operationalized in new media platforms with respect to the Punjabi diaspora.

Le déterminisme technologique et sa dialectique contestataire avec les domaines socioculturels ont réaffirmé que les technologies ne sont pas des outils apolitiques passifs, mais des systèmes interactifs radicaux modifiant la cognition humaine (Dascal 2006). À l'époque contemporaine, l'institutionnalisation de la création de contenu sur les plateformes de médias sociaux comme YouTube a fourni un espace indépendant pour le contenu, mais a également facilité les espaces sociaux numériques où la misogynie et le sexisme hors ligne sont régulièrement reproduits. Des chercheurs ont analysé la manière dont l'internalisation sociétale de ces processus sexistes systémiques—y compris la promotion d'identités normatives, le maintien de l'ordre chez les femmes



et la création d'une masculinité et d'une féminité hégémoniques—est mise en œuvre par le biais de relations parasociales dans et sur les plates-formes de médias sociaux (Chen 2014). Cependant, il y a relativement peu d'études sur la façon dont la nature de la polarisation sexuée à l'ère numérique distingue les cultures hors ligne et en ligne, en particulier dans le Sud global. S'inscrivant dans le cadre des humanités numériques d'une part, et des politiques de la musique populaire d'autre part, ce projet analyse la manière dont les identités intersectionnelles sont médiatisées par les productions culturelles dominantes sur les plateformes numériques. Ce projet analyse de manière critique l'esthétique de la vidéo, les paroles et les commentaires extraits de la vidéo musicale « Lahu Di Awaaj » de Simiran Kaur Dhadli. Les 1,3 millions de vues de la chanson, ainsi que le contenu des vidéos réactionnaires, mettent en évidence la production et la reproduction de la culture dominante, ainsi que la position des femmes dans notre société. En utilisant l'ethnographie numérique comme méthodologie de recherche, ce projet met en évidence la manière dont les nouveaux espaces médiatiques contribuent aux cybercultures par le biais de ce que j'aimerais appeler le techno-habitus existant. Il montre en outre comment, dans une société patriarcale comme la nôtre, la misogynie est rendue opérationnelle dans les nouvelles plateformes médiatiques en ce qui concerne la diaspora pendjabie.

I Introduction

With a constant curiosity of locating “social facts” in influencing human action, I found myself interested in the voice echoing from my earphones. Unlike any other form of expression, music, art, and lyrics have a way of communicating to the culture in a specific, powerful way. Music is not merely a form of entertainment, but also a reflection of the socio-cultural realities of society. Music and local culture share a reciprocal relationship. While the local culture influences the content of a song, the latter also shapes the behaviour, views, and attitudes of people. We learn to be a part of society through processes of socialization, becoming part of a group, or a situation, and instructing people on what is expected of them by ensuring particular norms and practices, which account for the social control in society. In this digital age, media consumption and popular culture play a significant role in the narrative formation and monitoring of societal norms and values.

This project explores the patriarchal underpinning of Punjabi culture created by a Punjabi singer, composer, and lyricist in the Punjabi entertainment industry. This project is a pilot study of a music video titled “Lahu Di Awaaj” (“Voice of the Blood”) by the artist Simiran Kaur Dhadli, where she laments women uncovering their bodies, praises modest Punjabi women, and frames her displeasure with “immodesty” in a threatening manner. For instance, one lyric from the chorus states, “*Marja dubb ke jisam dikha ke paise vatt di ae,*” which translates to “Go! Die by drowning; you earn money by revealing your body” (Dhadli 2021, 4:05).

Using the official music video, its lyrics, and comments, followed by a similar analysis and engagement with reactionary videos on YouTube, my paper navigates how popular Punjabi songs produced for entertainment are also an ideological construct.

II Rationale

Even though there are quite a few songs that represent, reproduce, and reinforce gender disparities and foster the internalization of long-standing male hegemonic cultural beliefs, the reason I choose this particular song and artiste is because it portrays (i) the stereotype of an “ideal woman” who is sexually passive, nurturing, altruistic, and submissive, and (ii) the internalized misogyny remediated by a woman artiste herself.

From the debates I followed and came across, the artiste Simiran gained popularity and limelight because a Hindi cinema/Bollywood actor (namely, Vicky Kaushal) made a video on one of her songs (“Barood Wargi”). Such exposure not only draws audience to the artiste, but because of controversial topics like feminism and nudity being debated, it gives them and their work a new life.

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How are characteristics of a patriarchal society, like misogyny, operationalized in new media platforms with respect to the Punjabi diaspora through social media circulation and production?
2. What is the nature of gendered polarization in the digital age that distinguishes offline and online cultures, especially in the Global South?
3. How do digital spaces contribute to cybercultures?

By addressing these questions, I hope to analyze digital participation with one of the most critical online debates today, *feminism*. Further, studying popular music helps us understand how popular music creates an audience “as a people, as a web of identities” (Frith 2007, 306). “The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over multiplicities, bodies, movements, desires, forces” (Foucault 1980, 74); thus, it is interesting to unpack how the discourse around one music video contributes to the formation of hegemonic structures inside the existing techno-habitus, which not only portrays a particular image of women, but also generates a specific knowledge and cultural order that regulates their conduct. I intend to contribute to research in and of networked technologies through social media platforms, as they are a constant source of power and knowledge.

These research questions allow us to understand the mechanization of power that makes way for *techno-habitus*. Inspired by Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, I use techno-habitus to refer to habitus specifically in terms of the networked world. Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically constructed; the main way in which it is operationalized is through socialized norms that guide behaviour and thinking. Thus, a “habitus” is created, a social process that is created and reproduced unconsciously. Bourdieu defines habitus as a set of socially learned dispositions, tendencies, skills, and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Through such systems of dispositions, people in particular environments also reproduce the very objective structural condition of which they are a product. It is the physical embodiment of cultural capital, to deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions we possess due to our life experiences (Powercube 2011). Techno-habitus is created by digital media forms that enable one to share videos and music and create content to explore the artistic side of one’s personality, while simultaneously contributing to the discreteness of culture around a video. If not reproduction, then individuals’ dispositions serve as an extension of existing structural conditions they are products of, thus ending up in the creation of a powerful discourse in and on digital spaces.

II Statement of ethics

I believe taking YouTube as a new media platform offering a space for public discussion around multiple discourses allows me to locate the discrete, distinct culture that prevails around my chosen music video and its content. The digital artifact is available on a social media platform and legally published under a particular channel, making it an open-source material/artifact to be looked at. The originality of my project lies at the intersection of the sociological imagination and recently developed insights with respect to data. The digital spatiality of my database and its surrounding gaze highlights the freedom netizens have in expressing their opinion and beliefs, enabling others to raise/express opinions on the same.

The internet can both restrict and empower citizens who use it. The idea of a digital public sphere is different from a physical one. *Public spaces* are mediated by civil society. How *embodiment* and *situatedness* vary in digital public spaces, constituting the internet as a platform for social change or hopeless fragmentation, is something this project attempts to locate. This project keeps in mind decoding the conversations via comments around a music video. Being in the age of an information society, where having a rationale based on just information is not enough, the media tends to operate as a larger structure shaping public opinion, driving forces of democracy amplifying the voices. It is not only important to have access to democratized knowledge, but also to locate the expansion of that knowledge. I understand that my *situated knowledge* (Haraway 1988, 581) exists while contextualizing the video. I intend to hold deontological ethics in each situation and action, justifying my moral understanding. My actions are done with the right motive, in the right manner, and with a good intention to understand the techno-habitus of digital platforms.

YouTube and other self-publication websites are potential data sources for many disciplines. YouTube being a public forum, people expect to be seen by strangers (Berger 2012, 3). While there are concerns whether data accessible on public platforms can be used for research, in my scenario, all the data are posted by public figures—musicians, their followers, and vloggers. All content is being uploaded on their social media platform and is less likely to be problematic in terms of ethical concerns because this data is intended to reach as wide an audience as possible (Townsend and Wallace 2016, 14). Given the size of the audience, I (the researcher) am unlikely to pose any harm to the channels and individuals whose content I have accessed. The content of reactionary videos and their comments are decided on the basis of usage of phrases such as “in my opinion,” “my views on the song,” etc., followed by positive affirmations with reference to the song’s narrative. Many vloggers have stated in their videos that they are responding to audience requests to make reactionary videos. There is no quoting

of direct responses/comments from any user, and anonymity has been maintained while referring to any specific comment. Given users reflect their opinions and are a reflection of what they portray on social media, their opinion about the issue is decided on the face-value of their response posted on social media. Qualitative research as such enables researchers to generate rich metadata corpora about subjects of human interest. As a researcher of digital cultural artifacts examining ethical relationships, I am maintaining a multiverse of perspectives and opinions. I have properly cited all the articles and research papers to which I have referred to understand how different cultural forms are rooted in modes of representation. Being in the public domain, the accessibility and reusability of my data allow for grounded analysis and interpretation. Data provenance and documentation of datasets can be easily retraced. I intend to use this public data in a fair manner for my academic research, keeping in mind the digital space and identity of users and artists.

III Methodology and tools

(a) Digital ethnography

Our social worlds are going digital. (Kozinets 2006, 1)

To understand the current society and its relationships, it is necessary to understand social activities on the internet and other technologically mediated communication. This is purely passive, digital, ethnographic-based research that is exhaustive and complete in itself. This research shows how knowledge is reproduced through virtual discourses among members of online communities (Hemetsberger and Reinhardt 2006).

My previous academic training in sociology has allowed me to understand how ethnography provides analytical depth for qualitative research. Unlike traditional ethnography, this project explores the “field” through digital ethnography. Digital ethnography involves analyzing social constructions of cultural life through online virtual worlds (Boellstorff et al. 2012). Platforms such as YouTube bring forth an exclusive and unique space for both researcher and the subject/conversationists without fear of extrinsic interference. Passive digital ethnography (in this particular case) offers a way to go beyond the existing academia and traditional disciplines, allowing one to seek out how knowledge is produced and developed about social realities that might otherwise be invisible. Approaching the field as an ordinary user with an interest in patriarchal ideology and its manifestation, I am using an inductive approach to make sense of data collected and generated. Bookended by digital humanities scholarship on one hand and sociology of gender on another, I try to unpack the intersectional identities that are

mediated through dominant cultural productions on digital platforms. The 1.5k views on the song and the video aesthetics, lyrics, extracted comments, and reactionary videos bring forth the production and reproduction of the dominant culture and place of women in our society. I approached the field as an ordinary user interested in patriarchal ideology.

Rather than rendering music videos and their reactionary video content as multimodal texts, a digital ethnographic view enables me to contextualize cultural practice on YouTube (Hine 2000; Varis 2016). In contemporary times, the institutionalization of content creation on social media platforms like YouTube has provided an independent space for content, but also facilitated online sites where offline misogyny and sexism are regularly reproduced. The ways a culture defines masculinity and femininity lead to expectations about how individual women and men should act and communicate, and how individual communication establishes meanings of gender that, in turn, influence cultural views. The YouTube zone of unlimited freedom, boundaries of cyberspace, and real life are interwoven—the digital identity and its construction are mediated by the set cultural values and practices.

I have conducted digital ethnography on the digital platform YouTube around one particular music video. YouTube is a space where all activities commercial, governmental, educational, and entertainment exist. It allows digital self-representation, interactions, and complex cultures to exist in one space (Chen 2014, 2; Burgess and Green 2009; Cheung 2000; Green and Jenkins 2009). The types of data used for this research are a music video and its lyrics, its comments, and the reactionary videos for the song and their comments. By doing so, I am trying to analyze how a larger audience/consumers maintain a parasocial relationship with a social media celebrity. Scholars from interdisciplinary research platforms such as digital humanities are concerned with parasocial relationships because they help us to understand the interactions in and around digital spaces, and by extension, the larger culture that is at play.

(b) Digitality and its nuances

Just as an individual enters into the processes of socialization, similarly one enters into relationships, structures, and institutions mediated by and through digital spaces. Thus, once you engage with technological objects and digital space, you enter into the conditions of “digitality” (Figure 1). New media platforms such as YouTube offer us a way to study “digitality” as a subject, where all cultural objects are being conceived as “digital” objects. This multidisciplinary research examines the internet and digitality as a research environment, which ethnologists call the “field.” It emphasizes digitality itself as making and developing things that help in the understanding of digital

cultures. Thus, for a sociologist, “digital” is all three: an object, a concept/method, and a space. It is an object of study that requires conceptual understanding according to changing times/realities and a space that is a site of social relations. It is as much a site of inquiry as it is a space of analysis. Thus, acknowledging the axis of digitality and humanities (Östman and Turtiainen 2016) constructs a research narrative with a focus on all four aspects—the technical deployment, the theoretical, and understanding digitality as a subject, as well as a tool. Digitality here would specifically focus on the digital affordances in specific post-colonial contexts as well.

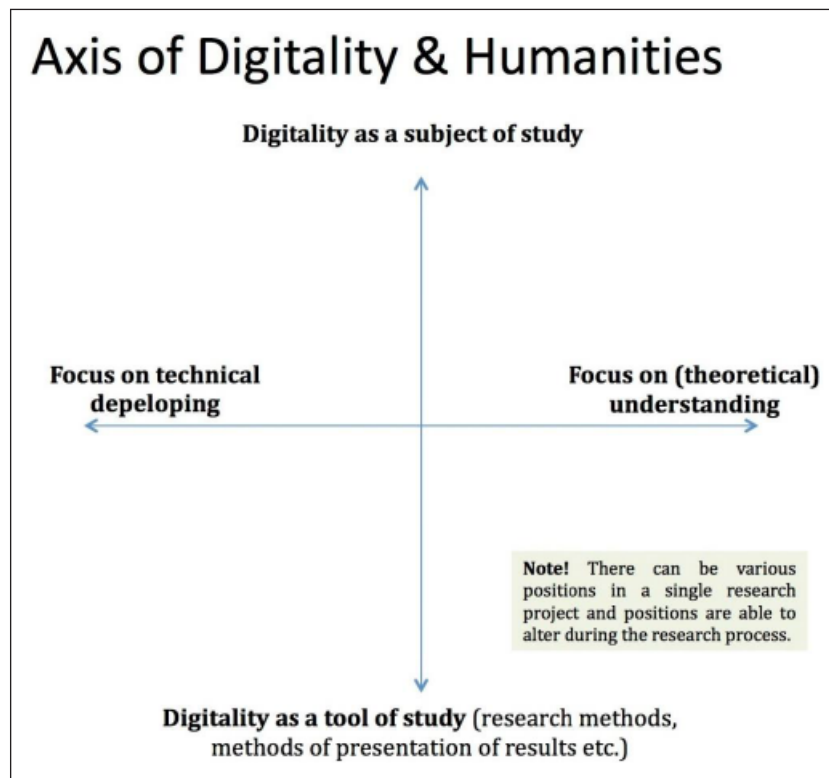


Figure 1: Model for positioning yourself among digital humanities research (Haverinen and Suominen [2015], quoted in Östman and Turtiainen 2016).

We understand the social construction of cultural life through virtual engagement/worlds, which is a significant part of digital ethnography (Boellstorff et al. 2012). Platforms such as YouTube bring forth an exclusive and unique space for both researcher and the subject/conversationists without fear of extrinsic interference. Passive digital ethnography (in this particular case) offers a way to go beyond the existing academia and traditional disciplines, allowing one to seek out how knowledge is produced and developed about social realities that might otherwise be invisible. The digital contexts

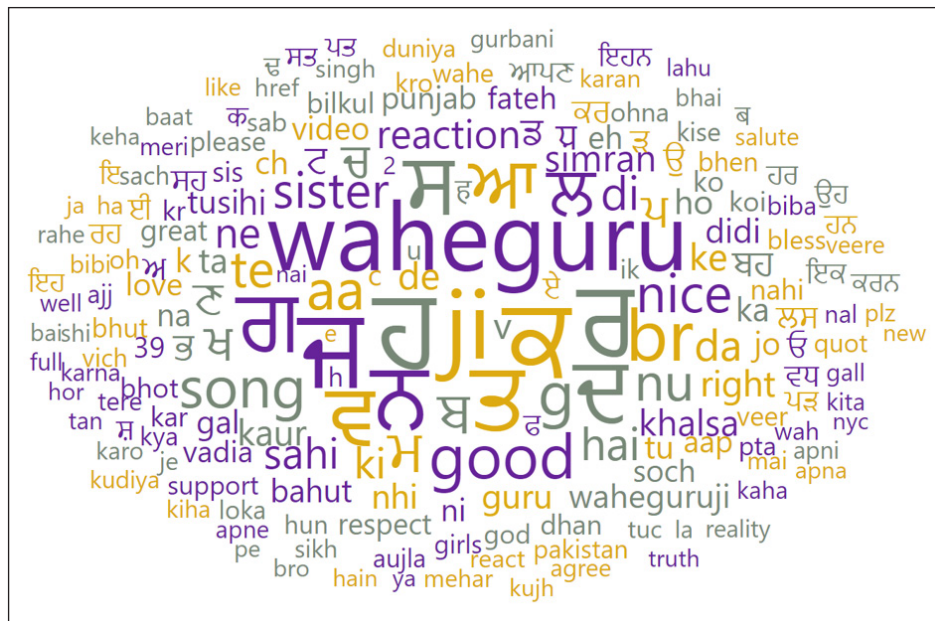


Figure 4: Combined word cloud of comments under reactionary video, generated through Orange.



Figure 5: Combined word cloud of comments under reactionary video, generated through Voyant.

IV Analysis

(a) Narrative(s) of/by "Lahu Di Awaaj"

This section deals with translation of the Punjabi lyrics synchronized video content into English. My positionality as an Indian scholar and diversity in cultural experiences have made me proficient in understanding the content of the song. Thus, the translation has been done thoroughly by me without any loss of content or its intent in the process of translation.

The singer commences the song by narrating her dream, in which she is visited by several girls dressed in typical traditional Punjabi attire who are asking something that she cannot understand. The girls look down towards the floor as soon as they see their brother approaching. They are instructed to return home before dark. Their father inquires about the reason for their late arrival. The girls do not argue and remain silent. While describing the artiste's dream, the video shows the visuals of Punjabi girls and women wearing traditional attire while engaging in activities typically associated with traditional gender roles. With this description, the artiste's dream ends, and she wakes up to a world that she calls *kali-yuga* or *kalyug* (the age of darkness). With this age, the simplicity that the artiste is dreaming of becomes dirt on one's shoes. The Kalyug is the last epoch in the cyclical timeline of cosmic or divine ages in Hinduism. The yuga cycle represents life stages in the universe into four parts—the Satya Yuga, the Treta Yuga, the Dwapara Yuga, and the Kaliyuga. *Kaliyug*, also known as Kalyug, is believed to be an age of spiritual decline, moral decay, and overall deterioration of human values. The social fabric deteriorates the respect for elders, traditional values, and societal norms. The video depicts kalyug as women wearing (short) clothes of their choice, uploading rather "obscene" pictures on social media, and asserting their sexual agency. Today's world is shown through Instagram-feed scantily clad women (Kang 2021). The artiste wonders where the world is headed and pleads to God with folded hands to give it some sense. The artiste labels the girls "mentally sick" who strip their clothes for fame. The artiste is extremely angry with feminists and challenges them to meet her once. She argues that "my pen always writes for the girls/women who bear good moral 'character'" (Nancy 2022, 132). She argues that these women will not be able to endure even a single blow from her, and that such women are called out to be "wicked" or "profane" or "mischievous" in our Punjabi culture. Further, the video also has iconic Sikh women who fought on the battlefields fiercely and wives of Sikh gurus; she shows through lyrics and visual imagery how an "ideal" woman should be. One of the initial apparent observations of the song is the difference in the perception of the audience regarding the song, women in the song, and the issues it brings forward. For some, the song is rooting for Punjabi culture as opposed to the "nudity" or "erotica." For some, the song is merely slut-shaming of women.

Further, the videography makes sure to mention instances (Archana 2019) from real life where women falsely accused men, and "feminism" (quote unquote) as a movement is portrayed in a way to drive all the "meninists" to get angry, bash, and slut-shame women. Additionally, the artiste fails to address men in the industry who feature such women in their videos. The irony lies in the fact that the same men who sexualize women through their video songs are now posting stories praising "Lahu

Di Awaaj.” One such artist is popularly known as Yo Yo Honey Singh, an India music producer, rapper, singer, and songwriter. He is one of the artists who gained popularity in a short span of time, with millions of views on his content on every social media platform. Most of his songs through which he got famous portray women as objects of male voyeurism (Nancy 2022, 138). His music videos often show women wearing short clothes and are sexist and misogynistic in nature. He became a reference point for many netizens since he praised Dhadli by saying, “*More power to this Sherni [lioness]*” (Punjabi Punter 2021, 2:24), but then deleted the story because of being called out as a hypocrite. Such aspects make the socio-cultural discourse even more complicated because it acts as the proliferation of mainstream patriarchal conversations in digital spaces.

The artiste, without a shadow of a doubt, blames women for portraying themselves as objects and oversexualizing their bodies without once pointing to the male gaze that dominates such cultures in the first place. Whenever a woman misbehaves, commits a crime, or engages in adultery, feminists are questioned. For instance, in a clip of a real-life incident in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, a woman beat a taxi driver with no fault of the latter (as reported). Now even though on social media no “feminists” and netizens in general stood up for the girl or defended her actions, the event sparked a debate online against feminists. Often in such cases, the word “feminism” has been brought on by the public to critique women and the feminist movement. In real life or the digital one, women and the ones who advocate their rights are in question rather than addressing one’s own unconscious misogyny. It is essential to question intersectional identities (especially in the Indian context, seeing its layered forms of stratifications), not only to understand the power of Slacktivism, but also to locate accountability that lies in front of feminists being left to defend every wrongdoing, every action, and behaviour of all women (whether online or in real life). Online activism, frequently manifested as mere voicing of opinions, posting of comments, and “liking” certain groups and causes, may have been criticized as not having enough value; however, it does make the participant feel good about themselves, because of their engagement in addressing the important political and social matters. This engagement not only serves as a light form of commitment towards social norms and practices, but also brings social acknowledgement by contributing to discussion about social and political movements (Skoric 2012, 83).

(b) Aftermath and what it signifies: What should feminism “look like”?

This project offered significant insights into gender power relations and identity construction in a patriarchal Punjabi society. The central video includes militant and

modest images of Dhadli, modest images of Punjabi women who avert their gaze respectfully in front of men, and beatific images of Sikh and Punjabi heroes and gurus. They substantially take the majority of run time, with which there is a careful execution of women engaging in pornographic-adjacent material on social media with their faces blurred or cropped. This accounts for a dichotomy between the portrayal of women: one who is under the direct control of the male patriarch and another who lives in the age of technology. The artiste believes modern women are degrading the culture of Punjab by not adhering to older cultural norms. She portrays perfect patriarchal ideas through her song. Popular Punjabi music in general echoes womanhood with patriarchal biases (Nancy 2022, 13). There is an inherent binary of a “good” and “bad” woman. If you are traditional, covering your whole body, sexually passive, obedient, and living by the “standards” set by society (Sharma 2021), you are a “good” and an “ideal” woman. If you claim agency/autonomy of your body and are sexually active and independent, then you are going against the set norms and regulations, and thus you are a woman with no respect or character. Images and videos in music videos taken without the consent of women add to the complexities of the issue. One popular social media influencer, Meethi Kalher, also filed a copyright claim on her video (Nath 2021), after which YouTube deleted the video. Dhadli then reposted just the audio file of the song.

Many other influencers like these raised their voices and reported Dhadli’s account on Instagram. As a result, her account was deleted. I gathered all stated information not through any articles, opinion pieces, or YouTube reactionary videos, but rather by doing a distant reading of the 4,000 comments under the video where the discussion was in the tone of *No one could do anything about Simiran, she is so brave, bold*. What is even more interesting to see for me as a researcher was that there was not a single straightforward negative comment cancelling her, or the song. She is raising her voice in support of the rigid, traditional, hegemonic structure of society. She is speaking about something everyone is waiting to criticize and bash on online forums and platforms. Even after being reported, the video still exists online. Because it’s the truth (the harsh reality one must accept) that the reactionary videos were all in support of the arguments raised by the artiste, however, there were only two reactionary videos that were emphasizing enough about how the artiste misunderstood feminism as a movement.

Another interesting component to look at is the cloud generated by the tool Orange on emoticons (**Figure 6**). When we convert it and make it understandable, we can understand the semiotics of emoticons, and their usage in different habitus enhances social relations by strengthening communication within these platforms. The semantic contribution of emoticons is dependent on the adjacent text contributed to deciding the value/emotions users/audience feels. Since emoticons are the lingua franca of

netizens, it is important to observe the patterns and networks of various emoticons through digital technology and data visualization. The emoticons further highlight positive feedback and support. The techno-habitus that is being built around the video and the word cloud of the comment analysis show how traditional heteronormative ideas are legitimized in and on digital spaces validating their male subjects. The deep-rooted misogyny can be seen through the analysis of the comments, where I did not find one straightforward negative comment. The Gurmukhi transcript in the word cloud highlights that the culture around it is so much more than just the network built around it.

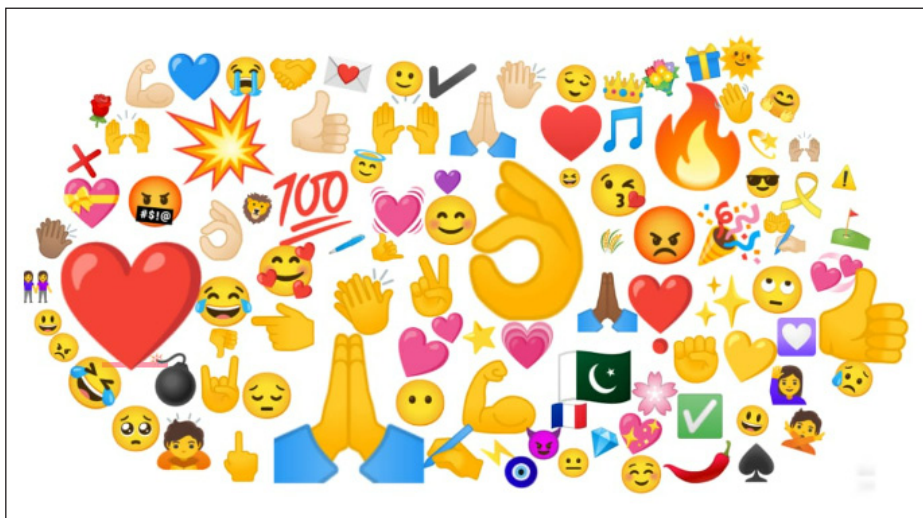


Figure 6: Cloud emoticons.

The artiste herself boldly manifests her Punjabi diaspora, which is further supported by the word cloud generated through reactionary videos (where the word “Waheguru” is used most of the time). She portrays herself as strong and fierce, matching the passion/sentiment of the song. She does show how women who dress simply in a traditional sense are appreciated by all.

Through the clothes one woman wears, she shows how uptight her ideas are, and how well she respects herself, her family, and her religion. The way the artiste tries to portray herself in this music video (Figure 6) is quite different from the aesthetics she builds in other music videos. It will perhaps be interesting to see how the audience would react to a song like “Lahu Di Awaaj” when the artiste is wearing western clothes, track suit, and bold lipstick. Through this, we can infer the importance of a *dupatta* in a woman’s life. As the lyrics say, “*Paaye suit bootiyan wale, gal vich chunniyan si* [Wearing suits with boots with a dupatta in neck]” (Dhadhli 2021, 0:15). Women are

obligated to wear traditional Indian attire because of inherent social and cultural norms. Our society is predominantly patriarchal, and wearing traditional clothes means protecting and maintaining the honour of the family. The emphasis on wearing suits with a *dupatta*, the attire of the artiste herself, signifies respecting the traditional socio-cultural norms. Thus, in the title of my paper, I bring this emphasis on clothes in the foreground. A tube top, a bikini, or a dupatta and saree—what piece of cloth/attire would define feminism? In a reductionist sense: *Do the clothes one wears define your ideological principles?* By labelling modern women as feminist, the artiste implies that they are immoral. Songs like these strengthen the gender-essentialist assumption, ask women to dress modestly to avoid harassment, and, at large, perpetuate rape culture by blaming women for having agency over their bodies. Such a discourse not only belittles decades of struggles of women to reclaim their bodies, but also justifies rape culture by promoting conservatism.

The *cultures of conversations* initiated through social media song and video production lead to the formation of cultural discourse. The discourse of digital cultures, however small, created on YouTube transcends to other social media platforms as well. The trending hashtags like #LahudiAwaaj and #SimiranKaurDhadli on Twitter added buzz/popularity to the song. The audience calls Simiran to be bold, and fierce, and even with so much criticism, without demoralizing herself, she announced part two of the song. Songs like these establish masculinist perspectives as a cultural standard, rendering women's worldviews invisible and insignificant. They represent, reproduce, and reinforce gender disparities by endorsing patriarchal ideologies. By romanticizing the traditional gender roles, these songs foster misogyny, highlighting gender and power relations of the society initiated through social media song and video production.

V Conclusion

Feminism is many things, but something that is common across cultures and diaspora is the idea of empowerment—empowerment across all identities, be it women of colour, economic independence, eradication of aspects of colonialism for Global south women, women's control over their bodies, and absolute control over their sexuality. As evident from above discussions, the construction of feminism is often misunderstood and distorted by many. The patriarchal ideologies are so much ingrained that even female artists establish masculinist perspectives as a cultural standard. The artiste's YouTube bio also reads she is the “*voice for the woman' and sings songs that uplift the image of women*” (Dhadli 2023, emphasis added). On the contrary, as this paper clearly shows, not only does she fail to uplift the image of women, but she also ends up advocating

behaviour commonly categorized under rape culture, including slut-shaming, victim blaming, and sexual objectification.

The paper explores the relationship built on digital spaces, which are constantly mediated and re-mediated by societal structuration(s). When complex, deep-rooted masculinity and misogyny are operationalized via digital spaces, it grants validation to their male subjects and thus legitimizes the patriarchal society. Through analysis of comments and reactionary videos, I conclude that cyberspaces act as a space for community and connection with similar diasporic backgrounds. Such production compels the new user to adhere to and align their opinions with the larger discourse. It becomes a rather perfect case of virtue signalling and attracting an audience as well. In this age of social media and “woke” culture, feminism has become one of the most controversial debates to get engaged in. An anti-feminist movement has grown in India, where there is a flow of content that argues women take undue advantage of law and norms; women have agency in the current age, and yet they talk about equality (Agarwal, Patel, and Pal 2022). We live in extremely rigid patriarchal society where hashtags like #Maritalrape trends, and girls are being killed for wearing jeans (Pandey 2021); with such a backdrop, media forms such as music videos become mediators of social norms where digital technologies give new means of expression to the manosphere. Youth *operationalizes* these mainstream cultural norms from digital spaces and thus acts as a carrier for the survival of patriarchal ideology.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Christa Avram, The Journal Incubator, University of Lethbridge, Canada

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