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## Cringe worthy symbol of India: Human creativity and neglected emotions in select cringe pop videos

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### **Abstract**

Cringe Pop, a genre of pop music, is a ubiquitous and popular behavior among young pop singers in the contemporary era. There have been numerous reasons for their widespread prominence and penetration into the internet world- constant repetition of their lyrics, trivial entertainment, schandenfreude, low production value and alike. Despite their increasing popularity, there have been limited efforts to examine the reflection of such neglected emotions and their relationship with the behavioral pattern exhibited in the virtual world. In this context, the study targets at investigating the reasons behind superiority of human creativity over logical understanding. The main reason behind every video that goes viral are an innumerable piece of content including reaction videos. While ‘Cringe Pop’ can’t be declared as a trend but every time a new video is declared ‘cringe worthy’ there is an avalanche of content that follows it. Also, the study aims at mapping the ‘disembodied voice beneath the voice of the human soul’ through select cringe videos. As an involuntary motion, cringe videos encourage a kind of mockery of the spectacle. The research aims to examine awkward moments in the Indian cringe pop music videos of Dhinchak Pooja. Involves an awkward or embarrassing situation and it becomes a source of sadistic pleasure for the onlookers. “Cringy” is a feeling of being in an extremely uncomfortable, unpleasant and awkward situation. As an involuntary motion, cringe videos encourage a kind of mockery of the spectacle. Cringe Pop works as people derive sadistic pleasure from seeing the humiliation of others. The main reason behind every video that goes viral are an innumerable piece of content including reaction videos. While ‘Cringe Pop’ can’t be declared as a trend but every time a new video is declared ‘cringe worthy’ there is an avalanche of content that follows it. These videos seem to have penetration on internet and have gained prominence due to the and alike.

**Keywords:** constant repetition, schandenfreude, awkward, penetration, cringe pop

### **1. Introduction**

Awkwardness is when the “you” one presents to the world clashes with the way the world is actually seeing them. It is that feeling which is hard to avoid. It is self-consciousness soaked with uncertainty, in moments both trivial and serious. There is something to be gained in adopting awkwardness and the much irritating feeling can bring people together. Everyone is aware of the concept awkwardness but it is very hard to define in words. A lot of feelings overlap- there’s social anxiety and embarrassment in awkwardness- awkwardness is self-consciousness. We all are really aware of how we are coming off to the world and there’s an obscurity of what to do next. Embarrassment is also a huge part of it too. But if at one time one feels awkward and at the same point of time they cannot feel embarrassed. It is mostly characterized as insignificant, and so it seems adequate to apply the word to matters of greater effect but it’s a feeling worth taken much more seriously than one often does. It is a mandatory moment of self-awareness, and it usually makes you cognizant of the disappointing fact that you aren’t measuring upto your self-concept. Awkwardness is when no one is talking or it’s when one doesn’t know what to do and what not. It is basically a feeling of being uncomfortable where one is often left speechless or is unable to speak. The most passionate advice is to be grateful for this odd little emotion and the power it has to connect us Cullity, J. (2002) [5]. There will always be awkwardness, and the only way to keep it from isolating us if one starts cringing together. It is hard to look at oneself from someone else’s point of view when it means talking in the ways one is not measuring upto the sense of self. But if you can stand it ,seeing yourself through someone else’s eyes can help you move a little closer toward becoming the person you wish you were.

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"If you are not regularly deeply embarrassed by whom we are", the philosopher Aldin De Botton has written, "The journey to self-knowledge hasn't begun". Little humiliation brings people together, if we let them. It's not every-time you do things you want of course sometimes people are looking at you but not to that extend that most of us think. The word "Cringy" describes a feeling that one gets when made to witness an extremely uncomfortable situation. This word "Cringy" comes from the word "Cringe worthy", as in, something that is no awkward and unpleasant that it literally makes you cringe to think about it. It's an involuntary motion that one's body makes when challenged with something gross, awkward or painful. Cringe is a kind of mocking you but at the same time showing some sympathy for you yet there are many bullies who give it a bad use to really mock you in a derisory way. Awkward situations have a purpose: to make us aware of society's expectations and limitations and motivate us to not repeat the same mistake again. Teachman, who studies anxiety disorders, says that "you can imagine how horribly social interactions would go if people had none of those indication to pick on". Clegg states that social awkwardness works as a "social early warning system". His research states that the people of our society pay their attention more towards the social atmosphere during an awkward moment by. But the effects of awkwardness have their limit. Consider those people who find nearly every moment so cringe-worthy that they avoid experiences with a high potential for awkwardness, such as first dates or networking events. "If socially awkward experiences lead one to panic and avoidance, then these experiences can become central to a self-perpetuating pattern of social fear and avoidance.

## **2. Significant elements making cringe pop viral**

These videos gone viral for all the wrong reasons in the year 2017 and we start watching the video out of curiosity and the next ten minutes of our life are cringe worthy. Content that is abhorrent, yet viral. Pop music has now a new genre named 'Cringe Pop.' It includes music and videos that are so bad that you cannot stop watching them. Cringe Pop works because people derive sadistic pleasure from seeing the discomfiture of others. Cringe Pop also works because for every video that goes viral there are numerous pieces of content including reaction videos and inevitable backlashes that follow. In the year 2017 musician, Dhinchak Pooja released her new single 'Selfie Maine Leli Aaj.' In the first two weeks after the release, the video racked up over 9 million views and currently has over 23 million views and a simple keyword search using 'Selfie Maine Leli Aaj Reaction' shows over 18,900 results on YouTube. Cringe Pop has been attaining surveillance worldwide Beaster-Jones, J., & Sarrazin, N. (2016) [4]. Google Trends has also seen huge spikes in the number of searches performed with the keyword. Though 'Cringe Pop' can't be declared as a trend but every time a new video is declared 'cringe worthy' there is a collection of content that follows it. Cringe pop at its core has few components that work in its approbation and helps it to go viral.

## **3. Constant repetition**

Whether it's Taher Shah's Angel or Dhincak Pooja's 'Selfie Maine Leli Aaj' both singles have a simple catchy tune followed with constant repetition of lyrics. American Rapper, Vanilla Ice with his rap song 'Ice Ice Baby' was

among the first singles to use constant repetition. The single was the first hip-hop song to make to top Billboard Hot 100 and which means because of the constantly repetitive lyrics these songs catches the minds of the public.

## **4. Production value**

In Taher Shah's Angel video he is dressed in purple robes and wings. The singer walks around a golf ground, calling himself an angel. Soon, his son and wife also joined him and they also have blonde wigs and hold wands. As a wannabe singer 'Dhinchak Pooja' can't afford the production quality of a popular Bollywood song. The mediocrity when it comes to production value works as an advantage for Cringe Popstars as it exasperate people to the core.

## **5. Whimsical in nature**

Whimsical content always has a peculiar or uncertain behavior. For instance, South Korean Popstar Psy created a whimsical movement for the audience in his video for 'Gangnam Style' where he effectuated his signature 'invisible horse dance' move. Dhinchak Pooja's dancing antiques in the video 'Selfie Maine Leli Aaj' where she goes around the city taking a selfie with random guys was also entertaining for the viewers.

## **6. Mindless entertainment**

Cringe Pop videos provide mindless entertainment to the viewers. Right from the music to the video it offers simplicity, repetitiveness, flawed sense of masculinity and focuses on ordinary people. Becoming popular or YouTube sensation in India is not so easy. In United States Cost Per Thousand (ad views) only costs about \$4 while in India Cost Per Thousand (ad views) can range anywhere between \$0.50 -\$1. As a YouTube creator, you can only monetize videos after reaching a substantial subscriber base. Advertising opportunities open up only after you have crossed one million views. From the following components we can easily conclude that these videos got accomplishment with the help of above four major elements.

## **7. Popularity behind cringe worthy videos**

From Taher Shah in Pakistan and Vennu Mallesh in India to Dhinchak Pooja from India only, there seems to be no relaxations from a continuous barrage of mind-numbingly Cringe worthy videos and memes on the Internet. Some love them and others hate them, but no one can ignore them. The recent reason for the Internet going hysterical again is the release of YouTuber Dhinchak Pooja's recent song 'Selfie maine leli aaj' and her viral stardom makes us wonder that we are hooked to videos like these and that they are so annoying or absurd. "A cringe video is one involving an awkward or embarrassing situation for one person or more. And the reason for its popularity is people deriving a sadistic pleasure from seeing the humiliation of others," explains Prerna Kohli, a Delhi-based clinical psychologist who has worked extensively with patients suffering from social media addiction.

She says that a person who enjoys watching such videos, or is engrossed by them, most likely suffers from inexpensive self-esteem and thereby enjoys the discomfort and mortification of others. "There is also a high probability that this person is a bully or has latent bully tendencies," she says. These videos and memes undoubtedly have an individualistic ability to go viral. They appeal to the human

psyche in a way that one cannot help but watch and share, making them spread through the web. Several studies have undertaken to explore the viral nature of Internet memes and videos. According to a study by Prof Shifman from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the most successful video memes share six common features: a focus on ordinary people, flawed masculinity, humour, simplicity, repetitiveness and whimsical content. Take Taher Shah, Vennu Mallesh or Bhim Niroula. They are all ordinary folk who have relied on YouTube videos to attain the stardom they enjoy today. This makes them more empathetic and engaging. Their songs have simple lyrics with catchy phrases that turn earworms. Dhinchak Pooja breaks the gender stereotype of the cringe block, but her videos share all the other elements. As do the videos of American singer and video blogger Rebecca Black, who is often credited as the real cringe-pop star. In the year 2011, her music video, 'Friday', received millions of views on YouTube within few days, and became the most talked-about topic on Twitter. She was bombarded with criticism over her bad lyrics (Yesterday was Thursday, Thursday/Tuesday is Friday, Friday) and her equally bad rapping. But her song was too bad to be missed. In her song "Friday" she had not used proper lyrics and tune but still her song racked up and earned millions of YouTube viewers. "The fascination for so-bad-it's-almost-surreal things is part of basic human nature", says Bhanuj Kappal, a freelance journalist and culture writer. "And with the Internet allowing anyone to create and put up their photos/videos for the rest of us to watch and share, that tendency has given birth to these viral video memes". "The reason such videos go viral are basically the same as that for any meme-a little bit of schandenfreude and human meanness mixed with the Internet culture's inbuilt obsession with the ironic and the absurd", he adds. Interestingly, these videos seem to be getting more and more attention worldwide. The increasing penetration of the Internet in the country allows people to watch and share these videos, providing a conducive ground for cringe-pop stars like Dhinchak Pooja and Vennu Mallesh to bloom. Rooshi Syed, a young professional from Delhi, gives a fan's take on why cringe videos are popular. "My favorite is Taher Shah. I look forward to his songs because they instil an element of hope in me. It's not the hope and love that his songs are all about, but the hope one gets upon seeing a man with no real talent doing exactly what he wants to do. Isn't it inspiring to see the 'don't-give-a-damn' sentiment being taken to a different level altogether? Same is the case with Dhinchak Pooja". The amount of buzz around 'Selfie maine le li aaj' is a confirmation that this viral trend is nowhere close its saturation point. Instead, more Dhinchak Poojas seem to be waiting in the wings-all set to pounce on netizens when they least expect it.

## **8. Rationale of the study**

"Decadence" in literature is a term used mainly in the context of Symbolism and Aestheticism (late 19th century artistic movements) and to refer to their frequent emphasis on morbidity, death and exacerbated sensuality and movement was characterized by self-disgust, sickness at the world, general skepticism, delight in perversion and employment of crude humor and a belief in the superiority of human creativity which was over logic and the natural world. Latin scholar Desire Nisard when turned toward French literature, he compared Victor Hugo and

romanticism in general to the roman decadence, where men sacrificing their craft and their cultural values for the sake of pleasure. The trends he identified, such as an interest in description, a lack of conformance to the conventional rules of literature and art, and a love for prodigal language were the seeds of the decadent movement. The first significant development in French decadence would come when writers like Theophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire handed-down the word proudly, to represent a rejection of what they considered banal "progress. Baudelaire referred to himself as decadent in his 1857 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and elevated the Roman decline as a model for contemporary poets to convey their agony. He would later use the term decadence to encompass the subversion of traditional class in pursuit of full, sensual expression.. The concept of decadence straggled after that, but it wasn't until 1884 that Maurice Barrès referred to a specific group of writers as Decadents. He defined this group as those who had been transformed heavily by Baudelaire, though they were also transformed by Gothic novels and the poetry and fiction of Edgar Allan Poe. Numerous were associated with Symbolism and others with Aestheticism. The pursuit of these authors, according to Arthur Symons, was "a desperate endeavor to give sensation, to flash the impression of the moment, to preserve the very heat and motion of life" and their procurement, as he saw it, was "to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul". Decadence, on the other hand, sees no path to soaring truth in words and images. Instead, books, poetry and art itself as the originator of valid new worlds, thus the allegory of decadent Wilde's Dorian Gray being contaminated by a book like a drug. Words and artifice are the conveyance for human creativity, and Huysmans recommends that the mirage of fantasy have their own reality: "The secret lies in knowing how to proceed, how to concentrate deeply enough to produce the hallucination and succeed in substituting the dream reality for the reality itself". Ultimately, the dissimilarity may best be seen in their approach to art. Symbolism is a collection of "symbols" that are there not to present their content but to elicit greater ideas that their symbolism cannot expressly utter. According to Moréas, it is an attempt to connect the object and phenomena of the world to "esoteric primordial truths" that cannot ever be directly reached. Decadence, on the other hand, is an accumulation of signs or descriptions acting as detailed catalogs of human material riches as well as artifice. It was Oscar Wilde who perhaps lay this out most clearly in *The Decay of Lying* with the suggestion of three doctrines on art, here cited into a list:

1. "Art never expresses anything but itself".
2. "All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals".
3. "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life".

After which, he suggested a denouement quite in contrast to more as' search for shadow truth: "Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art".

## **9. Critical analysis**

This paper mainly focuses upon the singers who made these cringe videos and memes are stick to their originality and they are not trying to copy other people in the showbiz. They are in this business as freelancer and are not in a need of any lyricist, singer, music composer and producer

because many a times all the functions are performed by single person only. "A stunningly captivating, clever and comical look at why social discomfort haunts us long beyond our teenage years. This book didn't just help me make sense of my most awkward moments. It liberated me from feeling embarrassed by them. They basically talks about newest trends and not about past and don't try to romanticize their songs. Mostly they talk about fashion brands and alcohol which attracts today's youth and their songs are targeted on one age group only. If we look on a wider scale, they are actually connecting people across the nations. They are living their dreams and basically living a life which everyone today desires. Although they are not providing any benefits to the society and harming either but they are working in order to fulfill their needs. In today's era, everyone desires of a successful life with name and fame which they are getting in the way they want. As we get only one life and its upto us what we make out of it so instead of thinking what others will think about us, we should do what satisfies us. We had nothing before this life and nothing will come after that so what we have is this life only so it's better to make most out of it in whatever sense.

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