GENDER STEREOTYPES AND SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION IN ITEM SONGS OF BANGLADESHI FILMS

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Abstract:

Films in the subcontinent traditionally contain songs for entertainment and bringing about a change befitting the story and its characters. A different type of songs, namely item songs, that are irrelevant to the story have become rather common and popular elements, especially in Indian Hindi films. Bangladeshi mainstream films, nowadays, are becoming dependent on item songs with striking performance, costumes, music, and lyrics. These item songs are generally women-centred and used for the commercial success of films. This study explores the gender stereotypes portrayed in item songs of mainstream Bangladeshi films. The study analysed top-viewed Bangladeshi item song videos shared on YouTube applying the theory of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and objectification. Audio-visual data are used for textual analysis of these item songs. The findings reveal that female roles are represented to be submissive, male-dependent, weak, alluring, tricksome, and the object of media desire rather than men. The results also suggest that female artists in item songs are more sexually objectified and more likely to demonstrate sexually alluring behaviour than males.

Keywords: item song, mainstream film, gender stereotype, critical discourse analysis, sexual objectification

1. Introduction

Films portray culture, society, and life and have become a significant part of mass media. They are a combination of different art forms, that is, photography, architecture, literature, theatre, painting, music, and dance; every art form and aspect of media eventually entered into films in a new and different form (Mahmood, 2013).

The first locally produced film with sound in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) was *Mukh O Mukhos* (1956), which was produced with songs and dance performances. Since then, songs and dance performances became a mainstay in movies in this region (Mahmood, 2013).
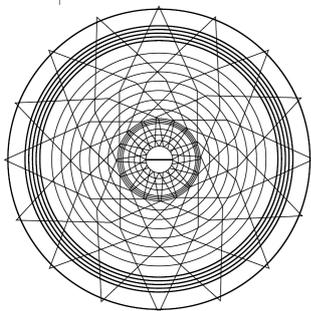
In the late 1990s, the inclusion of obscenity in Bangladeshi films led to the deterioration in their quality. Mainstream films were highly influenced by and copied from commercial Indian Hindi films. Since 2007, to reduce the inclusion of obscenity, sexuality, and vulgarity, Bangladeshi mainstream films adopted the use of *item songs* (Alo, 2016), a new and special form of song and dance performance, prevalent in Indian Hindi films. These item songs took a form of vulgarity and were filled with obscenity and sexuality in lyrics and dance moves.

Item songs, developed especially in Indian Hindi films, had been introduced in the 1950s. These songs include dance performances and are not related to the main story of the film (Basu, 2016). Usually, these songs have obscene lyrics and a leading character of a woman who wears provocative clothes and serves as a sex object among many men (Dwivedi, 2017).

We can trace a common feature in mainstream Bangladeshi films of treating women as objects, where the strong presence of the male gaze is portrayed through camera focus on their body parts. Such sexual objectification (SO) takes on a severe turn in item songs through the visual performance, sensuous lyrics, and dance moves. The skimpily dressed main female performer's body is represented as an object for the male gaze (Susmita, 2015), which Bhandari (2018) says eventually affects the sexual attitudes of the society by creating a stereotyped presentation of women. Ultimately media provokes women to concentrate more on their looks, body, and sexuality rather than their intellectual capabilities.

The representation of women in Bangladeshi films also has a significant impact on shaping audience attitudes towards gender. In a male-dominated country like Bangladesh, women are generally represented from men's perspectives. Women are portrayed to be submissive, passive, tortured, and sacrificed or portrayed as symbols of beauty and even in negative roles.

The practice of gender stereotyping is very common in Bangladeshi mainstream films. Most of the time, the female protagonist in a film is portrayed as having the ultimate desire and goal in life to be the wife of the hero. It does not matter to female characters whether the male character is criminal, unemployed, or characterless, the ultimate representation of women's destiny is marriage. Without being married or having a husband, women are portrayed as helpless, insecure, and easy victims of violence. The use and portrayal of women in films serve the purpose of describing, interpreting, and establishing the heroic role of men. The power, brilliance, intelligence, strategy, honesty, and heroism the male protagonist possesses can only be established and proved through various situations involving violence, stupidity, dependence,
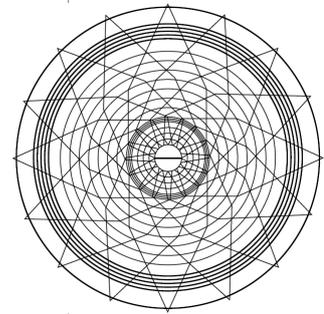
helplessness, weakness, dishonesty, impurity, and indecency of the female protagonist and other characters. In an interview with Islam (2013), Dr. Lotte Hoek, the University of Edinburgh teacher and a researcher on Bangladeshi film says that an item song is a form of erotic entertainment that is generally accepted in the narrative of popular films. This acceptance of SO of women in item songs determines some stereotyped concepts of gender roles that impact the society.

The representation of women in Bangladeshi item songs is sensuous and over-sexualized in most cases. These item songs are generally women-centred and are used for the commercial success of films. The premise of this paper is to focus on these item songs to trace gender stereotypes and SO.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to observe the portrayal of women in the item songs of mainstream Bangladeshi films in terms of gender stereotypes and SO. The specific objectives of the study are to:

a) find out the gender role of women and men in item songs;

b) observe the ways of SO of women in these songs; and

c) investigate the relationship between SO and gender stereotypes.

3. Literature Review

In the early 1950s, item songs in Bollywood films had been performed by female artists who were not the protagonists in the film, rather they played vamp or negative roles. However, trends and the nature of these songs have now changed and female protagonists are seen to perform in such songs (Basu, 2016). After their introduction in early 2007, Bangladeshi item songs have maintained basic similarities to Bollywood in lyrics and the make-up and presentation of characters.

Kapoor (2018) finds presentation of women with skimpy clothes, degrading lyrics, and obscene dance moves indicating their body parts inappropriately as general characteristics of item songs in Hindi films. Dwivedi (2017) found SO of women in Bollywood item songs through obscene lyrics, emphasizing body parts, comparing a woman's body to intoxicating substances and food, and the appreciation for fair skin.

Another study found that actresses performing provocative and sexual dance moves in item songs are generally surrounded by groups of men, which is a stereotypical presentation of gender roles (Jain et al., 2019). Women are depicted as just objects or commodities to be sold with men as the audience or buyers of that commodity.
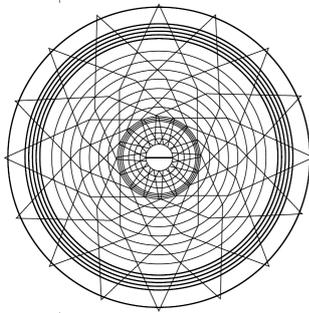
Habib (2017) observes that in item songs the performance of women is meant to be bold and negative. Without any sense of agency, women are seen as decorative objects in Hindi films. Agency can be explained as the concept of empowerment or the capability of deciding one's own life without any fear of violence (Raza, 2015).

To analyse the use and abuse of women in Hindi films, a study on item songs has been conducted, the results of which show that women and their bodies are portrayed as a commodity to satisfy men's desire and used only for male consumption. Using the semiotic method, Sahu (2015) concludes that with bold lyrics and presentation, the item songs target profit and popularity for the film.

Research on the presentation of gender role and SO of women in item songs of Bangladeshi films is scarce to non-exitent, although a good number of studies have been conducted on this issue in Hindi films in India. This study is an attempt at exploring this gap.

4. Rationale of the Study

Several factors prompted the present research. First, the literature review reveals that a majority of the research published in peer-reviewed journals covering the issues of analysing gender stereotypes and SO of women in item songs are from Hindi films. Second, we found research analysing gender stereotyping in various media content like films, dramas, advertisements, news stories, and so on but not in item songs of Bangladeshi mainstream films.

Third, we observe the patterns of the process of SO of women in item songs which shape the gender sense of the audience and society. The findings of the research are expected to help produce a gender-friendly environment through the portrayal of women and men in different media content.

Fourth, last but not the least, this research will cover the untouched social issues in the context of Bangladesh. This pioneering work can help future researchers in further exploration.

5. Methodology

This study applies the CDA and objectification theory design with a qualitative approach. Five top-viewd item songs have been selected in this regard.

5.1 CDA: The primary interest of CDA is to understand pressing social issues (Dijk, 1993). To analyse social interaction, Fairclough (1989) adopts CDA as an approach that focuses on linguistic elements. According to Fairclough, within the social system, these linguistic elements are the determinants of people's communication, be it speaking, listening, reading, or writing. CDA connects many interdisciplinary approaches to
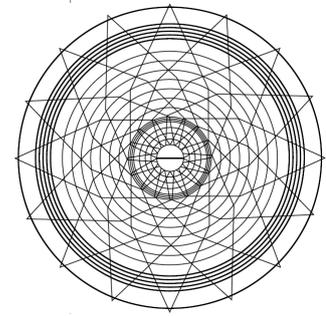
provide a more profound analysis of discursive practices. It helps understand how language works in creating and conveying knowledge and information to constitute and organize social institutions (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA observes the linguistic selections in a text to understand and relate them to socio-cultural issues for interpreting and recognizing the exercising of power and the ideology present in a discourse (Infante, 2016). It focuses on the construction, reproduction, and transformation of society through the functions of economy, race, class, gender, religion, education, sexual orientation, and the application of power and justice in such issues (Mogashoa, 2014). Human beings use texts to make sense of their realities and the ways of applying these texts to create, shape, and change the meaning and version of those realities. The theory is applied to discover the opaque relationships within discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes.

Fairclough's (1989) approach to CDA focuses on three analytical aspects in examining any communicative event or content (see Fig. 1). The first one is the actual text such as an advertisement, a news report, or a film where the description of the text is analysed. The second involves the discursive practices, that is, the process of creation, writing, speaking, reading, and hearing the text where the production and consumption process is analysed. This is the analysis of the relationship between the text and social interaction where the text is considered as a result of production, distribution, and consumption. The last stage is the larger social context or socio-cultural practice that bears upon the text and the discursive practices.
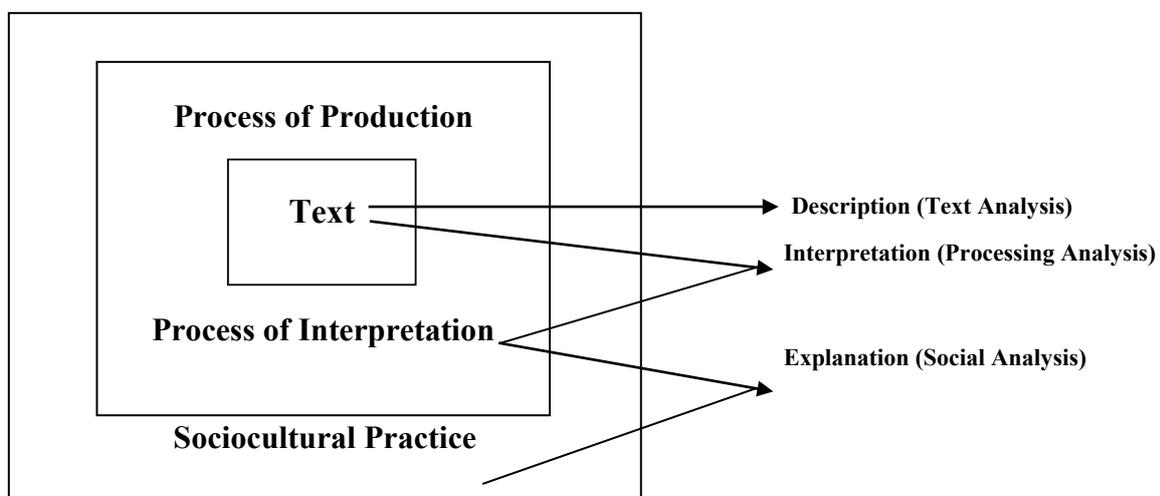
Figure 1. Dimensions of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97)
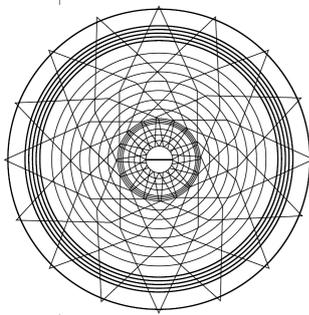
According to Fairclough (1995), CDA includes language as the text for linguistic description and the interpretation of the relationship between productive and interpretive discursive processes and the text. Last of all, it also includes the explanation of the relationship between discursive processes and social practices (El-Falaky, 2015).

5.2 SO: Another theory used in this study is the objectification theory. This theory provides a convenient framework for improving and upgrading the livelihood of women through realizing, investigating, and intervening in the social situation which sexually commodifies the female body and compares a woman's worth with her appearance and sexual functions (Szymanski et al., 2011).

According to the objectification theory, many women are sexually objectified and treated as an object or commodity by others and appreciated only in that aspect (Roberts, 1997). When a woman's body or body parts are noticed solely and these parts are detached from her as a person and she is observed mainly as a bodily object to fulfil men's sexual desire, SO happens (Bartky, 1990).

This theory postulates that SO of the body not only affects women's mental health but also creates eating disorders, depression, sexual dysfunction, and self-objectification (Roberts, 1997). The self-objectification process occurs when women start treating themselves as objects and judge themselves based on the physical appearance from others' perspectives, especially the male viewpoint. Self-objectification gives more importance to one's appearance, and women demonstrate a higher level of consciousness about their looks and bodies, constantly evaluating these aspects (McKinley, 1996).

Table 1. Nussbaum's definition of objectification

1	**Instrumentality**	Treating another person as a tool for one's own intentions
2	**Denial of autonomy**	Treating another person as deficient of self-authority and strength
3	**Inertness**	Treating another person as short of agency and activity
4	**Fungibility**	Treating another person as exchangeable with others
5	**Violability**	Treating another person as usable and capable of being violated
6	**Ownership**	Treating another person as something that is owned, bought, or sold
7	**Denial of subjectivity**	Treating another person as someone whose emotions and experiences do not need to be measured
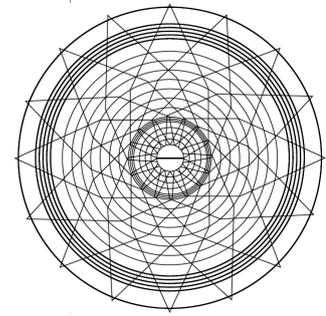
Objectification occurs when someone is treated as an object through their physical properties, and can be utilized, managed, operated, and manipulated (Calogero, 2012). According to the philosopher Nussbaum (1995), seven specific traits (see Tab. 1) used for a person constitute objectification and they characterize common approaches and behaviours toward objects and things.

Importantly, each of these traits is fundamental in the SO of women. The objectification theory how an individual is treated as an object by others. This study focuses on analysing the words in item song lyrics and the portrayal of gender roles by using CDA and the objectification theory. This study serves to examine the portrayal of gender stereotypes and SO in item songs of mainstream Bangladeshi films. The methodologies adopted are a qualitative data analysis of five songs, aiming at establishing a link between gender stereotypes and SO.

5.3 Selection of Item Songs: The study chooses five item songs, picking one from each year between 2014 and 2018. The basis of the selection of the songs is the number of views by the audience on *YouTube*; the selected five songs are the most viewed.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

The first phase of analysis was conducted with the help of the CDA theory and the second phase was conducted through the objectification theory.

6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

6.1.1 Description (textual analysis): The first part of CDA focuses on the analysis of the text. In this analysis, the text is item songs. Table 2 presents the list of selected item songs:

Table 2. List of selected item songs

Item Song	Title (in Bangla)	Translation	Film	Release Year	Views (as on July 2019)
1	Lojjaboti re chuiley	When Shame Plant is Touched by Anyone	*Dobir Saheber Songsar*	2014	1,505,761
2	Magic Mamoni	Magic Mamoni	*Agnee 2*	2015	18,897,750
3	Danakata Pori	Wingless Angel/Fairy	*Rokto*	2016	32,828,016
4	O DJ O DJ	Hey, DJ	*Nabab*	2017	33,009,651
5	Lal Lipstick	Red Lipstick	*Ami Neta Hobo*	2018	11,897,806

The theme of the first item song is: when the female performer is observed and watched by hundreds of men, she blushes like a shame plant and the storm of love arises in her heart. She wants love but it also burns her heart. Love colours her soul,
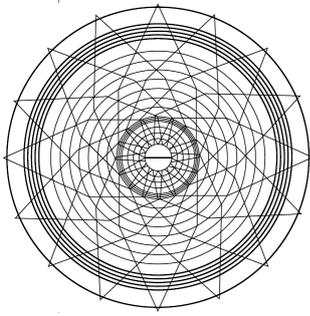
mind, and her. She needs a man who can understand the language of her eyes. She is trying to find a real lover. In this song, the language used in the lyrics is from different dialects of the Bengali language.

In the second song 'Magic Mamoni', the female performer refers to other item girls from different item songs and declares that she is not like them and calls herself Magic Mamoni, playing mind games with men. Magic Mamoni has a glowing face because of using 'Fair & Lovely' (a fairness cream sold in the market). She is very beautiful, like a flower bouquet. Her sex appeal is so high that when her waist moves it makes men crazy and spreads the fever of her love everywhere. Supporting her statement, a male voice also declares himself to be the only owner of 'Magic Mamoni' and complements her for being so hot that men sweat in cold weather just because of her sex appeal. In this song, the language used in the lyrics is mixed with Bangla, English, and Hindi, using words to describe 'Magic Mamoni'.

The third song 'Danakata Pori' translated as 'Wingless fairy' was published in the year 2016. The item girl in this song states that her Facebook status is single which is why everyone proposes to her and wants to take a selfie with her, and she feels clueless and declares herself as a wingless fairy. She has to be protective about the garden of her mind during the month of Falgun (spring season which is described here as the season of love) when, as buzzing bees, men are humming around her and nobody leaves her alone. She is therefore confused about the way that will be appropriate for her to escape and about who she will be accept with a 'yes' or to whom she has to say 'sorry'. She also says that her shining face attracts other men and that everyone follows her with their eyes. She has been waiting for her lover for a long time and feels confused. This song also uses both Bangla and English words in its lyrics.

'O DJ O DJ', translated as 'Hey DJ', is the fourth song and was published in 2017. The female performer wears short garments and wants to enjoy music, dance, wine, and hangovers. She requests the DJ at the bar to play a 'Jhakanaka' or highly musical song which would induce her to be drunk on the dance floor, and as she is very hot and her mind melts, she wants the chance to lose herself fully. She wants to enjoy life, which is short, to the fullest extent. She also knows becoming drunk would make her senseless, her eyes would be embezzled with sparkling light, and that everyone would go out of control. Her mind is very naughty and is constantly working. This song also uses both Bangla and English words in its lyrics.

In the fifth and last item song 'Lal Lipstick', translated as 'Red Lipstick', the female performer declares that from leader to actor everyone is mesmerized by her style. However, she is waiting for her hero and upon meeting him she will kiss his cheeks
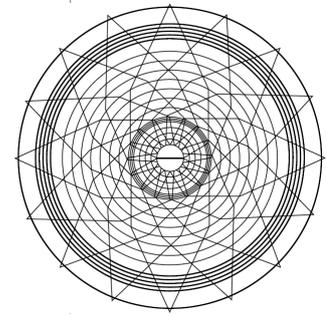
wearing red lipstick. She locked the door of her mind, but the bird of her heart often flies away. She is therefore very desperate to find her hero. She has a lot of fans in different areas, and many wicked boys keep their eyes on her making her hurry to find a hero. This song also uses both Bangla and English words in its lyrics.

In textual analysis, following Fairclough (1992), this study mainly focuses on the choice of vocabulary to analyse how women are described and depicted. In the lyrics of these item songs, first-person pronouns are extensively used establishing the discourse in such a way that the audience believes that the women like to see themselves as objectified. The pronouns 'I', 'my', 'me', and 'mine', used to describe their own qualities, situations, or context, present the phenomena that women only exist by, through, and for their beauty, sexuality, and objectification; and obviously, all these are directed towards men. For example (some translated texts from Bangla):

- When a hundred eyes woo me, the storm of love rages through me.

- When my waist moves, everyone becomes mad.

- Everyone proposes to me just because my status is single … I am a wingless angel.

- Wearing short dresses, I will make the party hot.

- I will apply red lipstick when I kiss my hero's cheeks.

The use of pronouns in place of verbs in this text establishes the strong relationship between the presenter and the viewers. The process is called nominalization by Fairclough (1992), where nouns and pronouns are used instead of verbs. The use of personal pronouns establishes a certain type of relationship between the female presenter and the audience, allowing a sense of creating and feeling a natural atmosphere where women are perceived as a product for consumption.

In the context of text, Fairclough (1989) also studies the grammatical feature and categories. The main feature is vocabulary, where the use of adjectives is common to add positive or negative connotations. In this case, these adjectives are related to the quality of the lead protagonist who is a woman. Beauty, glow, fairness, hotness, softness, weakness, sexiness, sensuousness, being striking, young, confused, diplomatic, and a player are the connotations conveyed through the use of adjectives in these item songs. The lyrics of these item songs use vocabularies as shown below at Table 3.
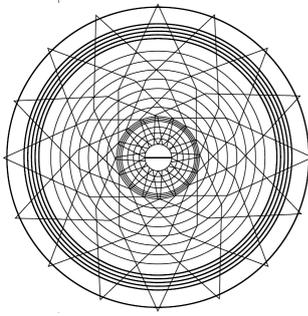
Table 3. List of vocabularies used in item songs

SL	Vocabulary (Bangla words)	Implied meaning in the song
1.	Dhak dhak	Increasing heartbeat for love
2.	Chinimini	Playing games with the lover's mind
3.	Jhakanaka	Request to play a rock song for dancing at the bar
4.	Gungun	Lovers are buzzing like bees around women
5.	Tukur tukur	Lovers follow women with their eyes, watching or staring
6.	Talli	Becoming drunk through alcohol consumption
7.	Nurani	A striking face
8.	Shining look	A bright and glamorous face
9.	Billu rani	Compared with others, the most glamorous, beautiful, and sexy woman
10.	Majic Mamoni	The woman who can play with her lover's mind
11.	Danakata pori	The most watchable woman, like an angel without wings
12.	Muah	The sound of a kiss on the lover's cheeks

These vocabularies express ideological opinions about viewing women and their realities from men's perspectives. According to these texts in the item songs, women are only conscious about their face, figure, and sexuality to gain love and play. The text seems to imply that women do not need any other qualities to live their life.

Most of the vocabularies in the item songs comprise a mixture of formal and informal words. The types of verbs, active or passive sentences, tenses, pronouns, parallelism, modality, and nominalizations used have an important function in representing reality. There are repetitions of synonyms or near-synonyms like 'shining', 'fairness', and 'light' and parallelisms (repeated use of similar grammatical structures) that intensify the meaning of the item songs. The sentences in the item songs are of the declarative type. The tenses used are mainly in the present form. Future tenses are used to express expectations of gaining love from a future lover and to describe the puzzlement women feel in trying to achieve that. All these item songs evoke desires and construct the so-called ideal beautiful image of a woman. The songs create a false impression that women are just sexual and beauty products.

6.1.2 Interpretation (process analysis): The second part of CDA analyses the production and consumption processes. This analysis has been presented under some specific statements or points that reflect the relationship between text and social interaction.
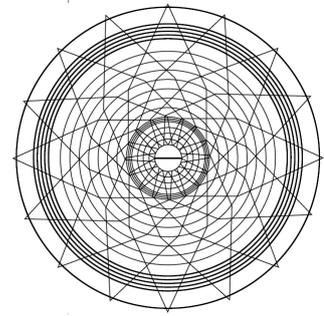
6.1.2.1 Irrelevance of an item song

The five item songs are from five mainstream Bangladeshi films. All these songs are not essential to the narrative of the films, making them irrelevant to the story. There is no logical connection between the songs and the plots of the films before or after their performance. These songs have been included without any sense of rationality, just to attract the audience and to dispel the monotony.

In the film Dobir Saheber Songsar, the item song 'Lojjaboti re chuiley' has been presented as a part of the job of the female protagonist. The leading female character of the film was kidnapped in her childhood and grew up in a female club dancer's house and eventually became a club dancer. A goon with his gang captured her after her performance at a club. She managed to escape from the goon and started living as a house worker. She describes her past life in the item song.

In one sense the presence of this item song is valid as it was her job. But the song gains more importance with the full description of her past life, consuming more time and with many details. The duration of the song in the film is 5 minutes 13 seconds. Besides the song, the description of her past is a combination of 58 seconds of oral story and another 5 minutes of an on-screen display of her past. Compared with the time duration, the item song takes on the same importance as the other aspects take. Therefore, without presenting the item song, it was possible to narrate her past life.

In the film Agnee 2, the item song 'Magic Mamoni' has been presented with the logic that the female protagonist, in the disguise of a dancer, took the chance to take revenge on one of the murderers of her parents who is attending the club for enjoyment. The item song performance has been justified in the film by her goal of taking revenge. Except for a woman's physical beauty, bodily performance, or tricks a female artist cannot take revenge or perform any act with her intelligence or courage is the general stereotypical sexual representation of women in mainstream Bangladeshi films.

In the film Rokto the item song, 'Danakata Pori' translated as 'Wingless fairy', has been presented again as a way of describing the female protagonist's past. She relates the story to the hero and the item song starts. The item song is rather unnecessary in that it has been designed to lead the female character to entertain the audience. The item song, in combination with the performance and vocal descriptions, takes 6 minutes 33 seconds, which is not very relevant in the narration of the film.

Another item song 'O DJ O DJ' from the film Nabab has been presented by the lead female character as part of her job as a crime reporter to find a criminal. She invites the
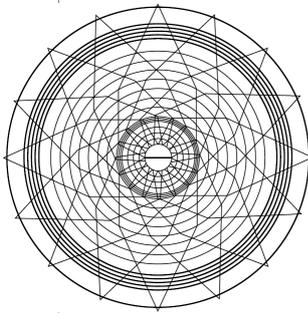
criminal to a club where she would perform as a dancer and act as a spy. This presentation of the item song is also very weak and illogical for the narrative of the film.

In the film Ami Neta Hobo, the item song 'Lal Lipstick' is also presented by the female protagonist who works as a club dancer. The item song has been presented as a part of her job in the film. Compared with other item songs, the presentation of this song is logical to some extent.

6.1.2.2 Provocative dressing and dance moves

In these item songs, female characters perform wearing provocative, short, skimpy dresses with high heels, and the camera focuses on their body parts. Their dance moves show sex appeal and are alluring. Except for 'Lojjaboti re chuiley', the other item songs started with exposing the legs of the women in the songs. The camera moves from their legs to their faces. In all the five item songs, the female protagonists' body parts are presented as the object of male's sexual desire.

The lead performers of these item songs move their hands and fingers over their body parts in a provocative manner. Self-objectification occurs in many parts of these songs. Lead performers are seen as wearing provocative dresses which are short and skimpy, showing cleavage and exposing their legs in such a way that draws the eyes of the audience to the female performers' body. To create sex appeal and make the party or dance floor hot, not only the lyrics of these songs use language such as 'when my waist moves, everyone becomes crazy' from 'Magic Mamoni' and 'wearing short dress, I will make the party hot (sexually)' from 'O DJ O DJ', but also the depiction of the women establishes the fact that the only role of women is to entertain men, in a way ascertained by men. The depiction of women's performance in item songs implies that the ultimate desire of women is earning men's satisfaction and fulfilling men's desire, especially sexual desire.

6.1.2.3 Fairness, beauty, sex appeal, and trickery

The female protagonists in most of the item songs praise themselves, claiming that their beauty, sex appeal, fair skin, and shining face are the obvious reasons for their demand and social status. They do not even treat themselves as a human being. They compare themselves with a shame plant to describe their quality as blushing, but not brave or independent; or they imply that they feel like a magician ('Magic Mamoni') or wingless fairy ('Danakata Pori'), any of which does not ascribe to human qualities. Women are tricksters, they love to play games with the heart of men ('Magic Mamoni'). These songs are ultimately for the production, distribution, and consumption of a male-dominated society. Women therefore describe their attributes from male perspectives.

[Scientific Articles]
Rahman M.M., Zannat S.
*Gender Stereotypes and Sexual Objectification
in Item Songs of Bangladeshi Films*
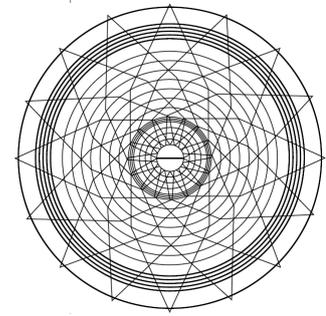
Therefore, the only determinant of powerful women is their beauty, fair skin, and shining face with a body full of sex appeal. These item songs' lyrics and presentation also construct the reality from a male perspective.

6.1.2.4 Alcohol, club, and women

The songs have been presented in such an environment where women in the club are surrounded by men consuming alcohol, with glasses and bottles filled with alcohol displayed on the shelves or tables of the club or in the hands of the male viewers. As these women dance, their moves are enjoyed by the male audience while sipping alcohol. In a scene in the song 'O DJ O DJ', the female protagonist is seen holding a glass of alcohol and moving it from her belly to her breasts lying on the table. This type of portrayal of item songs establishes a strong connection between women and alcohol consumption. Such presentation induces sexual enjoyment for both on and off-screen male audiences and validates alcohol or any other drug consumption as part of the sexual enjoyment culture. After consuming alcohol, men, as they lose control over body and mind, are allowed any wrongdoing with anyone, especially with women. This type of representation in item songs provides a ground for doing anything with women.

6.1.2.5 Final destination: MAN

A common notion in a male-dominated society is that women wait ultimately for one man who will be her hero, saviour, protector, or guardian. Women are considered to be of loose morals or vamps if they are surrounded and desired by many men, or they are the symbol of virtue, chastity, or honesty if they are with one man. The creation of the whore or chastity complex fulfils the requirement of men. This representation of women dominates the existing social construction depicts it in a stereotyped and objectified frame.

6.1.2.6 Women are depicted from a man's perspective

Women are presented, described, and objectified from men's point of view in every item song. Both in lyrics and presentation, it is obvious that a woman who is desirable or a dream girl of any or many men must have a fresh, pretty, and shining face. She must be submissive, shy, and a blushing shame plant; a sexually appealing figure who can create a hot atmosphere even in winter; she is just like an angel even if she does not have wings, but she owns magical powers to allure, mesmerize, and play games with the heart of men and her final destination is to belong to a man. All these descriptions depict women as beauty and sexual products, these stereotyped qualities or traits of women are portrayed from the patriarchal viewpoint.
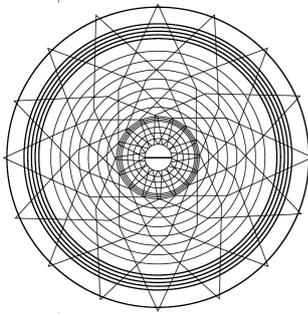
6.1.2.7 Women are objects and men are viewers

Most of the item songs have been presented in a club where the performer is a female and both men and women are viewers, although some male audiences are highlighted as viewers and the camera captures women from the male perspective. Women act as objects; they objectify their own bodies from the viewpoint of men and men enjoy that performance. Bodies of women in such songs have been used as a fantasy creator for the desire and irrational impulses of the male audience. Women are only presented as objects with no qualities, as perceived in a patriarchal society.

6.1.3 Explanation (social analysis)

The last part of CDA is the larger social context or socio-cultural practice that bears upon the text and discursive practices. From the analysis of the text and the socio-cultural interaction, it has been found that women are presented in stereotypical roles and are objectified from many angles.

All the item songs portray women in such a way that justify such performances. Most of the backgrounds are either of taking revenge or finding the criminal or creating a trap or just to entertain the audience. Every cause and situation for performing in an item song pertain to women, not men. In line with society's view, their role in such songs and films are depicted as trap creators through the use of their beauty, sexuality, and style to fulfil their ultimate intention. Qualities such as courage, honesty, strength (both physical and psychological), intelligence are missing, which is a common, stereotyped depiction of women's image.

Women in item songs are presented in provocative clothes and dance moves. Their only goal is to belong to a man. Women are objects and men are the viewers. The entire presentation in these songs is from a man's point of view. Such depiction of women is socially accepted by repeated representation in media, such as item songs and films. A patriarchal society approves and establishes such presentation of women for the sake of business, entertainment, and sustaining the active male dominance and submissiveness of women.

The practice of gender stereotype, both for female and male objectification, especially the SO of women, occurs through item songs as they present the male and female characteristics as approved by and practiced in the society. We see the existence of a binary presentation in item songs when women are portrayed as objects and men are viewers, women are weak and men are strong, women are victims and men are the protectors, women are tricky and men are intelligent, women are confused and men are determined, women are passive and men are active.
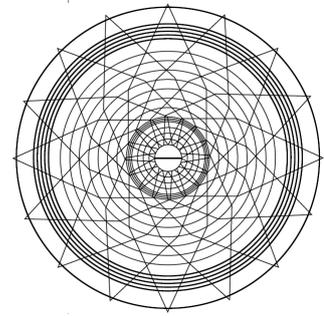
6.2 Analysis Applying Objectification Theory

The objectification process occurs in many ways. Philosopher Nussbaum (1995) specifies seven ways that are used to constitute the objectification of any person. The following analysis is done through the analysis of these characteristics or traits.

6.2.1 Instrumentality (treating another person as a tool for one's intentions)
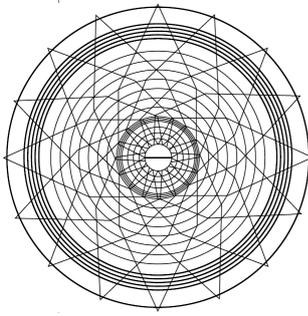
The objectification process occurs when any person is treated as a tool for another person's intentions. The study, applying CDA, finds that women are presented in item songs as the object of others' desires. Instrumentality occurs when the treatment of women is like tools for the objectifier's purpose. In every item song, women are treated as sexual objects for others. Self-objectification by women occurs when they provocatively touch their own body parts and the overall camera angle and presentation of body parts act and get the treatment of sexual tool for fulfilling others' desires.

In the item song 'Lojjaboti re chhuiley', women are compared with a plant, called the shame plant, that closes its leaves when touched. Women also feel like the shame plant when they are touched or watched by men. The feelings of women change according to men's intentions.

The red lipstick and lips are highlighted in the song 'Lal Lipstick', and used as a powerful tool for the lady to leave her mark on her man through a kiss. She uses a red lipstick which is noticeable, attractive, smart, and alluring, with its colour and presentation. She only applies it when she gets her man. Therefore, without a man, a woman is not even interested in her dreams or fantasy to be beautiful or presentable for herself. In the high consumption market culture, women are just buyers of beauty products, and eventually, become the product. A woman's interest to be beautiful or presentable is only decided by the social process. Women want to make themselves beautiful to attract men or when they are with their men.

6.2.2 Denial of autonomy (treating another person as deficient of self-authority and strength)

Denial of autonomy happens when the treatment of a woman shows a deprivation of autonomy and self-determination. The lyrics and presentation depict the women in these item songs as lacking self-authority, autonomy, and being powerless or weak to make any decision. The song 'Lojjaboti re chhuiley', portrays the female protagonist to be weak and shy like a shame plant; she feels love and romance when a hundred eyes watch her. Her feelings, desires, and every wish are highly dependent on men's wishes.

The lead performer in the item song 'Magic Mamoni', declares herself skilled in playing games with the mind of men with undeniable sex appeal. In a male-dominated country like Bangladesh, where women are in most cases accused of guilt for any incident, ranging from rape to kidnapping, irrespective of the crime or situation, the society and media spread information about the age, character, and background of the girl, hold women responsible for the incident, not the man. The representation of women is in the hands of men, who determine the roles, characters, and characteristics of women.

The performer declares herself a wingless fairy in the song 'Danakata Pori'. Such appellation is usually given by men to a beautiful woman in south Asian countries, especially in India and Bangladesh. In this song, the girl becomes confused in deciding her job when countless men follow her or want her, depicting the weakness of women in determining her role to save herself from men. In the song 'Lal Lipstick', the lead performer is unable to control her mind and she is trying to find her man, declaring that her style is unique by which men are mesmerized. Again, in this song, autonomy is denied and self-portrayal happens from the male point of view.

6.2.3 Inertness (treating another person as short of agency and activity)

All the item songs present women as short of agency and activity. Women are seen as passive, submissive, shy, confused, and dependent on fate and men. These item songs also depict women as lacking agency. Women are only conscious about making themselves beautiful and appealing, and they are waiting for their hero who will take care of them. Such presentations limit the agency of women in life, family, and in the society.
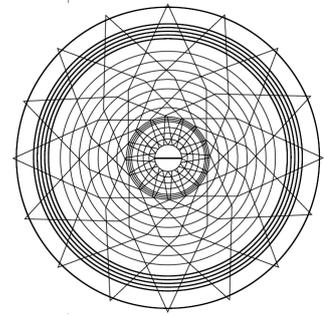
6.2.4 Fungibility (treating another person as exchangeable with others)

Women in the selected item songs of the study have been compared with the shame plant, wingless fairy, 'Magic Mamoni', and so on. Such comparisons seem to indicate that women's qualities are exchangeable with other things, be it any plant or a fairy. Comparing them with the shame plant conveys that women are the epitome of bashfulness, weakness, impatience, and sensitivity, while a comparison with a wingless fairy indicates the exchangeable qualities of beauty, fairness, and magical power to attract men's eyes with their incontestable sex appeal. Fungibility occurs as part of the objectification process when the lead performer in 'Magic Mamoni' declares herself more powerful compared to other item girls because of the quality of playing with the mind of men.

6.2.5 Violability (treating another person as usable and capable of being violated)

Violability means treating women as lacking in boundary-integrity. Women are treated like they have no boundaries and can be used or violated. The lyrics and presentation of 'Lojjaboti re chhuiley' indicate women's violability and sensitivity while 'Danakata Pori' indicate women's puzzling situation to save themselves from many men's desire and eyes due to their beauty and sex appeal. The woman in 'Lal Lipstick' feels confused when many men stare at her, indicating women are unable to protect themselves from men if they are not protected by any man. Anyone can follow, control, or manipulate women. The stereotypical social construction of the gender role for women is confirmed here.

6.2.6 Ownership (treating another person as something that is owned, bought, or sold)

Women in the item songs are also seen as being treated or as owned, bought, or sold by another person. They do not have any ownership of their desire, life, or activities. In one stage in the song 'Magic Mamoni', a male voice declares that the girl is his 'Magic Mamoni'. In all the other songs, the female protagonists are waiting for their dream man to hand themselves over for life, security, and love. The existing social system also creates the demand and value for those women who are with their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. Otherwise, the situation and possibilities may be created for her to be an easy victim. The item songs indicate that no matter how desirable the women are, they have to be under the ownership of one man, either a lover or a husband, otherwise the qualities of women are less valuable.

6.2.7 Denial of subjectivity (treating another person as someone whose emotions and experiences do not need to be measured)

Denial of subjectivity means the treatment of women in a way that their experiences and feelings need not be considered. The lyrics and visual presentation of item songs describe the denial of subjectivity of women when they are presented, portrayed, and visualized from men's perspectives. Men ogle at women and women also watch themselves being looked at. The camera angles are placed on the women's body parts in such a way that allure, attract, and create the fantasy for men's desires, and the female performers have no control over such issues. The lyrics of these item songs also describe women's situation, emotions, and activities from the expected, accepted, and approved mindset of a patriarchal society.
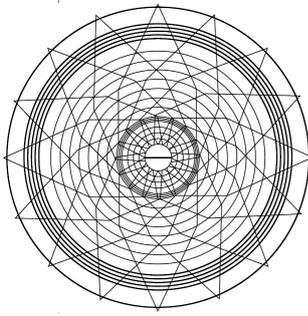
Applying the objectification theory, it has been found that the traits or characteristics of objectification are very common in these item songs. The portrayal of women in these songs determines the stereotypical gender roles for both females and males. Male dominance and female subordination have been presented through treating women as tools, deficient of self-authority, lacking agency, and exchangeable, having nonhuman qualities, being fragile, and having no ownership of own desire with denied subjectivity; and men are presented in stark contrast.

7. Findings

From the analysis of the five item songs through CDA and the objectification theory, it is clear that gender stereotypes and SO have a close relationship. Stereotypical gender roles allow women to be treated as sexual objects and the SO process occurs within the frame of the stereotyped gender roles. All the characteristics, traits, and qualities of women have been portrayed in the songs through the lyrics and presentation, which are limited, indicate submissiveness, male-dependence, weakness, passiveness, being alluring, and being objects of media desire. The results also indicate that the female performers in the item song are more sexually objectified and more likely to demonstrate sexually alluring behaviour than men.

The study reveals that women are depicted in a sexual and objectified manner, that is, wearing provocative clothes, and represented in ways that emphasize their body parts and sexual readiness, serving as decorative objects more often than men. This creates the situation of men's sexist comments like the use of deprecating words to describe women, sexual remarks, comments on women's body parts, and behaviours like ogling, leering, catcalling, and harassment.

The current study also indicates that the media often depicts a narrow and unattainable standard of women's physical beauty and relates this standard with a woman's sex appeal and worth. Sexual objectification, stereotyped role-playing, and importance on beauty portray women as decorative objects with no sense of agency.

Through the presentation of stereotypical gender roles and SO, the socio-cultural identities and the orientation of women have reduced the quality of their living and have increased sexual exploitation and victimization. Dominant ideologies of the society are constructed, produced, and distributed by the media. Item songs are not different from other media content in Bangladesh. Repeated production and distribution of these songs establish the stereotypical gender role and set the mind of the society accordingly.
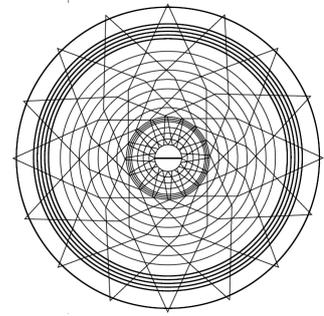
8. Conclusion

The film is a portrayal of social realities and can become a tool for social change, a change for the better. The main purpose of mainstream films is to be commercially successful. Therefore, the industry always tries to earn profits and they invest a lot in item songs for this purpose. Prioritizing return on investment, the producers of films include item songs and the audience enjoy it but they never take the consequence and impact into account, such representation in society. In the disguise of item songs, women are depicted and treated as a commodity and just as an object of pleasure.

The study focused on the stereotyped gender role and objectification of women to increase the awareness in the society with regard to treating women as individuals with agency. Objectification is not only damaging for women but also the whole society. Degrading women, who are a major part of society, makes it impossible for the society to achieve a developed, well-balanced situation.

Overall, our findings indicate serious concerns for the Bangladeshi society because item songs disseminate and establish the notions of stereotyped gender roles, sexuality, misogynistic attitudes, and hegemonic idealizations of the female body. Society needs to understand the impact and take necessary steps to establish a well-balanced, gender-friendly environment through the presentation of women in various media content.

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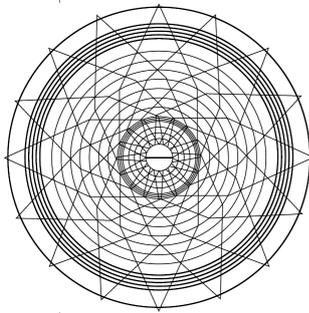
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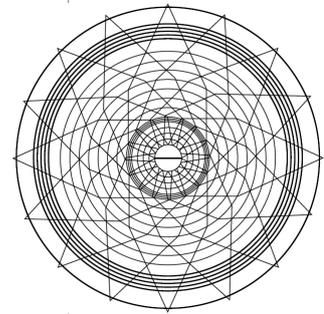
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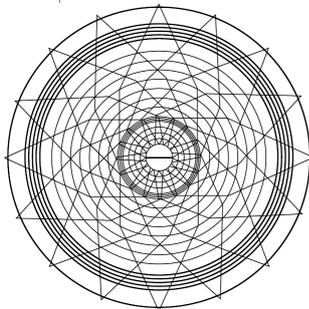
ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ СТЕРЕОТИПЫ И СЕКСУАЛЬНАЯ ОБЪЕКТИВАЦИЯ В МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫХ НОМЕРАХ БАНГЛАДЕШСКИХ ФИЛЬМОВ

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Аннотация:

Фильмы индийского субконтинента традиционно содержат развлекательные песни, которые влияют на сюжет и персонажей. Песни же другого рода, а именно музыкальные номера (item songs), которые не имеют отношения к сюжету, стали довольно распространенными и популярными элементами, особенно в индийских фильмах на хинди. Бангладешское массовое кино в настоящее время всё больше зависит от популярных песен с ярким исполнением, костюмами, музыкой и текстами. Эти песни, как правило, ориентированы на женщин и используются для коммерческого успеха проката картины. В этом исследовании изучаются гендерные стереотипы, изображенные в песнях основных бангладешских фильмов. В ходе исследования были проанализированы самые популярные видеоролики бангладешских песен, опубликованные на YouTube, с использованием теории критического дискурс-анализа (CDA) и объективации. Для текстового анализа этих песен были использованы аудиовизуальные данные. Результаты показывают, что женские роли представлены как покорные, зависимые от мужчин, слабые, соблазнительные, коварные и ориентированные на СМИ, а не мужчин. Результаты также показывают, что женщины-исполнительницы в песнях более сексуально объективированы и с большей вероятностью демонстрируют сексуально привлекательное поведение, чем мужчины.

Ключевые слова: музыкальные номера, массовое кино, гендерные стереотипы, критический дискурс-анализ, сексуальная объективация