

This is an Author Accepted Manuscript of an article from the book Tamil Cinema in the Twenty First Century. Edited by S. Velayutham & V. Devadas

Karupiah, P. (2021). Misogyny: A content analysis of break-up songs in Tamil films. In S. Velayutham & V. Devadas (Eds.), *Tamil Cinema in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 115-129).

Oxon: Routledge.

Misogyny: A Content Analysis of Break-up Songs in Contemporary Tamil Films

Premalatha Karupiah

Introduction

Adida avale, othada avala (Hit her, Kick her)

Vidra avala, thevaye illai (Leave her, don't need her)

The above lines are from the song *Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile* (Love, My Love is in Tears) from the film *Mayakam Enna* (What is this illusion?, 2011). These lines were sung by the protagonist, Karthik, to express his frustration because he fell in love with his best friend's girlfriend and was unable to pursue the relationship even though she reciprocated the same feeling. In this song he went on to describe her as a curse and the one who destroyed his dreams. He is joined by his best friend, who in consoling his friend, hoped that her life would be destroyed. Here, the protagonist, his friend accompanied by a group of dancers, danced to the song expressing hatred towards a woman. It conveys the message that it is acceptable to physically hurt a woman if she disapproves a man's love or attention. This is an example of misogyny in contemporary break-up¹ or 'love failure' songs in Tamil films.

Misogyny is an ideology which reduces women to objects that can be manipulated by men. It can be defined as 'a property of social systems or environments as a whole, in which women will tend to face hostility of various kinds *because they are women in a man's world* (i.e. a patriarchy)' (Manne 2017, pp. 33-34, emphasis in original). Misogyny is pervasive and can come in various forms depending on one's socio-cultural location in a society (Adams and Fuller 2016). Some common forms of misogyny are violence against women, verbal derogatory remarks, stalking, cyber-stalking, and trolling. Misogyny is related to sexism in

that sexism provides the reason to believe that men are naturally superior to women hence justifies misogyny (Richardson-Self 2018).

Misogyny is not a new phenomenon in the world of music. It has been identified in country music, heavy metal, hip-hop and rock and roll. The more recent studies on misogyny in music have focused on rap songs mainly in the United States of America (Adams and Fuller 2016; Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). According to Adams and Fuller (2016, 940), misogyny in music is the ‘promotion, glamorization, support, humorization, justification, or normalization of oppressive ideas about women.’ Misogyny, however, does not happen in a vacuum, it often reflects the social, cultural and economic system that supports the perpetuation of this ideology in music (Adams and Fuller 2016).

This chapter explores misogyny in break-up songs in Tamil films. Quantitative and qualitative content analyses were used to identify the expression of misogyny in eleven break-up songs in movies released after 2010. There has been very limited discussion on misogyny in Indian movies (Chatterjee 2019) and there is a lack of a systematic analysis of misogyny in Tamil songs even though scholars have discussed gender inequality, sexism, and traditional gender portrayals in Tamil films (Chinniah 2008; Karupiah 2017; Nakassis 2015). Studies have confirmed that Tamil films are mostly hero-centric i.e. primarily preoccupied with male and masculine perspectives of the world (Chinniah 2008; Karupiah 2015, 2016). The role of the lead female actor is by and large to satisfy the male gaze both on and off the screen. There is a high level of objectification of women in Tamil films expressed either through the use of the camera, dance moves or dialogues (Chinniah 2008; Karupiah 2016). The most cherished form of femininity in Tamil films follows traditional femininity very closely with a strong emphasis on purity, self-sacrifice, chastity and acceptance of the phallic

authority (Kaali 2000; Karupiah 2016). The male protagonists, on the other hand, are the symbol of hyper-masculinity. They showcase excessive use of violence and alcohol, lack emotional expression, and are the champions of benevolent sexism (Balaji 2014; Surendran and Venkataswamy 2017). There is also a lack of women's voice in Tamil films because there are very few female filmmakers in the industry and many actresses are not able or allowed to use their own voice in the films. This can be attributed to the lack of Tamil speaking actresses which may be due to the historical stigma of being an actress and the use of non-Tamil speaking actresses mainly for their physical appearance (Chinniah 2008; Karupiah, 2016, 2017; Nakassis 2015). Given the nature of inequality in the Tamil film industry, it can be hypothesized that break-up songs serve as an outlet for misogynistic expressions. However, the more important question is whether the extent and type of hatred expressed in these songs resemble elements of hate music. Hate music refers to music that is used as 'a medium to spread intolerance, bias, prejudice, and disdain for particular "groups" held in low esteem by certain segments of society. Such music can serve to label, devalue, persecute, and scapegoat particular groups of people—namely minorities' (Messner *et al.* 2007, p. 513). Women may not be minorities in general society, but the Tamil film industry is male dominated and inequality in the film industry (e.g. in terms of remuneration, plot of the films, and number of technicians) has been discussed in popular and academic literature (Chinniah 2008; Karupiah 2017, Surendhar 2018). The songs analysed in this study show elements of devaluing, blaming and scapegoating women which is seen not only in the lyrics of the songs but also through the dance moves, use of language and other props used in the films. Therefore, this study contributes not only to the study of misogyny but to the exploration and theorizing of non-Western sexist hate music. Such exploration is important because of the high consumption of Tamil films and songs in India and the Tamil diaspora. In

addition, break-up songs appear in romantic or romantic comedy films that may have a U certification, hence, they could be watched by viewers of all ages.

Songs in Tamil Films

Music is often said to be an important aspect of the lives of Tamils (Baskaran 1991). There is a long tradition of folk music and *carnatic* music in Tamil Nadu. While folk music developed based on the lives and experiences of the masses, *carnatic* music was the music of the elites nurtured in temples and palaces (Baskaran 1991). In the history of Tamil cinema there are only a handful films produced without songs such as *Kurudhippunal* (River of Blood, 1995) (Getter and Balasubrahmaniyan 2008). Songs and dance routines are a common feature of Tamil cinema. The number of songs in Tamil films is not fixed but many films have about five to six songs which would take up about 20 to 25 minutes of the film. Film songs can be used as part of the background music or actively performed by the characters in the film and may be instrumental in the success of the movie (Getter and Balasubrahmaniyan 2008). In addition, the role of Tamil film and Tamil film music in socio-cultural and political life in Tamil Nadu has been widely documented (Baskaran 1991; Getter and Balasubrahmaniyan 2008; Rogers 2009).

Songs in Tamil films are often used to convey emotional sentiments, moral virtues and social ills. Break-up or 'love failure' songs are typically meant to be an expression of frustration due to the hero's break-up with or being 'rejected' by the heroine. Break-up songs are not a new element in Tamil movies and have been around since the 1950s. Earlier break-up songs expressed frustrations of betrayal by the beloved or 'love failure' e.g. Yaarukkaaga (For whom in *Vasantham Maligai*² (Palace of Spring, 1972) and Kadavul Manithanai Pirakka Vendum³ (God should be born as a man in *Vanampadi* (Skylark, 1963). There were also a few songs of betrayal or 'love failure' by women e.g. Kadhalil Tholviyutal Kanni Oruthi (The girl who failed in love in *Kalyana Parisu* (Wedding gift, 1959) and Yaaraithaan

Nambuvatho (Who should I trust? in *Parakkum Paavai* (The flying woman, 1966). Unlike the male ‘love failure’ songs, these songs mostly describe the naivety and vulnerability of being a woman in love.

Break-up songs since 2010 have some interesting patterns. These songs are mainly performed by the male protagonist with his friend/s accompanied by a group of dancers under the influence of alcohol. The dance sequence and lyrics of break-up songs showcase male solidarity through the sharing of suffering among males. It is a way of presenting the agony of rejection shared by ‘all’ males. It is also common to have female dancers who are scantily dressed or showcasing suggestive dance moves to satisfy the male gaze on and off the screen. The female dancers (which sometimes include the female protagonist) are used to portray women as sexual objects and distractions that cause pain and suffering in a man’s life. All break-up songs are done by male actors and are from a male perspective. There has only been one contemporary break-up song featuring the female lead and it happens to be in a satirical film called *Tamizh Padam 2* (Tamil movie 2, 2008).

Many break-up songs are *gaana* songs. *Gaana* songs are urban folk songs reflecting the experiences of the working class in Chennai. *Gaana* songs are fast beat songs. *Gaana* songs may be an example of a cultural form that expresses experiences of marginalization, truncated opportunity and oppression based on class, caste or both. They are a unique genre of Tamil music originating from North Madras, Chennai (Surendran and Venkataswamy 2017). Lyrics of *gaana* songs in Tamil films use common words and expressions in spoken Tamil and English. Colloquial language is used to emphasize the social class of the hero. A break-up song features a hero who is coming to terms with his rejection by consuming alcohol. The intoxicated hero is depicted as being vulnerable and the consumption of alcohol

serves as a form of escapism from the rejection. Alcohol, colloquial words, and dance moves in many break-up songs are used to emphasize the ‘toughness and crudeness’ of the hero. It is a way of showcasing *gettu* – as a way of portraying a rough masculinity to show dominance and transgression through action and appearance (Nakassis 2010). Being tough and crude is portrayed as an important part of being a ‘hero’. A hero is often a man of action and when necessary would use violence to protect the people or achieve his goals (e.g. career goals, social goals, or pursuing the woman he loves). Hence the crudeness of *gaana* songs is another way of emphasizing a ‘rough’ hero and showcasing hyper-masculinity as the most attractive form of masculinity in these movies.

Methods

In this study, lyrics and scenes of eleven break-up songs in Tamil films produced in India after 2010 were analyzed (see Table 1). Even though break-up or love failure songs are not new in Tamil cinema, break-up songs after 2010 have received much attention in the popular media (Srivatsan 2016), particularly after the song, ‘Why this kolaveri di?’ (Why this murderous rage?) from the film *Moondru* (3, 2012). It became the most popular song on YouTube in 2011 with more than 11 million views in November 2011 (Jackson 2011).

While not all break-up songs are as popular as ‘Why this kolaveri di?’ (Why this murderous rage?), break-up songs are widely watched and consumed among Tamil film viewers. To give an indication of the popularity of break-up songs, Vanganna Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro), Venaam Machan Venaam (Don’t bro don’t) and En Bittu Padam Ni (You are my short porn reel) has more than 4.4 million, 5.1 million and 6.8 million⁴ views, respectively, after being released on YouTube by Sony Music. This does not include other forms of consumption such as being in films, music channels, radio broadcasts and personal collections.

Table 1: List of Songs

Film	Song
<i>Mayakam Enna</i> (What is this illusion, 2011)	Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, my love is in tears)
<i>Moondru</i> (3, 2012)	Why This Kolaveri Di? (Why this murderous rage?)
<i>Kalakalapu</i> (Sociability, 2012)	Ivaluga imsai thaangamudiyala (Can't stand their torture)
<i>Idharkuthaane Aasapattai Balakumara</i> (Isn't this what you wished for, Balakumara?, 2013)	Prayer Song
<i>Oru Kal Oru Kannadi</i> (A stone and a mirror, 2012)	Venaam Machan Venaam (Don't bro don't)
<i>Ethirneechal</i> (Swimming against the tide, 2013)	Sathiyama Nee Enekkku Thevaiye Ille (I swear I don't need you)
<i>Varuthapadaathe Vaalibar Sangam</i> (The Association of Carefree Youths, 2013)	Indha Ponnungala Ippadithaan (I understand now what women are like)
<i>Thalaivaa</i> (Leader, 2013)	Vanganna Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro)
<i>Trisha Illanaa Nayanthara</i> (If Not Trisha, Then Nayanthara, 2015)	En Bittu Padam Ni (You are my short porn reel)
<i>Romeo Juliet</i> (2015)	Adiye Adiye Ivale (Hey girl)
<i>Rajinimurugan</i> (2015)	Yennamma Ippadi Pandringelamma (Why do you [all] do this?)

Both quantitative and qualitative content analyses were performed on the lyrics of the songs listed in Table 1 to identify common words and themes used in these songs and scenes.

Quantitative content analysis was used to explore the type of words used to describe women, the target of the songs, use of alcohol or other substances. Qualitative content analysis was used to explore the meanings attached to the way a woman is described, the kind of language used in these expressions, dance sequences, and the context of the songs. The findings from both these analyses are discussed in the following sections.

Findings

The findings of this study show that all the break-up songs have misogynistic elements. This is clear when looking at the words that were used to describe a woman or women. In most of the songs, women were described in a degrading manner or as something that is harmful to a man (see Table 2). Even though the words used were not curse words, they were used in a derogatory manner and indicate that women were the source of all forms of misery in a man's life. An example of this can be seen in the movie *Romeo Juliet* where the hero is rejected by the heroine when she finds out that he is not rich as she had expected. The song *Adiye Adiye Ivale* (Hey girl) is an expression of the hero's frustration of this rejection. Here, the heroine is described as an *araki* (a demoness). In this dance sequence, the hero wears a t-shirt with rapper Eminem's name and image on it. Eminem's songs have been criticized in popular and academic literature as being misogynistic (Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). Therefore, this may be an additional indication of anger and hatred towards women. Similarly, in the song *En Bittu Padam Ni* (You are my short porn reel), the (ex) girlfriend is described as a *bittu padam* (short porn reel) which is equivalent to saying that she is a slut or vamp.

Table 2: Words used to describe a woman/women

Songs	Words used to describe women
En Bittu Padam Ni (You are my short porn reel)	<i>Bittu padam</i> (short porn reel); headache
Vanganna Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro),	Torture
Venaam Machan Venaam (Don't bro don't)	Quarter (alcohol); sugar (diabetes i.e. disease); figure (colloquial term to refer to a woman)
Adiye Adiye Ivale (Hey girl)	<i>Araki</i> (demoness)
Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, My Love is in Tears	Curse
Inthe Ponnungale Ippadithaan Purinju Pochuda	Grave (referring to their eyes)
Sathiyama Nee Enekku Thevaiye Ille (I swear I don't need you)	Poison (referring to their heart)

In addition to this, all songs highlighted a general mistrust of women. Mistrust of women can be seen in three themes: women's body and sexual objectification; (insincere women's) love versus (sincere men's) friendship; vilifying all women. Under the first theme, women were objectified and a woman's body is seen as a tool used to manipulate or harm men. The second theme highlights the destructive nature of a romantic relationship when compared to the supportive nature of male friendship. The third theme looks at the target in these songs. These songs not only express their hatred towards the woman who left them but to women in general.

Women's body and objectification

In more than half the songs, women were highly sexualized or objectified. Sexual objectification refers to the treatment of a person (mainly a woman) as a sexual tool. In the media, sexual objectification is identified with regard to the importance given to the overall appearance or body of females (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012). This is a way of humiliating her and a clear example of sexual objectification because she is identified as an object for men's sexual pleasure. In the song, En Bittu Padam Ni (You are my short porn reel), the woman is described as someone making the hero horny by wearing a nightie showing that she is a sexual object.

Table 3: References to women's body

Reference to women's body	Frequency
Skin color	2
Voice	1
Dressing and make up	4
Physical beauty	1

Sexualizing women in songs or scenes are not uncommon in Tamil cinema but the analysis showed that these songs emphasized how women used their body to harm men. The number

of references made to a woman's body in the songs analyzed is listed in Table 3. In these songs, women were identified as vamps that used their sexual attractiveness to manipulate and exploit men. A woman's body is her only capital to get what she wants and she is identified as being self-centered and would cause the destruction of a man's life. In other words, a woman's physical attractiveness masked the evil in her, and men were trapped by it. In two songs, references were made to a woman's white skin which is generally seen as one of the most important ideals of beauty in India (Mishra 2015; Nadeem 2014). The song, Why This Kolaveri Di? (Why this murderous rage?) is presented as an expression of frustration by the protagonist, Ram, when he found out that his girlfriend, Janani, and his best friend, Kumaran, were moving overseas. He expressed his anger towards the woman by depicting that she is evil. In this song, her white skin was contrasted to her black (evil) heart while in Venaam Machan Venaam (Don't bro don't), the lyric goes:

Tholu mattum vella unna kavutthupputtaa mella

Only her skin is white [but] she destroyed you

Another example is in the song Vanganna Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro). This song is performed by the protagonist, Vishwa at a wedding under the influence of alcohol. Earlier, he was betrayed by Meera, a detective who used him and his love to arrest his father, a benevolent don. In this song, a woman's husky voice was identified as a form of intoxication that would make a man irrational.

Whisky beer bothathan moonu houril pogumna

Husky voicele pesuva pogathu antha bothathan

Appa ni vizhunthana ezhunthida maataena..

Intoxication from whisky or beer lasts only for three hours

The intoxication from her husky voice cannot be treated

If you fall then, you will never rise again

Furthermore, women's makeup e.g. wearing eyeliner, lipstick, face powder were identified as 'baits' to trap, manipulate and destroy men:

Mogathukku naalum poosinaalae powderu

Nerukkathil azhaga rasikka pona murderu

She powdered her face everyday

Going near her to admire her beauty would mean murder.

While emphasizing the physical beauty of a woman, these songs associated it with the harm that could be caused by her beauty. This shows the level of objectification in these songs, because the only positive aspect about women was her body. Her value was based on her body or other aspects related to her body such as dressing and make-up. The attraction expressed in these songs was towards her body and not her as a person because she was described as being destructive and evil in many different ways. Many lines in these songs de-individualize women either by using a plural pronoun or 'it' to imply that all women were the same or treat them as a 'herd' rather than a person. If the heroine who was one of the targets of misogyny appeared in the dance sequence, she usually danced in a sexually suggestive manner, another illustration of how women's bodies are a distraction for men. This shows that a woman in a relationship was only appreciated for her body or physical appearance hence she is seen as a sexual object. She was not seen as an individual but an object that can be used for sexual gratification and can become addictive and toxic. This is similar to other studies that have identified objectification of women in Indian films and film songs (Jain et al. 2019; Karupiah, 2016; Datta, 2000).

(Insincere women's) love versus (sincere men's) friendship

Other than women's bodies, a love relationship with a woman is seen as harmful and this is contrasted to the sincere and supportive friendship given by a man. More than half the songs analyzed in this study have lines that highlighted that women's love was insincere. It was motivated by their need for money or material things (for example, cell phone, talk time, food). Other than that, women manipulate the 'naïve' men either to get their work done (e.g. buy food stuffs from a ration shop, write poetry for her) or to pass time. In all these examples, men were described as the providers of comfort, money, effort while women benefited out of it, reiterating traditional gender roles. The lines in the songs analyzed in this study also highlighted that after getting some material benefit out of the relationship, women would easily end the relationship emphasizing on the 'injustice' done to men. His anger and hate for women is because he was rejected by the woman he loved very much. Therefore, misogyny here stems from his love and devotion to the heroine.

In two songs, Yennamma Ippadi Pandringelamma (Why do you [all] do this?), and Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, My Love is in Tears), insincere and harmful women's love was contrasted with supportive and sincere male friendships. Male solidarity is shown as a source of support and this is highlighted by showing the hero dancing with his best friend and other male dancers sharing a similar experience of rejection. In the song Yennamma Ippadi Pandringelamma (Why do you [all] do this?), women were identified as a disease which destroyed a man's body and male friends were seen as a form of 'vaccine' that cured a man's broken heart. In the same song, other lines that conveyed a similar meaning are:

Kanna kalanga vaikkum figuru vaenaanadaa

Nammakku kanneer anjali poster ottum nanban pothundaa

We don't need women who make us cry

It's enough to have friends who would put up tribute posters for our funeral

These lines emphasized the harm done by women or women's love and contrasted it with male friendships which is expected to last throughout their life. Similar ideas are expressed in the song *Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile* (Love, My Love is in Tears) where having a woman in one's life is identified as difficult and it was better to be with male friends.

The heroes in Tamil films are often portrayed as symbols of hyper-masculinity. Hyper-masculinity is an exaggeration of stereotypic masculine attitudes which includes strength of the male body, rejection of subjective feminine experiences, a strong belief that violence is an important part of being a man, involvement in high risk activities and emotional toughness (Corprew, Matthews, and Mitchell 2014; Vokey et al., 2013). Most of these elements were present in the songs or in the films related to this song. First, everything expressed about the relationship was based on the male experience and perspective and disregarded the female experience in the relationship. Also, all the break-up songs expressed anger and hatred towards women because women were responsible for making strong men vulnerable. These songs also expressed heartbreak and hurt but this would not be accepted as a valid emotional expression for a 'sober' man hence these songs were sung under the influence of alcohol.

These emotions that were considered more feminine could not be expressed by the hero directly and could only be expressed when he was drunk. This was also a way of maintaining *gettu*. In many of these films in Table 1, the hero was portrayed as a 'good' person who had important goals such as supporting his family, pursuing a career or supporting a social cause. Other than that, romance is presented as another goal to be achieved by the man. He would use various tricks, strategies or execute plans to 'win' over the heroine. When all his hard work and effort goes in vain, it is expressed in the form of misogyny so misogyny becomes part of the courtship. Hence, hyper-masculinity, which encompasses misogyny, is portrayed

not only as the most accepted form of masculinity, but also the most attractive form of masculinity in these films because the heroine would eventually fall for this ‘good’ man.

Vilifying all women

Many lines in break-up songs in this study are used to show the harm or misery caused by women to men. Some songs highlighted that love is capable of destroying a man but since all these songs were related to heterosexual relationships, ‘love’ here refers to a woman’s love. Women were so harmful that the lines in four songs expressed intention of violence or harm towards women. In two songs, Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, my love is in tears) and Adiye Adiye Ivale (Hey girl), the hero would like to physically hurt her. In En Bittu Padam Ni (You are my short porn reel), the hero hoped that she died and in the Prayer song, the hero prayed for various mishaps to happen in the woman’s life. The target of vilification in some songs was the woman involved in the relationship but in six songs women in general were the target of vilification. Excerpts from some songs that vilified all women are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Lines that vilify all women

Song	Lyrics	Translation
Ivaluga imsai thaangamudiyala (Can’t stand their torture)	<i>Love-kulla maatinaalum, stove-kulla maatinaalum, theenji povom</i>	Regardless if we [men] get stuck in love or a stove, we will be burnt.
	<i>Thallunge yesamaan Thallunge – indha Ivaluga imsai thaangamudiyala Ivaluga ilaamalum, irukamudiyala</i>	Move boss move, women are like that Can’t stand their torture Can’t live without them
Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, my love is in tears)	<i>Ponnunga ellam namma vaazhvin saabham.</i>	Women are a curse in our lives.
Inthe Ponnungale Ippadithaan Purinju Pochuda)	<i>Intha ponnungale ippadithan purinjupochu da Avanga kannu namma kallaranu theriniji pochu da</i>	I understand what women are like Their eyes are our graves.
Vanganna	<i>Life oru boatungana safetya</i>	Life is like a boat, travel

Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro),	<i>otungana</i> <i>Lovela maatikitta sethula</i> <i>sikkidumna.</i> <i>Hitleru torture ellam history</i> <i>paesuthanna</i> <i>Ivalunga torture ellam yaarumae</i> <i>paesalana</i>	safely bro, If you get stuck in [women's] love, [your boat] would be stuck in the mud History talks about Hitler's torture but nobody talks about their [women's] torture.
Venaam Machan Venaam (Don't bro don't)	<i>Venaam machaan venaam intha</i> <i>ponnuga kaathalu</i> <i>Athu moodi thorakkum bothae unna</i> <i>kavukkum quarter'ru</i>	Bro, we don't need girls' love Their love would destroy you like alcohol
	<i>Figuru sugaru mathari</i> <i>Pasanga manasa urukkidum</i>	Women are like sugar (diabetes), would destroy boys' hearts
Sathiyama Nee Enekku Thevaiye Ille (I swear I don't need you)	<i>Ponnunga manasu nanju</i>	Girls' hearts are poisonous.

The above excerpts are not only misogynistic but are also examples of sexist hate speech, therefore, these songs have elements of hate music. Hate speech can be defined as any form of communication that denigrates a person or a group based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation (Nielsen 2002; Warner and Hirschberg 2012). Hate speech is often used to express hostility towards an oppressed group by degrading, maligning, and discriminating members of that group. It 'expresses hostility to and about historically and contemporarily oppressed groups, and in so doing vilifies, degrades, discriminates, maligns, disparages, and so forth' (Richardson-Self 2008, 2). Sexist hate speech is defined as speech that highlights gender inferiority, degrading and expresses hatred towards another gender (Nielsen 2002).

The studies on hate music have focused mostly on lyrics and have been related mostly to racial hate speech even though there has been some discussion on sexist hate speech in music

(Kahn-Harris 2003; Messner *et al.* 2007). Kahn-Harris (2003, 4) puts forward an important question related to hate music towards women: ‘when does hatred towards *an* other become hatred towards *the* other?’ (emphasis in original). This is pertinent in the context of break-up songs because these songs were meant to express one’s frustration and hurt after being rejected by a woman. However, the analysis of the songs in this study showed that in at least six songs, there were lines that vilified all women. In addition to this, in some songs, the lines that targeted women were sung by more than one person. An example of this can be seen in the song Kaadhal En Kaadhal Athu Kanneerile (Love, my love is in tears). This song is a duet sung by Karthik and his friend but some lines were sung with more than one voice indicating that more than one person is expressing intention to physically hurt a woman. Even if this was done for a purely aesthetic reason, the line *Adida avale, othada avala* (Hit her, kick her) means that he is asking someone else to kick or hurt the woman he is angry with. Since this woman is not known to the others, this can be understood as an expression of hatred towards women and not *one* woman. Similarly, in the song Vanganna Vanakkanganna (Come bro, greetings bro), after the line in Table 3 is sung, we can hear a background voice saying ‘fact, fact’ to support that women destroy men’s life. The lines in the song, Venaam Machan Venaam (Don’t bro don’t), were also not sung by the person involved in the break-up, indicating that hate expressed here was not directed towards a woman who has affected one’s life but to all women. In addition to this, as suggested by Kahn-Harris (2003) even when the lyrics describe one woman, she is described as a generic version of women hence the song or part of the song shows elements of hate music because it expresses hate towards women in general. In the song Yennamma Ippadi Pandringelamma (Why do you [all] do this?), the lyrics described some misleading acts by the girlfriend, but the chorus ‘Yennamma ippadi pandringelamma’ used a plural form indicating that these acts were generic acts of all women hence the frustration and hatred expressed was towards women as a group. Prior to the start

of this song, there were a few lines of dialogue spoken by the hero. In this scene, the heroine clearly expressed her dislike and irritation about the hero's action and speech. The lines were as follows:

*Love pandra mathiri paapingala, love pandra mathiri pesuvingala,
ippa enga appavuku pidikalai, enga aadukkutti⁵ ku pudikalainu scene potta
viduruvoma? Enaku niyayam kidaichavanum!*

You [all] look as though you are in love, you [all] talk as though you are in love,
Now you are claiming that your father does not like it, your kid [baby goat] does
not like it. Should we leave it? I demand for justice!

This dialogue not only made fun of the reason given by the heroine for not agreeing to be in a romantic relationship with the hero but the words used trivialize the experience of a woman. It shows the 'no' expressed by the woman as unacceptable. Her consent was irrelevant because her act of talking to or smiling at him was taken as a form of consent. So, when she later said that she was not interested in the relationship, she was seen as doing great injustice to the hero. To further add to the trivialization of the consent of the heroine, at the end of the song, the heroine heard the same line 'Yennamma Ippadi Pandringelamma' (Why do you [all] do this?), spoken by a comedian on the television and she smiled. This indicated that she was either pretending to be angry with the hero in the beginning of the song or was enjoying the 'harassment' by the hero outside her house. This is only to show that a woman's anger or irritation does not mean anything. Eventually, a woman would accept the 'harassment' and anger expressed by a man as part of their romantic relationship or courtship as long as the man was persistent enough.

The break-up songs in this study showed elements of vilifying, degrading and maligning women. Parts of songs that directly expressed hate towards women in general or indirectly by

de-individualizing them were not only misogynistic but also showed elements of sexist hate music. The exploration of hate in music is vital because music is a social phenomenon and part of a human experience which is universal. It is also a way of communicating meaning and messages to its listeners (Messner *et al.* 2007). The consumption of music is an important part of everyday life in many parts of the world. Music and songs also perform various functions: 'it has been used to comfort in times of need, to entertain, to seek spiritual connectedness, to help pass the time, to persuade, and to provide rhythmic continuity to various social causes and ideologies' (Messner et al. 2007, 515). This becomes even more crucial because of the pervasive nature of Tamil film songs in everyday life of people in Tamil Nadu (Getter and Balasubrahmanian, 2008)

Since music is used to express various kinds of human experience and emotion, it is inevitable that it has been used to express hate and anger. However, music is also not produced in a vacuum, so while it can be a reflection of everyday life, it can also contribute to the shaping of everyday life as songs (such as break-up songs) can be consumed by listeners of all ages. There is much discussion in literature on the conundrum of hate vs. free speech; hate speech in online media or the public realm (Nielsen 2002; Stevenson 2013); and hate speech as artistic expression (Lillian 2007). This chapter gives some insights into how Tamil break-up song as an artistic and emotional expression complicates the understanding of hate in music.

Conclusion and limitation

The break-up songs chosen in this study clearly expressed misogyny. It is a reflection of misogynistic elements in the overall presentation of Tamil films which often presents a male perspective of love, romance and rejection. However, break-up songs serve as an outburst of

the ‘true’ self of the hero (in terms of demeanor, language, appearance) especially since the hero may have pretended to be different in the process of courtship to impress the woman. In addition to this, some songs also expressed hate towards women and show some elements of sexist hate music. The hatred, prejudice and stereotypes towards women highlighted in these songs were presented as the ‘natural’ order of events because women were evil and destroyed men’s lives. Such portrayals imply that women should be treated negatively and were unworthy of a man’s love and devotion. This supports the normalization of misogyny in everyday life because of the central role Tamil films play in the politics and culture in Tamil society in Tamil Nadu. It also normalizes misogyny as part of love and hyper-masculinity as the most attractive form of masculinity. It would be hard to prove that these songs would directly affect the way women are treated by the viewers, but it normalizes the expression of anger and hatred towards women in everyday life.

One of the limitations of this study is that it focused mainly on the lyrics and the scenes related to the song as many studies related to misogyny and hate music. Future research should focus not only on the lyrics but the role of sound (music, different voices) in conveying a message in a song. Even though the same music could be used to convey different ideas or emotions, it would be interesting to explore how much music contributes to the expression of a particular idea or emotion as suggested by Kahn-Harris (2003), that is, if music itself can be used to express hate or the role of music in expressing hate.

¹ Also referred to as soup songs.

² Women are described as the message of death.

³ The lines of this song suggest that God should be born as a man to experience the agony of love of a woman. As the result of this suffering, He would end the creation of women.

⁴ Documented on 4 January 2019.

⁵ The word *aadukkutti* is used here because it starts with ‘aa’ similar to *appa*.

References

- Adams, Terri M., and Douglas B. Fuller. 2016. "The Words Have Changed but the Ideology Remains the Same: Misogynistic Lyrics in Rap Music." *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (6): 938-957. doi: 10.1177/0021934704274072.
- Balaji, Murali. 2014. "Indian Masculinity." *Technoculture* 4: 1-12.
- Baskaran, S. Theodore. 1991. "Music for the Masses: Film Songs of Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 (11/12): 755-758.
- Chatterjee, Tupur. 2019. "Rape culture, misogyny, and urban anxiety in NH10 and Pink." *Feminist Media Studies* 19 (1): 130-146. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2017.1369446.
- Chinniah, Sathiyavathi. 2008. "The Tamil Film Heroine: From a Passive Subject to a Pleasurable Object." In *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film Industry*, edited by S. Velayutham, 29-43. London: Routledge.
- Corprew, Charles S., Jamaal S. Matthews, and Avery DeVell Mitchell. 2014. "Men at the Crossroads: A Profile Analysis of Hypermasculinity in Emerging Adulthood." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 22 (2): 105-121. doi: 10.3149/jms.2202.105.
- Datta, Sangeeta. 2000. "Globalisation and representations of women in Indian cinema." *Social Scientist* 28 (3/4): 71-82.
- Getter, Joseph, and B. Balasubrahmanian. 2008. "Tamil film music: Sound and significance." In *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, edited by Mark Slobin, 114-51. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Kaali, Sundar. 2000. "Narrating seduction: Vicissitudes of the sexed subject in Tamil Nativity film." In *Making meaning in Indian cinema*, edited by Ravi S. Vasudevan, 168-90. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, Joe. 2011. "Nonsensical, Semi-English Music Video Goes Viral in India: The song's lyrics are practically gibberish, but India can't stop listening." *Time*, Nov. 30, 2011. Accessed 1 March 2020. <https://newsfeed.time.com/2011/11/30/nonsensical-semi-english-music-video-goes-viral-in-india/>.
- Jain, Parul, Enakshi Roy, Nisha Garud, and Imran Mazid. 2019. "Sexuality and substance abuse portrayals in item songs in Bollywood movies." *South Asian Popular Culture* 17 (1): 15-29. doi: 10.1080/14746689.2019.1585605.
- Kahn-Harris, Keith. 2003. "The Aesthetics of Hate Music." Accessed 21 December 2018. <http://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=2235>.
- Karupiah, Premalatha. 2015. "Have Beauty Ideals Evolved? Reading of Beauty Ideals in Tamil Movies by Malaysian Indian Youths." *Sociological Inquiry* 85 (2): 239-261. doi: 10.1111/soin.12070.
- Karupiah, Premalatha. 2016. "Hegemonic femininity in Tamil movies: exploring the voices of youths in Chennai, India." *Continuum* 30 (1): 114-125. doi: 10.1080/10304312.2015.1117574.
- Karupiah, Premalatha. 2017. "Voiceless Heroines: Use of Dubbed Voices in Tamil Movies." *Asian Women* 33 (1): 73-98.
- Lillian, Donna L. 2007. "A thorn by any other name: sexist discourse as hate speech." *Discourse & Society* 18 (6): 719-740. doi: 10.1177/0957926507082193.
- Manne, Kate. 2017. *Down girl: The logic of misogyny*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Messner, Beth A., Art Jipson, Paul J. Becker, and Bryan Byers. 2007. "The Hardest Hate: A Sociological Analysis of Country Hate Music." *Popular Music and Society* 30 (4): 513-531. doi: 10.1080/03007760701546380.
- Mishra, Neha. 2015. "India and colorism: The finer nuances." *Wash. U. Global Stud. L. Rev.* 14: 725-50.

- Nadeem, Shehzad. 2014. "Fair and anxious: on mimicry and skin-lightening in India." *Social Identities* 20 (2-3): 224-238.
- Nakassis, Constantine V. 2010. "Youth and Status in Tamil Nadu, India." PhD, University of Pennsylvania.
- Nakassis, Constantine V. 2015. "A Tamil-speaking Heroine." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6 (2): 165-186.
- Nielsen, Laura Beth. 2002. "Subtle, Pervasive, Harmful: Racist and Sexist Remarks in Public as Hate Speech." *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (2): 265-280.
- Richardson-Self, Louise. 2018. "Woman-Hating: On Misogyny, Sexism, and Hate Speech." *Hypatia* 33 (2): 256-272.
- Rogers, Martyn. 2009. "Between Fantasy and 'Reality': Tamil Film Star Fan Club Networks and the Political Economy of Film Fandom." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32 (1): 63-85. doi: 10.1080/00856400802709284.
- Srivatsan. 2016. "Sivakarthikeyan's Remo to Dhanush's Kolaveri Di: When will Tamil cinema bid goodbye to misogyny?" *India Today*, 12 October 2016. Accessed 28 January 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/movies/standpoint/story/remo-review-sivakarthikeyan-dhanush-kolaveri-di-simbu-beep-song-346113-2016-10-12>.
- Stevenson, Ana. 2013. "Making gender divisive: 'Post-Feminism', sexism and media representations of Julia Gillard." *Burgmann Journal* 1 (2): 53-63.
- Surendhar, MK. 2018. "Andrea Jeremiah on lack of strong female characters in Tamil cinema: 'It's a completely male-dominated industry'." 13 March 2018. Accessed 31 May 2019. <https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/andrea-jeremiah-on-lack-of-strong-female-characters-in-tamil-cinema-its-a-completely-male-dominated-industry-4387983.html>.
- Surendran, Saumya, and Sudha Venkataswamy. 2017. "'Machi Open the Bottle!'" Glorification of Alcohol and Stalking in Tamil Film Songs." 4th International Conference on Literature, History, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHHSS-2017) Singapore, Aug. 8-9, 2017.
- Vandenbosch, Laura, and Steven Eggermont. 2012. "Understanding Sexual Objectification: A Comprehensive Approach Toward Media Exposure and Girls' Internalization of Beauty Ideals, Self-Objectification, and Body Surveillance." *Journal of Communication* 62 (5): 869-887. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01667.x.
- Vokey, Megan, Bruce Tefft, and Chris Tysiaczny. 2013. "An analysis of hyper-masculinity in magazine advertisements." *Sex Roles* 68 (9-10): 562-576.
- Warner, William, and Julia Hirschberg. 2012. "Detecting Hate Speech on the World Wide Web." Workshop on Language in Social Media, Montreal.
- Weitzer, Ronald, and Charis E Kubrin. 2009. "Misogyny in rap music: A content analysis of prevalence and meanings." *Men and Masculinities* 12 (1): 3-29.

Acknowledgement:

This study was supported by the Bridging Grant, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 304.PSOSIAL.6316061