



## Unveiling Gender Resistance in the Discourse of Sinf-e-Ahan Title Track: A Study of Empowering Strength and Dismantling of Gender Stereotypes in Pakistani Society

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### ABSTRACT

Using an analysis of the lyrics of the Sinf-e-Ahan title track, this study investigates the representation of the idea of resistance of gender in the modern Pakistan society where the empowerment, strength and abandonment of gender norms is highlighted in the lyrics. Through critical analysis of the major lines of the lyrics, the study reveals how the song disrupts patriarchal views and makes the Pakistani woman iconic of self-determination and resilience. The title track is not just a cultural artifact itself but a strong one, speaking feminist agenda and calling for female liberation in a male-ruled society. This study, based on Pakistan's socio-political and cultural context, using feminist critical discourse theory, and taking a qualitative methodological approach, examines on the deliberate choice of language that resisted conventional gender expectations. The research explains the importance of lyrics which act as a strong tool for promoting feminism and the denial of dominant cultural norms. Exemplifying the potentials of popular music in producing positive gender narrations, this study contributes to academic debates on female representation in South Asian media.



## Introduction

One of the most important of all the means and tools of human communication, language is a distinctive feature of humans. We grow gregarious creatures via our use of language. On the other hand identity is the term for a person's view and expression of his or her uniqueness or group or political memberships including national, ethnic, or cultural identification. Language is very

important in the sophisticated, dynamic, social, and linguistic process of identity construction. Whether at a personal, social, ethnic, organizational, national or worldwide level, identity is always changing as we are always creating and negotiating it throughout our lives. Identities are not only negotiated and socially constructed; ascribed or achieved. Moreover, gender is a constant trait in everything we do. In our linguistic practices, choices and preferences, in newspapers, periodicals, advertisements, and so on, we see various displays and hues of gender in the way we dress up, in the way we behave, in the way we talk, in the way we behave. In essence, one cannot flee it (Suciu, 2007).

Words, one of many crucial categories helping us to understand this planet is gender. Everything we see and understand depends on the gender of our conversation partner and the associated stereotypes. It is essential to investigate the linguistic and gender practices of a given society (Hachimi, 2001). Since gender-based discrimination and powerlessness, at the linguistic or social level, is extensive and universal in nature relating to socio-culturally defined roles and attitude of men and women. Almost every area of life shows evidence of gender inequality. Gender differences are shown as binary opposites. Through the prism of language, social, cultural, and political variations between males and women are generated, expressed, and then investigated (Weatherall, 2002: p.76). In today's technology driven society, media is absolutely essential for the creation, rebirth, and deconstruction of societal and gendered identities (Fairclough, 1995).

Music has been used for a long time as a vibrant and powerful medium in political commentary, self-identity, and a counter to cultural mores. Lyrics in history even in folk songs or contemporary musical pieces have been essential for the dissemination of dramatic stories, resistant to mainstream ideologies, which push society into change while making the voices of the marginal heard. The mainstream media in South Asia, in the form of TV dramas, has a dual authority as a source of entertainment and an influential source that draws both the functioning and the nature of prevailing cultural norms. Thus the military drama *Sinf-e-Aahan*, transforms the earlier female gender stereotypes by empowering women through discursive and thematic practice.

The title of the album, *Sinf-e-Aahan*, really sticks out from its status as mere background music. This song reflects the rejection of traditional gender roles set by our society by presenting women as bold, confident and independent. The lyrics of this song represents the key themes including empowerment, resilience and self-awareness. It reveals a great transformation of "*Sinf-e-Nazuk*" as "*Sinf-e-Aahan*". The use of the term "*Sinf-e Aahan*," meaning "women of steel" is representative of a drastic change from the stereotypic characterizations of women which denigrate them as submissive, weak emotionally, and home bound. Arrogant proclamations that declare, "*Hum apne geet likhein ge*" (We will write our own songs), "*Mitti ki gudiya na samjhe ab hamen koi*" (No one should see us as clay dolls anymore) are obvious repudiations of patriarchal ideas of femininity that call for a womanhood of autonomy, resilience and strength.

In a society where women perspectives are often ignored or suppressed, the inspiring messages of the *Sinf-e-Aahan* OST requires strict academic exegesis. The focus of this research is to examine the means by which the lyrics of the song exponents this type of gender resistance in itself thus helping in promoting the narrative of female empowerment in Pakistani media. Using feminist theoretical lens and discourse analysis, the research attempts to clarify how the song negotiates traditional gender ideologies and propounds a different view of female selfhood. In this way, the study situates *Sinf-e-Aahan* title track itself as an influential entity that has led to contemporary advances in ways of thinking about gender roles and portrayals in South Asian media and culture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Notwithstanding the worldwide gender equality awareness, Pakistani media mostly supports antiquated views about women. Women are mostly portrayed as inferior, bound to the household chores and emotionally dependent. It reinforces patriarchal values, by limiting women's places and chances to the home and not the overall public realm. In line with the fact that drama serials in Pakistan have brought more independent female protagonists into play, engagement of learned scholars in the aspect of how music shapes this narrative story is yet under-advanced. The *Sinf-e-Aahan* title track offers an exciting prospect to examine the use of lyrics to serve as a device of gender resistance, as it eradicates the chronic images of female weakness and type writers. Pakistani media studies are void with a gap as regards the use of lyrics in socio-political expression which this research attempts to fill. The research aims to explore how language as it appears in the original soundtrack of the *Sinf-e-Aahan* creates a new vision of gender, which highlights empowerment, self-determination and nonconformance to traditional thoughts. The research examines the lyrics, melody, and imagery in the song to reveal how it challenges and maims the customary gender norms and the impact in a broader accommodation of empowered female images. Doing so not only fills a major gap in studies on the media, but it also shows the important ability music has of expressing feminist ideas and questioning conventions.

### **Research Questions**

1. What sort of lexical choices are used to portray female empowerment in the title track of *Sinf-e Aahan*?
2. How does the OST challenge gender stereotypes and help in reshaping the perception of strength in Pakistani society?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the different lexical features of the title track of *Sinf-e-Aahan*, portraying female empowerment.
2. To analyse how the OST challenges gender stereotypes and how the lyrics of the track help in redefining the perception of strength in the context of Pakistani media discourse.

### **Literature Review**

In recent years, Pakistani media has started questioning traditional gender stereotypes and promoting women's empowerment. This shift is clearly seen in Pakistani dramas, where previously women were seen only in their domestic roles but now they hold positions as active participants. The role of genders has been studied by various scholars; Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and gender representation challenges traditional gender norms. In her book *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990). She challenges the idea that gender is fixed and emphasizes gender performativity, meaning it is something we perform instead of something we are born with. In her view, gender representation refers to how society depicts and describes gender roles through media, language and culture. Media and music forms play vital roles in normalizing and perpetuating the representation. Rosalind Gill (2007) emphasises how media has changed over the years, where women are frequently shown as confident and independent, but still this can be misleading. Media continuously talks about women empowerment, but on the other hand, it also focuses on how they look. She claims that when women appear empowered, the media still works in a way that supports old patriarchal systems (Gill).

Music has been documented as the form of empowerment in a global context. Railton and Watson (2011) in their book called “*Music and politics of representation*” have analyzed the meanings conveyed through lyrics. According to them, music and lyrics serve as cultural texts capable of negotiating identity, resistance and empowerment, and music is a powerful tool for cultural and political representation (Watson).

Stereotypes in Pakistani dramas are viewed as misleading depictions of gender roles; women are always seen in overly emotional roles, while, on the other hand, males are always authoritative figures (Usama, 2022). According to his point of view, stereotypes are reflections of traditional attitudes. He argues that the representation of stereotypes in dramas is not only reinforcing them but also that the audience has started adopting these stereotypes as norms (Usama).

Tazeen Saeed Ali, Shahnaz, and Sanober Nadeem (2022) conducted a study based on gender discrimination that in the Pakistani context, gender roles are complex because our society keeps women in nurturing roles, and our dominant male members are continuously reinforcing these roles; as a result, females face unlimited challenges in order to seek empowerment. Gender discrimination is so prominent, which means unequal behaviour of a person created on the basis of sex, and this discrimination can be prevented only when the whole nation becomes gender sensitized.

The research by Arooba Abid, Muhammad Ahmen and Ali Raza (2024) analyses how discrimination of genders is prominent in Pakistani drama serials by exploring different discourse markers used by male and female writers. The findings highlight that male authors use more authoritative, controlling and assertive words in their writings. On the other hand, female authors prefer politeness. These differences in writing style are basically highlighting the presence of gender stereotypes. The researchers emphasise that in societal perception of gender norms, media is playing a significant role.

In the view of Fatima Chaudary, Mamona and Ali Baqar (2024), reverse gender roles in the Pakistani drama *Sinf-e-Aahn* have a major impact on societal perceptions about genders. Reverse gender roles emphasises that societal and traditional expectations about males and females are reversed or inverted. The researchers explore how a positive image of Pakistani society is portrayed by challenging stereotypes. The findings basically redefine traditional gender norms, where women are seen as leading characters. Moreover, the study highlights how Pakistani media influence public opinion and perception by portraying more inclusive gender roles.

The current study is different from all the above-cited literature because of the remarkable portrayal of females. In the title track of *Sinf-e-Aahan*, the role of females, cadets, is different from the role of women assigned in other typical OSTs. Most of the OSTs in Pakistani dramas revolve around beauty and emotional struggles, but this song shows the courage and strength of women and the roles which are normally related to men in Pakistani society.

## **Methodology**

### **Overview**

This study undertakes FCDA as a theoretical model for the study applied on the source study: the OST of the Pakistani drama series *Sanfi-Ahan* that challenges gender stereotypes and helps in reshaping the perception of strength in Pakistani society.

## **Paradigm of the Study**

The current study analyzes the title track of Pakistani drama *Sinf-e-Aahan*. The study is qualitative in nature. The researchers analyze and interpret non-numeric data. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative study is a method wherein which solution to human problems is understood and explored, where emerging questions and procedures are involved, and data are collected through natural setting and inductive way of analysis is used for analyzing and interpreting the meaning of the data. According to Kumar (2011), qualitative study is an approach in which situation, phenomenon, problem, or event is described and nominal or ordinal are used for measurement of variables. It is qualitative in nature as it uses research questions exploring and describing the model of discourse. The primary data is based on lyrics of a song from a drama called *Sinf-e-Aahan*, with the collaboration of ISPR. The aim of this study is to unveil the gender resistance in the discourse and examine how the OST challenges gender stereotypes and helps in reshaping the perception of strength in Pakistani society.

## **Sampling**

The sampling in use of the study is judgmental (purposive). Data have been picked up as per using judgment of the researcher. According to Kumar (ibid), purposive sampling or judgmental sampling primarily relies on one's own judgment. Judgment of the researcher has throughout the study been the main consideration in purposive sampling.

## **Theoretical Framework**

For the theoretical framework, this study is grounded in Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to examine the women's empowerment and gender stereotypes in the title track. Feminist critical discourse analysis basically studies theories of gender and treats both genders as equal without any sort of discrimination. This framework was developed by Michelle Lazar in 2005. She combined the feminist theory with the CDA in order to examine how language constructs power relations in discourse, particularly in relation to gender. This approach also helps to analyze how gender stereotypes are constructed and perpetuated through the language. By applying FCDA to the *Sinf-e-Aahan* title track, it sheds light on how the lyrics of the song promote women's empowerment and also challenge gender norms. The analysis reveals how media representations play a vital role in dismantling gender stereotypes.

## **Analysis**

The title song of the Pakistani drama *Sinf-e-Aahan* that talks about the female cadets from different backgrounds is a strong and deep story about redefining women's strength. By deep exploration of themes and lexical decisions, the text of the song destroys the traditional gender norms and pays tribute to women empowerment. The title of the song, "the 'Women of Steel'" expresses protest against patriarchal restraints and assertion for agency, courage, and self-definition.

The lyrics in the strong statement 'Hum apni geet likhain gy, Hum apni ret likhain gy' explains the lyrics that women are no longer satisfied with the handed traditions and read the scripts imposed by them. Instead, they are claiming ownership of their personal and cultural narrative; they are inscribing new meanings to rituals, identity and history. The lexical choice to "write" their own "song" and "rituals" symbolically points to a reclamation of voice and cultural authorship formerly controlled by male leaders. The recurrence of "hum" (we) highlights collective female voice and identity.

Agency remains at the center of the track's resistance narrative. In a society where a woman's worth and role are frequently determined by fate or "kismat," the song challenges this belief directly. Strong metaphors for control over one's destiny are lexical items like "kalam" (pen), "kahani" (story), and "kismat ki lakeeren" (lines of fate). The song encourages women to refuse the predetermined roles society maps out for them and instead become the authors of their own identities. When the lyricist writes, "Kismat ki lakeeren chhod de," it represents a give-up of fatalism- a call to action to change one's fate via will and determination. This statement not only contradicts the stereotype of women as resigned to fate but also urges self-determination as a moral necessity. Moreover, pen, once seen as instruments of knowledge and power, are now used by women. Through this, the track critiques the larger systems denying women the right to tell their own lives while also promoting agency and personal liberation.

The lyrics contain a clear deconstruction of the gender stereotypes linking femininity with weakness. The strong opposition between "to naheen kamzor, alga lay jor" challenges the stereotype of the weak woman and offers one of unrelenting strength. Lexically, "kamzor" (weak) and "zor" (force/power) are in direct opposition, therefore creating a strong and obvious contrast. The track repositions feminine identity as a source of power by utilizing this conflict. It claims a truth; it does not seek for validation. With its repeating chant-like pattern, this line becomes an anthem - a feminist mantra intended to change group social views. Moreover, movement is a powerful metaphor used to represent freedom. 'Chalen is badal pa, Ude is aanchal pa', these lines use images of walking on clouds and flying with one's scarf to confront notions of fixed, earth-bound femininity. Originally emblematic of modesty and restraint, the scarf or "aanchal" is now transformed into wings-an instrument of flight. The use of "ude" (to fly) suggests that freedom calls for the recontextualization of cultural identity rather than its abandonment. Reflecting a post-structuralist undoing of fixed meanings, this linguistic resignification transforms cultural symbols from instruments of oppression to instruments of freedom.

Furthermore, revolutionary resistance shows itself in the redirection of customs and traditions. In the South Asian setting where rituals (rasmein) often determine the roles and restrictions of women, "Rasmein sari tod ke aaye" is a revolutionary statement. Choosing "tod ke" (breaking through) is not apathetic rebellion; rather, it's active, aggressive rupture. It suggests that change depends on the dismantling of prior institutions. This fits with a more general feminist argument that polite negotiation with patriarchy is inadequate; what is needed is a complete dismantling of the very behaviors maintaining inequality. The song sets this break as a prerequisite for genuine self-expression "Ab sunen man kii" to listen to the heart or inner self, long muted by customs. Furthermore, the title track methodically tackles the objectification of women by destroying the doll metaphor. The line "Mitti kii gudiya na samajhe ab hamen koi" addresses the infantilization of women, who are usually viewed as delicate, voiceless, and ornamental. The expression "mitti ki gudiya," clay doll, captures this stereotype neatly: easily shapeable by others and easily broken. Rejecting this metaphor is a strong rejection of a fixed, decorative identity. The song, rather, claims dynamic selfhood and urges the listeners to rethink how cultural language has defined femininity. With this particular picture and by negating it, the song not only resists objectification but also calls for women to be viewed as multidimensional, intelligent, sensitive, and competent people.

The motif of emotional fortitude runs throughout the song effortlessly. Against the common perception that emotionality makes women less attractive, the lyrics reroute it to say that It is a kind of inner strength. "Haan seekha main ne apne aap main jeena" and "Bhool ke saare gum" illustrate how emotional experience serves as a furnace for personal development. Living "within

oneself” and “forgetting all grief” denote the capacity to survive and change suffering into strength rather than denial. This change challenges a fundamental preconception of female fragility by redefining emotionality as resilience instead of weakness. Given the cultural setting of emotional suppression, the intimate and forceful vocabulary of emotional resolution employed here constitutes a transformative action.

The OST's engagement with nationalistic emblems also strongly indicates women's participation in the discourse of collective identity and patriotism. “Kar buland paracham aese hamara” uses the metaphor of raising the flag to promote gendered inclusion rather than only national pride. Often raised by male heroes in media and history, the “paracham”(flag) is now flown by women power. The use of “buland” (lofty or high) serves a double purpose, it denotes not only the literal lifting of a flag but also the rise of women's status in the country. The message is clear: the country cannot move forward unless its women are recognized as strong.

The song also uses the re-signification of common cultural items as a lexical tool. The phrase “Chuudiyon kii zanjeer ko tode” directly relates to the change of bangles, symbols of beauty and marital status, into “zanjeer” (chains). The metaphor here is powerful: what is usually considered as decoration is revealed as limiting. Once more employing the verb “tode,” a recurrent linguistic motif in the song indicating rupture and emancipation, the request to “break” these chains. The repeated use of this word throughout the lyrics helps to unify them both rhythmically and thematically, hence supporting the idea of breaking society limits.

The song claims its message through another layer calls as spiritual validation. "Hai saath rab har kadam" provides heavenly approval of the female path. In a culture where religion is sometimes used to restrict women to certain roles, this line of thought changes the dynamics between faith and feminism. God walks "har kadam" (every step) with them; He is not distant or disapproving. This theological reconceptualization implies that resistance, bravery, and selfempowerment are spiritually approved rather than only socially acceptable. Such a claim argues the women's battle in a religion-focused society and removes the dichotomy between piety and revolt. Furthermore, the collective sense of struggle is shown by the frequent usage of the plural pronouns "hum" and "hamare." The song addresses a communal, intergenerational experience of fight and resistance rather than just individual women. This collectivism amplifies the influence of every line, transforming individual struggles into a society movement. Whether proclaiming "*Hamare haath hai duniya*," or marching ahead in unison, the music creates a story of unity. It is a world of women ready to rephrase their place within it, not one lady against the globe.

Ultimately, the last lines "*Ehasaan, ye teree kadam / Pehchaan, to sinf-e-ahaan*" show identity through action. Framed as results of movement and bravery, "ehasaan" (favor) and "pehchaan" (identity), being born a woman is not sufficient; one must take brave actions to be recognized as *Sinf-e-Aahan*—a steel woman. The ost values hardship rather than romanticizing it. The identity it offers is created by action rather than passed down via custom.

Altogether, the title track of *Sinf-e-Aahan* is a strong argument of gender resistance. It challenges entrenched prejudices and builds a new picture of the Pakistani woman as resilient, assertive, and self-aware through rich metaphors, forceful verbs, and redefined cultural symbols. The song is an ideological statement challenging every listener to think about the position of women in society and, more importantly, the language we use to characterize them, not only an accompaniment to the drama.

## **Findings and Conclusion**

Based on a thematic and lexical analysis of the *Sinf-e-Aahan* title song, the article reveals how the song transforms Pakistan's patriarchal system by transforming it into challenge-friendly force. It reveals the multidimensional empowerment embedded in the discourse by combining lyrical analysis with cultural, religious, and symbolic interpretations. The results show that the title track provides a strong alternative where women are no longer defined by submission, fragility, or silence but rather acts as a counter-narrative to mainstream images of women. Rather, they show themselves as active agents able to redefine rituals, rewrite histories, and change societal norms.

Beyond merely artistic expression, the words reflect an urgent need for change rather than a passive wish for recognition through repeated motifs of "breaking," "flying," and "writing," which call action, movement, and rebellion. Demonstrating how entrenched cultural symbolisms can still be taken back, the traditionally feminine symbols of bangles and scarves are linguistically re-imagined as a means of control and thereafter emancipation. In addition, the shared voice ("hum") which permeates the song throughout creates a unified feminist consciousness of the personal experiences, thus suggesting that people's empowerment and communities' enhancement are inseparably linked. Perhaps, one of the most interesting observations of the spiritual framing of resistance can be cited. Where religion in a usual way decides about gender roles, the statement that God walks "every step" with women designates mass theological credibility to feminist effort. This is especially important. This spiritual affirmation also gives this movement a moral, as well as a cultural foundation by seemingly opposing the postulated clash between belief and women's liberation. The song also chooses to not romanticize pain. Instead, it heralds resilience and states that legacy is product of effort.

Finally, the title track of *Sinf-e-Aahan* is a thickly layered discussion on resistant with its poetic format only as one of its many layers written not only through verse, but also through its provocative rejection of gendered prescriptions and forceful declaration for agency. It's an ideological statement rather, than a theme tune. The song encourages people to rewrite gender stories, see women as whole and capable persons, and begin writing societal standards from inside out. Having a powerful language and changed cultural norms, it exalts the vision of Pakistani womanhood, which is unapologetically powerful, emotionally strong, and spiritually justified. In other words, the choice of words used in the title track is turning it into one of the pillars in the cultural discourse on gender in Pakistan.

## **Future Recommendation**

More research on the *Sinf-e-Aahan* title track can further expand the gender discourse through incorporating a multimodal analysis; specifically what kind of visual images and cinematic elements more forcefully reinforce values of empowerment, agency, and opposition. For example, a strong frame from the title sequence displays the line "She doesn't need a hero, because she was raised to be one" together with a striking image of a female cadets in uniform, exuding strength and self-sufficiency. This visual-textual interaction strengthens the lyrical message and elicits emotional resonance transcending words. Future researchers might study how body language, uniforms, colors, camera angles, and symbolic visuals interact with lyrics to deconstruct stereotypes and foster a strong representation of Pakistani women.

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## APPENDIX

Chalen is badal pa  
Ude is aanchal pa  
Hamare haath hai duniya  
Hamare saath hai duniya  
Hum apne geet likhein ge  
Hum apni ret likhein ge  
Chal padi to kis raste diwani  
To kalam khud likh lay apni kahani  
Kismat kii lakeeren chhod de  
Teri phunk se badle roj ye  
Jhuti pad jaaye ye duniya sari  
To naheen kamzor, aalga lay jor  
Kar buland paracham aese hamara  
Ki dekhee duniya teri himmat aese, justaju teri  
Naajuk kah ki war karee jo tod de ungali  
Rasmein sari tod ke aaye  
Ab sunen man kii  
Mitti kii gudiya na samajhe ab hamen koi  
Ehasaan, ye teree kadam  
Pahchaan, to sanf ahan

Ehasaan, ye teree kadam  
Pahchaan, to sanf ahan  
Roke na bhi, to ruk na paae  
Kar lay khud se hi ye ahad  
Chuudiyon kii zanjeer ko tode  
Ummido kii ik lahar  
Haan seekhaa main ne apne aap main jeena  
Mujh main hai ye dam  
Hai mushkil raasto pa chalnaa  
Bhool ke saare gum  
Iraade teree hum ko ye bataayen, jeet kaa hai azam  
Haan duniya bole jo bhi hum ko Hai saath rab har kadam  
To naheen kamzor, aalga lay jor  
Kar buland paracham aese hamara  
Ki dekhee duniya teri himmat aese, justaju teri  
Naajuk kah ki war karee jo tod de ungali  
Rasmein sari tod ke aaye  
Ab sunen man kii  
Mitti kii gudiya na samajhe ab hamen koi  
Ehasaan, ye teree kadam  
Pahchaan, to sanf ahan  
Ehasaan, ye teree kadam  
Pahchaan, to sanf ahan