

Chapter 2

Meaning and History of Cringe Pop

2.1 Defining Cringe Pop

In the article, 'cringe benefits' published in The Hindu, Prashathy J. Nath describes cringe pop as so bad that we cannot stop watching them. "Welcome to cringe pop, the new vocabulary in the social media world, for videos that go viral for all the wrong reasons" (PARSHATHY J. NATH. (2016, April 29). Cringe benefits. Retrieved from

<https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/the-latest-in-cringe-pop/article8536811.ece>). This new genre is an outcome of digitalisation. The internet serves as the best medium whereas the social media is the one best platform where the cringe contents are released and within no time these contents and the artists become popular and clicks everyone's attention even though some find it annoying. This new genre is the new trend that has taken the internet by storm. This particular genre provides entertainment that is totally mindless yet people enjoy it for no good reason. With continuous repetition of these contents over the social networking sites it catches the attention of the users and hence an avalanche of viewers are received for the contents.

The year 2017 is the year when videos have gone viral for all the wrong reasons. You start watching the video out of curiosity and the next 10 minutes of your life are cringe worthy. Content that is repulsive, yet viral. Pop music has now a new genre named 'Cringe Pop.' Cringe Pop includes music and videos that are so bad that you cannot stop watching them. (What Makes Cringe Pop Viral? (2018, February 21). Retrieved from <https://paulwriter.com/makes-cringe-pop-viral/>)

2.2 Social Media and Cringe Pop

This genre of popular culture, known as cringe has penetrated into the society after the availability of internet in just a touch from every individual's smart phones. Yes, this new trend of entertainment came into being only after the increase in number of smart phone users. With easy and cheap access to internet, anyone with a laptop or a smart phone can instantly upload cringe content and also turn to be a internet sensation in just a day. Internet has made sharing and viewing cringe contents very easy and quick. In no time the contents go viral as soon as they are uploaded at different social media platforms. These contents are hugely available over the social media sites rather than any television channel. As with fast and cheap internet facility the population who have turned into smart phone users from just phone users view these contents and also share it. The cringe artists also target this section of major internet users to shoot up their contents and also gain viewership. Hence any one turns into a star with the help of internet and this new genre is something that the internet users can't get enough of.

2.3 Difference between Genre of Comedy and Cringe

Cringe, as described above are contents that are different from the usual entertainment contents yet still they become popular within no time for no reason. But more than a laughter element cringe contents are subject of mockery and unlike comedy, cringe contents are created as serious subjects not with an aim of projecting it as a comic subject. Whereas comedy as a genre of entertainment are actually created to derive humour from it. It is not unusual the way cringe contents are and aims at making people laugh with its lighter subjects. Well we can very well get the difference if we site examples of both the genres. To define comedy as a genre **Charlie Chaplin's *Mabel at the wheel*** would be the example whereas **Dhinchhaack Pooja's *Selfie maine le li aaj*** can be a better example of cringe content.

Merriam Webster defines the term cringe as an intransitive verb which means to recoil in distaste. Cringe is a genre which is very different from comedy, yet cringe which has the elements of irritation and distaste exists in the Bollywood industry too. But the line in between the two different genres of cringe and comedy is not very clear in the Bollywood industry. There are films which are cringe worthy in Bollywood yet they are classified under the category of comedy. But the genre of cringe has flourished through the new media and social media has hyped its popularity. It is different than the Bollywood mainstream films which are categorised under the genre of comedy as cringe contents and the cringe artists who gain huge fan base in no time, release their contents over social media unlike the big banner bollywood movies which contains elements of cringe. The movies also have big star cast unlike the cringe contents available over the social media. The cringe contents popular in the social media are free source of entertainment. Songs of cringe artist are the main contents which are popular over the social media audiences.

In the article, **5 Bollywood Movies That Made You Cringe**, published by Business Insider India on July 7, 2014 writer Charu mentions five Bollywood movies which are cringe worthy. The writer mentions how the contents of the movies turn to be so irritating that it results to mental exhaustion. The writer mentions how talented and popular actors are casted in these cringe movies. Movies like *Humshakals*, *Besharam*, *Aiyaa*, *Jai Ho*, *Joker*, *Tees Maar Khan* are said to be cringe worthy by the writer.

The following table 2.3.1 states five cringe songs over social media and five cringe Bollywood movies.

SERIAL NO	CRINGE CONTENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA	BOLLYWOOD CRINGE MOVIES
1	Selfie maine le li aaj- Dhinchaack Pooja	Humshakals
2	Angel – Taher Shah	Tees Maar Khan
3	You are a doctor- RajkumarThakuria	Joker
4	Bol Na aunty- Om Prakash Mishra	Besharam
5	Gangnam Style- Psy	Aiyaa

2.4 Beginning of Cringe pop; World Scenario

There is a lot of cringe artists over the internet but certain cringe artists became incredibly popular across the world through their cringe songs and videos which gained popularity irrespective of geographical boundaries. In this chapter the researcher will discuss about the most popular cringe artists who gave birth to this new genre of entertainment and also gained extensive popularity. The genre of cringe pop though began with easy access to internet but this genre dates back to the year 2011 when Rebecca Black, a singer from California released her song named *Friday* which despite of its unusual lyrics and nasal singing voice broke all records.

We'd give it over to Rebecca Black for giving birth to this genre through her nasal and deadpan voice, and irritatingly catchy song, *Friday*, which she released back in 2011 (Cringe-Pop: The Genre That Has Taken The Internet By Storm, Pass on the crown already, Rebecca Black **Pratik Aswal** 13 September 2017). The song though criticised by many became the most popular of all times.

The 13-year-old singer's critically panned synth-pop tune "Friday" has become so popular on iTunes and YouTube that downloads could net her hundreds of thousands of dollars, Forbes reported. Black's music video, which has become a laughingstock for its low-rent concept and amateur production, has already netted more than 30 million views since it was uploaded on Feb. 10, which the financial website estimated could earn Black and record label Ark Music Factory \$20,000. (Rebecca Black 'Friday' music video and song could earn her hundreds of thousands of dollars Soraya Roberts Daily News Staff writer March 22, 2011)

Along with the 12 million plus (and counting) hits, *Friday* broke into the iTunes Top 100 chart within two days. It currently sits at No. 69 on the digital downloads chart. (Five things you need to know about Rebecca Black's *Friday*, Stephen Baldwin March 11, 2017).

After Rebecca Black the another cringe video that topped the charts was South Korean Singer Psy's *Gangnam Style*. In the video the singer performs steps like horse moves which too went viral, leaving people to copying it for fun. It was the first video to gain one billion views over YouTube, making a record in the Guinness World Records, bagging the title of most liked video over You tube.

“*Gangnam Style*” has secured an unlikely accolade after UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hailed South Korean rapper Psy's global hit as a force for world peace. Ban has found himself displaced as the best-known Korean on the planet by the astonishing success of the chubby rapper's catchy video — and the veteran diplomat could not be more delighted.(‘Gangnam Style’ gets UN stamp of approval Agence France-Presse October 10, 2012). With obtaining huge numbers of viewers over the social media sites *Gangnam style*, which sang the lifestyle of the people of the Gangnam district of Seoul topped the charts within no time and brought South Korea into limelight. The step performed in the video was seen tried by almost everyone, starting from celebrities across the globe to every individual. It has influenced the Pop culture all over to a great extent.

The former American President Barack Obama too was carried away with the sway of Gangnam Style. He even tried out the step and in a press release after his visit to South Korea in the year 2013, he mentions “and in this sense, this visit also reflects South Korea's extraordinary progress over these six decades. From the ashes of war, to one of the world's largest economies; from a recipient of foreign aid to a donor that now helps other nations develop. And of course, around the world, people are being swept up by Korean culture -- the Korean Wave. And as I mentioned to President Park, my daughters have taught me a pretty good Gangnam Style. (Laughter.)” (Remarks by President Obama and President Park of South Korea in a Joint Press Conference. (2013, May 7). Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-pressoffice/2013/05/07/remarks-president->

obama-and-president-park-south-korea-joint-press-confe)In the year 2018 another cringe artist who came into the lime light of the internet users was, Laura Clery whose song *Potato*. The article published by the zee media Bureau, the writer describes the song as the perfect example of cringe pop.

2.5 Beginning of Cringe Pop In Asia

The next artist who entered the cringe entertainment world is the Pakistani Cringe artist Taher Shah. He is Pakistan's most followed internet superstar. His first release *Eye to Eye* propelled him into the world of online fame in 2013. With over 45,000 Twitter followers there is no doubt that Shah has gained a sizeable cult following. (Why Pakistan's singing angel Taher Shah has taken the internet by storm By BBC Trending What's popular and why, 9th April, 2016). His another famous internet hit is his next release, *Angel* which came popular in many countries including Pakistan. It gained more than two Lakh viewers within twelve hours.

The '*Angel*' comes three years after Shah achieved phenomenal success with his first – 'Eye to Eye' which made him a household name not only in Pakistan or South Asia but even beyond. He even won 'accolades' for the song mocked for its lyrics written in non-sensical English. (Taher Shah returns to storm the internet with his latest single '*Angel*' By Atikh Rashid, updated 9th April, 2016). His cringe contents broke the records over the social networking sites and made him the famous Pakistani cringe star overnight.

Just when Indians had started to grudgingly accept that the Pakistani music scene could be a shade better than ours with their superb Coke Studio, singer Taher Shah has managed to tilt things in our favour with just one song (Surendran, A. (2016, April 9). Taher Shah: killing me softly with his song. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/taher-shah-killing-me-softly-with-his-song/article8455461.ece>) this Pakistani cringe artist is one famous cringe star dominating this new genre of entertainment all over the globe. With many emerging stars in this genre comes another popular internet sensation and cringe artist from Japan, DJ Kosaka Daimaou aka DJ Piko-Taro. Unlike all other cringe artists from different countries of the world, DJ Piko Taro also rules the internet with his cringe song which made

him an internet sensation within no time. His song '*Pen Pineapple Apple Pen*' became popular over the internet.

Besides telling the world that it's okay to mix snake prints with leopard prints, DJ aka Piko-Taro has also become a viral sensation with his bizarre lyrics, Piko-Taro's infectiously entertaining dance moves and no explanation whatsoever about what a pineapple and an apple are doing around a pair of pens. We really don't know what's going on here, but Piko-Taro really does seem like a fun guy to be around. (Pen Pineapple Apple Pen: This cringe pop wonder from Japan has taken internet by storm, Sep,28 2016)

What is also intriguing about this video is that the caption has this cryptic message in the video description, "*It is ... to the person whom I do not entrust with music to affect a heart.*". With thousands of covers, parodies and tributes and over six million views on the original *YouTube* video, we guess that this you're going to hear a lot more about *Pen Pineapple Apple Pen* if you don't have it stuck in your head already! (Pen Pineapple Apple Pen: This cringe pop wonder from Japan has taken internet by storm, Sep,28 2016).

The guy doing the singing, if you can call it that, is Japanese singer and comedian Piko Taro. The original song is just about one minute long. Posted on YouTube in August, it became a monster hit after reaching 9Gag's Facebook page, where it amassed 50 million views and 1 million shares. The video is viral on YouTube as well, where it got more than 5 million views. (The internet is obsessed with the next 'Gangnam Style', and it's about fruit, Chris Smith , September 27, 2016).

This fruity cringe song which turned to be popular as much as the Gangnam Style, reached number 1 on the *Billboard* Japan Hot 100 chart ,the shortest single to chart on the *Billboard* Hot 100. In the year 2016, it reached 6 on Japan Hot 100 Year-end Chart. Such was the popularity of this strange yet highly watched song over internet.

Another famous cringe pop artist who is called the *Rajnikanth of Bangladesh* by his fans and followers is Ashraful Alom Saeed popularly known as Hero Alom, who in the process of pursuing his hobby began making movies and hence turned into a cringe star popular among people in his country as well as across many countries.

2.6 Cringe Pop in India

Along with the coming up of cringe pop sensations in different parts of the world, India too have their own cringe stars. While “selfie maine le li aaj” turned to an internet anthem all over the country, the singer Pooja Jain aka Dhinchaack Pooja, turned in to an internet sensation overnight. Dhichaack Pooja who have been in the limelight since the year 2015, with her song “swag walitopi” , than Daaru in 2016, Selfie maineleliaaj, Diloonka shooter, Babu De Dethoda cash and AfreenBewafahain in the year 2017 have gained millions of views and is one of the most famous internet sensation. Mugdha Kapoor Safava in her article *Dhinchak Pooja's 'Swag WaliTopi' Is So Bad It Will Ring In Your Ears Forever* , writes, “A girl by the name 'Dhinchak Pooja' has taken cringe-pop to a whole new level with her first single *Swag walitopi* that was released on YouTube on June 15. The video has gone viral and is being shared on every social media platform, including Facebook and Twitter. It has garnered over 121,406 views in just a month.”

Another cringe pop sensation who has taken the internet with storm, is Omprakash Mishra. With his rap video “**Aunty ki ghanti**” he has earned millions of viewers in no time. Samiksha Patnaik of Hindustan times in her article , *The psychology of cringe-pop fans: Why people like Omprakash Mishra's Aunty kiGhanti?* Writes how fans despite of the sexist lyrics have defended the singer, Omprakash. “Despite its sexist lyrics, YouTuber Omprakash Mishra’s Aunty kiGhanti song has taken the internet by storm, with many of his fans defending his song as “entertaining” and “catchy”. From taking to the streets to “celebrate” his song to sending death threats to a journalist, who demanded YouTube to remove the video, there are plenty of fans who defend YouTuber Omprakash Mishra’s *Aunty kiGhanti* song as “entertaining” and “catchy”. The self-proclaimed ‘Rap King’ is the latest to join the likes of Dhinchak Pooja and Taher Shah, who are regarded as the stars of cringe-pop – a genre of pop music which is “so bad that you cannot stop watching them”. Some 30,000 people on

YouTube have liked Mishra's song, which most critics have called out for its crass and violent sexism. Many have criticised the song for its "cringe-worthiness" and its suggestive and misogynistic lyrics have attracted intense media scrutiny."

But they is not the pioneer in bringing up this bizarre trend into the scene in the country. We have some other cringe stars that have been not much a sensation as Dhinchack Pooja or Omprakash Mishra, as their contents penetrated much before India had such easy access to the internet. But with the internet being the most loyal source to the cringe stars, anyone and everyone turns into an internet sensation and their contents reach people at a much faster rate.

Shewali Tiwari, in her article, 12 Cringe Pop-Songs That Were Gold Before Dhinchak Pooja Showed Up writes, " Months, maybe years, before Dhinchak Pooja shattered everyone's peace of mind, with *DiloKa Shooter Hai Mera Scooter*, we lived in a sane world. True? Well, no. We have always had gems who have gone a step ahead, and more, in terms of making terrifying content. These people may or may not possess the skills that one needs to make a song, but you know what, that hasn't stopped them."

Cringe pop culture came into the Indian entertainment scenario, with the coming up of the cringe stars like Deavang Patel , a Gujarati Singer, actor, producer. Patel is famously known for his parodies of famous songs like *Somwar Ko Sita* Parody of *Ina Meena Dika* by Kumar, Main *Adha Raha* Parody of *TuTu Hai Wohi from Ek Haseena Thi*, the starting music is based on the techno song *Around the World (La LaLaLa La)*, *Hai Kamar Hoi Kamar* Parody of *Whenever, Wherever* by Shakira, *TV serial Jab Banta Hai* parody of *Thoda Resham Lagta Hai* by Meghna Naidu, "*Bhajiya Garam* parody of *Dum Maro Dum* from *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*", *Susu-Susu* parody of *Suku Suku* by Shammi Kapoor *Cat Mouse Dog* parody of *Jailhouse Rock* by Elvis Presley, *Chalte Chalte* parody of *Chalte Chalte* from *Pakeezah*, *Dil Chahta Hai*" parody of *Dil Chahta Hai* from *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Monkey Monkey*" parody of *Money, Money, Money* by *ABBA*", *De De Thappad De* parody of *Hey Baby* from Doubt,

Main *Hoon Mad* Parody of *Bad* by *Michael Jackson*, *HoJata Hai Scene* Parody of *Rasputin* by *Boney M.*, *Kambhakt Machhar* parody of *Kambakht Ishq* from *Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya*.

Another famously known star who is also popular for his cringe contents is Harjeetsingh Sehgal who is popularly known as Baba Sehgal by his fans. His songs like *Thanda Thandapani* , *Aja meri Gari Mein Baithja* and to the most recent one , *adrakwali chai* are hugely popular among his fans.

Apart from these two popularly known cringe stars and their popular songs there are other cringe contents which gained many viewers before people started humming to selfie *maine le li aaj*. How can we not mention the very sensational dance from the movie *Desi Spiderman* having the lyrics “*spiderman tune churaya mera dil ka chain*” , or say Mohd Aziz’s *Khooniraat*, Sushil Jadhav ,Yadnesh , Patrick and Vinayak Malkari’s *Attitude*, Veenu Mallesh’s *Its my life whatever I wanna do*, Avi, Ritik, Gaurav and Nazim’s *Katta mere haatmein*, Wilbur Sargunraj’s *love marriage*, Hari Shankar Kalavoor’s *silsila hain silsila*, and Gudesswa’s *metro se Delhi mein baharayi hain* are to name a few among the rapidly trending cringe stars and their contents.

2.7 Cringe Pop in Assam

Coming to the popularity of cringe contents, in Assam, apart from the penetration of cringe contents from across the world and the country the state itself have their own cringe stars. Talking about popularity and penetration of cringe pop into the Assamese entertainment industry, the beginning was marked by the most popular cringe sensation Rajkumar Thakuria or popularly known as Mr. Rajkumar who in the year 2011 entered into the world of cringe with his first film *Terrorist entered my house*, after that he has been directing, producing, acting, singing in more of his films and is the most popular figure in the state as well as across the world. With films like *criminal hunter, super master, super warrior, Mr.james, wondrous Army* and song like, *Agar main Chand hotatoh, Dibani tu Dibani, Anamika You live in America, you are a doctor, Dibrugarh meinaya, ChalChal Arunachal*, Mr. Rajkumar has been the most popular cringe sensation specially among the younger generation.

With numerous fan pages over the social networking sites and YouTube channels with his contents Mr. Rajkumar is the most viewed and popular cringe star of the state.

There is a huge wave of cringe artists over the internet, enjoying fanbase despite the mockery and criticism they receive they enjoy the popularity which is measured in terms of views and shares. Along with this most favourite cringe star of the state, there are other cringe artists who have been catching the attention of the viewers with their contents. Cringe artist KussumKoilash gained much fan praises after releasing his song *Disco Bhonti* which was termed by many as “rap bihu”. Another cringe content which went viral was the song *jeans pant, half pant* by shristiNandini another cringe artist of the state. Cringe artist, Aryan who has gained popularity because of his song *High Heel-Disco Bihu rap, Tai mukbhalpai* by another cringe artist Jitu claims himself to be the rap star of Assam. He was also given the title of “Hero Alom of Assam” by a popular Assamese troll page over Youtube named *The Indian Buoy*. Another Assamese cringe Bihu which had gone viral is *Jaanmoni I love you*.

Some other wrongly went viral songs are Subashana Dutta and AbheenabMoran's *RajanigandhaVimal Pan Masala, Lean and Thin* by singer Duliajanor Debajeet , *BilahiBilahi* by Parbin Pori, *Bengena Bengena* by singer Hemanga, *Chandmari Adabari Ganeshguri* by singer Indrajit. These are to name a few most viewed Assamese cringe contents available over the internet which have gained much popularity through the social media sites.