

# Animal: A Jungian Descent into Childhood Experiences, Toxic Masculinity, and the Search for Belonging

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the psychological depths of the Bollywood film "Animal," employing Jungian theory and feminist critique to analyze its themes of disturbed interpersonal relationships, childhood trauma, misogyny, and the portrayal of women. We delve into how characters grapple with their shadow selves, seeking validation through destructive cycles of violence and the desperate yearning for belonging. The film's reliance on stereotypes and its glorification of violence is also examined, raising questions about its overall message and potential societal impact.*

**Keywords:** toxic masculinity, shadow, disturbed interpersonal relationships, aggression, gender

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## INTRODUCTION:

"Animal" is a visceral and unsettling exploration of the human psyche. It plunges viewers into a world where characters are haunted by the ghosts of their past, trapped in a web of toxic masculinity, and driven by the primal need for love and acceptance. This research paper delves into the film's psychological depths, utilizing Jungian theory and feminist critique to illuminate its complex themes.

### Disturbed Interpersonal Relationships and the Shadow Self:

The film paints a bleak picture of fractured connections. Vijay's relationship with his father, Balbir, is a desolate wasteland of neglect and emotional abuse, shaping Vijay's impulsive and aggressive nature (Singh, 2023). This dynamic mirrors Jung's concept of the "shadow self," the repressed and unacceptable aspects of our personality that manifest in destructive ways (Jung, 1959). Vijay's entire quest for validation becomes a "shadow dance," projecting his darkness onto others and perpetuating a cycle of violence that engulfs everyone around him (Hillman, 1978).

### The Echoes of Childhood Trauma:

"Animal" relentlessly echoes with the haunting whispers of unresolved childhood pain. Vijay's exile to boarding school and Balbir's emotional absence leave him emotionally crippled, while Abrar, ostracized after witnessing his father's suicide, becomes mute, his rage festering within (Singh, 2023). These characters embody the lasting impact of childhood trauma, highlighting how it can twist individuals into unrecognizable versions of themselves, forever trapped in the throes of the past (Herman, 1992).

### Women as Pawns in a Patriarchal Game:

While Geeta stands as a beacon of strength and independence, challenging Vijay's controlling tendencies, the film also stumbles into familiar pitfalls. Women like Zoya become mere pawns in the men's power struggles, manipulated and objectified, blurring the lines between victim and perpetrator (Freire, 1970). This reinforces the dangerous notion of women as manipulable objects, perpetuating the very misogyny the film seeks to critique.

### **Stereotypes and the Glorification of Violence:**

The film's reliance on stereotypes, particularly in portraying the Haque family as inherently vengeful and violent, is a cause for concern. This reinforces a harmful "us vs. them" mentality and risks perpetuating prejudice (Tatum, 2017). Additionally, the excessive glorification of violence, especially in the climax, raises questions about the film's message. Does it truly condemn violence, or does it desensitize viewers, blurring the line between entertainment and reality? (Giroux, 2000).

### **A Glimmer of Hope in the Darkness:**

Despite its bleakness, "Animal" offers a glimmer of hope. In the end, Vijay confronts his shadow and finds reconciliation with his father, a testament to the possibility of healing and breaking free from the shackles of the past. The film serves as a stark reminder of the enduring human desire for connection, even in the face of unimaginable trauma and violence.

### **CONCLUSION**

"Animal" is a complex and disturbing film that deserves to be examined through a critical lens. By employing Jungian theory and feminist critique, we gain a deeper understanding of the film's exploration of trauma, toxic masculinity, and the desperate search for belonging. While its reliance on stereotypes and glorification of violence raise concerns, the film ultimately offers a powerful message about the enduring human spirit and the possibility of redemption, even in the darkest depths of our psyche.

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