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## SHAH RUKH KHAN AND THE STAR’S CORPORAL GUISES WITHIN FILMIC DISCOURSE

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CHAPTER 4
SHAH RUKH KHAN AND THE STAR’S CORPORAL GUISES WITHIN FILMIC DISCOURSE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to look at the representation of Shah Rukh’s body as a performative vehicle that enfleshes the subjectivities enacted. The innate materiality of the star text negotiates with the corporal guises furnished to it diegetically. The star body, a visceral trope articulates the gender discourse of the nation, where the star body emerge as a site inscribed by the ideological contestation of discourses and representational politics of culture wherein the body of the star across films lends itself to both discipline and transgressions, compliance to heteronormativity as well as polysemic de-stabilizations and subliminal homoerotica. The star body while ceding to hegemonic heteronormative codings also privileges his corporal guises being read as contra-hegemonic and even unknown and uncanny. The epidermal adornments of the hero’s viscerality though mostly complicit with a capitalist market driven consumerist aesthetics, this consummability has not always precluded, the body’s representation read differently at another level, betraying the hegemonic heterosexual masculine resolution or closure; the body of the star have given expression to ‘othered’ alternative masculinities, and even cracks and fissures within heterosexual maledominance. The multiple guises and plural articulations of masculinity through the star body of Shah Rukh as a truly popular cultural text is caught within the interplay of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The star body’s peculiarity and his characteristic castings replete with intertextual allusions render him to a corporal site of recycling and nostalgia, invocative of heroic predecessors. The multiple imaginings of the star body’s positioning within filmic texts render it to be a fluid, visual signifier of nation, gender (and masculine prototype) at a specific historical juncture.

4.2 STAR AND THE BODY

Body of the star-actor is ‘a vehicle of performance’ ‘an interpretative vehicle’ an ‘artifice’ (Vasudevan. 2010, p. 304). It is an important value in portraying a character as Dyer argues: ‘What a character looks like indicates their personality with varying degrees of precision’ (Dyer. 1979, p. 123). The physiognomy of the star is crucial to the roles enacted i.e. the star’s face, his height, his countenance. Besides hair style and clothes reaffirm the physiognomy’s type as it is intended by the narratives (ibid). Looking at the relevance of the star body as a ‘visceral signifier’ (Hansen, 2005, p. 259), it needs to be seen how its relevance gathered strength in cinematic medium. In popular cinema there is a slow departure from theatrical conventions and customs, towards and different kind of logic where the central figure acquires an importance over and beyond the symbolic importance accorded by drama itself. There are certain parts of film technology itself that contribute to such a possibility. While in theatre, acting ability is gauged by tangible feature such as dialogue delivery and the grosser gestures, whereas the
actor’s countenance, although not irrelevant did not constitute an element in the narrative process as much it did so in the cinema. ‘The face, the body in its physical presence and detail, these became new elements that added something to the narrative, something that may will have gone unremarked by the audience, but would nevertheless have had a tremendous impact, drawing audiences to the cinema and away from the stage irreversibly’ (Prasad. 2010. p 9).

Looking at the way film medium uses the star body, Dyer argues :‘The star’s image is used in the construction of a character in three different ways : The film may, through its deployment of character and the rhetoric of film, bring out certain features of the star’s image and ignore others. In other words from the structured polysemy of the star’s image certain meanings are selected in accord with the overriding conception of the character in the film. This selective use of a star’s image is problematic for a film, in that it cannot guarantee that the particular aspects of a star’s image it selects will be those that interest the audience’ (Srinivas, 2009. p. 137).Preminda Jacob’s understanding, examines the body’s signification through the a triumvirate composite of stardom, viz. character, persona and image. It sees how body is cast to suit a character, how it allows to be consolidated in a typecasted persona and how the body lends itself towards an image construction that acts as a commodity in the extra-cinematic sphere. All three moments constituting stardom - viz. character, persona, and image facilitate a slippage (confusion, ambiguity or blurring) between the fiction that is the on-screen character and the reality that is the actor, creating a fantastic aura that ultimately begets the star. The first moment of this slippage of star character, hinges primarily on an actor’s physical attributes. In film casting, certain physical characteristics and innate behaviors are often more important to the selection criteria of the producer or director than the actor’s histrionic capabilities. The film audience, continuously exposed to the actor’s intimate physical features and involuntary facial movements - repeatedly accentuated by close-up filmography - grows to associate these traits with the character the actor portrays. The actor thus provides a living presence, an authentication to the character. This process is often so successful that audiences often find subsequent renderings of similar character by other actors to be less real and less satisfying’ (Jacob. 2010. p. 119). This position explicates the physicality of the star as a vehicle of the character played; it acts as a personifying medium that renders the character believably attached to the star.

Looking at the various ways the narratives have made use of Shah Rukh’s body (and image) from its structured polysemy , it can be argued especially in view of his success and popularity that this body deployed was perceived to be suited to construct the characters, mediate the roles enacted, wherein Shah Rukh’s body came to convey its quintessentiality via his innate bodily performance, style, idiosyncratic gestures and corporal attributes and also articulate convincingly the discourse within which the narrative plot was embedded. Not withstanding the variegated roles inscribed on the body, viz. the angst of a neurotic and its seething vengeance and violence, the hybridity of diasporic, urban flamboyant romantic youth, the agony of the Muslim ‘Other’, vehiculated through Shah Rukh’s body and even the discourse of global capitalism informing films and advertisements that have also inscribed the star body with sartorial emblazonment and an indulgent idiom of consumption, the body did not subject itself
to any radical transformation or re-morphing given that the characters were not disparately placed along social axes of class, status, age, sexuality etc. This continuity in bodily appearance is notwithstanding the subtle variations or differential characterization within each film. In other words, the body of the star, Shah Rukh, facilitating a slippage in all three moments sutures the real corporeality with the represented in terms of its socio-cultural positioning. This appears to be unlike the various experimentations attempted by actors like Amitabh Bachchan (in a musical track in Namak Haram), Southern star Kamal Hasan (in Chachi420) or SRK’s competing star Aamir Khan (in an ad film for Coca-Cola).

Star persona of SRK, borrowing Jacobs understanding thus offers another moment of confusion between the portrayed and portrayer, occurs over a protracted period of character acting in that demanded broadly similar corporal appearance. When actor is typecast in similar roles in successive films this slippage becomes increasingly fluid, the actor’s persona becomes imbued with the qualities of the characters he or she has portrayed in the cinema. For example, by the playing the exemplary hero in several successive films the film actor’s physical attributes becomes emblematic of specific social, cultural or moral qualities. (Jacob. 2010. p. 119). Shah Rukh’s portrayal mostly as urban, youthful, romantic, even diasporic hero is culturally inscribed on his clothing and bodily disposition and is indicative of the personality. This positioning has been in terms of his age, class, status, habitus occupation of the roles performed. Dyer says that there is a ‘dual’ articulation of dress wherein dress styles the body, establishes the identity and defines protagonists’ progression through different styles and self definition within the film narrative (Dyer, 1979 ibid. p. 24). Costumes of Shah Rukh’s culturally coded body are to be read as to how the clothed body is an index of the role. Clothes, worn by the star, mostly defined by urban, cosmopolitan, global trendy fashion wears or designer brands allowing for his embodiment negotiate also with the star’s gross biological body. What is conveyed is not just a culturally determined body, but coded body that also negotiates with star’s bodily gestures typical style, physicality and idiosyncrasies. He is placed in his times - but such temporal positioning while contemporary has also had its aberrations in a few roles like the historical character in Ashoka (2000), the ethnic Rajasthani villager in Paheli (2005) the stereotyped Muslim/Pathan stle in Hey Ram (2001), the deaf and dumb simpleton in Koyla (1997), the hypermasculine cyborg in RA.One (2011). Apparently in diverse roles, Shah Rukh’s characters mostly were similarly positioned in larger social milieu, viz. in urban educated, secular, cosmopolitan middle class individual. A similar social/class positioning of Shah Rukh’s body across various subjectivities - allowed his body to carry its qualities from one film to another as a slippage. Jacob remarks: ‘Capable of externalizing the moral message of the film upon his person and as part of his personality, the star carries these values from one typecast role to another. In the viewer’s mind the star’s persona becomes so entwined with the characters he portrays in the movies that even in extra-cinematic contexts many stars feel compelled to “stay within character” - that is, to continue projecting the general qualities of those typecast roles’ (Jacob. 2010. ibid. p. 119).
The other slippage is the moment of production of star image - a continuity from the cinematic, wherein the image is commodified in the extra-cinematic sphere. This image, largely a spill-out of the star persona consolidated across a series of typecasting is a marketable asset for the media entrepreneurs and product manufactures who deploy it suitably to meet their purpose. This argument is discussed in the next chapter. In this context it may be said that Shah Rukh’s physical attributes, his body encoded by his star persona and typecast roles provide a perfect raw materials to promote commodity to the urban, cosmopolitan educated burgeoning middle class. Looking at the phenomena of stardom as a composite whole of character, persona and image produced within a seamless continuum between the “reel” and “real” (Jacob. ibid. p. 120) might accord the star’s body spread across a large repertoire of texts an attribute of the “absence presence”. (ibid). wherein the body mediating the image and the persona attains a certain aura and ‘an equally elusive presence’. The qualities associated with stardom like magicality, aura, charisma can only solicit a corporal disseminations and here lies the significance of star-body both within the film and beyond. As per Guy Debord’s original idea, spectacle was defined as “capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image”. Reversing this original thesis, Foster, as cited, suggests that contemporary spectacle needs to be seen as an image accumulated to the point where it becomes capital”. In this new world replete with design, signs and surface (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 134) the body spectacularized becomes an image. It is this image that circulates as a commodity from films to other commercial sites of media production.

Each star-body has its uniqueness each body has means or traits that distinguishes it from other star-bodies. The differential casting of stars can be further effective through the varied symbolism of body, its stylization and its posturing and even idiosyncratic traits including mannerisms, gestures etc. Bachchan’s long-legged lanky body and its dance, Dev Anand’s bending body and its sauntering style of walk, Raj Kapoor’s Chaplineque walk, Sanjay Dutt’s bulging muscularity and its sulking semantics, the flamboyance of Shammi Kapoor and his nephew Rishi Kapoor made body the most crucial indexicality of distinction. In the case of SRK it has been his histrionics, his energized body movements, the emotional excess, the ‘boyish’ charm, the dimpled cheeks, etc typify his enactments. This uniqueness can be instantly recalled, remembered and help audience to construct a continuum or trajectory of physicality of the star and its motion, movements, gestures, style, fashioning etc. across his multiple filmic and extra filmic guises. While star bodies are cast within narrative discourse, each star has his uniqueness and this gives him/her a certain unique persona or image. Shah Rukh’s body was mediocre and yet came to be noticed as it espoused a language of the times. Chopra, observes: ‘ Shah Rukh Khan is shirtless...rests on his boyish, smooth chest...Khan is Bollywood, dude du jour..The limpid brown eyes are always scanning the surroundings ..On screen, the energy translates into rapid-fire speech, quivering lips non-stop gesticulation. It almost compels the viewer to keep watching... Innocence plus manic energy – that is Shah Rukh’s voice’ (Chopra,2011)
Studying the semiotics of the cult image in an Indian context. Daniel Smith as observed by Preminda Jacob notes that despite the advent of new mediums of representation such as photography, the “recognition factors” for the fashioning of icons, “a standard posture; a characteristic gesture … remain unchanged” (Jacob. 2010. p. 189). It is the body that provides the audience (and fans) with “recognition factors “that enables a star’s corporately to gain a real value.

Recognising the significance of star body, Ravi Vasudevan notes that body is not just an object but space is articulated and configured through body whether its rural life or global forms as seen in SRK’S spatial positioning as diasporized as well indigenized body. Body as ‘a vehicle of performance’ ‘an interpretative vehicle’ an ‘artifice’ is subject to play and transmutation(Vasudevan, 2010,ibid,p.304) and this is truly realization in seeing Shah Rukh change from graphically disfigured gory body of of early films to sculted muscular body later.

The posturing of body and its difference from other enunciates a difference not only by its uniqueness but also the sheerco-incidence of the body’s innate qualities and the hero’s performance to make the body ‘speak for its times’. In the case of Bachchan body became a register of new form of masculine bravado, a kind of a cult that radically departed from the soft romantic bodies of earlier heroes. It is this body that gave voice to the period of unrest. Tall, lanky, lean, cold, stern eyes, serious face baritone voice departed from prevalent notions of heroic bodies. Bachchan body in contrast to Rajesh Khanna, the surging star whom Bachchan dislodged endowed with a more ‘softer body’ and looks attracted a huge female fan following. While Bachchan’s emergence generated raging popularity among males across age barriers from eight to eighty, eventually women renounced gradually their idea of heroic image in favour of this aggressive male body and persona. This enraged, violent body stood for the present crisis of Vietnam war, the Naxalbari movement, Bangladesh war, youth revolt in U.S. itself. Every young enraged sought to destroy old rules. (Anando lok. 15/5/1999 p. 13-14).

If Bachchan’s enraged body catapulted to high level mass popularity - embodying the disenchantment of the times singularly emerged as a popular representative heroic body ‘as the unchallenged superstar for years with no one to be his second’ (Anandolok 15/5/1999. p. 14), by no 1990’s things appear more fragmented. There was no singular heroic body around which contemporary discourses gravitated. ‘All of a sudden Mumbai appeared fragmented. All arights of Mumbai focused on three Khans. All three Khans - Aamir, Salman and Shah Rukh are joint first. If one can appeal with his romantic image in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (Shah Rukh), the other can evoke pain and anguish as in Ghulam (Aamir), while the other is not emotional but instinctual (Salman) and in a casual approach he can open his shirt to sing. Each of the three heroes have their own orbit and have build their respective circle of influence and streams of loyalist, fans, friend and critics Each represent a different style of acting and maintains a district image/persona. (Anandolok. 6/3/99. p. 20-22)

Each of the three heroes represent different brands of masculimity in which their bodies and its inscription acting style, natural disposition, style, mannerism etc. give each a distinct identity. ‘All three of them have created individual brand-identities. Shah Rukh embodies naughtiness of
youth of an America returned teenage smartness, Aamir embodies restrains emotion and controlled expression while Salman opens his shirt and exposes his bare body to catch feminine interest’ (Anandolok, p. 28. 21/2/1999). The distinctiveness of each male star thus derives from their respective bodies. Even the directors are aware while casting the male star. If Khan is the archetypal “Yuppie” Raj/Rohit, the urban, stylish, NRI body in films of Karan Johar, he is the agonized tragic hero Devdas in Bhansali’s classic re-make of the novel. SRK’s biographer notes: ‘Be it Bhansali or Karan, both use the common traits of heightened visual pleasure through well planned sets and costumes, and of heightened emotions. The only difference is that they are on the opposite sides of the coin: Bhansali’s emotions revolve around the dark, heavy moods of extreme agony and ecstasy and an incredible and overwhelming sense of boss, while Karan induces light, happier, warmth, cheery and optimistic moods, with subtle sense of nostalgia of good old days. And Shah Rukh seems to fit in comfortably, at least on celluloid, in both of these arenas. Both Karan Johar and Bhansali claim that this is because of his personal attitude and attributes …’ (Sheikh. 2009. p. 297). Sheikh’s biographical analysis of the star and his insiders understanding of the industry help understand, especially Shah Rukh’s casting in heightened emotions of both pleasure and agony amidst opulent sets draws from the deeply emotive body - its excess and mannerisms. The body’s capability to project escalated emotional states typifies the star body and hence his casting in such roles. The theatricality of his body and its ability to deliver is often attributed to his foundation in acting skills from Delhi’s elite theatre circle of Barry John.

If “excess” of Shah Rukh’s body was visually explored by Bhansali and Johar in its emotive rendition and in its consumerist or indulgent trappings, then as Sheikh observes is equally relevant the considerations of Aditya Chopra and his understanding of SRK’s body and masculininity. Chopra’s says : ‘When I met Shah Rukh, as a last resort I told him, ‘Dekh, (means look) Shah Rukh, I understand you don’t like love stories and you find them pansy. But if you want to be a superstar in this country, you will never be one by being a man’s hero. You’re a masses ‘ hero after Baazigar but you remain a man’s hero. Girls like you, but they are scared; they don’t know whether they can trust you. In this country, you have to be every mother’s son, every sister’s brother and every girl’s dream guy to be a superstar. I can tell you one thing : you may do my movie or not but you must do love stories, because I think you’ll be fantastic in them. And my gut instinct tells me that love stories are what will give you your real identity…’. Aditya Chopra, narrates his experience of convincing the star who played a psychotic killer, a film from their own production house Yash Raj Films, directed by his father Yash Chopra. The reason for casting him in the essentially love tale DDLJ, Chopra says that Shah Rukh ‘did not have any preconceived image about; someone who could surprise you. For me, the scene in which he tells Simran(Kajol, the heroine) that he’d slept with her the might before was what defined Raj. At that moment, I wanted Simran and everyone who was watching it to believe that it’s possible with this man, he could have done it. Shah Rukh did fit the bill. The turning point in the character comes after he tells her that he is Indian. Till then, he’d been playing with bras. ogling at girls unabashedly. I did not wan Raj to be Ram. I wanted him to be thoda bad
mash…’(that is a bit mischievous) It may be argued that Chopra located certain plasticity in his masculine persona and body that gave it a certain unpredictability. His body and masculinity had a malleability that convincingly entered both guises of the evil and the virtuous with equal ace. Chopra narrating to Sheikh adds further: “When I saw Darr, I saw a side of him that I didn’t know, which he was hiding. He wanted roles where he could have blood, something in which he could hide himself… In my movie I wanted him without any crutches, where he didn’t have to hide himself. No blood, no gore, no villainy nothing. And I could see that given the chance, I could tap that… For, we’d already seen his anger. And seing love through the same eyes would be very special. And I was right”. (Sheikh. 2009. p. 317). It is this intensity that also attracted the veteran Yash Chopra who subsequently directed in ‘Dil To Pagal Hai’, ‘Veer-Zaara’ and ‘Jab Tak Hain Jaan’.

Still again, it is this malleable body known for flamboyance and histrionic capability which became a stranger once again in Swades. The unpredictability and strangeness emanating both from his relative newness to the industry and his lurking intensity guarded by a innocuous mediocrity of the body allowed him to be the ‘strange’ psychopathic other in his early films like Darr, Baazigar and Anjaam. It is this strangeness, this image of an “outsider”(read, to the industry with no family links) or an other that gets positively recast in the film Swades. Sheikh writes why and how this strangeness suited the role of Mohan Bhargava the NRI, Nasa scientist who visits a remote village. ‘But what I wanted to know was why would a director, who had made a commercial movie like Lagan, want to make a movie with a conscience and also take the biggest star the country has to offer as a double whammy. Ashutosh Gowarikar, the man behind the decision, does not have any regrets and recounts: “Let me give you an example of the boat image we used in the publicity design of the film. Before doing my film, Shah Rukh had done everything that you could ever dream of - designer clothes, introduction from a chopper etc. But here, he was not dolled up and presented with sheen. You did not expect him to be seated amongst those people in the boat. He was an outsider in a world that did not belong to him. I needed Mohan Bhargav to come in from another world and enter a world that he is only aware of. That’s why I choose Shah Rukh. I was not casting Mohan Bhargav, who is an NRI, who comes here and speaks with an accent… I thought as an outsider when a star of that status enters Karanpur, it would create the impression that he is an outsider. He’s now going to become one with them.’ (Sheikh. 2009. p. 323)

Shah Rukh’s body providing an interface to a crucial juncture in Indian history, viz. liberalization is constructed discursively, with the narrative discourse negotiating with the body’s uniqueness and its graphic detail. And as an actor while his body of work has grown his physical body has been further inscribed layered - providing audience to engage with the film by making its entry through the numerous means provided by the body that has evolved with the times. Despite mutable corporal guises he puts on as an actor the body remains a fluid signifier of its times and also a carrier of past. However to anchor it to its temporal constituents the star body gains a generic anne and for Shah Rukh it is other Rahul or Raj (Shah Rukh’s character was called Rahul in Darr (1993), Zaamana Deewana (1995), Yess Boss (1997), Dil
To Pagal Hai (1997), Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998), Har Dil Jo Pyaar Karega.(cameo role,2000), Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (2001), and his about to be released film Chennai Express(2013) and the star was Raj in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge(1995),Badshaah(1999), Mohabbatein(2000),Chalte Chalte(2003), Heyy Babyy(special appearance, 2007)and Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi(2008))(The Telegraph t2,SRK:Name Game and Fan Frenzy,p.10,31/7/2013)

Another important narrative device that implicates the body is that of masquerade ( see, Menon-Broker,2005) and while masquerade works at various level and a star’s film biography itself allow us to see a star in multiple guises, here I would like to see how the star body masquerades within a single film. While this is not uncommon, it is quite common in Shah Rukh’s biography of films. The male protagonist’s mediation of multiple ‘identity-less’ positions (or roles) renders an instability within the text which is resolved through masquerade. Shah Rukh’s body has masqueraded either in a bid to thwart the uncanny self - the stranger from erupting (as in Darr, Baazigar, Don and Don 2) or to reincarnate itself bodily (via rebirth with Karan Arjun or Om Shanti Om) or to remorph himself (as in Ra One as a cyborg or a spirited apparition as in Paheli) or to acquire a new corporal identity for some higher goal (as in Main Hoon Naa as an army officer changes over to an elderly school boy). In the following pages the discussion concerns the body of the star articulating via its corporality the narrative discourse within which it is situated.

4.3 DISCIPLINED BODY

Foucalt’s idea of disciplining the body is extremely pertinent to understand the subjection of the star’s body to aestheticization and fitness regime. The incarnation of the law and intextuation of the body occur not only during moments of transgression but also in everyday practices. All that seek to aestheticize the body and keep its shape and retain its fitness are means of disciplining the body within a social political regime of desirable appearance. Clothing, cosmetics, slimming jogging are all means of incarnating rules and intextuating the body. The relationship between the body beautiful and the body ugly, between healthy and the unhealthy, the well and the badly dressed, the groomed and the unkempt, the muscular and the flabby are social relationships of norms and deviations and therefore political relationships aimed at natmalizing in the body the norms of those with most power in the social formation. The meanings of health are social and not physical, the meanings of beauty are political and not aesthetic health and beauty are equally sociopolitical and are therefore discourses for the exercise of social power (Fiske 1989 p 91-92, also see, Turner,1984). The adorned and embellished consumerist body steeped in symbols of consumption affluence and pleasure sporting global brands, carrying expensive accessories, traveling and living abroad, riding luxury cars on one hand and the strictly produced perfectly contoured and sculpted six pack body exemplify a certain paradox. In either instances, the bodies are enhanced to constitute excessive texts where the norms of a good body are exaggerated, so that they exceed their official functions of health or effectiveness and become a spectacle(( ibid p 94). Such a rendering of body as spectacular robs its reality. Fiske argues that rather than naturalizing them is a potentially subversive semiotic practice. It is the naturalized and thus invisible norms that
perform their ideological and disciplinary work most effectively (ibid). The body is an economic body, it is a saleable commodity invested with value and glamour/charm that can seduce real, potential or aspiring consumers. The obsession with a desired body and attempts to discipline it within a health regime (for a musculature, sculpted body) or a glamour paradigm (for a consumerist body) is characteristic of what Dyer as cited in Fiske argues as part of bourgeois ideology at work. This however remains obscured as ‘the sexualized body, its aestheticization and its signification of social norms and deviation all work to disguise the fact that the body provides the essential labour of capitalism’ (Fiske ibid p 95-96). Dyer, further argues, ‘The problem of the body seems to me to be rooted in the justification of the capitalist system itself. The rhetoric of capitalism insists that it is capital that makes things happen, capital has the magic property of growing, stimulating. What thus conceals is the fact that it is human labour and in the last instance the labour of the body that makes things happen. The body is a problem because to recognize it fully would be to recognize it as the foundation economic life; how we use and organize the capacities of our bodies is how we produce and reproduce life itself.’ (ibid) Against this understanding the present researcher would seek to posit Shah Rukh’s body as an instance of disciplined body, as an illustration of and within the discourse of body building and maintenance of the male body via aestheticization, spectacularization, eroticization, body sculpting etc.

Sociological accounts consider body as both an intimate and social object: intimate in the sense as Fred Davis ascited argue that it tends to serve as a kind of visual metaphor by identity; social in the sense of being subjected to social and moral pressured and structured by social forces. The body is invested in rich symbolic and cultural meanings. The body is subject to moral imperatives and social regulations in the Foucauldian sense. Through modern institutions like prisons hospitals state and also through other aesthetic and moral practices at microlevel such as tailoring and fashioning the body allowing codes to operate coordinate and manage and impose ways to constitute everyday embodiment (Entwistle 2002 p 137).

In this section the study seeks to see how imperatives of commodification, capitalist market forces and consumerist drive subject the body of the star, Shah Rukh to a certain governmentality via a regime of muscle sculpting and codes of adornment. Both eroticization and consumerist guises of the star body in the constructionist sense are ordered, produced and regulated through the discursive regime of media, market and global market forces.

4.3.1 Sculpted Body and Bollywood Tradition
Muscularity is a virtue for contemporary Bollywood. It should be ideally fatless, well structured well contoured, defined and endowed with an athletic built. This muscularity abhors excess. It is slender but not thin. In other words its ideal embodiment is in contemporary stars like Salman Khan, Hritik Roshan, Arjun Rampal and likes. This obsession with muscularity stems from the need to look good and how well the body is maintained through a disciplinary regime of diet, exercise etc. None of the heroes avoid body building exercises. While Sunny Deol, Sanjay Dutt, Salman, Hritik are known for it, others like Shah Rukh, Aamir, Ajay Devgan are
also joining this fitness brigade. However, muscular body is not any recent phenomenon. In 50’s there was P. L. Jayraj and Pradip Kumar. Dara Singh entered film on the strength of his body. But the first Hindi film star who enamored the audience with his body was Dharmendra. An admirer of Dara Singh in his struggling days he visited gym on a regular basis. In “Phool Aur Pathhara” Dharmendra’s bare chest was exposed before an awe-struck audience. Many women audience of those days confessed that they have repeatedly seen the film particularly for that one scene only and have dreamt of that man. Dharmendra inspired an adolescent boy who started building his body and he is none other than Vinod Khanna. Vinod despite playing villain attracted women audience who thronged to see him than the hero and eventually Vinod became the hero and such was his bodily charm that had he not taken an exile from films, Bachchan success, says some producers would have been doubtful. Mithun began his career on the strength of his rock-carved body. And later Dharmendra’s son Sunny sculpted his body at the gym before being launched as an actor. But it was Salman Khan whose body in the film Maine Pyar Kiya (1989) created a great uproar for its sexual appeal. It was for the first time that against a fully-clad heroine the camera voyeured his bare chest - a direct expression of his sex appeal. Thousands of posters were sold. The muscularity of Salman Khan was first to discover ‘male sexuality’ in Hindi commercial films. It led to a sudden mushrooming of health clubs, fitness centres and gyms all over India. (Anandolok,22/4/2002. p 6-14). What an ideal male body is to be moderately muscular, chest to be trapezium. Robust chest, broad shoulders, fatless waist, strong legs. This defuses attractiveness of male bodies (ibid).

For starting a career in films, it has become a near imperative for aspiring actors of Bollywood to produce gym hardened washboard of six pack (abs) abdominal musculature. Beginning in the 1990s actors like Sanjay Dutt and most famously Salman Khan began muscling in a bid emulate their Hollywood peers Sylvester Stalone and Arnold Schewarzenegger. Soon men across India began to mimic the Indian stars giving rise to fitness obsession. Rachel Dwyer, an eminent scholar of Indian cinema, said early male stars like Dilip Kumar and Dev Anand never took off their shirts nor drew attention to their bodies. Now Indian actors are waxing their legs and chests and posing for suggestive photograph. A fit body according to Dyer has become a symbol of status. The ‘muscular body is very much a class thing’ affirmed Dyer. The whole fitness cult in India is a marker of social mobility. Prashant Talwalkar chief executive of one of India’s biggest charms of fitness centres remarked that till 1990s body building was considered a practice among lower income group men. It was Salman who popularised weight lifting and a muscular physique. Salman has given rise to a popular demand amongst young men and boys to have a body like him. Most Bollywood’s leading men exhibit their bodies on screens – sculpted by professional help and trainers. A competitive spree is noticeable among male stars. It represents a personal triumph says a new hero. The rising machismo is a part of self promotion of male stars, as the media seizures on every little barrier broken to create a news around the male body. This exposure of skin and the body by the male star is becoming a trend that runs contrary to the continued conservation practiced in films vis-à-vis display of sexual intimacy on screen. This trend is seen as response to the liberalization of the market and
proliferation of a globalized media (22.7.12 The Telegraph 7 days p 12 Quest for Six Pack: Jim Yardley).

Liberalisation marked an important departure in the sense that it challenged the female monopoly of being the sex object, almost redundant. A daily observes: ‘She’s vanished – and Vidya Balan’s bosom heaving in the film ‘The Dirty Picture’(2011) under lines that’ anxiety to recuperate the position ceding ground to men. ‘Celebrating the era of the female sex symbol with silky elan the film highlights this figure’s absence from cinema today. Once upon a time, heroines flashing décolletage twirling in saris amidst thundery rain, casting looks at the hero – and viewers – that were part humorous twinkle and part bedroom invite were de rigueur in Hindi cinema. In an era of censorship , the sex symbol heroine was vital. The onus of blending fantasy and normalcy lay entirely upon her. Heroes were to be honourable, forth right and macho spouting poetry and flashing fists with equal vigour. But sexy? That was the job of the heroine…Instead, in the 1990s as India liberalized, its heroines became wimps, shrinking in every way. In 1995, Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge verbally challenged the heroine, either taken by her lover or given by her father ..In fact, the female sex symbol’s vanishing meant the arrival of the sexy male star, exemplified by the three Khans. Through the 1990s, each created a distinct cinematic kingdom for himself. Thereafter, the trio’s sex appeal took over. With his overt machismo, Salman Khan was the people’s choice. Aamir Khan’s appeal blended with the idea of his intelligence. Shah Rukh Khan exemplified the quirky appeal of the unpredictable – turning up to claim another’s bride or playing bad boy with a snarling pont, he underlined how the Khan’s sexual presence made the heroines redundant. Suddenly cinema revolved around male cleavage metrosexuality, see through shirts, six pack abs, boyish pouts – these defuse today’s sex symbol. Vidya Balan may trill Ooo ..la-la…and Katrina Kaif can tap into the gringy appeal of older desi girls across item numbers. But the truth is, our sex symbols are now wholly male, Female viewers aren’t complaining. And judging by the roars when Salman Khan takes his shirt off, neither are the men.Welcome to the whole new Dirty Picture then – where the hero is the sexiest thing on screen’. (21.12.2011, The Times of India, Kolkata in The Times of Ideas: The Real Dirty Picutre: Step aside, heroines – a new breed of sex symbols rules the screen today).

Projecting male (heroes) as sex symbols relied heavily on their body – its shape size and built, Viscerality as the report suggests became important to the star image and film persona on screen and even for off screen engagements. Shah Rukh ‘s sexuality was explored not only through his body sculpting but also in his diegetic casting as a desirous obsessive male mostly pursuing other male’s woman(wife and even widow (as in Deewana) endowing his body with strong sexual intonations and making his body variously manifest its urge to win over or acquire the woman, wherein his own body or corporal presence was sexualized both overtly and covertly to win over female attention.

Looking at Fiske’s reading of Madonna and the sexual politics involved wherein she is seen to parody the patriarchal control over feminine sexuality via excess (Fiske 1996 in Storey), it may be argued that patriarchy that it believed to control femine sexuality upturns it. It may be asked
if male body eroticization is part of patriarchy’s attempt to narcissistically celebrate its own body – asserting a kind of autoeroticism (see Fiske, ibid) – i.e. self control over his own body and sexuality, a sexual politics of male making or is it the counter hegemonic homoerotic impulse that seeks to eroticise the male body as a part of homosexual pleasure, albeit in the domain of the visual. What may be also asked if the male body’s eroticization is an anxious response to compete with female sexuality and if heterosexuality is ceding ground to oppositional readings. It has also been suggested that the recent tendency amongst men, seeking to embrace physical strength, hardness and power is to reinforce the traditional masculine ideal – and at the same time to distinguish itself from ideas about femininity. The female form is traditionally conceived as soft and rounded, while the masculine form, in contrast, is taut and lean. The male preoccupation with abdominal stomach muscles in the face of decline in physical labour and increased girth, embodies an attempt to hold on to this traditional masculine ideal of muscular strength and conditions (Wykes and Gunter, 2005 p 5). With heroes ceasing nearly to play working class, marginal roles where robust, muscular bodies typify the characters, the patriarchal anxiety to sustain masculine ideal and compete with women’s bodies as equally exhibitionist has given rise to body building obsession among male Bollywood stars. Body morphing and conforming has contributed to discourses of malleable masculinity in which most leading male heroes can be located. While sexualization of female bodies remain central, eroticization of male bodies reassure men of their sexual power (ibid p 39). These bodies, following Hollywood tradition (see Morris 2007 p 444) as in the case of SRK is largely an ‘object, spectacle, prosthesis, site of desire, commodity, product of labour – but it is first and foremost a way of making a living…the body is a means to a wider kind of independence’ (ibid).

It is important to turn our attention to Hollywood, the prime source of body building practices by film actors and this has been the major source of inspiration for the Hindi film industry. Unlike routinely displayed non-white male bodies in the western, the plantation drama and jungle adventure films, until the 1980s bare white bodies were less common in cinema, the major visual narrative form of twentieth century except in two genres of the boxing film and the adventure film. The vulnerability of an exposed and bare white body, otherwise bereft of other status markers or symbols of wealth power, class and concomitant power borne by clothes and grooming tried to hide its inadequacies through its visual attractiveness, superior look and well built physique. In fear of being exposed as weak and de-legitimated in comparison to the more able non-white bodies an attempt was to project white male bodies that were well-built and trained. The built body served to affirm supremacy of white male body without loss of legitimacy on being risked of exposure. Popular heroes like Tarzan, Hercules, Rambo came to be played by actors with champion and/or built physique. The whites came to seize the dominant position in body building activity and gained pre-eminence in the field as its true representatives either as heroes of action films or on cover pages of magazines while marginalizing the non-white “Body building in popular culture articulates white masculinity. The body shapes it cultivates and the way it presents them draw on a number of white
traditions’ and also is sufficiently invocative of US-led global consumerst culture ‘and a fortiori Californian, lifestyle, with a characteristic emphasis on ideas of health, energy and naturalness…body building’s US-ness in its concatenation of labour and leisure pain and consumerism.’ (Dyer,2002, p 262 – p 264).

It is this influence of US-led consumerist culture that can be located in the contemporary body building practices of Bollywood male heroes. The influence of an US influenced disciplined ascetism and narcissistic Hedonism has come to characterize popular masculine images of newly affluent consumerist societies as in India. The virtues of white built bodies have come to be aspirational virtues for leading Bollywood actors: ‘many of the formal properties of the built body carry connotations of whiteness: it is ideal, hard achieved, wealthy, hairless and tanned. The built body presents itself not as typical but as ideal...Whiteness is an aspirational structure, requiring ideals...All the rhetoric of bodybuilding is founded on this and most vividly seen in the aspirational motifs of the posing vocabulary, bodies forever striving upwards... The built body is hard and contoured, often resembling armour. Body building has three goals: mass (muscle size), definition (the clarity with which one muscle group stands out from another) and proportion (the visual balance between all the body’s muscle groups). The first two of these present a look of hardness: the skin stretched over pumped up muscle creates a taut surface, the separation of groups seems, as bodybuilding jargon has it, to “cut” into the body as stone. Definition and proportion also emphasize contour, of individual muscle groups and of the body as a whole. Posing conventions, maximizing size, tightening for definition...further highlight these qualities, the use of oil (or often in films water or sweat) on the body emphasizes it as surface and hence its shapes’ (ibid.p.265)

Such an idealized body and techniques of contouring or sculpting the muscled body is now part of Bollywood masculinity and most heroes are exposing their bare sculpted body. Shah Rukh’s body also, as does many heroes of the Bollywood film industry, upholds the virtues of a hard, hairless tanned, affluent, tauted and achieved body, distinct from images of earlier toiling working class bodies. It is a disciplined body and articulates a sense of distinctiveness and boundedness against being merged with any other non-cultivated non-achieved non-sculpted male body. Such a body is enabled by an affluent society and its disposable income that privileges successful stars like Shah Rukh to produce such a body. The body is subjected to a certain regime of discipline, plan and practice, rather it involves professionalised techniques. The ability to create or produce such a body speaks of both affluence and discipline. ‘The built body is an achieved body, worked at, planned, suffered for. A massive, sculpted physique requires fore thought and long term organization; regimes of graduated exercise, diet and scheduled rest need to be worked out and strictly adhered to; in short building bodies is the most literal triumph of mind over matter, imagination over flesh...and many contemporary muscleman films, include sequences showing such disciplined physical preparation’(ibid.p.266).

Film magazines were agog with Shah Rukh’s strategy of bringing a new change to his physiognomy to achieve and plan a six pack body for the film Om Shanti Om. The capital
intensive regime separates his body from the indigenous wrestlers and muscle man or working class bodies. Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone’s iconic bodies of Hollywood carry signs of hard, planned labour and introduces a professionalized regime to the sculpting of a star body. The body having no signs of status inscribed on it, on sheer strength of its own visual appeal ensures to articulate its habitus. Dyer observes the body as a site, inscribed by affluence, treatments and cosmetic care. ‘The built body is a wealthy body. It is well fed and enormous amounts of leisure time have been devoted to it. The huge firm muscles of Gordon Scott, Steve Reeves or Arnold Schwarzenegger make the simplest contrast with the thin or slack bodies of the native people in their films. Such muscles are a product and sign of affluence’ (ibid p 266).

It is thus hegemonic model of an US inspired sculpted, wealthy, affluent, well fed and well groomed body that Bollywood heroes like Shah Rukh displays. The body like the muscled body of Hollywood stars and hairless and tanned, an imperative for sculpted bodies that typically connotes ‘the privileges of leisure(having the time to lie about acquiring a tan), wealth (buying that time, acquiring an artificial tan a traveling to the sun ( and a healthy lifestyle.’ (ibid p 266).The planned body of hero is thus allowed to gain a superiority endowed with virtues that have been purchased or secured through wealth, status time and professionalized care. It affirms the ability of the star body to intervene with his given natural body.

Dyer posits an analogous relation between built white body and the imperial enterprise. The white man’s body which is not naturally endowed but planned and achieved, landscaped, sculpted improvised and produced through discipline is parallel to the mission of colonial expansion through strength and planning. (ibid) And when this male body ideal finds a renouned legitimacy in the idiom of consumerist capitalist culture and assumes an importance in contouring star bodies one can be easily locate a transformation by Oriental other. It can be posed to ask if Shah Rukh’s body represents a post-colonial mimicry of Western heroes?

The disciplined, sculpted and professionalized bodies of stars like Shan Rukh Khan and the heroic league of the Hindi film industry despite influences of US-dominated culture is equally informed by a different project of nationhood from the creation and deployment of athletic bodies of male that has been endemic to anticolonial insurgency and struggle ( see, Mills and Sen 2004 p 6). The gym shaped diet controlled boedies of heroes can be seen to ’shaped by the demands of transnational encounters, but they are also culturally authenticated…Like the athletic bodies that were created by colonial schools and the imperial experience of an earlier era….is susceptible to cosmopolitanism and multiple citizenship’ (Mills and Sen 2004 p 10).

Studies have revealed how body discipline have historically been regarded as means and ends of nationalism. Physical fitness as embodiment of nationalism and nationalistic agenda have been common among North Indian wrestlers. The nationalism associated with wrestling, known as Bharatiya Kushti or Pahalwani takes shape in the context of gymnasium where young men engage in a complex regimen of physical fitness and training but there is an important sense in which the institutional structure of gymnasiums collectively defines an imagined community of men intent on building their bodies so as to rebuild the nation (Alter 2004 p 17).
The materiality of the nationalist body and its figurative expression of nation through sports like wrestling or yogic practices is different from professionalised body of contemporary times. While nationalist project disciplined male bodies, contemporary sculpted bodies are not subsumed by the political project of somatic nationalism. The disciplinary project of a regime of self control engages with the question of nationalism differently. It seeks to rebuild national character of the masculine body within a global capitalist regime –almost in a competitive gesture in view of global (Western) trends. Invested by power of capital, exhibitionist star bodies traversing national and international space can be seen as a site of identification, being instilled with notions of India’s modernity and increasing visibility on the international arena..(Munshi, 2004 p 163).

The desirable body of the hero, in constant circulation has a look that seeks to meet international blue print of masculinity erotic glamorous, healthy, fit and worked out. Such bodies of Bollywood male stars in an increasingly globalized world connects India to the outside world..This investment in the body and its physicality coincides not unnaturally with the period of India’s economic liberalization (ibid p 163) Such body as seen in Shah Rukh in a bid to compete is meant to meet the new exacting international standards popularized through greater circulation of global trends. A newspaper report on the star’s fitness regime observes :

‘Shah Rukh takes his fitness training as seriously as religion feels his trainer, something that he cannot do without, at least five times a week,. He has never failed his appointments with Sawan at the Body Sculptor, the fitness studio (gym) where he works out. On occasions, when he has to be outside Mumbai for shoots or otherwise, Sawan travels with him and arrange for his workout, which is tailor made for Shah Rukh. While gyms at the star hotels where he puts up suffices mostly, ‘some specialized equipment travel with my client, Sawan said from Mumbai. What perhaps makes Shah Rukh his trainer’s favourite is the extremely high basal metabolic rate of the actor, which makes it possible for him to take on the most difficult endurance training regimens.’ I give him some of the most impossible stretching and weight combinations that require great stamina and resilience. That is how I built his sixpack abs’ Sawan revealed. He said once in the gym, Shah Rukh can work out constantly for an hour and a half without a single break. ‘He can run continuously at 15 kilometres an hour on the treadmill. What makes him such an adorable student of mine is that he never questions the routine I dish out to him everytime he is here. No matter how tough the exercise is, he just goes at it and never falters..he oozes positive energy that makes it absolutely necessary for him to achieve high physical targets’. explained Sawan. The reason behind his flawless cartwheels is that Shah Rukh has perfected his balance…while his athleticism is incredible, it obviously results from a lot of hard work at the gym which we can’t see’(Times City: ‘The Secret of SRK’s energy’in The Times Of India,byJhimli Mukherjee-Pandey,31/5/2012) The vivacity of the performative star body is a regime bound construct that energises his physical agility and is further bolstered by what is seen as to emanate from his ‘mental resilience which he has in abundance’. (ibid).

The discourses of physical appearance and body care shifting from private to public space is best seen and read from the various new reportings on celebrity health practices and beauty
regime. In contemporary India, the onset of the new physical perfection has rightly been termed the arrival of professional body; a body acquired, shaped and toned like any other professional skill. Nowhere is this more visible than in the case of the successful stars of Hindi cinema today for which the display of the body and the body in performance are integral to the spectacle. What is beyond debate is that today the worked out taut body has become a cultural icon in India: a statement to the world that its owner cares (Munshi 2004 p 170).

This craving for a well sculpted professionalized body might also be seen to stem from what Fanon saw as blackman’s attempt to reclaim manhood. Does Shah Rukh and the Bollywood heroes penchant to remasculinize their bodies a continuity of what Patha Chatterjee observed as cultural decolonization even after political one. This building of the body marked by leisure, comfort affluence perhaps reflects once more the post colonial anxiety of the global nation that seek to exhibit its masculine idols –embodying the saleability required in a global consumerist market. Ashis Nandy has argued how colonial man has been constructed as effeminate in the colonial discourse and the way to emancipation and empowerment is seen as the negation of this assertion. In many cultural systems potency and masculinity are seen synonymously. Such a perspective has legitimized the extremely macho style of anti-colonialist movements (see Yuval Davis 1997 p 60). The spirit of obsession with bodies by male stars of mainstream film industry can be seen as a post colonial anxiety to liberate non-western male bodies from being potrayed as antithetical to idealized, strong, ordered, hygienic healthy and mature Western male bodies. Typified as weak, barbarous unclear diseased and infantile, (Mills and Sen 2004 p 1), the contoured musculative of glamourized male bodies seek to purge the somatic stigma.It may be therefore summerised that such display of the body stems from a renewed post colonial anxiety of the non white world in a globalizing moment in response to western domination of the global market.

Both films Ashoka and Om Shanti Om, one quasi historical and the other quasi metaphysical respectively,foregrounds Shah Rukh’s body as a spectacle. Such a trend of spectacularisation is true of Hollywood male stars like Rudolf Valentino, Fred Astaire, Rock Hudson, Marlon Brando, and Schwarzenegger. (Horrocks 1995 p 44 and Horrocks 1994 p 160). / The fetishised male body draws it within the vertex of consumerability and commodification. The bare sculpted body in modern psychology acquires pemis like qualities of such a body connected with the phallic character (ibid p 161 Horrocks 1994). The tensed, sculpted, taut body of Shah Rukh reflects a professional anxiety (of masculinity to prove his body to other competing male stare like Sanjay Dutt, Sunny Deol. Salman Khan and Hritik Roshan already known for their well built bodies ).Shah Rukh’s consumerist urban diasporic body seeks an apogee in the sculpted body and its spectacularised from. This body nevertheless is not a naturally occurring body but produced within a regime of governmentality that seeks to discipline physical body as an object of control, borrowing Foucault analysis of body being subject to institutional control (Turner,1984). The body subjected to a certain diet and exercise regime is a professionalized body that seek to destablize notions of constant visible embodied self (Shilling 2005 p 4) and
Body becomes an empty site, ie, a blank screen or sign receiving system ever open to being reconstructed by social forces beyond its control (Krolier and Kroker cited by Shilling ibid p 4). Body is not fixed and certainly defined as natural. Its changeable and negotiable possibilities is testifiable in the ancient art of medicine that amend to reduce the adverse experiences of pain or disease and physical damage. Amelioration of the negative possibilities of the body is an ancient art, as is the attempt to intervene to beautify or enhance its appearance. It is medical technology that gives us the ability to alter our bodies. But the present renegotiations of the body do not start from a natural state of body but is informed by a set of expectations about the body which are already deeply socialized (Evans 2002 p 2) Sculpting of male bodies is part of contemporary social expectations of an ideally designed body as exemplified by film stars who are not only supposed to look good, handsome and glamorous and act but also display a certain set code of desirable body shape or look. Traditionally, it is the female body, unlike the male body that has been regarded as unstable and permeable. Whereas the male body on the otherhand is regarded as stable and bounded. The apparent instability and plasticity of female body is further reinforced through its reproductive ability and relation maintained with medical sciences (ibid ). But men are not lagging behind and male bodies have opened itself to various conditioning as per social expectations.

Body as a complex of attributes can fluctuate in response to changing social norms and expectations that define an ideal body and technological expertise change allow individuals to consider diverse possibilities about physical existence. The contemporary west is excessively ‘regulatory in its attitude towards the body’ and prejudices against fat people or oddly shaped bodies indicate vigorous normalizing discourse about the appearance of the ideal modern body. This culture adopting a rigorous and proscriptive attitude of the body and the inclination to assume ‘that the body should be a perfect, seamless demonstration of the virtue of efficient and perfect function’ (ibid 2-3) is what produces the disciplined body.

The contemporary consumer culture imposes upon the real bodies an ideal of appearance which for most people is unrealistic and unobtainable. The fantasy body created in relation to appropriate body size and shape serves to fulfil the expectations and demands of capitalist society. This society has always demanded labour of the population, but the contemporary form of western capitalism dominated by a service sector and the prevalence of consumer goods, demands a particular form of labour: a labour force which is both educated and efficient, effective and in itself an advertisement for the product of its labour. The ideal employee of late capitalism is, therefore, not just a hard working individual but a person who possesses the public characteristics of being an acceptable shape size and well dressed and who therefore, confirms the desirability of the products of a service sector economy (Evans 2002, ibid p 10). The deployment of Shah Rukh in ads of men’s inner garments(Lux:Onn) exposing his well sculpted fit body, or professing in favour of health products(Sona Chandi Chawanpras) necessitates the star to represent a fit consuming body suited to endorse products and enhance their marketability.
The sculpted body, as illustrated by film stars and models, that panders to the consumerist tendencies of late capital is not the real natural body, it is unnatural. It is constructed in response to the fantasies, needs and desires of late capitalism (ibid p 11). Anthropologist, Mary Douglas advanced a compelling account of what she described as two bodies – that constitute the totality of our experience of embodiment – the physical body (the biological, individual body) and the social body (the body demanded by our culture). The physical body secures meaning for the physical body and shapes our embodiment. The sculpted bare body or torso of Shah Rukh despite its bold, fleshy corporeality is a social body whose embodiment is mediated by global capitalist and consumerist culture. This social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. This body is subjected to the social pressure of the glamour industry and global fashion trends, it provides itself as a site or a restricted medium inscribed by social and cultural practices of a well shaped contoured muscular body. ‘Thus the social situation imposes itself upon the body and constrains it to act in particular ways. Indeed the body becomes a symbol of the situation’ (Entwistle 2002, p 138). In a bid to maintain a competitive male edge of the Hindi film industry discipline their bodies. The desire for a well contoured and maintained body re subject to disciplining health regimes ‘designed to help them change their bodies and intextuate into them the norms of the dominant social values…it enables one to be more effective at work’ and varied practices for contouring a desirably shaped and fit body ‘are tools for incarnating the work ethic into the body of the individual’. (Fiske 1989, p 93).

The dividing line between compliance and subversion is through and the male sculpted body can be discerned as a conflicting site of both giving in and also resisting dominant ideologies and ways of being. The star, Shah Rukh, by succumbing to the prevalent masculine/heroic style of Bollywood succumb to dominant paradigms of the film industry. It appears to be what Foucault would term as a ‘technique of self production’. Foucault as cited argues that the ‘technologies of the self allow individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as transform themselves in order to attain a certain state …’ The social acclaim and public adoration secured through manipulation of his body via a fitness schedule and disciplinary regime of diet and exercise are part of star’s active self production as a desirable and perfect body. (see, Thapar 2001 p 142-142).

While looking at the sculpted body of Shah Rukh Khan in films like Ashoka and Om Shanti Om allow us to explore masculine body beyond its utilitarian value certain parts like the abdomen chest and biceps appear to be invested with libidinal meaning provided through the camera’s gaze. As Grosz cited argues that the investment in and the various shapes of different parts of the body image are uneven, for clearly some regions are far more libidinally invested than others. The perfect body of the star as eroticized fetishis part of his objectification. The perfectly shaped body parts are related to the socially shared meaning that such parts acquire for them, that involves commodification and eroticization (see Thapar, ibid. p 148). The body appears as an erotic field offering visual pleasure.
The saleability of the star body and its sculpted six pack abdomen is produced in response to the demand of the marketing style that dominates mainstream Hindi cinema. The body is duly commodified by subjecting it to particularly desirable physicality and fitness training. Such is the professional demand upon the body that ‘the physical demands of his job have taken a heavy toll on his body’ with an injured left cervical, left rib, left ankle, right toe left shoulder, left knee and as the report adds that ‘Despite being bruised and battered on several occasions SRK soldiers on’ (16/9/11, Calcuta Times, Times of India p 11). The star in an interview to The Times of India said : ‘I have undergone eight surgeries and have been living with injuries. I wanted to prove to myself that my body is okay, so I did an action film’ (interview given to Bharti Dubey on 26.9.11 The Times fof India ). This statement though appear to be informed by conscious choice of the actor nevertheless is thoroughly determined by his professional requirement where body and its agility is an imperative for every successful male star and hence its subjection to a disciplinig regime that demands a fit, well trained, muscular, agile, attractive body as per commodity aesthetics of market dominated culture.

In Foucauldian sense the heroic body becomes a site of disciplinary practice of physical training and fitness regime. The body of the star is subjected to its disciplinary discourse and the power of commerce can be held to be generative and productive of heroic subjectivity. The subjection of the body to disciplinary technologies produce what Foucanlt called ‘docile bodies’. In Foucanlt’s sense Shah rukh’s body has been ‘subjected, used ,transformed and improved’ (as cited in Barker 2002 p 89) to produce a perfectly sculpted work. Discipline in this Foucauldian sense involves the organzation of the subject through training, standardization etc. It brings to together knowledge power and control to produce subjects by categorization and naming them in an order through a rationality of efficiency/productvity and normalization. By normalization is meant a normative system of graded and measurable categories and intervals around which individual subjects cn be distributed. Classificatory systems are essential to the process of normalization and thus to the production of a range of subjects (ibid).

Here, commodification of heroes’ body and popular choice normalized a certain ideal of a desirable, consummrable, eroticized bodily shape. The sculpted body the fit body, and the agile body becomes an unwritten convention that hierarchses and encodes Bollywood heroes’ bodies. The heroic bodies, therefore in Foucauldian sense is subject to market driven discourse, subject to rigour and discipline of a professionalized methodical fitness body building and body sculpting regime and finally subject to the power of capital that demands such exhibitionist bodies. Heroes emerges as does Shah Rukh ‘as discursive constructions and the products of power where discourse regulates what can be said and done under determinate social and cultural conditions’ (ibid ) This renders heroic bodies, subject to sculpting as docile bodies wherein the heroes as subjects are bodily produced or rendered as effect of discourse.

Although Foucanlt’s work has inspired more studies of power as discipline and constraint than as the enabling power to it is arguable that his later writing centered on ‘technique of self ‘which does reintroduce agency and the possibility of resistance and change (ibid).This is seen in the conscious fitness practices of heroes of Bollywood, who are, is what Foucault as cited
says are ‘led to focus attention on themselves to decipher recognize and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire’. (ibid) That is popular magazines reveal how Shah Rukh recognizes him as saleable, star hero and therefore makes deliberate attempts to reinvent himself as per market demand and popular choice. The star prior to the film Om Shanty Om is seen to ‘become involved in practices of self constitution, recognition and reflection. This concern with self production as a discursive practice is centred on the question of ethics as a mode of ‘care of the self’ (ibid).

The film ‘Om Shanti Om’ is significant in the filmography of the star as it is his film that from the very beginning in its publicity campaigns and promotional drives showcased the star’s bare body displaying the 6(six) pack abs (abdomen). The star opening his shirt to expose his ‘sexy image’ does bring out to fore the regulating discourse of body building and fitness regime that sought to drive the post forty star towards a rigorous body building drive. This desperation to sculpt the body is narrated in an interview of the star in an article of a film magazine. ‘I am different from the rest, try to give my best in every film or else they will bid good bye to me and sever all ties… I will be forgotten if I cannot deliver. I need to strive and struggle to retain this position or will be left alone, they will not call me.’ The article says that the star is keen to adapt himself with times and can commensurately labour to transform his appearance. When the promos of ‘Om Shanti Om’ showcased the star body – in its bare sculpted look it took all fans and admirers by surprise. In a long career span of almost 18 years for the first time the star made concerted efforts to change his image at the behest of his friend and director of the film, Farha Khan. The highlight of the film rested on SRK’s bare body in the song ‘Dard-e-Disco’. However, this was not his first exposure. In ‘Maya Memsahab’ as a new comer he risked doing some erotic scenes with his co-star Deepa Mehta the surprised the nation and the industry above all. Shah Rukh remained unfazed by these controversies around sexually explicit scenes. He also exposed his body in ‘Baazigar’, ‘Dil Se’, ‘Phir Bhi Dil Hai hindustani’, ‘Ashoka’, ‘Chalte Chalte’, ‘Paheli’, and even ‘Swades’ where he takes bath. However it is his bare body in OSO that created a nation wide consternation because it is for the first time that SRK made his body or rendered his body desirous. The aggressive promotional drives of the film relied mostly on the star’s spectaculanized body. And although a multi-starrer film, the film sought to capitalize upon the star image and most importantly the ‘business potential of his body’. The idea struck editing director Farhan Akhtar and soon worked to explort SRK’s well sculpted muscularity. Initially though objected later the star relented for the sake of his own production. Such was his drive to build his body and render it attractive that the star was said to have even ignored his backache. This drive to overhaul SRK’s image via his well toned body was what director Farha Khan in a telephonic interview termed as “Re-introducing SRK” in a spectacularized version of his body. Answering to the query as to why so the director said that despite realizing the difficulty for an over forty man to reduce flab when they tend to gain weight projecting his bare body could not be desisted. This drive to create a new avatar is to re-invent him as an appropriate 21st century hero. Body has become an important attribute of popularity among contemporary Bollywood heroes – hence it because an imperative to recast
SRK’s body in a more desirable mode. Succumbing to the demands of time Shah Rukh prepared his body rigorously before declaring his readiness to expose it. In 2007-08 body sculpting was as important as appearance for popular film stars and every hero tried to sculpt their biceps and triceps. This was not there even a decade before actors started visiting gyms for fitness sake. Shah Rukh subjected himself to a rigorous regime of diet and physical training this food contained copious amount of amino acids. He worked for one and half months to build his muscles and stopped his shooting schedule for two months to build his muscle fibre. He who has been exercising for last three years did not do it so rigorously. His diet was always light as he prefers to eat less. The star expresses his strong will to maintain his fitness level as laxity would spoil it. This was not only for OSO, Shah Rukh acknowledging the relevance of physicality wants to portray an appropriate look and for the film ‘Chak De’ even practiced sports like college gym’s… In his professionalized attempt to produce a ‘well built body he even solicited advice from his contemporary male Bollywood stars like Sanjay Dutt, Salman Khan and Hritik Roshan and all there was known to have inspired and appreciated him besides giving him useful suggestions (Anandolak. 27/9/2007. Cover story. P. 10-14).

Bollywood has lived up with promptness to this trend wherein well sculpted and contoured muscular and toned heroic bodies have been hailed as a masculine heroic virtue. And as various popular magazines report in an almost competitive bid Bollywood heroes following diet and exercise regime regarded as an aspect of self fashioning required for the production of a firm and disciplined professionalized body as a symbol of gendered identity and the correct attitude (Barker 2002, ibidp.173 ).

4.3.2 Eroticized Spectacle of The Male Body

One is even provoked interpret such sculpted bodies as part of homoerotic culture – produced as possible motivations for widespread homoeroticism; the classical psychoanalytic view is that homosexuality exists covertly in everyone, and it is not surprising therefore that it periodically erupts into consciousness (Horrocks 1995 p.11). The sculpted male body can be a part of homoerotic imagery that is part of a general crisis in masculine identity wherein old cultural boundaries of gender and sexuality are being blurred and transcended and there is a leakage between categories (ibid p 11). This crisis is not similar to the one encountered in the sake of a political crisis in seventies that led to the emergence of the angry young man in Hindi cinema. This crisis can also perhaps, be one that is born out of a declining guardianship of a phallic state (Stratton 1995) and body and narcissistic obsession with body being a phallic substitute. This body articulates perhaps a yearning for maleness and masculinity, which may seem odd in a masculinist culture, but which shows perhaps how many men feel both insecure about, and dissatisfied with their identity (Horrocks 1995 p 11).

This recent trend to spectacularize the male body as seen in case of Shah Rukh’s films like Ashoka and Om Shanti Om, illustrates a tendency ‘for the male body has become objectified as a site of crisis and hysteria, besides a place of beauty and strength. To an extent, it is a dumb body, that cannot speak fluently in words, but must speak through its musculature and its
actions. It is narcissitic, obsessed with itself, using itself as bulwark against others: “the body of
the hero is the sole space that is safe. The male body is a very complex sign today at times it is
also feminized and eroticized...while there is also something desperate about its self
arrangement. It seems likely that the male body is being used to describe semi conscious
shifts in gender sexuality and power’. (ibid.p 170).

The exhibitionist urge of the eroticized, body expresses a narcissistic obsession. The body
through its objectification turns it to a consumable commodity – offering visual pleasure for
sexual gaze – inviting both homoerotic and heterosexual attention towards it. The consumerist
capitalist culture seeks to commodify the star body. One may also be led to read such
machismo as ‘not simply a monolithic male tyranny. It also represents a form of homoerotic
refuge from women, and from heterosexuality, Machismo is deeply narcissistic, and in
activities such as body building the male body becomes a home from home’. (ibid p 173). This
portends a departure from what is resolutely heterosexual official masculinity. Commodified
spectacularised, eroticized male body provide significant evidence of transformation in
conventional gender order and leaves open space for ambivalence or what Horrocks cites as
‘leakage of homosexual and feminine attributes into male image...The male body has been
foregrounded and eroticized but there is more than a hint that such images are directed covertly
at men. Furthermore, the exaggeration of the structure of the male body at times suggests an
imitation of the female body, not a denial of it’ (ibid p 174). This is evident in the hairless
smoothness of male bodies of the star and likes. Such feminized eroticization while rendering
body commodified by a capitalist culture also speaks of a competitive anxiety on part of male
codes and stars like Shah Rukh to look attractive and be more saleable.

Such obsession with the male body is seen also as male insecurity and anxiety over women’s
reproductive role and need for ritualized affirmation of masculinity brings out competitive
struggle for performance among men and overcomes uncertainty of maleness (Conway 1994 p
74). One can see certain subversion in reading of these exhibitionist bodies by locating a certain
masculine identity in a state of crisis and anxiety – competing with female fetishized bodies.
Miriam Hansen as cited in an agreement with Mulvey, argues that the erotic spectacularization
male bodies of cinema’s protagonist undergoes a systematic feminization of his persona.
(Jacob,2010,p.127) The contemporary male display of body of male stars is analogous to this
anxiety trying to performatively eroticize and commodify body to compete and even mimic
women’s body as seen in its exhibitionist urge. The female body is a modern icon, used to sell
all kinds of commodities and deployed as sexual fetish (Horrocks 1994 p 157). Men’s bodies
are no longer exempt from this process. Men’s body parts are being eroticized as well
eroticized in mass media. This trend of exhibitionism is not devoid of ambiguity and in
Bollywood (like also in Hollywood, see Horrocks p 160) the male musculature despite being an
emblem of masculine prowess and virility appear to mimic the female torso. The interest in
physique reflects the considerable amount of narcissism about the male musculature in
response otherwise gained by eroticized female body parts. The narcissistic masculine culture is
legitimized in the name of maintaining a good sporting male body. ‘keeping fit, being active,
consolidating the image of the male as invulnerable warrior/athlete’. (ibid). Fitness fetish is endemic to this narcissism and self obsession for a strong fit body. Such a musculature body ‘can be seen both as massive penis but can also be construed as quasi-female. In body building the pectorals become massive, jutting breasts which are flaunted…pop singers such as Prince and Michael Jackson that there is a vogue for lifting the T-shirt up suddenly to expose their chest in a grotesque parody of centerfold girl exposing her breasts…Thus we end up with a man with breasts and penis. He is truly self sufficient!’(ibid p 160).

Another area of male anxiety concerns slenderness and among the more powerful and influential representations of women that western culture promotes is the slender body s a disciplinary cultural norm, argues Bordo as cited. Slenderness and a concern with diet and self monitoring are preoccupations of western media culture and its interest in a ‘tighter, smoother more constrained body profile’. As a result advertisements ‘target bulge, fat or flab and the desirability of fit stomachs and cellulite management’. Slenderness is projected as a contemporary ideal for female attractiveness, and ‘it is perhaps no coincidence that we are a witnessing a simultaneous rise in the display of male bodies in advertising…’(Barker 2002 p 173).

Masculinity defined in terms of sexual gaze has yielded somewhat to masculinity as an object of desire and that ‘men like women are (now) encouraged to focus their energies not on realizing themselves as self-activting subjects, but on maximizing their values tokens of exchange’ ( Wernick, as cited in Saco 1992 p 26).

Sexualization of male body and its eroticized display might appear to problematise the way sexual differentiation is contructed by the organization of narrative by sights and sounds. Patriarchy regulates not only what is visually represented on screen but also the axis of vision itself which includes the ways spectators enjoy and make sense of what is presented to them. Psychoanalytic studies under the aegis of feminism have displayed as Penley cited argues that the primary motivating force in mainstream movies has been the narrative and symbolic problem of characters winding their way towards their authorized place in terms of gender. With stories that tease and flatter viewer’s sense of sexual differentiation films also offer socially sanctioned erotic ways of looking and spectacle (Mulvey as cited). Mulvey further claims that cinema has coded the erotic into the language of dominant patriarchal order. Studies by various scholars bring to fore the fact that the scopic regime is gendered. Configurations on screen and in minds of spectators tend to resemble, legitimize and reinforce each other wherein patriarchy structures the form and informs the spectatorial gaze also.

Laura Mulvey’s celebrated work on male gaze project its fantasy onto the screen’s projected image, viz the female body. And although for Mulvey male seem to mean heterosexual her analysis does not seem to be driven by essentialist notions of gender, However the masculinization of visual experience being gendered with heterosexuality inscribed on gaze does not preclude the ambivalence of sexuality ,maleness and masculinities. With male gaze being problematized, it fails to connote contaminent of sex within gender. Richard Dyer’s analysis bring to fore the analysis of male pin-up and the instability surrounding the male image
as an erotic object for both women and for men. In Dyer this instability surrounding male
image exists both within the gaze of men and within the visual text of the pin-up itself. To be an
image of masculinity, Dyer argues that the male pin-up cannot be posed as women are
conventionally posed for men as passive objects of an active look. Dyer as cited argues
‘Images must disavow…passivity if they are to be kept in line with dominant ideas of
masculinity as activity’. Similarly Mulvey as cited claims ‘Man is reluctant to gaze at his
exhibitionist like. It is this fear of the feminine that seem to have several effects on relations
between the male gaze and male images. Male exhibitionism threatens to become an object of
identification for the male spectators and this problematize the heterosexual pleasure of male
gaze. Conceding pleasure at male’s eroticized body is risky and masculine ego has to constantly
reassure himself from the enemy within and his own feminity. Male exhibitionism secures the
guaranteed heterosexual masculine confidence (Steinman 1992 201-203).

The eroticized display of exhibitionist male bodies of film stars against above arguments can be
seen to firstly mobilize male gaze as an active object on screens, pin-ups billboards,
endorsements and various print visuals of publicity. Bollywood heroes like Shah Rukh ,
Salman, John Abraham known for their bare display of body allow their bodies to mobilize
gaze as an active object of consumption. The enticing and alluring quality invites identification.

Nowwithstanding the patriarchal gendered differentiations and hegemonic heterosexual
ideology that is complicit with media representation, male eroticized images potentially can
generate bimodal response. The media construction of heroic images as an active consumer, as
a masculine ideal and as an object of sexual attraction for females/homosexual men can cause
as what Dyer claimed, instability to the image. As an autoconvertible image it can generate
interest along multiple axes. Here one can see the polysemy of the hero’s body. Here a parallel
may be drawn between eroticized exhibitionist male torso of bollywood male heroes, as in Shah
Rukh and some of his contemporaries and case of Reynold’s eroticized appearance in the
Cosmopolitan magazine. It was seen that his appeal was evidently enhanced among female
audience and did not affect his popularity among men. In both public and private hetero sexual
men identified with him with pride. Despite his presence in what can be dubbed as unmanly
position, he did not become the other (Steinman 1992 203-204) Here, Shah Rukh or male
Bollywood heroes constructed within a heteronormative discourse, despite its slippages giving
way to opposing meanings, do succeed in securing its insistence on heterosexuality ( see,ibid).
The narratives of the films for example, through a romancing heterosexual hero and heroine as
seen also in the two notable films of Shah Rukh- Ashoka as well Om Shanti Om secured and
reassured the hero’s heterosexuality. However, the way the Shah Rukh’s body poses itself as
fetishised, as consumable a sculpted for eroticization, might see it as responding to changes in
the iconography of gender with more fluid, labile categories and strategies ( see,Werner cited in

Taking the case of Reynold it can be argued that bare sculpted body of the Bolywood heroes
can produce an appeal of masculinity without the risk of emasculation. In the case of Shah
Rukh Khan his consistent melodramatic excess notwithstanding the narrative, continues to
provide the roles/subjectivities enacted adequate means to recuperate and assist his hegemonic heterosexual masculine autonomy. Mulvey’s argument that the problem of men watching men is elided by the function of the male star can be appropriately utilized. Mulvey argues that the male star’s ‘…glamorous characteristics are not those of the erotic object of gaze but those more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal’. (Mulvey cited in Steinman, 1992 ibid. p 207).

Eroticization of male body complicates the notion of ‘male gaze’ and the make spectatorial position. How masculinity of heterosexuality is preserved in face of image's seduction is difficult to gauge. The eroticized body of the star to emerge as truly popular need to be appeal across gender divides. The body of the star constructed within a heteronormative discourse and conventional gender consciousness however denies charges of homoerotica. Though the eroticized body offers seductive visual pleasure – an experience open for all, the gaze is problematized as to what kind of identification is solicited – criss crossing sex, gender and preference. Such a parade of masculinity while being complicit with patriarchy and heterosexuality, allows for a visual pleasure and even validates desire for a certified star without acknowledging homoerotica on screen in a bid to keep spectators as prisoners of gender (Steinman, 1992 ibid p 213). On the country Hearn argues that instead of thinking of film, popular culture and fashion as complicit with the hegemony of sexual differentiation, we can conceptualize this popular imaginary as a space wherein fantasy can unsettle or unfix the status of sexual identity thereby collapsing the binary oppositions between masculine and feminine, homosexual and heterosexual and narcissism and voyensism into polymorphos desires. In this sense masculinity is denied its “textuality”. In the imaginary, the dialectic of the gaze, there is always a difference where the subject is consumed and reproduced in and through a multiplicity of desire (Hearn et al 1992 p 230).

It can be argued that Mulvey’s ideas talk of male gaze at male objects without risking the heteronormativity and dichotomy of sexual difference as male gaze is seen only as an instance of narcissistic identification only. (ibid). While heterosexual ideology continue to cast a hegemonic influence in the construction of star, popular stars can fail to elude bimodal response, consumption and identification. The body of the star as a polymorphous text is not hostage to heterosexual masculinity but is consumed visually and reproduced in and through multiple desires. Activation of desirous gaze and its dialectical interplay construct the star as a desired object open to both narcissistic identification and voyenmistic gaze. It equally risks a kind of feminization of persona when the star is objectified for female visual pleasure (ibid).

While attending to Shah Rukh’s body in this analysis, it needs to be placed within the larger context of the Mumbai film industry and how Shah Rukh’s body responded to the contemporary trends and demands of this industry. Sudhanva Deshpande observes the transformations in heroic physique with coming of Salman Khan and his likes. Deshpande says: ‘Indian heroes of the past did not have physiques like his. Actors like Dilip Kumar, Shammi Kapoor, or Rajesh Khanna never displayed their biceps. Even the angry young man persona of Amitabh Bachchan was not promised on a muscular physique. Only a real wash-out, like the
wrestler turned actor Dara Singh, survived by showing off his muscles. This is not the case any more. If actors Jacki Shroff and Sunny Deol compensated for their limited acting talent with macho looks in the 1980’s, Sanjay Dutt discarded drugs and his actress mothér Nargis’s delicate looks to reinvent himself as a hunk in the early 1990’s. Just in time, too. In the 1990’s was the decade of the biceps – Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar, Sunil Shetty, Akshay Khán and the many others who came and went. Even Aamir Khan, arguably the best actor amongst the 90’s stars has a good enough physique to look a convening smallt time boxer in Ghulam… The exceptions to this macho brigade of course, are Shah Rukh Khan and Govinda, the one wiry and the other thank god, fat. But even they are feeling the pressure and in his home production Ashoka (dir. Santosh Sivam. 2001) Shah Rukh Khan shows more muscle than one thought he had…’ (Deshpande. 2005. P. 196-197). Shah Rukh as observed almost compulsively refashions his body in response to the market demands of producing and presenting a body that itself ‘is the object of consumption’ (ibid).

Kavi, editor of ‘Bombay Dost’ a Mumbai based gay magazine argues, as cited by Teresa Hubel ‘that the Bollywood hero is being increasingly eroticized on the Hindi screen, to such an extend that the heroine is ceasing entirely to be an object of sexual desire’ (Hubel, 2012. p. 285).

Sudhanva Deshpande (2005 ,p. 197) contends that the eroticization of the Bollywood hero has taken an intense turn the 1990s and is in response to the larger shift in the middle class imagination that drives the mainstream film industry. The camera adores the muscled bodies of current male star, whom she calls the ‘consummable hero’ (ibid. p. 197). A masculine figure whose body itself rather than his person or even his story, is an object of consumption visually albeit.

Camera shots earlier preserved for the female body is now exploring close male beauty and sexuality, it is giving credence to Deshpande’s designation of the Bollywood hero’s body as a new commodity in India. This kind of commodification of the male body on screen at the expense of the female body, distinguishes contemporary Bollywood cinema from classic Hollywood film, where, as Laura Mulvey has famously argued that the female is the object of consumption by a heterosexual masculinized gaze that structures the filmic text and determines how and with whom all spectators, male and female can identify. Mulvey’s Lacanian analysis, consider female body as vulnerable and subjectified to a ‘controlling male gaze” and its exposure on the screen as a passive spectacle as a performance of its oppression within a patriarchal scopophilic regime. As per Mulvey, woman is fetishized as an ultimate fetish whose body seen as ultimate product is stylized and fragmented by camera’s close shots constitutes filmic content. This fetishized female body is the direct recipient of the spectatorial (male) ‘gaze’. This gaze is inevitably help to be masculine, further, by this logic the male hero cannot be subject to the similar ‘sexual objectification’ since he acts as the ego-ideal in the film, the central character with whom – i.e. all of us in the audience both male and female – supposedly identify with. The brawny male body engaged in some kind of action is therefore the only narrative event in Hollywood that has conventionally legitimized exhibition of the
muscular male body Action cinema is therefore the only site that provides a showcase for the display of the male muscular body (Hubel, 2012, p. 287).

On the other hand the male body in Bollywood is fast ‘emerging as an erotic spectacle in all kinds of movies: in historical epics action films and even the traditional masala film. A link to the action genre appears not to be absolutely necessary to justify the display of this body or to distinguish it from the female body, which in both the West and India, is habitually depicted as the passive receiver of an objectifying gaze that marks the feminine as powerless. This new type of eroticized male body in Hindi films is an intensely powerful one, that frequently and purposefully looks back at us in such a way as to convey a command over our watching. The close-ups of his muscled torso insinuate not only that this man is beautiful and sexually desirable but that he is strong, authoritative and potent. (Hubel. 2012, p. 287–288). It may be recalled how significant is the bold and assertively directed looking back of Shah Rukh in the historical film Ashoka (2007) and the romantic film Om Shanti Om (2007). The look of the star straight at the audience via the camera is informed by a certain exhibitionist pride and a desire for adulation.

Hubel argues that in the Indian context, such a trend of eroticized display of male does not contradict extant cultural protocols or sexual mores unlike in the West where exhibitionist male body is held with an ambivalence regarding sexual pleasures it might invite. The ambivalence associated considers this display an exhibition which signals both an assertion of male dominance as well a hysterical unstable image of manhood. Hindi cinema does not suffer from their ambivalence as it draws support from existing traditions of viewing which is however is unavailable to Hollywood films. (Hubel. 2012, ibid. p. 288) Hubel explains the cultural naturalization of erotic display of male stars through the paradigm of darsanic gaze (as suggested by Madhava Prasad) and “Sringara rasa” of the Vaishnava tradition.

The ‘darsanic gaze’ makes Indian viewership of films different from the West. It is for Prasad a relation of perception with the public traditions of Hindu worship. Especially in the temples but also in public appearances of monarchs and other elevated figures. Darshans refers to the practice of visiting the temple to view the divine image and in turn be blessed by the divine gaze that looks back thus drawing the devotee into divine orbit of affection and protection. Unlike the Western realist film and in Mulvey’s theory of masculine gaze, the conventions of Indian spectatorship maintain a distinct protocol of perception wherein it is dissimilar to the voyeuristic positioning of the Western audience. The principle of frontality dominates Indian performance – where a reciprocity is assumed between the viewer and the actor – in the moving exchange of gaze. This accords the actor a symbolic and transcendent authority distinct from voyeuristic relation and in displaying itself confers a viewing privilege upon the spectator. The object of darsanic gaze is a superior, divine figure or king who offers himself to be spectacularize in dazzling splendor to his subjects or ‘praja’. Prasad’s theory of darsanic gaze, Hubel argues ‘certainly explains why the actors who play the heroes in Bollywood film are often so revered and influential in Indian society, but what it cannot account for is how their authority can be maintained…’ (ibid p. 288-289).
In a bid to supplement Prasad’s explanation, Hubel through Rasa theory argues: ‘The theatrical and dance traditions of India, out of which film arise identify Sringara as one of the eight rasas or expressions of human emotion that are evoked by an actor and simultaneously experienced by a spectator. Most commonly enacted by a female performer, and in some cases by a male playing a female, sringara rasa is the expression of her sexual desire for a absent male figure who is often a man but just as likely to be a god. Although there are any number of possible sringara roles, Radha is the quintessential Sringara heroine in classical Indian dance her desire for her beloved is manifested as an acutely physical state of arousal, through the tingling of the skin when it is touched by a breeze, for instance or the erection of nipples. Radha’s beloved in always Krishna, the mischievous and playful god whose sexual desirability is one of the themse of the famous Sanskrit poem ‘Gita Govinda’. In fact, it could be argued that the prevalence of Radha/Krishna story in all forms of Indian performance – dance, music, drama, television, film, theatre and so on – has made Krishna’s status as a sexually attractive god fundamental in mainstream Indian culture: it’s something that virtually all Indians would know about, whether or not they were actually Hindu, and so valued Krishna as a deity and the Radha/Krishna story as an emblem of the relationship between devotees and gods. If Radha is the quintessential Sringara heroine who can be performed by either women or men, then Krishna is the male erotic spectacle par excellence. In him is combined power and sexual appeal Linking Sringara rasa to Prasad’s theory of darshanic gaze reveals a protocol of perception or convention of spectatorship that allows the male body to be displayed in recent Bollywood movies as an erotic spectacle that, unlike the muscled body of the Hollywood hero, is unambivalent, even assured, in its articulation of masculine authority’. (Hubel. 2012, p. 289).

The eroticization and spectacularization of body of male star, like Shah Rukh when alternatively explained through indigenous viewing protocol, of darsana and sringara, shows its powers and desirability without fear of loosing its command and such exhibitionist displays in consonance with visual prototocols of Indian culture absolves it from the fear of being read as ambivalent like Hollywood counterparts. Notwithstanding the recent discussions on queering viewing practices in transnational circuits (See Dudrah. 2010) the text is allowed to maintain its heteronormative claim over the hero’s bare eroticized body.

While conceding to darshana, Prasad does not prelude voyeurism and identification to understand that the ‘new spectator wants to see on the screen through the depiction of the Bollywood hero is an exhibition of his own desire for control of his world and the resolution of his fear’ (Hubel. 2012, p. 290). Additionally to the same sex -desire and identification it potentially draws the fact is Bollywood’s new hero with ‘his newly muscular body’ ‘is additionally a sign of his commodification…’ (Hubel, 2012, ibid. p. 290).

In both the films, Ashoka (2001) and Om Shanti Om (2007) the body is shown in a close-up – in its intricate detailed display. The close-up like the tableau is another common technical device of film makers to interrupt the narrative and momentarily separate the star from the progression of the story. John Ellis as cited (in Jacob. 2010) writing about Hollywood cinema’s use of the close-up and other star-focused devices, contends that such an interruption of the
narrative seek to produce a ‘fetishistic moment… when the audience’s appreciation for a star becomes cultism’. The close-up shot provides a perspective of the star that is both intimate as well as conducive to a distanced, worshipful gaze. Through the vehicle of the close-up the audience is allowed to access the star’s face in details and also the contours of his or her body; in everyday life, such ‘depth of familiarity’ with an individual is revealed only to close, live-in-relatives or to an intimate companion. Conversely, as Laura Mulvey has argued that the close-up shot, by rendering a fragmented, diagrammatic representation of the star’s body disrupts the illusion of depth otherwise created by the narrative, thus projecting the star as an icon. As iconic stasis the close-up shot isolates the star from the larger context of the narrative ‘( Jacob, 2010, ibid, p.126) It may be argued that the visual framing of Shah Rukh’s bare body, its displayed musculature in both films and advertisements are devices of iconization.

In Hollywood cinema’s the fetishistic moments are de-limited and constrained by cinematic narrative. According to Mulvey close-up shots fragments female body and this working in tandem with the film script to produce the image of woman as a spectacle or woman as an icon. In Indian entertainment, however this fetishistic fragmentation of the body via close-up shot is most evident during performative interludes of the film – timeless dream sequences, musical elements choreographed scuttles or melodramatic soliloquies – during which actors and actresses are equally subject to the toxing and iconization described by Mulvey. However, the principal motive that informs the close-up device in Indian cinema is not to produce a subjugated female identity for masculine gaze as in Hollywood films but to ‘aid in the construction of a cultism around the characters of both the hero and the heroine’. (ibid. p 126-127).

Looking across two films viz. Darr (1993) and Om Shanti Om (2007) one sees how the body engages in a critical dialectical interplay of gender roles. In OSO and even Ashoka (2001) one can see how the film produces Shah Rukh body in an “exhibitionist” form that seeks to relentlessly erase its discursive basis because it wishes to remain unaware of the pleasure it gives it spectators. The enunciation of the body as per cinematic grammar obscures the latent content and smoothens the same. The spectatorial gaze invited by Shah Rukh’s body in the Freudian sense is gaze through the keyhole of primal scene and hence voyeuristic. According to Metzian position, the voyeuristic spectator is complicit with the framing of the body and the actor, behaves claims Metz as though he were not seen. This may be contrary to the understanding of star as an object of darsanic gaze, but it needs to be re-iterated that there may be alternative explanatory paradigms to explain the star’s body and one does not automatically validate itself to negate and eschew the other form of explanation. Besides it may be argued that the body of the star is caught within the overlapping matrix of both display and eroticization and if the former can be explained via darsana as an object of spectacle it does not preclude the latter component in being explained through ideas of voyeur and fetish.

The hero’s body thus eroticized is central to the economy of voyeuristic identification crucial to Western idea of cinematic experience. Metz identifies this specularity more precisely with the Lacanian mirror stage in which the child reads his/her own image as an “Other’s” image but
internalizes it as an idea. The economy of the mirror stage is however incomplete in the specularity of cinema since one’s own image does not appear: the screen is its own image not a mirror reflection. (Mishra. 2002. P. 93). If Om Shanti Om and Ashoka fetishized the body inviting voyeuristic spectatorial identification in Darr, he becomes a voyeur within the film. Here he is seen to revisit the role of Raj Kapoor as an auteur (film maker) who cinematographically ‘manipulated what film does best – the politics of desire and the subject/self/spectator’s insertion into that desire… the concept of the body – the female body – is important. Raj Kapoor has defended the body fetish by referring to erotic art; but there is something illicit, almost pornographic in his use of the camera as voyeur… the space of the female body is the space of the imaginary (where the fetish is compulsively repeated) … The (phallic) eye of Raj Kapoor so dominates these films that he appropriates the spectator’s position… as his own, transforms the position, and then feeds it back to the spectators something that the spectator had discovered himself…” (Mishra. 2002. p. 99-100)

In Darr it is the spectator who seek analogue in Shah Rukh’s stealthy stalking voyeuristic gaze and his libidinous drive. As in Kapoor’s films, Shah Rukh desire is towards the women’s fetishized body. But unlike in Kapoor’s films where it was conservatively circumvented and carefully placed in Darr the diegetic voyeuristic hero’s desire is made explicit. It contrasts with Raj Kapoor’s film where it was a ‘parallel narrative that define a larger pan-national consciousness’. In Darr the haunting signifier of Indian sexual repression was boldly espoused. The text of desire failed to get marginalized to the main narrative. The law of desire and economy of desire embodied by Shah Rukh, albeit as a voyeur – and a surreptitious stalker lover boy was more pronounced. (see Mishra, 2002. p. 98-100 for Raj Kapoor’s films). The stalker here endowed with voyeuristic look which as per Metz is “unanthorized scopophilia” enters into the heroine’s private world. Here it may be cited that such diegetic voyeur does not implicate the spectator. Madhav Prasad’s argument (Prasad,1998 p.. 72-87) that in the melodrama of the 1950s and 1960s voyeurism was curtailed through the subjection of the spectator to a mode of filmic production that normalized the spectator’s gaze into a structure of looking that deflected identificatory relation under the guardianship of state censorship. In Darr one might be provoked to surmise if it meant impending waning of the state’s guardianship and absolutist gaze over the spectators; and if the retreatist state allowed the subject (hero) to transgress and a semblance of couervatism was held on where the voyeur hero absolved the spectator’s from the guilt of voyeur. However this bid did betray to some extent the ‘darsanic’ protocol of viewership as the hero intervenes as the voyeur to deflect frontality. It still may be argued that the hero here does lend itself to be the ego ideal enabling subject identification as per Laura Mulvey’s position. It does call for the emergence of individuate subject/spectator who can identity with the object in an imaginary order and this is contrary to Prasad’s ‘Hindi feudal romance’ that functioned within patriarchal enclaves, embodying a premodern spectator in the proto-religious darsana tradition.

In response to this, Mishra contends that Prasad’s theory though forceful fail to account for the ‘textual complexity of the signifying system because bodies do erupt and “darsanic gaze” is no
guarantee that actual subjects are bounded to that gaze” (Mishra. 2002. p. 101). Shah Rukh’s voyeurism is a pretext allowing for a ‘surrogate identification’ with him – mobilizing gaze over body of desired woman. This voyeur it needs to be emphasized is enabled through surreptitious body movements as stalker or even as a masquerading body (during a Holi scene when SRK disguises as a musician with colours smeared on his face to gain an entry to the private space of the heroine bungalow). The body asserts an identity without confronting authority.

There however, is a displacement of voyeur in much later films of the star where the star himself becomes fetishized commodity, spectacularized – inviting and mobilizing sexual gaze upon his bare, sculpted, hairless metrosexual body. Unlike in auteur Raj Kapoor’s films as Mishra comments where ‘Women become the raw material for the gaze as a ‘scopophilic eroticism’ binds the text’, here it is man that takes up the space of fetishized woman’s body. In the musical interludes with amorous allusions ‘Raat ka naska’ (Ashoka 2001) or Dard –e-Disco (OmShantiOm,. 2007) the camera foregrounds a male sensuousness – through SRK’s eroticized libidinous body that the narrative diegesis does not try to hide. And unlike Kapoor’s careful and cautious projection of Nargis in ‘Aag’ (1948) as object of voyeuristic fantasies in opposition has a more sublime claim of narrative diegesis as virginally pure, pristine symbol of lovelorn or ‘viraha’ striken (Mishra. 2002. p. 103-104), Shah Rukh’s body seeks sexual consummation in its brazen display. The sexual politics of popular culture in post-liberalized India provides significant changes through such eroticized male body – brandishing its sexuality, unabashedly. This however as seen in Kapoor’s film was more subliminal source the real unleashing of the eroticized and sexualized body came ‘when Sharmila Tagore wore a bikini in Shakti Samanta’s ‘An Evening in Paris’ all old inhibitions of he film audience were broken’ (Saari, 2009. P. 35). The trend to exhibit the body in popular films was first inspired by heterosexual male gaze over female body.

4.3.3 Scope for Embodiment for Bollywood Male Stars

Before discussing the next section of aesthetically disciplined and coded commodified body, from the above discussion on Bollywood tradition and the illustrative case of various leading male stars of the popular film industry, including Shah Rukh, it needs to said that despite their subjection to the disciplining regime in a competitive bid to enhance the erotic, spectacular and marketable worth of their body, one cannot undermine the agentic component, and the self-driven initiative or choice of the stars to professionalize their bodies. The newspaper reportings on SRK reports on the intentionality and conscious choice of the star to train himself (also see the section on the star’s enabled agency in the next chapter). The body scheme central to Merlean Ponty’s conception of bodily unity and refers to an overall pre-conscious awareness of body’s situatedness in relation to the axes of important coordinates of its environment. The orientation of the body in space is attained through body’s capacities for motility or a project towards movement. Motility is accomplished through acquisition of new skill and incorporation of new objects, which enables individual to enhance the quality and quality of movement and exercise agenda. By inculcating expertise in use of objectes, we
effectively embody new means of projecting ourselves in the world. The other important factor is sensory media that provide us with sensory perception of the world and the environment that surrounds us. It provides us with the ability to forge an intentional relationship with the environment. The inter-communication of senses allow body to perceive an object or a setting (Shilling, 2005:bid 55).

Merlean-Ponty’s theory provides us illuminating account of the universal subjective feature of bodily existence, in the Bollywood scenario that involve heroes engaged actively in constitution of their natural and social world, their professional world where they need to acquire and attain the best corporal presence on screen through well shaped muscles, contoured physique, in otherwords a perfectly groomed and toned body. The various media reportings inview of embodied perspective recognizes the objective existence of the star’s lived body as a subject and his bodily experience. Bodily basis of experience allowed of Bollywood heroes, in training and contouring their body through lens of Merlean_ponty serve to demonstrate how subjectivity and experience of being is actively embodied through the intermediary of the star’s body. Body is a source of being and enables the stars to be an active source to participate in its building project as it is bodily capacity that invest into that making. (see, Shillings, 2005, ibidp 56).

However due to the lopsidedness of phenomenological account it necessitate to conjoin our reading of embodied experience of the star, as available to us through various media reportings and interviews of the star with what can help to understand the star not as a particularistic embodied subjecthood but contextualize him as a corporal within the larger social context and allow him to illustrarively articulate the larger social discourse. Bourdieu observes that while objectivism is unable to appreciate that bodily experiences are a precondition of and are inscribed within social institutions the subjectivism associated with phenomenology on the other hand is incapable of addressing the existence and development of the contexts in which experience occurs. Bourdieu seeks to relate experiences, appearances and accounts of individuals to the social conditions which gave rise to them. Bourdieu approach are developed through the key conceptual distinction between social field and habitus. As per Bourdieu’s understanding social field of cinema locate itself on bodies of heroes entering their space. The contingency allow space for heroes to negotiate with rules of field, that requires glamourization and display of self and body. The embodiment is part of body’s habitus and performatively incarnates the roles within the field. The habitus is not agentic as Bourdieu argues but a representational embodiment of the star’s body. The body is so inscribed, contoured, dressed, sculpted etc. to reproduce the dominant social practices of groups and individual, viz as per the contemporary expectations from silver screen idols (here, men).

Similarly the habitus being ‘the social embodied’ makes the Star reproduce the social field of glamour or aesthetic codes commuensurately. What also needs to stated that the contingency of the ‘social field’ of cinema allowed for variation in the body building practices. Besides being capital intensive procedures, when stars like Shah Rukh or other successful heroes of the industry are reported by the media to have undergone expensive health regime or aesthetic
interventions or affords professional trainers it does bring to fore the question of their class and capital empowered privileged position, and how such embodiments are contingent upon class location, taste etc..

What is also worth mentioning is the active engagement of the star, SRK in routine fitness schedules, as told by his trainer (as stated above) involves a cognitively reflexive monitoring and altering of action and it is crucial for exercise of both agency as well structural influence. Social actions as per Giddens is determined by reflexive plans and reflexive engagement with lifestyle, and this is well implicated through the Shah Rukh’s arduous disciplined health or fitness schedule (see, report in Times of India by J.M. Pandey) and this understanding help us to read his corporality as an embodied basis of both agency and structure.

The structural and agentic factors are interdependent and mutually reinforcing of the conditions that facilitate their reproduction. The interaction between the agentic, embodied, reflexive star body and society (as represented by the demands of the media and capitalistic economy) involves a mutual determination which harnesses physical abilities and dispositions of the star suitably to the reproduction of the idolized images of masculine body.

4.3.4 Consumerist Body

The post-liberation hero, Shah Rukh Khan displaying on his body the signs of consumption is comparable to the market place man, that desires its identity from the capitalist market place wherein manhood is contingent upon acquisition of tangible goods as evidence of success (Kimmel, 2001 p 270). In a post-liberalization economy, has opened up the market and unleashed the desire to possess, consume and savour. Acquisitive of cultural symbols associated with wealth, status and power defines his manhood and is inscribed on his body across several films in roles of affluent, urban/diasporic cosmopolitan youth. Constructing a consumerist masculine body and subjectivity is hegemonically secured in films of a post liberalized India. Shah rukh’s films, removed from earlier paradigm of heroes’ existential struggle to earn a legitimate livelihood, is more about the heroes’ individual pursuits or personalized crisis. The hegemonic influence of market economy is discernible in the visual aesthetics that define the sets, the locales and most conspicuously on his body. Such a body comes to define a certain normative manhood and set the standards against which other forms of manhood are measured evaluated and most often than not found wanting. (ibid p 271). As a result the consumerist star body becomes an exemplar of the upwardly, mobile Indian middle class seeking for a long awaited sanctified gratification (Varma 2004, ). The body of Shah Rukh is not only consumerist as it lends to branded embellishments but is consumables himself, ‘much to the delight of the advertising world … this new consumable hero wears Gap shirts and Nike sneakers and when he dances, it is in front of Mc Donald’s outlets in white man’s land or Hollywood studios, or swanky trains and has white girls – not Indian Peasants – dancing with him’ (Deshpande 2005, ibid. p. 197).
The export of gender order of western world to the colonies has remained as a continuous tradition – accelerated by linkages enabled by capitalist network and institutions. ‘As the world capitalist order becomes more complete, as more local production systems are linked in to global markets and local labour brought into wage systems, local versions of western patriarchal institutions are installed. These include corporations, state bureaucracies, arises and mass education system…This provides a solid institutional base for changes in gender ideology and imagery and changes in everyday practice. The export of European American gender ideology can be seen in the mass media of the developing world (Connell 2002; p 255). The European American gender arrangement have been able to sustain its hegemonic sway through an integrated netork of capitalist institution and has been strengthened further by the collapse of Soviet communism. However, the global gender order is not homogenous and does not tantamount to cloning of European/American culture and research has revealed how global gender order negotiates local culture (p 255 ibid).

The present global order of gender that is dominant and are the main beneficiaries of contemporary world order are metropolitan men via increased power over resources that accumulation and concentration of wealth has delivered to them. This amplified power is realised via consumption material confront and reduction of manual labour that has led to a restructed occupational hierarchies. The material uses and pleasure enabled by capitalist consumerism and economic growth has led to a change in male bodies (p 256 ibid).

With India entering into the global regime of capitalist market, change ensued in popular imagination of male heroes. Shah Rukh’s consumerist body is imbricated within a large global consumerist market and resembles the symbolic privileges of metropolitan masculinity in terms of accoutrements, life style and possessions.

Shah Rukh’s gendered body merges as an expression of political power and represent the ideological expression of this domination (Horrocks p 13 1994). In other words his representation mediates the alignment of state (policy) and capital through a brazen display of wealth and consumption on his body.

Analysts of consumer culture highlights the commercialization of body and this has become increasingly central to sense of self identity, a shift associated with advances of capitalism. Liberlization encouraged a shift from socialist regime of frugality in sphere of middle class consumption towards what favoured seductively a kind of hedonistic consumption (Featherstone 1982). The body status within film as a consumer/consumable was further strengthened by body gaining an ubiquity in advertising culture and proliferation of production oriented towards leisure. This enhance an emphasis on the achievement of an appearance and a degree of physical control consumersurate with the display of a hyper efficient performing self (Shilling 2005 p2). Pasi Falk as cited in Shilling argued that the boundaries of the late modern self on becoming detached from the bonds of collective physical rituals, and centred around individualizing consumption focusses on ‘bodily  surface and its sensory openings’ in response to consumerism.
Post liberalization Indian state policy sanctified consumerism and with the disciplining state’s control over the market declining emacipated the body to become what is as an object on show as a vehicle of identity, consumption and social status. (Giddens, 1991, Turner, 1984) The body – its physical self and exterior defined itself through branded accountrements, clothes, cars, houses etc. The topographical relevance of the star’s body and his embellished ‘flesh as appearance’ promoted by as a physical capital (Bourdien 1978) – as an endowment to be upheld as avowed market of a status enriched star-body performing rich urban cosmopolitan diasporic affluent youth characters in multiple films.

‘Dress has an intimate relationship to the body’ (Entwistle 2002 p 133) and the consumersist body of the star adorned and inscribed by high fashion of global brands appear to exude through his narcissistic bodily expression what umberto Eco described as epidermic self awareness. The brazen and bold display of the Gap T-Shirt for example in the film Kuch Kuch Hota Hai and the sartorial flambouyance adorning his youthful consumersist body in several films like Dilwale dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Dil to Pagal Hai, Kal Ho Na Ho and so on was loaded with semantic significance and most significantly this body mediated the desire of the bourgeoning community of consuming middle class and imposed a certain demeanor of a desirous man ‘obliged to live towards the exterior world’. (Eco cited in Entwistle ibid p 133).

The ‘visceral nature’ of the clothes and fashion garments are part of fashion ensemble that circulates globally that draws the body into the vortex of a consumersist global culture informed by a certain homogeneity of techniques, aesthetics, attitudes and so on. Global fashion techniques of dress can be said ‘to produce different bodies. Cloth and the tailoring practices that shape it, give form to the body’s presentation in culture…the dressed body as a situated object within the social world. The dressed body is not only a uniquely individual, private and sensual body it is a social phenomenon too, since our understandings and techniques of dress and our relationship to cloth, are socially and historically constituted’. (ibid p 134-135).

While erstwhile hero and heroine’s star-bodied have sufficiently sought fashionable embellishment quite often in films, post-liberalization’s ushered a distinct change in terms of its visceral aesthetics and style where bodies came to affirm itself more as decorative appendage to the otherwise ostentations romantic sets and exotic locales. (see, Mazumdar,2007) Taking Goffman’s understanding of presentation of self ahead, it is suggested that ‘the body is both the property of the individual and the social world’; body is thus ‘the vehicle of identity but this identity has to be manged in terms of the definitions of the social situation which impose particular ways of being on the body. Thus, the individual feels a social and moral imperative to perform their identity in particular ways and this includes deressing…Goffman’s ideas can be extended to discussion of the ways in which dress is routinely attended to as part of presentation of self in everyday life’ (Entwistle 2003 ibid. p 139).

Extending this analysis it can be argued the star body as a site – as also a dressed phenomena expresses the cultural milieu of a post liberalized nation. Here the body articulates an expressive freedom in favour of hedonist consumption removed from the gazer of a statist socialist ethos of restraint and austerity.
Foucault’s notion of discourse can enable the analysis of fashion as a discursive domain which sets significant parameters around the body and its presentation. Fashion as a dynamic system of styles sets out an assemblage of competing discourse on image and the dominant system governing dress in the West, has been closely linked to the operations of power. (ibid. p 146). The star body as a textual site is inscribed by the discursive domain of global fashion. The transnationally circulating fashion seeks to claim the body and render it docile and compliant to dominant codes of global fashion originating in West and the star comes to embody the image that suits the spirit of capitalist market. Applying Foucault’s insights into the way star bodies are subject to power and discursively constituted show how such discursive practices of designed fashionable dress ‘act upon the body marking it and rendering it meaningful and productive’ (ibid p 147). This post structuralist perspective informed by Foucaultian idea of power and discourse runs the risk of treating the body as passive and fail to see the active autonomous choices and engagement of the star, which however is often precluded through the presence of fashion designers and costume makers who are in charge of dressing the star body not only in films but also in advertisements and most public appearances of the star to keep it in ‘vogue’. Discussion of fashion and dressing as discursive domain produces an account of bodies as if they were texts, acted upon by social forces, rather than the flesh and blood material of our embodied existence. If the dressed body is to be understood not only as always situated and structured by culture, but also as an intimate aspect of embodied existence we have to look elsewhere for a fuller account of dress as a fleshy practice that is one that involves real flesh and blood bodies (ibid p 148). It can be argued that such an understanding premised on discursive constitution of the star body as a cinematic representation concerns our attention. In view of an interpretative study of text, it is methodologically constrained to gain access to an understanding of the star’s active involvement in the dressing of his body/self/ that is only possible through his personal interviews as primary data.

The sartorial tradition of Indian (Hindi) film heroes have been succinctly described as; ‘The post independence period saw Western clothes becoming the norm again for the urban, upper caste male, with Indian clothes reserved for wearing in the home (the vest or kurta worn with a lungi or sarong) or for strictly formal occasions – the bandgala (lounge suit with Nehru collar) or the sherwani pyajama. This trend was mirrored in the films with male stars becoming famous for their style, whether ‘Debonaire’ Dev Anand’s quiff or Shammi Kapoor’s ‘India’s Elvis’. The greatest superstar of the Hindi movie, Amitabh Bachchan, very tall, thin and not conventionally handsome, set the trend that has continued to present for ‘cool’, outrageously stylist high fashion for men, often eclipsing his female co-stars. Bachchan’s representation was fetishistic, his first appearance usually being of his feet, shod in black leather, as the camera slowly panned his long body. His legs which were used in the movie as weapons of destruction, were clad in the widest flares or bell bottoms, …Bachchan regularly appeared in a vest, but his body was for action, not offered for display, while his fashionable clothing became his trademark’ (Dwyer and Patel 2002 p 82-83).
The 90’s hero departed from the action displaying masculinistic bodies typified by Bachchan. The heroes of 90’s displayed the urban cool look of Tommy Hilfiger and Nike trainers, informal fashionable clothes designed for fashion, leisure, romance. (ibid), Shah Rukh an archetypal hero of 90’s in his fancy designer outfit falls in this category of well dressed, clean shaven young male with well dressed, well groomed and well maintained body. SRK like ‘The male at the end of the twentieth century is groomed, maintained, exercised and dressed in the clothes of consumer society, an object of his own narcissistic gaze’ (ibid p 84) invites gaze of the audience on his fragmented body, his torso, arms face etc. Emblazoned with the Tommy Hilfiger and DKNY labels proudly in KNHH (ibid p 89), constituted his professionally managed body as his costumes were crafted by fashion houses /designers and this image also was meant to dress his off screen appearance (ibid p 93). The body of the star through global brands of sports clothes, informal casual wears transnationalised its appeal, often to justify the diasporic urbane, cosmopolitan roles. And looking at the consumersit body of SRK shaped and contoured by post-global culture of 1990s India, one need to see it also as a construct of the discourse of a new media circulating and popularizing global consumerist lifestyle and ethos of good life and its indulgence via films, satellite T.V. advertising, lifestyle /film /gossip magazines etc carrying images of fashion, leisure and consumption enticing middle class to the charms of newforms of style.

Fashion accessories are crucial vehicles of affirming star value and power Emblazonment of star body of Shah Rukh is not only of diegetic relevance they adorn star bodies as worthy of such goods and can be seen as what Simmel observes, as notes Barthel: ‘as extensions of ourselves. They extend our power. They communicate our sense of ourselves to others. And they give that sense back to us again. They become locus of power. By finding our identities in and through products, we actually hand over our identities. When such commodity fetishism occurs, we no longer have power over goods, Rather, they have power over us…..’(Barthel, 1992 p 138). Fashionable, smart clothes, doning of branded wears/accessories are articulations of star power beyond films, as it draws its support from the extra filmic glamorous image of the star that circulates as ads or as news in film magazines/gossip coloums about his real life of affluence, style and conspicuous consumption involving owning of villas to IPL franchise ownership, from private foreign holidays in luxurious style to his personal fetish for good living. According to Barthes, clothes signify and can function like language. The fashionable encoding of Shah Rukh’s body are readable as language. As fashion operates like a language, then Shah Rukh’s body adorned by mostly semi-formal, sporting wears and doning of global brands made famous especially by his Gap T-Shirt in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai has evidently signified in favour of a certain hybrid urban taste. These clothes inscribes a status and class identity on his body that comforts in its abundance and purveys a certain hedonism. This body is both consumerist and is equally consummable by gaze. The language of fashion inscribed on the body is related to a wider semantic field of meaning which can be understood in relation to ideology.
A very powerful reason as to how Shah Rukh’s typecasting in a young romantic lover boy image easily lends his body to consumerist moorings comes from Arjun Appadurai’s powerful essay: ‘The Social Life of Things’ that allow us to see how the romantic image of heroes are used to increase demand for luxury goods and promote consumption. Quayson observes on Appadurai’s writing: ‘Appadurai boldly joins Baudrillard with Simmel, Mauss and others to define how exchange value is created for commodities through what he carefully elaborates as their “social life”. This, he shows is not a secondary off shoot of exchange relations but is part and part of economic exchange and the creation of value in all societies…. ..the comments he makes about the work of Sombart. Sombart argues that the principle cause of the expansion of trade, industry and finance capital in the west was the demand for luxury goods, principally on the part of the newly rich…He locates the source of this increased demand…..in the new understanding of free love sensual refinement, and the political economy of courtship during this period. To Sombart fashion becomes a driving force for the upper classes, who are satiated only by every increasing quantities and ever differentiated qualities for articles of consumption…. ’(Quayson 2000 p 97). Adding interpretive gloss to read SRK’s consumerist body through Appadurai’s application of Sombart, we can discern a cultural politics of fashion inscribed on his body, where luxury is semiotically related to economic drives promoting luxury goods. In this context it may be said that with a distinct change in cultural economy of films involves a change in digitization and computerization of images circulated of stars beyond films in posters, promotional material etc., Professional designers have joined the film industry with a background in corporate advertising and the overlap of technology gives a glamorous sheen to star bodies rendering it more consumerable. This fluid movement between advertising and the film industry is illustrative especially for stars like Shah Rukh, who straddles both with style and elan allow his body to attain a certain representational mode, aided by corporate ad style and technology. The aesthetics of consumption inscribed on his body is also a part of stylized representation (see Mazumdar 2007 p 94-101)

Consolidating himself in a romantic lover boy image and even described as India’s mascot for the “Generation –X the Youpie, Shah Rukh’s body” and its consumerist trappings gives further affirmation to these epithets. Infact, his iconization falls well within what can be described as youth culture and because youth culture has come to be redefined ‘ ..participation in youth cultures can no longer be characterised as a brief period of ‘gang’ or peer group activity restricted to a certain limited period in the teens and early twenties. The late modern extension of youth culture practices in two chronological directions, downwards towards late childhood, and upwards towards the mid-to-late thirties, means that participation in youth culture practices – in general may last more than 20 years, even carry on towards middle age....’(Nilan and Feixa 2006 p 7). The star’s well toned fit body its dexterity and youthful look even playing as romantic hero post mid-forties allow him to embody the virtue of youthfulness defying biological chronology. This semiotic youthfulness reinforces his consumerist image and his consumability. His body commodifies youth culture and lend itself to marketing of products to
consumer groups termed ‘middle youth’ (Brooks 2003 p 2) convincingly for his body retains the look despite his age well beyond forty.

What has come to be seen as a consumerist look of the post-liberalized Bollywood heroes, is a certain and androgynous adornment of the star-body, particularly in the case of Shah Rukh. Since Dilwala Dulhaniya Le Jayenge’, Karan Johar who has been advising him on his costume design narrates the openness of the actor to wear colourful clothes and even ‘It was the first time a hero had worn neck accessories…’ Johar reminisced in his narration to the star-biographer Sheigh ‘I would go to Goregaon market, Bandra and buy different chains for different scenes’ (Sheikh, 2009. p. 294). Later in his own film Johar convinced Shah Rukh about the need to wear clothes in which he would look good. He (Johar) said : ‘… I said, if you don’t connect visually you don’t connect at all. He was appalled at half the clothes, I gave him to wear. I had been a fat child and I couldn’t wear a lot of clothes and I made Shah Rukh wear what I couldn’t. There’s nothing wrong in a man looking good! Why can’t Shah Rukh look good? He became the muse in my head. And it worked. He has the structure that can carry anything. He has a compact frame’ (ibid.p. 296). The adornment of the hero redefined the male heroic body as a source of visual pleasure and the innate malleability and his corporal quality lent itself appropriately to adornments by consumerist imaginations of film makers.

Unlike his contemporaries Salman Khan Aamir Khan, Ajay Devgan who have at times played the role of either marginalized, socially excluded or lumpen, Shah Rukh with the exception of films like Koyla (1996) and Josh (2000) have moved from margins to psychopathy of his earlier films to a materially endowed agent or subject. The earlier struggles of heroes come to be replaced by narratives of pleasure, consumption and acquisition. The consumerist body (and also the sculpted bare body) is almost a complete antithesis to the working class rogue body of angry young man cult of Amitabh Bachchan. The body of Bachchan as a proletariat destitute working class man, in films ,as the messiah of the poor, in several films of seventies derives its class based meaning from the struggle, pain anguish and toil in which the body engages itself.

Bourdien, as cited in Fiske(ibid), observed the class-based meanings of the masculine body when he notes ‘the prevalence of the popular valorization of physical strength as a fundamental aspect of virility and of everything that produces and support it ( ‘strong’ food and drink, heavy work and exercise’. Bourdieu argues, as cited, ‘a class which like the working class is only rich in its labour power can only oppose to the other classes – apart from the withdrawal of its labour – its fighting strength, which depends on the physical strength and courage of its members, and alo their number i.e. their consciousness and solidarity, or, to put it another way, their consciousness of their solidarity’(Fiske,1989 ibid.p.96) For Bourdieu the body becomes the site where working class consciousness is materialized, particularly the strong excessive body. This working class, with its virility and prowess argues Bourdieu ‘is perhaps one of the last refuges of the autonomy of the dominated classes of their capacity to produce their own representation of the accomplished man and the social world, that is being threatened by all the challenges to working class identification with the values of virility, which are one of the most autonomous forms of their self affirmation as a class. The most fundamental principles of class
identity and unity, those which lie in the unconscious, would be affected if, on the decisive point of relation to the body, the dominated class came to see itself only through the eyes of the dominant class, that is, in terms of the dominant definition of the body and its uses’. Fiske argues that a working class body is excessively strong grotesque and bears the value of class consciousness, and it is the political meanings of the body that matter. The individual working class body becomes the class body as the site of the subjection of the proletariat (Fishe 1989 96-97). Amitabh’s body a site for proletariat working class struggle against inequalities and injustice is laden with political and economic significance. The rogue bravado, confrontational temperament and cold rationalized violence became an icon of protest and rebellion. Bachchan’s body became offensive in protest and as per Fiske’s understanding it became ‘the means of evading, resisting and scandalizing that social power’. In contrast to the contemporary avatar of designed and sculpted bodies of male stars like Shah Rukh the angry young rogue body of Bachchan refused to be aestheticized (for aesthetics is merely class disciplinary power displaced into metaphors of beauty symmetry and perfection’ (ibid,p.97). The body provided the language, the idiom and the expression of protest by the oppressed. Bachchan’s body in films like Deewar, Zanjeer, Sholay, Coolie emerged a metaphor for the body of the people, the subordinated body, the labouring body, the oppositional body (see, Fiske 1989 p 102).

The consumerist body appears hedonistic, and gratifying its need materially it also is sensually pleasure giving for the fleshy body and is steeped in signs of affluence and consumption. This body in other words as cited by Thapar can be identified as a ‘celebratory body’. ‘Experiencing the body as celebratory implies that desire attains fulfillment in our perceptions of our bodies as well as in the gaze of the other. Film stars, fashion models …..probably experience the celebratory aspect of their embodiment’ (Thapar 2001 p 128-129). Fashioning Shah Rukh’s body in designer apparels and branded clothes pronouncedly celebrates the consumerist embodiment of the star body and mediates a narcissistic fulfillment of masculinity—showcased as a model for an urban, metropolitan India embracing global capitalist idiom of consumption.

It would be naïve to assume that cinematic discourse produces visual images of adorned and indulgent bodies alone. The stars themselves creatively and actively participate, in the presentation and perpetuation of these images. As a result media produced and celebrity presented self images, make their gendered bodies a textual discourse. Advent of liberalized television network, circulation of popular magazines and advertisements for consumer good, cosmetics, clothes etc. through fashion displays and their representative icons (that includes film stars and fashion models) (ibid p 133) produces a consumerist culture. The star body of Shah Rukh as a consumerist textual discourse extends much beyond the diegetic scope. The active involvement of the star in his fashionably posturing in print and audio visual media, in brand endorsements reinforces his consumerist body on cinema’s screen. Vortex of consumerist culture seizes the star image and constructs it in a way that is not discrete to films, but maintained within the intertextual universe of media and popular culture.
The consumerist body renders itself amenable to consumersist inscriptions wherein the body turns to a site of fashion, taste, class and ‘habitus’. We can consider how different groups use certain styles of dressing and the meanings they connote in order to distinguish themselves phatically from other groups. Fashion is one of the main ways of producing group and personal identities…we realize that fashion, like any text is always socially constructed in its production of meanings and what it does with them (such as creating an identity or an impression ).((Thwaites et al, 2001 ibid p 78-79)The consumerist body of the star through such fashion inscriptions that affirm and celebrates his successful image (read, body) also becomes an insignia or representative of certain class or status group, inviting identification or providing an ideal of aspiration for those beyond the bracket of the represented habitus and phatic group as does most figures of popular culture via their polysemic appeal. Shah Rukh’s style radically different from the trump image (as of Raj Kapoor) or plebian angry young man look(as represented in sense of films of Amitabh Bachchan ) is that of affluent, urban, cosmopolitan and diasporic man. Suitable to this image the body is embellished with attire that exudes a consumption based identity. The semiotic link (ibid p 81) between dress code and status is clearly evident. The body of the star emerge as a cultural text and has its signs and codes informed by consumerist values and social ideas, and at the same time signify those values and quite possibly reinforce their appeal to readers. The text is both produced by and reproduces cultural attitudes (ibid p 81). While codes of consumption constructs the body of the star, the body in turn reinforces values of good life and affirms consumption while also being produced by it.

Codings of masculinity intersect with social ways that serve also to express the tension between gender regime and social structure. Arnowitz as cited argued that representation of working class disappeared in the mid 1970s as working class identity was displaced to other upwardly mobile occupations. Images of white collar professionals define particular masculinity of upwardly mobile, liberal middle class men (Hanke 1992 p 193).

Urban subalterity earlier seen in early heroes of post colonial India – Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar was aggressively revived in Bachchan and his contemporaries like Shatrughna Sinha. The legacy was carried forth by Mithun Chakraborty and still further by Govinda often in guise of a ‘dehati’ (rustic) Urban metaphors depicted both Amir (Rangeela 1995) and Salman (Judwa 1996) as urban “tapor"(see, Majumdar,2007), while Ajay Devgan and Akshay as urban macho lumpen enacted several films.

In contrast barring the film Josh(2000) Shah Rukh mostly in the image of urban cool dude sought to valorize the image of urban upper middele class masculinity recurrently and consistently unlike most of his contemporaries. The metaphors of consumption herein may be seen to reinforce the body and persona of the star as an urban consumerist man like no other heroes of his times. With the influence of global consumerist capitalist culture in a post liberalization nation it is not difficult to see it embodied in and inscribed upon the body of the popular star. Shah Rukh’ masculinity may be re-cast as Global Indian imaginary. Unlike in Britain and elsewhere Hollywood film culture has a hegemonic presence and America is the
Imaginary and American Imaginary to the Transatlantic gaze is the realm of identification (Hearn et al 1992 p 218-220) in India it is Bollywood that dominates popular film culture. The power of global capital since its advent in post-liberalization regime has insidiously influenced the construction of the hero. The consumersist body of the urban diasporic, Shah Rukh that has typecasted him in several films emerges as the global Indian imaginary – offering a structure of subjectivity can therefore serve as the imaginary symbolic. The global idiom of consumerism and fashion turns the body as a semantic site. In films and advertisements the body is constructed as an Imaginary ideal by global capital as a purveyor of consumption. Shah Rukh’s body and its semantics articulate a negotiation of the vernacular and the global – cosmopolitan. His global Indian image is adapted to appeal to largest common denominator where consumerism promoted by global capital turns the body to a site. Cultural production is never free from, but is bound into the workings of capitalist economy based on commodification (Couldry 2000 p 50). This leads us to understand how the body of male star in films and more pronouncedly advertisements is commodified by capitalist culture. The body invites vicarious participation into this culture of consumption – which often obfuscates class inequalities and contradictions involved by serving as the imaginary ideal for the aspirational groups.

Shah Rukh’s recurrent casting as the diasporic hero, transterritorialized subject allowed his roles to bring to fore the de-territorialised, performative nation (see Bhabha, 1990). This also enlarged the star’s constituency enabling diversely positioned audience to discursively negotiate with his image. The star body and image as a text is located within the matrix of a certain political and cultural economy (of film production) and is informed by the hegemonic discourse of a globalizing nation. Inscribed by the consumerist idiom of globalizing economy, produces a certain polysemy of his star text. Consumption creates its own republic and has a cross gender/race/religions/class appeal (see Fiske in Storey ed. 1996). The consumerist idiom of the body and image of the star renders it open to plural appropriations and hence explains his popularity. It also seeks to represent an image of the star acquiescent with the consumerist tendencies of the globalizing times.

Media forges links to create a powerful allegiance to the involvement driven imperatives of capital and the values associated with the free market, individual effort and the pursuit of free choice, Media discourse must create a media public with particular tastes choices and desire – whose values it claims to represent. By a trying or posing to represent the interest of all, it seems to protect the interest of those whom it is allied in capital investment. (Thwites et al, 2002, ibid p 150). While the sculpted spectacularised exhibitionist male body of Shah Rukh Khan like several other Bollywood heroes are hailed to be popular, it is discretely in tacit alliance with logic of market capital and its interest that seeks to gain through such exhibitionist, consumerist, commodified, saleable body. As western capitalism has shifted its attention from ‘productive capacity of well drilled bodies and more on the cultivation of consumption, the emphasis has changed from repressing whims and desire to encouraging them….Suddenly, the liberation of the body’s unpredictable demands, rather than their repression was at the heart of
capitalism and as such the body moved to the fore….’(Mills and Sen 2004 p 2-3). The capitalist discourse propelled by globalization has unleashed an indulgent body and Shah Rukh’s body in post liberalized India is an exemplar of the tendency.

Parenthetically mention may be made of the famous Chaplinesque walk of Raj Kapoor on the highway that brought him to Bombay in the beginning of the film the sings the opening song: ‘Mera jota hai japoni, ye patloon Englishtani, Sar pe lal topi Rusi, phir bhi dil hai Hindultani…’ It means “My shoes are Japanese, these pants are British. A red Russian cap on the head, but still my heart is Indian. In Sumita Chakravarty’s view this song privileges “the core (heart sentiment)” over peripheral (“limbs, outward appearance) where the body signals randomized global accumulation of accessories… a map on which nations can appear to coexist in harmonious yet distinctly separate spheres… By transforming the social marginality of the filmic hero into the centrality of the Indian citizen, material needs are displaced onto a more intangible (emotional) level of experience”. For Chakravarty, it is an ‘internationally conscious figuration of the nation in the Nehru era, in which vagabond laughs at his improvisement pondering over his own society. The tramp ‘sublimates his chosen material lack with sentimental pride in his “Indian” heart. Such pride in the spiritual, sentimental, and emotional connotation of a special Indian identity is meant to compensate for that material lack (or in this instance, meaningless materialism identified with other nations). These are common and enduring strategies of rhetorical inversion used by popular Hindi cinema to defuse the nation the elevated spiritual Indian versus the cross Western materialist’ (Virdi, 2003, citing Sumita Chakravarty, p. 98-100).

Many more years later the same rhetoric finds re-iteration in a changed context in the social cultural political and economic history of the nation. Raj Kapoor’s positioning in a Nehruvian socialist regime resorted to this idealistic claim in affirmation of a sentimental patriotism despite material lack and the body inscribed by certain foreignness. Shah Rukh’s positioning in globalizing nation - embracing neo-liberal economic regime while appearing to be more conciliatory to this globalness, upon a closer alternative reading expresses a certain resistance in being engulfed by the advent of the global capitalism. The title of the film in which he both acts as well produces viz. ‘Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani’ and the music track spills beyond the filmic scope, as if to uphold and re-iterate the claim to the purity of Indian identity despite globalization. Raj Kapoor’s ambivalence and resistance towards the modern despite a body that consumer the ‘foreign’ is re-articulated by Shah Rukh’s voice. This voice seeking a certain dis-embodiment from that of Kapoor and seeks to locate itself in a discourse that is resistant and refuses to be engulfed or swamped by all that is global. The counter-assimilative voice speaks of a patriotic spirit despite body’s location with a consumerist paradigm of global capital.

The endorsement of consumer goods and fashions has long been a major function of cinema in both Hollywood and India Film Scholars have recorded discernible artistic and commercial liason between fashion industries and the attire of film stars, especially in the role of popular films in launching new trend in clothing styles and other aspects of personal appearance of stars. It is a ‘symbiotic’ relationship where cinema aids in the festishization of consumer goods when
stars use brand name objects or wear designer apparel and accessories within the film. In return when stars are invited to model for consumer products – most commonly make-up hairstyles or clothing – in popular magazines, the cinema industry gains an additional publicity outlet. Fashion is thus, instrumental in connecting the film to the extra-cinematic sphere. The star’s wardrobes traditionally account for a substantial portion of a film’s budget. So there is a direct economic advantage as well when brand name companies provide the outfits at no charge to have the star model them in the film.’ (Jacob, 2010, p. 130)

The body of the star is a site to launch fashion trends and the star body purveying consumer brands attains a commodity value. The body upholds consumer fantasies and promises of sartorial pleasure. The consummate, consumerist and consumable body of contemporary stars, as illustrated typically by Shah Rukh offers a site for cinematic pleasure to synergize with ancillary spheres of culture industry including fashion Shah Rukh’s urbane body have provided itself as a with ancillary culture industries including fashion. Shah Rukh’s urbane body have lent itself as a peg for campaigning in favour of consumer goods as a body that endorses pleasure in indulgence and gratification. The body becomes the locale of sensory aggrandizement in both cinematic and extra-cinematic space and also the ‘consuming link’ that connects film with the extra filmic, culture industries etc. It is body’s third signification – its personifying of fashion that enables the star to provide the vital link between film and the other popular spheres of fashion media sports etc.

This new consumerist body marked by pleasure indulgence in plentitude savoring abundance of materiality as already stated is starkly dissimilar to the rogue, struggling, plebian masculine body of angry young man Bachchan as angry young man. The body of Shah Rukh in its consumerist avatar declares the coming a new subject, a product of Bollywood’s alliance with global corporate media and therefore we need to ‘...see in Bollywood’s new discourse the advent of a popular culture and more mercenary avatar of that ‘new subject’. With the increase in the travelling power of Bollywood’s merchandise, with the widening of commerce and buyer a power has been divested on the seller; and identity or self-expression has become a predominantly jouissant celebration’. (Bhattacharya-Mehta, 2011, p. 6). The body a site of merchandise display appears as a commodified fetish purveyor of global consumer goods and a body that seeks to affirm its identity through indulgent consumption.

Post-liberalization sanitized consumption and this has its most illustrative manifestation in spatial aesthetics which is crucial as backdrop to the positioning of the consumerist body as well. Writing on visual culture Dwyer and Patel observes: ‘Earlier village style appeared along the line of Indian arts and crafts promoted by the government and tourist industries, with fewer depiction of the interiors of the urban middle classes. Interior designs appeared late for this group for whom the standard interiors under permit Raj were pistachio-green paint, strip lights, brown plastic seat covers. Their increased spending power and since 1970s the rise of consumer choice allowed them to enjoy new forms of consumption and lifestyle opportunities. Interiors are now often furnished from shops ranging from designer boutiques to government emporia, which provide a choice of styles from ethnic chic to high tech décor. All this gained an
eminence in post liberalized India complicated by the creation of a consumerist society in India, as the urban middle classes began to define themselves by patterns of consumption rather than work or birth. The rise of the new middle classes in urban India in recent years has made romance and consumption, leisure, pleasure integral to a middle class lifestyle created by and reflected in the mass media through a wide range of practices including advertising, cinema and photography. A new middle class Utopia has been defined for the enjoyment of love, wealth and equality where the family has become the location for intimacy and sexuality. Much romance is now located in the liminal spaces of leisure, travel/tourism and nature. These new middle classes enjoy a range of consumerist and leisure practices including travel, beauty, fashion, health and fitness with their aesthetics based on the commodity and their sentiments expressed in spectacle. Hence commodities and consumption are not opposed to romance but form a key part of it, its preferred romantic situations being sites of consumption whether gastronomic, cultural or touristic. Eva Illous argues further that modern love is comprised of three major elements: the sexual, the ritual consumerist and the rational-economic…’.(Dwyer and Patel, 2002 p 52-53).

Romantic narratives plush interiors, affluent families, exotic locales travel, leisure etc. provide the conducive and appropriate site for consumerist bodies. Bodies align to consumption via the visual culture and the accoutrements that surround it. The consumerist body, is a romancing body, a leisurely body, an adorned body, a pleasurable indulgent body, an affluent non-working body and all of it is not just a corporal inscription but how the body engages in a dialogic relation to the surrounding and is a vehicle mediating the consumerist milieu of its location. The extravagant sets, exotic locales and the consumerist body is a composite visual complex – defined by similar visual vocabulary.

The increasingly consumerist lifestyle of India’s elites in the 1990s is seen in films that now feature a mix of Indian and Western designers in their clothes, furnishings etc (ibid p 58). Shah Rukh’s body straddles between the new lifestyle space of home and abroad, shown as hugely extravagant interiors. His consumerist body has been in specific chronotropes of romance associated with remote or even fantastic space accessed in dream sequences or even those with diegetic explanation for instance his Europe/US travel in films like DDLJ, Prades, K3G, KANK, Yes Boss, KKHH etc. These places provide privacy against familial (metaphor of statist surveillance) guardianship allowing the libidinous pleasure living romantic body to consume sensuous experiences of romance love or marriage against scenic, spectacular backdrop, removed from moral, everyday lives. However in 60’s colour films used landscape as spectacle and in Raj Kapoor’s Sangam (1964), Love in Tokyo (1966) by Pramod Chakraborty or Shakti Samanta’s An Evening In Paris (1967) exotic locales served as utopias of consumption (ibid p 59). These served as vicarious moments of visual pleasure for middle class caught within a maze of austere socialist regime.

Shah Rukh’s body exposed to consumerist behavior and lifestyle opportunities is seen in its association with travel, its movement in airports, shopping arcades, expensive sports, costumes, cars, that easily associate with both leisure, romance and hedonist pleasures. More than often
these bodies, in post liberalized regime, are seen as transnationalized, diasporic bodies appealing to middle-class Indian market. The consumerist body is a consumable object caught in an economic/consumerist space. The star’s body provides audience through its own super rich adornment and lavish spatial location to enter vicariously into the lifestyle space of the super rich and enjoy vicariously the pleasures of conspicuous consumption (Dwyer and Patel 2002 p 71). These spaces are seamlessly tied to global consumerist locales, appearing oblivious of grim tropical realities of poor rural/urban India. Fashionable designer clothes and positioning in extravagant interiors gave SRK’s body recurrently a consumerist character.

The celebratory temper of the hero’s consumerist body is suitably positioned within a space that is mostly re-invented familial space. The new traditionalism of the family ritualizes consumption amidst extravagant weddings, engagements etc. in K-Jo films, a name for Karan Johar films which typifying this genre creates designer interiors or domestic space upholding ‘the addiction to designer labels, the immaculate interiors. The beautiful people, urban milieu … as it might look in a heritage calendar’. In these films as Gopal argues are adept at inciting desire through a display of bodies and commodities, the ‘K-Jo’ film fully harnesses the technological potential of cinema to immerse spectators in a consumerist utopia. This liberation into the world of things in Karan Johar’s cinema has been justly read in connection with India’s transition to free market capitalism in the 1990s and the sudden flow of images and commodities into a nation whose economy since independence has been partly socialist and whose media including cinema fairly regulated (Gopal. 2011. p. 20) Consumerist bodies ritualized their consumption in a familial refuge where family, a metaphor of the nation, sanctified this attired regime of practice from socialist ethos of restraint and frugality to a more indulgent consumerism. Family bonding and its conviviality facilitates incursion in the national celebratory idioms where bodily consumption via bonding of ‘bodies’ is secured. Family is the privileged locate that reclaims filial bonding between familial bodies and allows jonissance and jubilation over gratification of bodies caught in abundance. And this is well known that Karan Johar has always preferred Shah Rukh in most of his films (see, Sheikh ibid) consistently cast in ostentatious domestic spaces like in KKHH, KANK, and so on. The star thus emerged as an archetypal K-Jo film hero.

Re-affirming the relevance of visual aesthetics of space it needs to said that it would be naïve to ignore the placing of consumption encoded bodies in a new kind of “surface culture”. Surface here refers to the expressive forms of architecture, advertising, print, television, film, and fashion. The new sensorium of urban life, triggered by an explosion in the surface culture of recent years, needs to be situated in the larger context of urban modernity and the display of the commodity form. (Mazumdar. 2007. P. 110). The positioning of the body within a consumerist family set up, amidst new panoramic interior forges a link via congruence between the body and its appropriate locale. The positioning of consumerist body commensurately is secured in ostentatiously and lavishly furbished private space. These interiors are analogous to the exteriority of the body and its surface aestheticization cannot be seen as disjunct to the consuming bodies. ‘As designers gear up to create enclaves of urban interiors, we see the desire
for new styles and modern living performed through a transformation of private space. Histories of consumer cultures have shown how a withdrawal of the middle classes into their domestic interiors, electrical kitchens and private automobiles was required to enhance the experience of consumption. The withdrawal was made possible through the creation of a privatized and depoliticized subjectivity’. (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 115). The narcissistic consumerist body was essentially anchored in these films within a physical topography and interior spaces inscribed by plentitude and opulence. Beside the aestheticization of space and surface is an exteriorized expression of such body. The materiality of these scenic interior is significant to human habitus and ‘ involves a serial transference of signs that results in a psychological symbiosis. The home interior and its many fragmented spaces - … provide insight into the psychological domain of intimacy, habit, the everyday and sensuousness… The interior is a locus of pleasure desire anxiety and eroticism…’ (ibid. 115).

The lavish interior design central to the intimate space of the familial and private mediate the identities of bodies located as manifest articulation of values attitudes and tastes. The semiotics of lavish interior and exotic locates provide the symbolic world and the space as a landscape that emits cultural and social signs that are congruent with consumerist bodies.

One of the most convincing means to reflect identity is via consumption. The consuming body becomes the negotiating link between the global consumerist idiom and Indianess. The body’s location in familial spaces provides an anchorage to tradition while also exhilnts its proclivity to accept global trends. Mazumdar writes : ‘This search for “Indianess” and also the desire to be part of the global landscape shapes the production of popular culture in unprecedented ways. Cultural difference is seen as an essential marker of identity, something that needs to be asserted and “redeemed in a higher global unity.” This duality embodies a desire for access to a lifestyle mythology that is seen as global, while at the same time it assuages anxieties about this access through a constant reassertion of “Indianness”. The cinematic form mediates this anxiety through a retreat away from the specificity of urban space, particularly Bombay, into an imaginary world of architectural design where the “Indianness” of tradition and modernity are played out. Cinema mobilizes the fantasy of a lifestyle unblemished by the chaos and poverty that exists all around… Carefully constructed abiding by international standards of design and fashion, these cinematic interiors become the display window for an urban lifestyle myth that can never fully exist in the physical spaces of the city. Interior design becomes the map for the charting-out of a spatial unconscious that desires and urban dream world of contemporary consumption. The panoramic interior is not just an expression of he sensorium of surface culture, but becomes an essential aspect of the delirium of urban consumption’ (Mazumdar. 2007. P. 118). Locating and embedding consumerist body to space as mediated through narrative positioning (for example the hero in his own house as in DDLJ, DTPH, KANK, KKKG, Pardes etc.) of the heroic body keeps the body in a consonance with his surroundings. The body in tandem with space mediates the global nation as constructed in popular imagination. The body’s performance for example song and dance is also a device for spatial exploration visually for the audience. ‘The interior panorama of Bombay’s family film is also
explored through song and dance sequences that seek to navigate and illustrate the power of architectural splendor and design…” (ibid. p. 119)

It is relevant to mention that in films since Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. Shah Rukh’s body recurrently gave into consumerist aesthetics of fashionable clothing – trendy ‘cool’ and smart embedded in ambience of modernist space or navigating through panoramic spatial settings. The lifestyle oriented “cool” body of the hero in films like DDLJ, KKHH, KANK, KHNH, DTPH lives amidst architectural interior that are flashy, fashionable and strategically organized to be in congruence with the perfect body – its smart moves light gestures, gymed contours, sporty looks, ‘gymnastic movements, modern dance gestures, sexual energy’. (see Mazumdar ibid..p. 127). The body coordinates with its spatial moorings to convey a “modern look” and a regime of consumerist pleasure. ‘Lifestyle mythology’ finds perfect visual articulation via the hero’s body (ibid. p. 128). The spatial and corporal topography are instances of postmodern ‘hyperstylization’ (ibid). The body caught in designer interior in simulated modernist spaces ensures that the realist physical topography of the territorial nation’s public space does not impinge on the body’s consumer aesthetics.

The positioning of Shah Rukh’s body in extravagant interior of diasporic family films create the illusion of a consumer body caught in a shopping mall where mall like interior hypermodern space (that is by narrative logic may be deeply familial) makes it so that Bodies flow in and out of this commodity cosmos as a consumer. The cinematic ambience provides as per Ann Friedberg, as cited, a perceptual experience to that of the shopping mall. It creates a desire for movement within a seamless world. The ability of cinema to produce a mall like phantasmagoria- a realm of consumption (Mazumdar. 2007. P. 141-142) enables post-liberalization films to suture the body in such locales appropriately. Mazumdar further argues : ‘Like the experience of the shopping mall cinematic spectatorship relies on a perceptual displacement of external reality, offering instead a “controlled commodified and pleasurable substitution… Cinema’s ability to do this creates the possibility for imaginary world which in the current context of urban transformation after globalization,… are designed to entice the spectator’s desire for a seamless commodity world’ (ibid. p. 142) where I argue the body of the consumerist hero seeks its gratification and affirms its consumerist affinities.

The consumerist body of Shah Rukh gains pronouncements for his success as a romantic hero. Virdi (2003) suggests that romance aligns with consumption in post-liberalization films and in SRK’s body one discerns how they coalesce. A comparison here is worthwhile with Bachchan. Bachchan’s angry young man image and his ‘masculined domination ‘ produced one actor genres such that fanzines did not overlook its antiwoman antifeminist and sometimes even anti-mother stance of the Bachchan persona in films. In Film Fare magazine, Sheela Naleem points to: ‘ ‘hints of ‘misogyny” in Bachchan’s films and notes that rarely does the hero enter into warm heterosexual relations. Bachchan thus redefines the Romantic hero – the tradition from K. L. Saigal to Rajesh Khanna and banishes the centrality of romance. Vengeance precludes love; the Jacobean revenger cannot love …’ In the 90’s in contrast to this angry young man cult, heterosexual romance gained centrality through coming of new league of 90’s heroes,
where struggling bodies gave to more non-arduous, consuming, sporty, cool, trendy leisure bodies that recombined romance with consumption as both was gratificatory and supported by a more free and liberal politico-economic regime. ‘Youthful romance blended Indian values with NRI lifestyle’ (Anandolok. 28/11/98. P. 27) where bodies negotiated this links in enacting tradition abiding roles with bodies adorned by high lifestyle choice etc.

In Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Devdas, an adaptation from classic Bengali novel authored by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Shah Rukh playing the iconic lovelorn renouncer ‘Devdas’, lend his body to what the director called ‘modern outlook’. The star himself expressed his desire to give the character an energetic youthfulness (Anandolok. P. 12-13, 19/2/2002). The story was cast in the context of new millennium – with huge sets and baroque interiors. In was an attempt to package classicism in an age of microchip. While the decision to cast SRK as Devdas was to capture the tragic expression and agony that could be naturalized on his face (Ibid. 10-12) what betrayed was Shak Rukh’s body and its adornment by the extravanza of Bansali’s design.

Despite the tragic renouncer he plays, he hero’s body ironically failed to escape its consumerist commodities gloss that became almost endemic to his star biography. The figure of the renouncer as the hero have mostly been inspired by the classic literary hero Devdas as the novel has not only been re-visited thrice cinematically but has also inspired tragic romanticism in subsequent films like Pyaasa(1957) and Kagaz Ke Phool (1959). The figure of the renouncer can also be traced in several other heroic renditions by heroes like Dilip Kumar (in Deedar 1951), Raj Kapoor(in Mera Naam Joker 1970), Dev Anand (in Bambai ka Babu 1960), Rajendra Kumar (in Sangam, 1964), Rajesh Khanna in several films like Amar Prem., Amardeep or Amitabh Bachchan (in films like Silsila, Kabhie Kabhie and even in Zanjeer , 1973 that seeks to combine renouncer’s ethics with revenger’s actions. In this whole trajectory, of popular Hindi film’s heroes, in renunciating performances that derives from the classic character of ‘Devdas’ mostly as a metaphoric point of reference, besides its direct adaptation, the one enacted by Shah Rukh Khan acts to attenuate the character differently.

Shah Rukh Khan, with a body that has lend itself to become an insignia of consumption and pleasure across various films and commercial endorsements, when cast as Devdas (2002) sought to re-cast the Devdas syndrome in a more contemporary idiom that otherwise has been inter-textually looming large in films for several decades as a figure of renouncer. The new re-casted Devdas is set to enact renunciation rather ambiguously. The grand decorative mise-en-scene of the film provide us with images of opulence that renders a clear abrogation of the materialist world appear both ambivalent and partly incredulous. This visual contradiction, that contravenes the very spirit and content of the original text, is such where the material props deployed in the film are to ‘be read as rewards for ethical, renunciatory life’(Mishra, 2002, p.7) Shah Rukh Khan, who have mostly played the role of an acquisitive male hero, having recurrently pursued his love object either in his psychopathic avatars in films like Darr(1994) and Anjaam(1994), or in his illicit fantasies or desires in films like Deewana(1992) and Maya Memsaab(1993), or took them away from their prospective suitors and fiancés in films like Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge(1995), Pardes(1997), Yes Boss (1997), Kuch Kuch Hota
Hai(1998) in his role as Devdas, is sharply contrasting by sheer virtue of his filmic image or his ‘star biography’. Shah Rukh’s persona defining that is deeply embedded within a consumerist discourse of a globalizing nation is mostly removed from the original spirit of the text that resides in repression, surrender and sacrifice. His early roles with psychopathic desirous drives and obsessive love or his subsequent roles as a charming youthfully exuberant lover-boy inscribed his image in a way where the very casting of the super-star as Devdas allowed us to witness an on-screen negotiation between the classic renouncer and his image that has grown by accretions drawn from his both filmic and extra-filmic image. Mostly cast in films within the habitus of an urbane, affluent, diasporic, cosmopolitan, heroic subject; his extra-filmic engagements within a consumerist discourse of brand endorsements or entrepreneurial ventures and his biographical tale of ascendancy positing him as an exemplar of an ‘Achiever’ in the realm of the popular extends into the role of ‘Devdas’ in ways that both parodies the meaning of renouncing and interrogates its inherent and subdued narcissism. The glamorized, embellished body of the star in specially designed costumes and the self-destructive journey of Devdas caught amidst panoramic sets of a typical blockbuster film insidiously introduces a narcissistic arrogance of wastefulness amidst abundance and purges the pathos from the star body despite its tragic denouement.

Commenting on the casting of Shah Rukh as Devdas, film journalist Anupama Chopra says that the star otherwise recurrently cast in his straitjacket romantic hero roles of Raj or Rahul ‘in designer romances’ in the said film is subjected to only a reconstitution without having to overhaul his naturalized star-image. A certain continuity of the star-image was retained in his retro-fashioning achieved through his ‘…Oxford-returned look….achieved by sourcing vintage suits from old clothing stores in London.’(Chopra 2011,ibid p.279). The star was repositioned within the nostalgia narrative while retaining his consumerist look in consonance with the temporal frame of the novel without having him to decant his body from the glamour gloss that is endemic to most leading stars of mainstream cinema.

Explaining the choice of the director Sanjay Leela Bhansali to cast Shah Rukh as Devdas, over other contemporary heroes, the star’s ‘official biographer’ Mushtaq Sheikh says that it is uncannily informed by the star’s own tragic experiences of early loss of his parents and the anguish of his early struggle to gain a foothold in the industry as a struggling actor. This inner void and grief re-invocably enacted in the role was thought to make the star appear to be convincingly suit the said role (Sheikh, 2009).Like the biography intersecting with the character Devdas, that made Shah Rukh essay the role of the protagonist of the novel, the star’s filmography and the consolidation of his image in diasporic characters embarks the post-liberalisation ‘Devdas’ upon a trans-territorial and trans-national locale. Such inflections upon Devdas seek to appropriate from the star’s persona and his filmic roles his trans national characterization as well his popularity amongst the diasporic constituency. The re-adapted Devdas, in view of global circulation of Bollywood films, responds to the changed cultural economy of Hindi films. Firstly, the corporal performative vehicle of the star embeds itself within a visual vocabulary of consumption, whereby the star’s adorned body at the level of its
surface level meaning denies the earlier austerity of previous heroes playing the same role in their simple clad bodies. Second, transporting Devdas to London is a strategic intervention to take the nation beyond its territorality, intended to direct at the overseas circulation of the film and capture the imagination of the diasporic audience, who by then was contributing significantly to the gross earnings of Hindi films.

Shah Rukh in the nostalgic plot of recycling and revisiting of Devdas not only adds to his own repertoire of roles, as every actor has to subject himself to narrative transition as he shifts from one role to another across variety of filmic texts and add to the accumulated accretions of his star-biography, he also conceals as well pays homage to what precedes him. In his role as Devdas, partially dislocates his predecessor, Dilip Kumar, who played the same role nearly five decades ago. This involves a process where the corporeality of the present star translates the character as per his reperformances. This leads to a point where Shah Rukh ‘transmogrifies’ the restrained, austere, tragically somber bodies of his predecessors, the earlier avatars of Devdas, into a more melodramatic rendition marked by excess that is typically an idiosyncratic trait of the star. Devdas thus re-incarnates, re-inscribes and re-invents himself upon a new body, viz. the body of the super-star. (Broker, 2005)

4.4 TRANSGRESSIVE BODY

4.4.1 Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin and anthropologist Mary Douglas have amply showed that the body’s physiological properties and boundaries constitute a rich repository of cultural meaning. The boundaries of the body are potentially dangerous since they are leaky the body is semipermeable open and therefore must be contained and managed by culture. Despite the disciplinng regulation of the body, cultural texts privilege discerning of transgressive moments that fail to be contained by the hegemonic conservative forces of the text. Like deviance being a social reality, transgression within popular texts as extensions of this social reality allow us to see how even heroes (opposed to earlier binaries and archetypes of hero versus the villain) today, as illustrated in the case of SRK transgress the social (legal/moral) boundaries.

The resistance of the body the hero within diegetic scope, ie of Shah Rukh in the following films is to be discussed as transgressive bodies claiming or seeking for pleasure appear as an evasive gesture. Their varied manifestation in these films, have been different positioning the body with respect to discipline and control. The body expressed a ‘semiotic insurgence’ (Fishe 1989 p 53), it resisted and refused social control in manifold transgressive corporality. The transgression of patriarch, symbolic of the Phallic state (in Mohabbatein) of infidelity (in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kalna), in subliminal subtextual homoerotica (in Kalho Naa Ho), of state boundary and statist discipline leading to incarceration in prison (in Veer zaara), as refusal of social control is politically meaningful in maintaining a social identity that is separate form and oppositional to the one preferred by social discipline (ibid. p 53) These bodily transgressions in every instance demands a price for its recalcitrance thereby affirming hegemonic control of...
power apparatus within cinematic discourse. This however does not preclude the eruption of
the disruptive, offensive bodily pleasure as an expression of popular pleasures (of evasion)
against discipline, control, surveillance and proscriptions. The transgressive body of the hero
Shah Rukh suffers the tragic death of Megha (Aishwarya Rai) - his beloved in Mohabbbatein, in
the breaking up of his family and losing faith of his wife, mother and son in Kabhi Alvida Naa
Kahna in mortification in Kal Ho Na Ho, incarceration in Pakistani prison and long severance
from his soil, his village his family and his beloved in Veer zaara and in death in Dil Se that
had semblance to altruistic suicide to save the honour of the state. The popular impulse while
offering routes to evasion to the hero’s body within the narratives, in the last instance, submits
to the stranglehold, of social control and secures its hegenomonic control.

Fiske notes: ‘Other resistance are those of evasion of getting around social control of dodging
the discipline over self and others that those with power attempt so insistently to exert.
Anything out of control is potential threat and always calls up moral legal and aesthetic powers
to discipline it. The signs of the subordinate out of control terrify the forces of order (whether
moral, legal or aesthetic) for they constitute a constant reminder of both how fragile social
control is and how it is resented; they demonstrate how escaping social control even
momentarily, produces a sense of freedom. That this freedom is often expressed in excessive,
irresponsible (i.e. disruptive or disorderly – the adjectives are significant) behaviour is evidence
both of the vitality of these disruptive popular forces and the extent of their repression in
everyday life. The pleasures of evasion tend to center on the body; those of the production of
contrary meanings center on the mind. . ..the body and its pleasures have been, and continue to
be, the site of a struggle between power and evasion, discipline and liberation; though the body
may appear to be where we are most individual, it is also the material form of the body politic,
the class body, the racial body, and the body of gender. The struggle for control over the
meanings and pleasures (and therefore the behaviours) of the body is crucial because the body
is the social is most convincingly represented as the individual and where polities can bes
disguise itself as human nature’ (Fiske 1989,p 69-70).

The body as a site is intersected by complex ensemble of axes of polity, gender nation state and
is amenable to being contested terrain where transgression and regulation can be best
represented. ‘ Despite the disciplinary use of the body to incarnate and intextuate the law, the
body remains a desperately insecure site for social control, which is why society has to develop
such powerful and all –encompassing apparatuses to deal with it’. (ibid p 94).

4.4.2 Transgressive Body: Transgressing the Border: Shah Rukh’s Body in Veer Zaara

The task of squadron leader Veer Pratap Singh (played by Shah Rukh Khan) as rescue man,
who saves lives at the borders brings out the protective role of male body, enabled to protect
the weak and comes out forcefully when Veer saves Zaara from the accident site: the soft and
vulnerable feminine other. It is the able body of the heroic star that drws up Zaara in a gallant
gesture of an airforce officer - upholding the true ideal of a duty bound body of national
soldier falling within hegemonic masculinity’s configuration of bodily actions and gestures.
Foucault has revealed in detail the ways whereby western societies have used the body as the site where social power is most compellingly exerted. The body is where the power bearing definitions of social and sexual normality are literally, embodied and is the site consequently of discipline and punishment for deviation from these norms (Fishe 1989 p 90). In the film, Veer’s body represents nation metaphorically as ‘The individual body is the incarnation of the body politic’. (ibid) and Veer’s transgressive desire to unite with Pakistani girl, Zaara, scion of a rich aristocratic elite family offends the latter’s state. And this encroachment upon Zaara’s body (politic) by Veer is quelled with Veer being incarcerated in a Pakistani jail without trial – thereby containing the Indian/Hindu body politic as a threat to the purity and sovereignty of the Pakistani/Muslim body politic embodied by Zaara.

Womans ‘signifies nation’, ‘the boundaries of group-identity, marking its difference from alien other’. Assigned with the responsibility for reproducing the group through time, women are signaled out as ‘custodians of cultural particularisms’ and ‘the symbolic repository of group identity’. Because symbols of cultural authenticity are jealously guarded, actual women face a variety of pressures to conform to idealized models of behavior and women are ‘particularly susceptible to control in strategies to maintain and defend the (group’s) boundaries…Women’s movement’s and bodis are policed in terms of their sexuality, fertility and relation with ‘others’… (and women are seen as) possessions, as those responsible for the transmission of culture and through its political identity’. (Peterson 2003 p 162).

Veer’s claim over Zaara (her body signifying the nation of Pakistan) is an infringement by the Hindu /Indian alien other against the sovereignty of the state, its culture and identity. While Zaara’s desire for Hindu (Indian) Veer defies the guardianship of her nation and its moral control of possession, Veer’s transgression is meted out with severe penal consequences for incarceration. Zaara fails to carry the burden of representation as women are constructed as symbolic bearers of a collectivity’s identity and honour. As an embodiment of the nation representing the spirit of her collectivity(see Yuval Davis 1997, p 45) she desiring for Veer, signifies a transgression on her part as well beyond her collectivity’s boundaries – a cultural/political breach of conduct seen to bring dishonour to the state (as she is seen to be daughter a state leader of Pakistan). Yuval Davis cites penalization of women during W. War II who befriended occupying Nazi armies (Warring quoted).

4.4.3 The Transgressive Body : Transgressing Fidelity in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna
Feminists mostly have identified sexuality as the primary social sphere of male power, arguing that male sexual dominance is at the heart of all other power relations in society. Contemporary cultural discourses and iconographies around sexuality, scientific/medical discourse and popular images are replete with instances of male’s insatiable sexual appetite.(Segal, 2001, p102).

In the film Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna, the dejected man, Dev(Shah Rukh Khan), who has lost his ‘field’, a football player where he earlier exhibited the bodily skills is now rendered unfit following an accident. This emasculating experience robbed him of his worth and esteem as he by strange co-occurrence strays into a relationship within another married woman Maya, for
being lonely and unhappy in his marriage with a successful professional, Rhea, and transgresses fidelity via sex. The ubiquity of the discourses and imagery of conquests/submission, activity/passivity, masculinity/feminity constructing heterosexual intercourse as the spectacular moment of male domination and female submission, is inescapable. Almost to escape the stigma of a disabled sports person’s body, the body of the hero seeks to reclaim its phallic power.

It is the phallus which creates the seemingly ineluctable bound between male sexuality and power (ibid.p 103) and therefore Dev allows his body – to turn masculine enough in conquering the body of Maya in an active sexual or libidinous drive. This transgression is perhaps muted, as the male body seeks to reclaim its dominance and can be seen as to reinforce cultural ideals and values of male power within the wider context of gender hierarchy. This phallic male power, as a symbol condenses the multiple significances of the whole configuration of male dominance with its diverse social practices that confer power and authority on men (ibid p 104). Sports being dominated by masculine power of bodily skill and dexterity had conferred a image of firm and able bodied man onto Dev and thus with the loss of his sporting career, it becomes ‘legitimate’ for the male body to retrieve its phallic power albeit in a transgressive gesture by claiming Maya and subordinating her to his masculine (read physical) charm.

A counter hegemonic reading of the narrative can expose the vulnerable masculinity of Dev Saran. His alienating experience from his wife Rhea who is materially more accomplished perhaps evolves a crisis syndrome for Dev who apprehends a loss of his body’s ability to sustain his heterosexual marriage. As heterosexual performance is generally viewed as ‘the mainstay of masculine identity’ (ibid p 105) Dev’s body seeks to engage in sexual intercourse as he in a deliberate move decides to lead Maya to the seclusion of a hotel room. Was this to heal his wounded ego of being unable to hold on to a stable marriage? Dev was perhaps seeking a bodily assurance of satisfying Maya’s sexual sensibility as fear of failure and ineptness to satisfy female sexuality continues to lurk within (ibid p 105) and Dev in this sought to escape this fear.

The dominant male sexual desire and drive as a discourse hegemonically encourages certain cultural misrecognitionviz denial of sexual vulnerability and also ambivalence towards sexual intimacy (p 107 ibid), by posing Dev firmly as the libidinous man. Seeking sexual intimacy with Maya, serves to allay his anxiety and diffidence, Maya, here does not resist much and appears to be complicit with Dev’s desire for her body and she serves to collude with Dev’s defensive denial of his own sexual anxiety over his body’s (in)ability. The plot appears to be a repression of male sexual anxiety and insecurities, by endorsing myths of the inevitable link between sexuality and male dominance (Segal, 2001, ibid p 108). Obliterating Maya’s agency in this sexual encounter serves to conceal Dev’s emotions of weakness, his conflict within, his pain and struggle-assuaged by claiming Maya’s body.

The symbolism of phallic power is not sufficient to prove male dominance and is sustained through encouraging or controlling how both men and women relate to their bodies (ibid.p 108-109). The bodily derive of Dev is by a sleight of hand tolerated despite its transgression, as a
certain sexual coiciveness of men toward’s woman h been socially tolerated expected and even encouraged (ibid p 109).

‘Not all men are “responsible” fathers nor successful in their occupations and so on. Most men’s lives reveal some departure from what the male sex role is supposed to prescribe’ (Carrigan et al, 1987 p 77). This understanding sensitizes to the fact that not all men succeed in being filled into the normative sex role which means that there can be variations in presumed behaviour.Dev’s accident renders him infirm to continue his football career, and Rhea’s accomplished career make Dev’s assertion of a dominant mode of masculinity both problematic and even tenous. Dev’s failure stemming from his bodily incapability due to an accident that debilitated his sporting body is hegemonically secured by the narrative of cinematic text – as his body closes to regain his lost masculinity through body itself. Hegemonic masculinity is the true nature of men, and social harmony arises from promoting this idea not impeding it. Masculinity in these terms is a nonsocial essence – usually presumed to arise from the biological make up to genetic programming of men((ibid p 78).

The transgressive body of the male seeks to regain its dominance and how the body struggle to negotiate in the complex power shifts that has taken place in his private space / household with his wife assuming greater material success and empowerment. ‘The notion of the overall social subordination of women, institutionalised in the marital diversion of labour’ is countered within the narrative through greater success of Rhea, leading to ‘what is an occasionally reversed power situation in particular relationships…’ ( Carrigan,1987ibid p 79). This creates a demand on the masculine body to comply to its hegemonic ideal.

In psychotherapy sexuality and sexual feelings is deemed ‘as a cover behind which deeper needs lie buried. In our culture sexuality has been emphasized partly as a result of the increasing isolation and emotional autism of people’. (Horrocks 1994, p 116). Sexuality is a refuge for the anxious apprehensive body that seeks to purge out its frustration, insecurity that surrounds his otherwise failed body in public domain. Sexuality reassures the body of its masculine heterosexual potency and releases its suppressed insecurity. The transgressive body of Dev fails to hide its infantile dependence on a woman’s body – claiming which in albeit clandestine manner allow him to regain his strength (bodily). The emotionally starved body looks for sexual intimacy to overcome the inner pain and loneliness.Sex for pleasure alone is vacuous, empty, lonely. Horrocks arguest that sex containsa relational dimension. The transgressive body of Dev is therefore not to be read as as merely a pleasure seeking narcissistic body sex, albeit infidelity, it expresses an ardent attempt to overcome inner anguish and loneliness and as an affirmation of relation – as an emotional fulfillment. ( see, ibid p 120-121).

One can also read Dev’s transgression as pure act of bodily pleasure and as the evasive element of pleasure centers on the body (Fiseh 1989 p 50), we see how the body in a confined space, in a diasporic locate escaping the priestly mediation of family (state) and gaze of disciplining authority seeks an unboundedness. The deprecation and humiliation of Dev at his failure to deliver his conjugal and familial responsibilities as per social expectation sees what can be seen
as the loss of self and the evasion of ideology (ibid p 50) His body seeks what comes close to Barthes idea of jouissance. ‘Jouissance, translated variously as bliss ecstasy or orgasm is the pleasure of the body that occurs at the moment of breakdown of culture into nature. It is a loss of self and of the subjectivity that controls and governs the self – the self is socially constructed and therefore controlled, it is the site of subjectivity and therefore the site of ideological production and reproduction. The loss of self is therefore, the evasion of ideology’ (Fiske, 1989 ibid p 50).

The transgression body struggles to control its meanings and seek an escape from meaning for meaning always is socially produced and reproduces social forces in the subject. The body became a vehicle for escape. The claim for orgasmic pleasure lead to a loss of self, an evasive pleasure and an escape from the self control/social control in Foucauldian (ibid p 50). The resistance of body, as a site of transgressive energy contains a powerful affect: the passionate intensity of Dev’s body seeks pleasure, albeit illicit and clandestine, in sexual engagement with Maya. The body of Dev makes it appear threatening from above and liberating from below, as it provides oppositional pleasure, against institutionalized control of family, conjugality and state. The freedom in pleasure in orgasmic consummation appear foreshadowed by unbriddled sovereign free market and the uninhibited consumer desiring for greater gratification.

The body of Dev though transgressive appear to be engaged in a negotiation with older forces, albeit in a tacit/discrete manner. In post-independent India the much discussed feature of censorship code for Indian films has been the prohibition on kissing. The Enquiry Committee Report based on film censorship reported that this prohibition was based on an unwritten rule all of which was informed by British code of censorship that also applied in British India with certain modifications. The ban on kissing was however, related to nationalist politics of culture. It sought legitimation on ground that this informal prohibition corresponds to the need to maintain Indianness of Indian culture. Holding kissing as a sign of westernness the ban was justified. However, Prasad argues that films discretely subverted such ban through implicit and suggestive representation in response to bureaucratic regulation and curtailment by censorship. The informal nature of prohibition that curtailed representation of privacy of a couple was based on an illicit alliance between state and other sources of pre-modern feudal pre-capitalist power enclaves or bases. Cinematic representation equated with the public sphere justified the ban on moral grounds, supported by consensus ideology of the coalitional ruling bloc (Prasad 1998, p 88-93).

The couple formation is secured and guaranteed by the modern state against the despotic regime of pre-modern feudal Europe. Prasad cites how Rousseau and Diderot construct the couple. The couple herein is the political subject that guarantees a state that is free from the risk of despotism (Corol Pateman’s argument recalled asserts dependence of the social contract on logically prior sexual contract. It is not between a man and a woman but between men who all agree to recognize one another’s right to a space of (despotic) sovereignty. It is thus a dual contract that alone produces the conditions of possibility of modern state, where the phallic power is not incarnated in the king’s living body, instead distributed among the male
contracting members of the society constituting a fraternity. Thus the very stability of post-despotic state rests on stability of the micro despotism of the nuclear family. Prasad argues that the Hegelian idea too, sees modern couple as embodiment of modern state. Prasad contends that such a construction of couple and securing of private space guaranteed by state against despotic regime is crucial to formation of modern state polity. Its idealization in Indian popular films, that emerged in the historical space of modern is committed to the endless reproduction of the couple, in narrations that bring about or restore the conjugal scene. However, while the cinema in the West had to only represent a transition from familial to conjugal-the resolution of Oedipus, in Indian cinema, the modern state is present only as one of the several patriarchal authorities competing for domination. In the dominant filmic narrative the device towards affirmation of conjugality is reined by restoration of the clan to its position of splendour and power; the couple is repeatedly reabsorbed into the parental patriarchal family and to its maintenance. The modern family romance occurred in popular Hindi film only in an embedded form under the aegis of compound authority of a feudal and modern patriarchy.

Borrowing Marxian terminology from a different, context, Prasad argues that the feudal family romance in the modern is only formal, not real. Real subsumation would render the family a transitory functional entity committed to re-enacting the conjugal scene in the lives of its children and later dissolve itself. Like Hegel’s idea of arbitariness of old family and the way it preserves the clan, the Indian family notes Prasad controls its familial tradition of lineage ie, ‘khandan’, ‘gharana’ or ‘vansh’.

The alliance between the modern state and pre-modern centres of power prohibits the invention of the private, which is also the domain or sphere for the couple or conjugality. The idea of modern couple as embodiment of modern state had its idealization curtailed in the Indian mainstream cinema for long.

The kiss that marks the Christian marriage and inaugurates a zone of privacy thereby dissolving all other intermediaries claims except that of the state whereas in the old family of authoritarian regime, the private does not exist. The unspoken, informal like prohibition was outcome of an alliance between the modern state and the numerous pre-modern points of power and authority prohibits the private zone of intimate exchange and ideal. On the contrary as per Hegelian ideal, the members of couple become one. The informal alliance constituting the Indian ruling bloc often precluded intimate exchange where scope for emergence of female subjectivity posed challenge to claims of intermediate patriarchal authority from imposing an unrestricted control over conjugal space.

The private is a self-enclosing libidinal exchange that various authorities seek to control. Any representation of this private space and its activities in public realm thus constitute a transgression of the scopic privilege that the patriarchal authority of family reserves for itself. Such a representation threatens to draw a circle around the couple, thus realizing its autonomy its independence from the self appointed sanctioning authority and at the same time renders the modern state the sole overseeing authority and also the guarantor of the couple’s autonomy. This also marks the inauguration of the history realist voyeurism in films.
In Indian context, the prohibition or negative injunction against kissing attempts to block the centrifugal force unleashed by the kiss lest it jeopardises cultural integrity. The prohibition which is informal and therefore paradoxically non-existent constitute the basis of the consensual formation that guarantees stability of community’s identity. This understanding help us explain as to why kissing or privacy of conjugality is prohibited as it is feared that the question of a certain tendency of desire that cannot be integrated into a homoestatic system, as it threatens to break out of limiting circuits of national body to seek its fulfillment elsewhere, and this elsewhere being precisely the culturally non-specific deterritorialised space of modern consumer culture. (Prasad, 1998 ibid 94-98).

In the film Kabhi Alvida Na Kahana the diasporic heroic body of Dev (Shah Rukh) transgresses the scopic privilege of patriarchal authority of family (of the husband Rishi and father in law) of Maya. In the absence of the territorial state, it is absolved from the position of a overseeing sanctioning authority. The transgressive desire that would otherwise rupture limiting controls of the national body polity seeks consummation in a transterritorial space. In the context of the state form in which the relation between citizen and state are mediated by unreconstructed patriarchal codes and here the injunction against the representation of the private. A state that has to oversee the expansion of capitalist production through maintenance and sometimes intensification of pre-capitalist mode of exploitation is obliged to maintain a protected sphere of cultural traditionalism. The patriarchal nexus that maintains this protected culture of nation accomplishes a naturalisation of an ideological notion of a conflict between tradition and modernity. This argues Prasad help maintain a prohibition of kissing in earlier times, symptomatic of cultural protocol whose origins lie in the need to prevent the dissolution of pre-capitalist patriarchal enclaves to rein in forces of democratic transformation. It is not transparent expression of a pre-existing cultural predition but a meaningless prohibition that regulated public circulation of images as an obligation of a contract between the new modernizing elites and traditional ones. It seeks to veil the representation of the private, observes Prasad in earlier films. (Prasad, ibid p 99-100).

In the film Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna the prohibition over private space of couple (conjugal) is circumvented in two discrete manner. The scopic regime inaugurated through a bed room scene between a romantic heterosexual couple(outside wedlock) exonerates the state from its obligation as an overseeing authority by presenting a scene that favours consummation of an extramarital sexual relation through transferring the scene to a transterritorial space in a hotel room also beyond the site of patriarchal familial control representd by Bachchan father in law to Maya (Rani Mukherjee). The state in its newly pledged route towards a liberal regime, however reveals some of its old vestiges opf conservation where it shies from offending pro-feudal familial traditions. The culmination of the relation to marriage in subsequent portion of the narrative help the nation state to remain complicit with a conservative ideology of pemodern familial Indian tradition while creating an illusion of freedom for a couple’s desire. Despite a liberalizing nation embracinb capitalist regime voyenism remains unauthorized scopophlia as the private remains diegetically illicit escaping the state and patriarchal familial
control as ell wedlock of legitimate conjugality. Yet the sheer representation of being allowed for, albeit illicit in a tacit way undoes the injunction and tries to liberte itself from a earlier visual culture that disavowed capitalist modernity against sanction of a commuatarian regime. Prasad observed in the informal injunction that prohibits intimacy of a couple generated simultaneously a chain of implied prohibitions viz of representation of private, cinematic culture and its scopic regime and also a certain disavowal from acknowledging the emergent capitalist nature of the new nation state. Although socialism remained the officially adopted ideology, it was no more than a protective shield for development of indigenous capitalism. So by disavowing and rejecting an emerging capitalist culture, it provided an ideological proof of acceptability of socialism. The Indian popular cinema in contravention to cinematic visual, as unauthorized scopophilia within a reserved space where symbolic is suspended and subject’s gaze is allowed for the narrative, unfolds under the aegis of symbolic or what elsewhere Prasad calls as Zizek’s ‘Big other.’ The gap between screen and spectator is produced where the voyeuristic relation is underwritten by the symbolic. This removes chances of subject’s autonomy as an imperative of capitalist society’s conditions for individuals. Withdrawal of the couple into a space of inviolable privacy threatens to set the image loose from its cultural moorings of conservativism and obliges  it to a contracted voyeuristic relation. By prohibiting this withdrawal mainstream Hindi cinema for long produced and maintained the illusion of a community of control acknowledgement of all subjects towards presence of all others (ibid 102-103). Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna is cautious not to overhaul the earlier form but it is partially disavowed in the wake of the arrival of global capitalist culture. While not denying arrival of individual freedom, desire etc a certain reassuring conservatism is nevertheless preserved by several narrative ploys like transterritorializing the scene, subsequent resolution in marriage, Rhea and Rishi, individually the two betrayed individuals finally seeking to re-settle through their respective second marriages prior to Dev and Maya re-uniting at denouement.

4.4.4 The Transgressive Body: Fatally Transgressive Body Drawn towards (Other) Body Representing Ethno-Nationalism

The story of Dil Se, sees how the psychotie split between good and bad mother (and as per Kleinian assumption, a paranoid schizoid split between separating good and bad mothers) is enacted through the body of Shah Rukh Khan, playing Aman Varma a news reporter working for the state run All India Radio, from Delhi. In one of his official visits to Assam is enchanted unknowingly by Megha, played by Manisha Koirala, member of Assamese separatist group. Aaman fleets across difficult terrains pursuing her in a passionate impulse, Meghna, metaphor of the ethno nation, unknowingly acts as the bad mother – the seductive femme fatal. She is part of a terrorist conspiracy and was a crucial ploy to attack the state clelebration of the Republic Day parade at New Delhi. Upon learning Meghna’s role as a human bomb, Aman splits apart the seductive mother – disembers her thus preventing her from threatening the good mother nation. In guilt of being seduced by the bad mother, he kills himself in a combustive embrace with Meghna. The fatal embrance consummates the symbiosis of the male body with
the bad seductive mother. The male body as both a true lover and patriotic state official annihilates the bad mother, terminates himself in guilt and protects the good mother nation. A feminist reading can allow us to see how Meghna’s body a victim of brutal rape and military torture seeks to avenge against state-sponsored terror. The body of Meghna is subjected to military rape in her adolescence – where her body became a site of sadist masculine revenge to cover its impotence and inadequacy and unconsciously locks the phallic destroyer – the military rapists into a dark and deadly symbiosis. Her rape by the Indian soldiers represents the brutality of a masculine state force condoned by culture of soldiering as the ‘inner woman’ is raped and annihilated in military training. Meghna’s rape bring to fore the pseudomasculinity of state agents, that torments her body from a deep sense of inacequacy – in an anxiety ‘of not being a man’. ‘Political and military rape is repeated at ground level by individuals. And in many wars soldiers begin to rape women…But the state needs to crush men to create its brutal warriors, who will crush others. This can be found in all armed forces…’(Horrocks 1994 p 139). In the film the masculine/patriarchial state force unable to command allegiance unleashes brutal violence and terror over a North-Eastern valley and Meghna falls victim to sexual violation.

Aman initially does not know that Meghna is part of a terrorist outfit affiliated to secessionist movement in the North East and is being trained to be a suicide bomber. Aman and the viewer has no knowledge of this and Aman for some reels tracks the elusive Meghna to claim her hand in marriage. The intriguing female body in black undergoes an utopian transfer to become a ‘totem of a globalized middle class desire.’ In several song sequences, as fantasy sequences, the female body of Meghna clad in designer gowns, pearl necklaces becomes the object of passion and allure before Aman’s desirous body. As the realist space of narrative is fraught with questions of nation, terror, state violence etc. denying consummation of the relationship, the film imaginatively invents intimate space for the couple – fantasized by the hero within scope of musical interlude. The hero defying all constaints deterritorrialize their bodies from their realist milieu to enjoy a virtual consolidation of desire,otherwise precluded by nationalist discourse or ‘national storytelling’ as the citizen cannot fall in love with the terrorist.Musical interludes of fantasies that sees Aman romancing Meghna serve as surrealist insertions and liberates signs and bodies from axiomatic of nationalist narrative. It seeks to postulate in favour of romance that is bodily expressed in songs that is otherwise not at all commensurate with an ethical substrate of nationhood. Here, love symbolizes an anarchic power ‘because it threatens to introduce a terrible forking of paths between the destiny of the citizen and that of the state’ (Basu. 2010. p. 162-164). The ‘intolerable love’ articulates in a musical space - geotelevisually transported mostly to a free, uncontested zone beyond state through imagination of the male protagonist. In the visual utopia of song and dance sequence, the body of the woman personifies illicit desire of the male citizen. She resembles the ‘mythical entering ―outside‖ that can come only after/beyond ‘national geopolitics’. She represents a kind of escape; and Basu calls her as an ‘expressssive animation of boundless desire’ (ibid. p. 169). In various song sequences like ‘Satrangi’, the otherwise austere, militarized terrorist body is allowed to be ‘temporarily absolved of its location in unhappy history and terror, and claimed, in a state of
supreme lightness of being; by pure specular relations of global commoditization. In other words, the ethically impossible picture of the terrorist as beloved becomes apparent only as cinema - as - spectacle, which is indeed capital accumulated to the point of image. The woman-in cinema thus assumes the form of unbridled, immanent production values (the dancing body, the fetish body, and the fashion body) in a mise-en-scene no longer weighed down or mediated by statements and relative of a historically defined situation. The song sequences exert an ontological pull that removes images of desire from an embattled geopolitical milieu of the nation state, but this removal to an “outside” can be seen to become manifest only as a newer arcade of lifestyle signatures. The potential that lies in a utopian friendship with terror is curtailed and telescoped into a picture of possessive individualism. Commodities and vectorized time space modules appear… to be flattened into a vision of posthistorical freedom to consume that is always arriving’. (ibid. p. 169). Shah Rukh’s fantastic escapades in musical interludes, romancing the fatally desirous body of Megna also turn the disenfranchised body of the woman a consumerist desirable spectacle, glossing over its real disruptive threatening presence to the state. The unbridled desires informing the metropolitan body of the hero imaginatively recasts the militarized grounds of areas like Ladakh into a eroticized space of dancing couple and conjuring images of ‘bondage and ritualistic masochism’ inflected upon the bodies. These escapades of the ‘illegitimate couple’s bodies’ imaginatively produced are castigated through death. The primordialism of consumer desire and unrestrained libido is thus expunged through death alone.

In the early years of globalization, the narrative discourse of Dil Se, articulates the anxiety of state of control contain its consuming middle class in face of unleashed global capitalist market forces. The state supported liberal regime once again reminds that an invitation to open market forces need to solicit a prior reconciliation with statist paradigm.

In contravention to the Hegelian conception of the civil society and the rational state wherein human (heterosexual) love is unifying organic bridge between the individual’s particular and state’s general interest, the love of Aman animates a foreboding of statist devices amongst signs of militarization, policing, surveillance etc. The couple is delegitimized as it is opposed to nationalist formations and in view of conceptualization of bourgeois subjectivity and the nation state. ‘Apropos of the particular story… the peculiar nature of Indian nationalistic formations, by that token, would already delegitimize the couple because their nuclear desires contravene the ethics of their respective communities. In Amar’s case, it is a Hindi-speaking North Indian one that dominates the pan Indian state scenario while for Meghna, it is one that is marginalized and outlawed from the very center stage of Indianness.’ (ibid. p. 165). The powerful modernist constitution- the subject, the unity and law are at stake. The prospect of an union of bodies cannot claim to be exonerated from bindings of state law ‘Aman’s maniac quest for Meghna continues even after he comes to know of her secret, … he chases her till the bitter end, despite learning on the way that she is an enemy of the nation, even after the law declares him to be a collaborator with antinational forces and disgraces his family. The prohibition of the legal order is not enough to dissuade Aman; he does not find his attraction to be “unnatural” (since it is
neither incest nor a contravention of the territorial rights of another man - Meghna’s fictional husband) despite being avowedly against the dictates of the state as well as the patriotic clan he comes from. We thus get a glimpse of a disconcerting new age, “urban” conjugal desire that is not afraid to cast itself against both the “not yet modern” constitutional nation state and the self contained ethnical universe of the feudal joint family. The narrative of an obsessive and ultimately self destructive quest of the citizen- professional protagonist is affectively consolidated in Dil Se through the star text of Shakrukh Khan and the lyrical rhythmic motorization of bodies and nature in the song sequences. … Dil Se is cast as a journey through the seven shades of love, as elaborated in ancient Arabic literature… This trajectory of lovelorn unbecoming departs from the normative diagram of the modern subject, in the process flouting state and society sanctioned ideas of conjugality’ (Basu. ibid. p. 165-166). The family that produces legitimate citizen subject is desacralized as Meghna with her accomplice in subterfuge infiltrates Amar’s familial/domestic space. Amar finally learns about Meghna but does not detract from his passion and instead of a convincing dialogic resolution by a state and its disenfranchised people, Amar along with Meghna are killed. Basu writes : ‘… Amar finally confronts Meghna after coming to know of her true intentions. This dialectic between the historical legitimacy of the national state and the outraged search for law destroying violence by the marginal community is left suspended in the film. In the special urban sensibility that governs ‘Dil Se’, there can neither a theodicy nor a wholesome late coming of the secular state to affect a final unity between the dialogic word of the law and an aspired, singular ontology of justice. After the unfinished interaction, conjugality can only proceed fatally, in the stark landscape of the pre/postpolitical, where god is wither absolute nor has he achieved a modern death; he has simply stopped speaking. Hence, in Dil Se, love consummates itself through an obstinate voluntarism of death, when Amar and Meghna blow themselves up with the explosives originally intended for the terror act. Ths illegitimate couple thus overcomes the fear of demise that is presumed by most modern political philosophies based on constitutive contracts or self-other dialectics of leadership and bondage. Suicide, as a perverse, yet supreme achievement of modernism… prevents the encounter between law and life and takes love “elsewhere.”Death, in other words,becomes the utopian outlet that Amar searches for when, after coming to know of Meghna’s identity, her post and her iron clad filial obligations, he pleads that the two should run away to a place distant from the violent geopolitics of the nation state and proprietorships of the community… Meghna cannot be loved within the scope of an egalitarian homogeneity that constitutes people ness; as a minoritarian presence, she can only be an object of tolerance and suspicion …’ (Basu, ibid. p. 167) Recalling the totality of the Heghain rational ideal argues Basu, Meghna ‘ethically speaking, she can never be a citizen.’ (ibid. p. 168).Unqualified to be assimilated within the ‘ethical family state composite - Meghna is always foreclosed from entering the sanctified space of the same as the site of family state is a ‘repository of patriotic love’ (ibid).Meghna stands delegitimated as a terrorist and insurgent body hence is not part of organic unity of majorritarian normativity in the sense of Hegehan universe (of the state). She is ‘homeless’ - a product of a malfunctioning state through. She is a
non-familial subject and ‘it can never be customary to be in love with Meghna… However, had Aman married the familial citizen Preeti, there could have been, in terms of a unitary national communal spirit, the real possibility of diffusing the formal inclemency of law. That is, of not only rendering love legel, but also making it indistinguishable from life itself’ (ibid. p. 168). Here it needs to be said that the hero’s family had arranged marriage with a Keralian(Malayali) girl Preeti(Preity Zinta), whose family was known to that of Aman’s. The fruition of this marriage that was being arranged by the two families would have otherwise led to a nationalist unification with Aman a North Indian boy getting married to the South Indian Preeti. In fact a fantasy musical interlude engaging the bare body of the hero saw him in an eroticized dance sequence with Preeti, who falls in love with him and imagines him in a typical South Indian attire, in a picturesque landscape of Keralian backwaters, boats and lagoons along with a dancing troupe of men and elephants allows his body to be lent to a Malayali ethnicization.

The tragic pathology of death visits Amar’s transgressive body, the defiant body that seeks a consummation in contravention of statist dictates despite his credentials that otherwise demands a strong state-bound allegiance. The body meets with a punitive end in the form of Aman’s death for his ‘illicit’ passion and desire towards the terrorist Meghna as this was in contravention to the modernist legitimate discourse of state and citizenship. The transgressions were seen when defying the plausibility of narrative logic, Shah Rukh’s body seeks ‘a visual consolidation of an unremitted desire’ (Basu, 2010 ibid.p. 168). Shah Rukh’s fantastic escapades in musical interludes, romancing the fatally desirous body of Megna also turn the disenfranchised body of the woman a consumerist desirable spectacle, glossing over its real disruptive threatening presence to the state. The unbridled desires informing the metropolitan body of the hero imaginatively recasts the militarized grounds of areas like Ladakh into a eroticized space of dancing couple and conjuring images of ‘bondage and ritualistic masochism’ inflected upon the bodies. These escapades of the ‘illegitimate couple’s bodies’ imaginatively produced are castigated through death. The primordialism of consumer desire and unrestrained libido is thus expunged through death alone. In the early years of globalization, the narrative discourse of Dil Se, made in the year 1998, articulates the anxiety of state of control contain its consuming middle class in face of unleashed global capitalist market forces. The state supported liberal regime once again reminds that an invitation to open market forces need to solicit a prior reconciliation with statist paradigm (see, Basu, 2010 ibid,p.169).

4.4.5 Transgressing the Patriarch: Mohabbatein and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham

The counterposing of Shah Rukh’s masculine body, as a rebel, as oppositional son like roles in films like Mohabbatein and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham against Amitabh Bachchan, in both films, poised as a conservative, orthodox patriarch is far from being seen as innocuous and is charged with an ambivalent identification. The identification with the father to become masculine allows a boy to be engaged in heterosexual relations with women. The successful performance identity is contingent on heterosexual orientation. Identification with the oppressor or the source of fear viz. the father allow for being masculine. However, this identification involves a
split vision. He sees his father as his mother with a combination of awe, wonder, terror and desire. He simultaneously sees the father as he the boy, would like to see him – as the object not of desire but of emulation. The homoerotic desire for the father results in a kind of homophobic response from the son, who seeks to suppress the desire and lead to a fight from intimacy with the father /other men(Kimmel, 2001, p 276). Mohabbatein’s Uday Shankar a paternal prototype and Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham’s Harsh Vardhan, the patriarchal foster father poses as the disciplinarian symbolic phallic father. The somber prosaic and firm personality of the two patriarchal roles combined with super star Bachchan’s star biography serving almost as a contemporary legend privileges an ambivalence of homoerotic desire and identification. The conservatism of a Hindu patriarch with hierarchical notions and wielding of material/institutional power constitute a dyadic alliance – personified in Bachchan’s character. Assuming a disciplining authoritative role he is cast as model for identification. The stern, coercive and rigid control of his character renders Bachchan’s tall, ageing body is reminiscent of a fast declining phallic power of the state. Shah Rukh’s body and masculinity defined by liberal spirit of an open market economy seeks to flee from the rigidity of satist /patriarchal stranglehold. His heterosexual choice in both films contravence hierarchy and discipline upheld by the paternal figure.

In this model, the identification with the father is defensive, and emerges out of the defensive need against castration anxiety. The identification with the father is made in fear and Anna Freud termed it as identification with the aggressor. The son averts castration anxiety by renouncing his Oedipal desire for his mother and converting his rivalrons hostility towards his father into an angry emulation of him (Richards, 1990,p.162).Shah Rukh’s character assuming a parallel authority, that entailed an assertion of his individual romantic choice in either films can be recounted as the son’s joining of competitive rites of masculinity to overcome the threat of the patriarch’s domination., a figurative expression of autonomy seeking individual citizen body against the authoritarian state power.

The Hindu conservative patriarchal forces, seeks to reassert its hegemonic control, in a classic resilient gesture of aligning with right wing economic forces without loss of its tradition bound moorings and affinities. Amitabh Bachchan’s tall rigid body assumes figurative position of the super-ego attempting to subordinate the more pliant body of the son, Shah Rukh. Shah Rukh to be subordinated to denial and prohibition . The super ego inspires a symbolic introjection where the parental figure provide a subjective model or exemplar, or is representative of the Law. The ego-ideal, ie the authoritarian father figure, articulates an ideal identity to which the ego, ie, the hero, aspires; the world of ego-ideal remniscent of a phallic authoritarian state which the softened, retratist liberalized state aspires, and by which it constantly measures itself, but in relation to which it is always found wanting. It is the mirror in which the subject would like to see itself reflected, the repository of everything it admires(Silverman, 2002, p 27).

The psychic entity of the super ego, imagined to be embodied by the father figure, Bachchan demanding two mutually exclusive imperatives you ought to be like this (like your father) and you may not be like this (like you father) – that is, you may not do all that he does, somethings
are his prerogative. The ego, the prototypical male subject fails and falls short of its ideal; the ego transgresses and comes to take pleasure in the pain inflicted upon it by the super ego – where fear of punishment gives way to the wish for it, and discipline come to stand for love. The looming large framed body of Bachchan, representing the super-ego, the statist ideal fail to be attained by the ego. The disciplining demands of the super-ego fail to be met, as the ego wanting to be like the father, is prevented from doing so. Within an idealized paradigm for heterosexual development the father appear as rival and as well a model (see Horrocks 1994 p 71-72) and in both the films there is transference of love and seduction over mother to the romantic choice. The fatherly position of Bachchan within diegetic framework seeks to negotiate with his legendary extra-cinematic status, a position admired, envied and attempted to be usurped in both cinematic and figurative terms by the younger stars like Shah Rukh as reinforced by publicity of film magazines, tabloids etc.

The rebellions body of Shah Rukh contests the authoritative body of the patriarch ‘..in symbolic ways, identify with – and eventually find his own woman’ (ibid, p. 72). The romantic choice analogous to the mother is crucial to the masculine development of the son, figuratively contesting the conservative patriarchal symbol viz. the father both a rival/model. The contest between two masculine bodies is marked by separation, desire and rivalry – as homoerotic desire (admiration) and identification with the adorable patriarchal body is denied along with a necessary redemption of transference of sexual love to another woman in a bid, to assert an independence that competes with father. In both films, the contest between Shah Rukh and Bachchan can be seen as hegemonic conservative patriarchy ceding ground to a more liberal, pliant mobile, softened body. The monumental rigid coercive firm body of Bachchan faces an ideological assault by the more uninhibited body of Shah Rukh that refuses to be enchanted by Bachchan’s imposition of familial/institutionalized discipline in the two films.

The authoritarian patriarchal figure of Bachchan is embedded within familial set up of the film Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham and proto-patriarchal familial structure of Gurukul school in Mohabbatein that replicates a state like authority akin to state’s disciplinary control. Patriarchal marriage and family provides the organizational frame or site of authoritarian patriarchy and either films locates patriarchy in familial tradition.

Psychoanalysis revealing that the interlacing of the socio-economic structure with the sexual structure of society (Connell 1994, p 28) allow us to see how old patriarchy is trying to survive the onslaught of new socio-economic regime. The family is in effect the factory of the authoritarian state (ibid) and when patriarchy seeks to reassert itself in a reinvented form an immanent confrontation is staged between the former, represented by Bachchan and Shah Rukh, representing the soft state and neo-liberal forces of market economy, defying to be reined by the patriarch’s control. The family steeped in consumerist affluence in either films, with Bachchan a business tycoon heads his family and commands unflinching compliance and obedience in Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham and the film Mohabbatein acts as a patriarchal head of an elite boarding school meant for training and disciplining rich upper class wards. Shah
Rukh in either films attack this very site viz the family/and proto familial school’s disciplinary regime in his gesture to transgress the formidable patriarch.

Shah Rukh’s transgressive body is to be seen in oppositional terms to Bachchan’s patriarchal authoritarian body. While Bachchan’s body embodied the ‘multiple tenors of Liberalization. Hindutva dyad’, SRK’s body powerfully registered a more secular, cosmopolitan face of ecoliberal regime. The framing of Bachchan’s body in iconic stasis reflects his authoritarian disciplinary conservative resolve against free spirited incursions spearheaded by the more liberal masculinity of Shah Rukh.

In the film Mohabbatein, Shankar the authoritarian Headmaster of ‘Gurukul’ (school) a metaphor of the statist phallic regime zealously upholds institutional values the mommental tallness of the star in his real corporal terms provides a ‘phallic spectacle’. The grandeur and majesty of his persona corresponds to the architectural magnificence of the school. He embodies the values of Hindu Right and his body harnessed meanings harvested by this section. Bachchan’s re-invented body departing from the brutalized inscriptions and rogueness of Emergency day mediated ‘a specifically Sanskritized, upper caste Hindu masculinity’ (Sen. 2011. p. 152). In contrast, Shah Rukh’s body errant, rebellious and transgressive body/masculine self is directed to dislodge the patriarch from its idealistic and moral pedestal and ‘literally and figuratively break the gates that enclose all within Gurukul’. (ibid.) Disobeying the dictates of the phallic father, Shah Rukh’s body stands for libidinous freedom. This body refuses to be reined by institutional discipline first as a student and later as a teacher of the same school, first by romancing with Shankar’s daughter (played by Aishwarya Rai) as a student and later in his stint as a teacher allow his transgressive strategies to enable students in romantic escapades in defiance of norms.

The first occasion of the hero’s transgression in Mohabbatein is a proto-Oedipal play as Raj Aryan Malhotra had audaciously fallen in love with Shankar’s daughter Megha. The daughter’s body is policed by the father and learning so he is enraged by her unacceptable display of sexual desire for Aryan (his body). Shankar’s obsessive covert desire for the daughter and the desire to curb and control her sexuality brought the suitor against the father. ‘Megha operates not as a daughter but as a surrogate for her mother. Like a dutiful wife, she takes care of her father’s personal needs… In a particularly revealing moment, she masquerades as a bride with a veil and ‘mangal sutra’, which had once belonged to her mother. Shankar contemplates his daughter in her bridal finery and proclaims that his ‘daughter is more beautiful’ than her mother ever was’ (Sen. 2011. p. 153).

Megha’s verbalization of desire for Aryan provokes Shankar to deal with Aryan primitively ‘who has challenged his primary claim over his daughter’s body’ (ibid. p. 153). However, it is Megha’s death that asserts her agency and ultimate desire to live only with Aryan ‘is also a rejection of Shankar’s desire’ (ibid). And after a passage of several years the patriarchal body gracefully succumbs to the liberal forces of change embodied by Aryan analogous to the protectionist Indian state reconciling to the liberal economic changes. Nevertheless, instead of digracing the noble stature of figuratively expressed towering body of Bachchan, Aryan’s
journey from rebellion and transgression against the patriarch into reconciliation and recognition of the patriarch provides a corporal articulation of two ideological strands of Hindu conservatism and neo-liberal democracy. The conjoining of the two discursive strands was secured to give credence to perhaps the liberal policy of the Hindu-Right BJP-led government in the early 2000s a time when both the films Mohabbatein(2000) and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham(2001) was made. It reflected how through new guises and strategies Hindutva aligns itself with liberal regime through a reinvented patriarchal reconciliation. Aryan’s worthiness to wear the mantle of heir via this reconstructed patriarchal reconciliation, invests his liberal body the solemnity of guardianship. The inflection of authoritarian component onto the transgressive body co-opts him into the disciplining mechanism - a narrative ploy that is complicit in an ideological nexus with conservative forces.

4.4.6 Transgressive Body : Subliminal text of Homosexuality in Kal Ho Naa Ho
Fiske avoid categoricalism of a purely structuralist analysis of gender. Acknowledging the presence of masculine and feminine forms, contended that the meanings of feminity and masculinity cannot be reducible to a system of binary oppositions. Fishe suggested that even within masculine narratives, there is evidence of de-stabilization of masculinity as a category (Hanke 1992 p 187). Connell observes that ‘hegemonic heterosexuality cannot now monopolize the imagination in the way it once did. The expansion of possibilities is not only a question of growing variety in current sexual practice. There has been a flowering of utopian thinking about gender and sexuality, a sense of expanded historical possibilities…. Utopian thinking about sexuality and gender is found in other genres too, among them film, painting, poetry reggae and rock’ (Connell,2002.,p 257).

Here in narratives like Kal Ho Na Ho within the popular discourse, a certain de-stabilization occurs that shifts balance of heteronormative masculine ideal. Hindi commercial films produce a flexible maleness within the parameters of heterosexism. Consumption and consumerist and also the consumable (body of) the hero now opens space for such flexibility in contemporary times. It is interesting to see how the narrative seeks to reproduce gendered bodies of heroes and heroines, which however is never secured against multiple, counter-hegemonic/popular readings.

Masculinity is a historical and cultural construct than biological. It designates a cluster of connotations, as Penley cited argues is an ensemble of multiple effects commonly associated with those born male in the patriarchal culture. These connotations are terms within a discursive system in which meaning of masculine is based on its difference from feminine (or vice versa). In other words we can identify no ‘such ‘thing’ as masculinity only unevenly shared ways of understanding behaviour (of males and females) as masculine. As Anthony Easthope cited argues that men and women, male and female, masculine and feminine are compartmentalized and sorted into opposite categories and assigned to separate places. Differentiations of this kind pervade culture in ways that are hegemonic but also unstable contradictory and shifting at crucial points. Inevitably the strategy comes apart at
seams argues Easthope. In film and television, attempts to contain sexual differentiation shape not only gender images but also imaging of gender (Steinman, 1992). Despite the unstable, contradictory and shifting discourse of masculinity – as seen in transforming prototypes of heroic ideals – what Hindi mainstream films sought to maintain under the influence of hegemonic gendered ideology was a gender differentiation in strict terms between the masculine hero and feminine heroine. As a continuing feature of such film tradition it is the masculine hero who is counter posed vis-à-vis the feminine heroine. Shah Rukh’s imaging too has been gendered vis-à-vis the heroine in response to contemporary demands. However, in the film Kal Ho Na Ho analysts have discerned subliminal expressions of homosexual affinities between the two male heroes Shah Rukh Khan and Saif Ali Khan (see Dudrah, 2006; Gehlawat, 2010). While earlier heroes comically masqueraded as females like Amitabh Bachchan in Namak Halal, Kamal Hsan in Chachi 420, Govinda in Coolie No.1 and so on, never or rarely did a hero overtly display what can be either ‘feminie’ or a homosexual trait. But with consumerism becoming brazen, display and trend of exposing bare, eroticized, hairless (waxed) male torso have rendered the hegemonizing discourse of heterosexuality both unstable and insecured – thus leaving room for alternative sexual readings. This is also not to suggest that earlier gendered heroic bodies were more hegemonically secured. It is to argue that with cultural changes unleashed through liberal economic regime have set favourable grounds for such discursive and popular readings in opposition to the intended meaning of the text (and the male body of the hero) encouraged further through eroticized display. (Shah Rukh’s famously bare body in films like Ashoka. Om Shanti Om are such instances).

Cienematic representations have been mostly hostage to dominant understandings of sex and gender. Within queer theory a major agenda has been not only to trace the ways in which dominant representations of gender and sexuality serve to marginalize gays and lesbians but also to deconstruct these dominant representations. A key aim has been to avoid essentialist understandings of homosexuality and to destabilize the kinds of binary opposition that define the homosexual in contrast to the heterosexual. For most part this necessitates the study of the collective representations and discourses through which such binaries are encoded (Smith 2001 p 242). The collective representations and binaries encode gendered bodies of actors on screen to ensure space for heterosexual identification. Even while subtly opening up space for homosexual, such representations are not free of heterosexual bias.

Under the influence of Lacan and Foucault, identity is seen as a signifier at play in cultural fields instead of being innate to individuals as a biological or a psychological trait. Derrida’s deconstructivist techniques are also drawn upon frequently to problematize the opposition between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Judith Butler’s psychoanalytic work is perhaps the best known example of this position. Butler argues that the cultural regime in which we live inscribe a heterosexual orientation as normal and links sexed subjects (men and women) to sexed bodies (male and female). Butler’s model suggests that gender order is performatively maintained. Deconstructive performative practice can problematize taken for granted
subjectivities and gender binarism. Butler sees performativity as means to create alternative
gendered identities and spaces. It plays on difference and simultaneously subverts core binary
opposition that preserves hegemony of heterosexuality (Smith, 2001 ibid).
In acting while performativity can destabilize gender order mainstream heroes have rarely
rushed such destabilizations. Then sexed and gendered bodies are guided by a heterosexual
discourse that the narrative demands. The only de-stabilizations in such performance can be
subtly discerned – as inadvertent slippages at a subliminal and sub-textual level. The main text
of the plot guards the bodies of heroes and heroines against such deviations. Therefore what
may be seen as alternative gendered identities or performances are muted in expressions?
Sociologist Scott Swain as cited by Messner, suggested that negative views of male bonding
are distorted and unfair Swain asserts that male bonding provides a covert style of
intimacy (Messner, 2001 p 254). Peter Lymen argues that there is an erotic basis to the fraternal
bond in male groups (ibid p 257). According to a number of film critics, Bollywood movies
generally are founded on a ‘blatant eroticism between men that the standard heterosexual
romance is meant to dampen and camouflage’ (Hubel, 2012, p. 285). It is not much difficult to
analyze certain motifs and signifying codes of Bollywood films that subvert the orthodox and
conventional heteronormative diegesis of films. Thomas Waugh, in examining the profuse and
rigidly ambiguous indigenous male-male sexual iconographies in contemporary popular
Bollywood films cites queer readings of male-buddy moments in films such as Sholay (1975)
and ‘Main Khiladi Tu Anari’ (1995), to which one can add also add several post 1990s
contemporary films. Waugh as Dudrah says ‘.. outlines how the cultural devices of khel
(play/playfulness) and dosti (friendship) between the on-screen heroes (which involves the use
of sexual innuendos, phallic symbols and the close proximity of male bodies in intimate
postures) can be read as an implicit homo social sphere that operates within and yet beyond the
predominant heterosexual reel and real life. Waugh usefully points that devices such as same
sex khel and dosti challenge and redefine the rules of heterosexual gazes and desires as the
dominant and only modes of seeing and interacting. Such devices allow queer audiences to
view themselves and their heroes and heroines as simultaneously visible and invisible,
polyvocal and ambiguous…’ (Dudrah, 2010, p. 293).
While looking at the recent homocrotic expression especially in films of Shah Rukh one needs
to retrospectively analyse how this current of the homocrotica is traceable to films based on
male bonding and camaraderie with 70’s, especially in films of Bachchan. Teresa Hubel
observes: ‘By the 1970’s, the era of Amitabh Bachchan and the angry young man, the bonds
between the hero and his yaar or best friend had so crowded out the female characters that Kavi
insists the films could be read as misogynistic in their ‘focus on men to the utter exclusion of
women’. Amitabh described by Kavi as ‘only apparently the most heterosexual of Hindi film
heroes’ is also the subject … watching Amitabh Bachchan films in Bombay movie halls in the
late 1970s, he theorizes the implications of these narratives as well as of the song lyrics that
subtly endorsed the expression of men’s love for one another. ..The bond that Amitabh
Bachchan formed with other male actors on the screen, complements by the presence of an all
male audience that had gathered to watch him, engendered a sort of homoerotism in the dark of the movie hall’(Hubel 2012,p286).This sub-textual homoerotica seeks a more pronounced articulation in the films like Dil Chahta Hai, Dostana (2009), Garam Masala (2005), Main Khiladi Tu Anari (1994) and the playful homosocial camaraderie shown among heroes as ‘buddies’ caught in Khel and dosti in films like Dhamal, Gol Maal 1 and 2. Hera Pheri etc.

Notwithstanding queering of manifest heteronormative content by queer diaspora, one can argue that Bollywood themes are getting inherently queer. In other words, whether Bollywood’s investment in its text are such where it is naturally a rich cultural resource from where meanings of “queer”, queer practices, readings are readily produced. It may be speculated that even the manifest and explicit heteronormative content opens up its fissures and renders itself easily to be queered. Its representational excess often seek to marginalize questions of authenticity of heterosexuality as ‘both’ queer and straight are equally caricatured; they are representations of an ordered and constructed world (that is, of heteronormativity) and its slippages that make spaces for insights into new queer world’s (Durah, 2010 ibid. 301-302).Dudrah locates and acknowledges the recent shifts that inform Bollywood films ‘in which queer themes and representations are becoming slightly more visible and more fluid,…’ and Dudrah speculates ‘therefore, is Bollywood listening to and in dialogue with queer South Asian cultural politics both in homeland and the diaspora?’ (ibid).

In the film Kal Ho Naa Ho, Dudrah identifies ‘khel’ (playfulness) and dosti (friendship that is communicative of a certain bonding in terms of queer sexual connotation). Both khel and dosti involve devices of bodily playfulness. Same-sex sexual display, intimacy, affection, sexual innuendoes, proximity of bodies as gestures etc Queer practices engages in such signs and codes involving the body and in the film, a housemaid is allowed to suspect a gay relationship between two diasporic youth : one being Aman Mathur (Shah Rukh Khan) and Rohit Patel (Saif Ali Khan). Notwithstanding the presence of the heroine, Naina Catherine Kapur Patel (Preity Zinta) to set up a heterosexual love triange in compliance with the dominant ideology, the ‘sexual innuendos between the two male characters and scenes of their bodies in close intimate proximity to each other abound in this film. The two characters also flirt with camp performativity and dance together with added suggestions of homosexuality, albeit through the use of humor as a backdrop. Even the film’s climax is open to queer reading. As Aman lies dying on a hospital bed, the two male characters reach a compromise over their individual love for Naina, while holding and embracing each other closely. During this climax, Naina is seen outside of the frame of the two characters, outside of the hospital room in which Aman and Rohit make their private agreement with each other’ (Dudrah. 2010. p. 302-303).

While Prasad’s identification of ‘darshana as one of the foundational ideologies that structures’ visuality of ‘Hindi film’ might obscure or limit the ambivalence of male body and its display or sub-textual homoerotic he acknowledges that Bollywood is simultaneously invested in the realist paradigm… relies on the politics of viewer voyeurism and identification to make sense of narrative Drawing upon the homosocial moves of India, one can discern an ‘easy expression of same sex affection’ by the ‘new spector.’ (Hubel. 2012, p. 290). It is important to trace the
ascent of homoerotaica within larger dynamics of the nation. Looking at the homoerotically charged ‘dosti’ or friendship and its influence in popular cinematic medium and how it gains an accentuated articulation in post-global liberal scenario, Dinah Holtzman says: ‘The Hindi/Urdu word dosti encompasses greater intensity and devotion than the comparable English term ‘friendship’. Bollywood’s treatment of dosti entail physical intimacy and a moral code not necessarily shared in friendships between men in the West. Ruth Vanita as cited, elaborates, ‘The continuum between romantic friendship and love is a slippery space where affection slides into or is coded as erotic without being overtly depicted as sexual’. She draws parallels to Hollywood buddy films and remarks that Bollywood representations of dosti are also influenced by ‘older Indian traditions of same sex love’. Cinematic dosti is fusion of Hindi mythology, Muslim ghazals, Sanskrit and Parsi theatre, Hollywood cinema and music video.

India’s economic liberalization in the mid-1990s led to the introduction of satellite television on the subcontinent and a subsequent increase in imported Western pop culture. The shift from dosti as normative homosocial relationship towards the current trend of comic acknowledgement of the homoerotic undertones of dosti is tied to the recent influx of Hollywood film and American television in which homosexuality is a popular theme. Post-2000 depictions of dosti via its coupling with gay jokes is reflective of national concerns about how economic liberalization, the burgeoning middle class, Western style consumer capitalism and diasporic populations and its impact upon Indian national values, culture and traditions. An examination of Bollywood dosti films from the 1970’s through 2004 demonstrates how the newly ‘queer’ homosocial dosti points to a possible national move away from a hegemonic heteronormativity that enforces marriage and reproduction.

Although this shift does not represent a sea change in conceptions of masculinity and sexuality it reveals ambivalence about the future of indigenous traditions like homosocial dosti amid and increasingly globalized nation. Newly ‘queer’, dosti is the result of changing perceptions of gender and sexuality (on the subcontinent and in the diaspora) as well as of widespread national, cultural anxiety and ambivalence about India’s integration into a global economy dominated by Western popular culture. Popular Western texts promote culturally specific ideologies that may be perceived as both alien and undesirable in other nations thus challenging indigenous value system. (Holtzman, 2011, p. 111-112).

The representation of homoerotic under the name of dosti is not a discrete popular cultural phenomena but hints at the larger economic and political discourse of the nation and its popular imagination (on cinematic medium). The ambivalence and anxiety of the liberalizing nation continues and the hegemonic heteronormativity within cinematic narrative declines to cede grounds to alternative notions of sexuality and body. While Western popular texts seek to enforce an acceptance and although incipient in character the cultural perceptions in the popular domain in India under a liberal regime tend to thaw its orthodoxy. However, the hegemonic heteronomative current in popular mainstream films continue to affirm its dominance over final resolution.
In the film, Kal Ho Naa Ho, dosti is sacrificed to allow the nation to affirm the heteronomative hegemony via monogamous heterosexual union. In the film it is the love triangle between two men and the woman they love the dying Aman, Shah Rukh, devotes himself to uniting his friend, Rohit, Saif Ali and his love interest, Naina, played by Preity Zinta, in marriage before his death. Kal Ho Naa Ho is a contradictory poem to thwarted romantic love that ultimately redeems arranged marriage. However, the conclusion suggests Rohit and Naina’s marriage includes three people, one of whom has died, but who lives on through their union. ‘Aman’s death, like Jai in Sholay, is necessary for normative monogamous heterosexuality to thrive….the achievement of normative heterosexuality is intertwined with homosocial friendship, death and homosexuality such that dosti appears to be a casualty of heteronormativity… Although dosti is appropriate for early stages of life, it must be sublimated (often via death) to maintain and propagate the nation via heterosexual reproduction. Each film concludes with triumphant heterosexual coupling combined with a pervasive sense of grief over the loss of a ‘yaar’. Mourning this loss is crucial to dosti films’ (ibid, p. 112-113).

The body of Aaman, subtextually inviting a potential homoerotic bonding and camaraderie is rendered ailing and morbid. It falls victim to a kind of heterosexual chauvinism (see, Carrigan, 1987 et al p 84). The demand and fear of homosexuality integral to sexist practices, excise aaman, the prince star attraction of the cinematic text – denying any aberrant appeal, albeit at a subtextual level, aaman’s death ensures a subtle penalization of his body and consummates heterosexual relationship between Naina and Rohit thereby ensuring to secure ‘a complimentarity of sexes that is institutionalized within the family…’(ibid p 84).

The difference that the meaning of dosti acquires in post liberalization popular culture of films is exemplified in how Sholay’s homosociality of ‘dosti’ is queered and its homoerotica is tacitly accepted while remaining reticent towards over consummation of the desire. Holtzman observes: ‘Sholay exemplifies cinematic dosti prior to economic liberalization while Kal Ho Naa Ho and Masti are illustrative of the newly queered cinematic dosti. Using Eve Sedgwick’s notion of homosocial desire as the meeting point of homosociality and homosexuality as a model, a comparative reading of the film elucidates the ways in which Bollywood treatments of dosti have evolved. The proliferation of gay jokes in recent Bollywood film signals a departure from traditional conceptions of dosti towards an embrace of the conflicted love/hate approach to male homosociality and homosexuality currently popular in Wester media. Contemporary Hollywood comedies dealing with male friendship…. traffic in ironic acknowledgment of the homoeroticism of the buddy films. These films deflect queerness through comic acknowledgement and disavowal of homoeroticism by the main characters. Kal Ho Naa Ho and Masti similarly acknowledge and deny the homoerotic dimensions of traditional dosti as represented in classic Bollywood buddy films like Sholay. The newly queer (ed) dosti films feature comic subplots involving mistaken gayness. Misperception of the protagonists’ homosexuality is the result of slapstick encounters in which the two friends are seen engaged in ‘innocent’, non-sexual physical behaviors that resemble oral and anal sex. What does it mean that script writers assume Bollywood audiences fluid comic relief in gay jokes? Freud’s
theories of jokes provide a useful template for exploring the function of Bollywood gay jokes. In ‘Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious’, Freud affirms that jokes are an exposure of something ‘concealed or hidden’. Bollywood gay humor is an exposure of desire between yaars. Romantic/sexual attraction to a ‘yaar’ may be deeply repressed in the unconscious but is nevertheless present, in some form, within the psyche. Gay inneundoes enables a collective release of tension by simultaneously acknowledging and disavowing desire within same sex friendship’ (Holtzman, 2011, ibid. p. 113)

In the film Kal Ho Naa Ho, the body while remaining homoerotically charged and acknowledging the possibility of the same allow a heterosexual denouement. What is significant in tracing the trajectory of homoerotic content in popular films, is how ‘dosti’ the basic kernel to homosocial and homoerotic bound differentially expresses itself in response to ‘shifting audience and cultural perceptions’ (ibid. p. 112). In the film, Kal Ho na Ho one can discern the patriarchal politics to keep homosocial distinct from homoerotic as the former is a guard against erotic possibilities within a male- male relationship (Eve Kosovsky Sedgwich cited in Steinman, 1992 p 211).

Economic liberalization heralds a certain ebb in conservative approach towards sexual codes defining homosocial relationships. The ambivalence notwithstanding a certain leniency implied in intimacy (of two male bodies) in the film does create small ruptures in the heterosexual claim over the male bodies of either stars: Shah Rukh Khan and Saif Ali Khan. The heterosexual impulse nevertheless may seek refuge in the very fact that the gayness exists at the level of misperceived relationship between protagonists - at the level of jokes. Gayness manifests at a more circuitous way: ‘The gay jokes force audiences to imagine the protagonists having sex via the characters who misperceive their relationship.’ (Holtzman, 2011, ibid. p. 114). In Kal Ho Naa Ho, the comic incongruity arise from the fact that the housemaid mistakes it to be a gay relationship. The humor of gayness and gay jokes emerge from the apparent incongruity of sexually unfulfilled male bodies seeking sexual and emotional satisfaction from each other. The situation in the film appear comic as they suggest an abhorring notion that ‘ostensibly heterosexual male protagonists’ might voluntarily opt for a life of masti (i.e. frivolous and mischievous sexual activity) with a yaar or intimate male friend in opposition to socially sanctioned heterosexual marriage and reproduction. Choosing a life of ‘masti’ and ‘yaari’ in contravention to social obligation laid down by heterosexist prescriptions tantamounts to refusal of adult dharmic duties that entail one to join the householder phase of life, viz. garhasthya and marry and reproduce. This marks the passage, as per the Hindu tradition, from adolescent phase of celibacy, ie. ‘brahmacharya’. Opposing this passage appear to surface in such gay jokes that function to give vent to repressed desire of adult men to retain ‘adolescent stasis’. What remains silent in Sholay finds a clearer expression in films like Kal Ho Naa Ho. These gay jokes render star bodies amenable to imagination of gay male audience by allowing them to release their repressed fantasies and desires of dispelling cultural taboos and prescriptions in favour of heterosexual marriage and reproduction. These jokes instead favour
the possibility of perpetual youth of homosocial (and possibly homosexual) camaraderie. (ibid., p. 115).

The hegemonic heterosexual discourse unequivocally purports to establish the heterosexual orientation of the male hero, in romantic engagement with the heroine in mainstream commercial films. And to this effect the homosexual impulse if present is muted. Most occasionally this has been done through strategies that preclude homoerotically charged friendship or male bonding, by sacrificing one of the men. Sangaam (1967) and Sholay (1975) can be cited where the bonding is pre-empted either through a heterosexual contest over a single woman or by removing one of them to enable consummation of a heterosexual romance as in the case of two films respectively. It is a cultural ploy ‘that the erotic bond between men is neutralized through overt homophobia and through the displacement of the erotic toward women as objects…’ (Messner, 2001, ibid p 253). To this effect, Naina is capable of drawing heterosexual attention from either men offsets the subliminal presence of a homoerotic relationship, thus attempting to deny Aaman’s body from being amenable to a certain discursivity or a alterentative reading. The presence of Naina (Preity Zinta) and the apparent contestation between Shah Rukh and Saif Ali over her is a thinly veiled heterosexual angle that belies the guarded homosocial desire. The woman’s body is a site where upon homoerotic is queerly deflected. Heterosexuality provides a subterfuge for homosexuality which continues to be a lurking threat to heterosexuality. It is for this that Aman (SRK) is mortified. The female body ruptures the imminent coupling of a potential homoerotic relationship, otherwise functioning to conceal same sex libidinous exchange. The indulgence in comic gestures between two male bodies, their inneundos and mistaken gayness is benignly funny since ‘it flirts with the strong undercurrent of homoerotic attraction underlying male bonding shenanigans. The friend’s (over) investment in one another’s sexual impulses may be a projection of their own sublimated desire for one another displaced onto the female body’. ( Holtzman, 2001, ibid p. 114). The female body and rivalry over it is only a discrete expression of underlying tension of homosexuality in a repressed cultural milieu. Despite the discomfiture over acceptance same sex romance, the film in terms of its content, through gay jokes did ‘imply explicit gay sex acts’ which unmistakably and unambiguously can be read as ‘simulations of oral and anal sex’. (ibid. p. 115).

Given Bollywood’s inhibitions against explicit representations of heterosexual act, the gay jokes and innuendoes opening up male bodies to non-heterosexual imagination is contradictory. The leniency that informs this approach reveal that homosexuality is not alien to Indian culture. Holtzman, cites R. Raj Rao who observes that homosexuality is prevalent in covert yet recognized places in Indian in there… subtler forms of homosexuality are actually engendered under the auspices of normative patriarchal culture’ (ibid. p. 115). What is interesting and significant is how Shah Rukh’s and Saif’s non-macho urbane, Westernized cosmopolitan masculinity make their bodies more pliant towards such narrative guided positioning. While rogue, tough, action oriented masculine image of Bachchan and Dharmendra resolutely guarded the homosocial context from straying to homoerotic travails in the film Sholay where they were
engaged in fierce show of masculine prowess in action scenes, in contrast in KHNH the metrosexual bodies of the two stars, fairly accommodates all suggestions of queerness albeit at the level of jokes.

It is wrong to ignore the larger context of the nation that transpired change in perception towards sexuality and what was silenced was encouraged t a fair share as a subtext a subplot. ‘Kal Ho Naa Ho.’ suggest that what was once considered strictly homosocial (Sholay in the 1970s) now appears queer in the twenty first century. Mistaken gayness subplots illustrates the shifting relation of homosocial to homosexual bonds as well as changes in perceptions about masculinity and masculine friendship over the last thirty years. These changes apart from being largely the result of India’s economic liberalization as already stated is due to expansion of overseas market /reception andollywoods’ new found appreciation of NRI audiences. (Holtzman. 2011. p. 117). Despite a palpable proscription remaining the decline of statist patriarchal gaze and guardianship offered homoerotica its voice.

The acknowledgement and disavowal of the homoerotic and the ambivalence around it is traceable to colonial history of the nation and ideological legacy that remains. As Holtzman says: ‘India, a post colonial nation, must deal with the legacy of colonialism and the ways in which nations are both gendered and sexualized via the discursive tropes of colonial ideology. Indigenous forms of homosocial bonding are in danger of re-interpretation by popular Western media. The queering of dosti can be construed as an effect of global Western neo-colonialism. In the West, male homosexuality is often equated with a lack of masculinity and/or behaviors thought to be ‘feminine.’ Positing dosti as ‘queer’ by western standards implies that Indian masculinity and male-male friendships are feminine by contrast. The suggestion that desi masculinity is more feminine or lacking harkens back to the era of British coloniation when native ‘effeminacy’ was cited as justification in British ‘benevolent’ paternalism and civilizing mission’ (Holtzman. 2011. p. 117). The post colonial labelling and queering of homosocial camaradene and intimacy produces two responses. The first is the postcolonial anxiety to assert heterosexual masculinity for which Aman’s body (Shah Rukh Khan) dangerously ‘bisexual’ is sacrificed to preclude a homosexual union. However, this subplot make cautious moves towards ‘queering of dosti’ which may be read positively as it reflects greater willingness to homosexuality and liberal perceptions.

The homosexual discourse obliges us to think that masculinity is not a single objects but as being constantly constructed within the history of an evolving social structure, as a social struggle occurring in a complex ideologically and politically contested terrain where there is constant process of subordination, marginalization resistence , mobilization and contestation. It compels us to recognize the role of political violence and state power and historical construction of both masculinity and femininity is implicated within a control and direction of state power (Carrigan, et al 1987, ibid., p 89). This understanding can privilege an interpretation whereby the diasporic male subjects removed from state’s disciplining surveillance and priestly mediation, opens up a possibility for imagining sexuality differently. And also perhaps a liberty gained in view of rise of gay identity politics and demands placed upon statist
discourse in favour of rights and recognition. An implicit yet dynamic conception of the masculine body of Shah Rukh is not a discrete reading but inevitably connected to the decline of state (phallic) power and post modernist demise of the hegemonic heterosexual masculinity. The liberating potential of homoerotica that poses to challenge heterosexuality and heteronormative construction of popular stars as in here Shah Rukh seeks a slight release through the star body, paradoxically through a body, that in many other cinematic instances ‘function as a reinforcement of patriarchal masculinism’ (Horrocks 1995, p.11). Policing by a heterosexuality and homophobic response is common to most society, but its growth of homoerotic imagery is attributed to general crisis in masculinity as traditional categories of gender are being blurred, transcended, melted not just theoretically but also practically (ibid p 12). Notwithstanding the Indian state and society upholding the legitimacy of heterosexuality, fluid, transient sexual categories in the realm of popular culture has opened up the whole area of gender and sexuality. Oblique reference, allusions or subterfuges are being deployed in films (like Kal Ho Naa Ho), that ‘by subverting unconscious assumptions that certain gender and sexualities were normal and other were perverse’ (ibid p 12) seek to draw attention to changing gender realities. In a diasporic film a transtelialized imagined nation inhabited by the diasporic bodies freed from statist control allow popular cultural realm to revise old stereotyped notitons of sexuality albeit in an implicit manner. As the democratization process is broadening in Indian, such subversions through slight of hand, without attempting to deconstruct the hegemonic heterosexuality does challenge the politicized identity conferred by state and bring about ‘a generalized loosening of inhibitions and constructions’ (ibid). As Horrocks argues that heterosexuality is naturalized, and is more of a politicized state identity rather than organic and is complicit with political power, ‘Gay men and lesbians had no choice in this matter, since the state had politicized their own identity, but one of the spin offs has been the heterosexuality itself can be analysed politically, not as a natural choice or a biographically driven appetite but as an identity that locks into the gears of a patriarchal capitalist culture that fetishizes the family, and uses heterosexuality to punish other identities…one need only point to the persecution of gay people in Nazi Germany and in contemporary Inan to see the clear connection between dictatorship and sexual tyranny. But it hs also become possible for heterosexual people to investigate how much their other gender and sexuality is imprisoned by hide sterotypes which erve reactioning ends (ibid). Metropolitan wealth and resources paradoxically creates a crisis in gender order and opens up new possibilities.

Drawing from Connell’s argument one can locate Shah Rukh’s body within a masculine paradigm of affluence and consumption an image consolidated across several diasporic films the removal from bread winning anxieties or crisis allows his body more amenable to equivocal readings.(Connell,2002,ibid)

The sanction against homosexual inclinations can explained in terms of the perception of the body ‘essentially as the vehicle of procreation… prepared mainly for the life of compulsory heterosexuality’ (Thapar 2001 p 132). Butler emphasizes that the construction of sexed body
takes places over time, and that its performative nature implies that gaps and fissures open and that there is always something surplus to the norm that threatens to rupture its successful inculcation. Far from being based with preconscious generative bodily capacities, or the voluntaristic practices of embodied persons, ‘resistance’ is produced by the heterosexual matrix and is therefore always tied to the dominant source of power in society. The linguistic powers of heterosexual regime dissolves flesh and blood bodies and agency is realization not in external opposition to power but immanent to power’ (Shilling, 2005, p 51). The performativity of star within heterosexual discourse, allows its slippages to be read as homoerotic though such resistance (or sexual transgressions) remain tied to ideological and economic power of cinematic production complicit with heteronormative discourse of patriarchal capitalist culture as well political state power. (see, Horrocks, ibid) state.

4.5 VIOLENT BODY

The kind of bodily aggression and ruthless graphic violence tainted with gory excess on screen appeared almost unprecedented through the violent body of Shah Rukh. The psychotic impulses sought bodily expression in all the early three films of the star, viz Darr, Baazigar and Anjaam. The violent body expressed a failure to repress the inner aggressive drives and the unmitigated, unbridled aggression erupted in a rage that sought to wreak havoc on every potential opposition towards the body’s desired goal. Vengeance, aggressive craving and a fierce acquisitive impulse directed the star’s body.

The eruption of the violent body, grossly amoral and guilt free can be seen as an expression of the moral panic created over the retreatist state. In the early year of liberalization, signs of a retreatist state, if one is allowed to speculate, created a spectre of a waning of a ‘Symbolic Father’, that led to a weakening in formation of ‘collective super ego’, Chodrow observes: ‘…when unbridled aggression erupts, it has two sources, both in the weakening of the super ego. First by definition, either super ego formation and internal guilt did not develop in the first place, or the aggressive drive that have been turned inward as guilt are redirected outward…But there is another element in super ego formation, the super ego holds moral standards against which it measures the desires of the id, and these standards are formed through the internationalization of parental, and hence societal norma. Thus second, a failure of morality and ethics in addition to the reexternalization of aggression enables excessive violence’ (Chodrow, 2002, p. 238).

The hero’s body of violence resembles the drive of a kind of moral masochism ‘who under the domination of a hyperdeveloped conscience’ displays ‘his …desire for punishment’ which ‘is so great so as to pose a constant temptation to perform sinful actions which must then be expiated’. (Silverman, 2002, p 25). His deliberate choice of crime appears evidently in the angst driven traumatized masochism of the body, engaged in self-inflicting violence upon himself. Citing Freud and Reik, Kaja Silverman’s description of ‘moral or social masochism’ approximates the violent body wherein ‘the subject functions both as the victim and as the victimizer, dispensing with the need for an external object. Even when punishment seems to
derive from the external world, it is in fact the result of a skillful unconscious manipulation of “adverse incidents” (ibid p 29). The desperation of the body, its obsessive drive unconsciously leads to actions where he suffers bodily from his own actions – as a result he appears to be such that both ‘pain inflicting and the pain enduring person are identical impersonating simultaneously object and subject’ (ibid p 29).

Vengeance for the sake of dishonoured reclusive mother (Baazigar), obsessive passion and desire for a mother substitute (Darr and Anjaam) allow the subject’s bodily violence to be traced to a refusal to accept maternal separation. In all these stories, there is certain anxiety indicative of a traumatic male severance from the maternal symbiosis (Horrocks, 1995, p.15).

Unlike the earlier frontal mode of violence of the body by earlier heroes like Dharmendra, Amitabh Bachchan Mithun Chakraborty, Sunny Deol, Sanjay Dutt Shah Rukh in his early films brought in a more covert from of violence and an interiorized anxiety and pain. The hero maintained a masqueraded self by being an imposter in Baazigar and a secret stalker in Darr. This inner world represented the inner female world from which his ambivalent masculinity failed to assert its complete severance. His anxiety was marked by a trajectory of growing separation from what is otherwise a degree of continuity with the mother (ibid p 14). His apparent failure to cope with this trauma and suffering kept him alienated, unable to be intimate and expressive of his true self.

Unlike Bachchan’s films where despite an absence of a father (Deewar, Zanjeer), the son was inducted into a patriarchal world where the authoritarian state confronted him as the symbolic father. In the early years of liberalizations with signs of a rolling back state, a certain dilemma marks the induction of the son into the paternal world. Horrocks observes: ‘But the male infant has to make a further separation – he must become a different gender. He has to become a not woman and unlike his mother in various ways. Here the role of father is often seen as crucial in inducting his son into this other world – but behind father stands the patriarchal world, with its demand on the boy: become a man. There has been much speculation in psychology that the male severance from the maternal symbiosis causes deep and permanent trauma’ (ibid. p 15).

The body of Shah Rukh unlike the macho masculine body of earlier popular films, seeks violence in a more discrete and ruthless manner, more because it suffers an anxiety to enter phallic world, which is not reassuringly as strong as before, due to the waning influence of the phallic state/father. Unlike earlier macho heroes who healed their masculine wound struggled with their masculine existential insecurity and coped with symbolic remove by using he anxiety as ‘his separation provokes in him to create systems of ideas which can stand in the place of the lost intimacy and within which he can strive for coherence and harmony’ (Hudson and Jacot as cited in Horrocks p 15); the heroic subject’s body in Shah Rukh’s early films is ripped by greater anxiety. While earlier heroes created ‘a new Phallic Paradise from their own ideas and actions’ as a compensatory activity wherein it enunciated a system of ideas that appeared as public proclamations either by waging a class war, a struggle against feudal practices, crime, in the public sphere, Shah Rukh’s body withdraws from the public sphere and instead of
severing from maternal symbiosis seeks a schizophrenic split, struggling with inner rage and desire.

It can be said here in parenthesis that the heroic persona of Shah Rukh evolved in a parallel trajectory to the nations liberalization and global forays. Overcoming initial jitters, the subsequent cinematic narratives, reinstates family as an appropriate metaphor of the nation, relatively absolved of statist trappings. The new family reinstated stabilize the masculine body and filmic persona of Shah Rukh – in a gesture that has sufficiently rendered the body more placid,pliant and most importantly reconciled to the changed conditions; as ‘the family acts as an executive organ of society, and a conduit for the channeling of ideological messages’(ibid. p 16). Citing Erich Fromm, Horrocks argues: ‘The family is the medium through which the society or the social class stamps its specific structure upon the child and hence on the adult. The family is the psychological agency of society’. (ibid p 16).

The sulking, seething violence of the hero’s body represents the eruption of dark psychic forces. Taking a Jungian approach towards James Bond films Horrocks sees Bond as a variation of the universal hero motif found in all cultures, as the man who has to pass through many obstacles to find the truth or find a great prize. The hero figure can also be seen as an image of the ego, struggling with the forces of unconscious. The hero slays the dragon – Bond sets out to neutralize figures such as Goldfinger or Dr No, who are likewise archetypal figure of evil and under this interpretation Bond is not so much an image of men per se but of that part of all human beings that leads us out into the world, overcome obstacles, achieves things and so on. The hero pertains as much to women as men because Bond is not really a conventional hero, but contains elements of the anti hero or the trickster, the figure who sets out to upset the apple cart. Bond’s cynicism and sadism shows the hero contaminated by other dark psychic forces (ibid p 41-42).

Shah Rukh’s early films sets him apart from virtuous archetypal heroes motivated under inner impulses governed by dark psychic forces. His neurotic and schizophrenic expressions brings to surface the feminine self in the absence of a strong phallic state. The political crisis in seventies, despite a containing yet delegitinizised state, and provoked the dark forces to be personified in the cult of angry young man hero- but the post-liberalization sees a greater eruption with state truly appearing softened than even before.

Unlike the more confrontational body of Bachchan displaying violent rage, Shah Rukh’s brand of bodily violence was more discrete. The reason of violence in men in masculinity studies have been cited in their deep feelings of inadequacy, impotence and unwantedness. The violent male often secretly fears he is not a man, and sees no other way of proving he is than the method demonstrated to him by his society – violence and oppression. Patriarchy recruits and trains violent males as its shock troops, but the cost to them as individuals in enormous (Horrocks 1994 p 31). If Bachchan the proletarian/messianic hero made a bold display of this anxiety it was more covertly done in Shah Rukh’s early films – where for long a conscious split is shown in the character, where the more poised public self (body) struggles to hide the violent body, skeptical to reveal aggressive stirrings of a middle class body.
In film like Baazigar despite being a ruthless and remorseless avenger there continues to be his efforts to hide his fragile masculinity. There is a certain duality to this tough or ruthless masculinity as shown in film imagery, Horrocks cites Robert de Niro in Taxi Driver or Micky Rourke in Angel Heart to prove his point (ibid. p 32). A certain tendency to pathologize his violence seeking body, his deviant body tend to distract attention from the fact that fragility and anxiety is not typical to such men but common to all man(ibid p 32). The violent body from a certain feminist position argues Horrocks ‘is partly a result of over symbiotic mothers (and absent fathers) and lack of masculine identity?’ (ibid p 85). And alternatively if one seeks to read it as a profound masculinistic machismo, where the desperate body almost in self destructive gesture blindfoldedly pursues either vengenceance (Baazigar) or desired object (woman in films like Darr, Anjaam) one is led to believe if profound guilt and self hate turn some men to crime in the unconscious hope of being punished (ibid 35). The punished body of Shah Rukh in his early violent films as a negative hero acts as a site for the projected violence. It is a projection of our violence as Horrocks argues. ‘And we all project our violence onto ‘violent men’. As Jung said, in a discussion about the Second World War: We love the criminal and take a burning interest in him because the devil makes us forget the beam in our own eye when observing the mote in our brother’s and in that way outwits us…to a degree we all share this feeling – there is a macabre pleasure in seeing the guilty caught and punished…It’s a way of having our own violent feelings in safety, and feeling reassured because the guilty are (usually) punished’. (ibid p 135). Instead of a lumpen proletariat, a working class subaltern body or that of a ruffian, rogue body, popular films, as represented by violent films of Shah Rukh, derived a sadist pleasure to transpose, the inner violence of middle class onto a more respectable middle class body to expunge perhaps its guilt of growing desire unleashed by the advent of an open market.

In the film Darr, Shah Rukh Khan playing the protagonist Rahul is seen talking to his dead mother and obsessively pursuing his love interest Kiran (Juhi Chawla). Such a syndrome can be read as the flight from the feminine. Historically and developmentally masculinity has been conceived as the flight from women, or repudiation of feminity. Freudian understanding argues that developmentally the central task to secure an identity of a man. The Oedipal project as per Freud is to renounce his identification with and deep emotional attachment to his mother and then replacing her with the father as the object of identification. The son’s sexual desire for the mother is denied by the sexually powerful father. The boy’s first emotional experience that follows his experience of desire is fear and is symbolically experienced as the fear of castration. This derives the boy to renounce his identification with his mother and seek to identify with the father the actual source of his fear. In doing so the boy symbolically capable of sex union with a mother like substitute that is a woman. The boy becomes gendered (masculine) and heterosexual at the same time. Masculinity as per this model, is irrevocably attached to sexuality. The boys sexuality will come to resemble the sexuality of his father – menacing predatory, possessive and possibly punitive. The boy has come to identify with his oppressor, now he can
become the oppressor himself. But a terror remains the terror that the young man will be unmasked as a fraud; a man who has not completely and irrevocably separated from the mother. It will be other men who will do the unmasking. Failure will de-sex the man, make him appear as not a fully man (Kimmel, 2001 p 273).

Rahul’s anxiety resembles the anxiety, the fear of his being de-sexed, his manhood is not secured and appear problematised. In a clandestine way, he reidentifies with his mother, while the fear of father drives his body to almost an obsessive desire for a motherlike, substitute viz Kiran. The boy fails to be completely gendered. The deep ambivalence involved in his struggle manifests in the surreptitious stalker body of Rahul in all his attempts to terrorise and annihilate Kiran’s suitor.

In terms of desire in films like Darr, Anjaam and even forbiddingly for the other man’s woman/widow in Maya Memsaab and Deewana can be seen as the search for the contrasexual with obsessive intensity and passion. Jung, as Horrocks observed argued ‘that many relationships are bedeviled by this mutual fascination: each partner is trying to find part of themselves in the other one’ (Horrocks 1994 ibid p 42). This leads us to see if the characters of Shah Rukh’s early film expressed a search for his feminine side, recapitualting infantile maternal fantasy through eroticized desire for the heroines body. Shah Rukhs fantasies for Karan (Juhi) in some musical interludes, represents some elements of the dreamer in psychic terms – it may be ‘the man dreams of his own feminine side doing something typically masculine – a blend of genders’. It represents multiple and complex psychic identification and a psychic drama (Horrocks 1995ibid p 46).

The desirous body of Shah Rukh in Darr and Anjam exhibits in a nearly unprecedented manner, a blatant exhibition of sexuality. His body represents a passionate obsession that a appears scary and refuses to be curtailed reined in behind perfect manners and self discipline (Horrocks 1994 p 100). Citing from Jane Austen’s novel. Horrocks argued culture seeks to tame and harness male sexual potency from being overtly evident and pronounced. Unleashing an untamed desirous body of the male protagonist in the films belies the archetype of heroes as decent man as the decent man is part friend, part brother. It is curious how incestuous sexuality becomes: the husband is often a quasi brother and therefore safe (ibid p 100). Shah Rukh all the more counterposed against the decent suitor of the female protagonist represents a kind of untamed, aggressive male sexuality – nearly symbolic of a larger aggrandizement sought by middle class in the wake of a liberalizing market. The call of the market releases the gratifying consumerist urge of the body.

Shah Rukh’s violent body is both intertextually related to and also provide an antithesis to the Bachchan creed of violence,and this has its relation to the political unconscious of the nation. The 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the emergence of the violent movie with the ‘angry young man’ epitomized by Amitabh Bachchan in Bollywood films like Sholay (1975), Deewar (1975), Zanjeer (1973) and Coolie (1983). The films have been mainly seen in the context of growing urbanization, growing significance of the ‘Underworld’ and the intense dissatisfaction of urban male youth mostly unemployed. The significance of elaborate fight sequences in these
movies has been attributed to the increased violence of metropolitan life of the urban poor. The polysemic narratives of Bombay cinema responded to and were produced by the turbulent political situation prevalent in the 1970s. In these films the sympathetic construction of rogue masculinities - the outlaw, the outsider at a time when being an outsider was entailing a political risk was a significant in the decade of increasing by authoritarian regime of the Congress led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Bachchan’s celluloid iconography ‘the aesthetics of violence and its philosophical undertones in films brought in shifts in attitude towards masculine violence and the figure of the ‘outlaw’ in the gangster genre’. (Banerjea 2005. p. 163-165).‘Bachchan as an outlaw standing at the cross roads of the popular imagination. A noble figure straddling the very limits of legality, pushed too far by the shadowy forces of organized crime and laissez-faire corruption. And in that sense, Bachchan’s cinema epics of manifest destiny potently dramatise many of the conventions of the classic ‘gangster film’, certainly the idea of the lower battling against established social forces, even when those forces are made up of rogue capitalis goonde - Coolie, Deewar, Trishul, the main protagonist’s shift from an underprivileged or disrupted childhood to adulthood... (ibid. 170). This is different from the violent masculine posturing of Shah Rukh in his early films, where the body is a more interiorized privatized body grappling with its inner seething discontent and calamities. The inner formentation, its personal anguish seeks a graphic bodily manifestation. This body in Darr and Baazig or even Anjam is a self-obsessive body and is different from the broad social language writ large on Bachchan body, marked by a brooding anxious interiority. The narration of “interiority” is produced through revealing of the past memory of family’s destitution, running and homelessness in Baazigar. It emanates from an experience of loss and distrust. The recall of this memory - the site of pain and angst seeks a graphic bodily articulation. Unlike the angry young man’s traumatic memory (in both Zanjeer (1973) and Deewar (1975)) that sought a social redressal, the “interiority” revisited through enraged body of Shah Rukh is a more personalized strife Mazumdar writes : ‘Javed Siddiqui, who wrote Baazigar sees the psychotic as an extension of the “angry man”, the only difference being in motivation and impact. The ‘angryman’s compulsion contained a dialogue with society on issues of justice. The psychotic fights only for himself. This drive towards death, imbued with a radical evil, is surely Bombay cinema’s Nietzchean moment,…. the psychotic’s image seems to question the more “rational”, restrained and controlled anger of the 1970s “angryman” era. Bachchan’s portrayal of the wronged urban man, unstable but always “morally” bound... seems a different image from that of the psychotic whose apparent retreat on screen from the values of social justice seems to embody the melancholic subjectivity within contemporary urban existence. This melancholia is perhaps a result of both a fascination with and fear of the stranger’. (Mazumdar, 2007,ibid. p. 36-37) ‘….what makes Baazigar interesting is its narrative rendering of a contemporary existence of evil to present the stranger in the city. This new stranger is not an easily identifiable type - that is, he is not a villain or someone belonging to an ethnic group. What marks thus character is his ordinariness and his ability to lead a deceptive life (Mazumder. 2007. p. 2)
The body of the psychotic unlike the enraged protagonist in Deewar is more garbed and cloaked by innocuousness and mediocrity of appearance. The deepevity of the masquerading body is unique to the psychotic genre. The stranger’s body is seen to intrude into urban order and civic control and is disruptive of order, hence in Durkheimian sense “pathological”. When the vision of a rational urban utopia guides planning for the city Zygmunt Bauman, as cited argues that strangeness and strangers are first targets. The stranger occupies a fuzzy space between the insider and the outside. This strangeness plays an important role in mapping notions of otherness within the space of the city. According to Georg Simmel, stranger is not someone with a fleeting presence, but a person who “is fixed within a certain spatial circle - or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries - but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong to it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it”. The stranger is thus attributed with qualities that make him both remote and close within a spatial entity.’ (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 31) The culture of suspicion is buried in the everyday of urban living. In trying to make sense of the violence, our attention be “directed to a cultural elaboration of dread and unease that does not throb with overt hostility but is fleeting and everyday… Violence is latent in an urban situation … It is is within this culture of suspicion which is at once ordinary and capable of erupting into extreme forms of violence, that the idea of strangeness is born’ (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 30)

The debutante Shah Rakh was appropriate to capture the strangeness and the sudden eruption of terror. His unassuming ordinariness and secret agenda of vengeance allowed his body to cloak its much madness and anxiety. Ironically it is this ‘unsuspecting strangeness and the sizopheric body that generates fear, unvase dread, unlike Bacchchan’s bold and daringly was culling body, the psychotic’s body works convincingly exuding strangeness and moving with stealth.

The star as the protagonist in these three films, appears as the stranger in Anjaam, the stalker in Darr or the masquerading person in Baazigar and his body movements and its ability to disrupt the repetition of predictable conflict between hero and the villain, enhances his strangeness. It allows him to gain a freedom and physical mobility to introduce newness, shock and confusion. The stranger moves with suddenness and exposes the spectator to the shock of terror and violence. The most significant aspect of the shock introduced by the stealthy body of psychotic lies in a combination of violence and the expression of “interiority”. (ibid. p. 34).

The stranger’s body nurtures secret agenda of vengeance, his impersonating strategies his stealth and stalkings in Baazigar engaged his body in an “adventure”. He demonstrates a strange ability to intrude into spaces, killing undetected. ‘Ajay’s ability to walk with ease through diverse spaces makes him present everywhere but unknown to others around him.’ (ibid. p. 36). The body without display of muscular aggression unlike heroes, strikes in silence. Mazumdar citing a communality to both Baazigar and Deewar employs the master trope of homelessness. The urban hero is a homeless destitute his body marked by the experience of loss, aviation, deprivation and anger. The narrative deploys this “homelessness” and estrangement to
navigate his body across various social spaces - negotiating various encounters. This movement of the body marks the trajectory of revenge of the anti hero. Homelessness of the body invokes traumatic memory of the past and reminds him of his non-communitarian individualism and his unaccepted ‘social body’ seeks catharsis in use of revenge and violence. (see Mazumdar, 2007, ibid. p. 3)

The antihero’s enraged performative body emerges from a crisis in both Deewar and Baazigar and thus to understand Baazigar one needs to understand how the psychotic hero is a reconstructed anti-hero to be seen in continuum with Deewar. In other words analysis of Shah Rukh’s avatar as a psychotic hero is intertwined with the ‘Urban Warrior Amitabh Bachchan and the “Angry Man”? (ibid. p.89). The legendary script writers duo who gave birth to the “angry man” films Javed Akhtar and Salim Khan attributed the success of the film to a breakdown in the legal apparatus and traditional life style in India. The hero as a criminal minded vigilante.” mirrored the rage and disillusionment of the 70s youth. Psychoanalyst. Sudhir Kakar, as cited saw the ‘angry man’ phenomenon as a direct product of development and modernization. According to director Shyam Benegal’s perception, when idealism of early post-independence films began to wane a sense of despair gave way to revenge and vengeance emerge personified by the “angry man”. Filmmakers, critics, academics have unfailingly linked the “angry man” phenomenon to rising political social and economic crisis.

Bachchan’s rise to stardom was epitomized by his complex and varied portrayals of the “angry man”. Apart from his unique style of acting his physical movements and bidily gestures ‘ushered a new kind of anger on screen’. (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 9). His performative mode nevertheless worked through a restraint of body movements. In fact, Bachchan’s ability to deal with “interiority” made him suit the role of Vijay whose “inner exile had to be bodily performed with tremendous economy and complexity. Loss, trauma, anger and revenge coalesced to give his body an expression of anger - deep and brooding (ibid. p. 10-11)

The Bachchan phenomenon and films like ‘Deewar’ slowly ebbed with vestiges of its influence in certain films during the 1980s. Shah Rukh made his film debut with Baazigar the first of the psychotic films directed by Abbas Mastan. ‘Baazigar diamatically reinvented he anti hero as a self-destructive force withdrawn from the world. The spectacle of psychological violence unleashed by some of the psychotic films alluded to changed social circumstances that required a different kind of narrative. The desire here was to move away from the social context into a world where despair had urturned into a nightmare’ (ibid., p. 27)

Unlike the “angry young man” persona the psychotic persona of the 1990s hero, Shah Rukh is radically different. The body of the psychotic represses his anger and vengeance under a “Strangeness”. Unlike the brazen body of Bachchan, Shah Rukh’s seething anger emanates from the spectre of terror and violence that looms large where violence is more cold, subdued and surreptitious. Emanating from pathologies of the city and its neurosis, the character is attributed to this new bugagage of madness and the terror and suspicion it generates. ‘(ibid,p.30)

Mazumdar argues that Deewar’s angry man” is in dialogue with the psychotic figure of Baazigar played by Shah Rukh, while Deewar addressed a social crisis of 70s. Baazigar
reflected the anxiety of its times. Thematically what binds the dynamics of the two cult films is the deployment of anger and revenge (ibid. p. 2) and its bodily inscriptions. In both the films the childhood memory is a source of trauma write on the body. The agonized self-destructive body seeks revenge knowing of its fatal consequences. The body of the hero marks the acknowledgement of crisis. The articulation of a tragic and divided urban subjectivity as in Deewar and Baazigar has played an enormously significant role in popular Hindi films, working primarily through the performative power of anger. When combined with revenge anger allows one to create a temporality of past, present and future through which revenge plot reaches its climatic resolution. The revenge narrative invokes past as a site of traumatic memory to be resolved in future. (ibid. p. 1). Constructed as journeys driven by a graphic rage inscribed on body and invocation of traumatic memory bodily registered in both Baazigar and Deewar, plays out also an unusual cartography of the enraged, vengeance seeking minds of the protagonists. The violent body provides a access to ‘urban topography’ - as the urban transposes it self and its pathologies upon it. It is the writhing body encoded by urban trauma that mobilizes itself in wreaking vengeance. Anger, revenge and urban subjectivity in popular Hindi films was most influential during the “angry young man” phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s personified in the figure of Bachchan. Bachchan’s brooding inward-looking anger reflected the crisis of the time. Bachchan’s brooding anger mobilized the experience of childhood suffering and alienation and was reflective of a system of social injustice. The angry young man phenomenon was ebbing in 1980s although revenge continued to be relevant in cinema. But it was only in the psychotic films of the 1990s that revenge was mobilized again for a novel exploration of selfhood’ (ibid.) through the urban subjectivity and body of Shah Rukh, re-inventing the violent urban pathologies of desire and anxiety, this time from a middle class locale.

Another significant aspect of this body is the body providing site for ‘the externalization of an agonized subjectivity and as a schizoid movement towards “irrational” fulfillment. The body becomes an index to his interiorized pain. It is the body and its histriomics, its anxiety and restive quality that privileges an access to his pain, desire and subjectivity. Ajay’s body is a nihilist, self-destructive body that seeks freedom from its pain in death, as this body takes suicidal risks to liberate himself from pain. As Mazumdar observes: ‘The torture that leads to death, the pain inflicted on the body is both pleasurable and painful. In a sense, the psychotic embodies the pain of a scarred and torn city expressing an agony that needs to be shared. … “It is through this movement out into the world”, says Elaine Scarry, “that the extreme privacy of the occurrence (both pain and imaginary are invisible to anyone outside the boundaries of the person’s body) begins to be shareable, … The climactic end of Baazigar is a violent battle between Ajay and Madan Chopra. The battle is excessive, brutal, bizarre and tactile. Everyone is killed as Ajay drives himself toward death in order to ensure Chopra’s death. The film ends with Ajay’s body sprawled on the ground… Ajay’s dead figure is the site of tragedy. This fatalistic end of the film builds on the theme of personal sacrifice as the solution for revenge…” (Mazumdar. 2007. p. 39-40). This violent body lacks moral pangs and unlike angry young man
who expressed penitence (often during death as in Deewar) – Shah Rukh’s brand of violence remained uncontrite. The body unlike Deewar is killed not as a redemptive device neither does it attain martyrdom - but is emptied of meaning fulfillment. Its (body’s) schizoid action is far removed from utopian release of self - the body emerges as a ploy of destruction, vengeance and death. Such abasement of the heroic body, its incrimination in culpable crime for personalized vengeance (in Baazigar) or for obsesssive desire (in Darr and Baazigar) and his unabashed demeanor does alert us towards a certain decadence of middle class values and laxity of scruples. The aberrant heroic body is more than an individual’s (hero’s) characterization. The despicability and abjection of the heroic body provided catharsis to a nation that sought ablation of its guilt and its anxiety vis-à-vis terror spectic and enticement of a neo liberal economy (in its early phase) - all of which was related to its own failure to manage development, inequities and politico-economic crisis. Notwithstanding the abominable body of SRK its odious deeds, and narrative indciment against Shah Rukh, the hero did not fail to provide himself as a corporal extension of the distraught middle class, as Chopra as cited in Bhugra noted, that Shah Rukh’s character despite its negative portrayal resonated well amidst the audience in the film Darr, and even was more popularly accepted than the positive masculine self represented by Kiran’s husband/suito, played by Sunny Deol (Bhugra, ibid, 2006) Shah Rukh’s image of an unstable neorotic man also, conjures Jamesonian idea of schizophrenic post colonial subject and its graphic bodily violence sought to restore the destability in the larger society and body polity. This body articulated anxiety and attempts to grapple with changes. The inflicted upon his body was reminder of Mandal politics and self immolation (see Bhugra, 2006 Mazumdar, 1998).

Drawing on Robert Warshow’s classic essay ‘The Gangster as Tragic Hero’, it is easier to be critical of the established mapping of the fictive Indian family in Bombay cinema as a site of nationalist/antinationalist discourse about the state. According to this Manicheanism a story like Deewar works by activating then resolving familial conflict within the rubric of a proto-nationalist narrative. What such accounts ignore, however are the ways in which the very conventions of the ganster genre disrupt notions of either absolute marginality or seamless integration. Thus, in a climactic moment in the film when Vijay meets his brother Ravi – a police officer under the same bridge that was once their pavement dwelling it is possible to hear something else in then emotionally charged encounter. For all Ravi’s (Shashi Kapoor’s) talk of adarsh (ideals) and asul (principles) the exchange is never purely dialogic one on the nature of citizenship and state. If Vijay embodies a kind of lawless and anti-nationalism, which is doubtful, then Ravi too can be seen as emblematic of civic disenchantment, albeit a flaw produced within institutional settings. Ravi is just as much an outsider although in state-sanctioned garb as his criminal brother. His poor employment prospects belied the future promises of his educational training. Quite tragically it creates a situation, wherein the very
condition of fatricide is produced when eventually he is assigned the task of bringing within the
grip of state’s law, his own brother Vijay, the kingpin of the gang.
The posturing of these two male patricidal bodies vis-à-vis the state is different from the early
films of Shah Rukh. The violent body of Shah Rukh is more directed towards his individualized
obsession. Textual reading of Baazigar, Anjaam, Darr, does lend themselves to be an
allegorical history of the nation state as much as Deewar ( see,Prasad. 1998. p150) albeit in a
different idiom of the hero’s body that acts as a ‘cathartic morality’ play in which social
deviance is redeemed through heroic sacrifice’. (ibid. p. 175). However here catharsis as in
Deewar acts differently as it seeks to reinforce state’s authority over outlaws. In films of Shah
Rukh it embodies a different discourse of the nation. The fear of overwhelming desire
unleashed by the incipient liberal regime and delusional enticement of such indulgent regime is
punitively curbed. In contrast to the underclass body of Bachchan (that belied his otherwise
biographically inscribed upper class modality of his body language).(ibid.) Shah Rukh’s real
body and its middle class modality corresponds well to the diegetic placement of his cinematic
body. In denouement despite critical of protagonist’s seething desire, the narrative accounts
seek to locate his body within an ambivalent fiction of ‘moralist middle class society’. Shah
Rukh’s death especially in Baazigar, as in Deewar may be similarly read as a ‘precursor to
some form of reconciliation with legitimate citizenship or the idea of being a good Indian’
(ibid). Like Bachchan’s dissident corporeality’, Shah Rukh’s violent body in his three early
films seeks to interrogate questions of middle class morality and allegiance to state supported
legality. Seen from this perspective of rupture, anxiety, desire and morality, Shah Rukh’s
bodily performance of cold and seething violence acts as a new metaphor and this physicality
introduces a hermenenetics of self seeking body. His physical practices are largely discrete and
disguised. The performatve modality of the body shows a clear oblivion of the bigger world.
This body broaches upon a private struggle – grappling with an inner desire.Unlike Bachchan’s
body that sought a micropolitical redemption for the common man, the destitutes etc. Shah
Rukh’s engages within a more reductive parameters of ‘nationalist discourse’ – articulating
concerns of middle class subjectivity. The body however like the angry young man does
problematisethe distinction between citizen-subjectivity and a stranger/outsider. In all these
films, the body disguises, recourses to alibi or operates within a subterfuge of a separate
identity, as in Baazigar or surreptitiously works in background (as in Darr or appears in
pretense (as in Anjaam).
Following Madhava Prasad’s argument that ‘connects the popularity of the angry young man
with the political violence in India at this time, arguing that Deewar shows an unofficial history,
played out in private where the law (of the father and the state) has broken down
(Dwyer,2002,p. 96), it may be said that departing from muscularity of heroic bodies, Shah
Rukh’s seething body and its lurking violence was yet another unofficial history where the state
was beginning to liberalize its economic regime but not intrepidly.
If ‘Amitabh brought a new physicality into the cinema’ as Dwyer argues to add : ‘While not a
muscular action hero, he was particularly tall and long limbed, slim and hard boiled and looked
right for the part’ with ‘Another aspect of his physicality was his voice.’ (ibid, p. 97). Shah Rukh’s yuppie urbane, slim, medium height evidently non-muscular (in early films) expressed violence, anger and frustration in a more privatized setting and his ruthlessness was surreptitiously expressed – cloaked by his masquerading self either impersonating or discretely dissemble his agenda. Unlike Amitabh’s voice – eloquently manifesting the inner anger, Shah Rukh’s voice through not bold and obdurately pronounced in like Bachchan’s strong, terse dialogue had a intransigent body language incommensurate with his mild, boyishly masculine – often tottering voice. Inter textual positioning of Shah Rukh allow us to see how in subsequent years his body accumulates greater restraint under provocation. Unlike his early films like Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenga (1995) and Pardes (1997) the body expresses more tempered desire and shows greater subservience to authority (patriarchal). Manas Roy observes a sequence in DDLJ: ‘… when the heroine’s father throws the hero out of his house and the proposed son-in-law starts beating the heroin in a typical vendetta fashion. The hero does nothing to defend himself but once his fathe is hit by one of the men of the heroine’s father, plunges into action and manifests aggression to defend his father. It is at this point that the heroine’s father gives sanction to the hero: defending the father means by logic of mirroring defending the future father-in-law or in a broader sense, the father principle, being the originating source of authority…’ (Ray, 2012. p. 233)The aggression of the body shown for instance in DDLJ gains legitimacy as it seeks to protect the father, the ‘darsanic object’ (ibid). The body that wreaked havoc in lives of people, escaping state control in early films, almost in an anarchical feat, resurrects his anger in revived faith in father a metonym of the state wherein violence is instrumental means to protect the ‘patriarch’. The body in later diasporic films cedes to authoritarian control. 4.5.1 Violent Body of Shah Rukh (as Voyeur) Applying Mulvey’s theory, Nair, as cited by Bhugra notes that in Hindi films, heroines are portrayed in a manner reflective of their (body’s) subjection to patriarchal gaze on them. Nair argues that for the male gaze, the female image can be a source of anxiety (the castration complex), so the male attempt to nullify it by fetishism or overvaluation. This ambivalence towards women, where they are either an object of desire or a threat, leads to male worship and fetishization of the women on the one hand and also to devalue, punish and save her as a guilty object on the other hand. The woman is created as the “other” in which patriarchal ideology cannot believe or accept. Ideology deals with it in two ways: either by rejecting or annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating or converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself. (Bhugra. 2006. P. 133). In the early films, of Shah Rukh Khan, especially in Darr (1994) and Anjaam (1994) the heroic body displayed his obsession for the woman, as an object of desire (the heroine) almost as an inner threat or insecurity. The fetishized (body) of the woman was pursued almost in a bid to assuage the anxiety and in a bid to possess and control it. On one hand was a strong obsessive love and on the other was the desire to coerce her, terrorize her, stalk her till she succumbed to submission. Here it needs to be said that the response of the obsessive and neurotic hero and the
hero’s aggrandizing or desirous body as a masculine response to crisis is distinct from the 1970’s angry young man cult represented by Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh’s seethingly violent body was directed towards the desire for the woman (her body) in both Darr and Anjaam. This obsessive ‘heterosexual panic’ can be compared to Bachchan’s films: ‘The hero-based formula films of the 1970’s also whittled down the role of the heroine. The 1970’s no longer adored the women, and openly asserted the right to treat them as insignificant possessions… With the arrival of the angry young man, the roles of women became secondary and simply decorative…By the 1970s, the euphoria of Independence had disappeared and the contradictions of socialist path of development that India had adopted had sharpened and become quite evident. It is as if the childhood of republic was over and the angst-ridden, rebellions teen years were upsetting the parents… In this era, the protagonist is shown as a marginalized individual and the audience identifies with him as “one of us”. He does what we would like to do, but are unable to because of social mores and our own private morals. He is much wronged and exploited, and has suffered physically emotionally and psychologically. These themes continued in the next decade and their portrayal became more prominent, aggressive and violent’ (Bhugra. 2006, P. 89)

As per Bhugra’s suggestions the male hero of 70’s was striving for survival, living in a time of economic and political crisis. This macho image was of a crusader who pursued redressed of larger social problems. The heterosexual interest of male was undermined in an attempt to attend bigger problem. The turbulent times calls for male action and agency with no time for privatized broodings and voyeurism like seen in early films of the star, like Darr and Anjaam. Heterosexuality in 90’s through Shah Rukh’s body as an obsessive lover/voyer was nearly pathologised ‘through obsessive violent and desirous body of Shah Rukh in ‘Darr’ and ‘Anjaam’. His anger was not brazen as the macho man but more deep and interior to his body and mind. In contrast to ‘the 1970 films,’ where ‘the macho man did not go around hunting for women, because they fall at his feet’. (Bhugra, ibid) Shah Rukh despicably pursued his desire.

In the film, Darr, Shah Rukh’s disguised body and its violent obsession is evident in his role as a stalker as well a voyeur. Prospects of a blighted desire transpired his body to become violent that did not see him as a brawny body engaged in a wrangle with opponent but engaged the body in a stealthy way to wreak its violence. The body unlike Bachchan was least brazen and audacious. His obsessive nature and deranged state of mind sees him as ‘a stalker who is serenading her’ (desired woman) and ‘is also able to ener the private space of the family unobserved, whether in disguise as a musician at Holi or as himself, in Switzerland, where the couple are unaware that Rahul is the Stalker’ (Dwyer. 2002. P. 179) and accepts him as an unthreatening acquaintance till he openly erupts in violence.

In Darr, Shah Rukh’s obsession for the heroine is ‘engulfing’ and she is a captive to his erotic and emotional frenzy’ (Chowdhury. 2011. p. 57). His fantasies for the woman revolving around a bodily desire for the woman comes as musical interludes. His fantasies allow him to completely claim the woman through her passionately responsive submission. In reality, he is tormented for being unable to possess the woman he desires. This obsession, frustrated passion
embodies the ‘sexual anxiety’ and fear of his (and his audience’s) time’ (ibid). There is a strange split within the body: as on one hand he desperately desires the woman and at the same time despises her. His desire for the woman and its bodily fermentation is reflective of his inner split: a schizophrenic split of the self and its ‘Other’. The body becomes a site of struggle to conceal and harness its repressed desire and how the failed struggle break into hysterical violence.

In Darr unlike the make body that aggressively desires and suffers, the female body’s eroticism appears more innocent, naïve and vulnerable to the violent attacks by the gopping stalker (SRK). The unpunished erotic buoyancy of the woman is in sharp contrast to the violent yet punished body of the desirous body of the( anti-)hero. The hero’s voyeurism becomes the pretext for the exposure of the woman’s body.

Shah Rukh’s raging sexuality is offered a counter point by symbolically instituting marriage with Sunny Deol a responsible navy officer (ibid. p. 59). Sunny’s welt built masculine body appears more conservatively poised vis-à-vis Juhi’s ie, Kran’s sexuality Shah Rukh’s untamed desire for the woman’s body contains meanings and representational attributes opposed to the more genteel and sobre masculinity of Deol. Both men derive oppositional meaning from their positioning vis-à-vis the woman. At the conscious level while the heroins symbolically surrenders to her socialized identity of the feminine self by marrying Deol. At a more subconscious level her body is acquiescent to the eroticism and voyeuristic gaze of Shah Rukh. The male gaze and its erotically charged desire is punished and thus ideologically denies clandesture pleasure of voyeuristic gaze. (ibid).

There can be a strange association, albeit an uncanny one between the body of vulnerability of the drunken lovelorn Devdas and his inherent sadness and the psychotic lover in ‘Darr’. Devdas, the renouncer adumbrated a later libidinous release in the violent body of Darr. Darr recycles Devdas and perhaps ‘Devdas’ that was part of the collective conscience, the metaphor for sacrifice was revived by the gratification seeking body in Darr. One can thus explain how Darr struck a chord. The actor SRK himself realized, says his biographer Sheikh, that everythime he is beaten he would gain audience sympathy: ‘Shah Rukh didn’t mind being pasted by Sunny. ‘Let him’ Shah Rukh said, ‘every time he pastes me, they (the audience) with hate him. And love me. He played every blow of Sunny Deol to his advantage’ (Sheikh. 2009,. p. 287).The audience empathized with this terrifying crazy, obsessive character, as it was an agonizing journey of his body towards his own death or redemption. Bhansali, compares Devdas with Darr, as in both one can see the body’s journey towards redemption of freedom from obsession and it was death. (ibid. p. 287)

4.6 PATRIOTIC BODY: THE STAR BODY IN MAIN HOON NAA, SWADES AND PHIR BHI DIL HAI HINDUSTANI

Aggressive masculinity finds an appropriate expression in patriotic body as expressed through guns, tank armed heli copters in popular culture. Emphasis is placed on the male body its musculature, strength and its ability to withstand torture and kill efficiently. This analysis
supports Connell’s that patriarchal power requires the construction of a hypermasculine ideal of toughness and dominance. Such encodings of masculinity/body suggests what it means to be man with the notion of the will of the people and the national interest. Such masculine representation secure ruling class hegemony by neutralizing class antagonisms and harnessing working class resistance to authoritarian ends. This firm of gender stereotype (in popular cultural representations) has been seen by analysts as cultural expressions of attempts to restore the loss of masculine authority in a situation of political crisis (Hanke 1992 p 190-191).

It may be argued in this case that popular Hindi film heroes constructed in the domain of the national popular culture have tend to support and maintain a certain hierarchy among masculine types, wherein the heroic ideal has been upheld and rest subordinated to it. The patriotic masculinity of Shah Rukh in films like Main Hoon Naa while being an expression of aggressive body of a patriotic army officer venturing for protecting national interest and its people thus to balance this image of toughness with a body that plunges into a situation of crisis in a bid to restore peace and goodwill diplomacy. Masculine authority here alters the bodily expression of aggression that does not seek vengeance instead acts as a saviour of people to restore faith in peace. Comparison can be done with Amitabh’s construction against backdrop of economic and political crisis and failure of consensual state politics and developmental programmes saw his subatterity to harness resistance from the lower ranks serving an agenda of representational cultural politics and the hegemonising ploy being the messianic underdog hero.

Military around the world have defined soldier as an embodiment of traditional male sexual behaviors. This is clearly reflected in popular media images of Hollywood actors like John Wayne fearlessly leading troops in a World War II battle. Tom Cruise as a top gun pilot or Sylvester Stalooe as Rambo single handedly rescuing American prisoners of war, there has been a long association between the military and images of masculinity (p 77 barrett). Military as embodiment of idealized masculinity capable of physical agility are part of ideal masculinity in popular films and other cultural firms. In the film Main Hoon Naa. Shah Rukh Khan as Major ram poses as an examplar of patriotic masculinity.(Barrett,2001,p.77)

In the rescue operation in the film MHN,where Ram seeks to protect the college from the hands of Raghavan shows how Ram engages himself in risk and all the stunts and actions are rendered so as to prioritize his body’s risking ability. Barrrett citing Foucault’s view of power relations embedded in processes of categorization and differentiation, argues how within the armed force there exist graded categories as per their quality to take greater risks. In the entire operation of rescue conducted, in pre-emptive moves of the male body in bid to foil Raghavan’s operation one can see how there is an attempt to combine the patriotic military body’s physical strength with a technical ability. The cool technical relationality and skill to operate and manoeuvre in crisis shows how the body is capable of endurance and calm demonstration of competence in face of crisis (ibid p 91) as we see Ram saving the college and the inmates from havoc.
The achievement of masculinity in culture is never secure and seeks for constant confirmation and exhibition. The army is a gendered institution, its structure values practices rites rituals reinforce gendered identities (ibid. p 97). Shah Rukh’s role as a patriotic army officer within the realm of popular cinematic discourse allow for securing a strong capable masculine identity and contribute to construction of a hegemonic ideal of the nation in view of threats and aggression faced by the nation.

Combat is reserved exclusively as male preserve, for whom the quality of belligerent performance is culturally prescribed. The culturally sanctioned definition of maleness provides a blueprint for male role models in war films (Donald, 2001, p 172). Such cultural prescriptions informed the belligerent roles of heroes of Hindi popular cinema since early nineties in response to threats posed by terrorist attacks. Almost in a sharp contrast to heroes of his times displaying an aggressive hawkish belligerence, vis-à-vis the neighbouring state’s aggression, Shah Rukh’s patriotic body provides a moderating role where the body offers a more responsible and protective posturing in safeguarding civilians held hostage instead of provoking any offence from the opponent. Departing from a combative tenor, the body commits itself to protection and peace. But like all heroes engaged in belligerent performance, Shah Rukh’s body is nevertheless, hegemonically poised and resolved to pass the litmus test of endurance. The fearless body appears to be stereotyped warrior ‘capable of stoically enduring privatiouss and pain and be able to pass the stress test that war imposed on these qualities’ (ibid. p 176).

In response to the patriotic fervour and defensive posturing against terror threats, that influenced heroic construction in several war films since early nineties, the film Main Hoon Naa sought to cast the heroic body of Shah Rukh Khan in slight aberration from his romantic image. One can perhaps be provoked to discern an anxiety to cast his body within a visual regime of armed masculinity engaged in a patriotic mission, in a bid to re-masculinize his body and counter feminizing influence of romantic melodrama. As Connell remarks: ‘but the persistence with which ideologies of patriarchy struggled to control and direct the reproduction of masculinity. It is clear that this had become a significant problem in gender politics…in a study of the Boy Scouts of America, expressed a fear that boys would be feminized through too much influence by women…Pressure from women against gentry masculinity had been part of the historical dynamic that led to a key institution of bourgeois culture, the ideology and practice of “separate sphere”. This defined a domestic sphere of action for women, contrasted with a sphere of economic and political action for men’. (Connell, 2002, p252).

The bodily violence of seventies that catapulted Amitabh Bachchan to a near cult figure of an aggraive young man successfully resonated the political crisis of the Indian state, especially during Emergency. With the bliss of affluence promised by liberalization, bodily violence could have been rendered redundant without the spectre of terror attacks or aggression faced by the state. This film might be seen as a cultural ploy that allowed to re-masculinize the Indian popular hero’s body countering the feminizing influence of melodramatic romance and consumerism. Shah Rukh’s masculine power in the film is not be seen as his personal power but a public display of state power, individuals are deployed to manifest state power in a more de-
personalized and de-individualized male power in service of state, the ultimate power holder. The star body in the film is to be seen as ‘clearest example of public power shrinking personal power…National armies are the supreme expression of patriarchal state power, used externally against other states and internally against strikers and other dissidents’ (Horrocks 1994 p 31). In the film Main Hoon Naa, the de-personalized body recruited by state is used against its internal dissident raghavan, attempting to jeopardize a diplomatic deal. Shah Rukh as the soldier who is the embodiment of public state power acts as an agent of the state (ibid p 32). The patriotic body of Shah Rukh draws upon the familiar personification of nature as female and how it is an easy slide to reading the nation as woman. This depicts the Motherland as spatial embodied femaleness: The land’s fecundity upon which the people depend, must be protected by defending the body/nation’s boundaries against invasion and violation by foreign males. The rape of the body/nation not only violates frontiers but disrupts – by planting alienised destroying reproductive variability – the maintenance of community through time. There is an additionally potent message in this patriarchal metaphor: Men who cannot defend their woman/nation against rape/invasion have lost their proprietary claim to that body, that land (Peterson, 2003 p 162). The potency of Shah Rukh’s heroic body in the film seeks to prove his ability to defend the nation, its community of people, its boundaries against disruptive insurgent forces in Main Hoon Na, where the body is a valiant belligerent one.

The film Swades, seemed to show the prowess of technical expertise. This can be said to reflect a split in hegemonic masculinity (Connell,2002 ibid. p 251). Earlier films organized around physical dominance of heroic ideal faced a new alternative in this film. Practice organized around expertise or technical knowledge (ibid p 251). Connell argued that dependence of state and labour markets on technical expertise, scientific knowledge and trained professionals of information industries led to a polarity within hegemonic masculinity between dominance and technical expertise. None seeks to replace other but co-exist as gendered practice, either in opposition or enmeshed. The body of Shah Rukh unlike the earlier film is a non-militaristic body, it is a embodiment of scientific knowledge and therefore expresses patriotic fervour in a more epistemological and cerebral idiom-through ushering reason and scientific temper into a backward, under developed remote village

Seidler as cited by Barker has argued since the Enlightenment men have traditionally associated masculinity with metaphors of reason. Enlightenment philosophy and the discourses of modernity have championed reason as the source of progress and knowledge, manifested in science and increased levels of material production, reason, control and distance are central metaphors of contemporary masculinity, control over other people and control over ourselves (Barker 2002 p 122-123).

The other ploy to affirm Indianness or patriotism of the star body is counter hegemonic to culture of global and its prime vehicle, viz. media. For example in the film Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani (providing an easily identifiable or recognizable intertextual reference to Raj Kapoor’s famous song “Mera Joota Kai Japani” in Awaara, PBDHH, is cenred on debate on how the influence of the media (typically a Westernized medium) is liable to disrupt the age old
Indian tradition valued and eventually corrupt the society. The protagonist an ambitious journalist Ajay Bakshi and the heroine Ria Banerjee (Juhi Chawla) are aggressively careerist and unethical reporters who work for competing television companies (a sign of privatization of broadcasting) and would do anything for a good marketable story. The early part of the film is marked by their professional competition, romantic banter as they match their wits against one another and are shown mostly as Westernized professionals who neglect their personal lives for their career. Ajay the hero dedicated to his high paying job and luxurious life while Ria is focused equally on her career. Through a sense of coincidence the two reporters are forced to cooperate with one another and reveal what is coded through dialogue as their Indian sides - their humanity and kindness. At denouement of the film they ironically use T.V. as the means to rally up support to save a “Common man” which they earlier used to exploit people. The common man is shown to be the wrongly accused of being terrorist by unjust execution by corrupt politicians. Ajay Bakshi until then an ‘obnoxious yuppie’ shows the other side of himself through a heart rendering plea: “those of you who are Indian at heart let us join forces as a nation and save an innocent man”. In the sequence that follows crowds of people pour into the street and march toward the Central Jail, waving Indian flag and the refraime of the nationlist song Vande Mataram merges with the film’s tittle song. Shah Rukh to prove his status as a patriotic hero despite a large rallying mass support behind him performs an incredible individual bodily stunt to prevent the accused from being hung. His agile body dives across an enormous expanse to catch the accused and saves him at the nick of the moment. The sequence is shot in slow motion as Khan fights off attacking guards though extremely athletic moves of his body. The soundtrack is limited to the sound of his breath and an extended war cry which serve to heighten the actors star quality and focus the audience on the physically and bodily heroic performance of their star. (Menon. Broker. 2005. p. 187-188).

The body of the hero amid a rallying crowd becomes the primary site of political action and cultural expression of patriotism. This bodily performance represents a collective mobilization. Through allegory, the hero and his mobilized and highly energized physical action speaks for the nation and its place in the world as well for individual communities within the nation. The hero emerges as the reference point within a group or mass and symbolizes the power of singular patriotic individual each of whom can rise to the occasion for the sake of the nation. While Khan undoubtedly remains the reference point (the hero) of the entire sequence, his pleas address each person individually. This mode of address has a clear nationalist message urging the people to take small steps towards overcoming problems. (ibid. p. 189-90).

4.7 SECULARIZED BODY OF RAM

This section seeks to employ the method of socio-cultural analysis of four films of the star [text] Shah Rukh Khan to examine how the religio-mythical discourse of Ram is transposed to a secular terrain and allow for a re-imagination of the Ram narrative. This allows both the cinematic as well the star text to negotiate with an otherwise religious conception in order to produce an alternative understanding of the epic hero Ram in more inclusive idiom and how
Ram is translated to an altered metaphor in a secular nation on the trajectory of a globalizing regime.

Myths are endemic to every culture and civilization almost universally speaking. Myths at their simplest best, provide fable-like narratives with didactic morals and are repeated from word to mouth. The oral narratives provide the symbolic figures around which folk beliefs are organized. The heroes of the folk epics are believed to be invested with supernatural powers: divine, magical and shamanistic to intervene and miraculously alter the course of events. These myths which are fabrication of imaginary tales continue to enchant people and their imagination. As a sacred or religious tale whose content is concerned with the origins or creation of natural, super natural or cultural phenomena, myths have meanings beyond conventional anthropological understanding as oral history, as expressions of society’s dominant values as a social charter (Marshall, 2005).

Myths constitute a part of our daily living. It is found in so called conventionally secular sites of expressions- as in the newspapers, on television screens, in advertisements, and in film. Everything written or spoken in language has the potential of generating myth. Myths reveal the structure of reality and ‘the multiple modalities of being in the world. They are the exemplary models of human behaviour.’ (Eliade, 1985: p 15). According to Ernst Cassirer, myth is non-theretical in its meaning and essence. It hides its meaning under all sorts of images and symbols and ‘its logic – if there is any logic- is incommensurate with all our conceptions of empirical or scientific truth’. (Cassirer, 1944; p. 73) Cassirer believed that myth is unconscious fiction which displays a perceptual structure. It has a definite mode of perception which sees the world in a certain way. In its elementary form, it precludes the perception of a neutral world and instead marked by an emotional quality is polarized in terms of good or bad, threatening or inviting, friendly or inimical and so on.

One of the most remarkable contribution to the study of myth came from French structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss who proposed that ‘myth is a language’ (Strauss, 1963, p. 211) According to Strauss, binary oppositions are a fundamental property of myth and constitute a part of our collective unconscious. These binary oppositions, Strauss claimed are endowed with a deeper structural meaning not readily available to our understanding at the level of the plot. While exploring the binary oppositions within the Oedipus myth he argued that it is a mediation on dilemmas posed by social and cultural life in the spheres of kinship, and reproduction. [ibid]. Levi-Strauss likened primitive thought to ‘bricolage’ and the primitive man operates as a bricoleur. It puts together systems of classification, mythologies and rituals from whatever available in the surrounding natural and social environments, treating these as signs that could be assembled into more or less coherent cosmologies. This process of creating culture from nature frequently involved systems of transformations, in which the elements in a pre-existing symbol set are taken up and re-combined in new patterns. By use of ‘analogies and comparisons’ mythical thought could be innovative. Working by means of a ‘new arrangement of elements’ and ‘continual reconstruction from the same materials,’ the savage mind was able to build incredibly complex cultural systems (Strauss, 1966, p. 20-21) just
as a talented bricoleur (meaning an odd-job person in French) could manufacture ingenious contraptions using whatever could be found in the garden shed.

The other most prescient intervention came from another French intellectual and philosopher Roland Barthes work ‘Mythologies’ [1973(1957)] consisting of a collection of essays where Barthes applies a semiotic approach to study French everyday life and culture. According to Barthes, signs within culture are never innocent but caught up in complex webs of ideological reproduction. In the essay entitled the ‘Myth Today’ at the end of ‘Mythologies’, Barthes attempted to draw some post-facto lessons from his assembled studies and posit them within a politico-philosophical framework. Barthes suggested to combine the abstract study of semiotics with a more sociological account of their concrete form and function. This would allow us to ‘connect a mythical schema to a general history, to explain how it corresponds to the interests of a definite society’ (Barthes, 1973, p128) For Barthes this ‘definite society’ was a capitalist Western society and that myth was a representation of bourgeois ideology and typically functioned to justify or naturalize the existing social order. The result is that ‘myth is experienced as innocent speech, not because its intentions are hidden…. But because they are naturalized’ (Barthes, ibid, 1973, p.131). The power of myth lies exactly in this very ideological potency to translate an arbitrary system of values appear as a system of naturalized facts.

The Levi Straussian idea of myth as part of our collective sub-stratum of the unconscious and its reconfigurations through bricoleur can be seen discernably in popular Hindi films — within its cinematic narratives which are important social and cultural texts. The influence of myths have been two-fold, firstly at the level of genre and secondly at the level of narrative address and this paper examines the latter. The mythical epic tradition have informed popular Hindi films since the beginning of film production in India firstly as popular genres known as the ‘mythologicals’ and later functioned meta-discursively in shaping the cinematic texts (Mishra, 2002). This influence of myth was not just for myths being a part of our collective unconsciose (see Levi Strauss, 1963, 1966) or for providing themselves as powerful cultural inter- texts and hence a part of our tradition or cultural repertoire in the anthropological or cultural or historical sense of the term but also in the political sense with ‘myths’ being created — complicit and collaborative with the dominant ideological discourse. (see Barthes, 1973)

Hindi popular films have been a veritable site of a hegemonic bourgeois ideological discourse and domination[Virdi, 2003] and has tried to produce also the hegemonic myth of an unified, secular nation- almost an imperative, both ideological and commercial, for a popular mass entertainment catering to a large and diverse populace[ibid] Foregrounding my argument on the basis of this understanding this paper would selectively draw four films from the star Shah Rukh Khan’s ‘film biograph’(see Dyer, 1979) and suture them to see how certain moments and narrative strategies allow for a secular and creative transcendence of a more denotative meaning of ‘Ram’ embedded essentially within a Hindu religious discourse. This discourse of Ram gets popularly appropriated and metaphorically deployed in four distinct though not exclusive ways in the four films — viz. Hey Ram(dir. Kamal Hasan 2000), Main Hoon Naa(dir. Farha Khan 2004), Swades (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker 2005) and the more recent RA.One
(dir. Anubhav Sinha 2011). Re-adapting and re-working the mythical Ram discourse in what is analogous to a bricoleur the political myth of a secular and unified nation is re-produced in cinematic texts as would be seen in the four films chosen for discussion.

This re-coded ‘Ram’ gets interpellated by the secular interpellative voice (of the character played by the star) in Hey Ram desisting him from a resurgent militant and political Hindu nationalism, and in Main Hoon Naa gets personified in the very character played by the star named as Ram who fights the enemy of the nation the demonic Raghavan who is not an ‘other’ but a demonic alterity lurking inside as Raghavan is the other name of Ram as per the epic tradition. This other can be seen as a rupture in the symbolic order of the state and its coherent narrative— it is an eruption of the “Real”. In the film Swades the star-image offers a transcreation of the meaning of Ram imagining an alternative secular discourse of Ram that is more transcendental and beyond the narrow confines of religion. In an evocative lyrical rendition of a famous Ramlila sequence Ram gets transposed to a more secular terrain where Ram enunciates ‘ekta’ i.e. unity, ‘pragati’ i.e. development and in soul searching of ‘Ram tere man main Hain’. The film title Ra. One a semantic variation of Ravan the demonic other of Ram gets annihilated not by Ram but the star playing as G. One (seemingly the Good One) where the star intertextually derived can lend himself to be associated with Ram— here the absent referent.

These secular gestures of appropriations of Ram in these instances is further complemented by Shah Rukh’s well-known secular image and credentials that further privileges this re-coded secular imagining of Ram and renders Ram onto a more polysemic register. The recuperation of the otherwise dominant secular discourse through this re-coded Ram can be seen almost as a rebuttal to the right wing ideological currents that have been gaining grounds in popular Hindi cinema since the rise of Hindutva politics and threatens to rupture the commonly held myth of an unified nation within mainstream Hindi cinematic narratives. (Bharat et al 2008, 8, Virdi 2003).

4.7.1 Hey Ram: The Interpellative Voice of Ram

The film is about the protagonist’s ideological journey from a liberal, secular position to a chauvinistic militant religiousity and then a retrieval of the earlier consciousness. Set against the backdrop of the partition of Bengal its relevance in the present Indian environment clouded by religious extremism was widely unrecognized. It is the story of Saket Ram, as narrated by his grandson. The film begins with Saket Ram, an 89-year-old retired archaeologist, lies on the deathbed, on 6 December 1999, the 7th anniversary of the destruction of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

The scene reverts to the past as Saket (Kamal Hasan) reminiscence the 1940s, when he and his good friend, Amjad Ali Khan (Shah Rukh Khan) were archaeologists working together under their boss, Mortimer Wheeler, in Mohenjo Daro (Indus Valley Civilization)) in the then North-West province of undivided India. Relations are pleasant between the Indians and the English,
and Saket and Amjad did not approve of Partition and the creation of Pakistan almost to testify the liberal and secular nature of these two characters.

Aparna Ram (Rani Mukherjee), Saket's simple Bengali wife, is a school teacher. She is seen to live in Calcutta in the midst of riots and chaos over the issue of the formation of Pakistan and the call by Mohammed Ali Jinnah for "Direct Action". Saket goes to Calcutta and is swept into the communal mayhem. In one instance, Saket saves an innocent Sikh girl from the hands of a barbaric Muslim gang. When he returns to his house, he finds a group of Muslims entering his house. They brutally rape and murder Aparna. Saket, unable to cope with his tragic loss, kills the Muslims, who raped and killed his wife, in a fit of rage. Outside his house, he runs into Sriram Abhyankar (Atul Kulkarni), who is part of a Hindu militant group determined to fight the Muslims' malice with similar brutal force, and assassinate Gandhi for what they perceive to be his treachery towards Hindu dominated India (Gandhi wanted Hindus and Muslims to co-exist peacefully with hope of winning over the hearts of the rioters through sheer self-pity).

However, Abhyankar and his fellow extremists had lost patience at what they deemed Mahatma Gandhi's unreasonable stand to appease Pakistan, who had already invaded Kashmir by that time. Mahatma Gandhi was pressuring the newly founded Indian state to pay Rs. 62 Crore to Pakistan and some territorial concessions as well. For Gandhi's stance, what these militant Hindus came to see as pro-Muslim made him the target of their attack.

Meanwhile, Saket returns home in Madras. Urged by family to remarry, he weds Mythili (Vasundhara Das). However, on a trip to Maharashtra, he reunites with Abhyankar and becomes a part of his militant organisation that plots to kill Gandhi. Due to an horse-riding accident, Abhyankar is left a quadriplegic and leads to Ram swear that he will carry out this mission, that of killing the Mahatma. Saket in the course of his exposure to the ideology of political Hinduism was sufficiently indoctrinated and incited equally by the tragic loss of his beloved first wife comes to the believe that Mahatma Gandhi (Naseeruddin Shah) is solely responsible for the partition of India viewed him as the enemy. Hindu fundamentalists, including Saket, are furious and plot to murder Gandhi. While engaged in this mission Saket meets Amjad Ali, his old friend. Amjad saves Saket’s life from his fellow brethren in midst of a communal riot almost by giving up his own life. However, Saket, after several incidents surrounding leading to Amjad's death (with whom he reunites briefly in a congested Delhi area), changes his mind about Gandhi. He decides against assassinating the leader, and attempts to beg for forgiveness. Soon afterwards, Gandhi is killed by another assassin, Nathuram Godse. Ironically, Gandhi dies without his famous last words: "Hey Ram!" as popularly believed, and as in Richard Attenborough 's film ‘Gandhi’.

Saket Ram recovers his secular-self and then on lives by Gandhian principles. As the 89-year-old Saket Ram is being taken to the hospital, he is told of bomb blasts in the city due to Hindu-Muslim communal riots. He asks "Innuma (even now)?". They were forced by the police to be taken into an underground shelter for their security, but Saket Ram dies there. In his funeral, Gandhiji's grandson comes and sees Saket's private room which is full of historical
photos. Saket's grandson hands over Gandhi's footwear and spectacle which Saket had previously collected from the place of shootout and had treasured it all the while.

The assassination of Gandhi, a historical fact and the death of Amjad [all to save Ram], a fiction-offers to be coalesced within the secular ideological trajectory of sub-continental history and politics. The last call of Gandhi for Ram gives a voice to the death of Amjad for the ‘Ram’[Saket] as his conscience. This call renders Amjad to an interpellerator (see Althusser ,1971) trying to hail back Saket ‘Ram’ to his earlier secular positioning. Amjad in his death and his borrowed call of ‘Hey Ram’ almost contests the attenuated Ram.

4.7.2 Swades: The Nation-Builder Ram
The sub-plot of the Ram Lila sequence acts as a crucial adjunct to the main plot of the film. The lyrics of the song allow the Gandhian philosophy of village self-sufficiency to be re-articulated with a secular imagination of Ram and a mandate of scientific development. The protagonist Mohan almost acquiring a narrative authority in favour of a secular transcendence [see Vasudevan 2010] in an inter textual reference to the earlier film Hey Ram conjoins a much revised idea of an ideal Gandhian village with Ram, and the imaginary Ram rajya of the Ramayana narrative becoming an important metaphor of prosperity and stability in a post-liberalization globalising India.(Singh,2008)

4.7.3 Main Hoon Na: The Patriotic Ram
The advent of neo-liberal capitalism in a post-liberalization era almost coincided with a resurgent Hindu nationalism and led to a dyadic cultural formation that had its resonance in commercial cinematic texts. (Sen, 2011) A spurt of counter-terrorist and jingoistic films were recurrently produced since the early nineties with films like Roja(1994), Border(1997), Sarfarosh(1999), Gadar- Ek Prem Katha(2001) being the remarkable ones in this tradition.(Bharat et.al. 2008). A discernibly strong cultural parallel is seen in Hollywood films and its cultural paranoia that deploys othering strategies to locate the Arab|Muslim as the nation’s ‘other’( Boggs and Pollard,2006). This paranoia and the looming spectre of terror is the obverse of neo-liberal capital [ibid] and fed by spectacularizing tendencies of a global media-culture producing Hyper-real images of war and terror(Baudrillard ,1993) The two films hence to be discussed appear to resist the ideological impulse of cultural nationalism that has come to insinuate popular cinematic narratives since the early nineties. Counterposed to the trend of cultural nationalism, Main Hoo Na and Ra One visiting the Ram metaphor enunciates an altered idiom towards imagining the nation’s other.

Drawing upon Slavoj Zizek’s(2000,1993) understanding, one can see how Main Hoo Na splits open the Ram narrative, the grand symbolic order by the rupturous eruption of the Real. This Real is none other than the alterity of Ram-Raghavan. The altered discourse on Ram in this film urges upon an introspective secular nation to look for its own true image now mired in contradiction and fraught with tensions germane to the exclusionary cultural assumptions of a majoritarian Hindu nationalism. While Ram represents the secular face of the nation, Raghavan
is its dark, atavistic, parochial alterity seeking to destabilize the symbolic order. The other resides within the margins of the nation’s embodied self Ram as Raghavan and comes to haunt the myth of a cohesive national unity. Ram here is not a hostage to narrow ideological underpinnings of belligerent nationhood that came to shape contemporary heroic discourse: but an agent of fabulation, who saves the nation from a crisis and renews the diplomatic rhetoric of rapprochement with Pakistan. Eschewing the exercise of othering Ram poses alternative resolutions to overcome the problems and reinstates the troubled harmony and peace of the ‘fictional nation’.(Virdi, 2003, ibid)

4.7.4 RA.One: The Annihilator Ram

The film Ra One revisits the Ramayana narrative and replays one of its most celebrated tale of destruction of the evil by the heroic Ram, who however derives his metaphorical meaning only through the annihilation of the evil, Ra One. It is one of the popular reworkings of the superhero genre that has its origin in Hollywood. Ra one can be seen as a unique articulation of the superhero cult, based on technological prowess and hypermasculine corporeality, and indigenous mythical traditions. Credence of this creative transformation is found in the comments of Shah Rukh Khan on RA. One:

‘RA. One is the modern, new age technology version of our mythological “Raavan”, who was a mixture of ten different evil characters. I am essaying the role of G.One or better say “Jeevan”, a superhero who saves the mankind from Ra.One’s torment. Through this film, I want to prove that Indian superheroes can also be as cool as the international ones’

Jenny Nayar (Shahana Goswami), an employee of UK-based company Barron Industries, introduces a new technology that allows objects from the digital world to enter the real world using the wireless transmissions from multiple devices. Shekhar Subramanium (Shahrukh Khan), who also works for the company, is given a final chance to devise a video game with a difference. In order to impress his skeptical son Prateek (Armaan Verma), and upon the request of his wife Sonia (Kareena Kapoor), Subramanium uses his son’s idea that the villain be more powerful than the hero. Shekhar's colleague Akashi (Tom Wu) provides the moves of the game's characters, Jenny does the programming and Shekhar gives his face to the game's protagonist G.One, whilst the antagonist Ra.One is faceless and has substantially greater powers than those granted to G.One. The game has three levels, and either of the players can only be killed in the third level using a special gun that holds a single bullet. While designing the game, Akashi notices some malfunctions but ignores them. When the game is finally launched, it receives a standing ovation and Prateek loves it so much that he insists on playing it instantly. He logs in under the alias 'Lucifer' and proceeds to the second level, but is interrupted by Akashi. Ra.One, being unable to end his turn with Lucifer, becomes determined that Lucifer shall die. When the mainframe fails to shut down, Akashi calls Shekhar, who notices a problem with the game. Ra.One uses the new technology to enter the real world, murders Akashi and goes to find Lucifer. Shekhar rushes home but is blocked by Ra.One on the
way. In an attempt to save his son, Shekhar claims that he is Lucifer. However, Ra.One scans Shekhar's identity and kills him for lying. Prateek notices the strange circumstances of his father’s death and realises that Ra.One has come to life. He and Jenny attempt to bring G.One to life. Meanwhile, Sonia tells Prateek that the family will return to India. Having taken the form of Akashi, Ra.One chases them, but G.One enters the real world through Jenny's computer and causes a gas explosion which saves them and destroys Ra.One. G.One takes Ra.One's H.A.R.T., without which Ra.One is not powerful. Sonia finds she cannot leave G.One and takes him along with them to India through Shekhar’s passport. G.One promises Sonia that he will protect Prateek from any harm. Ra.One returns to life, takes the form of a billboard model (Arjun Rampal), and goes after G.One and Prateek.

During Prateek's birthday party, Ra.One hypnotises Sonia, assumes her form and kidnaps Prateek. Ra.One then instructs G.One to give him his H.A.R.T. back, and sends the real Sonia in an suburban train. G.One saves Sonia just in the nick of time (though the train terminus is destroyed) and returns to save Prateek. The game resumes, with Prateek controlling G.One's moves. Following a lengthy fight, both of the characters reach the third level. With little power left, G.One and Prateek trick Ra.One into shooting G.One without his H.A.R.T. attached, which leaves Ra.One helpless. Furious, Ra.One creates ten copies of himself. Prateek, unable to differentiate the real Ra.One, asks G.One to quote one of Shekhar’s sayings: "If you join the forces of evil, its shadows shall always follow you". The pair then realise that only one of the ten Ra.Ones has a shadow: the original one. G.One shoots and destroys him, and after absorbing Ra.One's remains, transports himself back into the digital world. Several months later, Prateek and Sonia return to the UK, where Prateek finally manages to restore G.One to the real world, much to his and his mother's joy.

Ra. One is to be seen as an intertextual instance whether discourse of Ram reaches its apogee through a postmodernist decentering. Ram, the absent referent in the film functions more as an abstraction where annihilation of Ra One privileges his culmination to what can be seen as his Ram-hood. Imagining of the evil as Ra One as a semantic variation of the mythical Ravan allow for a more generic otherness that escapes narrow identification on communal lines. Ra. One can also be read as a depoliticized ‘other’ or rather the rupturous real emanating from the scientific and technological symbolic order based on scientific invention and rationality. It is the counterfeit reproduction of technology and capital that continues to lark despite being terminated by the G One at denouement. The armoured hyper-masculine superhero G.One with a body of a cyborg can only combat Ra..One in his assumed extraordinariness and not the otherwise ordinary looking Subramaniam. This assumed unfamiliarity within G.One borders the real .G.One as the inventor of Ra.One brings to fore again the question of alterity where the ‘other’ can be seen to inhabit Ram thereby conceding to Ram only to have a tenuous grip over the mythical unity of a symbolic, unified nation.

Rama myth as a symbol of a golden age steeped in deep religiosity was revived and recounted in the late 1980s in the Ramanand Sagar’s televised version and few years from then by resurgent Hinduvta brigtade that spearheaded the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. Sheldon
Pollock as cited in Mishra, has come to show how at various historical moments the Ram myth is grasped by an Indian collective and deployed at the behest of a particular class toward quiet specific politically mobilized ends. At crucial historical moments, the Ram myth came to be revived. Gita Kapoor, as observed by Mishra, argues that the primary function of myth is to define and sustain the specific identity of a community, and its investigation occurs at moments of historical crisis when this identity is embattled. Ram as a mythic material has been accessible and malleable to specific political ideologies and was even uncannily reprised at an earlier moment of breakup or partition. The Ram narrative readily appropriated or reevaluated has its narrative being recast during times of real or perceived crisis as a historical study of the Ram myth would suggest [Mishra, 2002]. This reappropriation of Ram has invariably been directed on religious lines. In the four films that have been discussed here can allow for a popular re-imagination of Ram on a more secular terrain, in more generic terms and even as in Ra. One elude essentialist trappings of single identity, single body and mind. It can escape narrow religiosity through its secular transformation as in Hey Ram and Swadesh and bipolarity against the demonized ‘other’, namely Ravan by being the source of both where Ravan is only the obverse, the alterity of Ram and not its distantiated ‘other’.

4.8 STAR BODY WITHIN THE REPRESENTATIONAL POLITICS OF HEGEMONY AND COUNTER HEGEMONY

Shah Rukh’s image of a man or a masculine body appear to be coded in a certain contra-hegemonic manner in films like Koyla as deaf and dumb, in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna as disabled man and as a victim of autism in My Name is Khan. However these images as per Hanke’s study cited in Saco, is not an evidence of displacement of dominant discourse about gender. Rather it can be seen to be placed within modifying attempts to revive elements within discourse of hegemonic masculinity without explicitly addressing questions of power gender inequalities etc. Recuperating hegemonic masculinity, these modifications attempt to make it more adaptable to contemporary social conditions and be able to absorb or accommodate counter hegemonic discourses (Saco 1992 p 34). With respect to hegemonic masculinity in several films, Shah Rukh’s casting as the hero served to naturalise idea of hegemonic Hindu upper caste class identity and even when he plays a Muslim role as in Hey Ram, My Name Is Khan or Chak De India not withstanding its analogous link to his biography his Muslim identity is problematised. Richard Dyer, as cited in Hanke observes naturalization of whiteness in media representation that seek to obscure the privileged position from which (white) men in general articulate their interests to the exclusion of other categories. However, this is not hegemonic heroic masculinity is routinely secured in popular films as there is dialectical interplay between dominance and resistance and Hanke cites Hall’s observation moving state of play in meanings which is then articulated to a state of play in the field of power (Hanke 1992 p 185-186). Here in this context a comparison may be drawn between Shah Rukh and a competing contemporary popular star of Hindi film industry Aamir Khan. In his recent films like Taare Zameen Pe (2007), his role questioning the competitive urban parenting culture of middle class families; in the film
3 Idiots (2009) questioning the meritocratic ideal of patriarchal educational institutions, in Rang De Basanti (2006) questioning the credibility of state institutions although appears as a kind of redemptive attempts and does not de-stabilize the relatively stable framework of patriarchal codings of gender roles, family marriage and nation, but only seek to shift the hegemonic balance only.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity originates within recent work in the sociology of gender. Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1987) argues that hegemonic masculinity should not be understood as the male role but as a particular variety of masculinity to which women and others (young, effeminate or homosexual men) are subordinated. Hegemonic masculinity is a question of how particular men inhabit position of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce social relationships that generate dominance (ibid). Hegemonic masculinity thus refers to the social ascendancy of a particular version or model of masculinity that operates on the terrain of commonsense and conventional morality that defines what it means to be a man thus securing the dominance of some men within sex/gender system (ibid). The ascendancy of men as ruling within capitalist patriarchy is achieved only through violence and concern but also through a cultural process in which masculinism the dominant ideology of patriarchy meet with resistance and challenge. For this reason the analysis of hegemonic masculinity is also a question of how oppositional gender ideologies become absorbed contained or rearticulated (ibid).

This form of hegemonic construction is also discernible in the realm of popular culture. In popular Hindi films heroes are often constructed within the domain of the national popular culture complicit with hegemonic forces and also thereby maintained a kind of hierarchy among men. The heroic ideal is upheld and rest subordinated to it. Shah rukh’s sublimal homosexual leanings get contained in Kal Ho Na Ho through a heterosexual romantic triangular resolution thereby circumventing oppositional gender readings. Oppositional homosexual readings in this film is a stance where gay affinities get appropriated and rearticulated via hegemonic discourse informing the narratives of popular films. Hegemonic masculine must be continually reconstituted through specific representation of masculinity and the strategies by which hegemonic masculinity is achieved and ideological consent won or lost varies (Hanke ibid).

Construction of heroes in popular Hindi films shows how hegemonic masculine discourse continually reconstitutes and repositions itself. The changing masculine (heroic) persona from 50’s onwards exemplifies how this hegemony is constantly being negotiated and achieved in response to spatio-temporal realities. Hanke contend that the overall cultural effect of this ongoing process is that questions of power, real gender inequalities, sexual politics etc are glossed over. Apparent modifications of hegemonic masculinity may represent some shift in the cultural meanings of masculinity without an accompanying shift in the dominant sociostructural arrangements thereby recuperating patriarchal ideology by making it more adaptable to contemporary social condition.
and more able to accommodate counter hegemonic forces that includes alternative sexual ideology (ibid).

Departing from the macho-masculinity Shah Rukh’s continuous romantic lover boy casting since DDLJ Pardes, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Kabhi Kushi Kabhi gham, Mohabbatein with a nurturing emotional rendering and in addition his playing of marginalized discriminated victimized Muslim hero in Chak De and My Name Is Khan point towards apparent modifications or accommodations to prevent backlash from counter hegemonic forces that was probably anticipated given that from early 90’s a strong current of hegemonic Hindu nationalism influenced films where Hindi heroes invariably as patriots saved the country from assail of Islamic terror (see M Bharat et al, 2008) Such assimilation or compromise equilibrium of Hindu hegemony articulated through a Muslim hero by identity allow for dominant Hindu hegemonic ideology to recuperate itself from counter attacks. Choosing a Muslim hero to play the role of the marginalized Muslim who is later able to prove his integrity is not be seen as a displacement of dominant ideology (Hanke, 1992, ibid p 197).

Films like My Name Is Khan and Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna can be seen as Shah Rukh’s departure from hegemonic or ‘successful masculinity’. These roles seek to represent a failed masculinity and displays as sheer ‘inability to be a hegemonic (re-masculinized) masculine figure’. While in My Name is Khan, he plays autist and Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna a debilitated former football player it represents an ‘inability to form a part of the public sphere that the patriarchal nation represents. This inability thus makes him alternative’. (Shyama P. 2010. p. 87). Posited as an irresponsible husband/father/son Shah Rukh here is unable to fulfill familial responsibilities and is rendered ‘powerless’. These two films has the counterposing of Shah Rukh against a more able less dominated, successful professional woman/wife (Rhea in KANK played by Preity Zinta and Mandira in MNIK played by Kajol, both successful stars of the industry and als risks the hegemonic presence of the hero on-screen), in stark contrast to the failed body of the hero and it can be argued: ‘The inability of the masculine identity facilitates the narrative to demonstrate other able subject positions.’ (ibid) The wife in either films are physically, emotionally, and financially more stable and empowered against a nearly fragile masculine self. While Dev(SRK) fails to maintain his sporting career, he also lacks interest in house hold and parenting (KANK) Rizwan(SRK) in MNIK is emotionally constrained and unwittingly leads to the sad demise of his foster son – whom he fails to protect against racist attack. His image of an ‘irresponsible masculinity within the realm of the family threatens the very existence of it’ (Shyama p.2010, ibid. p. 88). It leads to rupture within the family fabric and conjugal discord. The problematization of the private space is relevant to be noted as Shyama P. argues: ‘The private becomes important in so far as it helps in the construction of the citizen subject. Thus as Madhav Prasad argues, the control of the private becomes important in so far as it helps in the construction of the masculine subject’ (ibid.). Interestingly in both narratives of KANK and MNIK, the question of citizen subject remains ambiguous on account of the masculine subject’s transnational location. Nevertheless the private space rendered problematic positions masculine subject as enfeebled and threatened. It also creates fissures in
the unstinted hegemonic masculine authority over private space. Prasad, as cited, observed ‘The private is only invented in and through this relationship of the family to the state (the end result of the contract that inaugurates the new patriarchy), whereas in the old family which is also, at the same time, an authoritarian regime, the private does not exist’ (ibid). One may be led to surmise that whether the problematized private space is a cinematic extension of liminal position of the diasporic subject, in both films- KANK and MNIK, vis-à-vis the land of his origin and his minority position in the state where he lives. The mobility of the male subject to control private space raises question about the integration of the same to the patriarchal national space. ‘The responsible ale ought to control and discipline the private space of the family so that it helps in the construction of the larger national public. An alternative imagining of masculinity, one that is unable to control the private space by being irresponsible and undisciplined, becomes a threat to the patriarchal national space as this would mean the empowerment of the private space’. (ibid. p. 88)

The denouement however ensures a preferred hegemonic resolution wherein in either films the male regains his authority over the private space. In KANK via a transgressive mode, the body within space of a hotel room consummates an extra marital relation with a more submissive, docile female body of Maya, who loves him despite all odds. The surrender of the woman marks the triumph of the otherwise discredited body over that of the woman, and the hegemonic resolution ensures that this very body re-starts domesticity and regain control over the private space by his second marriage to Maya after separating from his earlier wife. While in ‘My Name Is Khan’, he abandons the private space of conjugality after the death of his step son and carries alone civil tirade against racist and other discriminatory prejudices and allow him to reconstitute his relation to the national space (marked by his long journeys across America) and the state (where he meets the American President).

The othering process sees a culmination in the de-subjectified castrated body of the Muslim boy Kabir Khan – a victim of antism. His metaphorical castration in face of extreme discrimination and presentation renders him emotionally dead, unresponsive to others, not open to life. The castrated man has no joy in nature, no joy in his own body. He cannot let himself share with fear, or weep with exhaustion or grief. Some men permit themselves rage, and this becomes their sole means of emotional expression, along with contempt. The trouble is that such a man despises and hates himself most of all – all those unwanted parts of himself that he sees as unmanly and effeminate. Castration means the something has been cut off literally the male genitals. But we also talk about men cut off from this feelings or simply that someone seems very cut off. So this is a kind of emotional castration: an inability to be present with others, a state of being withdrawn or remote. This is the true castration of modern man. They function from the neck. Their bodies are deadened, and therefore their feelings are not available to them. It is hard for them to cry to be warm to melt to love. At its deepest castration means being cut off from oneself, divested of a sense of I. This is not specific to men. It is not a fear of not being male, but of not being. It is the feeling of not being a subject of being an absence = a non being (Horrocks 1994 p 105).
The description ideally fits Shah Rukh a victim of antism, living in a gap or void of not being a man. There is a haunting loss of selfhood and fear of castration (ethnic identity) in the very proclamation the title of the film suggests My Name is Khan. These is haunting fear of him being subject to state’s gaze as a terrorist this apparently deadened antistic body however shows a kind of strange inert strength and process that He is not so much fragile as curtailed, reduced. He is able to get through life by shrinking himself to safe proportions. He does not feel threatened because he doesn’t risk anything especially intimacy with others. None the less behind the grim mask there is an inner world that is full of emptiness, lolliness yearning (Horrocks 1994, ibid p 106). Beyond his constrained selfhood, there is seen a man who take up the mission to disprove the myth of othering Muslims as terrorists and resiliently carries a struggle against perciption. He antistic body numbered metaphorically emerges as a symbol of the other Muslim male body that strangely coalesce with his biography as a Muslim actor himself.

Why does his body turns autistic? In response to a cultural nationalism that is alienating at the level of nation and as an aftermath of terror attack on us on 9/11 by Islamic terrorist groups suspect has given birth to an antistic express. Shah Rukh in film embodies the shame, guilt, fear, vulnerability, frigidity, inner void of Muslim subjechtood. He epitomizes a deep sense of shock at the magnitude of persecution and marginalization. “The autistic male is deeply ashamed. He is especially ashamed of his feelings of vulnerability and need, which threaten to betray him. We could say he is ashamed of being alive, and therefore maintains an outer deadness. Spontaneity frightens him, since it threatens his self-control. Enthusiasm disgusts him, since it is too alive. Everybody suffers as a result of this autism. Their friends and partners suffer terribly, because there is so little open contact with them. And they suffer too, since the core of them remains untouched, unseen. Such men are profoundly lonely, and feel unloved. It is difficult for anyone to love them, since they are difficult to find ……It’s hard really to convey the sense of deprivation, starvation, about such men. They are good at disguising it, with rationality in particular as an outer mask. They see the world through their intellect, so that they can avoid the terrible void inside themselves Their neediness is massive, and massively denied. But when- and if- they begin to discover how deprived they feel emotionally, physically, sexually, spiritually- it can lead to a great crisis for them, since their life appears to be like a wasteland. They are so good at their job, so efficient, so productive, and now they find inside themselves a blasted landscape, a desert. They find a core of loneliness that is so profound, so unseen, untouched by any other human being, that it can appal and terrify the individual, unless they are given support.” (Horrocks, 1994. p. 110-111) Horrocks description of an autistic man appropriately corresponds to the autistic character played by Shah Rukh Khan in the film MNIK. He is thoroughly embarrassed, jilted, threatened by being cast as a member of a stigmatized ‘Muslim ‘ community. His frigid, numbed exterior turns him reticent towards emotive renderings and othering allows him to coil himself. His autistic body tries hard to protect and shield him and his vulnerability with a strange cold stiffness and calm rationality. His extremely routinized body efficiently mechanized in its renderings lacks.
expressivity. His autistic non-expressive body manifests the deep scars of a muted community-it represents a kind of schizoid of a community that feel estranged, different and unintegrated into the mainstream society. Here the case of America is representatively used. The body of SRK acts as a site of collective emotional autism for the othered Muslim community. Khan’s body becomes a communal site of articulating ‘unhappiness under an iron control, a mask of impassivity’ (Horrocks, 1994, p.124). Ironically, autism emanating from within an atomization and loss of social bonds, witness the autistic body, assuming a larger than life, magnification which singularly carries out a crusade against discriminatory practices and ‘othering’ (of Muslims). The body assumes a certain transcendence to combat the parochial (U.S.) state policy and communal feeling. The autistic body despite its constricted expressive capacity calls upon human consciousness for a more inclusive solidarity.

Othering is gendered and crucial to male selfhood (in Crisis) construction and cultural identity. The hegemonic Hindu masculinity under the pale of cultural nationalism like every reigning definition of masculinity is laden with a defensive effort prevent being emasculated (Kimmel, 2001, p. 282). This leads to a defensive posturing of the dominant Hindu masculinity against authoritarian faith especially the Muslim. Cultural nationalism informed the emergence of a certain belligerence of the Hindu (male) against the demonized Muslim other in films (see, Bharat, et al 2008, Budha, 2008). The hegemony of the Hindu masculine subject is often secured in post 1990s film in annihilating the traitor/terrorist Muslim. Both Hindu as well reigning Muslim stars have often been cast in such roles.

Inscribing on his body the stigma of being the other, in films like Chak De, My Name is Khan Hey Ram, Shah Rukh Khan stages an almost bodily fight against such othering. The aggression towards the other is endowed conspicuously with bodily manifestations and has deeper roots in the psychodynamic complex of any human society and culture. Elaborating upon national ethnic racial realm, Freud noted how innate aggressive derive is directed towards neighbours or those held as outsiders under provocation. Freud as quoted in Chodrow notes: ‘The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked, they are on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain to torture and to kill him. Homo homini hipus‘ (Chodrow, 2002, ibid p 236-237).

The othering becomes particularly relevant when it is traced to have its origin in cultural and political context. In contravention to the secular tradition of the nation, under the influence of resurgent ring wing Hindu cultural nationalism, Hindi popular films source early nineties, have aggressively deployed othering strategies vis-a-vis the Muslims as demonized traitors or terrorists. Hindu male protagonists or heroic roles have been hegemonically constituted –
divested with masculine bodily prowess and belligerence against the villainous other in response to the threat of terror and militancy.

Aggression appears in response to the experience of an external threat from a projectively externalized agent. The fear of being attacked, endangered and threatened by an ‘other’ lead to defensive retaliatory aggressive feelings. This aggression emerging as a defense against endangered self or in an attempt to express a self in a situation of internal paranoid, schizoid fragmentation, lack of internal wholeness and lack of mentalization in which person relies more on body (Chodrow, 2002 ibid, p 241 p 243). It is this bodily aggression that becomes central to the narrative of jingoistic war films seeking to terminate the nation’s other.

Ethnicity as ‘ego identity on a social scale or the social equivalent of psychic selfhood, with the same deep roots’ allow us to understand how othering at the level of a drive for collective violence emanate from individual level and how under particular conditions, violence becomes a way to affirm collective selfhood and identity as much as it affirms individual selfhood. National ethnic racial violence correspond to the aggressive individual’s projection of hatred, violence or paranoid schizoid level splitting etc in response to narcissitic threats, humiliation, shame or trauma. Social processes herein is thereby homologous with individual processes. This collective violence occur in moments of social disintegration, political crisis, lawlessness, ethnic strife and so on. (ibid. p.245-247)

This phenomena can be seen in the collective paranoid – schizoid functioning of the Hindu nation vis-à-vis the Muslim other, whereby the other is seen as part rather than a whole object and the self is also fragmented. As in classic Kleinian perspective in the paranoid schizoid fantasy, the paranoid element can be cited in the persecutory anxiety of the Hindu nation articulated in the aggressive and belligerent bodily action of the hero – wanting to attach or retaliate under the threat of being attached. While the schizoid element involves splitting of different aspects of self and object so that neither self nor object is whole or appear real and alive. There is a derealization or absence of depth in perception of self and that of other. In paranoid schizoid fantasy seeks to protect the good aspects of self and object separated from bad aspects of self and object. This lead to further demonization of the object as bad aspects of self re evacuated and put into that world (ibid p 241). The patriotic gallant, chivalrous, brave body of the protagonist playing, the Hindu hero is counterposed against the treacherous, conspiratorial, terrorist, traitor demorised body of the Muslim other – the alienated object.

This draws us to Chodrow’s view that this aggression or othering is essentially gendered, i.e. it is masculine and not generic. ‘Men after all, are directly responsible for and engage in the vast majority of both individual violence and rape as well as collective violence. Historically and cross culturally, they make war. Men are soldiers and as politician and generals, those who instigate and lead the fighting …Men find themselves and organise themselves into groups whose goal is extreme violence and aggression. The military in all societies is by definition masculine … ‘ (ibid.p 251-252) Cultural constructions of masculinity abet constructions that foster or enable both collective and individual male aggression and expression of anger. The construction of hegemonic, majoritarian Hindu masculinility engenders a construction that
contains propensities of aggression or paranoid-schizoid fantasies, in response to the resurgence of a virulent cultural nationalism.

Chodrow argues that cultural selfhood experienced psychodynamically stems from national ethnicity and people hod. Othering of ethnicity is gendered and sexualized Male identity and definition of selfhood in opposition to the other is crucial to male sense of cultural selfhood, as seen in several post-1990’s nationalist/patritic films discussed in the earlier chapter.(under Secular Films)The male body can be seen as a vehicle of this cultural selfhood and a masculine (gendered) site for identity construction vis-à-vis the other. It is the body that gives expression to the said paranoid schizoid complex and aggression.

Gender being relational, masculinity is conceived against its other – that which is non-masculine. This led to privileging of some traits and social categories. Mangan remarks: ‘Masculinity, then, repeatedly defines itself in terms of its opposites, and the history of gender construction is...a matter of marking off the ‘other’,... the other comes back to haunt the dominant order which had dispelled it. In the cultural assertion of masculine gender identity a continual interplay arises between the thing itself and the other against which it is being defined’ (Mangan, 2003 p 11). Shah Rukh personifies this haunting other of the Hindu nation, to resist the very othering by enunciating alternative possibilities.

Shah Rukh’s character in chak De, My Name is Khan, Hey Ram contests the hegemonic Hindu masculinity a firm a model of masculinity which a majoritarian culture sought to privilege in senses of popular commercial films, while vivifying the Muslim other. Hegemonic masculinity is that former model of masculinity which a culture privileges above others which implicitly defines what is normal formals in that culture, and which is able to impose that definition of normality upon other kinds of masculinity. Its characteristic tactic is the kind of definition through opposition is to legitimate not only the dominant position of men...but also the dominance of particular social groups of men, along with their values, beliefs and their powr and wealth over other groups (Mangan,2003 ibid p 13) Under the ideological influence of a resurgent right wing cultural nationalism seeking hegemony, heroic ideals in mainstream Hindi cinema privileged a belligerent Hindu masculinity as the patriot protecting the state’s interest against Islamic terror.

‘Broadly speaking each historical era produces its own version of hegemonic masculinity, which operates both on an external level in terms of social roles and relations, and on an internal one, in terms of subjectivity, feelings and definitions of self. Hegemonic masculinity is by nature paradoxical, since it seems to stand still but in fact always on the move...it is continually in the process of changing’ (ibid p 13). Thus heroic ideals have been produced by spatio temporal dynamics and have changed from idealists of euphoric days of newly gained independence to angry young man emanating from depths of a political crisis to even a militant Hindu warrior hero in the face of terror and insurgency. Heroes have therefore been produced by complex transitional movements and construction of various forms of masculinity: both dominant and marginalized, emergent and subordinated arise out of cultural and political dynamics. It is this hegemonic struggle that is brought to fore, in Shah Rukh’s films, where the
biography of the star body coalesce with the enacted subjectivity and the performative body of the Muslim hero/subjectivity contests the othering — through bodily renderings — via sporting feats in Chak De and as an active civilian in My Name Is Khan and mortifying sacrifice in Hey Ram, as a loyal Muslim friend saving his Hindu-militant friend Ram(Kamal Hasaan0 against rioting communal forces.

The creation of the other as a grotesque body ‘…demonstrates albeit in an extreme form the way in which our culture can create ‘monsters’…but we can create an imagined monsters and impose that creation of the imagination onto a ‘real’ body…precisely the process which Mary Shelley envisaged: people will create monters out of their own fantasies and desires and impose on those ‘monsters’ the imaginative world, with all their hierarchies of race and gender, which they have access to’ (Evans 2002, p 8). The othering practice seeks to ascribe a certain monstery to the other Muslim body in popular films since recent past as either terrorists or traitors. Ra. One starring the hero counters this, by turning this on his head, where the threatening monstrous body appear to be a technical creation of good self. To annihilate this monster, the good self paradoxically splits to become an armoured cyborg, with a body that appears not as real body. The fantasized created body of the monstrous, Other Ra One mocks the real body of the good self as it splits to a created facet of his own body. Otherwise real and natural what we do create are fantasies about the body which are often in themselves monstrous. In doing this we can easily lose sight of the real body (as Frankenstein lost sight of the needs of his creature) because our attention is fixed on the fantasy and not on the real (ibid p 9). This Ra One counterposed by cyborg G one create an ambiguity around understanding of our real bodies (ibid p 13).

4.9 CYBORG BODY

Ra One sees Shah Rukh in the avatar of a cyborg hero, G.One, to combat the cyber evil’ Ra. One, played by Arjun Rampal. Ra,One is a creation of the Ra One escapes the confines of the computer game format and the big screen to become an autonomous presence and active material force in culture comparable to heroic Lara Croft (Angelina Jolie) in the film Tom Raider (2001). G One, the cyborg body of Shah Rukh, emerges to annihilate the evil Ra One . The role of G. One is important from the vantage point of studying popular cultural texts. Inspired by imaginary characters like superman, this film allows Shah Rukh to expand the repertoire of his body images and unlike Lara, contribute towards eroding popular distinctions between an illusion and reality (Rojek 2007 p 113). While in the west there is long tradition in the study of an influential relationship between the technology of cartoons, animation and popular culture (ibid) Bollywood adaptation is more recent. It accorded to the heroic body what Eisenstein argued is embodied by the Disney films, viz protoplasmaticness of popular culture (ibid p 113).

The film Ra. One parallels and can be said to be quite strangely similar to the Frankenstein narrative. According to Horrocks the Frankenstein narrative represents a ‘very complex symbol…but it is also clear that Frankenstein has a ‘womb complex’: he has a burning desire to
create life’ (Horrocks, 1995, ibidp 40-41). Ra One resembles the monstor feminine who can threaten to castrate -who evokes the fantasy of an ‘archaic mother’ all powerful and threatening. Ra. One can be morphed as woman, it represents the fantasized interiors of mother’s body and the monster itself is a startling rendition of a phallic/vginal fantasy.

The machismo and the prowess displayed by G.One in face of crisis parallels ‘macho fascism’ of muscular cinema like Schwazenegger, Stallone or Bruce Willis or male superstar images like Rambo, the Terminator and Robo Cop etc. (Horocks 1995 p 172).

The monster faced by the superhero may be the very mirror image of himself (ibid. p 172) – his splitted body that threatens it. The scientist’s constructive genius and his epistemology gives rise to the ontology of a uncontrollable monstrous body, Ra.One. Drawing parallels between the story of Ra One and Frankhenstein, it can be seen as reinvoking the question of the creation of life and in the relationship between science socialization and intelligence. The monstrous Ra. One like Frankenstein emerges from creative powers of science, ‘...the creature duly becomes less of a creature and more of a monster and creator and created are locked into a deadly relationship which it is not difficult to see in terms of present relationships between science and human beings. Even through we need to recall that the monster is not human – but created by science – there remains the sense in which monster stands for all those characteristics which are unsocialized and uncontrolled. The society is one which implicitly condones intellectual arrogance and the impulse to dominate and yet fails when faced with the challenge of integrating the different or the difficult. (Evans 2002 p 5). Ra One too emanates from such depths. Evans argues that Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein recognizes that there is no difference between the created body and the natural body and the novel displays that it is untenable to speak of the real body in any meaningful sense: all bodies even those apparently created by science are both natural and social (ibid). This collapse of boundary becomes evident when Ra One features as a man with a naturally looking body and G One ambiguously turns to what is akin to cyborgs – not wholly machines and not wholly natural organisms either (ibid 5). It is pertinent to quote Donna Haraway as cited by Evans: ‘Twenty-first century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed...’ (ibid p 5).

The armoured body in Ra One as G. One is an exemplar of a brutalized violent machnismo. The very fact that his body lends itself to a mechanized logic ‘reflects a contradiction within patriarchal masculinity which must dehumanize its agents whilst also promising them power and glamour’. (Horrocks 1994 p 33) as blue eyed G One with an exoticized corporality combines both. One can draw parallels with examples cited from Hollywood images of machismo where Rambo, the Terminator, the Man with No Name - are simultaneously images of glamourised brutality and of deranged autism (Horrocks 1994 p 33).

The armoured body of Shah Rukh in Ra One a re-masculinized, robotic body represent what feminist claim as phallic panic felt amongst men in fear of monstrous feminine (Horrocks 1995 p 40). The dark superman theme is claimed to repress beneath the shy rather feminine man a potential genius. The very cult of manhood celebrated via legend of Superman is not to be
mistaken as champion of masculinity; instead its failure—its victim. The hypermasculine violence is a desperate psychotic assertism against his own unmanliness (Horrocks 1994 p 126). Superman inspired film Ra One thus represent a certain duality and informed by a ‘typical ambivalent mode’ of a clumsy man behind omnipotent G. One G One is a ‘modern rendition of an archetypal figure, who solves insoluble problems, put disasters right and can actually control nature. This is man the scientist,…the accumulator of knowledge and technology. But there are also some serious ideas about men here: that beneath the outer surface of competence, knowledge and sureness there is someone less assured, more nervous about himself. But the polarity in this fantasy can be reversed: Superman is the fantasized compensatory image for the man who feels inadequate’. (Horrocks 1994 p 145). The split produced to cover the otherwise vulnerable scientist’s inadequacy through a hypermasculine, Superman like image shows a defensive gesture on part of the male hero’s body (ibid.).

Ra One can be read as emergence of a post modern cyborg where both the heroic G One and villainous Ra One is indexical of uncertain bodies or destabilize the notion of stable ontologically secured bodies and embodied subjects. The ability to remorph itself supposes an instability of the body and its malleability to change its form. (Shilling 2005 p 4-5).

The superhero genre inaugurated by Ra. One is now being upheld as a pioneering changer in the superhero genre (The Telegraph, 23.10.11) and responds to the demand of the youth for such content. The reason why such superhero films are being made is because Mumbai is ready to brandish its newly acquired ability to make such film enabled by special effects studio technologies with companies like Pixon Eye Qube, Reliance Media works and Prana the price has reduced (ibid).

This cyborg body or superhero bodies are masculine bodies that can be imagined to be metaphorically the armoured body polity affirming its technical prowess and expertise. The star himself took the initiative to promote the films in the West like Poland, Germany, Canada and even Russia. He is keen to open that market again for Indian films. He also planned a premiere in Dubai and London (Times of India 14.10.11).

Although directors are making superhero films, none has taken the risk of launching a relative unknown like a Christopher Reeve (Superman) or a Toby Maguire (Spider Man) in an Indian superhero film. As sociologist Shiv Vishwanathan points out, ‘Unlike the superheroes of the west, here the superhero character will have to be a superstar to pull in the audience’ (ibid). The rationale to use heroes like Shah Rukh, Hrithik Roshan and Southern super-star Rajnikant in Ra One, Krish and Robot, all superhero films, explains how star power is needed to enable the star (body) to claim superhuman qualities.

The film responds to compulsions of catering to global markets and its popular demands and hence a change in content (ibid). The superhero cyborg body in Ra. One masquerading under an innocuous geek’s garb erupts with a surprise that has an intertextual relation to the film. Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi (2008) where a ‘gawky everyman’ transforms almost corporally to become ‘a cool hunk hip hop dude’ as young sporty exuberant dancing body to make his wife happy.
In Ra One too the cyborg body is remorphed body. The superman body as the star himself who produced the film claims it to be inspired by Hollywood superman genre, by films like Superman, Batman, Terminator and also by Bollywood films like Krish and Drona. He wanted to produce film about an Indian superhero and fact that we have had mythical superheroes like Ram, Krishna and Hanuman, the star feels that we need to have our own Indian superheroes now as well (16/8/11 t2 p 13 Cover Story, The Telegraph).

The armoured body of Shah Rukh as G One to combat the demonic Ra One is cloaked in his sani which appear to be inspired by the nanosuit in the Crysis games? (The Metro Telegraph 1/11/11). With India aiming to become an important player in global economy and politics, the cyborg body of the hero can be seen as a pot colonial cultural motivation at re-invention.

According to Jameson’s observation this body can be seen as a celebratory cyborg of post coloniality played by ‘something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps impossible dimensions’ (Janieson as cited in Gandhi L, 2003, p. 352). This cyborg body as post colonialist would say is indexical of ‘colonial aftermath marked by an ambivalent cultural mood and formation which accompany periods of transition and translation’. And herein transition is marked by a shift towards a globalizing regime and translation is implied through adoption. The Hollywood genre of superhero films into popular Hindi film. Pursuing the imperative of post coloniality towards ‘re-invention’ the cyborg body appears to be informed by the compelling imperative ‘to negotiate the contradictions arising from its indisputable historical belatedness, its post coloniality…and its cultural obligation to be meaningfully inaugural and invention on the other.

Thus, its actual moment of arrival into independence is predicated upon its ability to successfully imagine and execute a decisive departure from the colonial past (ibid. p 353).

The cyborg body of G. One (as played by the star), technologically armoured by annihilating Ra One representative of its uncanny past of colonial subordination seeks to overcome its continuity with its unresolved past. It attempts to mitigate its vulnerability of being controlled by it. Ra One a monstrous entity emanating from a computer game devised by G. One, is the colonial unconscious that threatens to captivate the scientific mind of G One. The cyborg body of G One reclaims its freedom and severance from its repressive past by terminating Ra One.

This gesture nevertheless shows that the colonised’s predicament, is at least partly shaped and troubled by compulsion to return to a voyeuristic gaze upon Europe. (see, ibid p 357).

Considering a parallel between American national paranoia (on the pattern of the comic bugs from outer space sci fi stories popular in 1950s Hollywood and role of action heroes in Hollywood blockbusters as how Schwarzenegger will save the world…with a less overtly political agenda offer a spectacular acting – out of a very simple story of humanity’s salvation in a struggle of good against civil – whether Vampire (Blade), viruses (outbreak) mad science (Jurassic Park), national disasters (Volcano Armageddon) or hostile extra-terrestrials (Alien Species)…”(Morris 2007 p. 436) Ra One reflects the nation’s paranoia already a nuclear enabled state and commanding high defense technology to exhibit its prowess and assuage its anxiety and threat perception through the heroic body of G. One – the annihilator of evil. In order to
terminate the digitized evil, G One’s (SRK’s) body otherwise an organic site seeks to contest Ra One in digitized way. Does this digital war anticipate digitization of human body who is armoured to contest its own creation the computerized intelligent agency of Ra One. All these cyborg agents or digital brings hybrids of human and non human subject and object (wo) man and machine, consciousness and corporeality in a new cybernetic register are enabled being’s with cyber subjective position (Luke, 1999 p 44-45). Shah Rukh’s body turning to a cyborg is an attempt of organic body to amend the ontological constitution (ibid p 45) and allow us to rethink over human corporality and its agency without assuming superheroic power and cyborg like character.

A significant aspect of G One’s cyborg body are his blue eyes. These blue eyes have entered a commodified domain; and they cease to be part of white man’s anatomy. Aided by marketing, the proliferation of images of blue eyes on dolls, cups, films and even sweets, blue eyes become a disembodied object of aesthetic intensity and these blue eyes is detached from its objective domain and then transferred into the domain of commodification, accruing an exchange value. (Quayson, 2000 p 99-100). Shah Rukh attains this aestheticized object of a commodified culture by doubling himself being his own ontological interlocutor with an immediacy. (ibid). This is also true of his doubling in his film Baazigar where blue eyes allow his body for ontological doubling. These blue eyes are incarnated signs and as Appadurai as cited in Quayson, says are register of consumption (ibid p 100). Blue eyes of G. One while reflecting a desire for aestheticization and commodification drive of market capital to superimpose it upon a non white body is also informed by a certain subliminal post colonial anxiety and ambivalence. It may be seen as the uncarry desire for mimicry reinvoked by post colonial man (see Bhabha 1990).

4.10 SEXUALISED STAR BODY AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF SEX

Bodies are conceived to be sexualized in multiple ways. Bodies can be anatomically sexualized or sexed in biological sense as male or female. Secondly, these sexed bodies may demonstrate gendered attributes and be sexualized in terms of gender identity: feminity and masculinity. Finally, bodies can be seen as sexualized for being engaged in certain sexual practices like heterosexual or homosexual sex and be sexualized as per the sexuality demanded by their bodies. The usual assumption is that terms like sex, gender and sexuality are definable and universal experiences. However, there are several cultural norms associated with these terms and how they are developed and adopted.

There are primarily two schools of thought that seek to define sexuality. The first school viz. naturalist approach represents an essentialist view of sexuality; sex is conceptualized as an overpowering, functionalist force determining person as well as social life. Male heterosexual desire informs such sexuality and sexual choice or desire. Holding men as active agents with ‘natural’ sexual urges, it rendered women as passive recipients of men’s sexual drives. Our everyday commonsensical understandings, legal and social views tend to be premised on this approach.
The second school of approach challenges these essentialist notions of sexuality. This includes neo psychosanalytic approaches which see sexuality and sexual desire as linguistically constituted. This also includes discursive or poststructuralist approaches that take as its point of departure Foucault who argues that sexuality is a historical construction and sex is a complex idea constituted via deployment of sexuality.

What binds the second group of theorists is the recognition of social and historical sources of sexual definitions and a belief that bodies are unified through ideological constructs such as sex and sexuality. Sex and sexuality are shaped and determined by different social forces and complex historical transformations. Notions of sex, gender and sexuality mean differently, spatio-temporally, meaning differently in different societies. Discursive or poststructuralist position hold that these notions combine to create understandings of sexualized bodies which are subsequently expressed and reinforced through social norms, education, judicial system regulation of deviance etc. The constructionist view suggests the sexuality contains potentiality for choice, change or diversity. (Stephen 2002, p 29-30).

In this section, I seek to justify why it is needed to utilize the discursive or post structuralist position to explore the sexuality of the star body constructed and understood across a significantly lengthy filmographic trajectory. Foucauldian analysis, in particular, offers a valued way of seeing the relationship of sexuality of the star body as socially constructed or discursively produced.

The meaning of the sexualized body is semiotically structured by codes and rules of discourse. The sexuality of the star discursively produced serves to expose the subject position from which hegemonic power relations seek to control the production of meaning while also leave room for counter hegemonic contestation. Speaking about the sexualized body of the star articulated not in terms of the sheer materiality of his body alone, but also of his gendered expression that is masculinity performed and sexualized desire the body mediates. The content of sexuality is contingent on the discursive formation in which the star body embeds itself. Sexuality here is relational and consists of active social relations and not simply social acts. ‘The particular inter relations and activities that exist at any moment in a specific society create categories of sexuality which determine the broad range of modes of behavior available to individuals within that society. Sexual categories do not represent sexual essences implicit within individuals; rather they are the expressions of the active relationships of the members of that society’ (Stephen 2002, p 32).

This understanding how sexuality permeates body, bodily gestures, expression, behavior, actions of the star how it constitutes his subjectivity diegetically and his performativity is important. This sexuality is discursively constituted socially, politically and economically and bound to its spatio-temporal dynamics. Sexuality of heroic bodies is not a natural quality of the body, it is the effect of historically specific power relations. Variety in expression of sexualized body have a diverse repertoire, heroes of popular films have been differently endowed by their physiognomy, mannerisms, performative style, cast within certain discursive framework and attained an unique masculine.
Sexualised image derives its meanings from social forces that produce it at a certain temporal juncture. The biological sex of heroic bodies is not adequate. Bodies have discursively expressed themselves as male bodies with masculine traits. And that these are not imminently transfixed and based on an assumed essentialist correspondence between biological sex and the body’s gender and sexuality. While heroic bodies tend to align with a heteronormative discourse, the expression of body and its gendering have varied in response to changing socio-political and economic context. Male and female bodies display masculine and feminine traits in varying degrees. Male and female bodies have different social values and significance that, in turn, have a marked effect on our consciousness and the way we perceive and make sense of our bodies. Differently sexed bodies determine different experiences of what it means to be an individual and how bodies can actively work to produce themselves and either confirm or deny the various social inscriptions they are given (ibid., p 33).

It can be argued that bodily display of sexuality and heroic masculinity have had plural manifestations across several decades in popular stars or masculine figures from Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand to Shammi Kapoor, Dharmendra Rajesh Khanna to Amitabh Bachchan and finally to contemporary heroes Shah rukh Khan, Amir Khan, Salman Khan, Hritik Roshan and so on. It has varied from being sublime, anxious, ambiguous, hedonistic, flamboyant, morbid, aggressive, macho, cold, ruthless, gratifying, acquisitive, hybrid and so on. The social value and significance of these masculine traits and heroic bodies posits itself, performs, produces itself discursively, the meanings of which though hegemonically ascertained do leave fissures to articulate dissenting meanings. The restraintful bodily expression and sublime romanticism with its subdued sexuality aligned itself with the frugality of statist socialism during times of Raj Kapoor and his contemporaries. The socialist value of Kapoor’s body lies in it being invested by its temporal significance and ideological consciousness.

While discussing about sexuality of star bodies, it is relevant to discuss that star bodies provide a site and acts as a veritable cultural text inscribed by the performativity of sex. Accordingly to Judith Butler, sex is cultural and it is produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms, a citational performativity that is always derivative. The assumption of Butler is that sex is not a singular act or event but an iterable practice secured through citation and reiteration of the norms or conventions of the law. It is, through being repeatedly performed, that the performative being, Butler, argues as cited, ‘that discursive practice which enacts or produces that which it names’. Performance does not originate the law or its authority but invokes it through appeal to an authority that has no claim to origin or any universal foundation. Rather the very practice of citation produces the authority that is cited and reconstitutes the law. The maintenance of this law is a matter of reworking a set of already operative conventions and involves iterability, repetition and citationality. Therefore, the statement ‘It’s a girl’ initiates the process by which ‘girling’ is enforced. Butler cited states. ‘This is girl, however, who is compelled to cite the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Feminity is thus not a product of choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from
relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. Indeed, there is not one who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a ‘one’ to become viable as a ‘one’ where the subject formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms. Consequently, Barker argues that performativity is neither a singular act nor a performance produced by any ‘self-conscious intentional actor’. Instead ‘performance of sex is compelled by a regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality that reiterates itself through the forcible production of ‘sex’. Indeed, the very idea of an ‘intentional sexed actor is a discursive production of performativity itself.’ (Barker 2002, p43).

The star body is a performative site of masculinity and in its enactment reproduces the heterosexual discourse. It is a citation of the gender norm that dominates mainstream cinema. The role of psicizophrenic/neurotic negative hero in early films expressing anguish, passion, vengeance and anxiety reworks upon the existing operative conventions of earlier angry hero cult and revisits it and hence appear meaningful through its reiterability and citation. As an iterable enactment it renders itself meaningful.

In his later performativities as an urban, dissporic, cosmopolitan hybrid hero, his body draws it citation from earlier heroic style of flamboyant post colonial dandy prototypes being Shammi Kapoor, Dev Anand and seen in reiterating romanticism of Rajesh Khanna. The earlier heroic discourse is cited, reiterated, recast and reworked in the performative bodily renderings and gesture. This performativity of gendered body of the hero allow us to appreciate Butler’s argument, as cited ‘Gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect that very subject it appears to express’. (ibid; p43). The enactment of the hero is literally performative par excellence wherein the body through Shah Rukh’s variety of bodily articulations of reiterates the discourse within which the hero is embedded. The variety of bodily articulations is productive of discursive meanings.

And it is to be seen wherein very little of it can be realised as intensional and agentive (ibid 43). Passion, histrionics, flamboyance, seething violence, eroticized exhibitionism of bareness of the sculpted body, frolic dexterity, anxiety melodramatic excess that characterize Shah rukh is bodily enactments are only citations of masculinity and its sexed body. The subject formation of the hero, as aginst the feminine heterosexual hereine is contingent on enacting gender norms legitimated by hegemonic discourse of mainstream Hindi cinema. Body as sexed is part of a cultural discourse that produces it materially and also regulates the body normatively. How a desirable sexed body should be is how it sis normatively regulated and governed by the discourse. The heroics body is a social construction that constituted his subjectivity as masculine and heroic and governs it materialization. The other words the heroics body is discursively sexed and regulated through narrative/representative mode to affirm its socially determined sexed identity.

Performatively also need to be related to the question of multiple modes of feminity (and masculinity), that can be held to be differentially enacted by the same hero under diverse circumstance. Instead of a dichotomous opposition between two categories of male-female sexual identity concerns the balance of masculinity and femininity within specific men and
women argues barker, following Julia Kristeva’s ideas. This struggle between two opposing male-female masses could result in the deconstruction of sexual and gendered identities understand in terms of marginality within the symbolic order. This argument stresses the singularity and multiplicity of persons as well as the relativity of symbolic and biological existence (Barker 2002 p 111). On the strength of this it can be therefore argues that heroic performance have differentially expressed and performed a range of masculinities at varying junctures of nation’s social history. Shah Rukh himself in his various performance have performed in multiple modes of masculinity. Besides no heroes have been purely masculine and in varying proportion have exposed their masculinity with femininity. Shah Rukh’s melodramatic excess have often departed from the rigour and economy of robust masculinity of earlier heroes like Bachchan. Shah Rukh’s histrionics, comical gestures, on-screen mimicry, pliant persuasive roles as romantic hero; the lurking and anxiety striken neurotic roles of early film have challenged the masculine gravitas or poise of earlier heroics subtly, and introduced a hint of both metrosexuality,androgeneity in his performance style.

Here Kaplan’s study of Madonna transgressing gender codes as cited by Barker may find an appropriate context for citation. Kaplan claimed that Madonna as a commodity sign is ambiguous and deconstructs gender norms. For Kaplan Madonna is able to alter gender relations and to destabilize gender altogether. Kaplan argues that such is made possible as Madonna’s videos are implicated in the continual shifting of subject positions stylized and mixed gender signs that challenge the boundaries of gender constructs.(ibid.)

In this section I have tried to apply Butler’s understanding of gender and body to see how the body of the star appear as a performative site that both (a) Re-iterates the heteronormative discourse; and (b)De-stabilizes essentialist understanding of gender and turns the body open to polysemic readings.

Gender identity, according to Butler, as constructed, is not clearly psychological or biological but as where culture ‘becomes destiny’ However, in Butler’s understanding of gender, gender embodiment is seen to be produced, not determined. The following discussion on Shah Rukh’s perforative body allow for realization of the body being open to and produced through construction with both creative and transformative possibilities within a given socio-cultural context, here albeit the popular cultural text of cinema..The performativity of the star body give credence to what Butler as argues that gender embodiment is an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification (Thapar,2001 p 134-135.)

4.10.1 Star Body as Performative Text - Gender Performance with Heteronomative Discourse in Films as per Heterosexist Readings

What Butler says in her book ‘Gender Trouble’ as being ‘tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts’ corroborates temporal and iterative constitution of gender in acting or cinematic performance, films, characterized by afterwardness and repetition is a varitable ‘site of performing gender’ (Nikhila. H. 2010. p. 51) Performativity of gender and its iterability can be appropriately seen in filmic medium as this
section of the chapter proposes to do. As per Butler’s argument that one can become gendered over time by repeatedly performing acts and that there is no prefixed or abiding gendered body or identity is realizable in the gendering of an actor’s body through cumulative images and accretions. The various gendered performance of Shah Rukh are seen to produce his heterosexual gendered body and image. In the discussions that follows here, sees how the star body performed to match upto the gendered ideal (as per the demand of the script). Butler’s assumption of pre-existing cultural norms are well seen in (filmic) ‘script’ that precedes (cinematic) performance. Shah Rukh is thus seen to act out. Cultural conventions/norms of gender are embodied and enacted through his ‘performing gender’ in various roles. The star acts as per gender as an embodied agent. He is seen to actively embody or inscribe his body by wearing ‘certain cultural significations’ (Butler, as cited). This performance is not agentic, but precedes him. It has been re-iterated(read re-enacted) in popular space of Hindi films for several decades by heroes, under the demands of hegemonic heteronormativity. The script located within discursive shifts of gender nation, polity, culture, economy etc. ‘survives particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduce as reality once again’ (Butler as cited in Nikhila H. P., 2010, p. 154).

In his performances of anxious strife psychotic young man pursuing his desire obsessively in early films, in his performances as a romantic diasporic urban hero, in his role as the Muslim (‘Other’) hero, in his role as a cyborg or a mafia leader (Don) his performative body is targeted towards a clearly set agenda of attainment that ranges from revenge to love, to redemption, to wealth, etc. These enactments performs a mobilization of masculine energy towards a task that reinforces centrality of male dominance, power and will. Performative gender of Shah Rukh’s body and masculine self reiterates male-dominated narrative codes and conventions. Instead of producing any novelty it rendered explicit social gender norms as per dominant heterosexual readings of the text. There is little scope for actor’s agency as per demands of scripts. It is both ‘reiterative citational practice’ wherein only its actualization has differed largely due to the shifts in gender discourse across time and space and space and materiality of star’s particularistic body or physiognomy. Butler’s ideas can be applied to see how Shah Rukh’s body performs the scripted gender role notwithstanding the subversive/popular/counter hegemonic reading of the same. In Butler’s sense, Shah Rukh’s enactments have performed gender by “securing heterosexual norms”. Even when posed as psychotic and unstable, his performance have been gender abiding that did not risk violating ‘normativizing injunctions that secure the borders of sex’ (Butler, as cited in Nikhila ibid). Mostly complicit with heteronormativity, Shah Rukh’s body though never brusquely macho, (like Sanjay Dutt. Salman Khan, Sunil Shetty, Akshay Kumar) or rogue (as was Amitabh as angry youngman) performs gender within discursive limits. It has normatively re-iterated through scripted enactments and cultural markers in his romantic choices and ‘motivated assertive goal seeking masculine actions’. Where he is strictly not pursuing romance, in a typically masculine role affirming physical feat and epistemological skill and rationality, held to part of the modernist gendered paradigm and gender binary that associates masculinity with these traits (see, Hermes,
ibid) as the hero he leads and trains (Chak De India !) a woman’s hockey team or enlightens a backward village (Swades). The amorous body (Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna) romancing another man’s wife, the revenge seeking enraged body (Baazigar, Josh) the youthful flamboyant body (Dil to Pagal Hai, Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge etc.) are heterosexually coded script and performed by Shah Rukh.

While norms and discourse can set limits of performativity within bounds of heteronormativity it is not unusual to locate transgressions and subversion of heterosexual norms through differently performing gender, not as scripted by the norms but amenable to alternative/counter-hegemonic readings of most popular texts. Though not in explicit terms the subtext of a homosexuality is located in male to male bounding in, Kal Ho Naa Ho. A subliminal suggestion is preempted and heterosexuality reaffirmed by literal pathologizing and mortification of Shah Rukh’s body (where he suffers from an ailment and dies) only to ensure a heterosexual re-union between the heroine and the other hero. In Kal Ho Naa Ho, all hints of Shah Rukh’s likely bigendered position is undermined and is heterosexually recuperated and confirmed by revealing his love for Naina and all chances of homoeroticism is pre-empted by his death. While repeated heterosexual performance had sought to secure Shah Rukh an image in favour of it across several films especially in heterosexual romantic narratives, in Kal Ho Naa Ho, its subversion failed to gather strength. As a sexual possibility such renderings at the sub-textual level, hardly challenges the gendered image of Shah Rukh consolidated across several performances as a heterosexual masculine hero.

Speaking of reiterative performance of gender that seeks to enact the cultural prescriptions of gender, it is pertinent to appreciate that gender norms are not static but discursively constituted from time to time. This is best exemplified in remake films of Shah Rukh like Devdas and Don while being iterative performance of broadly a similar script in both the films one can see how ‘the social drama of gender is being scripted through each successive remake’ (Nikhila,2010 ibid p. 55).

In contrast to the more sombra prosaic restrained masculinity represented by Dilip Kumar in Devdas (1955), Shah Rukh’s reincarnated Devdas(2002) revealed a certain indulgence, aggression and bold masculinity. Similarly, in Don, unlike the earlier avatar played by Bachchan that saw the elimination of the evil half in the new Don played by Shah Rukh exorcise redemptive devices in favour of a resurrected evil who fails all statist attempts. In previous Don the good masquerading as Don reinstated a moralist resolution in alliance with state agents. While in both the later versions of Don and Don 2 a suave technology oriented, man with a physical agility and dexterity of a fleeting device, an ace criminal mind allowed to be exonerated indicate how the cultural norms around heroic masculinity… are getting reconstituted over a period of time. Shah Rukh’s iterative performance in both Devdas and Don and Don 2 articulates a re-scripted masculinity that is imminent ‘through each successive remake’. (ibid. p. 55). Through ‘these remakes … masculinity’ gets ‘constituted through the shifting discourses’ (ibid. p. 66).
Shah Rukh’s gendered performance caught within heteronormative moonings are mostly romantic enactments that often often ‘sought to create a hegemonic masculinity and a subservient feminity through its public/ private divide represented by the family’. (Shyama,P.,2010 p. 82). Such performance as Pollock argues aids the ‘construction of the nation as primarily a patriarchal one’, observes Shyama P. Pollock as cited argues: ‘The sexual contract, it is to be remembered, is not a contract between the man and the woman who form the couple, but between the men, who all agree to recognize each other’s right to their own space of (despotic) sovereignty; the family and the women who, within it, becomes the man’s property’. (ibid. p. 82). Shah Rukh’s pursuasive and acquisitive masculimity claims the woman often along with familial consent to cement the union (Dilwale Dulhianiya Le Jayenge, Pardes etc.). The diasporic male (often played by Shah Rukh) redeems his claim over his own sovereign space of his ‘imagined nation’, notwithstanding his transterritorialized location by affirming his claim over the female. The triumph of the male body over female meant allegorizing the triumph of the nation - secured against odds that otherwise threatens to that disturb the stability of middle class utopia. Mostly laying claim or winning over the other man’s wife (Maya Memsaahab, Deewana, Kabhi, Alvida Naa Kahna), a fiancé (Dilwale Dulhianiya Le Jayenge, Pardes etc.), Shah Rukh’s masculine performance secures triumph of a competitive, acquisitive, indulgent liberal nation consonant with the imperatives of global capitalism and the competitive market ethos. While Bachchan’s mechanism in “angry young man ‘persona, led to a significant attrition of heterosexual romance in film from 90’s it was further revived. If Bachchan’s violence secured him his masculinity, heterosexual romance and its acquisitive pursuit through Shah Rukh’s body became the other ploy to the same end.

For Michael Kimmel the great source of fear and secret of American manhold is homophobia, or fear of being seen by other men as feminine and therefore of being assumed ‘homosexual. This fear of losingmanhood and of being inadequate as men haunts even American popular culture, which explains ‘its penchant for the uber-masculine type who almost never touches other men except violently - a type which includes every Clint Eastwood character and most of Schwarzenegger’s not to mention countless other male roles - would seem to attest to the existence of this style of homophobia.’ (Hubel, 2012. p. 290). This anxiety, insecurity and apprehension of losing masculinity and desperation to assert one’s heterosexuality that informs American manhood is not so in India claims Hubel. She argues that it is not so definitively present in Indian public society and citing Kavi and Rao’s testification argues that the ‘same sex relationships are accorded a freer rein than in the US.’ (ibid). One of the claims culturally placed on Indian malehood (heterosexual) is to protect and control the feminine. The male hero, located within the heteronomative discourse is required to performatively testify his masculinity by protecting the honour or ‘izzat’ of women, the metaphor of if can be both the domestic space and the nation.

‘The great secret’ of Indian manhood is not that it desires the masculine but that it fears it cannot protect or control the feminine, which in India’s popular culture is sometimes imaged as actual girls and women and sometimes as typically feminine spaces, such as the home or, even,
the nation: Bharat Mata or Mother India. The repeated invocations in the mainstream media of izzat or masculine honour, housed, as it always seems to be, in female bodies, would seem to point to this fear. Indian male fear is everywhere in Bollywood: in the rock hard abs of the heroes as well as in the sidelining of the heroines. It is especially evident in what is perhaps the most iconic storyline in Hindi movies, the one in which the feminine - imaged either as an actual female or females, the feminized domestic space of home and family, or India itself - is threatened and so must be defended, usually violently by the male hero… This ‘real’ India… also has long-standing associations with the feminine sphere of domesticity… This lodging of national identity in the feminine, indeed in female themselves, left men free to engage in the world, that because of the system of dichotomies that structured ideology, came to be conceived as masculine, and hence, as their natural place. So men could adopt Western values, don Western clothes, go to Western schools and fight the colonizer in public without losing their essential Indianness because this Indianness was being sustained by women who, in their turn, embodied in their Indian style of dress, their maintenance of Indian domestic customs, and their modest modes of behaviour. In Hindi cinema, this nationalist assumption about the feminine essence of Indian culture and the sanctity of the Hindu/Indian home and family has been translated into the narrative….The typical plot sees these essentialized sites endangered by outside forces or contaminate them beyond recognition. The hero must, therefore, confront the danger and dismantle it, usually by means of masculine rage and violence’ (Hubel. 2012. p. 290-292)

Shah Rukh in several films have engaged his body to protect the feminine sphere, viz both the nation and the female body and its honour. Protecting the honour of the heroine’s honour (in Dilwale Dulhannya Le Jayenge through his self-restraining libido and in Pardes and Yess Boss by showing physical valour to protect the purity of the heroine’s maiden body being defiled by the salubrious fiancé) and nation’s honour (allowing his sporting body to guide and lead the Indian women’s hockey team towards world championship in the film Chak De and saving the honour and grace of the nation by protecting its diplomatic deal while scuttling terror plans in the film Main Hoon No). The inhibited, libido restraining, protective male body in DDLJ, the chivalrous body in Yess Boss and Pardes, the gallant military body in Main Hoo Naa and the competitive sporting body in Chak De India are instances of the many avatars of the star/heroic body proving its ability as the true Indian heterosexual male body that is capable of protecting woman/feminine sphere and the Mother-Nation.Conflating of women and nation has been predominantly effective in the constitution of Shah Rukh as the masculine hero - ‘as the saviour of India, a hero whose actions in defense of the feminized nation confirm his right to control his/her destiny’ (Hubel. 2012. p. 292-293) The star body in testifying its ability to protect the feminine and he feminized nation reinforces its heroic casting, with the hero as the idealized Indian masculine body.

In many ways contemporary hero like SRK manifests masculine characteristics of the Krishna lover as per psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar’s (1989) understanding. This is an archetype based on the Hindu God, Krishna who was known for his love of life women and food: ‘He is phallus
incarnate with distinct elements of the ‘flashier’ who needs constant reassurance by the women of his power, intactness and especially his magical qualities that can transform a cool Amazon into a hot, lusting female. The fantasy is of the phallus… building the pride of an unapproachable woman, melting her indifference and unconcern into submission and longing. The fantasy is of the spirited and androgynous virgin awakened to her sexuality and thereafter reduced to a groveling being, full of moral masochism where she revels in her “stickiness to the hero” (Kakar. 1989. p. 37). After a brief stint in early films and its negative roles since Dilwale Eulhaniya Le Jahenge. SRK’s role as a romantic frivolous mischievous lover who wins over female has replayed the Krishna myth across several films DDLJ. Pardesh, Dil Pagal Hai, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham and even the amorous extra-maritality in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahena.

4.10.2 Polysemic and Performative Body of The Star

Corporeality or the role of body in Bollywood style of dance is an important way ‘in which gendered and racialized identities are inscribed in bodily gestures and movements.’ (Gopal etal. 2010. p. 46). It is this fact in recognition of which ‘embodied practices traffic in the field of identity politics is central to understanding how and why Bollywood song and dance sequences are mobilized in different national and cultural space’. (ibid) And while it can be conceded that performative body is a veritable site of gender identity and its articulation it may be argued that despite the influence of a heteronormative discourse, ‘dance performance enables a different kind of sexual embodiment.’ Contesting Butler’s view of gender performativity and gender as a corporeal style body in song and dance sequence is rendered fluid, non-referential and polysemic. Such a body does destabilize assumed fixedness of nationalist identification as well as the presumption of heteronomativity. In Bollywood song and dance, body turns to become ‘a borderland where improvisational and interactive elements help reconstitute subjectivities’ (ibid. p. 47).

In various dance sequences it needs to be studied how star body is rendered liminal - to a borderland of meanings and performance. The polysemy of a dancing body exposes the fissures of heteronormative discourse - where the star performing in synchronized movements along with the heroine/female co-star/ female troupe dancers enable it to be read beyond fixity of gendered corporeality. In this context mention may be made of the following dance sequences of Shah Rukh where bodily movements and gestures registers a popular transcendence of gendered encodings

- Dil Se (1998) : Song : Chhaiya Chhaiya
- Om Shanti Om (2007) Song : Dard-e-Disco

In Ratnam’s 1998 film, Dil Se, Amar (Shah Rukh Khan) a city bred educated radio journalist meets Meghna (Manisha Kairala) a mysterious woman at a train station as he is on his way to undertake a assignment in the politically turbulent north-eastern part of India due to ethnic insurgency. He keeps on seeing her and desperately falls in love with her. In this film the song ‘Chhaiya Chhaiya’ is a musical interlude and is part of the musical repertoire than runs across
the film. The semiotic energy of the performative body of the star eluding the delineated boundaries of both narratives and subjectivity merges in disperse assemblage of visual and aural flows of the dancing number. Body acquires a fluidity of gender and location inviting a participation within the flow of repertoire, metaphorically signified through the moving train on which the various singing and dancing bodies are perched up. The body of the star here gains an emancipatory energy as it dances with a pulsating beat with a band of ‘Banjaras’ (nomads) - almost as an oblique reference to its transgressions as a state appointed official, abdicating his duty to pursue desirously a woman (a trainee suicide bomber) - whose body is a threat to state security. (Basu, 2010, p.161-162)

The “Chhaiya Chaiya sequence ‘begins with a discontinuous cut to the top of a train moving under a clear sky and in broad daylight. The top of the moving vehicle becomes a utopian space for anthropological spectacle, ethnic chic, and folk bodies - all combined and set to techno rhythms… The hero dances with a host of people in spotless rural attire and a comely belle whose rustic form is magically animated y an urban impelling of music. Such an assemblage of camera perspectives (ethnography, heritagism and so on) is a recurring feature in many Hindi film musical interludes featuring North Indian peasant bodies, Goan fishermen, or tribal figures. In such situations the camera assumes both an urban anthropological “look” (by which the city historically has read the country) and a perspective that incorporates such bodies into a metropolitan post historical arcade of “ethnic” diagrams.’ (ibid) Shah Rukh’s body synchronizes with bodies of the non-urban “other” - peasants, tribal as city’s fascination and romance with the ethnic-folk and the archaic. The hero’s anthropological distancing is mitigated by his positioning within the interstices that radically recombines the bodily synergy of the city-bred hero with ethnic counter parts. The panoptican position of the camera, looking at the dance sequence on a moving train top are an assemblage of signs drawn from different parts of the nation - trying to project a seamless linear narrative of nation’s time and space bound to same tune by dancing bodies. The sequence seeks to juxtapose the urbane journalist hero’s bodies against the ethnic other, where dance bridges the chasm of social, cultural, economic distance - in a bid to deny all dividing social and gender categories and enunciate the prospect of a post-modern body.

The barriers of ossified distinctions between the metropolitan and ethnic bodies are ruptured and the performative heroic body as a fluid spectacle within an assemblage of other bodies celebrate this passage towards fluidity. The bodies amidst a mélange of movements and music-Western techno,Sufi music,Urdu poetry,ruptures the incommensurability raised between the ethnic and Western,folk and metropolitan etc. It produces a dynamic ,fluid performative dispensation of the bodies dancing upon the train, the lead provided by the hero and the gypsy/banjara woman(Malaika Arora-Khan). The tunnel the train passes metaphorically announces this passage towards fluid,performativity of bodies and erasure of categories. The hero’s body is inscribed by motifs of transnational consumer lifestyle ie. on its surface, but it allows its libidinous passion to articulate a primavaelity in its dancing gestures. The body is
reordered and recombined with an array of images that negotiates a certain consumerist urbanity of global/modern India with visual motifs from non-metropolitan India. The polysemic performative body amenable to reconstituted sexual identities and translations are vindicated in findings that support the fact the Bollywood music and dances are open to ‘queer appropriations’. ‘Bollywood’s emergence as cosmopolitan style is linked to the queer use of Bollywood by its urban South Asian and diasporic audiences; while the queer appropriations enhance Bollywood’s cool quotient… queer desis in the United Kingdom make sense of and recreate in the diaspora the politics of Bollywood as a cinema of the masses… While the aesthetics of Bollywood films, particularly as inscribed in the songs and dances, are embedded in and arise out of culturally specific contexts, they are also constantly subject to slippage around issues of gender and sexuality. They warrant consideration as promiscuous and unsable texts moving in and out and in-beween heteronormative and queer desires and sensibilities’ (Dudrah, 2010. p. 288-289). On the strength of this it may be argued that Shah Rukh’s passionately thumping performative body in Dil Se’s Chhaiya Chhaiya or the eroticized bare bodied dance ‘Dard-e-Disco’ in Om Shanti Om as seductively inviting to destabilize issues of gender and sexuality - rendering the star-body to be more flexibly recoded. This is not to deny the strength and strangehold of heteronormative ideology of Hindi cinema over narrative discourse (Prasad 2003) and embodied representations, but what Dudrah suggests is an alertness to acknowledge ‘how ideology is reworked and contented in and through the signs and codes that Bollywood cinema might offer us as constituting the language for a new form of politics especially one based around the queer pleasures of gender and sexuality’. (Dudrah, 2010,ibid. p. 290). Such performative fluidity of the star body and its polysemic reading is appropriately suited to the diasporic situation and how diasporic sensibility already couched in a sense of liminality of being allowed them to negotiate their sense of subjectivity of sexuality and gender in a reordered way. Interesting the queering of Bollywood opens out the fissures of an essentially heteronomative text through readings of performative bodies circumventing the heteronomative discourse. Dudrah argues : ‘Although East Asian cinema seemed explicitly queer in aesthetic and content, popular Indian cinema seemed to work more implicitly such that queerness emerged as queer audiences reread the heteronormative film text such that it yielded other sensibilities. Gayatri Gopinath’, Dudrah cites ‘draws on cultural theory and feminist audience studies to argue that Bollywood cinema provides queer diasporic audiences with the means by which to reimagine and reterritorialize the homeland by making it the locus of queer desire and pleasure. Gopinath is interested in tracing the “interpretive interventions and appropriations “made by queer diasporic audiences of Bollywood films. She employs a “queer diasporic viewing practice” in order to see articulations of same sex desire in particular examples of popular Hindi cinema throughout the diegesis of he film, even when the film has an orthodox heterosexual ending… she is more interested in “looking for moments emerging at the fissures of rigidly heterosexual structures that can be transformed into queer imaginings… As a result of such tracings, the queer diasporic subjectivity put forward by Gopinath is the product of dominant Euro-
American constructions of gay and lesbian identity brought into dialogue with the experience of South Asian queers who negotiate between the spaces of multiple homes, communities and nations across the cultural registers of the East and the West. This is a useful formulation of the queer diasporic subjectivity, as it does not privilege a European mode of understanding or performing of queer cultural identity at the cost of its Asian counterpart, but rather asks for an analysis of the communicative dialogue…’ (Dudrah, 2010 ,ibid p. 291-292).

This formulation is further buttressed, as it may be assumed when the identifiable image allowing for same sex identification is co incidentally a diasporic subject (diegetically speaking). The physicality of performing male body of Shah Rukh privileges such queer performative identification even in non-diasporic roles as may be argued for two reasons. First, because of his overseas popularity and secondly as corollary to the former his repeated casting in urban cosmopolitan diasporic ‘yuppie’ roles have consolidated his image as typecast. Based on this it can be argued that Shah Rukh’s male image and body privileges queer diaspora readings.

Queer themes and representations or queer reading possibilities while discernible at the fissures of cinematic text, it may be also be contended that in several films such openings appear less tacit, less discrete and less innocent. Citing Kavi, Dudrah argues : ‘… the changing image of the male hero in Hindi films over some five decades to suggest how the contemporary male body and in particular the semi-clad and gym-fit physique of 1990s star Salman Khan, has been ambiguously paraded and eroticized on-screen such that its appeal exceeds straight pleasures’ (ibid.. p. 292-293).

Shah Rukh’s bare sculpted, eroticized body in the dance and song sequence of ‘Dard-e-Disco’ in Om Shanti Om (2007) render the star to be homosocially polysemic-allowing for queer identifications. Textual ambiguities of a seductive male body invest the star’s body with alternative ‘libidual possibilities’ (ibid) also. While we seek to reconfigure the hetero sexual ideology of Bollywood films and engage our attention to tact or secret cultural codings of male body and sexuality - the confirmation of such polysemy comes only from transnational circuits of circulation. As Dudrah mentioned hat ‘the diasporic queer urban ethno scape of the gay and lesbian club as an imaginative site’ where cultural devices are deployed for translation in such spaces. (ibid. p. 294). What is not much confirmed that how homeland audience respond to such ambiguous texts and whether it is similarly read as by queer diaspora albeit secretly.

Here, it is pertinent to quote Dudrah’s findings derived from qualitative and participant observation he witnessed and experienced at a particular Asian gay and lesbian club in the United Kingdom as a representative empirical template. Identifying such clubs as diasporic urban ethnoscape as interactional site where films, as a cultural register of performance of race, ethnicity gender and sexuality, Dudrah argues, provide codes and sign to negotiate sense of being that shift between the homeland and place of residence. Interestingly while diaspora’s appropriation of the homeland through Bollywood, articulating ‘referents from the homeland and the place of settlement professing dual or multiple cultural sensibilities’ as seen in occasions of South Asian weddings and other community gathering, the queer diaspora’s appropriatous
are more covert. As Dudrah says: ‘… the issue of sexuality is often an unspoken and silent register in the enactment of cultural identities at diasporic community events and this is where the queer desi club night offers an explicit engagement with issues of gender and sexuality. The space of the club is highlighted further as a marker of gender and sexual difference within the South Asian diaspora itself… This mélange of musical genres testifies to the club goer’s eclectic cultural identities, and they also signify certain kinds of identities that are enabled on the dance floor through a performance of the self. These include fluid gender and sexual identities produced by some of the more promiscuous melodies and lyrics of the songs from each of the genres and at the same time, urban and racialized identities are evoked… Not only are South Asian gay and lesbian identities constructed and celebrated in the queer desi club space, they are also articulated with brown skins and ethnic identities that negotiate the inequalities of racism, gender and sexuality that exist not only in heteronormative spaces but also in predominantly white gay and lesbian spaces. The queer desi club is a safe space and its dance floor is an interesting outlet that allows these kinds of performances to take place. The dance floor is a site where identities are rendered mobile through a play of actual bodily movements and embodied gestures that use fantasy and the imagination to interact…’ (Dudrah, 2010, ibid. p. 296-297).

The star body’s homosocial polysemy in song and dance performance enable queer appropriations that coalesce with and negotiate ethnic and racial identities in diasporic spaces like dance clubs. It is in these urban desi sites or ethnoscapes where popular appropriations of star body challenge its embeddedness within a hegemonic heterosexual discourse. The liminality of sexual and gender identity negotiate, coalesce and even align with the liminality of diasporic identities. Shah Rukh’s dance in the song-and-dance sequence from the film ‘Dil Se’ ‘Chhaiya Chhaiyya’ in particular as observed by Dudrah is open to queer appropriations: ‘The crowd shouts in excitement and begins to mimic the dance steps of actor Shah Rukh Khan and his gypsy-girl consort (Malaika Arora Khan) from the film, with hips swaying, pelvis thrusting and arms waving about in the air - this is one of their queer performances to shout out to and to make their own’ (ibid. p. 297). With respect to ‘Dil Se’ Dudrah further argues that while in the film, the song affirms Shah Rukh’s passionate heterosexual desire and love for the unknown girl (the heroine) he has just seen, in the club this moment invite reconfigured meanings and sexual pleasures. ‘… the crowd also registers this filmic moment while simultaneously reclaiming and acknowledging the song as one of their queer anthems’ (ibid. p. 298).

Similarly in Dard-e-Disco, Shah Rukh’s naked torso can be deliberately used to discursive queer practices and appropriations and therefore displace the dominant heterosexual aesthetics and codes of the music video to enable new ordering of bodily pleasures around gender and sexuality and embodiment of dancing body. While the eroticized, spectacularized muscular ‘6-pack’ body is implicated within ‘conventional and expected patterns of heteronormativity’, the signifiers deployed like black urban dancing troupe and seductive display of body can be seen as potential subversion of orthodox ‘heterosexual expectations of how men and women should
conduct themselves sexually’. It can work to be recreated by homosexual performance as it is easily commensurate with ‘queer semantics’ (ibid. p. 298). Queer patrons reconfiguring Bollywood’s heterosexual signs and codes challenges the cultural order of gender and sexual behaviour otherwise conservatively evoked. Shah Rukh’s performative body provokes caricature of heteronormative expectations and his sexuality opens up to queer semantics and identification, as he looks straight to the camera and dances in a manner in which we have been seeing women dancers mostly in popular Hindi films.

Queer South Asian diaspora clearly subverts and translates Bollywood’s heteronormative boy-meets-girl romances but this is not unique to this diaspora since almost everywhere queer-cultures tend to appropriate straight(heterosexual) social texts and discourse for their own means and thereby create a new language through which they can express and communicate. Through a tacit and secret politics that is in dialogue with Bollywood sources the queer South Asian diapora informs and reproduces it “anew” (ibid. p. 300-301). This reworking is visibly done on the body as physicality is one of the most visible domain to affirm gender and sexual identity. Hence, it is argued that it is the representation of the star-body that performatively allow for such re-configurations and discursivity.

The hybrid image of Sah Rukh enables his body to mobilize a queerness of display and negotiate with queer hybrid aesthetics. This body provides the site that can negotiate the shift of location (between homeland and diaspora), gender, sexuality, racism and so on. The performative body illustrates the hybridity and liminality of transnational flows of cultural signifiers.

Looking at the relevance of performative elements engaging the star body, Jacob contends that ‘While the films narrative elements - the progression of the storylike -tend to constrain directors and actors into advancing the plot and developing its characters, the performative elements can liberate these individuals, providing the audience with interludes during which they can delight in the histrionics and physical attributes of the stars.’ (Jacob. 2010. p. 121) Shah Rukh’s performativity engaging his body is one of the defining qualities of his star persona and image and serve to liberate his image from being hostage to heteronormative inscriptions.

The star’s flamboyant mannerisms as an youthful lover (in Deewana. Diwale Dulhania Le Jayenga, Dil To Pagal Hai, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai etc.) his obsessive enraged body in seductive sequences of musical interludes (in Ashoka, Om Shanti Om). his valiant militaristic body and its agility (in Main Hoon Naa) are also part of his performative repertoire - offering moments of physical performance and its “excess”. As per Jacob performative elements for audiences of Indian cinema derive from the hybridization of two traditions, indigenous and Western, of theatrical performance - rasa and melodrama. (ibid.p 121). Jacob’s view of performativity as a hybrid aesthetics privileges body’s performativity to remain a fluid signifier.

It is often contended that in contrast to Amitabh Bachchan style marked by an ‘economy of movements’, terse and controlled rage, Shah Rukh reinvented melodramatic excess, via his
bodily mannerisms and histrionics, that had nearly turned anachronistic. This excess articulated mainly through body struck chord with the melodramatic narratives of films that cast him. As Jacob observes that out of the three two mechanism that enabled the success of melodramatic mode of performance entails the body. To quote Jacob:

‘A second mechanism of reassurance in melodrama was through the dominance of the visual element. To sway a mass audience comprised of literate persons and those with little or no access to education melodrama relied on a heightened capacity of the visual sense. Hence nonverbal communication dominated rhetorical strategies in most melodrama. The intensity of actor’s facial expressions, exaggerated body postures and gestures rendered words or speech impotent and superfluous. It is no wonder that the cinematic medium, which initially was silent adapted well to the melodramatic mode of theatrical performance.... A third mechanism that enhanced the accessibility of melodrama was in the stylization of expression codified as a limited set of conventions. The exaggeration and artificiality in the expression of emotion in melodrama enabled viewers to quickly grasp these conventions and enjoy a participatory experience by mimicking the gestures, tones of voice, and expressions of the actors… Thus the character’s psyche was externalized and registered visibly on the body of the actor through codified expressions, gestures and poses. This codification of emotion - through expression, movement and gesture is strikingly similar to Rasa…’ (ibid, p. 124).

Jacob’s argument brings out the suitability of body mediating exaggerated expression endemic to melodramatic style. Body provides the visuality to expression that is important in the mass-appeal of popular films. Melodrama affects the star image as it uses close ups to increase the impact of emotional depth and heightens stars role and viewer’s interaction with image (Dwyer and Patel, 2002; ibid p 29). Shah Rukh’s performance in melodrama allow his viscerality to be endowed with emotional intensity and forges identification with audience. As per Barry King’s views (ibid), the star’s teacher when he began his career as a stage-actor in his theatre group in Delhi, Shah Rukh’s body is more a rendition of personification, where his typifying persona retains similarities in different performance especially in his excess and mannerism, and this creates and maintains the star text restricting the way in which an image can be presented (ibid) i.e. giving his corporal text a certain continuity through its transfilmic mannerism. In this context it may argued that Shah Rukh’s body re-invented a certain kind of excess where his graphic violence, psychotic stalking, feats of insecurity (in early films) allowed emotions to be pitched higher. Subsequently his boisterous youthful energy sought to be corporally registered. The performative body while unfixing sexual categories and gendering practices in a “popular” moment in the film Don (dir : Farhan Akhtar. 2007) sees how the dancing and performative body of Shah Rukh, a polysemic text, destabilizes the claim of Hindu (religions) middle class hegemony through a public performance on street during Mumbai’s illustrious annual Ganapati festival. The illustrative tableau of Ganapati articulating ‘a Hindu nationalist iconography’ (Davies, 2007, p. 7) through the secular medium of cinema undergoes a popular appropriations, as in many other Hindi movies, in Don (2006) through Shah Rukh’s dance in the street
procession. The dance is a secular enactment of the body that seek to challenge hegemonic grounds held by middle class Hindu.

Raminder Kaur’s essay on Ganpati utsav may be quoted here. She notes: ‘In recent years, nationalism has undergone catalytic change. Anti-colonial struggles embedded in the history of the sarvajanik Ganapati utsava have predisposed the festival to revival of nationalist ideals as well as it being part of a campaign for “public awakening”. The public circuits of media networks ad collective gatherings provided a performative occasion to disseminate messages that were politically motivated but often veiled in religious allegories. Such promulgation of nationalism and social “awakening” in former times has had a number of consequences. Comparing the present day scenario with the past, people on the moral high ground began to complain about the “vulgarization” of the festival - namely the excessive commercialism, racketeering and “obscene” behaviour and dances during immersion processions. This was largely a middle class response to what was seen as the increasing plebianization of a religious festival...’ (Kaur. 2007, p. 210)

The performative body of Shah Rukh in the dance sequence of Ganpati utsav in Don (2006) registered a certain plebialization and an attack on vaunted ideals of somber, Hindu cultural nationalism that were upheld by middle class initiative toward this festival. The street opened up a space for attacking the solemnity of what is a historically middle class festival through body of a popular star. It should also be remembered that being a Muslim the performance was not devoid from being intersected by his (star) biography. The festival commonly associated with Hindutva brigade met with a popular and secular appropriation through a performative rendition by the star body and quite tacitly by the Muslim script writer and director Fahan Akhtar. Ramindar Kaur speaking on Hindu hegemony over Ganpati festival writes : “Such projects have been coterminous with the political agenda of the Hindutva brigade particularly since the 1980s. Hindu militancy invariably had its repercussions on the Ganpati utsav in Maharashtra. Due to the public nature of the festive context, the festival was increasingly used to propagate ideas conducive to the Hindutva project... Such street displays constituted a mode of asserting artistic, economic and political power, where the streets could be used as conduit for various agendas... In the process versions of the nation are played out in several ways in the festival context’. (Kaur. 2007, p. 210-211).

The street performance by Shah Rukh in Mumbai conveys that the Hindu hegemony over the festival and its claim to (religious) nationalism is not assured. The performance exposes the limitations of hegemonic articulations as well as provisional and multiperspectival space of the festival, and contests and unsettling overriding Hindutva claims to the festivals character. The performative body is the tool to challenge and destabilize Hindu claim, over the festival and seeks to render it more secular, polysemic and carnivalesque.

What is noteworthy, notwithstanding the long prevalence /influence of Punjabi tunes and dancer in Bollywood, is how Bhangra decoupled from its Punjabi ethnic roots is reinscribed as a formulaic cinematic idiom and overwrites its traditional affinities within a Bollywood
semiotics of body as coded upon dress gestures appearance and movement. Bollywood appropriation of Bhangras ethnicity and its cinematic transfiguration mediated via body on to a popular cultural space of cinema that circulates in transnational global space provides to our reading a performative moment against its originary ethnographic location.(Gera-Roy,2011,p.36) The star body as in several case one can cite Shah Rukh’s body in Punjabi wedding song and dance in ‘Bollywoodized sangeets and Shaadis’ has produced a ‘performative Punjabi in dance gestures, movements etc’. Bhangra is reappropriated by a heterogenous audience as a popular text to negotiate issues of tradition and identity in a challenging context of the global The star body provides the visual signifier to Bhangra’s popular transformation - disrupting its originality and ethnic location to a popular performative texts.

As a celebratory dance by Bollywood stars, as too by Shah Rukh, ‘that its specific Punjabi location is forgotten to the point of insertion in non Pubjabi contexts. The incorporation of Bhangra and its non-Punjabi cross overs into India’s generic popular cultural vocabulary (Gera Roy. 2011,p.37-38). is enabled as it may be argued through star body and its polysemic performativity. Bollywood bhangra a popular hybridized formulaic aesthetics allow the ‘stars’ to improvise their own signature movements (ibid p. 38). Bhangra’s recoding and popular translation loosens the control of ethnicity on the body and its gestural codes. Bollywood’s bowdlerization produces a saleable performative mix where gender codings too are unsettled ‘To stage Bollywood pleasure, females are made to perform male gestures and vice versa; dissimilar dance genres are mixed with one another… Most of all, Bhangra is decontextualized in Bollywood and becomes a ‘floating signifier’ that may be pasted on any occasion in any setting…’ (ibid. p. 39). Decontextualization and hybridization of Bhangra happens on the stars performative body on occasions of ethnic celebration and family bonding (as in Shah Rukh’s dance in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge) to signify filial affection and traditional values through a body otherwise conveyed as modern/ secular/global/cosmopolitan and even diasporic. It is also recoded as mating dance (in films like Veer Zaara.and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham). The star body functions both to affirm ‘family values’ and to woo the heroine. But whatever the occasion, th resplendent body of the star in gorgeous ethnic wear allows its carmivalisque tempering to appear liberatory from gendered encodings and articulates an intersection with hedonism, pleasure and consumption.

The rendition of corporal performance through Bhangra seeks to redefine ethnolinguistic identity of the Punjabi male body as a more fluid, hybrid and mobile signifier of gender, class, ethnicity and nation - in order to invite diasporic imagination. Gera Roy obseves ‘Bollywood’s new market segmentation, in which the diaspora is clearly factored, constructs the subject as Punjabi in deference to the Punjabi domination of the diaspora whose body becomes the site for the play of tradition and modernity. It must be pointed out that Punjabi identity or Punjabiyat has always been inscribed by a certain form of corporeality. Whether in the valorized body of the ‘vir’ or the warrior in Punjabi tradition or that of ‘the martial race’ in imperialism, punjabiyat has always been articulated to materiality. Punjabi identity ws ascribed by British
imperialism through their inclusion as one of the martial races who were recruited in the imperial army particularly after he rebellion of 1857. The martial races were supposedly the big built, broad shouldered, lightskinned, hardy inhabitants of certain parts of India who were seen as naturally warlike ad aggressive in battle and as possessing qualities like courage loyalty, strength, resilience and industry. But this inscription perfectly fitted the Punjabi self construction as an industrious warrior community. The text that set the trend for valorizing an essentialized punjabiyat (Punjabi-ness) as rusticity, namely Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge … is often cited to establish the nexus between NRI capital, the location of the director, Bollywood culture industry and the imagined spectator. Bhangra emerges from the diasporic film’s romanticization of rustic authenticity … The valorization of Punjabi peasant values as Indian over others may be attributed to their fitting perfectly into the techno-nostalgia suffered by the diaspora. The association of Punjabis with agricultural prosperity results in the nostalgia for the homeland and its tradition being mapped onto a specifically Punjabi rural imaginary. Not stereotyped Bengali or Tamil intelligence but the caricatured Punjabi prasnt kinship structures are reclaimed in nostalgic return to the face to face community of the homeland…But the positioning of the Bollywood subject as ethnolinguistic rather than national in the NRI film is carried over in films intended for home consumption which also borrow punjabiyat to signify family values… Bollywood’s conscious diasporization which shifts the ideal spectator from the Indian to the diasporic which is Punjabi, makes the diaspora the ideal space for the Indian spectator as well. In the ‘Hindu Family Values’ film of which Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham is the prime example, begins the synecdochic mapping of Punjabi bodies and sites onto a national imaginary that continues in Kal Ho Naa Ho, Veer Zaara and Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna. While the home audiences might not share the diaspora’s strong identification with Bollywood as homeland, aspects of the Bollywood media imaginaries are used o perform ritual and culture by urban Indians everywhere. In these performances of ethnicity, Punjabi forms becomes metonymic of the Indianness that is being revived through medialized images in part as a conscious post national modernist drive to resist the pull of he global…’ (Ger-Roy,2011 ,ibid. p. 44).

The body in its performance of Bhangra, where Bhangra is a hybridized ‘mediatized reinvention of tradition spills’ (ibid. p. 45) becomes a perfect site to negotiate Indianness. Indian radiation and diasporic location. The body disseminates a hybridity a non-essentialized liminality of Indian identity and it is the performative unstability and its hybridized popular style that unsettles Punjabiyat and Punjabi Bhagra body from its ethnolinguistic positioning and allow it o become a fluid signifier of Indianness. The performative ‘Bhangra body in the dialogue between different voices and bodies’ (ibid. p. 44) that Bhangra enables a cross-over cultural identification with audience of a diverse nation. The star body is a privileged popular site enabling audience identification across a diverse demographic profile to which Hindi films caters to. The star body turns Bhangra into a popular cultural ritual and allow for a kind of ‘Bhangra’s nationalization via Bollywood’ (ibid. p. 46) and this is enabled through popular star body and its performative functionality.
The body of the star engaged in Bollywood Bangra can be seen as a corporeal signifier of a performative body of the nation - popular, polysemic, fluid, and ambivalent. The performative ‘Bhangra body’ exhibiting a kind of what is close to Bakhtian carnivalesque pleasure negotiates a recoded ethnolinguistic identity of Punjabi with the larger body of the nation. The dancing Bhangra body comes to signify to the nation a hedonist philosophy that is in conflict with the professed ascetic ideal constructed through the mind body opposition in Indian thought and culture. Images of the Punjabi body in pleasure disseminated over the national media, especially Bollywood and its stars produce a desire hedonism. Signifying infinite pleasures forbidden by law, the Bhangra body presents to the self the joy it excised in the process of the body soul division and the nationalization of the soul as Indian. The repressed spirit that is celebratory returns via the image of the Bhangra dancer carrying the promise of all corporeal pleasures including eating, drinking and sexuality. The hedonist Punjabi body as the other of the national ascetic body becomes the site of repressed pleasures. Through enacting sounds and body movements of the Punjabi body, the national body attempts identification with the other. The Indian self that has been constituted in opposition to the hedonist ideology of Khao, piyo mauj Karo (eat, drink and be merry) now seeks to be its other and it is as if by imitating the gestures and sounds of Punjabi dance that Gujarati, Maharashtrian, Bengali and Kannada difference can enter the Punjabi body, which seems to promise infinite pleasure as this hedonist, uninhibited body as opposed to the the repressed body breaks free of all taboos. Through its identification with leaping, jumping, shouting body, the self attempts to repossess the body and the pleasure it promises. Through mimicking the corporeal movements of the body in pleasure the self attempts to appropriate pleasures that body promises and to make itself whole through identification with the hedonist other. (ibid. p. 48-49) The privileging of this hedonist pleasure seeking dancing Bhangra body in the popular sphere parallels the retreat of an austere socialist state towards a neoliberal economy. The Bhangra body performs and celebrates its freedom from moral inhibitions against pleasure and consumption.

Such is the physical agility and energy of his body, that the IPL ground, where he participates actively as a spectator and franchise owner of his team is an extra cinematic site to display his sporting, fit performative body. A newspaper report notes: ‘One moment he took your breath away by climbing more than 30feet on a steel frame as easily as a lizard and the next moment you gaped as he gyrated and danced for a whole 50 minutes right under a blazing sun as most of you cowered for shade and cover. Tuesday’s spectacle at Eden Gardens was actually a continuation of what Shah Rukh Khan, the first man of Kolkata Knight Riders team, has been displaying everytime his team won. The two cartwheels that came earlier are not to be forgotten and are still being talked about – not only by his fans. The fact that it is possible because of immaculate physical fitness goes without saying, but one heard an amazing story of more than 14 years of rigorous training under an equally exacting trainer, Prashant Sawan’ (31.5.12 Times city: The Secret of SRK’s energy, Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey in The Times of India). The IPL (Indian Premiere League) ground serves as an extra cinematic space for unleashing the carnivalesque temper of the body, albeit built through discipline. This space
provides a perfect alternative popular arena, beyond cinematic space that allows for the disciplined well contored for the star body to negotiate with popular impulse, uninhibited gestures. The free play of the apparently agentic frenzied celebratory body is enabled and produced through a discourse of regimen of fitness training. Besides dancing at the victory celebration at Eden organized at the behest of the Chief Minister, rejoicing over KKR’s(Kolkata Knight Riders,a franchise owned by Shah Rukh himself) win, the star danced before a thunderous public ovation and did what came to be seen as The superhero climb, when half way into the victory lap, Shah Rukh suddenly did a spiderman! He soared up the white steel frame near the sightscreen at the High Court End. On Sunday, he had tried to almost jump from the VIP stands after the Chennai win (30.5.12 The Telegraph p 3).

4.11 RECYCLED NOSTALGIC BODY OF THE STAR: RE-VISITING THE PREDECESSORS

Popular Hindi cinema is deeply imbricated within a culture of familiarity producing a spectatorship whose expectation and anticipation are structured by the pattern of repetition, recycling and intertextuality. This affective attachment of the audience to this familiar universe is crucial to construction of cinematic national identity. Hindi commercial films produces a visual and performative system dependent on intertextuality.

The audience situates itself as prime mediating and shaping agents of a formulaic and predictable text with an acute ability to re-interpret cinema and provide films with a long cultural life that extends across generations. The generic patterning and syncopated narrative structure allow for a wide range of manoeuvring, manipulation and interpretation by audiences. The formulaic texts are under constant revision via audience selectivity.

Re-patterning recycling and reperformances of films produces oblique symmetries parallel texts and symbolic intertexts allowing audience to evolve largely consistent sets of social experience and develop a familiarity and nostalgia for the format. This allow for spectatorial engagement within a vibrant re-invention of cinematic code, its structural dynamism and also allowing spectators to become both producer and retainer of meaning. Repetition gives an internal coherence to the text also, and this repatterning dialectics between text and audience allow one to maintain the other within a familiar cultural universe. Such replaying of performance can be situated in the star body which reproduces itself as a familiar text evoking both affective investment and nostalgia. The star-body of Shah Rukh can be seen in a quasi limbo state inscribed by past and the present. It allows itself to re-live many aspects of past. Here I would like to see how and when Shah Rukh’s body is both an object of repetition and recycling and an object of nostalgic affection. However it is not say that the star’s body invoking nostalgia is hostage to past alone. Cinema’s predilection for recycling and repetition allow for generic recoding and narrative re-patterning with changing tunes while also holding spectatorial familiarity that is informed by a conservative ideology that ‘prides itself on maintaining true – Indian middle class values’ (Menon-Broker,2005).
Raj Kapoor’s lyrical romanticism and pathos is (Dissanayake et al, 1989) starkly contrasting to
the gratifying consumerist cool dude body of Shah Rukh, Kapoor an embodiment of Nehruvian
socialism, was embedded within a cinematic discourse of social reform and nation building is
apparently ideologically antithetical to the neo liberal spirit that informs contemporary heroic
constructions. Notwithstanding these apparent distinctions, it may be explored how certain
narrative recycling and reperformativeness of the heroic/star body of Shah Rukh is rendered
possible.
The film Shri 420, is a story of Raju (Raj Kapoor) a young man, who comes to the sprawling
city of Mumbai (then, Bombay) to earn and lead a decently good life. He has earned a B.A.
dergree and a medal of honour for his honestly and is determined to work hard to prove his
worth. To his dismay, the corrupt city shatters his dreams and disillusiones him about the virtue
of honesty. The poor educated honest man trying to survive against the corrupting influences of
the big city ultimately emerges as a survivor of odds. The tramp is an outsider to the city with
whom audiences all over India identified as the symbol of the depressed in Indian cities – in
particular during the post-partition era of this film. The migrant from the village or across the
borders has always viewed the city as full of wealth and its promises and adventures as well as
of dark secrets arousing deep fears and anxieties. Raju the idealistic innocent tramp realizes his
worth lessness in the dubious alleys and musky darkness of the city. Disillusioned the tramp
transform to a tuxedo, thus the innocent awkward easy victim because a trickster in a bid to
adapt. (Dissanayake et al., 1989. p. 50-56).
Shah Rukh’s film Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman re-visits ‘Shri 420’ in its own times – reflecting
an ambivalence and anxiety in response to the ‘new’. The new here is no longer urbanization
but a changing economic regime under liberalization. It is about the travails of “Raju” again an
educated engineer who replays a degenerate journey of his moral standards to fulfill his
material dreams while working for a construction company of Bombay.
The Raj Kapoor persona, Raju, the tramp first introduced in Awaara was repeated in Shri 420,
Jagte Raho, and also in Jis Des Mein Ganga Beheti Hai as well. In terms of his perception, he is
fundamentally simple and naively innocent vulnerable to the manifold pressures of a
complex urban environment (ibid. p. 61). Kapoor’s sincerity becomes poignant and his body
seeks to mediate this sincerity, simplicity and idealism through its austerity, passivity and a
prosaic calmness and simple cladness. Non-violence is a prominent feature of Raju’s body
and its is captured unambiguously in the simplistic symbolism of the same especially in the
film ‘Jis Des Mein ‘.
Several decades later, Shah Rukh revisits “Raju” – the metaphorical heroic prototype. An
idealistic man, simple yet ambitious. He is anxious to protect his middle class dreams, his
bourgeois utopia of procuring the material pleasures the city promises. Like Raju’s earlier
avatar he strays into wrong path but manages to regain his middle class scruples and values.
There is ordinariness in Shah Rukh played “Raju” but it forsakes its tramp look and destitution.
The body anxiously maintain its “respectability” and presentable demeanour as a passport to
gain access to resourceful men of power and position.
Kapoor’s oeuvre constitutes a harmonizing of the two discourse of tradition and modernity. His the “Raj” or “Raju” was created in the middle of the period that is generally referred to as the “Nehru Years” that envisioned an optimism of building a modern India. “Raj” or “Raju” inspired by the Chaplinesque tramp – the downtrodden vagabond through comedy suffused with pathos became an emblem of the nation’s underprivileged (ibid. 105-106). In contrast SRK’s role of Raju in Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman or its similar type in Yess Boss, Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa metamorphose with time into a more genteel character though complex – drawing closer identification with middle class. He sheds his sartorial simplicity, rustic naivety from his body to look “smarter” though innocent in certain ways. What it does like the earlier “Raj” is to expose corruption by the rich, then manipulations and dishonesty. Even without posing as firmly as a crusader like Kapoor’s “Raj” SRK’s roles does retain altruism. In “Raju Ban Gaya Gentlaman” he risks his job to expose his employers in court to do justice to those harmed by collapse of a poorly built budge, in “Yes Boss” he saves Seema (Juhi Chawla) from being a prey to his debauch and rapacious boss by relinquishing his cherished dream of having an independent advertising office. The new “Raj” becomes wise through an encounter with the devious elements of the city.

Unlike Chaplin’s politicized view, Raju by Raj Kapoor, blunts the political edge (ibid. p. 109) and this is reiterated in the later much personalized trials and tribulations of the later Rauj as played by SRK, in Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman. Unlike the battling Charlie Chaplin, (see Sahai, ibid), Kapoor as Raj is more accommodating and more keen to maintain status quo and adapting than to challenge the decadence. So is the later Raj or the middle class hero who attempts to adjust and even expose a body that balks and reconciles.

However, this new man the middle class prototype of earlier Raj by Shah Rukh, is more surefooted in his physical movements within a familiar spatial geometrical matrix of home, office restaurants or other well marked urban spaces. Kapoor’s Raj for example in Awaara is a thief running from police and takes refuge in house of a judge, in Jagte Raho he is a simple country yokel looking for water unknowingly intrudes and is mistaken for a thief ,while in ‘Jis Desh Mein Ganga Baheti Hai’, a naive innocent man Raj wanders into a group of outlaws (see ibid,p. 110).

Citing Foucaultt’s notion of power, Sahai sees how the ‘iconoclastic human of Raj, the tramp inverts traditional power relations by mocking the very power of the materially rich or the dominant who victimizes him.His steadfast adherence to his ethical and moral values indicated his superiority to those in power (ibid,p. 111-112). The middle class “Raj” or Shah Rukh regains his conscience and his claim to righteousness. The moral power of the middle class against the materialist lure and enticement was affirmed through the new Raj. Both caught in the cusp of change. Kapoor in times of early years of freedom and India’s more towards urbanization and industrialization. Shah Rukh in the early years of liberalization and globalization. Dissanayake and Sahai argues that Raj Kapoor’s roles seek to harmonize the discomes of modernity with traditional values. Despite being affected by throes of
modernization (and later changes) both seek to ‘re-emphasize certain traditional moral values which might serve to heal arounds caused by these transformations (ibid. p. 153).

Both the heroic bodies provide an interface between tradition and indemnity – neutralizing its dichotomy or binary opposition between good and evil. The actively mobilized body seeking to fulfill his self his aspiration articulates individual choice, freedom and autonomy outside the commotional familial set-up within which heroes are located. Both can be seen as individuated selves bearers of distinct identity, while for Kapoor it could have been the citizen subject of the newly formed state, for Shah Rukh it was the free social climber or a free market consumer who aspires to fulfill his dreams. Both embodying a consciousness of emergent idea and changes.

Shah Rukh recast as ‘Devdas’ in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s magnum opus is one of the most illustrative formal nostalgia in popular Hindi cinema. Based on the 1927 book by the famous Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay the novel has been made into a film four time, in 1935 in both Bengali and Hindi, in 1955 in Hindi and so also in 2002. While plot and character development has remained largely unaltered since the beginning in every version cinematography and cinematic technique have adapted to the predominant aesthetic style and prevalent political ethos of that period. But what is starking different is the austere brooding nature of the 1955 neo-realist version with the extravagant commercial spectacle in 2002.

The most recent remake feeds off from the vast repertoire of cultural and filmic intertexts and playing into audience’s nostalgic associations that have always had a certain cultural valence in Hindi mainstream cinema.

The two version of 1955 and 2000 provide an interesting comparison of the constancy of Hindi commercial films structure while both allow the protagonist on his journey towards self-destruction, but are situated on the path differently. Unlike Bimal Roy’s 1955 version that constructs his protagonist as a genuinely tragic character who returns from city to village in contrast to Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s 2002 version where the hero returns from London. In both the returning is a key feature of nostalgia. However the 2002 sequence being more melodramatic and grandiose reflected contemporary cinematic aesthetics. Interestingly it is the “Inter textuality through similar cinematography and narrative structure that allow for all versions of Devdas to connect across time and space, there by producing one meta-version of the film with several protagonists who go through the same narrative moment. A system based on formal nostalgia allows the industry to repeat the basic narrative of Devdas across different time periods, but also compels each version to have specific elements of attraction, eg. 2002 version is largely superstar based. While this feeds into past sources of nostalgia it also opens avenues for future intertextuality and recycling. Thus the films are most often re-invented and made relevant to contemporary audience (Menon Broker. 2005, ibid).

The star body of Shah Rukh had lend itself to glamourize tragic end in a more bold and stylized manner. Dilip Kumar’s brooding agony and melancholy – his silent suffering gets a corporal accentuation through Shah Rukh’s typical style and gestures. Pain seems a voice in the explicit physicality or excess of the star body of Shah Rukh, which also had lend itself to glamourize
tragic end in a more bold and stylized manner. Renunciation is re-coded as the starry body of Shah Rukh is allowed to guard its “Sheen".

Another aspect that the star-text of SRK does or his body does is to re-introduce the insider-outsider dilemma common to early post-independence commercial films. Shah Rukh’s rise marks the return of the romantic hero of the 1950s and the cosmopolitan hero of the 1960s, but in a complex refashioning informed by an increased violence in the 1970s – 1980s and the anxieties and politics of globalization through the 90s (ibid.p.182). Shah Rukh recycles older heroes their style and also improvises. Broker observes that Shah Rukh who plays mainly North Indian (specifically Punjabi) Hindi character as a film persona explores the insider-outsider dichotomy in both his personal history as well as on-screen. These characters range from ultimate “insider”, a wholesome all-Indian bubble-gum yuppie (DDLJ) Pardes for example) to the psychotic schizophrenic “outsider” of films like Baazigar (1993), Darr (1984) (ibid, p. 183) ad later as the “othered” Muslim, an “outside” to the Hinduness of nation’s social fabric in Chak De. My Name is Khan and so on.

Looking at the star-body that seeks to recycle past heroic styles in re-visited and recycled themes, involves nostalgia, wherein earlier styles revived and cease to be anachronistic. This relooking at past can be seen as what Jameson calls as a “schizophrenic” culture. He uses the term in a sense developed by Lacan to signify a language dis-order a failure of the temporal relation between signifiers. The schizophrenic body experiences time not as a continuum (past-present-future) but as a perpetual present, which is only occasionally marked by the intrusion of the past or the possibility of a future. To call the postmodern culture as “schizophrenic” is to claim that it has lost its sense of history (and its sense of future different from the present). It is a culture suffering from “historical amnesia”, locked into the discontinuous flow of perpetual present, the temporal culture of modernism has given way to the spatial culture of posturodermism. (Storey. 2003. p. 65).

Films like “Ashoka” a historical legend, “Paheli”, a folk-story, “Hey Ram” a myho-historical fiction based on Partition history and Gandhi’s assasination have allowed cinema’s incursion into past temporal frame, re-creating it and reproduced it within comtemporary style in a postmodernist gesture. Storey argues that despite the ahistoricity of post modern culture, that ‘feels vampirically on the past’, nevertheless is a cultue. As per Jameson postmodern is a world of Pastiche : a world in which stylistic invention and innovation is precluded as “the producer of [postmodern] culture have nowhere to turn but to the past : …” Instead of original cultural production it derives from previous and its failure leads to what Jameson call as “imprisonment in the past”. The hermenentic force of present images derives from past what Jameson sees as “complacent play of historical allusion’. Instead of being a culture of pristine creativity, post modern culture is said to be a culture of quotations.Jameson’s best known example of the practice of pastiche in post modern culture is what he calls “nostalgia film”. These nostalgia films also include futuristic films and not just historical ones. According to Jameson nostalgia films function in one or two way : first it recaptures and represents the atmosphere and stylistic features of the past and it recaptures and represents certain styles of viewing of the past. Such
films instead of attempting to recapture or represent the “real” past, always make do instead with certain cultural myths and stereotypes about the past. They offer what he calls “false realism” films about other films representations of other representations. History is effaced through “historism” and ‘random cannibalisation of all past styles’. (ibid, 65-67)

In films like Devdas, Ashoka of Shah Rukh (and also other heroes playing such rites like Aamir in ‘Mangal Pandey’ or Hritik Roshan in ‘Jodha Akbar’) the body of the hero is stylistic allusion to past. It is a quotation of “pastness” and is caught within an “intertextuality” and its embeddedness within a labyrinth of “pastness” of aesthetic effect. The body stylized nostalgically operates as a “new connotation of pastness and pseudo-historical depth in which history of aesthetic styles displaces “real” history” (ibid.p67).

Having looked at the nostalgic recycling of Kapoor’s simplicity, idealist patriotism and Dilip Kumar’s brooding tragic melancholy, it calls to explore further down the heroic trajectory. One of the prominent early heroes who has been revisited in the ouvre of SRK is Dev Anand, in his urban Westernised consumerist avatar. It is Dev Anand, the hero who inaugurated the incarnation of ‘modern’, ‘urbane’ ‘Westernized’ hero on screen ‘The country bumpkin or a variation of the Devdas prototype consumed by alcohol and obsessive love were not for him. There was a lightness of being in the way this gentleman-lover went about romancing his heroines… Nor was he dubbed ‘debonair Dev’ for nothing. Much of the persona that he evoked for himself had to do with his sartorial style: scarves tossed casually around his shoulders, full-sleeved, buttoned up shirts berets, all kinds of caps and of course his patented puff, which so many actors and young men emulated. His mannerism also set him apart from the others. Breezy, cocky and charming initially these unfortunately tosilled into caricature…’ (Jain, 2012. p. 108).

Dev Anand’s affectation was seen in the mannerism and style of later romantic heroes, notably Rajesh Khanna. Mannerisms, style, urbanity was reinvented after several decades in the recycled body of Shah Rukh. But this was eclectically combined with another significant affectation viz. the star persona of Shammi Kapoor. While Dev Anand’s body was a stylized dandy, it became more energized performative brazen, virile, playful, flabouyant and agile in the body of Shammi Kapoor. Displaying a brazen hedonistic masculinity ‘Shammi Kapoor made a strong impression with his fresh acting, playfulness and great physical agility, which involved jumping, leaping and general cavorting. Most importantly he exuded an unabashed and irresistible sexuality that was far from the heroes of the time, who projected romanticism but rarely sexuality…… Shammi Kapoor did not have the brooding quality of James Dean, the famous Hollywood rebel but in the Indian context, he was a rule-breaker with a brazen attitude towards prudishness as well as a light disdain for parent authority ad conventional behavior…’ (Kabir, 2012. p. 143-144)

Shah Rukh revisited the Shammi style in his energized physicality, body’s vigour and performative body and its uninhibited rendition in childlike somersaults, jumping, thumping. Shammi’s hedonistic masculine body and libidinous, unbriddled physicality was recoded in the
youthful exhuberance of Shah Rukh’s body across films where he plays the urban romantic lover boy : DDLJ, KKHH, DTPH, Dil Se, Yes Boss and so on.

The tradition of reworking was not novel to SRK alone as stars like Rajesh was also seen that ‘he gently tweaked the existing formula.He blended the playfulness of Dev Anand with a fraction of Dilip Kumar’s intensity; to this he added his own charm and style’ (Ghosh 2012. p. 178). As the romance cult of Khanna that waned with the rise of the angry young man image of Bachchan was nevertheless revived by the new heroes of the 1990’s.

Intertextuality and formal nostalgia have defined heroic style for long. Towards late 90’s and early 90’s, romance was resurrected by the band of young soft-faced conventionally fair and handsome heroes like Aamir Khan and Salman. Both the heroes met with success in their romantic casting and it gave romance a new lease in popular films. It was Shah Rukh Khan in early films like Baazigar and Darr in1993, who was cast ‘in the Bachchan mould’ (Bhatia. 2012. p. 194). This was also the time when he ‘son rise’was still on (Gahlot. 2012. p. 194).

With former heroes competing to launch their sons. ‘A few years earlier, industry boys like Anil Kapoor, Sanjay Dutt Sunny Deol and Kumar Gaurav had made their debuts and the film industry had almost shut it door to outsiders (ibid). Shah Rukh an outsider to the industry, like Bachchan uncumingly made his ‘psychopathic strangeness’ look palpable.

Another importqnt mechanism by which the body is recycled or turned nostalgic is through what in common parlance known as “retro fashion”. The male star bodies in recent times have been re-cast in old sartorical style - revisiting earlier filmic styles. On narrative pretext of dream sequence, stage shows earlier bodily incarnate along with legitimate historical plots or period dramas (like Devdas) star bodies have been styled as per erstwhile fashion codes. The use of past style is motivated not by a simple escapism but by a desire to understand our culture and ourselves as products of previous codings. In her article on the semiotics of fashion, Kaja Silverman defends “retro” dressing (the wearing of vintage clothig) because ‘it inserts its wearer into a complex network of cultural and historical references… by putting quotation marks around the garments it revitalizes, it makes clear that past is available to us only in a textual form, and through the mediation of the present… It is thus highly visible way of acknowledging that its wearer’s identity has been shaped by decades of representational activity, and that no cultural project can ever start from zero”. (Colins, 1989. p. 133).

Shah Rukh’s body have been coded by semantics of nostalgia through “retro fashioning” of his body. The most eminent example is Om Shanti Om’ as an earlier aspiring star of the film industry of 70’s - in a previous incarnate sporting flowery shirts and bell-bottom trousers typifying the trend set by the ‘Flower Generation’ in the west. In the period classic re-make of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhy’s novel ‘Devdas’, SRK dresses as a “Bengali bhadralok” Suchh retro dressing or fashgioning of the star’s body by the films can be seen as post modernist gesture that seeks to negate chronological limits.

Colins argues that modernists and postmodernists differ fundamentally in their respective attitude toward the “already said”. The former constructs a dialogic relation with previous representations only to reject them as outmoded resulting in a semiotic zero sum game. The
latter constructs an entirely different relatioanship with the accumulated representational activity, recognizing that this activity cannot be conjured away by sudden rupture because it forms the very fabric of our “structure of feelings”. Post modernist text acknowledge that “meaning” “identity” etc. are complicated not only by the decentred nature of current political production but also by co-presence of previous representations persisting through mass media - specifically T.V. which represent its own morphological community in a daily basis. In concentrating on synchronic tensions rather than diachronic breaks, the post-modern text constructs polylogic rather than dialogic relation with multiple “already saids” where relation between past and present codings is based on interaction and transformation instead of simple rejection (ibid. p. 134).

Casting of Shah Rukh across diverse films layers his star-body with roles. The moments he slips into one, the accretion gained nullifies previous identifying makers and hero begins to occupy the empty space of a star vehicle, dislocated across films and true (Menon - Broker. 2005. p. 175). The endless repetition and recycling of plots and characters allow each new hero or star to partially dislocate the previous hero/star and remorphs into a revised incarnate. His body as a trope is pregnant with traits and streaks of earlier heroes/heroic prototypes. In this sense star text creates a vacuum that is only filled through endless repetition that allow a star to become a popular icon, a receptacle into which collective needs and desires of a nation are poured. Due to this, inspite of a repetition of form, the mutation of a star is necessarily a historical process, that is modified over time. The formulation of the hero is transmuted as society is conditions and crises continue to change and individual character development is often compromised for a more allegoric national role. (ibid. p. 171)

The star text and the star body constituting the dynamic component, which notwithstanding recycling of themes is a modified embodiment of times. The star body provides the site to allegorise the nation and the dominant discourse. Shah Rukh’s body while revisiting earlier heroic prototypes allowed the nation’s contemporary discourses to inscribe themselves upon his corporal-text. Each accretion, every guise is an embodiment of the nation’s current socio-political and economic currents. The star body and the persona is therefore a historically constituted phenomena - intersecting with the nation’s prevalent mood or temper, providing a corporal biography of the nation at a particular juncture. Endowed with nation’s spirit, the star text also is a carrier of a legacy of a preceding text that are transmuted in response to the times. As complex signs star are embodiments of historical, cultural and economic meanings; in themselves cultural interfaces (Ibid. p. 172).

4.12 THE SPLITTED BODY RETURNS AS REMORPHED: DOUBLING OF THE STAR BODY: KARAN ARJUN, OM SHANTI OM(RE-INCARNATED BODIES), DON AND DUPLICATE (DOUBLE ROLES), SPLITTED(RAB NE BANA DI JODI)

Jung’s analysis unlike Frend is maternal nonphallic as he emphasized the mother.relationship and the individual unconscious as a maternal one. Emphasizing the importance of the maternal archetype, Jung suggested that for every individual one of the greatest challenge was the ability to separate from the mother ‘…which can be seen as an internal force as much as an external
one. Crucially, the unconscious itself can be seen as maternal, from which the ego rises as a new born son, and to which it will one day return. Thus the Christ myth can be interpreted psychologically as an image of an idealized ego self relationship’ (Horrocks 1995 p 42).

In several films of Shah Rukh Khan there is a doubling of the body or a certain duplicity involved. In early films the body splitted in schizophrenic crisis later came to masquerade as dual as reincarnated or as remorphed. Surveying these images reveal a certain ambivalence and anxiety within the masculine body. This fractured body, borrowing Jungian analysis can be upheld as maternal spectre – the unconscious psychuc force threatening to erupt.

In the reincarnated split of the body in two films of Shah Rukh, Karan Arjun and Om Shanti Om represents a primordial recalling or a dramatic union with the mother in next birth – seeking to salvage her from distress. The mother’s body is invested ‘with mythological and mysterious qualities. It becomes far more than flesh. It is a temple, home and source of life. It provides food. The womb is the place where all we began our fleshy existence. The vagina is the gateway to the womb, which men can periodically re-enter. Men yearn to get inside this body again, to feed from it again, to go back to their point of origin. There is also the strong feeling of loss in many men…” (Horrocks 1994 p 82-83). This split in body represents the male body’s desire to re-enter the mother’s body/womb – here the mother is a metaphor of the nation that survives despite loss of state’s phallic power in a post-global scenario. The search for the mother’s body represents the faith of the male body in the undying mother(nation).

The overwhelming power of the mother over the son is not free of ‘potential danger and ambivalence’ : ‘that first massive influence of the mother may be so great, and not sufficiently corrected by the aggressive potency of the male presence that the boy is unable to separte from his mother and unable to establish a non-female identity for himself…In such cases, the adult man will be full of contradictory feelings towards women. He may unconsciously want to be a woman like is mother – for she was powerful she was alive she was nourishing, she represented life itself. He wants to be like her, and to be close to her inside her. He wants the symbiosis to go on for ever. But then he is faced with an enormous conflict: he also needs to get away from her, to emerge from within her and be borne again (Horrocks 1994 p 75-76).

In both films, Shah Rukh’s re-incarnated body unites with the mother and shows how the male star is seen to bodily strive for her wish fulfillment through vengeance in Karan Arjun and cinematic success in Om Shanti Om, as the junior artiste was re-born to become a super-star with the same name. However the same narratives can be seen as the metaphysical continuity of the unconscious trans-corporally as per the Hindu theory of re-incarnation based upon ‘karma’ or deeds. The continuity of the metaphorical unconscious in Hindi films is affirmed through the continuity of doubling of the body where the same star, as in the two narratives of Karan Arjun and Om Shanti Om, is seen to re-appear as the re-incarnated body/soul with a retrievable memory and characteristic traits in order to fulfill the unattained goal or task. Karma is not just a doctrine of ‘re-incarnation’, fatalism or pre-destination but a promise of hope. Given the innate tendency of the unconscious towards light (‘satwa’), combined with an individual’s personal efforts in this direction (dharma) karma assures that attainment of the goal of
existence (moksha) is certain even though there may be set backs in the process-a process which may require a number of re-births and many life cycles for its completion (Kakar, 1996, p. 48).

Contemporary films have a distinctly odd ambivalent relation with the West. The post-colonial subject is necessity the locus of such dislocated ambivalence often perceiving the ‘Other’ to be the Self. As Homi Bhabha suggests. “The other is never outside or beyond us, it emerges forcefully within cultural discourse when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously beyond ourselves”. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 4). The Western threat is central to most films in the 1990s and is often articulated by the ambivalence within the narrative that also manifests itself as a doubling or “Splitting” of the male protagonist. In Hindi commercial cinema, the male protagonist’s “doubling” and “Splitting” appear to represent the internalization of an ambivalence between the ‘self’ and ‘the other’. Sudhir Kakar quoted defines psychoanalytically the process of splitting as “a mental process that involves the separation of a longed for loved objects from the hated image of it, together with a corresponding split in the mental images of the good and bad self”. In the commercial cinema, this has conventionally been represented by two brother or psychic mirror images of a character (played by the same or separate actors) who are very different from each other. (Broker, 2005, ibid., p. 190-192).

In the case of Shah Rukh such splitting has occurred in certain films with slight modification as a snigle diasporic or urban male protagonist with two distinct identities. In most of the first half he is an ‘obnoxious yuppie’ - playful flamboyant and leads a luxurious life of wealth and “excesses of a Western lifestyle such as fancy cars, girl friends and lax relationship to authority”. After he falls in love with an Indian protagonist, there is a dramatic change in his persona (and even the physical disposition). He usually discovers an Indian side of his personality. The majority of the ‘feel good’ melodramas in 90’s such as DDLJ (1995) and Phir Bhi… (2000) follows this transition’ (ibid., p. 192-193).

The concept of doubling takes an interesting dimensions in the film ‘Pardes’ as the lives of two brothers (not biological) overlap and paralleled one another, providing counter points between protagonists that helped to intensify audience identification in favour of the leading male star SRK. In the first half of ‘Pardes’ likeness between the two actos, SRK and Apoorva Agnihotry is consistently harped as ‘diasporic brothers’ despite the fact while SRK harbours the dream of a return to India, Apoorva actively denies his Indian identity. The second half is about the attitude of the two brothers towards Ganga, fiancé of Atoorva (Rajeev). While the latter transforms to a rapacious villain and attempts to rape Ganga (Mahima Chaudhury) a dramatic rift enables the younger brother Arjun (SRK) to “split” from his brother and fight to protect the chastity of Gange, symbol of his motherland and denying therefore all inflections of his “Western” personality. (ibid. p. 193).

Shah Rukh has been doubled quite often in his acting and even splitted as scizhoid and performed in roles engaged in impersonation, like Darr, Bazigar, Anjaam with aslide of an outsider/insider in his body, masquerading, impersonating, camouflaging etc. This schizophrenic splittedbody is both outsider and the protagonistr and doubles his body. (see, Broker, ibid). Films like Duplicate and Don (2006) casts him doubly, with the star body playing two distinct roles.
While Karan Arjun and Om Shanti Om sees him re-incarnating, and in films like Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi, there is split in his personality that re-visits the masquerading of his earlier films but more positively. One of the most innovative doubling of the body comes in Don2 where Shah Rukh’s contemporary star Hritik Roshan, appears to beguile the intelligence, as the masked ‘face’ of the star.

These splits reflective of intra as well inter-cultural conflict are resolved via representations of two confronting characters (played by the same actor) posed as look alike mostly. The double conventionally dramatized the discontinuities introduced into Indian societies by new social and political forces and neutralizes the schism between tradition and western modernity argues Nandy (Nandy, 1998, p 226) and adds further from R.D. Laing.

At the psychological level, doubles arising out of splits in personality reflects a kind of schizophrenia. The schizoid self attempt to achieve ‘secondary security from the primary dangers facing him in his ontological insecurity’. Schizophrenia is a strategic devise for a sensitive person who invents it to cope with ‘unlivably inconsistent situation in a totally insensitive world’. What is true at the individual level is extendable or analogous to cultures also. The double roles played in popular films Nandy argues seek to ‘externalize an inner struggle to cope with two disjunctive parts of the Indian’s cultural self…The West today is only partly an external category, it is also an inner vector of the Indian self, an acceptable and legitimate aspect of Indianness activated by society’s long exposure to occidental despotism. Traditionally, the society handled such exposure by fitting the intruding cultural strains within its age old scheme of things. But now that West has found more powerful allies within Indian culture, now that it has altered the priorities of the culture by entering the interstices of atleast the middle class Indian mind, the conflict between. Eat and West has become a matter of inner contradiction…, However crude, melodramatic and maudlin the use of the double in popular cinema may seem, psychologically it helps exteriorize inner tensions (through the mix of projections and the concretizations that go into such doubling) to help maintain the integrity of one’s self system. This is the final reason for the surfeit of doubles in commercial movies. They give clarity, mythical though that clarity may seem to many, to the inner confusion and disintegration produced by inescapable outer predicaments’ (Nandy, 1998, ibid p 228-229).

4.13 CRACKS AND FISSURES IN DOMINANT MYTHS AND ANXIETY OF THE MASCULINE HERO

The potential of sociology is to problematize, contest, interrogate and debunk the stable gender categories and provide an antidote to implicit knowledge of men and masculinities (Haywood et al, 2003,p.7) The ideological scaffold which can be gainfully interrogated to see how in – several films of the star, Shah Rukh, that is within his Happy films, Secular films, Violent films one can locate male anxiety and insecurities caused on account of cracks and fissures in popular myths and hegemonic control.
Culture is a power agent of control and propaganda, Janet Thumin as cited argues: ‘it is necessary for the dominant group, in the struggle to maintain its hegemony to demonstrate its ability to control potentially subversive elements’ (Horrocks 1995 p 26). Horrocks further argues that Hollywood narratives have succeeded in reinforcing collective myths of American society needful to maintain capitalist, patriarchal heterosexual hegemony against all that threatens it, viz, poverty crime, homosexuality and feminism. He adds: ‘...that overall Hollywood stresses the romantic sentimental side of life, and underplays a realistic group of life as it is. Hollywood does periodically turn to social protest if it seems to be doing well at the box-office, but it has mainly been the privyover of conservative dreams’. (ibid p 26).

Horrocks does not stop to establish the crude economic logic of popular culture and its ideology of legitimiging the dominant order. In addition to its conservative ideological role, informed by a Stalinist economic determinism, popular culture does expose or reveal fissures in conservative ideology. Horrocks claims that in relation to masculinity besides reinforcing conservative patriarchal myths and masculine ideology based on dominance arrogance and power, there are gaps and flaws that expose the hollow man.

Departing from economic determinism of Marxian perspective. Horrocks urges upon Gramscian notion of hegemony that implies cultural field as a contested site of struggle and negotiation Hegemony being contested pluralize meanings of culture as Horrocks suggests : ‘that popular culture has a contradictory nature – it contains ‘dominant’, ‘negotiated’ and ‘oppositional’ meanings often blended in the same text’(ibid p 27).

Popular culture is not monolithic and Horrocks cites Hollywood films that reveal how cracks, counterhegemonic tenor and subversions are contained with it, Patriarchial hegemony in popular culture are therefore are not impenetrable and cracks or splits in traditional virile masculinity and representations of it are discernibly seen revealing a weakening and disintegration of patriarchal and capitalist ideology.

Taking cue from Horrocks understandings of counter hegemonic readings of popular culture’s masculine representation with respect to Hollywood films one can locate fissures in representations of the star body and within his masculine identity across various genres of popular films in which he has performed.

The machismo image attempted in films like Ashoka and Om Shanti Om in a bid to exhibit a muscular masculinity in display of a sculpted bodyone can locate a sign of weakness. Horrocks claims that image of machismo is open to subversions meaning and The film actor Arnold Schwarzenegger provides an excellent example of this. Although often touted as the supreme icon of muscular masculinity, it is interesting that source of his films potray men who are shattered…In addition, schwarzenegger’s enormous inflated body simultaneously acts as a hypermasculine emblem, but also mimics women’s bodies (Horrocks 1995 ibid p.27).

Horrocks observes that ‘The researches I have referred to up to now all show a more or less conscious attempt to deconstruct traditional images of manhood. But we should not neglect the more unconscious study of masculinities that we find in popular art, as here we find those issues that secretly trouble men, their wishes and dreams, their nightmares and darkest fantasies.
In fact popular art doesn’t study masculinities, but it provides a brilliant mirror in which to view them. I am thinking for example of cinema and its ability to reflect insecurities in the male image, sadistic and masochistic fantasies, problematic relations with women and attempts to subvert or reinforce traditional machismo’. (Horrocks 1994, p 16-17).

Despite the contention that masculinity is non monolithic and plural /variable there is a tradition within psychotherapy that seeks to locate an underlying unity in all men that facilities the continued use of the singular term masculinity and Horrocks argues ‘...masculinity in men dress have a unitary function. All shades of masculine identity ranging from macho to the effeminate, have thus in common, they convey the message: I am not a woman’. (ibid p 33).

A certain anxiety engulfs masculinity in our culture whereby the man struggles to affirm has masculinity in distinction that that which is feminine. A certain defensive quality comes to define masculinity and the male struggles to ‘distance himself from femaleness and femininity, in order to prove that he is a male. The way this is done varies from culture to culture and from sub-culture to sub-culture. These are rituals of masculine initiation, there are clothes, hair styles, jewellery styles, there are special segregated dwellings and spaces – but in all these variegated expressions of masculinity we see one driving force – the need to prove that man is not a woman’. (Horrocks 1994 p 33). Masculinity anxiously strives to produce its difference . Masculinity in this sense is defined in opposition to femininity. The masculinity is the negation of the feminine, and this opposition varies in content from culture to culture. This is one culture long in men cn denote masculinity, in other cultures feminity. What counts is not so much the content but the structural opposition between the two genders (Horrocks 1994 p 33).

The violent body seeking for fulfillment of desire or vengeance in early films at the loss of phallic power of state articulates a middle class masculine anxiety to reclaim its desire on a plane that appears to be privatized space of the body – backing intrepidity the body contiously yet violently seeks for a goal desire – appearing to be more feminized. Much later the consumersist investment in the body reflects urge of metropolitan urban middle class masculine body’s consumer panic to counterpoise itself. Sufficiently embellished against the feminine body that for long has sought for its eroticization and fetishisation.

Jeft Hearn’s book ‘Men in Public Eye’ bring to fore the consolidation of male power over women in public domain. This publicness of men qua men are constructed through public visibility. The male dominance and power that permeates every sphere bring to attention the divide between public and private represents a fracturing of life that enables or equips men to control both sphere (Horrocks 1994 p 34). Hearn as cited argues. ‘I see public patriarchies as materially founded on men’s power and dominance in and over the private domains particularly around biological reproduction, domestic work, sexuality, nurture and violence’. This power maintained in either domains get challenged in films like Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna and My Name Is Khan and this challenge directed body that farled to perform public domain successfully nd assert itself in private domain, seeks a bodily resolution. If in Kabhi alvida Naa Kahna the otherwise discredited/physically disabled body – metaphorically emasculated re-
instates is phallic power by sexually conquering and acquiring another man’s wife, it nevertheless exposes its anxiety of rejection and desperation for refuge in a woman’s body. In both My Name Is Khan and Kabhi alvida Naa Kahna against a more socio economically successful counterpart (wife) exceeding the male in public domain, there is an anxiety over this loss of control in private matters as well. An androgeneity articulated seen as in relation to the son in terms of nurtrance is integral to the anxious response of the hero in both the films KANK and MNIK.

In drawing up an overall estimation of Shah Rukh’s portrayal of his masculine body one can readily identify a departure from a traditional macho image of heroes popularized through bodies of Amitabh Dharmendra Vinod Khanna Shatrugna and later Sanjay dutt Sunil Shetty and Sunny Deol. A certain deep anxiety informs the masculine body of Shah rukh where there is an urge to disavow macho image whether the body seeks vengeance, obsessively pursues his desired woman or romances in later films. There is a bodily rendered demand or keenness for a certain interiority or a private domain marked by a renewed bodily energy for melodramatic excess and emotional rendition. This can be seen as ‘that our gender system is going through an immense crisis and change, reflecting an even deeper crisis in the bowel of society…men can begin to let go of some of this baggage which they have had to carry around for thousands of years…men are becoming fed up with being traditional husbands, fathers and providers protectors and soldiers’ (Horrocks 1994 p 62-63).

In a kind of a contradictory vein one can read a certain anxiety in some of the filmic bodies of Shah Rukh to guard the masculine self/body against the feminine. Men seem to be constantly haunted by the reassuring need to produce themselves as men not women and struggles to construct a kind of defensive armour against feminity (Horrocks 1994 p 90). Shah Rukh body in certain films steps out of its emotive melodramatic romantic renderings in a display of machismo. This fragility argued Horrocks is endemic to all manhood across all cultures to prove machismo in fear of the inner feminine.

The anxiety in brave militaristic patriotic body of Main Hoon Naa, in re-asserting virility of Hindu Indian man in re-claiming the loss in partition in Veer Zaara, in the zealous nationalist loyalty of the othered Muslim in Chak De and the Hey Ram, in the armoured super hero like body in Ra One is part of bid to reproduce a macho like masculinity against weak feminine and threat of impotency; the death in Kal Ho Naa Ho is an anxious bid to escape homoerotism. All these images of masculinities/bodies are masculine constructions to retain hegemonic control. These images are cultural artifices, constructs and each culture produces the masculinities it needs – in other words the realm of popular culture constructs these images to protect the inherent macho image and pre-empt the star body from staying further into the excess of feminine romance and melodrama – as a constant vigil and repressive attitude towards any excess feminity in man.

As true of popular Hollywood films of twentieth century, Shah Rukh too is found in a wide variety of masculine image. From G one’s hypermasculine armoured body representing strength and virility, to a near wimp, simpleton clerk in Rab Ne a Di Jodi to more balanced
routes as neither effete nor brutal in several films like Swades, Chak De Hey Ram rardes Kuch Kuch Hota Hai etc. The adoption of hypermasculine image or macho body can be read as paper thin defence in defiance of vulnerability. (Horrocks 1994 p 106).

Shah Rukh Khan’s arrival on screen as a neurotic, desirous hero, later as a struggling anxious middle class subject subverted the masculine image portrayed by Amitabh, Dharmendra Sanjay Dutt, Mithun Chakraborty and so on, the depicted himself in a mould that parallels similar developments in post-war, American films. ‘A new kind of acting emerged neurotic, dangerous, searching for authenticity, not afraid to look weak or clumsy…also projected a narcissism, a femininity, that produced something highly charged and intense on screen. They seem locked in some private self dialogue, fascinated in their own bodies…’(Horrocks 1994 p 154). The struggle inscribed on the body of lumpen/subaltern/working class hero was removed- the body appeared more respectable in terms of class. The middle class body of the hero perfectly captured middle class frailties, anxieties, gratifying desirous urge and a self obsessive temper (ibid).

Shah Rukh’s films re-invented melodrama and excess and allowed for the heroic conception to depart from the macho image. His comedies, his histrionics mischiefs, caressing of the heroine, dancing moves, playfulness with heroine compromised on essentialisation of heroic ideal. The emotional excess of his bodily gestures made him produce a certain bodily vocabulary of Freudian idea of ‘constitutional bi sexuality’. The liberalized phallic statit authority losing rigour allowed the otherwise repressed feminine interior to be manifest. This showed fissures in what Jung argued to be public masculinity. As taking cue from Jrendian idea of complex layered non pure masculinity/feminity Jung argued as cited by Connell: ‘No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is rather that very masculine men have – carefully guarded and hidden – a very soft emotional life, often incorrectly described as “feminine”. A man counts it a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible, just as a woman at least until recently, considered it unbecoming to be manish. The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious’ (Jung as cited in R.W. Connell 1994 p 20).

One such anxiety that informs masculinity is contingent on approval by other men: ‘Other men: We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men’s approval. It is other men who evaluate, who evaluate the performance…and how we constantly parade the markers of manhood – wealth, power, status, sexy woman – in front of other men, desperate for their approval. That men prove their manhood in the eyes of other men is both a consequence of sexism and one of its chief props…Masculinity is a homo social enactment. We test ourselves, perform heroic feats take enormous risks all because we want other men to grant us our manhood. Masculinity as a homo social enactment is fraught with danger, with the risk of failure and with intense relentless competition’ (Kimmel 1994, p 128 -129).

In most films, Shah Rukh’s masculine self and body reveals an anxiety to prove his manhood and the most favoured means has been an obsessive neurotic to a romantic desperation to
win/acquire/conquer his woman of love, otherwise engaged to/married to/romancing with another man. This may be discerned as the market syndrome marked by spirit of unbridled competitive zeal and consumerist desire to obtain gratifying needs. For a man arriving at a time when desire of middle class (see Varma) cease to be reined or harnessed and acquisitive instincts are upheld, Shah Rukh appear to preclude every sense of inadequacy against other men (Kimmel, 1994, ibid p 130). This could be a frenzied effort to keep at abeyance fear of humiliation in eyes of other men.

Homophobia is the central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. ‘Homofobia is the fear that other will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend, that we are... We are ashamed to be afraid’ (ibid p 131). The test of masculinity and the fear and anxiety haunting men, as it may be argued, is not characterized by any fixity and time space and context puts differential claims on men and therefore heroic ideals have produced diverse resolutions. If Nehruvian heroes Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar sought it through idealism. Shammi Kapoor and Dev Anand through a bodily flamboyance, Amitabh through violence and vengeance of a rougue body, acquisition and gratification desire is the leitmotif in my reading of Shah Rukh’s manhood in times of a globalizing nation. ‘Masculinity has become a relentless test by which we prove to other men to women and ultimately to ourselves that we hve successfully mastered the part’ (ibid p 138). The body of Shah Rukh, engages in violence in early films and later drastically reforms itself from a bold desirous drive to a more strategic market like tact of winning over their men’s women in a more persuasive body departing significantly from a non-macho style. With a disarming obliging, vulnerable, jovial body and mannerisms against the more aggressive male suitor/opponent also desiring the same woman in films like Dilwale dulhaniya le Jayenge Pardes Kuch Kuch Hota Hai Yes Boss and so on wins over the woman.

The taut sculpted phallic body of Shah Rukh in films like Om Shanti Om and Ashoka implodes a certain emotional rigidity since the phallic male feels sexually permanently dissatisfied (Horrocks 1994 p 161). The body appear to compensate for this dissatisfaction and assuage the anxiety to be emotionally unfulfilled. It brings to fore a narcissistic obsessive star syndrome to compete with other contemporary male stars. Culturally this fetishism can be equally read as a defence against body’s spontaneous or morenatural stirrings or rhythms, its vulnerabilities and raises the phallic man’s guard against external threats and enables him to gain a control over his disciplined body (ibid p 161).

Given the lack of narratives centered around women and films made by women, one is led to say that women’s filmic representations remain marginal - ‘as inscriptions of and by dominant cultural discourse which clouds their ... sensibilities and aspirations. However, one needs to concede that no power structure, however totalitarian is monolithic. Popular Hindi cinema is no exception and despite its successful assertion of a patriarchal hegemonic discourse, hegemony of male power need to be constantly secured against threats of resistance. There are
discremable leaks within dominant male dominated discourse and Virdi argues that ‘These moments of fracture open opportunities to read the text against the status quo ideology that the narrative imposes. The fault hues in the patriarchal order enable reading against the grain and reading resistance - a process Teresa de Lawetis calls “self-representation” in the space-off’ of the hegemonic discourse.’ (Virdi, 2003. p. 123).

Masculinity achieves meaning within pattern of difference – against the feminine or the marginalized men as the other (Barrett, 2001.,ibid.) However, masculinity is heterogenous and even contradictory and defined via series of hierchical relations that seek to reject and suppress feminity and homosexual desire, command and control over weak and inferior. The sexual difference between man and woman is a shifting reality through cultural domination of men over woman persists (Segal,2001 p 100). Masculinity is not reducible to the male body and its effects. Heroic masculinity depend on subordination of alternative masculinities although it has been produced by and across both male and female bodies (Halberstam,2002, p.355). The enterprise to define masculinity without maleness has been rendered nearly difficult. Ideological motivations sustaining complex social structures align masculinity to maleness and to power and domination rendering reimagination of alternative masculinities in film fiction or lived experience problematic.

In the film Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Shah Rukh’s heroine in the film, Kajol (Anjali) in the first half of the film appears almost as a female gender deviance in his tomboyish attire and movements – articulating a benign desire for youthful mischief and sporting actions – as a desire for the greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys (p 358 ibid). The tomboyism without risking much of male identification was tolerated as sign of urban independence and through nurturance of a secret heterosexual passion for her best friend Rahul (/Shah Rukh Khan) remained confortably linked to a stable sense of a girl identity (ibid p 358). What is interesting is the refusal of masculine hero to develop a heterosexual romantic interest in his tomboyish female friend despite a strong camaraderie. Instead he falls in love with Tina. (Rani Mukherjee) the more feminine and docile female body. After several years following Tina’s death, Rahul and Anjali fall in love only after she convincingly is ‘remodeled into compliant forms of feminity’. (ibid,p 358). Halberstam further argues : ‘But even as cursory survey of popular cinema confirms the image of tomboy can be tolerated only within a narrative of blossoming womanhood, tomboyism represents a resistance to adulthood itself rather than to adult feminity’ (p 358 ibid).

The fortified male masculinity of Shah Rukh’s body resists female masculinity as a sign of sexual alterity and affirms male masculine power through chosing Tina, complaint with conventional feminity over the tomboyish avatar of his ‘best friend’Anjali.. It serves to affirm gendered taxonomies inscribed on bodies and subverts alternative feminity to reinforce masculine male power.

As per Sanssurean semiotics, a sign derives its meanings from other signs and works through a system of differences (from what it is n’t) rather than of identity (with itself). It means something not because it has some fixed identity, but because it is different from other signs.
We could put that in a succinct but paradoxical form by saying that what a sign is due to what it isn’t. Though signification has a vertical relationship between signifier and signified, the source of the signs meaning is a set of horizontal relationship between signifier and signified and between signified and signified. These horizontal relationships determine a sign’s value….The relationship between signifier and signified for any particular sign depends ultimately on the relationships all the signs in the system have with one another’ (Thwaites et al 2002 p 36-37). Masculinity and male body as a sign has its value determined, therefore by its horizontal relations or network of difference like feminity or female body. Here by similar token heroic construction a hero as a sign, or heroic metaphors of manliness is defined against the heroine and her gendered attributes. Shah Rukh’s body despite its consumerist embellishments,adornment,sculpting like most popular heroes have sought to retain its difference vis-a-vis the feminie other and KKHH is one instance which is one of the most pronounce one in the star’s film trajectory.

4.14 CONCLUSION

Popular texts inscribed by plural discourse and open to plural/polysemic readings privileges all exercises of analysis or interpretative reading to take multiple vantage points and apply plural perspectives, categories, theoretical positions to explain the text. In this chapter while reading and understanding the representation of the star body, that of Shah Rukh Khan, in several films, the present researcher attempted to include both dominant as well oppositional or counter-hegemonic readings of the star text. The corporal guises of the star body, a discursive entity, is pregnant with ideological content of the text and the ideological intent of film industry’s representational apparatus and its producing economy. The body acts as a trope of nation’s social, political, cultural and economic discourse; emerge as a popular site open to plural readings; articulates and re-articulates the gender discourse and masculinity. The body is not innate to the star, it is appropriated, re-appropriated by ideological discourses to act as an embodied representation. The viscerality, as a representative device or ploy via subversive readings render possible to locate both cultural politics as well representations fraught with anxiety and contradictions. The body in this chapter as read from cinematic images have been interpreted through understandings that are primarily constructionist in their theoretical affinities as it involves the actor being cast, positioned and directed to perform as per narrative discourse. However it also includes understandings of the star’s corporal uniqueness, its materiality and even includes reports and narratives reflective of the star’s lived and embodied experience. The representation though involves discursive construction of the star’s bodily text, it does leave scope for reading his reflexive, agentic engagement as an actor for whom his body is a vehicle of self-expression also besides being a malleable ploy for cultural representation. Also the body seen through classical theoretical positions offered by Western scholarship on films and cultural analyses, also is equally invested with traditional connotations and protocol of indigenous protocols of viewership. The star body of Shah Rukh, as understood in his ouvre is an instance, that can be regarded to be of emblematic significance, albeit in popular domain.