CHAPTER 5


The River/Women as a Metaphor: Virginity, Sex and Identification in Cinema.

This last film that director Kapoor completed before his death in 1988 became a smash hit that heartily reconfirmed, after several lukewarm releases, his cherished epithet of “the Great Showman.” It is in fact in the grand Kapoor tradition: an ingenious and epic-scale allegory that synthesizes classical and mythic narrative, soft-core political and social commentary (here condemning the corruption of politicians and capitalists and championing the nascent environmental initiatives of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi), and an audacious display of the female anatomy. Broadly speaking, the narrative recapitulates the Shakuntala story—that first appeared in the epic Mahabharata in perhaps the 3rd or 2nd century BC and then was reworked, some six hundred years later, by the poet Kalidasa into the most famous of all Sanskrit dramas. Since the heroine of this story (after an ordeal that will be summarized below) became recognized as the mother of the dynast Bharata, whose name is reflected in the official, post-Independence name for “India” (Bharat, or the [land of the] descendants of Bharata”), this tale is as portentous as it is popular.

But the film additionally alludes to another Mahabharata motif: that of a human prince’s union with a river goddess (as in King Shantanu’s marriage to Ganga incarnate), as well as to the myth of the divine river’s “descent” to the human realm, now superimposed onto mundane space to follow her meandering course over the north Indian plains to the Bay of Bengal. This permits the film to offer both a spectacular travelogue and an auspicious visual pilgrimage to some of north India’s most revered Hindu sites—from the source of the Ganga at the Gaumukh glacier, near the Tibetan border, to her great pilgrimage center at Banaras/Varanasi, to her merger with the Indian Ocean at Ganga Sagar, an island off the Bengal coast. As if this were not
enough, motifs and themes from the *Ramayana* and from the life story of Krishna and his medieval poet-devotee, the Rajput princess *Mira*, are additionally worked in.

Ethnic ontogeny, national geography, Hindu mythology, and the feminization and divinization of land and nature thus all converge in the film's blue-eyed Himalayan heroine, *Ganga* (played by Kapoor's ingénue discovery Mandakini, whose stage name evokes another sacred river)—who shoulders this heavy symbolic burden, above her ample cleavage, as jauntily as she does the jug of *ganga-jal* (Ganges water) she carries in a famous scene early in the film. Like her epic prototypes, this divine mountain-girl meets and falls for a city-boy and contracts an informal marriage with him—and then (so to speak) it is all downhill from there.

Some background concerning the *Shakuntala* story: One of the most ubiquitous tropes of classical Sanskrit narrative is of a prince, emblematic of masculinity, urbanity, and indeed human culture, who strays into the wilderness (usually while hunting deer) and there encounters a mysterious, semi-divine woman, symbolic of the fertility and protean power of nature, with whom he falls in love and who fatefuly alters the course of his life. *Shakuntala*'s birth is itself the outcome of a brief liaison between a celestial courtesan (*apsara*) and a world-renouncing king, and she is raised in a forest hermitage where (like a Disney heroine) she fondles tame deer and talks to birds and flowers. The virile King *Dushyanta*, out for a hunt, comes upon her and convinces her, with some difficulty, to enter into an informal "marriage" with him, promising to legitimize their union and send for her after he returns to his capital. In fact, the *Mahabharata* (with its characteristically astute and dark vision of realpolitik) makes clear that the king has no such intention, and merely intends to enjoy a one-night-stand with a naive rustic belle. However, in Kalidasa's better known version (possibly produced under the patronage of the Gupta kings), both *Shakuntala* and her royal lover fall victim to the power of a curse that causes her to lose the signet ring he gave her as a love token, and him to suffer total amnesia regarding the affair.

Kalidasa's king-hero is thus exonerated of guilt for abandoning the heroine (and Raj Kapoor will likewise favor the latter approach, substituting a grandmotherly heart-attack and resultant family crisis for the loss of the ring). In any case, the lovesick *Shakuntala* becomes pregnant and gives birth to the hero's son, and then—after enough time has elapsed to make her forest-dwelling neighbors wonder why no one has come for her—makes her own way to the royal city to present the boy to the king. In the story's most powerful scene, the latter denounces her (in the *Mahabharata*, *Dushyanta* knowingly lies, ostensibly to protect his reputation and lineage against the paternity suit of a possibly "loose" woman, but in the Sanskrit drama he of course literally
does not remember who she is) and *Shakuntala* suffers bitter humiliation, yet offers a spirited and heartfelt defense of her claim. Both versions direct the audience's sympathy toward the woman who has been wronged, and ultimately rely on a deus ex machina to bring the erring (or amnesiac) king to his senses—whereupon the little family is happily reunited and *Shakuntala*'s son, the demi-divine *Bharata*, becomes heir to the throne. Kapoor's film substitutes a weak hero for an erring one and introduces parental and family complications that further exonerate him, and it situates most of its heroine's humiliation during her long journey to the metropolis.

*Ram Teri Ganga Maili* opens with a brief prologue depicting a political rally on the banks of the Hooghly (the name of the Ganga's channel that flows through Calcutta), ostensibly to protest the pollution of the river, but in fact (as we learn immediately after the credits) as a grab for power by the corrupted party boss, *Bhagwat Chaudhury* (Raza Murad) and his industrialist backer *Jeeva Sahai*, (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), to whom he has promised a license to build another polluting factory.

The credit sequence alternates scenes of the pristine river of the Himalayas with her debased form on the plains, graphically showing (in newsreel-like footage) her pollution with human corpses and raw sewage, while the bhajan-style title song intones a verse (among others) that alludes to Kapoor's own previous oeuvre: his *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* ("The land in which Ganga flows," 1961):

> **He who has worshipped Ganga with head humbly bowed,**  
> **and who has sung the praise of the land in which she flows,**  
> **He too now must come forward to say, 'God, your Ganga is tainted.'**

"Sculpting in time..." 2 That is the memorable phrase Andrey Tarkovsky used to describe the process of filmmaking. True, most films are mindless fillers of available time. But the very process of making a film organises itself to fit a given time frame and this imposes a temporal flow. Filmmakers have been conscious of this temporal flow and are driven to seek a visual metaphor to encapsulate this passage of time in a given space. The most lyrical metaphor of all is the timeless flow of a river to connote an unseen dimension besides the incantatory presence of this ceaseless movement of eddying water. By comparison, the use of juxtaposed shots of changing seasons or the flapping pages of a calendar are literal. Changing seasons imply the cyclic nature of time while the flowing river hints at a mysterious link with the past and forebodes an unknown future. Is it any wonder then that the most remarkable images from films that imply the churning chaos of immediacy and the certitude of eternity, of change and immutability, are linked to rivers?
Rivers have been the channels of not only trade and commerce but the very arteries that nurtured civilizations. Rivers are both the heart and the nerve endings of great cities and cultural centers, nourishing the heart, mind and souls of civilizations, of people who created these cities and are sustained by their creations, over centuries and generations. Nothing else comes close to the symbiotic relationship between a river and a city, religious faith and its ardent devotees, than the mystical - and mystifying - bond that anchors Varanasi to the Ganga. The Ganga embodies the mystique of life and death, a flow of seemingly irreconcilable opposites, of sinful exploitation of blind faith and the pitiful hope of redemption. The exploiters of flesh and faith are the custodians of temporal power and religious faith in Varanasi. A vulgar exploitation of our collective reverence for the Ganga touched the nadir of hypocrisy and unapologetic obscenity in Raj Kapoor’s puerile purveyance of pieties he loftily called "Ram Teri Ganga Maili". Raj Kapoor’s mammary obsession led him to douse a nubile, un-bloused Mandakini (a starlet specially named by him for his kitschy, cliché-laden parable) under a waterfall to symbolize the purity of innocent love. From his early film "Barsaat"(1949}, Kapoor has associated the unsullied mountain stream with the sanctity of redemptive romance that is sensual and also nurturing.

But Raj Kapoor is also guilty of sullying the spring of his romantic inspiration and nothing describes this artistic corruption more than the pious hypocrisies of "Satyam Shivam Sundaram" (1978) and "Ram Teri Ganga Maili". The story of a young engineer falling in love with the sweet unseen voice that actually comes out of a scarred face - and a voluptuous body flaunted with breathtaking brazeness - climaxes when a river rises in flood to inundate the hero with blinding insight. In "Ram Teri Ganga Maili", the corruption of a whole society is encapsulated in the course of the Ganga - from the crystalline pure snows down to the dirty, decadent plains. In a flourish of heavy handed irony, the heroine is ritually raped in the vast brothel that Varanasi had degenerated into, on a pleasure boat afloat on the Ganga. Subhash Ghai who takes his mantle of showmanship with an undisguised air of self-importance, updated the equation between the redemptive river and chaste Indian womanhood in "Pardes". His heroine Ganga’s redemptive powers extend beyond desi shores. An NRI tycoon singing "I Love My India" comes home to find a purebred desi bride to rescue his Americanised son from the luxuriously cushioned hell of western materialism. The entire film resonates with the ultimate corruption of a heroine named Ganga (her mother is named Narmada).It has one sequence - replete with silhouetted boats against flaming sunsets - to celebrate the actual river we venerate.

The image of the river - both in "Ram Teri..." and "Pardes" - is visually prosaic, completely innocent of any sublimity or intimations of immortality. It
is amazing how another "masala" movie made in the mythological idiom captures the liquid grace of Ganga's fabled descent from heaven to earth. It was in Bapu's Telugu film "Sita Kalyanam" made in the late 1970s that a swirling white diaphanous cloth drew beautiful arabesques against a dark starry sky. The simplicity of the inventive image set to melody created an aura of lyrical dance. A much maligned genre - but one with strong theatrical roots in our modes of narration - like the derided mythological, can create a moment of sheer visual magic.

Like so much else in Indian cinema, it is Satyajit Ray's genius, which created a memorable vignette of Varanasi in "Aparajito" (1956). The second, often neglected, film in the Apu Trilogy recreates a small slice of Bengal in Varanasi, subconsciously evoking the connection between the river from its most visible, visited and venerated city down to the broad, almost stagnant serenity of a mighty river as it splits into many estuaries and spills its waters into the Bay of Bengal. The boy Apu skips around with desultory curiosity and contained energy on the ghats of Varanasi where his father's weak feet falter and stumble before gasping out the last breath and the pigeons fly in a moment of surreal epiphany. The small temples cling tenaciously; to the ghats and the sprawling terrace of an old style mansion taken over by impudent monkeys form a collage of an ancient city that is very much alive in the present. The river as a means of a journey is reinforced by the image of the train chugging over a bridge - it also connects "Aparajito" to "Pather Panchali" (1955) - but with a subtle alteration of meaning. Apu's journey back to his native Bengal frees him from the inherited calling of priesthood into the world of science and intellectual curiosity as he grows into an adolescent.

Ray may have imbibed the understated poetic use of the river as symbol and metaphor from observing Jean Renoir at work when the great French master generously gave his time to eager acolytes while shooting "The River"(1951) in India. The smoothly gliding river bordered by lush foliage and a majestically towering tree were as much a part of the narrative as the colonial family living in a sprawling sunny bungalow on the edge of the great river. Renoir juxtaposed the river's changing moods and the awakened sexuality of the adolescent girls with his signature seamless ease.

Carefree adolescence flowering into femininity is a theme Ray touches with warm humour in "Teen Kanya"(1961). Aparna Sen is the gamine tomboy frolicking by the river and climbing trees to chase her pet squirrel. The citified yet awkward scion of the village's wealthiest family woos her. This unlikely romance unfolds to the rhythms of the river which takes the young man away to Calcutta and makes the tomboyish heart grow fonder. Ray's short film was stretched out to saccharine length in the Hindi remake "Uphaar". Jaya
Bhaduri's impish charm gurgled with mirth to offset the majestic calm of the river.

The French connection with the Ganga survived into the 1990s. Vijay Singh, the Paris based writer/film-maker saluted Ganga's abiding mystery in "Jaya Ganga" (1998). His picaresque narrative coursed along the river from its high Himalayan source down the undulating plains, drawing deliberate parallels between sophisticated Gallic surrealism and the illusory nature of all Maya at an existential plane. It is one man's search for a woman he finds in a book, which takes him to the Himalayas and ends in a Hindi film rescue of a dusky dancer from a kotha. The voyage along the Ganga may not have realised all the ambitious meanings the director intended but the journey is both picturesque and teasingly ambiguous.

From the surreal to the commercial is a steep but necessary descent. It is surprising that not many film-makers other than Shakti Samanta exploited the dramatic backdrop of the Howrah Bridge as more than a picture postcard image. This historic suspension bridge across the Hooghly is our equivalent to the Golden Gate and Brooklyn bridges, which are used to such heightened cinematic effect by Hollywood. Samanta was given permission to shoot on the Howrah Bridge for a day and the boat traffic was stopped for a while. So well organised was this producer/director that he packed up the musical suspense thriller well within the allotted time and traffic - both road and river - resumed earlier than anticipated, to the disappointment of the crowd that had gathered to watch this Ashok Kumar starrer. Our newer film-makers with lavish budgets for picturising songs abroad opt for the Sydney Harbour and its landmark Opera House or the over familiar London landscape where the Thames is hardly seen while the lead pair cavort to instant costume changes.

Perhaps they associate river-scapes with the outmoded Radha-Krishna myth and the sedate - by comparison to the MTV-ised choreography - raasleela. These bucolic prancings are dated to the archaic 1950s and 1960s by mainstream Hindi cinema. It is the films in regional languages that are alive with local colour and celebratory ardour. Think of the many K.Vishwanath films - from "Sirisiri Muvva" to "Sankarabharanam" to "Swatimutyam" to "Swatikiranam" - where impossibly noble people resolve their personal and cultural conflicts by the seemingly serene yet ever threatening waters of the Godavari.

Whatever be the particular village, the broad expanse of a river complete with wide steps decorated with rangoli, sandy beaches for the sprightly heroine to dance to alliteration-laden lyrics are an essential part of the Vishwanath film-scape. An even earlier film "Moogamanasulu" centered on the worshipful adoration of a simple boatman for the zamindar's charming
daughter whom he ferries across the river to college everyday. The beguiling charm - even though farfetched - of the star-crossed lovers ensured it was remade in Hindi as "Milan".

Mani Ratnam introduces his eponymous heroine Roja as a water sprite gambolling in the river while the camera cuts to the rhythm of "Chinna Chinna Aasa". The marvellous collage works like an expanded Liril ad, selling the virtues of village belle innocence. Even river magic has to be bottled and sold for a consumer market.

Coming back to studying the film, we see that while magnate Sahai celebrates the ruthless Chaudhury's election as party president and plots a marital alliance between Chaudhury's daughter Radha (Divya Rana) and his own dreamily idealistic son Narendra or "Naren" for short; Rajiv Kapoor who is an ardent follower of hindu reformer Swami Vivekananda (whose given name was also Narendra), and dreams of a college trip to the source of the Ganga, to discover if the river is truly pristine upstream, far from the corruption of Calcutta. Though his father refuses him permission to go, Naren obtains it through the intervention of his pious, wheelchair bound grandmother (Sushma Seth), who gives him a metal urn and begs him to "bring Ganga back" to her. Naren's cause is also championed by his maternal uncle (mausa) Kunj Bihari (Saeed Jaffrey), an artistic bon vivant who frequents courtesan houses and who quotes a verse of Muhammad Iqbal concerning Ganga, and also fits Naren with a Swiss hat and suede jacket for his mountain idyll. This is also to show the outsider that Naren is who intrudes the pious space which Ganga occupies.

Once in the Himalayas, Naren's group finds the road to Gangotri blocked by landslides and settles into a comfortable holiday camp serviced by local mountain folk. It is while ecstatically roaming the hills nearby that Naren has his first encounter with Ganga-the-girl, in a scene brilliantly staged to evoke its mythic resonance's—she is first experienced through her tinkling laughter, and then rises, yakshi-like, ( celestial) from a field of wildflowers to announce "I am Ganga." It is, of course, love-at-first-darshan for both young people, and their bond is cemented when Naren saves Ganga from an attempted rape by one of the college lads, and then accompanies her on a walking pilgrimage to the river's source. There is truly breathtaking scenery enroute, and also accompanying Ganga's first song (that establishes her as both innocent and seductive), Tujhe bulaye yeh meri bahen ("my arms call to you").

The voyeuristic side of Kapoor's reputation as "Showman" rested in part on his willingness to repeatedly push the envelope on what government censors would permit filmmakers to "show" on the screen: from Nargis'
bathing suit in Awara (1951), to Dimple Kapadia's bikini in Bobby (1973), to Zeenat Aman's blouseless mini-sari in Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978). The equivalently scandalous (and doubtless most replayed) scene here is Mandakini's bath in a waterfall while singing Tujhe bulaye..., the refrain of which calls out "Aa jaad" ("Come to me,")—her gauzy sari rendered translucent by the water to offer, in effect, a full frontal display of the young actress' generous charms. Kapoor maintained that...my cinema was born in an age of idealism. That is why the songs in my films have a pristine quality about them; the women have a freshly washed, innocent look.3

Pre-marital sex in Hindi cinema, at least until recently, generally adhered to two rules: (1) the encounter had to be understood by the couple as a genuine and committed "marriage," suggested by evocations of nuptial ritual (see, e.g., the prototypical scene in Aradhana, 1969), and (2) even a single night's contact invariably resulted in pregnancy that, moreover, produced a male offspring. In Ram Teri Ganga Maili, the pretext for Naren and Ganga's abrupt union is the supposed "mountain custom" of girls being allowed to choose their own spouses during an annual full-moon festival (represented by the song Sun Sahiba Sun, "Listen, Beloved [I have chosen you; will you choose me?") as well as the pressure exerted by another local suitor. In a dramatic scene, Ganga leads Naren to a ruined temple that has been adorned as a nuptial chamber, while outside her stalwart brother Karan Singh (played by Hindi-speaking Indo-American actor Tom Alter in a rare non-anglo role) fights off the jilted fiancé and his minions, ultimately sacrificing his life for his sister's happiness.

Unfortunately, that happiness is not destined to last long. After a single blissful night, Naren returns to Calcutta with his college group, promising to return soon to fetch Ganga. Instead, he finds the house adorned for his own engagement party—to Chaudhury's daughter Radha—and when he tries to tell his grandmother that he is already married, she suffers a heart attack. Naren is no irresponsible Dushyanta, however. Though stricken with guilt over his grandmother's death and severely beaten by his father who blames him for it, Naren attempts to escape to rejoin Ganga, but is apprehended in Rishikesh by police alerted by the evil Chaudhury, and brought back to Calcutta a virtual prisoner. Plans for his marriage to Radha proceed. Eventually, he confides in his uncle Kunj Bihari, who makes a second, unsuccessful attempt to retrieve Ganga.

The mise-en-scène alternates between Naren's trials and the advancement of Ganga's pregnancy against the backdrop of changing seasons in the Himalayas. Among falling leaves (and while Naren languishes in a police lockup in Rishikesh), the very-pregnant Ganga sings a long-distance duet with him (Yaara O yaara, "Beloved, O beloved"); she gives birth to their son, helped
by a midwife and the friendly village postmaster, as snow falls on the hills. Yet when Naren still fails to appear by the next spring (and a misdirected letter from Radha reveals details of the planned marriage in Calcutta), the distraught Ganga resolves to go to Calcutta. She intends to make no claim on Naren (who she thinks has spurned her for Radha), but only wants him to accept their son.

Ganga's trials now take a more demeaning dimension. Tragically missing Kunj Bihari at the Rishikesh bus stand, the innocent girl (who knows only that Calcutta is the place “where the Ganga ends”) is waylaid by a succession of exploiters: the madam of a cheap brothel in Rishikesh, a lecherous brahman priest, and finally a wily procurer for a higher-class kotha or courtesan house in Banaras, who is drawn by her beautiful voice. Though some viewers might wince at the film's relentless depiction of the helpless vulnerability of a young mother lacking the “protection” of a male escort, the type of situations depicted, and the satire of exploitative north Indian types is, alas, not altogether hyperbolic (many prostitutes in Bombay and other cities are in fact said to be waylaid girls from the Himalayas), nor is Ganga entirely without agency: she fights back, attempts escape, and hurls shaming sarcasm at her abusers and would-be corrupters. Throughout this numbing “descent” of Ganga-personified, there are ironic allusions to the sacral status of the river for which she is named, that reflect on the hypocrisy of formal religion (as when an elderly woman on a train refuses Ganga a sip of water for her infant, because it is precious Ganga-water obtained on a pilgrimage).

Though Ganga increasingly sees herself, and is seen by others, as a “fallen” woman, the film is of course careful to maintain her technical chastity, and the “Bai” or courtesan to whom she is eventually apprenticed gives a speech clarifying that her girls are trained only for “singing and dancing,” and are not forced to “sell their bodies.” Nevertheless, after a remarkable dance performance in a pavilion on the bank of the holy river that reprises the title song, now in Ganga’s plaintive voice, she is indeed sold—to a powerful and ruthless politician from Calcutta (Chaudhury, of course), thus paving the way for the film's extraordinary climax, when Ganga (assisted by Uncle Kunj, who has finally located her) is brought to perform at Naren's wedding to Radha. Kapoor pulls out all the stops during this dazzling sequence, juxtaposing a double entendre-laden bhajan (Ek Radha, ek Meera, “There is Radha, here is Meera [both love Shyam, but say, what is the difference between them?]” with a series of seemingly irresolvable dharma-dilemmas, escalating dramatic speeches, and even a (somewhat) surprising ending.

As an ideological statement, the film displays all the status-quo-affirming warts characteristic of Kapoor's work (and indeed of much of mainstream Hindi cinema): the ultimate reduction of social conflict to family
squabbles that can be resolved through "love" and "faith," and the combination of enlightened messages about women's agency and honor with the relentless display of their bodies and the stereotyping of their social roles within an unquestioned patriarchal matrix. By positing no explicit connection between the villainous Sahai and Chaudhury's corruption and the hyper-rich lifestyle enjoyed by their families, the narrative apparently seeks to divert resentment against an entire class toward a few "bad" individuals within it, and gives viewers license to relish the spectacle of Naren's innocently conspicuous consumption of the fruits of his father's ill-gotten gain (e.g., he sports a different outfit every day on the Gangotri trip).

Though the sincere but ineffectual Naren finds a voice at the end, it is the performances of Saeed Jaffrey as Kunj Bihari—an old debauchee who refuses to be a hypocrite—and of Mandakini as Ganga—an innocent who is nevertheless discerning and capable of the most disarming forthrightness—that dominate the film. When the two finally meet, Bihari (plotting a way out of Ganga's plight and alluding to Sita's agni pariksha or "fire ordeal" in the Ramayana) delivers the memorable line, "You have already been through a severe fire-test, daughter-in-law; it is now your Ram's turn to be tested!"

The shooting of another Kapoor's film Jis Desh Me Ganga Behti Hai (1961) had taken him to Calcutta and at the banks of Ganges where the Dakshineshwar temple is situated. There he happened to meet a holy man at the Swami Ramakrishna Paramhans math (monastery) who narrated to him the story of Totapuri Maharaj, a sadhu from Rishikesh who had once come to see Sri Ramakrishna. In Raj Kapoor's own words,

They met at the geographical point where the Ganga is at its filthiest, and Totapuri Maharaj said, 'Ram, yeh teri Ganga kitni maali hai'...Looking at him steadily, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa replied 'Maharaj, this is but natural. As she flows down from Rishikesh to here, the Ganga does nothing but wash the sins of human beings.......

It was from here that Kapoor converted this idea into what was to be his last film. And for the first time he wrote the story by himself where the title of the film was not a reference to the Ram of Ramayana but to Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Though audiences still read it as a call to Lord Ram and Kapoor's Ganga was just not the overworked river tiring itself with the garbage humans pumped into it everyday; it took the form of a blue-eyed nubile young debutant who was shown to fill the bill to the core. Ganga the pure, Ganga the virgin, Ganga the Himalayan beauty, Ganga the faithful.
Women, Voyeurism and Films: The Contested Screen.

Actor Mandakini's waterfall scene will perhaps go down in history by what people will remember her for. She opened the doors of voyeuristic pleasures for an audience which till then had seen only less. Her breast-feeding shot, where she is suckling her infant son are, also marred by men in the frame who seem to be aroused by the action. Strange for a society which accords a divine status for the mother figure!! This brings us to discuss the role of voyeurism in films. And the film drew its success from the young actor's anatomical display and not for the concerns for an over polluted river as its director claimed.

The very broadest possible meaning of the voyeurism is watching others do something that one is not doing oneself. Thus, there is a sense in which all the visual arts are voyeuristic- that is, all visual arts invite us to be spectators rather than participants. The word 'voyeur' comes from the French word voir or to 'see' which ultimately comes from the Latin word 'videre' which is the root of the word video. The whole film industry is based on the fact that people like to watch events in they are not participating. So, of course, is theatre; books, too allow us to read about and visualize events in which we do not take part. So the question is that why do we like to watch and that too over and over again.

The ancient philosopher Aristotle provides some provocative answers to voyeurism. Aristotle's, *Metaphysics*, which is perhaps his most sophisticated philosophic treatise, claims that, as human beings we all desire to understand. He makes the claim that sight is the sense that we like best because we learn the most from seeing. One then is pushed to ponder over as to why we like to see what it is we like to see. Aristotle says, 'sight makes us know in the highest degree and makes clear many differences in things.' Certainly we like our other sense but not so much because they help us to know; through our other senses we experience more immediate facts and pleasures, facts and pleasures not so tied up with knowledge. As we say, 'seeing is believing, or knowing.'

This talk of nudity in the Indian entertainment industry is about as old as the industry itself. When Durga Khote donned the male armour to pose as Rani Durgavati in a film of that name from the late 20s or the early 30s, there would have been many crying hoarse at the debasement of women. Nargis' swimsuit outfit in *Awara* would have aroused similar indignation. The floodgates, as we all know, opened with Raj Kapoor's plebeian/voyeuristic turn in the seventies. *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* made it mandatory for every newcomer after that to spell out her views on
‘exposure.’ Answers varied from ‘I will not expose’ to ‘if the role demands it, and if it’s tasteful, why not.’

Notwithstanding an occasional sizzling number such as ‘dhak dhak’ it has taken two decades for that question to become as topical again. Words like nudity, exposure and vulgarity have returned to our newspapers due mainly to a spate of small budget films concentrating on the sexual aspect of relationships, and a sling of music videos with re-mixes of old songs. This particular Kapoor film went beyond the voyeurism of sex; the film’s most famous scene became the celestial like nymphet bathing under a frothy waterfall undressed to thrill in a transparent white cloth. Nothing compared to the amount of skin ficks we see in our films today but Raj Kapoor’s justification of showing the virginal purity of the river in the form of a woman untouched by the evils of society and her subsequent fall from grace could have been handled otherwise. Enough for those directors who think courage is equivalent to doing the shocking and forbidden which in turn will always try to violate whatever sense of propriety our culture has left. But here too we may be seeing another pathetic attempt to attain some intimacy.

For decades, films have been a substitute of intimacy for many; rather than being involved in the lives of real people, rather than sharing the joys and sufferings of those whom they know and care for, they come to care for the fictional characters they see in the films though only momentarily. To use a semi-clad woman in the name of artistry is certainly no aesthetics, these kind of scenes are certainly anti-art and are rightly loathed by those who think that our entertainment agencies should b a product of human intelligence. As an entertainer Raj Kapoor knew that scenes with a marginally clothed woman would sell well yet he seemed offended at being called a voyeur. In the case of ‘Ram Teri Ganga Maili’ he claimed that his inspiration came from the imagery of the beautiful Ganga, scantily clad, ‘as divine, as spiritual perfection.’ He said with a touch of bitterness: -

Fortunately painters like Raja Ravi Verma and Kanu Desai painted scantily clad nubile beauties as their vision of Ganga at a time when there wasn’t any holier-than-thou film journalists to vilify them and sling mud at them. Like the rat-pack did when Raj Kapoor tried to present a similar vision on screen.5

The Ravi Varma press, established in 1894, introduced gods and goddesses with faces transplanted from foreign magazines and books but in Indian attire which gained immediate popularity. One of Ravi Varma’s favourite mythological themes Shakuntala had a buxom shepherdess in a tasseled sari reclining in a forest meadow alongside a basket of flowers -a scenery which was devoid of historical or material reality. His Damyanti was a lovelorn damsel leaning over the terrace in much the same manner as a still
from the theatre show 'Feast of Roses,' a photograph which seems to have influenced him. As many smaller letterpresses in local print shops were set up a greater indigenization of popular imagery took place to cater to regional taste. It became possible to collage, interpolate and visually acquire the desired 'other' the subjects of their own colonization in the very mode of picture construction. European landscapes, the castles of Lake Geneva, alpine meadows had images of gods and goddesses transposed on them to create a curious gestalt between figure and ground.

As Kajri Jain mentions, "The nation as geography, as body, as present, is curiously absent, giving way instead to a mythical, undifferentiated foreign... For of course, there is no one Indian landscape, just as there is no one Indian physique." In this work Ravi Varma depicted the descent of the celestial river Ganges to the earth while the god Shiva stands by with his consort Parvati and the bull Nandi awaiting the event. The popularity of these oleographs by Varma were precisely their theatrical style and their introduction of specificities into the highly symbolic rendering of gods and goddesses.

The large space that the young actor bathing and singing under the waterfall occupies a concrete space suggesting a hybrid existence while defying the carnivalesque aspect of multiculturalism. (A line of enquiry, which needs to be undertaken, is the trajectory of the gaze in art in countries like India. Is there anything like the pure gaze?) A characteristic of art in the present is a blurring of boundaries between the gallery and public spaces and between the spectator and the object. What is it that is characteristic of these new nuanced art objects? To quote Maaretta Jaukkuri in the catalogue 'Unfolding Perspectives' Helsinki 2001, "an important new aspect here, however, is that this seems to be a process that goes in many directions, and which no longer adheres to a mono-directional, from- center-to-periphery model, but which seems to be going in every direction and to be forming very much its own model. In this model all participants are both spectators and objects of the others' gaze." Popular art is marked by this dichotomous relationship where the spectator and viewer are interchangeable and equally questioning. Take for instance the image of the god Vishnu reclining on a serpent and served by many gods while he rests in his lordly abode. The god returns the gaze of the devotee and there is a merging with the deity, which is the aim of devotion. Kajri Jain points out, "The moment of iconic perception of the gaze, and the icon-as-object dissolves in the immanence of the subject, god. Unlike the cult object of (Walter) Benjamin, an essential aspect of the icon is its visibility, its availability for darshan (seeing or being in the presence of the holy), and the elimination of distance between the viewer/devotee and
both the form and the substance of the icon, all of which are ultimately the same thing."8

The pedestalization of the image has taken place in a popular mode which allows for a participation in the divinity. To quote Kajri Jain again, "In a transitory world of maya, illusion, god is the only original, the only permanence: everything else, any form, is equally ephemeral, equally a reproduction, a copy (but at the same time, the more prevalent the images of a particular deity or divine avatar, the stronger its cult). The power of the icon, therefore, does not decay with mass reproduction for the exact reasons that the aura does."9 The same picture can be simulated in diverse ways from oleographs to calendars, in popular art, and in films by the posters of alluring stars, which are their selling factors. What is more they are interchangeable with films stars even politicians provided it is in the same idiom. The present day version of it in the Brooklyn lunch box hybridizes the image of Lakshmi further, melding together the goddess with the politician Jayalalitha and any popular film actress from a Hindi film. The condensed image with its multiple layerings, signals in several directions. It is interstitial and hybrid but its functional role while remaining the same can also serves other modes: the divine film star, the film star politician which was the most visible in the recent elections and so on. The street signs and movie posters, the small-scale operators of consumerism, the hand-made images sensitive to the smallest fluctuation of public feeling are all grist to the visual mill which are churned up in a prolix array.

At the same time this particular film was a visual treat as it captured the unspoilt landscape of the Himalayas. Infact a major part of the shooting took place in the outdoors though Raj Kapoor if he was to be true to the spirit of his theme would simply have to go the Gangotri, the source of the river Ganges in the higher reaches of the Himalayas. It is a fact that Radhu Karmakar, the cinematographer of the film fell victim to the difficulty of breathing engendered by the lack of oxygen at those heights. Yet Kapoor captured some of his most splendid outdoor visuals during this location-shooting. The romantic scenes with Mandakini and his son were shot during the outdoors of the making of the film including the song and fight sequences.

But, again even some of the best films incorporate elements that degrade women in the name of artistry. For women, what matters to most is to be able to 'get past those scenes' and for men it is the pleasure factor which make them watch the scenes and not yet find it an ennobling exercise. Most men tend to find such scenes titillating and enjoy the physical sensations with no regard for the feelings or for the dignity of the woman involved; she is simply there to serve their pleasure. Why women feature in the most objectionable and explicitly sexual scenes is something that has sparked off a
host of debates. Noted filmmaker and lyricist Gulzar says in an interview that, "I sometimes feel annoyed with the heroines for what they accept as roles for themselves. Our heroines have to be educated."10

The director of this film never fully appreciated that scenes such as these mentioned, conveyed more horror and despair than the depiction of direct violence and atrocities against women. His defense was 'I don't profess to be a moralist or a reformist; I am not a preacher or philosopher or an intellectual. I am just saying what I feel.'11 Thus disclaiming any role other than that of a filmmaker, he thought he was absolving himself of all social responsibilities. He used to say with certain ferocity:

Thank god I have not studied much, thank god I am not literate, not bookish, and I haven't read much... I am down to earth and I can feel for the other one, I can smile with him and share his pain and joy.12

The anti-intellectual stance was born out of Kapoor's conviction that as an entertainer, his job was not to intellectualize, rather feel the pulse of the emotions that he wanted to bring about in his films. Therefore his social criticism was basically a gut reaction to the flaws of a transitional society marred by corruption and injustice. Why he chose women and women's bodies only to depict these flaws in the society is a notion that he would not have been able to defend at all. He had the reputation of launching new faces, which predominantly projected women from a non-film background and were women who ultimately exposed their bodies in his films. It has been widely believed that he approached a host of top actors in Bollywood to play the lead in this movie, they refused.

When asked whether women in RK films are rather buxom and overexposed the male lead Rajeev, who was also Kapoor's son said:

I don't accept that women in our films are buxom. What's important is that a woman should be sensuous. She should be delicate, virtuous and glamorous. There's a thin line between sensuality and vulgarity. The Madhuri-Rishi pair (in Yaarana and Sahibaan) has not done well at the box-office. It's not a star pair that makes a film... it's the whole team. The scenes, the story, the background, the songs... everything counts. It's like a family effort. If a film is made with sincerity and is well-packaged, I'm sure it will make a difference..13

This particular film's young actor was perhaps that much naive and obviously blinded by the glamour of the industry and gave in to the demands of the film. Mandakini was reportedly sixteen when she was signed on for the film and in Raj Kapoor's eyes fitted the bill perfectly of the virginal metaphor that he used to portray the river. The wet saree sequence in popular films was the way sexuality was being projected over the years for the audiences.
"Indian cinema excels in the matter of disguised acts of sexual excitement by operating on the basis that the female nude is less exciting than the veiled."\footnote{14}

**Masculinity and the Rhetoric of the Gaze: Beauty, Photography and Diegesis in Hindi Cinema.**

In *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* it wasn't 'legitimized by a sudden torrential downpour that soaks the woman's flimsy saree, and 'allows for a very provocative and sexually tantalizing exposure of the female body,' (Richards 1995) but a deliberate attempt to portray the young actors generous assets.

This also brings us to discuss the eye of the camera and the ways it uses its technical power to objectify women. Looking at someone using a camera (or looking at images thus produced) is clearly different from looking at the same person directly. Indeed, the camera frequently enables us to look at people whom we would never otherwise see at all. In a very literal sense, the camera turns the depicted person into an object, distancing viewer and viewed.

We are all familiar with anecdotes about the fears of primal tribes that 'taking' a photograph of them may also take away their souls, but most of us have probably felt on some occasions that we don't want 'our picture' taken. In controlling the image, the photographer (albeit temporarily) has power over those in front of the lens, a power which may also be lent to viewers of the image. In this sense, the camera can represent a 'controlling gaze'.

Film theorists argue that in order to 'suspend one's disbelief' and to become drawn into a conventional narrative when watching a film one must first 'identify with' the camera itself as if it were one's own eyes and thus accept the viewpoint offered (this is, for instance, an assumption made by Mulvey 1975). Whilst one has little option but to accept the locational viewpoint of the film-maker, to suggest that one is obliged to accept the preferred reading involves treating viewers as uniformly passive, making no allowance for 'negotiation' on their part. There are many modes of engagement with film, as with other media.

Film theorist Christian Metz made an analogy between the cinema screen and a mirror (Metz 1975), arguing that through identifying with the gaze of the camera, the cinema spectator re-enacts what the psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan called 'the mirror stage', a stage at which looking into the mirror allows the infant to see itself for the first time as other - a significant step in ego formation. Extending this observation to still photography, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins observe that 'mirror and camera are tools of self-reflection and surveillance. Each creates a double of the self, a second figure who can be examined more closely than the original -
a double that can also be alienated from the self - taken away, as a photograph can be, to another place In relation to film and television narrative, camera treatment is called 'subjective' when the viewer is treated as a participant, as when:

- the camera is addressed directly; or
- when the camera imitates the viewpoint or movement of a character (a 'point-of-view' shot); here we are shown not only what a character sees, but how he or she sees it.; or
- the arms or legs of an off-frame participant are shown in the lower part of the frame as if they were those of the viewer (one parody of this technique involved putting spectacles in front of the lens).

An empirical study has shown that a subjective version of "a television commercial received higher scores and better evaluations on measures of viewers' involvement" supporting the notion that subjective camera treatment can help to make the viewer feel more involved in the situation depicted.

In the case of recorded texts such as photographs and films (as opposed to those involving interpersonal communication such as video-conferences), a key feature of the gaze is that the object of the gaze is not aware of the current viewer (though they may originally have been aware of being filmed, photographed, painted etc. and may sometimes have been aware that strangers could subsequently gaze at their image). Viewing such recorded images gives the viewer's gaze a voyeuristic dimension. As Jonathan Schroeder notes, "to gaze implies more than to look at - it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze." Several key forms of gaze can be identified in photographic, filmic or televisual texts, or in figurative graphic art. The most obvious typology is based on who is doing the looking, of which the following are the most commonly cited:

- the spectator's gaze: the gaze of the viewer at an image of a person (or animal, or object) in the text;
- the intra-diegetic gaze: a gaze of one depicted person at another (or at an animal or an object) within the world of the text (typically depicted in filmic and televisual media by a subjective 'point-of-view shot');
- the direct [or extra-diegetic] address to the viewer: the gaze of a person (or quasi-human being) depicted in the text looking 'out of the frame' as if at the viewer, with associated gestures and postures (in some genres, direct address is studiously avoided);
the look of the camera - the way that the camera itself appears to look at the people (or animals or objects) depicted; less metaphorically, the gaze of the film-maker or photographer.

In addition to the major forms of gaze listed above, we should also note several other types of gaze which are less often mentioned:

- the gaze of a bystander - outside the world of the text, the gaze of another individual in the viewer's social world catching the latter in the act of viewing - this can be highly charged, e.g. where the text is erotic (Willemen 1992);

- the averted gaze - a depicted person's noticeable avoidance of the gaze of another, or of the camera lens or artist (and thus of the viewer) - this may involve looking up, looking down or looking away (Dyer 1982);

- the gaze of an audience within the text - certain kinds of popular televisual texts (such as game shows) often include shots of an audience watching those performing in the 'text within a text';

- the editorial gaze - 'the whole institutional process by which some portion of the photographer's gaze is chosen for use and emphasis.\(^\text{18}\)

In relation to viewer-text relations of looking, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen make a basic distinction between an 'offer' and a 'demand':

- an indirect address which represents an offer in which the viewer is an invisible onlooker and the depicted person is the object of the look - here those depicted either do not know that they are being looked at (as in surveillance video), or act as if they do not know (as in feature films, television drama and television interviews); and

- a gaze of direct address which represents a demand for the viewer (as the object of the look) to enter into a parasocial relationship with the depicted person - with the type of relationship indicated by a facial expression or some other means (this form of address is the norm for television newsreaders and portraits and is common in advertisements and posed magazine photographs).\(^\text{19}\) Some theorists make a distinction between the gaze and the look: suggesting that the look is a perceptual mode open to all whilst the gaze is a mode of viewing reflecting a gendered code of desire.\(^\text{20}\) John Ellis and others relate the 'gaze' to cinema and the 'glance' to television - associations which then seem to lead to these media being linked with stereotypical connotations of 'active' (and 'male') for film and 'passive' (and 'female') for television.\(^\text{21}\)
Here perhaps it should be noted that even if one's primary interest is in media texts, to confine oneself to the gaze only in relation 'textual practices' is to ignore the importance of the *reciprocal gaze* in the social context of cultural practices in general (rather than simply a textual/representational context, where a reciprocal gaze is, of course, technically impossible.

**The Obscenity Debates: Films and Central Board of Film Certification**

It is also important to understand how censorship in our country works, it is an irony that while most lewd and suggestive actions which mark the success of our filmi songs are let off by the censor board, actual activities of passion are scissored. Many academics have raised their voices on the shift to self-regulation but with a population that is largely illiterate, the notion of what to see and what not to see would be a largely relative term confined to the sensibilities of yet another group of handfuls making them no different than the present members of the Board.

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) was set up by the Government of India (GOI) under the Cinematograph Act 1952, to certify films for public exhibition. All films--foreign, Indian, feature or documentary--have to obtain a CBFC certificate before they are screened at a cinema or broadcast on television.

Presently, the CBFC is chaired by veteran actor, Sharmila Tagore Pataudi who has had a remarkable innings in Bollywood, and has 25 other non-official members. Various offices of the board are assisted in the examination of films by advisory panels consisting of eminent personalities from different walks of life. In keeping with a government decision, about half the members of every such panel are women.

India produced a total of 795 feature films during 1995, and the figure for 1996 upto October was 545. Of the films made in 1996, 102 were in Hindi and 385 were certified from four southern regional offices--Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Thiruvananthapuram. The largest number of films were in Telugu (122), followed by Tamil (103). For the first time, there were two films in Spanish, and 14 in English. Apart from the officially recognized languages, films were also made in several dialects like Lambani and Sadari.

Of the 545 Indian feature films certified in 1996, 425 films were on social themes and 67 on crime. A total of 333 or 61% were granted 'U' certificates (unrestricted public exhibition), 86 or 16% 'UA' certificates which require parental guidance for children below 12 years of age, and 126 or 23% 'A' certificates (exhibition restricted to adults only). Among the 113 foreign feature films certified in 1996 (upto to October 31), 25 were granted 'U' certificates (22%), 25 'UA' certificates (22%) and 63 'A' certificates (56%).
The Board also certified 757 Indian short films, 181 foreign short films, nine long films other than feature (four Indian and five foreign), and 1066 motion pictures made on video. Up until the end of October 1996, eight Indian feature films, 11 foreign feature films, and 10 foreign video feature films were refused certificates as they were found to be in violation of one or more of the statutory film certification guidelines. Some of these films were certified later in a revised form by the Board.

Of the 795 Indian feature films certified in 1995, 157 were in Hindi, and 559 were certified from the four southern regional offices--Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram. The largest number of films were in Telugu (168), followed by Tamil (165) and Hindi (157). There were 89 films in Kannada and 83 in Malayalam. There were as many as 18 films in English, and dialects in which films were made included Tulu, Nagpuri, and Bodo. There was also a silent film.

A total of 644 films were on social themes and 108 were on crime. The films given 'U' certificates numbered 503 (63%), 122, 'UA' certificates (15%), and 170 'A' certificates (21%). Among the 220 foreign features certified, 49 were granted 'U' certificates (22%), 21 'UA' certificates (9%), and 150 'A' certificates (68%).

The Board also certified 850 Indian short films, 330 foreign short films, nine long films other than features (three Indian, and six foreign) and 1328 video films during 1995. During the year, 21 Indian feature films and 14 foreign feature films were refused certificates as they were found to be in violation of one or more of the statutory film certification guidelines. Some of these films were certified later either in a revised form by the Board itself or on the orders of the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.

Following the controversy generated around the screening of sexually explicit films, in 2002 and the Board’s lack of clear criteria and the myopic view of the process of film-making in a changing society, Vijay Anand, the then Chair of the CBFC recommended a few proposals to the government which included various aspects:-

On the issue of non-censoring of films in general, it was recommended that ratings were to marked like, U, U/A and A and take adequate measures to enforce them strictly. Special theatres could be set up to screen sexually explicit films after giving them a M/A (mature adult) listing. He urged the CBFC to make independent from the clutches of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and recommended to ensure that half the board members are aged between 20 to 30 years as 75% of the youth in the country
are in this age group. Finally he asked for the films shown on television also be brought under the ambit of the board to end dual standards.22

The Government's unwillingness to accept these proposals prompted Anand to resign and in frustration gave out an exasperated comment that...who were shopkeepers yesterday are passing judgments on cinema as CBFC members today. They don't look at cinema in its entirety -they are just looking to suggest cuts. We wanted members to have a film background so that they understood the process of filmmaking.23 Whether one agrees to Anand's recommendations is not the issue here but in a way he did manage to bring about the shortcomings of the censor board.

The next Chair is worth mentioned because it somehow connects to the film in focus. Arvind Trivedi Lankesh was the next boss of the board; an actor himself in the widely popular television epic, Ramayana said he firmly believed in upholding Indian culture in all its purity. He is reported to have said that “Films are our Gangotri, do not soil them.”24 The subject of censorship in Hindi films dates back to the pre-independence era and this letter below perhaps outlines, the debates of creativity and aesthetics in films.

A Letter to Mahatma Gandhi (written in 1939 by K.A. Abbas).

"Today I bring for your scrutiny - and approval - a new toy my generation has learned to play with, the CINEMA! - You include cinema among evils like gambling, satta, horse-racing etc. ... Now if these statements had come from any other person, it was not necessary to be worried about them ... But your case is different. In view of the great position you hold in this country, and I may say in the world, even the slightest expression of your opinion carries much weight with millions of people. And one of the world's most useful inventions would be allowed to be discarded or what is worse, left alone to be abused by unscrupulous people. You are a great soul, Bapu. In your heart there is no room for prejudice. Give this little toy of ours, the cinema, which is not so useless as it looks, a little of your attention and bless it with a smile of toleration."25

Sharmila Tagore, the new Chair of the Board argues on the question whether we need censorship at all or not. She says that “Well, many respected people in the industry like Shyam Benegal, Mrinal Sen, Aruna Vasudev and others think we do not. They say it's undemocratic, irrelevant in the information age. It is argued that censorship is an outdated concept when India is at the front line of the IT boom and that control does more harm than good.”26
Some countries have opted for a rating system in which nothing is cut out but viewers are informed of the nature of the film so they can themselves judge. Others have a self-regulatory mechanism where the industry itself decides how a film is to be classified and modified wherever necessary. She again states that.... But India has no such cohesive film industry body. As of now we have only the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), so it's our job to try and make it work.27

India is a democracy but it cannot be as liberal as, say Britain, although sometimes I feel we go overboard. For example, our TV channels have no qualms about showing dead bodies whereas TV in the West is very restrained in such matters.

Also, in India there is a wide gulf between urban and rural sensibilities as well as a huge diversity of cultural values between linguistic and religious groups. The urban-rural divide is, in fact, growing. We have to act responsibly keeping these things in mind or else we will face many protests. So I believe there must be some form of censorship although it must be intelligent. Now, if there is a smoking sequence in a film that glorifies the habit, it must be deleted for glorification of any addiction is not okay. If you want to show a woman as being "cool" or "modern", don't try to establish that by depicting her with a cigarette between her fingers. That's why I feel we need to have a comprehensive dialogue with producers and directors and impress upon them public perceptions that ought to be kept in mind. I know they regard the Censor Board as an impediment, they think of us as spoilsports. But that's not the way we should be perceived; we must evolve guidelines collectively.28

One needs to realize that a woman with a short number should not be viewed as yet another loose woman and rather focusing on the parts where the dress does not cover her body; the depiction can be easily shifted to her profession, her character and her entire personality. One is not asking to negate the entire aspect of sexuality from films but what needs to see a balance of sharing sexual power between the sexes.

The kissing scenes in the film was something that would have shocked a large audience and the love making scenes would have naturally kept families from viewing the film as a weekly outdoor activity in the cinema halls. The objectionable part perhaps was not the act itself but how it was portrayed; the man gets to keep his clothes on throughout the scenes while he gets busy undressing his young bride, with the camera focusing on her bare shoulders. The climax of the scene ends with the couple lying next to each other semi-clad with black satin sheets.

That people kiss — and sometimes in public — is no more a closely guarded secret. "Values change over time," says director Subhash Ghai. "Twenty years ago, a boy and his girlfriend holding hands caused a scandal.
Today lips have replaced the hands."29 "But I am told Indian actresses do not kiss,"30 says a despairing Dev Benegal, film director. "That's because kissing was always seen as a mark of a loose person,"31 explains Ahmedabad-based social scientist Shiv Vishwanathan. The Indian Cinematograph Act of 1952 brought out a set of rules that pushed kissing off the stage for a while. There was a time when Hindi films would rather that the birds and the bees did it than their actors. Eastmancolour would never be complete without two roses rubbing petals or birds pecking on each other's beaks. But that, sociologists say, is trademark Bollywood for you. According to Vishwanathan, the more an actor projects a public persona of a liberated individual, the more he or she extols middle-class values. "This is not new. Earlier, the actress Bindoo, who would be seen playing the vamp in many a revealing dress, would insist that she was 'unspoilt' in real life,"32 he says.

In fact, instead of ensuring and encouraging clean, harmless and meaningful films, what the Censor Board has actually succeeded in doing is, in Benegal's words,

Perpetuating a certain conformity on the films made in our country. We all know that cinema imposes its own reality on a captive audience, but the Censor Board has had a great deal to do with how that reality has been shaped. There is little use in laying the blame solely on the Censor Board or even the film industry, of course - it represents the mindset of the entire establishment, which does not favour any unpredictable response, or challenge from its audience.33

Benegal adds that over a long period of time "we have conditioned them (audiences) and ourselves by making films pitched to low intelligence levels with a sensibility than can only be termed as coarse."34 He then elaborates how this has happened despite the Censor Board:

Be it in the depiction sex or violence, a cat and mouse game is played by the censors and film producers. The only way the censors can deal with sex and violence is to reduce its duration on screen. The producers get their way by extending the duration of these scenes, allowing the censors to edit it down to what they would have liked it to be in the first place. Both parties are satisfied, and in all this, the casualty is sensibility - that of the audience as much as that of the film producers.35

The films that are thus cleared, however, cannot be redeemed or sanctified by half a dozen or even fifty cuts because many of them are inherently vulgar and harmful. Many producers are even known to arrange a few token cuts for publicity purposes and have been known to then bribe their way past the Censor Board.
The set of guidelines given to the Censor Board thus means precious little even though they categorically state that 'pointless or avoidable scenes of violence, cruelty and horror' should not be shown.

**Women and Sexuality: Didactics of Popular Cinema.**

The recurrent display of breasts, whether as the babe lost under the waterfall, or as a prostitute feeding her infant violates the very essence about showcasing the plight of a helpless single mother. Reproductive techniques have always been considered to increase the art historian's capacity to do scientific research. Early in the history of the discipline, in 1893, Bernard Berenson wrote that: "when this continuous study of originals is supplemented by isochromatic photographs, such comparison attains almost the accuracy of the physical science." On the other hand, there is the awareness among art historians of the power of images in reproduced form. In tracing the historical pre-figurations of the art historical slide lecture, Nelson finds similarities between scientific lectures, and the popular entertainments of traveling showmen during the nineteenth century. Special phantasmagorical effects like the magic lantern - a variant of the camera obscura -, projected and reflected images, painted slides, smoke, and so on, were used in both cases. Recently, researchers in Visual Culture Studies have become increasingly sensitive to the effects of the ideological powers of reproduced visual images.

It has even been argued that the new fields of Media Studies and Cultural Studies anticipated hypertext effects now easily obtainable on the computer. The project of cultural criticism with its scholarly procedures of analytic comparison, juxtaposition and critical contrast anticipated such technological developments, which in turn make these procedures much easier. In advertisements of interactive academic computer software, connection by way of association, spatial juxtaposition through the superimposition of windows, and 'evident' visual meaning, are characteristics that are stressed. Terms used for these purposes are 'associative', 'linked', 'hierarchical', 'dynamic', 'visual', and 'genetic'. Such terms demonstrate a set of assumptions about how scholars go about their work. Art historians are not the only scholars influenced by these technological innovations.

For an electronic journal article in the field of Visual Culture Studies it seems an appropriate strategy to demonstrate how an ideologically biased presentation of visual images anamorphically distorts them in the minds' eye. By juxtaposing seemingly disparate images, their visual links based on shared motifs and metaphoric references, sometimes over centuries, are brought to the fore. In this way, it is hoped that some veiled nuances of ideological meaning will be teased out.
Composed of representations of the female body in the nude, David Salle's post-modern paintings serve to simultaneously arouse and to initiate an intellectual response. On the one hand, it is true that his images are often culled and developed from soft porn magazine photographs, and on the other hand, his work has been described as hyper-literate. The remoteness, coldness and grayness of his nudes are often cited in defense against allegations of his pornographic objectification of women. His work refers overtly and even oppressively to pornography, but is simultaneously a renewed and post-modern confrontation with the 'high art' subject of the female nude in Western art. The representation of the female body in the nude has been problematic ever since feminism and Salle knows that "his hand is right in the fuse." Salle's fascination with the ambivalence of remoteness and familiarity; distance and earthy sensuousness; coldness and warmth; contemplation and arousal; melancholy and humour; blandness and eroticism; reverie and action; grisaille and warm colours; sardonic and scabrous humour, is augmented by the subtle play between concealment and revelation; veiling and revealing; concealing and uncovering.

On the thinly painted surface of the canvas, representations are seemingly superimposed on one another in the manner of a palimpsest. Sanford Schwarz wrote in the *New Yorker* in 1984:

> Perhaps only in movies have we seen something of the gentle and diaphanous effect he gets, of different images simultaneously drifting back into and rising up from other images.

Salle succeeds in disturbing the typical erotic and delicate 'high art' balance between concealment and exposure. He upsets the distinction between the obscenity of pornography and the containment of the 'high art' nude genre by posing his model to revealingly thrust her lower rear in the direction of the spectator, and simultaneously suggesting the remoteness of the female form by means of the monochrome grey tones and the polished, non-tactile application of paint.

The significance of the representation of acts of concealing and revealing is made evident in the so-called *Venus Pudica* or *Aphrodite of Modesty* that can be considered to be the epitome of the female nude in Western culture. The example presented here is the marble *Medici Venus* in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence (Figures 5 and 6), represented as covering her genitals and breasts with draped fabric. The act of modestly covering her body from a frontal viewer is at the same time a charming exposure of the view of her naked body from the back - in particular since it was made for exhibition in a circular temple, exposed to viewers from all sides.
Speaking of art, in his classic study of the nude, Kenneth Clark declared that to be *naked* was to be deprived of clothes and possibly be disgraced. *Nude*, however, meant a balanced, prosperous, and confident body. Questioning this, John Berger says that to be naked is to be oneself without disguise; to be nude is to be an object placed on display, especially women for viewing by men. So he inverts the value of Clark's terms, honouring *naked*. Art theorist Lynda Nead complicates it all by showing there can be no semiotically innocent and unmediated body, and accuses Clark, fairly, of hiding the mind/body problem in his binary opposition of terms.

One argument against women's exposed breasts is that they harm children psychologically. There's no evidence for it. Of course a young child will become upset if her parent screams 'Don't look at that horrible woman!' That scarcely demonstrates harm from women's breasts. Another argument is that greater exposure of their breasts in general will lead to more violence against women. Strikingly, there's no evidence for that either. *Individual* women may be in greater danger in certain situations if bare breasted. But they know that. Even the strongest advocate of their rights distinguishes a social restriction from a legal one.

Global society's fixation on women's breasts is well outlined in three recent books: *Breasts*, by Meema Spadola (1998); *A History of the Breast*, by Marilyn Yalom (1998); and *Breasts: The Women's Perspective on an American Obsession*, (1998) by Carolyn Latteier. That obsession is closely connected to women's lack of self-esteem, often manifested in debilitating eating disorders and dangerous surgeries we all know about. Moreover, nothing may represent objectification of women as much as men's fantasies of their breasts, alluring in proportion to how much they demand them to be hidden. Those demands are the real perversion, said anthropologist Ashley Montagu.

One explanation of the breast exposure prohibition comes from Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. She notes that abjection is caused by "what disturbs identity, system, and order." The maternal body brings about one trait of abjection, a simultaneous attraction and repulsion. In this connection, in *The Politics of Women's Bodies*, Iris Marion Young describes what she calls 'the breasted experience.' She suggests that patriarchal control of women's bodies depends partly on keeping the two main functions of breasts separate. Breasts, Young notes, "are a scandal because they shatter the border between motherhood and sexuality."

One approach to the difficulties, posed in heterosexual male culture by women's bodies, is suggested by the philosopher Michel Foucault. Repressing certain ideas and activities, especially sexual, is part of a wider network of cultural definitions, institutions, and practices, which promote a dominant
ideology. Some of their main discourses are in education, law, medicine, and religion. In constructing sexuality and much else, the network binds the dominators as well as the dominated. Indeed, repression occurs only in conjunction with the pervasive opposite, well-organized promotion and proliferation. This helps to explain why repression may be indirect or obscure - hard to recognize, analyze, and overcome.

Still, over the past few centuries, nudity in western art - in the 20th century including film, television, and digital media - has been overwhelmingly female. It isn't hard to discover why. Most artists have been heterosexual men. Their activities, including their art, often reinforce their superior gendered status. If that sounds wild, much recent feminist and gender theory clarifies it. Really, wouldn't it be odd if male social structures weren't reflected in images of the body?

This includes the use of the nude female for scopophilia, the male gaze of pleasure, of possession, direction, and often violence. This is not to suggest that every man's look of appreciation for a woman's physical state is exploitative. Yet often in art, as Berger puts it, men act but women appear; men look but women are looked at, including and especially by the presumed male spectator. Laura Mulvey found the same problem in a lot of mid-century Hollywood films. Of course the situation has improved some, partly because of feminist artists in various media.

Ganga's exposure in the film adheres to the prevailing culture that says semi-naked women in public belong to men and are of bad character or asking to be violated.

Most Bombay films, even recent ones, link nudity and sexual activity. Therefore, it's difficult to find nudity in these films that isn't sexual. Take for example; here the heroine simply gets out of a waterfall when she sees Naren. But sexual implications linger, because she and the hero are in that kind of relationship. And the camera work still favours the heterosexual male viewer. So does, the scene's composition and even the contours of the breast. Because the man remains outside in the open and is fully clothed, we see little of his body.

There are other reasons to censor men's bodily exposure at that point of time, not as the metrosexual hero of our age. One relates to homophobia. Male nudity beyond the locker room may be a threat to many men, leading to doubts about their sexuality and control. Another is that men's body image may suffer if they think women are comparing their genitals with another man's. A third is that the power structure inherent in looking is upset: the roles of men and women may be reversed through male nudity, leading
through a different route to men's vulnerability and loss of a privileged position.

Sex is a tough subject for most people to discuss. It connects through intense emotions to privacy and security, intimacy and bonding; and therefore entails much vulnerability, and risk of violation of personal boundaries, breakdown of relationships, and loss of self-respect and will. Perhaps to help reduce these dangers, we wear clothes that hide the parts of our bodies our culture deems sexual at the end of the 20th century.

It's another paradox, of course. The sexual implications of these semi-clothed young women are much more explicit than those of the naked people you've seen so far. Skimpy clothes such as thong underwear or bathing suits are often more erotic than total nudity, hiding and emphasizing disembodied body parts. Such images are not what the Century projects women to be, unless you include its implicit criticism of them.

The moral problem is not with a couple of seductive poses in themselves. It's their context, quantity, and pervasiveness. On a wide scale they privilege detached, impersonal, object-centred visual eroticism, especially in male scopophilia, and act as a fetishizing compulsion on both sexes in a debasing cultural hierarchy.

Laura Mulvey's concerns lie in how the social "world ordered by sexual imbalance" is directly reflected by a visual world, which acts to reinforce the patriarchal values of the society from which it emerges. In the context of Mulvey's argument, the imbalance is created by the power of one group (the male artist and his male audience) over another (the female as object). The imbalance also exists since the overwhelming historical canon of art is male dominated and the female voice has been marginalised. This is problematic in attempting to evaluate art since an artist can never be assumed to work in isolation. 'He is the privileged user of the language of his culture'. Mulvey believes that art and in this case film carry the potential through images of women, produced by male artists, to "reproduce on the ideological level of art the relations of power between men and women." Laura Mulvey argues that, "Freud's analysis of the male unconscious is crucial for any understanding of the myriad ways in which the female form has been used as a mould into which meanings have been poured by a male dominated culture." If this is so, then Kapoor's work cannot escape from the patriarchal values, which he has imbibed from his society, and accordingly, any criticism has to regard it in these terms. A Freudian analysis demands that we regard the work of art as a manifestation of the artist but in a manner that requires decoding. Indeed, the film seems to invite a psychoanalytical approach, which the director somehow admitted later as much to himself, that so much of every art is an expression
of the subconscious that it seems the important qualities are put there unconsciously.'

Mulvey's argument that "fetishist obsession reveals the true meaning behind popular images of women,"\(^49\) seem to be substantiated by some evidence in the film. For example, according to Mulvey, the fetishising artist would print women with some phallic substitute, which can include, cigarettes, shadows and high-heels. In this film the woman wears a virtually translucent dress, which suggests not only her figure but her nipples and the expanse of skin above her white drape. This seems to correspond with Mulvey's analysis that, the fetishist becomes fixated on an object in order to avoid knowledge (of) the true nature of sexual difference."\(^50\)

Another element, which attunes to Hollywood films, are the workings of particularly male psyche are indicated by Ward's, argument that somehow the juxtaposition of lone women facing windows contains a suggestion of terror.\(^51\) J. Ward points out that most artists nude and semi-nude women are always alone and, "are especially vulnerable because they seem to feel safe."\(^52\) The stark white wall of the waterfall behind Ganga outlines her lonely figure. She is singing out for her lover with her arms doing most of the actions, our gaze therefore is concentrated on her upper torso and her legs, parts of herself that she only reveals in the belief she is unobserved.

This is recognised by Lisa Tickner in her own analysis of Western erotic fantasy in artistic images of women.\(^52\) She argues that increasingly, images in art have tended to present images of solitary women which according to Tickner results in "isolating her into a more effective symbol."\(^53\) In the assumed role of voyeur this symbolism would be of the vulnerability of a woman at the mercy of an intrusive and potentially violent male observer. Like Mulvey, she identifies possibilities of sadistic elements in such imagery, which are rooted in Freud's castration complex, and further argues that these images reflect 'psychic forces and contradictions the artist does not understand'. Ganga whose body, from the nape of her neck to her entire midriff is covered, not to hide but unravel her assets and is exposed to the viewer whilst the subject settles into the environs apparently oblivious. Renner argues, "the male eye treats the female body as a screen onto which to project unconscious desires."\(^54\)

The film also demonstrates the power of the male gaze. We watch the women through the eyes of various male actors – Naren who truly falls in love with Ganga, the politicians who lust after her etc. The women are objectified through the operation of this gaze (the shots that show Naren as he is looking unabashedly at Ganga while under the waterfall, without realizing that she is being watched). The voyeuristic gaze establishes control over the object of the
gaze and there is simultaneously, the experience of sexual pleasure in the voyeur. This is comparable to cinema voyeurism, where we gaze at the images on the screen who are controlled by our fantasies, and we experience a similar pleasure and power from watching without being seen.

Mulvey talks about fetishistic scopophilia by which women are constructed as "to-be-looked-at-ness." The women in this film, whether it is the heroine Ganga in her translucent attire or Rajeshwari Bai, the brothel madam, are all part of this construct. Women who are not as attractive are seen despairing (as in the case of Rajeshwari Bai) because they also lack romantic relationships. Bhagwat Chowdhury and his business partner look at Ganga in a shared moment of voyeurism, whereby the woman is constituted as an object of their gaze (and also of ours, as we watch her through the eyes of the men in the film). Women are seen as "lack". If we look at Mulvey’s work more scientifically we see that the female body has been a vision of pleasure throughout history. It can be seen in the frescoes of the Renaissance as a representation of beauty. From the showgirl to the topless bar maid, the body of the woman is used to make a profit from the male’s sexual desire. The body itself becomes an object of desire for a man, and the amount it signifies, is merely sex. This has held true for ages and has yielded Bollywood cinema to be a spectacle that aids this gaze. Narratives can be broken up by erotic pleasure and the viewer himself is controlled by these pauses because of his or her own psychoanalytical attachment to the film. In Laura Mulvey’s essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 1975 she states “The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against her in the story line.” The viewer derives pleasure from the look, or viewing the film and then identifying with the film in certain ways but their determination of their relationship to the film is not autonomous. In Bollywood films, the spectator does not have independence in choosing their perceptions of the film. This, in turn, makes their role powerless and manipulated.

The film genre is usually presented in a theater, with the screen above the audience. Obviously placed this way for optimal viewing, it gives the viewer a sense of looking up throughout the whole movie. Much in common to a preacher’s pulpit, an altar, a classic stage, or a professor’s pedestal, the film itself seems to be placed in a position that is hierarchically more important than the audience. The image on the screen becomes dominant over the audience. The actors, because of their new attained importance, merely from the placement of the movie screen, have manipulated the audience into subconsciously believing that those actors and actresses are either more important, or more importantly, more sexually desirable. Paul Willeman, in his essay Voyeurism, The Look, and Dwoskin, also points out that Christian
Metz describes the viewer of Hollywood cinema as invisible because of the film’s characteristic of not participating with the audience. The film seems to ignore that it is being watched, and so, the audience can regard themselves as non-watchers. They can easily get caught up in the spectacle of the idealistic subject, as it rarely points out to them their role.

Ideology itself must be understood as a tool in making people understand their already inherent roles in society. In Philip Green’s book *Cracks In the Pedestal*, he describes ideology as an ensemble of beliefs and practices that support a partially fictitious sense of community among the members of any organized human group. He continues to discuss that our relationship to the world is unstable. This idea can be understood in the example of the roles society places for us to inherit, but these roles that we cannot necessarily fulfill. If film can present this ideology in a way that results in stable identities fulfilling these roles, then the film itself becomes a mode of reason. The viewer can connect to the film because it provides a link between the ideal role and the object that seeks that role. Because, in the real world, roles are unstable and our perceptions of these roles is skewed by visual culture, the viewers pleasure from watching the idealistic event in the film is false, and their understanding of their personal role in reality has not changed.

Because Mulvey describes the inherent male gaze that has dominated the medium of film as a threat to “transcending the instinctual to the imaginary.” She points out that film itself manipulates the look into certain erotic zones. The female form becomes a passive part of the narrative; in fact, the female character can interrupt the narrative for the audience’s purpose of viewing the female figure in the movie. The woman herself has thus become a spectacle, for the film chooses for the audience how long they will gaze at her body while she in turn only becomes a passive part of the narrative element. Laura Mulvey chooses to search for a “new language of desire.” Bollywood itself has engrained a certain aspect of eroticism into its movies in order to define beauty and pleasure. Its films manipulate the audience into ease and plenitude by controlling the image of the woman and using it to create visual pleasure.

Mulvey points out that the importance of the ego is crucial to the pleasure experience. Without our initial recognition of ourselves we cannot identify with others, and therefore not participate in the world through any form of visual or oral language. The spectacle, on the other hand, yields signifiers that are not necessarily identified with the signified. Though we are able to associate our first mirror images of ourselves with “me”, we cannot always make sense of the spectacle and yet we can still identify with the images as if they were real. If cinema reinforces our own false linkage to the image inside the film, then the film becomes pleasurable to us not only because of its
voyeuristic appeal, but because of its linkage of the viewer to the film, creating a union that is equally satisfying when we forget the real world and then realize that we have now become a part of it again when the film is over. The viewer partakes in another illusive role, he points out that the viewer takes on two looks, but one is not their own. They fluctuate between their own look as an audience and the look as the director. If the spectacle itself is choosing the role for the audience to play, then their role is never autonomous and the audience cannot make a true decision on the film on their own accord.

There are two contradictory aspects of the look, according to Mulvay, when one engages in viewing Hollywood cinema which can be in a way helpful in understanding our very own Hindi films. They are the scopophilic look and the look of identifying the viewer to the subject of the movie. Both structures require idealization, and therefore force the viewer to be devoid of true logical perception. In other words, the idealized form on the screen has to be there first in order for the viewer to identify with the subject matter, or, to feel a voyeuristic sense of pleasure, but these pleasures are tainted by the subject itself, which was idealized in the first place and has no connection the viewer's own true selves. The scopophilic component of visual pleasure is described as “taking other people as objects and subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze.”57 This pleasure is sexual, but Laura Mulvay points out that it is independent of Freud's erotogenic zones. This gaze is natural and inherent even in children but it can further be developed into a larger complex because of the constant images of “persons as objects.” Film provides to the viewer and extremely voyeuristic sense of participation. The film becomes a spectacle when the viewer begins to derive pleasure from the feeling of “looking in on a private world.” Their participation in the film is a passive viewpoint and their own personal desires can change the film's meaning, but the film itself still controls their gaze.

As the movie takes its narrative form, reality itself becomes idealism. "In this way, the spectator's look at the spectacle and the intradiegetic looks can be articulated to each other via the spectator's narcissistic identification with his/her representative diegisis."58 If the viewer can then identify with the spectacle, the spectacle becomes real and their desires are manipulated by the spectacle. The representation of beauty in the film, then in fact, becomes what is truly beautiful, the representation of evil, becomes what is truly evil, and then the representation of what is useful becomes what is truly useful, and so on and so forth. In "The Society of the Spectacle", Guy Debord describes the spectator's role as an alienated one. If the spectator "accepts recognizing himself in the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own existence and desires."59 The film spectacle begins to control his own desires and creates the illusion of reality for which the viewer can relate, but
in fact these ideals only control the viewer's desires in the end. Willemen states that viewing pleasure at the expense of the objectification of women must be destroyed but it cannot be destroyed altogether because it would abolish cinema itself.

In addition, Mulvey states that cinema itself really should take on a new form of visual language because it continues to feed the "neurotic needs of the male ego." The image of the woman on the screen prevents the viewer from separating himself from the image because of the already intrinsic erotic symbols engrained in the woman. The spectacle becomes reality and the viewer cannot discern the simple imaged that "become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behavior." The film itself may provide an outlet for the male gaze, but they do not control their role as the looker.

One can also see the woman as "bearer of the image" in the film. Women are seen as either sex objects in the film, or as oppressive. Mulvey's point about woman-as-spectacle is enforced here where the women are seen and described in terms of objects/relationships. Fenichel's idea of women as "lack", arousing in men the castration anxiety. Naren is able to avoid this by placing Ganga in danger by temporarily deserting her, and then by 'saving' her.

Although feminisms have not always recognized it, women have sometimes collaborated with men in their oppression. Given the hidden nature of some of the oppression, that's hardly surprising. In the film, Ganga is confronted by a woman first who leads her to the slum's madam carrying a child to her breast and promising to help her. Next the grotesque madam further robs her of her belongings and sells her off in a matter of minutes. After her escape, the unholy priest at the banks of the river wants to take her home while his wife's away for his own pleasures. His wife watches the encounter but does not confront her husband there. Furthermore she gets the police in time to act but retracts her statement at the police station stating that it was out of plain suspicion.

She pleads for Ganga's silence and for the honour of her husband. Rajeshwari Bai, the madam at Varanasi's kotha tells her that she doesn't sell women bodies but encourages her girls to entertain their clients through their song and dance. Yet when Bhagwat Chowdhury quotes a handsome price for Ganga, she is not even mentioned in the film. Naren's mother too violates Ganga's rights to live outside her now despised profession pleading to hide the truth away from Naren in order to save her husband's relationship with the mighty and the powerful. The only woman who does not come in her way is Radha, Bhagwat Chowdhury's daughter who is in love with Naren. In fact she
is the one who comes in for Ganga’s defense when she identifies her with Naren’s child.

Social construction of gender simply points to histories of men’s dominance, which isn’t created by identifiable men or women. Much of this dominance has been and still is played out through the body. In three different spellings and meanings, the naked body is sighted by eyes, cited by processes, and sited in society’s discourses. In life and art, the body, clothed or not, acts as a site of enactment and reinforcement of a culture’s rules and gendered disciplines, especially dominance not by all men but by men in general.

One could view Ram Teri Ganga Maili as a partially courtesan film which were a staple diet of Bombay cinema in the thirties and the forties popularized by filmmakers such as B.R. Chopra and V. Shantaram. These directors used the medium to send out overt messages that courtesans/prostitutes could be of the marriageable variety after all but only after their rescue form the ignoble profession and their only by retaining their purity factor for the prospective husband or suitor. This element carried on till date where prostitutes/courtesans managed to retain their chastity and abstain from any contractual physical contact to facilitate their reunion with the hero at the end of the film. And Ganga does that and repeats the same role of the “many outcast women who are nurturing and sacrificing, beautiful and gentle prostitutes with golden hearts who help and nourish the hero.”63 Whether as a poignant reflection of the dependence on the values of a manmade society or a scaling metaphor of the post colonial politics, corruption and moral decay as Raj Kapoor tried to depict in the film, the elements of commodifying the female character remained very much the same. He thought that ‘womankind symbolizes love, affection and warmth. They deserve to be respected and put on a pedestal. They have as much right to happiness as any other man, but, by and large, they are denied this right. But it’s not just lecture-bazi. I’m an entertainer first and foremost.”64

While Shantaram devolved on the need for social reform, and Abbas on economic disparities, Raj Kapoor dealt with the interaction of both on the underprivileged, at the same time insinuating that the underdog was a glamorous rather than reprehensible hero. That he has not always been able to adjust suitably to the times, and that spectacle eventually got the upper hand, does not alter the fact that he made the canniest compromise between art and commercial expediency in the conventional Indian cinema. That canny compromise continued, through this film and so did Raj Kapoor’s effort to keep up with the times, in his own way. To begin at the end, in the final analysis, Raj Kapoor remained, where he had started out, almost forty years ago. He changed the locale, the environment, moved out of the sharp light and
shade of the black and white films, and into the larger-than-life hues of the Technicolor screen of today. But the naive and sentimental lover of the forties, the idealist debunker, the heroic underdog, still remained the major underlying motifs in his work. In his last film, he again sold the story of the son of a wealthy; industrialist father who is an idealist of the old order, and the son in turn is a philosopher in search for inner tranquility. His father’s craving for more wealth and power leads Naren to exclaim: ‘The father cannot see his son before the banknotes, the son cannot see his father behind them.’ It was again to bring the character of the male protagonist to the forefront, a space which the female actor never negotiates in the film.

So like any bankable showman Kapoor retains the purity syndrome of his heroine in spite of her walk into the sinful world of negotiated lust. Ganga’s entry into the kotha (whorehouse) projects her more like a colonial courtesan than a real life prostitute who is pushed into the trade either by financial crises or by a lover or a scheming pimp. One is made to believe that the display of skin was to project the virginal innocence of the Ganga, which in turn is meant only for her lover and no on else. So with the chastity belt on, Ganga takes on the job of singing and dancing for a client with the sole purpose of locating the father of her child.

Women and Prostitution: Heuristics and Tradition.

Ganga’s entry in the kotha projected her as more of a regal, colonial courtesan rather than a misled village girl forced into prostitution. After all that repeated display of her body she is never shown to sell her body to prospective clients. When she realizes that the kotha is her only option, after Rajeshwari Bai, the resident madam tells her that if she chooses to walk outside she will have no option but to give herself upto the sins of numerous lustful men. As she tells her, glancing at her infant, iss bacche ke pita ka naam tujhe to pata hoga, par bahar kis kis ka beej liye phiregee? She tells her that, yahan tan ka vyapar nehin hota, the jilted come here to soothe their hearts, pay and go away. She holds a puja thali, (plate decorated with offerings for a deity) and is draped in a traditional saree unlike the regular madam of a brothel. She says that she is going to the temple to offer her prayers, a statement that puts some relief in Ganga’s mind that she would not be violated here. Unlike the historical character of the courtesan although socially decentered has been shown to have been the object of respect and admiration owing to her artistic skills and musical accomplishments. Ganga has the talent and begins to train in the brothel. But her beauty and youth are also the added bonus of attracting clients. As Rajeshwari Bai remarks, sur se Saraswati and roop se Urvashi. You have the voice of the Goddess Saraswati and the beauty of the celestial nymphet Urvashi, a dancer in the court of Indra. Her physical form attracts potential customers and thus
somewhat realistically portrays the representation of the courtesan/prostitute as a humiliating yet tantalizing, essentialised and as an active individual in our time zone. Though the film was not a courtesan film per se, it did fulfill the classic instance of female objectification in the cinema. "Here is the representation of woman as a spectacle par excellence; she is a body to be looked at, the place of sexuality, an object of desire—everything in short, that the apparatus of cinema purveys and the misogynistic tendencies prevalent in Indian culture exploit."66

The courtesan films were a staple diet of Bombay cinema. The 30's and the 40's and right till the early 50's saw filmmakers like B.R.Chopra and V. Santaram using the medium for delivering overt social messages that projected courtesans / prostitutes as fallen women who ultimately became marriageable or acceptable after their rescue by men. The one thing that has remained unchanged that these women have been shown to have retained their sexual chastity and have somehow refrained from accepting any contractual physical contact from their clients. Stock images of feminine/maternal purity circulated in countless films have been continually used to define the modest, self-effacing courtesan. The representation of women as the role of the courtesan, is that of an ambiguous character, as she is not traditional but not the vamp either. This character exists outside the normal domestic domain and provides the protagonist with comfort, care, and physical happiness. She generally falls in love with him, although the hero never falls for her. This role is historical, not a new character created only to support the moralistic woman.

While in the earlier movies women have been shown to join the profession to support their children, Ganga does not have that on their mind. Her sole purpose in life is to locate the father of her child and somehow the film negates the bonding that exists between a mother and her infant. All that remains of bonding is the various instances where she is shown to breast feed her child but the camera's focus is not on her face or her child but on her anatomical structure. Most Indians know that breast-feeding mothers do not make a public show of their maternal activity whether irrespective of regional spatial and other differences. If one has to necessarily suckle the child it is always done under a veil. And Ganga comes from a society where all women would naturally adhere to this tradition.

Therefore the repeated show of flesh on the screen on the pretext of showcasing the plight of a helpless mother violates all notions of common sense and is just put up there to titillate. These are the types of violent images that filmmakers project in the garb of addressing so called social issues. Ganga as the prostitute mother somehow makes her seem more desirable by men. The spectacle becomes obvious when she is asked to perform for a
bunch of lecherous middle-aged politicians to wag their tongues and asses her entire body. When she is asked to perform, Bhagwat Chowdhury cannot hold back his lust and asks the pimp who gets her there about her sexual status. Kya Iski Nath Uttar Gayee Hai? (Has she been deflowered?) This is also to suggest to the viewers that though her marriage with Naren has been fruitful she looks as virginal as ever. When she is mocked about her infant’s illegitimate status she hurls abuses only to be undressed without putting up a fight. They are furious at her non-resistance and urge her to shout and scream otherwise the world will say that Ganga ne nanga hona chup chaap seh liya. She sings the title score of Ram Teri Ganga Maili Ho Gayee to signify that she has been violated in a way though not totally.

Theoretical Implications of the Gaze: The Divine Prostitute in the film

In the representation of the female prostitute in the cinema, the earliest archetypal narratives to emerge are those of the fallen woman. While most Bollywood of this period have traced the fate of the innocent young woman lured into forced prostitution by unscrupulous procurers (or rescued in the nick of time), have received considerable critical attention, no doubt partly because of the highly controversial social phenomenon to which they refer, the tale of the fallen woman prostitute in film has, been largely ignored in terms of documentation or analyses. As a prostitute the woman is degraded and trapped, condemned to a miserable fate unless fortune intervenes in granting her an opportunity to atone for her sins. She is likely to die at the end of the film, through suicide, illness, accident, murder or execution (the conventions of Victorian art and literature, Nina Auerbach notes, ordained that “a woman’s fall ends in death.”67

Otherwise she may survive and save her soul through an act of redemption; frequently she is paired off with a good man whose upright character serves to cancel out the poor impression of the male sex given earlier in the film. Such a narrative is predicated on the belief that a single woman who is sexually active is morally corrupt (making her in the mind of many men ineligible for marriage, thus blocking off one avenue for her future). The version featuring a young woman protagonist is perhaps best exemplified by the many screen adaptations of Leo Tolstoy’s novel Resurrection, first published in Russia in 1899 and adapted for the stage in Paris in 1902 and New York in 1903.68 Screen versions include: Opstandelse (Denmark, 1907), The resurrection (USA, 1909), Katusha (Japan, 1914), Vozrozhdennia (Russia, 1915), A woman’s resurrection (USA, 1915), Resurrection (USA, 1918), Resurrection (USA, 1927), Resurrection and a Spanish-language version, Resurrección (USA, 1931), We live again (USA, 1934), Aien kyo (Japan, 1937), Duniya kya hai (India, 1938), Resurrezione (Italy, 1944), Fukkatsu (Japan, 1950), Auferstehung (West Germany, France, Italy, 1958), Voskreseniye (2
parts, USSR, 1960/62). The list is undoubtedly incomplete, and versions of the story are known to have been produced in France, Mexico, and China. Marcel L'Herbier's ambitious *Résurrection*, which began filming in France in 1923, was left incomplete when the director fell ill. There are also several TV adaptations.

The well-known story, set in Russia in the 1870s, tells of an orphaned peasant girl seduced by an aristocrat, Prince Dmitri Nekhludov, on his vacation. Becoming pregnant, Katusha is disgraced and leaves her godmother's service. After her child dies, she is reduced to prostitution. Following a trial in which she is convicted for a crime she did not commit, Katusha is sentenced to exile in Siberia. Dmitri, a juror in the case, feels remorse and offers to marry her. She, however, refuses him, accepts her lot as a prisoner and is spiritually regenerated.

The ironic twist which is given here to the traditional country (good)/city (bad) oppositional axis is indicative of the complexity with which the more accomplished fallen woman films can address the moral issues at stake. Amleto Palermi's *La peccatrice* (Italy, 1940), for instance, the tale of Maria, a young country woman seduced and abandoned who subsequently finds herself working in a city brothel, predominantly follows the traditional pattern, as commentators have observed. Marcia Landy writes, "Everything in the country is light, spacious, and open in contrast to the sordidness, the cramped and hostile environment of the city," while Robin Buss refers to "the contrast between rural purity and the dangers of urban squalor." Quite similar to the story that we have tried to analyze here.

The pathos generated by the story of a woman of good character reduced to selling her body had an obvious appeal to female audiences, Auerbach writes: ...the fallen woman, heartbreaking and glamorous, flourished in the popular iconography of America and the Continent as well as England." Her stance as galvanic outcast, her piquant blend of innocence and experience, came to embody everything in womanhood that was dangerously, tragically, and triumphantly beyond social boundaries and the fallen woman archetype possibly owed its existence as much to women in a creative capacity as to men. Nevertheless, it is its function in fulfilling male fantasy needs which draws special attention. The chief role of the fallen woman story in this respect is to achieve an admixture of sexual innocence and experience in the one person, a woman who as a fantasized object of desire can overcome for the male spectator the separating out of his affectionate and erotic feelings.

American feminist theorists Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein have argued that the roots of male attitudes towards women are to be traced
to family structures, universal under patriarchy, which make child rearing an almost exclusively female responsibility. It is the ambiguity with which the "fall" is depicted, and the elusive, dynamic dialectic of purity and corruption, which preserve the woman's mystery and thus her allure. (For men with the reasonably common psychological formation this applied to, a "good" woman lacks sexual appeal while a "bad" woman is unworthy of his serious attention: hence the need for a synthesis.) There may be ambiguity as to whether the woman has actually become a prostitute or not. Ganga is shown to sing and dance in the front of her clients but does not have a real physical connection with them.

Ideologically, the fallen woman film deals with the disturbance to the patriarchal order, which occurs when a female is cast adrift from the family and, bereft of protection from father or husband, is forced to fend for herself. In its address to male audiences, the film will typically warn of the consequences of parental or marital failure; while for female spectators the story may serve as a cautionary tale, illustrating what is in store for the woman who permits herself to stray from the path of virtue. Ultimately the patriarchal pattern will be restored, whether through the straying lamb being brought back into the fold, or through her elimination.

For the woman who repents there is the chance of being brought back once again under the wing of the patriarchy. Tolstoy's Katusha finds the path to God in the snows of Siberia, and serves as the model for many another cinematic penitents. Often, for the reformed prostitute, happiness is finally possible through a pairing up with the man she loves. But for others, death awaits. Many a fallen woman, having demonstrated female independence, an ability to survive alone despite the misfortune she has had to bear, offers too much of a threat to the patriarchal norm to be permitted to carry on living. Though Ganga the divine blames herself and no one else for their loss of status, she is willing to sacrifice her love and declares that she would not want to stay and interfere with Naren's life. Bhagwat Chowdhury thinks that prostitutes and mistresses are in house decors and never a part of the family. Therefore he picks up his gun and tries to shoot, she takes the bullet to her arm and survives to be reunited with Naren.

The eyes see so much and have taken on a power of their own via "the gaze". The power that the dominating gaze holds imitates our societal structure. The gaze that we use in our everyday lives represents our individual structures. Several Feminist film theorists have come up with their own definitions of the gaze that began its entrance into cinema in the late 80's and early 90's. Originators like Laura Mulvey and Mary Anne Doane, saw the power of the eye and the impact that it had on society. Others to follow, like Judith Mayne and Constance Penley, took it one step further and to redirect
the question from a different perspective. As a summary essay, several theories on the gaze from some of these ladies will show the foundation that has been built because of the many feminisms and where our current feminist filmmakers have their origins. These theories are but some of the ones that one comes across as learning experience into the worlds of Film and Women’s Studies.

Laura Mulvey began the questioning in her book and essay, "Visual and Other Pleasures." She approached the cinematic apparatus from the point of view of Freud and Lacan and giving a definition to the woman as an object. Mulvey states, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness." Mulvey’s main question was, on how can women’s film-viewing pleasures be understood?

Mary Ann Doane, felt that the female viewer was in a role of cross-gender identification that caused a distance with the text. She saw woman as wearing a costume in a sense. Chris Straayer quotes, "In 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' she argues that, because woman's pre-oedipal bond with the mother continues to be strong throughout her life (unlike man's), the female viewer - unless she utilizes artificial devices - is unable to achieve that distance from the film's textual body which allows man the process of voyeurism: 'For the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image—she is the image.' This is where the woman becomes narcissistic. Doane offers a way for woman to distance herself from the image - through the masquerade of femininity.

Doane summarizes the female spectators position as the viewer adopting the masculine position in relation to the cinematic sign, where the female is left with two options, "the masochism of over identification or the narcissism entailed in becoming one's own object of desire, in assuming the image in the most radical way. The effectivity of masquerade lies precisely in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image, to generate a problematic within the image is manipulable, producible, and readable to woman."76

Judith Mayne, in "The Woman at the Keyhole", 1990, takes the gaze further and approaches the gaze from a "keyhole" perspective that was prevalent in early cinema and still shows a presence in current Film. She states, "For when we imagine a 'woman' and a 'keyhole', it is usually a woman on the other side of the keyhole, as the proverbial object of the look, that
comes to mind.... but rather asking...what happens when women are situated in both sides of the keyhole. The question is not only who or what is on either side of the keyhole, but also what lies between them, what constitutes the threshold that makes representation possible.\textsuperscript{77}

The foundation that these theories as well as other theories offer is one that women filmmakers need to start on a path of speaking in their own voice, having their own gaze, and being a woman in a world that they generate themselves. For it is not power that is important but becoming and being a woman and individual that can never be defined exclusively.

“Whether as a poignant reflection of dependence on the values of a manmade world or as a searing metaphor of postcolonial political corruption and moral decay, prostitution denotes a masquerading social and moral universe.”\textsuperscript{78} While Bhagwat Chowdhury promises to clean up the filth in the Ganges, he instigates volunteers to agitate to help further his own industrial interests by building factories on the banks of the revered river. Kapoor himself in the twilight of his life commented that.... there is so much corruption. You feel that people are becoming more and more crude and vulgar. They seem to have no values. The basic strengths, truthfulness, loyalty, what we considered to be the gems of humanity, don’t exist at all. Basically there is something wrong with the whole system.\textsuperscript{79} And yet he rode on the success of the film which blatantly exploited a young actor.

Mirror imagery is abundant in most prostitute films, giving added dimension to the metaphor of woman as essentially “split”(virgin/whore, for example) and as the looking glass held up to the man. In this film, the river, which flows by, becomes the looking glass. As Virginia Woolf said, “women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and the delicious power of reflecting the figure of man twice his natural size,”\textsuperscript{80} here Ganga’s image in the murky waters is a blurred one a sign of emptiness, suggesting her distanciation from herself, a sign of her emptiness and social negation and a displaced narcissism on the part of the male.

\textit{Bhagwat Chowdhury} who ultimately buys her and keeps her in his bagan-badi (farm-house) mocks her while she is trying to cover up while feeding her baby. \textit{Rehne Do, Kab Tak Chupate Phirogee, Ek din to Dikhana hi Hai. Leave it, why should you want to hide, some day you still have to show them off.} The reference is obviously understandable. This happens only after the men have seen her suckle her infant, which in turn seems to arouse them. Motifs of imminent prostitution with multiple variations are found in most commercial cinema. Stagings of attempted rape scenes, the misfortunes and social ostracism of the unwed mother, the village woman assaulted by phallic gestures in the big bad city are all there in \textit{Ganga’s} story. “Apart from the
dramatic potentialities and voyeuristic elements of these scenarios of libidinal excess, these scenes reinforce the sense of female vulnerability in the face of male power and aggression. These stereotypical images have led to a blanket critical denunciation of the negative images of women in commercial Bombay cinema, images that adhere to Aruna Vasudev's notion that a woman can either be a vamp or a victim.

Though the film in focus was not about a prostitute or a courtesan but it did well to fulfill the classic instance of female objectification as spectacle par excellence: Ganga is a body to be looked at, the place of sexuality, and object of desire-everything to gratify lust. Indian feminist have followed their Western counterparts in denouncing a Hollywood-informed Indian cinema whose symbolic language strictly leans itself to the sexist stereotyping of women images on the screen. The first phase of feminist has worked on our sense to help us understand the meaning of the woman as an object of the male gaze, the commodified image as fetish, and the independent woman who in reality is not independent after all. The reflection theory (how images of women fail to reflect their actual lives or identities) somehow does not begin to address the power of these images and their pleasurable address to spectators, both male and female. Film historians have rightly agreed that a more generic approach is needed to understand films, which depict women, in order to provide a better grasp of the elements that construct their distinctive appeal.

"Of all the courtesan films that portray her as the sacrificing mother closest to Bombay film melodrama and the least ambiguous in terms of representational strategies." Given the importance of the mother in Indian social and physic life and the generic stability of the maternal melodrama, questioning of the female sexuality and independence can be dealt relatively easily by being subordinated or silenced before the obligation and intense emotional effect of motherhood. Thus this section of the film can be viewed alternatively as a maternal melodrama, projecting the "problem of woman and of prostitution onto the terrain of emphatic identification associated with motherhood." Devoid of any strong kinship ties, Ganga is the lone woman semantically linked to the bazaar or the marketplace and is a challenge to the social structure yet a vital part of it through her connection with Naren. The film follows the traditional line of first destroying and then reconstructing the family. The early narrative of the film confirms that Ganga has already been betrothed to another man. She challenges the negotiation and settles for her lover instead which her elder brother accepts and defends the relationship by battling the jilted suitor and sacrificing his life. The "normal" world and its values are overturned in the courtesan stage of the film, primarily definitions of the "home". Threatening societal pressures are often responsible for the uprootment of women from their place of origin.
And also, different social worlds collide and meet across the body of the courtesan, primarily to disrupt societal norms or values. Like when Ganga performs at her own husband's pre-wedding ceremony hiding behind a veil. If the home is alien, then the mujra or the performance becomes a "home" in terms of the familial relationships that are revealed in the course of testimony to exist between key characters and the reconciliations that result from it. Though Ganga laments that she has been soiled and has just come to give him his son and not to disrupt his soon to be married life. Naren becomes the valiant saviour and accepts her, therefore fulfilling the need of the home.

The departure of Naren marks the beginning of the many ways of reconstructing Ganga's family of procreation. The trajectory here is the replacement of the real family with a substitute one, what Thomas Elsaeseer has called "displacement-by-substitution." The patriarchal motive becomes clear here by totally blurring the role of the elder brother who had proclaimed that his bachelor status was due to the fact that he had to first marry off his sister. While the couple after has married rather hastily in an ancient mountain temple get busy with consummating their marriage, the brother defends the union by giving up his life. Not a tear is shed for the slain brother and there is no mention of him either later in the film; all Ganga has on her mind is to bid farewell to her now husband and sing a song which reminds him of his promise to fetch her.

The courtesan film as maternal melodrama, projects the problem of woman and of prostitution onto the terrain of emphatic identification associated with motherhood. In this film, Ganga's marriage with Naren was a masquerade of sorts, a relation of secrecy without the knowledge of his parents which makes it illegitimate in a way. Therefore the relation can be seen as exploitative and abusive, not nurturing and protective owing to her single mother status. Her child is therefore seen as born out of wedlock by the world and therefore makes her more approachable to the trade itself. Prostitution has long been seen as a metaphor for the circulation of sexual currency (with the consequent debasement of ethical values), what maternal sacrifice is meant to achieve is personal redemption as well as the redistribution of social wealth and prestige (through the acceptance and incorporation of Ganga's child into the city bred industrial family of Naren).

Also "innocence, simplicity and/or virginity as inherent snares for young women are a pervasive theme and source of dramatic action in Bombay films, projecting the anxieties of urban living." Melodrama also displaces the courtesan genre in that it is fear and violence rather than passion which punctuates the action. All sorts of violence mark the lives of prostitutes in reality but films coming out from the factories of Bombay have glamorized such crimes over many years. Therefore blackmail, coercion, extreme physical
and mental abuse with ample amount of skin display take over more than half of the film's storyline and which takes us further away and in the process gets lost somewhere in the narrative. In fact these factors also foreclose the chances of social rehabilitation except through death.

Ganga's happy reunion with Naren at the climax disrupts the earlier nautch girl stories where death is seen as the only liberating factor for such women. The earliest draft of the script had posted Ganga's death in the final scenes of the film. The earlier scriptwriters of the film said that it was the only possible ending, “the sort of classic ending which was perfect for the story and pleasing to the intellectual and aesthetic sense.” When distributors heard of the proposed ending they were 'positively horrified', interestingly not by the brazen sexual scenes but by her death. “They were cut up that a girl who had suffered so much through the film should be cheated of eventual happiness, for God only knows what reason.” Though the director's brother, Shashi Kapoor himself a distinguished actor disagreed and urged him not to give into negativism and kill off Ganga because he thought he was making a social statement in the film and it was not meant to be just another love story. But Kapoor gave into the commercial pressures and he eventually put the bravery award in the hands of Naren who revolts and walks away with Ganga. The cathartic release is provided at the end of the film as the main characters are united and Ganga is accorded the right place next to her husband.
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CHAPTER 6

KHALNAYAK (The Villain): Women, Sexuality and the Gaze revisited

Starring: Sanjay Dutt, Madhuri Dixit, Jackie Shroff, Rakhee, Anupam Kher and Ramya Krishna.
Lyrics: Anand Bakshi.
Produced and Directed by Subhash Ghai, Mukta Arts.
Distributed by: Eros International.
Time: 190 Minutes.

This is perhaps one film, which made big news because it was mired in various controversies. The highly publicized court case against the “Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai” number for vulgarity, and the arrest of the film’s star, Sanjay Dutt for allegedly harbouring links with terrorism. Its film song ‘Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai’ (What is behind the blouse?) plunged the nation into a debate about morality and the existing cultural mores. The lyrics of the song became what might be called the ‘watershed period’ of the ‘double meaning songs’.

A brief summary of events is described below which precede the songs first appearance. The film opens with the shot of a desolate mother, Aarti (Rakhee) pining for the return of her runaway son Ballu Balram (Sanjay Dutt), her only memory being the photograph she has put away amongst the pages of the Ramayana. Missing from home for the last six years Ballu becomes the ‘villain’, after he joins the world of crime. Ballu kills a politician and is captured by the hero, intelligence officer Ram Sinha (Jackie Shroff). While he is visiting his girlfriend, sub-inspector, Ganga (Madhuri Dixit), in Bollywood’s version of an Indian village, Ballu escapes from prison and Ram is accused of incompetence. Infact the media lambast him for neglecting his duty by indulging in an affair/romantic liaison with a fellow officer. Ganga then is targeted to be the ‘distraction’, the temptress whom leads Ram away from his professional obligations. In order to redeem himself in the eyes of the police force he must move away from his ‘distraction’. Therefore he takes the vow of a ‘temporary celibacy’ until he has captured the elusive Ballu.

In order to salvage her fiancé’s reputation and that of her own, Ganga disguises herself as a ‘folk’ dancer with the sole intention of luring him into a relationship and finally chaining him down. As the drama unfolds, she lays a trap for him, only to change her mind later, when she reads the emotions of the good man behind the evil face. Therefore she protects him, by intervening