CHAPTER 6

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

Starring: Sanjay Dutt, Madhuri Dixit, Jackie Shroff, Rakhee, Anupam Kher and Ramya Krishna.
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. Instead of 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
as a human shield amidst a shoot-out between the police and the gang. While Ballu escapes, Ganga is accused of consorting with a criminal, is charged and put on trial for betraying the police force. The film ends with Ballu’s dramatic entry into the courtroom to declare that Ganga is pure and has neither betrayed her lover nor the police force. Infact he asserts that it was her pristine purity, which compelled him to return and surrender.

This film neither portrays rape nor battering but what becomes important is its projection of its double-edged puranitical meaning of purity, a standardized criterion for all women in India. The ‘violation of the self’ is what sums up the portrayal of women in the film.

This section of the study also looks at the deployment of the song/dance routine in this film because it forms a powerful part to show the portrayal of women in our films and also shows that sexuality is central to the construction of national identity. The ‘Choli Ke Peeche Kyaa Hai’ number, shows that how the various song and dance numbers included in each film, rely heavily on the use of playback sound (which are the crux of most commercial films) and serve to allure the national psyche. Following the common market practice, TIPS, an established music company primarily involved in the film-music industry, released its audiocassette for Khalnayak, featuring this tantalizing song ‘Choli Ke Peeche Kyaa Hai’ while the film was still in production. One can easily say that film music is as omnipresent in the whole of the subcontinent as our population figures!! For a secular democracy of over a billion people, no mean fact this. In India, the success of a popular film is often connected to its music.1

In fact if we look back, in 1931 and 1932, what seemed a dark moment in Indian film history, song and dance in part derived from a tradition of folk music drama played an important role in winning for the sound film, an instant and widening acceptance. With the coming of the talkies, the Indian motion picture came into its own, as a definite and distinctive piece of creation. This was achieved by the musical. The same music was expected to temporarily block the Indian film from western markets, and this proved to be a perceptive prophecy. “The audiocassettes and music videos not only serve as advertisement for the film but also generate profits for the music company; these profits are often passed on to the film producers.”2 In the last decade the music industry has both expanded and flourished. Countrywide sheet sales of audiocassettes have drawn to Rs. 5 billion annually, a good reason to churn out more in the future productions. Approximately 150 Hindi movies titles are released every year, with an all India sales estimated at 1 million cassettes a
day-inclusive of piracy. ‘Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai’ appeared on the top-ten songs of the year on every countdown on television and on radio.


Hindi cinema has never been naturalistic...as a matter of fact, song picturisation itself has undergone a pretty dramatic change, argues Sudhanva Deshpande, (1998). The satellite boom has glamourised songs to the hilt and carved out their own autonomous space in the narrative of the films and have been obvious to most audiences. Aristotle’s dictum that there can be no desire without fantasy contains even more truth in reverse. “Fantasy, as embodied in the Hindi film, is the 

mise en scène
 of desire, its dramatization in a visual and aural form.” The key aspect of fantasy, then, is the Hindi song or gana and is effectively used to mould the female actors role reducing it to a spectacle as the subject of the look. Songs are the raison d’etre of Hindi films and the genesis (as in this case) of violation of the female form. Vanraj Bhatia, renowned musician notes that the Hindi film industry is first and foremost, operative enough to emphasize a point where action stops and the song takes over, expressing every shade of emotional reverberation and doing it far more effectively than the spoken word intertwining it with the physicality of the female body.

The song belongs entirely to Ganga (Madhuri Dixit), which is a celebration of her sexuality claimed the director of the film. An undercover cop who plans out her seduction trap by using her body and not really her intellect. For somebody who is professionally inclined, she conveniently carries her identity card and pistol neatly stashed away in her purse. Ganga's guise as a dancer constructs the expression of her sexuality as a 'masquerade'. We as privileged spectators know that behind this guise is a 'pure' Ganga who loves Ram and who is enacting this role out of a sense of duty. The song opens up with a traditional Rajasthani trumpet, which is phallic enough to indicate the importance of the male gaze, and is composed of one hundred and fourteen shots, a veiled yet backless Ganga swaying to the sinuous rhythm of the song. Unlike the all male audience who watch Ganga's entry, the spectators know that she is a representative of the police force and thus, of course, a danger to the criminal world. Interestingly within the domain of the criminals, Ganga is also constructed as the object of desire and as a lure, which can destroy the world if she is not controlled. During the course of the song, Ballu's gang members look at him uneasily, afraid that he may be too enamoured by the dancing girl and that his desire for her may put them in danger.
As Ganga dressed in an itsy-itsy, red sequined blouse glides across the floor; the camera salaciously focuses on different parts of her anatomy. In this case, the technology and the editing processes construct Ganga as a sexual object. They also position the male audience within the diegetic space as voyeurs and extend the same position to the spectators in the theatre. Although the technology of the camera and the editing processes construct Ganga as a sexual object, the privileged spectators, unlike the all male audience in the diegetic space, know that she is a sub-inspector and a subject of the law. It is the song then which serves as the culminating point of a theme.

A conservative subcontinent opposed to expressive sexuality, films somehow place social messages within its narrative which becomes a curious mixture of the ‘speakable’ and the ‘unspeakable’ elements. Take for example a playback sequence in the film Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978) in which actor Zeenat Aman wears a see-through loincloth to cover/uncover her assets. Undressed to thrill, she is shown praying to a phallus shaped stone idol of Lord Shiva. Such a positioning of the elements- a conflation of religious fanaticism and eroticism- allows the Indian moviegoer to simultaneously experience sexuality and not feel sinful. Thus songs are not only heard but also ‘seen’ with the aid of the female body placed at the climactic moment of the drama. Anil Saari describes a similar scene-featuring actor of the yesteryears, Mumtaz-: The men, young and old-were totally fascinated by Mumtaz’s voluptuous personality. Even the old men would sit intently and stare at all the eroticism and semi-eroticism.

In the case of two old men- definitely over 50- it seemed that the song and dance sequence culminated in an orgiastic exhaustion. One of the two men even got up and went out for a while, almost as if the end of the sequence marked the end of one exciting and sensory trip- a catharsis.4

Dixit did the same three decades later. After marking Ganga’s entry, the camera cuts to another dancer, Champa Didi, (Neena Gupta), as she demands “Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai? Chunri ke neeche kya hai?” (What is behind the blouse? What is behind the veil?). The positioning of the folk singer too is made inviting, sexually implicit and aggressive. (She sits with her legs apart). Her eyes and lips express the invitation. Employing a reverse shot, the camera turns to Ganga, focusing on her blouse, as she slowly unveils and answers, “Choli mein dil hai mera, chunri mein dil mera, yeh dil mein doongi mere yaar ko, pyaar ko” (My heart is in my blouse, my heart is under the veil, I will give this heart to my lover). And if you read what lies beneath: I shall use my body to lure the man (Ballu) but my heart, (which is under a veil) shall be my love’s, (Ram’s). The camera lingers over Ganga's blouse and makes the double
entendre visible. The reference therefore is just not to Ganga’s heart but also to her heaving bosom. The camera captures this highly sexualised interaction between Ganga and her co-dancer.

The performative aspect is that both Ganga and her dancing partner know that this high-pitched sensuality is a trap for the villain, the (Khalnayak). After showing this interaction, the camera cuts and zooms on the smirking face of Ballu, the villain who is simultaneously the desiring male subject and the criminal object under Ganga’s surveillance. What Ballu does not realise and the privileged audience does is that behind the blouse and behind the veil is a representative of the police force masquerading as an object of desire. 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.”

In addition to the major forms of gaze which have been discussed earlier in the thesis, 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.” In relation to viewer-text relations of looking, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, (1996) 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 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.” 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.” 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.

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). Looking is socially regulated: there are social codes of looking (including taboos on certain kinds of looking). It can be instructive to reflect on what these codes are in particular cultural contexts (they tend to retreat to transparency when the cultural context is one's own). “Children are instructed to "look at me", not to stare at strangers, and not to look at certain parts of the body... People have to look in order to be polite, but not to look at the wrong people or in the wrong place, e.g. at deformed people.”

Within the bounds of the cultural conventions, people who avoid one's gaze may be seen as nervous, tense, “evasive and lacking in confidence whilst people who look a lot may tend to be seen as friendly and self-confident.” Goffman (1969) describes the sustained 'hate stare' as exhibited by bigoted white Americans to blacks. The directed eye contact violates a code of looking, where eye contact is frequently broken but returned to, and leads to depersonalization of the victim because an aggressor deliberately breaks the rules, which the victim adheres to. Commenting on Noting Pratt's (1992) exploration of 'the colonial gaze', Schroeder comments that 'explorers gaze upon newly discovered land as colonial resources', and adds what that John Urry (1990) describes as 'the tourist gaze', which reflects status differences, "emphasizing that it is historically variable." Codes of looking are particularly important in relation to gender. One woman reported to a male friend: “One of the things I really envy about men is the right to look.” She pointed out that in public places, “men could look freely at women, but women could only glance back surreptitiously.”

Why focus on the bare backed blouse? The director argued that it was a necessary element in the narrative of the film; rural Rajasthani women usually wear it as their traditional dress. Although viewers got to see cholis
making a statement about sexuality before (Ketan Mehta's, *Mirch Masala*, Kalpana Lajmi's *Rudaali*) but never like this. 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 that may also be lent to viewers of the image. In this sense, the camera can represent a 'controlling gaze'.

In her classic book, *On Photography* Susan Sontag referred to several aspects of 'photographic seeing', which are relevant in the current context. "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed."  "Photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention... the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging what is going on to keep on happening." "The camera doesn't rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate - all activities that, unlike the sexual push and shove, can be conducted from a distance, and with some detachment."

The functions of photography can be seen in the context of Michel Foucault's analysis of the rise of surveillance in modern society. Photography promotes 'the normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them.' However, "looking need not necessarily be equated with controlling." John Ellis argues that 'gazing is the constitutive activity of cinema.

It is clear that the conditions of viewing in the cinema are significantly different from the conditions of viewing in the home. For instance, in the cinema one watches a narrative which is beyond one's own control, in dreamlike darkness, in the company of strangers and typically also with a close friend or two, having paid for the privilege; it is hardly surprising that in the context of the nuclear family, with companions one might not necessarily always choose as co-viewers and with channels which can easily be changed, viewing is often more casual - indeed, many televisual genres are designed for
such casual viewing. Ellis argues that the conditions are such that 'the voyeuristic mode',22 cannot be as intense for the television viewer as for the cinema spectator.

Nevertheless, the song makes a reappearance in the film with a false 'role reversal'. Richard Dyer (1982) describes the gaze of males in images aimed at women (pin-ups, star-portraits, drawings and paintings), where the female model typically averts her eyes, expressing modesty, patience and a lack of interest in anything else, the male model looks either off or up. In the case of the former, his look suggests an interest in something else that the viewer cannot see - it certainly doesn't suggest any interest in the viewer. Indeed, it barely acknowledges the viewer, whereas the woman's averted eyes do just that - they are averted from the viewer. In the cases where the model is looking up, this always suggests a spirituality... he might be there for his face and body to be gazed at, but his mind is on higher things, and it is this upward striving that is most supposed to please... it may be, as is often said, that male pin-ups more often than not, do not look at the viewer, but it is by no means the case that they never do. When they do, what is crucial is the kind of look that it is, something very often determined by the set of the mouth that accompanies it.

When the female pin-up returns the viewer's gaze, it is usually some kind of an inviting smile. "The male pin-up, even at his most benign, still stares at the viewer... since Freud, it is common to describe such a look as 'castrating' or 'penetrating'."23 Stereotypical notions of masculinity are strongly oriented towards the active. Dyer argues that the male model feels bound to avoid the 'femininity' of being posed as the passive object of an active gaze. Paul Messaris notes that historically, 'direct views into the camera have tended to be the exception rather than the rule in some ads aimed at men.'24 However, "during the past two decades or so, there has been a notable countertext in male-oriented advertising, featuring men whose poses contain some of the same elements - including the direct view - traditionally associated with women."25 This seems likely to indicate both a more explicit concern about how men look in the eyes of women.

By this time Ganga and the audience find out that Ballu discovered Ganga's true identity at the very first meeting, soon after she finished the song. This discovery not only unveils Ganga's identity as a sub-inspector but also more importantly reveals her display of sexuality was a masquerade and that behind this façade is a pure 'Ganga'. In fact her identity card reveals her name as Ganga Gangotri Devi, a certified purity by Indian mythological standards. Yet when Ganga makes her first appearance in the film she is far
from being divine. Brutalizing women prison inmates (where she is posted) projects her as part of the normal behavioural pattern prevalent in policing agencies in our country. She is shown taking a woman inmate by her hair and using the choicest of expletives. To make her position more convincing she slaps one of them.

*Kutti* (Bitch/female dog), *Chudel* (witch): Language used by the inmates.

*Yeh Tumhare baap ka ghar nahn hai* (This is not your father’s house.)

*Hararam ki pilli Do dande parenge to sab thikane aa jyega.* (Illegitimate female pup when you get two blows of the stick everything will be fine with you.)

In fact the opening lines of her first appearance in the film conflicts with her holy name. A prison inmate asks her, "Kaisi aurat hai tu? (What kind of a woman are you?)" And she responds by slapping her and saying, "Aisi aurat hoon main! (This is the kind of woman I am!)

Coming back to the song, *Ganga* is persuaded to eat, with *Ballu* trying to entertain her with her song. He is veiled, complete with blouse and a skirt but somehow the camera never gets to sexualize the male bodies. Their performance is the least alluring in fact it degrades the physical form of a female body by it’s lewd actions. In contrast to the depiction of *Ballu* and his gang as voyeurs during the first picturization of the song, the camera never constructs *Ganga* as a voyeur because she refuses to watch the men perform. Moreover there is no place for a female gaze in popular cinema, the narrative of the films deploy patriarchal modes and regulate the ways of seeing in the films,—it is only women and that too only bad women who can be good lures, men are obviously the subjects of desires and not sexual objects.

The lack of oomph in the male rendition of the song/dance sequence is intentional because *Ganga* needs to be shown as a temptress, the medium of seduction, which has to be through the focus on her body. The first rendition was more vulgar and obscene in nature than the second one because it implied the motive...a presupposed sexual encounter that finally never takes place. A daunting foreplay, the actual act remains cut out because *Ganga* has to retain her purity for her *Ram* and also because she’s on the right side of the law therefore cannot have a relationship with the villain.

**On Screen Mothers: The Dynamics of the Significant Other in Hindi Films.**

The roles essayed by actors as on-screen mothers are also a prime example of what Mulvey calls as the passive female. “The vitalizing powers of women characters are always ignored.”26 The mother’s role in traditional Hindi
cinema enjoys a double inheritance as it encompasses the mother-goddess tradition. "At one end Hindi films equate the role of the mother to a goddess who fights a lone battle vanquishing the demons that haunt her-Mother goddess can be interpreted as expressing ideas of power, autonomy and primary in the widest sense of the terms...she conveys a world view in which the creative power of femininity is central, she is the combined energy of the Gods but she wields weapons and battles alone with hardly any male support."27 She is the benevolent Shakti- the actualizer of Gods latent power and the embodiment of His grace. She thus enjoys an independent status. "Even the radha-krishna couple is shown in a total non-heirarchical relationship,"28 Mahakali, Mahalaxmi, Mahasarwati, Durga are portrayed alone, this is the Goddess who exists in herself-by herself,' Ganesh (1990) explains that, the Goddess is a powerful symbol of linkages. "She bridges realms and levels hierarchies and schisms; between the autochthonous and alien, conquerors and the conquered....she exists as a disturbing presence; by daring to exist, to fight and begs to differ."29

However down on earth few things are detrimental for the mortal mother goddess. The ideal mothers are of the species-silent, suffering, stoic and painfully subservient splashed over the celluloid screens to make to weep in your tissues and draw out all your maternal instincts. As the movie draws near the end, most of us want to forget them because we don't want to be identified with such a character and those who want to would want to put it across to their children about the various sacrifices a mother puts in for her offsprings. The positive impact and the significance of this character is absolutely stultified with the result that the character just slips through your fingers and what remains behind is a pathetic caricature.

Popular cinema refuses to place the role of the mother within a more realistic environment; instead it strives to contract this space into a place of isolation and confinement. Rakhee's role as Ballu's mother is very much the same as a sobbing wallpaper. As the grieving mother, of a son gone astray, she is the epitome of despair. Aarti as she is called in the film again has a sacred connotation in Hindu religion. Her white robes signify her marital status and her sorrow. Therefore dress codes are also signifiers of social norms and Hindi films have repeatedly perpetuated this. Films employ symbols to portray certain structural oppositions also, e.g. conventional versus unconventional, constrained versus free. Street (2001) opines that clothes can be used to suggest "difference, fluidity and possibility and is important in film narrative, whether made explicit to the audience or not."30 As Annette Kuhn explains in The Power of the Image; Essays on Representations and Sexuality (1985); "Clothing has the potential to disguise,
to alter, even to reconstruct the wearer's self."31 This is exactly what is seen in
the film to define each of the women actor's characters, raunchy as the
dancing girl Ganga, the loud clothes of the jailor's wife, the villain's moll has
western clothes designed to essay her role and then that of the mother is
always shown in white. The way we treat our elderly widows is a long heated
debate. The societal construction of a respectable halo is a facade, a veil to
suppress widowhood and relegate it to a heinous crime. In the scenes where
Aarti is interrogated by the police for her absconding criminal son, she is
repeatedly slapped and pulled by the hair by male policemen. There is a
marked absence of women policewomen. Her being the single performer in the
frame depicts her loneliness, caused by the death of her husband.

The connectivity to her son is by all means violent though through the
common strategy of the flashback. This has 'traditionally served to recall to
highlight, to fit in pieces of a puzzle, to justify an action currently being
carried out'. Mother and son develop the notion of objectivity' by recounting,
separately, to two different listeners, how the villainous Roshiba came into
their lives leading to the breakup of the family and the son ending up being
the villain's favorite hit man. A schooleteacher by profession, Aarti's character
is depicted by just being another hapless woman. This blasphemous
caricature that the character is reduced to has no strappings of the
characteristics that a modern educated woman should have inculcated from
her education and from her life. "The suppressions, the exactions and the
dictatorial conventions of the society tend to inhibit the 'autonomy' of a
woman as an individual."32 Therefore inspite of her educational qualifications,
Aarti's projections of a wailing mother by not even trying to bring her son to
justice or attempting to locate him or fighting for his case is something
uncharacteristic of a woman in our age. In the view of Zauderer, “Autonomy
is not merely a liberal masculine ideal,” but a basic need for freedom of thought
and action. The liberation from the feeling of helplessness is the ideal of
autonomy. Women submit to the tyrannies of fraternal societies at three
levels, the emotional, the social and the financial."33

The Manusmriti tells us that, a virtuous wife should not do anything
displeasing to her husband, who took her hand in marriage when he is alive or
dead, if she longs for her husband's world (after death). She should be long
suffering until death, long suffering, self-restrained, and chaste, striving (to
fulfill) the unsurpassed duty of women who have one husband. A woman who
is unfaithful to her husband is an object of reproach in this world; (then) she is
reborn in the womb of a jackal and is tormented by the diseases borne of her
evil. 34
The figure of the mother, as perhaps every student of popular Hindi cinema is aware of, is central to the narrative of the film. "At a very general level this is easily explained by the importance attached to fecundity in India from the days of antiquity; while it is also possible to argue that Indian civilization always had a substratum of matriarchy, certainly antecedent to the patriarchy which is far more characteristic of the Indian society today." From another point of view, no important or poignant relationship exists in the Indian society than between the mother and the son (Kakkar, 1978) and the Hindi film best exemplifies the significance of this relationship. Chandrashekhar (1988) argues, "the sole irreproachable ideological thesis one can defend is the love of the mother." The Hindi film then enacts for the Indian male a double return to the source; seated in the darkness of the movie hall, we all descend into the darkness of the womb but for the Indian male that darkness is like a wellspring of light, and the womb that place where our sleep is undettedtered by any sound or intrusion. It is an attempt to reinstate the primacy of the umbilical stage.

Therefore we see Ballu who refuses to swear by any holy book when he’s asked to testify in court but takes the name of his mother who is his sacred book. While the mother is an absolute must for the narrative, the character itself degenerates into being just a wronged and long suffering persona. The flashback shows Aarti defending every wrong doing of her son, not reprimanding him for anything that is wrong but shielding him from all accusations. She says, Meri mamta ne usko bigaad diya hai, (my motherly love has spoilt him), thereby implying that she is the one responsible for the state Ballu is in.

For a woman motherhood becomes the weak link, to choose between the right and the wrong. But a mother’s maternal instincts can have a far-reaching effect on public life. The well-known American writer (and feminist) Charlotte Perkins Gilman has observed, "Mothers with their natural characteristics of care, nature, provision and education can be shown to be ideal public administrators." They have a strong impact on society with their natural habit of saving the interests of others and also the manner in which they bring up children. This concept of ‘social motherhood’, which transcends the ‘separate sphere’ ideology, can be exploited to positively tackle the repressions, suppressions and arbitrary conventions of society. Her characteristics of ‘care’, ‘nurture’, ‘provision’ and ‘education’ can enable the mother character to direct the resources of administration and society, away from competition and self-interest thus aiding social advancement and progress. The politics of social motherhood can be directed towards aiding social advancement and not hindering it.
The projection of non-nurturing, well-intentional but misguided mothers has a crippling effect on social and cultural theory. A strong endorsement of the mother ideal could reveal the vast potential of this character. But popular cinema has continued to portray the role of the mother with astute remoteness, well insulated by social histrionics. Even the criminal son is looked up as an equivalent to a portrait of Jesus. While trying to look for him in a church she asks the priest.....\textit{Father kya aapne mere bete ko dekha hai?} (Have you seen my son father?) He says, No child I have not, but tell me how does he look like? She chances on the portrait of Jesus and says that; there he looks like him. And the priest replies back saying, that the one in the portrait is the Son of God. Thereby implying the character of Ballu's deceased father who was a righteous lawyer.

Then when \textit{Aarti} meets \textit{Ram}, the police officer on the chase of her fugitive son and who she discovers is a past acquaintance, and gets a foothold of the danger her son is in and therefore pleads for his life in return of trying to turn him in. And when finally mother and son meet, she implores Ballu to turn himself in so that she would in turn will be spared to see him dead. Infuriated Ballu physically assauts his mother at least twice over when she prevents him to kill Ram. Gone are the theories of a respected \textit{devi jaisi maa} here. Is this not violence?

\textbf{Sexuality and Obscenity: The Looked-at-ness of the Object.}

Coming back to the song, R.P. Chugh, an advocate was among the many, who filed a legal petition in Delhi alleging that the song is, \textit{Obscene, defamatory to women community and is likely to incite the commission of offense. The song is grossly indecent and is being sung through cassettes at public places, annoying the people at large, the undersigned especially. (R.P.Chugh, 1993).}^{38}

The veiled sexual reference made in the song, in Chugh’s eyes was not only obscene but derogatory to women and this is something that none of us to contest. Chugh’s cluster of complaints threw out the assumptions of our society’s perception about sexuality and about prevalent patriarchal discourse in India, first that sexuality is obscene, sexual references dishonor women and third that sexual entry into the public spheres disrupts social boundaries. Shabana Azmi in an interview argued that... “I have always advocated that it is very wonderful for women to celebrate their sexuality, but Hindi cinema is not a celebration of sexuality. When you see a heaving bosom, a swiveling navel, a shaking buttock in fragmented bits on screen, it makes a woman lose...
all autonomy over her body." She further quotes Maithili Rao's work, particularly the *Choli Ke Prechhe Kya Hai* number as being a prime example of the female actor reduced to an object of the gaze, a clear violation of the self.

A section of people shot back saying that the song was a Hindi version of a popular folk number of Rajasthan and they found nothing repelling in it. But Arun Katiyar, in an article for India Today, confirmed that 'folk traditions, especially in Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have spawned wicked lyrics. However he added that these kinds of songs are sung in specific contexts such as pre-nuptial wedding ceremonies. In these ceremonies, he explained the "women sing what is commonly known as ladies *sangeet* (songs) in Punjab, it is done in a jovial manner than as a come-on." Therefore, women, traditional and sexuality are intrinsically intertwined. The song's detractors claimed that it contributed to sexual harassment, constructing women as victims.

Conversely, its proponents suggested that the song could never be vulgar because it had women participating in it. A shallow defense in itself!! We have Katiyar who confirmed the song's traditional pedigree but confirmed that it was dislodged from its context, in particular, pre-wedding ceremonies, which was to say the site of tradition. These positions also throw light on our culture, in which women are either the victims of sexual abuse or guardians of morality and tradition.

Sexuality is shown as an aggressive, almost a wrong step on the part of the female character in films abstracting her of any desires from her own side. This brings us to discuss the importance of the male gaze in popular cinema. Though as spectators we know of the masquerade that the upright police officer Ganga is putting on in order to lure the culprit, she's disguised as a dancing girl, more of a prostitute as she herself says. .... *Vaishya* in the film. 'Choli ke peeche kya hai' contributed to sexual harassment of women, screamed women activists and as Shankar Chugh, another member of the BJP, reiterated her views:

*On the one hand number of steps have been taken for the welfare and security of women, on the other hand persons like Subhash Ghai have been giving song to the anti-social elements like choli ke peeche kya hai and it has become very difficult for girls and women to go out. In case the above song is going to continue, the next song would be: kachi ke peeche [behind the underwear] and petticot ke peeche [behind the petticoat] etc. (S. Chugh 1993).*

Vineet Kumar, who filed a case against *Khalnayak* at the Consumer Redressal Forum in Faridabad, cited an "instance in Sambhal where a young
man namely Raju, son of Shri Nazar resident of Miyan Sarai used to tease girls of respectable families by singing this un-parliamentary song." Kumar argued that the song should be deleted from the film on the grounds that it was "against the culture, convention and moral of Indian society." (V. Kumar 1993). Concurring with Vineet Kumar's sentiments, an affronted Ashok Kumar from the Integrity and Welfare Society wrote: One doesn't understand what the director Subhash Ghai wants to say to a cultured nation like India by showing songs with double meaning. When one's sisters and daughters are around and songs like these are played, one feels ashamed and embarrassed. (A. Kumar 1993) Adding to the list of the song's detrimental effects, Mrs. Ram Gupta indignantly inquired what kind of culture and tradition children would learn from watching such a song (Gupta 1993). Shweta Sanjay also expressed her concern about the song's effects on "innocent minds": The audio playing of the said song has been disturbing parents and innocent minds throughout the nation. The said audio song should have been banned immediately on its release. . . . I fail to understand as to how parents will feel while viewing the said film with their children and more so when they ask about the meaning of the said words (Sanjay 1993).

In Chugh's petition, the public argument, and the filmic narrative, the female body becomes the site and focus for the debate on the role of sex in Indian tradition. What complicates the debates on Indian tradition further is the specific function the film industry assumes in a growing capitalist market. Some members of the film and music industries claimed that 'Choli ke peecho kya hai' was a 'folk song' and hence, a part of Indian tradition. Within the capitalist market, such traditions are easily manufactured, packaged, publicized and sold. In Khalnayak, this film/'folk' song becomes a conduit for the commodified presentation of the female body. Bollywood's highly sexualized version of the 'village belle' is sold in theaters and video stores for huge profits. Thus, the film industry plays a crucial role in the commodification of female sexuality.

Her gestures and bodily movements would have also have to comply with a real one, therefore she dances /entertains, lifts her skirt right on the table exposing her legs to the audience and to where Ballu is seated. And when he offers her a wad of currency notes, which she aptly stacks it away in her blouse. The focus is on her assets and to where the notes finally make their resting point. In India, working class women are known to keep their money in the safety of their blouses. But it is never meant to entice or allure. Most prostitutes are known to do the same which would mean the acceptance of a deal made with a potential customer and since the song does not end up with a sexual encounter the action is absolutely meant for the male gaze. In
fact the camera engages in the voyeuristic option of following her with Ballu in her dressing room, where she is shown in the process of undressing. The song's aim was to titillate and so it did. (An estimated 5 million audiotapes were sold.).

'Oh god! The gaze is male', was the original outcry of feminist film criticism. And since film depends on a series of looks—yours, the director's, the hero's— with the gaze goes the entire construction of the cinema from the list of character to the way we see them. Over the last few decades women scholars have been breaking their ball points trying to describe what a female gaze might be what images might emanate from a female subject with her own language and vision. The feminist's word on the women-as-object seemed final: inert, blind and silent. And violence against women was always seen as more of a physical wrongdoing than to look at invisible meanings of the images that are thrust upon us on the celluloid.

Violence in today's world has had a new meaning in the way actors are asked to dress, speak and engage themselves on the screen. To portray a woman as an object of the male gaze is also violence of sorts. Women at different levels of the narrative deal with realistic situations in the most unrealistic manner, mothers moan for their wayward sons, sisters get raped and killed unmercifully, the so-called bad women either transform themselves somewhere in the middle of the two and a half hour melodrama or are vanquished in the end.

The female protagonist remains the core of the erotica unnecessarily generated for the male gaze. Among all the women characters portrayed on the screen there is hardly notion of a female bonding; in short, women cannot be friends but as competitors vying for the attention of the male characters that surround their world. The so-called vamp's role is no longer a separate identity in today's popular cinema, it has taken over by an all consummate character reducing the character to that of a victim rather than the perpetuator of force. This is what we will constantly try to identify and analyse in the thesis.

The earliest feminists critics had the miserable job of developing a critique and aesthetic in a field dominated by men with a few exceptions—Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino in Hollywood, Maya Deren and Shirley Clarke in the experimental realm directors and producers has until the era of feminist criticism, have all been male. And in India we have never really had a feminist female director in the true sense of the term. The point of view of most of our films is male, with the female characters (even in 'women's films').
Informing the female viewers how men expect them to behave and within the frame, women are looked at, men do the looking. Laura Mulvey in her seminal article ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ drew attention to this hegemony. But even her 1975 essay women in the western world were protesting the “roles” permitted by the male perspective. Marjorie Rosen in Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies and the American Dream, (1973), Molly Haskell in From Reverence to Rape, (1987) and John Mellon in Women and their Sexuality in the New Films (1973) all describe the variations of the good girl, (obsequious and protected) and the bad girl (rebellious and punished) was all that women were allowed to be.

Popular Hindi cinema advertises this proposition wholeheartedly. Ganga as the rebellious and thus playing the role of a ‘bad girl’ (prostitute) needs to be punished for saving the life of Ballu not just because she was deviating from her professional duties but was shown to be developing a soft corner for the latter. The film needed a male saviour in the form of the villain himself who stands up for her innocence and purity in the courtroom when she is handed over a rigorous punishment.

With Mulvey however psychoanalysis and semiotics entered the picture and the discussion shifted from the contents of films to their structure and how this structure benefits the psychological needs of men. Traditional narrative film is pleasurable, Mulvey wrote, because it provides men with a larger than life, protected arena in which to assuage their fears of castration. Later, Mulvey likened the structure of the film to the structure of stories and other folk and mass culture. It was then Paul Willeman who identified the psychological processes; Mulvey associates with narrative cinema as being part of non-narrative cinema as well. In the darkness of the theater where reality recedes and the story envelops, according to Mulvey, is where the male viewer identifies with the male lead and partakes of his victories.

As in the case of this film, though one knows that Ballu is the villain, the male viewer identified with his pathos, his agony into the world of crime as an innocent man driven by the frustrations of a corrupt society and the failure of his upright father to lead a comfortable life. His education doesn’t not help him to get a job and is elder sister too suffers the same fate despite of her educational qualifications. Roshiba the bad man is willing to offer him a lucrative position, so he decides to take it up because of his unemployment. Though he wants the good girl, Ganga whom he eventually falls in love but cannot marry her because she is already betrothed to the good man, Ram’s girl. Therefore he is shown to overcome his evil and punish the real villain and save the girl from an imprisonment, forcing the male viewer either way
dashing the threat of the absent phallus. Compounding this satisfaction is the thrill of women erotically displayed. All in all, the male viewer is left with a rather heady sense of himself.

But the presence of women can trigger castration anxieties even in the midst of seduction. If escape by 'getting' or punishment isn't a propos, there's always the out-and-out denial. Film allows men to make women onscreen into fetishes; phallic substitutes that not only neutralize the threat to castration but also become positively reassuring. Between the voyeurism implicit in identification, the sadism inherent in conquest, and what Mulvey calls fetishistic scopophilia (love of looking), cinema proffers men as an erotic free-for-all. (Women filmgoers don't figure into this picture much, except as identifying with the female object onscreen and so rendering themselves as objects). Therefore Mulvey considers the perspective of cinema masculine and its intention to address only men. This male bacchanalia is precisely the pleasure Mulvey would like to vitiate, replace it with the counter-cinema, and eventually with a new language of desire. What we cannot be expected to do is produce a film out of the blue—what with such basic tools of narrative and vision set up as playground for the male psyche—but we can start by subverting the one that exists in our popular films, films that are universally watched and understood by our masses. Claire Johnston, in *Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema*, took her theory further, declaring that there aren't any women onscreen at all—just the male and the non male. Culling from Juliet Mitchell's work in psychology, Johnston says that the female is repressed in culture and elided from the screen. If one is to ever have female subject one would have to begin by undermining the present state of cinema, perhaps by making the elision of women, patent.

As important as the works of Mulvey and Johnston were, by the late seventies, more was needed: more than the descriptions of how tough women have it, how word and gaze are determined by male needs (and, in turn shape them), and how thoroughly they serve his purposes. At best, women are left, as Ann Kaplan puts it, in a position of negativity—subverting rather than positing. Ruby Rich further questioned this by arguing that if, according to Mulvey, the woman is not visible on the screen, then how does one formulate an understanding of a structure that insists on our absence even in the face of our presence?

The answer to Rich's question lies, possibly, in retaining some critical perspective about psychoanalysis and semiotics, and in keeping an eye on reality, which, unlike epistemological systems isn't codified or closed, and where, for all its messiness, change occurs. So thought writer Julia Lesage,
who called the semiotic theories of Jacques Lacan ‘a discourse which is totally male’ which seals women off in the realm of exclusion and childlike helplessness. And so though Sandy Flitterman and Judith Barry, who, in an effort to return to a little comfortable materialism, argued for an aesthetic that “subverted the production of ‘woman’ as commodity.’ Lucy Arbuthnot and Gail Seneca, also dissatisfied with feminist criticism’s focus on male domination and female lack, noted that new feminist films, by destroying narrative and identification with the character, destroyed both male and female pleasure. But since we don’t have a real basis for feminist Hindi films it’s best to leave that aspect alone.

In fact with a more thorough appreciation of fiction, we turn to Stern (1998) who suggested that we might have to bother so much with subverting the male images. Instead, it would be a better deal to develop the images in women’s minds. We might, for the first time, be honest about the ones we have and be able to pursue them further, since we wouldn’t assume they indicate private longings for real. Fictions about voyeurs and violence, we discover, aren’t products of only male psyche; they can be located in everyone’s mental library. And further they may not be products of gender at all. And this ultimately would be a boon to debunking traditional femininity.

In the Hollywood flick, Variety, Bette Gordon said “to hell with it....” and put one of her own fictions into celluloid: She made her heroine both object and voyeur. And it’s just this sort of manipulation that Teresa de Lauretis recommended in her book, Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema, (1984) women can, according to de Lauretis’s look, though they are said to be seen only, they can in fact, desire though they are said only to be desired. Film noir lets this contradiction surface. But traditional cinema tends to punish voyeuristic women for pursuing passions they are not supposed to have thereby resolving the dilemma by the very presence of those passionate poses as we see in the film itself where Ganga seems to get attracted to the persona of Ballu but cannot because she is someone else’s property.

Feminist cinema should take the plot in some other direction developing a new frame of reference with a body of exceptions and heresies born out of the contradiction that female desire presents. Hopefully even popular cinema could develop a new frame of reference from which would come out stories and pictures that don’t rehearse the processes and rhythms of male psychology. Instead of traditional narrative, which is obviously in cahoots with male sexuality. (The hero encounters dark, mysterious challenges, struggles, and emerges not only victorious even in the garb of a villain, a real man), so in a way could also develop a language that might have a space for female lust.
Anne Kaplan (2000) looks not so much for contradictions but gaps starting with feminist Julia Kristeva's idea that women are what’s 'not yet represented' in current language and ideologies, Kaplan takes cue from the reinterpretation of mothering in the *Riddles of the Sphinx*, (a film by Mulvey and Peter Wollen and suggests motherhood as an area ripe for redescription). The mother may be romanticized or vilified but the real condition of raising children and the implications of childhood's helplessness have been constantly brushed under the carpet. Infact, the male need to dominate and conquer or make women into fetishes may not stem so much from the particular fear of castration as from the more overwhelming fear of being once again helpless and dependent on the mother.

Understandable, the conditions of infancy, of being mothered have been repressed. All in all, recent criticism implores us to avoid the ivory tower of feminism, that we look to film, life and the images in our mind for contradictions and elisions- anything that gets us off the track of male art and language domination and gets us rolling to see what women in reality are, what they desire and what they would want to portray on the screen. The process begins with subversion and sedition and ends in a new aesthetic. Mothering is a comfortable place to start with both socially acceptable and socially correct mores. The fact of the matter is that it is not just a male construction but at the same time this cannot be the only area of investigation. It is time to reconsider the idea of objectification in popular films especially from a woman’s point of view. Men in any case hardly admit their covert desire to be overtly admired. It is certainly a part of a woman’s experience in life and in art. And it might not be a condition of mobility and silence. Men may think of women as absent and most women even think of themselves in the same way, they could be right because this is the way we lead our everyday lives.

Psychoanalysis claims that the male mind is dominated by the fear of castration and the Oedipal process. Lacan applied this idea to culture by suggesting that each male child enters the process of symbolizing, of language in the broadest sense of the term, when he experiences the loss or fear of loss of (the ultimate deprivation being the absence of the phallus) and learns the sign or the word for the lack. But even if we are to accept this picture of masculininity (and many feminists actually do, though there are other models of male development), must we accept the psychoanalytic notion of feminity. Men may worry about castration but as women are we necessarily played by the penis envy? Why assume the complementarity? And is the castration necessarily the decisive trigger in the development of language? And when you
get down to the basics men may see sex as penetration, marital or even sadistic perhaps women see sex as bringing a man inside for the satisfaction of the motion. Men may regard female genitalia as frightening abyss, while women may know it as a muscle, as suction and as a sensation. So when Ganga uses her body as a seduction she sees herself as a sensation but is projected on the screen in parts to heighten the level of male pleasure.

This brings us to the question of addressing whether women use the male gaze “some men fantasize themselves as passive, others as dominated didn’t matter to me or to any other stripper so long as they paid attention. We wanted control. They yielded all responsibility to the woman on stage, the thrill from stripping was power, I was seen as powerful; more important I felt powerful”. These words by a Las Vegas stripper throw feminism and film criticism for a toss. Though our female protagonist does not really strip in the movie but uses her youthful self to overpower the men who are watching her.

The experience of being looked at changes according to what goes along with being seen. And if it does, it is better to shift out when looked at is annihilating and when it is as it was for Ganga, a source of power. If we don’t take this stand, we perhaps end up destroying the pleasure we take in our films and as well as the pleasure of flirtation that we enjoy in our real lives. What Ganga does on the screen is performing perhaps not solely for the male look but also with identifying with her own beautiful self in trying to show off that she is in control of her own sexuality. She seduces and lures Ballu but at the same time does not end up in bed with him. This false halo of portraying women as so called individuals in control of their bodies and lives are something that popular films have to shrug off.

Ganga’s body onscreen is lavished with the attention of everything with the lighting to the placement of the frame-regardless of her fate later in the narrative. Inspite of her being on the right side of the law, Ballu takes the opportunity to slap her over a couple of occasions, pull her by her hair and throttling her by the neck. Yet she can’t help but be a persuasive ego ideal for the female audience. Commanding the gazes of those within the frame and those in the theatre, she embodies this false sense of power and imparts this possibility to the women who watch her.

The question is whether popular cinema should give it all up? As a political condition, being an object is an antagonizing dilemma but to show a woman as she is even if it is shown in an erotic environ is what we too do in real lives. As women and men alike we need admiration, which is pure and simple; we need the posturing, the dressing up, the poises and the moves, the
risk and the denouncement. We need it onscreen to evoke interest and emotion but what we need to understand is that it should never allow to impinge and violate our own sexuality and make it a market force. The objectification in cinema, as part of a play allows certain rules. Johan Huizinga, in his thorough study of the game (Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture), calls play outside ordinary life, not serious but completely absorbing, connected with no material interest, and designed to display something out of the ordinary (an object of skill) calculated to arouse admiration. When objectification meets these conditions, anyone who ever has been looked up and down knows the feeling—the sense dominion and helplessness when road side Romeos mow you down with lyrics laced with the wildest sex innuendo's. While being the audience female filmgoers may tow with objectification, it's in the realm of the play but when the shows off and the requirements of the play are not observed, objectification takes on a different warpath. It becomes a permanent state of being, a position of political and psychological helplessness. Outside the context of the film, objectification would mean that women have little to say about the world—their roles and their desires. Outside this context, the object has a lot to lose, and looking for venues of subjectivity then becomes imperative.

But does this acknowledgement of her sexual power make her aware of her own sexuality? "At her raunchiest, she teaches us to guess what is beneath her choli definitely not her heart as the camera plays its own game of reducing the actor to a sum of her fractured body parts, while the villain’s eye patch underlines the male gaze."42 Therefore Ganga’s role gets fragmented: as a police officer, as prostitute and as a lovelorn woman who wants the villain trapped because without his imprisonment she will not be able to marry the man she loves. So despite the transformation that has taken place in the last two decades or so, and the quite remarkable way which women have emerged out of the shelter of their homes into the working space into the wide spectrum of jobs made available to them, most films show a young woman getting into a job while waiting to get married.

"This ‘modern’ miss is almost always shown as the temptress, as man’s evil genius."43 The ‘modern’ girl is either defeated or made to reform as Ganga as in a way in the film, having been brought to see the undesirability of her ways of trapping Ballu. Confronted with situations she cannot handle she is made to wait till the hero or a male character bails her out as does Ballu in the sentimentalized courtroom drama. The result of this denigrating depiction of an educated woman is a violence of sorts where women are shown to be incapable of handling the pressures of their careers.
In the Fifties, educationists and social workers petitioned the government to seriously consider the counter effects of films that showed women in this manner. According to them, all efforts to introduce education for girls were being nullified by the negative image of the educated woman as projected by popular cinema. In any case, it is Ganga’s role as the vaishya that enthralls the audiences. Maithili Rao has repeatedly argued that it is this type of stereotyping that allows the filmmaker to take full control of the female body. He can easily eroticize her and reduce her to a mere sex object than he can do with other categories. “The space in which (such a woman) is filmed, the way her body is fractured and commodified into an object for the overwhelming male gaze, all thrust her even more irrevocably into depths of involuntary thralldom.”

Amidst all his controversy surrounding the song, what needs to be problematized is both the way repression of female sexuality and its commodification is used in the name of Indian tradition. The song could give us an insight into the area of women’s sexual agency. During the period when this film was released, Dixit, who plays Ganga, became the highest paid film female actor in Bollywood. It is not difficult to analyze the fact that why many urban middle class women found nothing wrong in the song and in fact enjoyed the performance. Our society lays down certain parameters on how women should dress, speak and conduct themselves. And above all, any public display of expressing their sexuality is scorned upon. In an atmosphere where the consequences of any sexual expression lead to sexual violation and harassment, many of Dixit’s middle class fans found her performance pleasurable because they associated sexual agency with her song.

A quick look at the petitions filed by Chugh throw light on the meaning of sexuality in traditional societies where discussing about the issue is taboo. And it also threw about a public debate on the representation of sex in popular cinemas. This controversy was subsequently taken up by politicians and led to a stricter approach by the Central Board of Film Certification. Shakti Samata, the then chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification in Bombay received a few hundred letters for and against the deletion of the song from the film and from its trailer. The ‘nearly’ complete Khalnayak appeared before the Examining Committee in Bombay during the course of Chugh’s petition and the debate arising from it. The trailer for Khalnayak was submitted for certification a few days before the film was released. Initially, the Examining Committee ordered that the words ‘Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai’ be deleted from the trailer as they violated the censorship guidelines. However, after examining the entire film, the committee passed the trailer without cuts.
because it was satisfied that the line did not violate state guidelines in the context of the totality of the song.

After the committee members watched the film, they recommended that the theme of the film, the song sequences and the fights would be better understood by children with parental guidance. Film distributors are wary of the censorship labels because an adult certificate would give the wrong signal to parents who would in turn ban their children to see film for obvious reasons. The members unanimously felt that the film should be granted a "UA" (Unrestricted public exhibition subject to parental guidance for children below the age of twelve) certificate with some cuts. The Examining Officer then informed the committee about the various letters received by CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) for and against the film. The members further discussed the issue and felt that the visuals in the song sequence were not vulgar but the words _Choli ke Peeche Kya Hai_ could be deleted. (India, Examining Committee, Report on _Khalnayak_ 1993). Public debate (in)formed the committee's decision to grant _Khalnayak_ a "UA" certificate subject to seven cuts, three of which pertained to the first picturization of the song. The song appeared twice but since the second version featured the male protagonist and did not see anything wrong with it public debate necessarily focused on the first version. Though the second song was equally denigrating with physical references to women's bodies by men nobody raised objections because the male body could not have become the attention of a female gaze. In any case the committee recommended the following cuts in this song sequence:

Cut No. 5 Reel No. 6: Delete the words _'Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai, Chunari ke Neeche Kya Hai'_(What is behind the blouse? What is underneath the scarf?)

Cut No. 6 Reel No. 6: Delete the visuals of _Ganga_ pointing at her breasts where she croons _'Jogan bana na jay kya karoo_ (I can't bear being an ascetic so what should I do?).

Cut No. 7 Reel No. 6: Delete the close pelvic thrusts of the dancing girls in the beginning of the same song (India Examining Committee, Report on _Khalnayak_ 1993).

_Ganga_ oozes with raw sexual power only when she is playing the bad woman. If we are to thoroughly analyze the different acts of violence in the film, we find that it is interspersed with liberal doses every two and a half minutes. Fair enough for the filmmaker to argue that since the film is about a terrorist and is about violence and the triumph of love and truth. But what about the unnecessary violence portrayed against women in the film? Obscenity and vulgarity took the center stage with the inclusion of a single
song negating the entire fact on how these terms are violent in their own particular ways particularly when films use the bodies of women to transmit the cultural mores in a society. What then comes out is the bodily reaction to filter such violent images thus making them invisible. So when Ballu throttles Ganga, pulls her by her hair or threatens to cut her up with a blade, it does not violate the mind because this is how we treat women in real life.

With all this controversy the song went on to become a smash hit. According to market estimates TIPS the music company, which released the audiocassette made a neat profit of Rs.30 million. Considering the profits at stake, an editorial in The Sunday Times suggested that the song was used as a marketing strategy by its director to promote the film. When a controversial text enters the public domain, it becomes a marketable property due to its lure as a forbidden object. Its status as a forbidden object is known as the act of censorship. (Kuhn 1996). Censorship fuelled desire and the effect was that more and more people went to see something that they did not expect to see in their normal lives, a bosom heaving damsel's inviting body and a wronged man.

Janice Radway's insights throw light on interpreting such responses. By attending to viewer's responses in a context, we can see that "although ideology is extraordinarily pervasive and continually determines social life, it does not preclude the possibility...of limited resistance." This resistance is carried out by viewers who appropriate otherwise ideologically conservative forms in order to better their lives, "which have been controlled and dictated by their place in the social structure."

By reading films such as Khalnayak one discovers not only 'a code of prohibition and denial..in the sense that cinema supplies what reality denies, but we "will also recognize the wounds that the code of prohibition and denial have inflicted on desire itself...wounds that are not external to but within the iconographic system that expresses rather than represses." It is no coincidence that the first Indian film was a mythological. The moral education of all but the thinnest layer of affluent, westward looking Indians is derived from the epics. These stories, despite liberal doses of miracle and fantasy are no fairy tales easily told and easily forgotten. Nor are they irrelevant to real life, a part of the literary and artistic heritage of the past as Greek mythology is for the western civilization. On the contrary, they have a living reality and a dominant influence on the conduct of daily life till today. (Kamla Bhasin)
Idealized Women: Stereotypical Images of Modernization and Tradition.

Unfortunately women in India are not given that option. *Khalnayak* can be viewed as performing an interpretation of the Ramayana, argues Lal (1998). The example of *Sita*, the perfect woman, the perfect wife, acquiescing unquestioningly to her husband’s rejection to her is nothing more than an abject surrender to the prejudice of a male dominated society, has been held up as the ideal for all women to follow. Taken in conjunction with the rules of Manu ‘the Law Giver’, the average woman in India is always nothing more than a daughter, sister, wife, and mother. ‘In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons; a woman must never be independent’, wrote Manu and with these few lines pushed the Indian woman into a quagmire of exploitation and eternal subjection for the next two thousand years. Tradition required it, and today’s popular cinema glamorizes it. Bollywood churns out films, which repeatedly reiterate, underline and reinforce such lines of inequality.

Coming back to the film’s uncanny similarity with the characters of the *Ramayana*, *Ganga Gangotri Devi* is the epitome of purity similar to that of *Sita*. So when she lets *Ballu* escape just as he is being captured, the force of rumor and public opinion induces a greater trauma. The whole world (*saari janta*) gossips about *Ganga*’s infidelity, for it is, not possible that, during her captivity under *Ballu* she entered into an amorous relationship with him. For *Ram*, his wife *Sita* went to *Ravana* scream the media, and if the *Ram* of the *Satyuga* (the age of truth), could renounce his *Sita*, at the word of a mere washer man then why should *Ram Sinha* side with his now tainted lover. Why should love always be sublimated, pure and eternal? Caught in *Ballu*’s love nest, *Ganga* commits treachery against her country and is shown to betray her colleagues in the police force. The crux of the matter ‘is today’s *Sita* cohabited with *Ravana* and demeaned *Ram*’ (*Saaransh yeh hai ki aaj ki Sita Ravan ke paas rahi aur Ram ko badnaam kiya*). If *Ganga*’s purity has to be recovered she should stand trial.

Once *Ballu* finds that he has been spurned by *Ganga* (He had taken a *mangal sutra* for her), he plans to return to the path of villainy as a person who wanted desperately to reform but the world, and its inhabitants would not let that happen. In fact when *Ganga* tells him that his unkempt looks make him resemble an animal, he goes on to refurbish is external self and turns up dressed in a suit. How that happens with a criminal in a hideout that is beyond imagination but what matters is that how a woman could have had a bearing on the way he dresses himself. When he comes to the gang's hideout with his suit, there’s the sound of laughter everywhere not of approval.
but of utter ridicule. This is also to show that a criminal does not have the
right to wear nice clothes, Ganga laughs too but nods her head in approval of
his new found dress sense. It is then when he hands over an idol of Ram to
her not realizing that she worships her lover, as did Sita. The constant
projection of men as lord of lords in a woman's world just erodes the concept
of independence that is attributed to an individual. It's perfectly acceptable to
idolize the men in our lives but worshipping them is far too stretched an
imagination.

In any case, Ballu's transformation is halted because of the deceit of a
woman and he swears to become the world's worst man. Yet, he the nayak,
triumphs over the khalnayak and he storms into the court where Ganga
stands trial telling all that Ganga is pure, pavitra, and in every drop of her
blood there is Ram. So ultimately we need the khalnayak to come and save
our yet another damsel in distress. The other woman in the film is Ballu's
mistress who truly loves him, Sophia the evil woman who drinks, pines and
dances for him. The song, which is a description of his entry, is marked by
their sensuous gyrations. But she is used only ornamentally in the film as eye
candy where ever and whenever necessary. According to filmmaker Mahesh
Bhatt, this much-maligned figure is always portrayed as the agent of
destruction of the established value system. Actually the relationship is
already in crisis when she enters. It's like the body, which is open to viruses
when it is vulnerable. The vamp becomes the insignificant Other. What
becomes of her in the end is unknown and also of her true relationship with
Ballu who is not aware of her feelings for him. In short the moll cannot get the
hero for herself for she is evil and even the bad man would want someone as
pure and virginal as Ganga.

The role of Ballu's elder sister is a waste...the film does not what to do
with her righteous character so she is blissfully done away with moments on
her arrival on the screens. Another female character is rendered a complete
caricature, is the jailor's wife who is shown as the garish pan-chewing wife
and who has no ambition, than to marry off her daughter. Though she is
aware of Ram's relationship with Ganga she does not hesitate to approach
him for her hand in marriage. Armed with a near naked picture of her
daughter she pressurizes her husband to broach the topic of the proposal
when the jailor chances upon the picture of the daughter and says that she is
without any clothes.... to which the wife reacts as saying that in America
women dress like this which is in any case denigrating. When is she is about
to showoff her so called westernized daughter the jailor intervenes and pushes
a red hot piece of pepper down her throat to silence her. She briefly appears in
the same insane manner in a just another two scenes where she is shown as the shrew, who is devoid of any grey cells in her brain.

Other than this, Ganga's aging aunt who she stays with since being orphaned is the typical elder who wants her married and settled in life. In fact on her insistence Ram decides to marry Ganga without any further delay and when he is about to put the sindoor (vermilion) the news of Ballu's escape comes in and Ram runs off in haste leaving Ganga's desire unfulfilled. It is this incident in what is seen as being as close to one's desirability to achieve something is the intrusion of the Other, (Ballu) which marks the shift in the film. All in all this is a violent film; quite obvious with it's title being that of a villain's story. To view Ballu as the Other, becomes problematic because of the film's happy ending where he comes through as a changed man. The repository of evil, the signification of unassimilability and the implacable foe of the nation marks Hindi films perilous acceptance of a man on the other side of the law.

What the film did was to drive the audiences to distraction in this way failed to provide the arena where they have plenty of room, plenty of space and time to contemplate issues of their own place and position within certain parameters. There is underlying possibility or hazard in making such films but it continues to attract the viewers as an alternative to what is called thralldom of traditional narrative cinema where the mind gets taken over by these strategies of identifications of vicarious voyeuristic action and enactment.

Cinema was one of the means by which Indians gradually abandoned nineteenth-century codes of reticence and acknowledged and explored sexuality and its implications for the definitions of womanhood. The passionless Victorian woman was being reconstructed as the desirous "New Woman" eager for the experiences of urban and sensual life and the increasing array of consumer goods. Exploring the necessary limits to the degree and direction of expressed desires was one of the tasks, in the interests of social stability, of the cinema of the time. How were women to know how to behave except by being the beneficiary of discussion on these topics? "Bad women" were those who did not know how to use their new freedoms properly, while the new good woman's desires were reasonable. Thus movies, many scholars maintain could and did participate in this ideological transformation by serving up cautionary tales, fictional fables for educational purposes. As films showed glimpses of the forbidden, the middle class could respond in either of two ways: forbid any naughty representations or else embed them in narrative. Both responses occurred. The middle class, important though it was in setting standards, was far from
homogeneous, Staiger (1995) argues. In fact, the production, distribution, regulation, and critical reception of moving pictures all bore the marks of vigorous debate and dissension over content and form.

What is not visible within the frame but yet inferable from what is visible in the frame is what students of film studies have been trying to locate in their search for the unseen, implied, contradictory and potentially transforming “space-off” that Teresa De Lauretis invoked in 1987. What needs to be questioned is the genesis of new identities, strategies and alternative modes of narratives within the realm of popular Hindi cinema. Bodies and genders should be able to find their meanings and a new projection going beyond old traditional scripts.
Notes and References


2 The rise of the film song in the 1930's in India coincided with the advent of the Talkies. The film industry realized it had access to technology, which would allow it to reproduce songs; thus it would have access to larger markets and greater profits. Therefore, classical songs such as ghazals were restructured to greater profits. At the classical musical gatherings, the musician could change and was encouraged to change the tempo of the music depending upon the context. However, the medium of the film demanded uniformity, reproducibility and repeatability to sell this product at a centralized scale. Rapidly, due to its wide reach through the medium of radio and record players, film songs displaced both classical and folk music in popular culture. Thus, the film song is linked to the project of building a modern nation state. As the Indian culture, the film song is associated with the nation. Referred from, Monika Mehta, "What is Behind Film Censorship? The Khalnayak Debates (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis MN, 2001).

3 Ajay Gehlawat, 'Playback as Mass Fantasy: The Hindi Film Experience,' Film Review article, in India star Review of Books.

4 Anil Saari, quoted in the above.


8 John, Ellis, Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video (London: Routledge, 1982).


17 Ibid., p.4

18 Ibid., pp.11-12.

19 Ibid., p.13.


21 Ibid., p.138.

27 Kamala Ganesh, "Mother Who is not a Mother" in Economic and Political Weekly (October 20-27, 1990); p.5.
28 Vrinda Mathur, p.66.
29 Kamla Ganesh, ibid.
32 Mathur, p.68.
33 Ibid., p.67.
35 Kamala Ganesh, ibid.
36 Chandrashekhar, ibid.
38 This piece of information becomes significant taking into account the number of letters received by the Bharatiya Janata Party in support of Chugh’s petition.
41 Letter from the Director of Nirman Theatre to Shakti Samanta, 7 May 1993. While theatre owners in Rajasthan and S. Nayyar pointed to a history of folk traditions in defense of the song, the director of Nirman Theatre in Chandigarh referred to another tradition, namely, the history of Indian cinema. He inquired why the censors and the public were agitated about 'Choli ke peeche kya hai', considering that songs such as 'Ik chumma de de' (Give me a kiss); 'Teri choli mein silwate kaise padhe' (What makes your blouse stretch/wrinkled?); 'Jumma-chumma de de'(Give me a kiss on Friday); 'Raat bhar mua sone na de sooi lagawe ghari ghari' (All night a needle kept piercing me and did not allow me to sleep); 'Hum to tambu mein lumboo lagaye batahe' (I sit in the tent, holding it up with my length); 'Chamdhe ki jopari mein aag lagi hai' (My skin is on fire); and 'Lenahailenahailenahai' (I want to get it, I want to get it, I want to get it) had been passed with evoking any censure or anxiety.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 The legal procedure under which the case could be filed was the Consumer Protection Act.
47 Ibid.