CHAPTER 8

MOHRA: Portrayal of Stereotypes: Women, Sexuality and Rape.


The film though loaded with its usual cliché masala ingredients made over six million through its music sales owing its profits to one single track ‘Tu cheez badi hai mast mast’....so much so that the actor on whom the song was picturised, Raveena Tandon, became to be identified as the ‘mast mast’ girl. The film subsequently got a number of nominations in the Filmfare awards category but quite expectedly won the best choreography award for the same song.

Women in Indian Films: Protagonists, Objects or the Weak Links?

The film begins with the opening caption of Love Life Hate Drugs, which is indicative of the undercurrents that hold the narrative. Roma Singh (Raveena Tandon) is a media professional, sub-editor of a Mumbai newspaper in search of a story on convicts. Her task is eased out with the presence of her jailor father (Kulbhusan Kharbanda) who helps her gain easy access inside the prison walls. Her first day ends in disaster when a couple of inmates try to rape her but is saved in the nick of time by good Samaritan, Vishal (Suneil Shetty). This rescue act preempts Roma to cross check his credentials and she decides to dig up his past and unearth the truth of a wronged man gone astray. Vishal opens up to her and says that his sister-in-law and wife were brutally raped and murdered and justice was denied to them when the law
connived with the culprits and let them off. Vishal avenges his family’s murder by killing the four drug addicts and thus lands up in jail. Moved by his story Roma arranges for a second trial with the help of her influential boss, Jindal (Naseeruddin Shah). Vishal’s case is reviewed and is found not guilty of the murders. Jindal convinces the now grateful Vishal that the root cause of his misery are the drug lords operating in the city and justice can prevail only when such cartels are done away with. So Vishal begins his witch-hunt to eliminate the drug lords and their henchmen one by one, while Roma romances the upright police officer Amar Saxena (Akshay Kumar). Amar gets on the track of Vishal in his own pursuit of nabbing the drug lords. Slowly Vishal realizes that he is just a pawn in the game that Jindal is playing, who wants to be the drug baron by doing away with his contenders. Vishal is kept a prisoner and Jindal who confesses his lust for her too holds Roma hostage. For all obvious reasons the police arrive on the scene and peace is restored with Vishal sacrificing his life for Amar.

Other than the main female lead in the film, four other actors make two minute appearances in the film, the longest credit among these going to Vishal’s sister-in-law who enacts the rape victim. Vishal’s wife (Poonam Jhawer) also plays the potential rape victim, has one song and four one minute appearance on the screen. Jindal’s wife (Priya Tendulkar) appears in a flashback scene and she too has the same time span. Flora (Kunika) as Tyson’s moll and Amar’s mother are gone without batting an eyelid. Interestingly all women other than Roma and Amar’s mother are murdered in the film.

These roles are analysed subsequently in the chapter. But first it is Roma’s character, which needs attention as she fills up to be a central character in the film. The film opens not with Roma but a sinister looking bare bodied convict chained to his legs while being dragged to his cell. He puts up resistance and injures a couple of policemen in the process only to be overpowered later. The camera moves on to defining his toned body and somehow gives out the message of his aggressive masculinity and his youth,
which will indicate his presence as the evil man in the forthcoming scenes. When *Roma* enters the prison the mighty evil man attempts to rape her. His bare torso again reflects the physical power of the man while *Roma* is fully clothed to initiate the purpose of disrobing in the scene.

While a few pin her down the rapist begins to tear off her dress while she screams in terror, for a modern educated she does not put up any form of real resistance as if waiting for a rescue mission by another male. This shows how gendered power dynamics are projected on our screens. The disempowered subject is the outcome or effect of a discourse that privileges male perspectives and interests. That, however, should not be interpreted as a simple straightforward domination of one group (men) over another (women). Although there are different forms of struggle against power relations, such as those against forms of social, ethnic or religious domination, and against economic exploitation, the third form of struggle, against subjection (against forms of subjectivity and submission) is one that is the becoming more and more important. In history these struggles have been fought separately or mixed together, but mostly one prevailed at a time. The focus of this section is on subjection as particularly characteristic of our time.

**Women and the Power of Violent mechanisms in Films.**

It is said that power constitutes the subject but, also, the subject becomes part of the mechanisms of power. The French philosopher Michel Foucault has shown that power should not be read in terms of one individual or class' domination over another, but rather as a technique. "The subject becomes the vehicle of power, which, in turn, has constituted it as that type of vehicle." According to Foucault "subjection, then is the process of the construction of subjects in and as a collection of techniques or flows of power that tune through the whole of a particular social body." Foucault has explicated the relation of power to knowledge and knowledge to power in ways that "dismantled recognised modes of domination by bringing to the fore the complex network of disciplinary systems and prescriptive technologies through which power operates."
Feminists have filled in the gaps left open by Foucault's non-engagement of sex and gender as specific categories, and demonstrated that certain forms of power rest on deeply structured forms of male or masculine domination. Feminists have identified the women's bodies as "the locus of masculinist power, for instance in the medicalization of women's bodies, the physical and sexual abuse of women and the mutilisation of women's' bodies for the sake of 'beauty'."4

Power relations are rooted in a whole network of the social. In recent history sexuality emerged as a mechanism of new ways of organizing knowledge. Sexuality is shaped by historically specific power relations and is not something 'naturally determined, but contingent and socially determined. The sexual body is both principal instrument and effect of modern disciplinary power. As Lois McNay points out "feminists have shown how the various strategies of oppression around the female body - from ideological representations of femininity to concrete procedures of confinement and bodily control - were central to the maintenance of hierarchical social relations."5

Sexuality produces desires, but sexuality is not a biological given, it is the effect of a discourse. Desires are created through a whole range of images in magazines, schooling, media, pornography and films. This insight is not new, earlier; philosophers of the Frankfurt School highlighted the colonisation of pleasures by capitalism and how it 'chains us.' Women are continuously filling in the already existing public images. Elaine Scarry refers to the inequality in the representation of female and male bodies in western art, film, and above all magazines imagery: "[t]he newsstand in a city tends to present to all who pass on the street a proliferation of images of women unclothed - it subverts women's autonomy over their own bodies, their power to determine to degree to which they will or will not reveal their own bodies is preempted by the prior existence of such images in the most public, most communal of spaces."6 Comparatively speaking men have no bodies and women have emphatic bodies.
"But to have no body is to have no limits on one's extension out into the world; conversely, to have a body, a body made emphatic by being continually altered through various forms of creation, instruction... and wounding, is to have one's sphere of extension contracted down to a small circle of one's immediate physical presence. Consequently, to be intensely embodied is the equivalent of being unrepresented and... is almost always the condition of those without power."7

Bartky argues that modern forms of femininity render women’s bodies docile in a manner distinct from contemporary western society’s disciplinary practices for men.8 By analysing various practices and discourses aimed specifically at women and the different aspects of the feminine body image, Bartky shows how the female body is ordered and controlled within what she calls a disciplinary regime of femininity.9 The absence of formal institutions (such as prison, army, asylum) makes the feminine body institutionally unbound. But the institutional differences between producing, on the one hand, the criminal, the soldier, the mad, and, on the other hand, femininity should not prevent us from seeing the disciplinary practice of producing the inferiorised body. The disciplinary practices of femininity produce a subjected and inferiorised body as an outcome of a far larger discipline: the discipline of an oppressive and inequalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system “aims at turning women into docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army turns its raw recruits into soldiers.”10

According to Rosi Braidotti the body is to be thought of as the point of intersection, as the interface between the biological and the social, “that is to say between the socio-political field of the microphysics of power and the subjective dimension.”11

“...the sexualization of the female body is fundamental to the way in which women are socialized as individuals. The internalization of representations of the female body by women is fundamental to the formation of feminine identity, but the process must not be understood as straightforward and unproblematic. It is by mapping the way of which
the body circumscribes subjectivity that feminists can begin to describe how gender is constitutive of identity but, at the same time, never determines it completely."12

Foucault has said that capitalism penetrates much deeper into our existence than what traditional Marxist analysis has assumed. It is not simply transformation of labour into profit and into surplus value by the capitalist system. But capitalism also elaborated a set of political techniques of power, by which man was tied to something like labour - a set of techniques by which people's bodies and their time would become labour power and labour time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyper profit or surplus profit. So, it is not only the macro-economic and political framework, but also "the 'infrapower', a web of microscopic, capillary political power (whole set of little powers of little institutions situated at the lowest level) which was developed to entrench the system. This web of little powers is established at the level of man's very existence, attaching men to the production apparatus, while making them into agents of production, into workers."13

The economic system requires the use of techniques of power to control the female body. By sexualizing the body, by creating desire a woman's body becomes commodified: a product to be bought and sold to the masses via films. Foucault shows that if one were to do a history of the social control of the body, one could show up, that, up through the centuries it was the inscription surface of different controls and signification. It also illustrates the weakness inherent in Foucault's gender-blindness and the lacunae in a theoretical framework that focuses on the 'general' human subject. While disciplinary technology objectifies the body, and produces "a docile body that can be subjected, used, transformed and improved"14, it objectifies the female and male body in different ways.

The intersection of the body capable of working and the sexualised body has been a characteristic form of oppression of women: the work of women with and through their bodies: the prostitute/sex worker selling sex, the sexy female body in an advertisement selling, besides the car, the importance of
sexiness and the availability of sex. It has been said that perhaps the most fundamental tenet of contemporary feminism is “the discourse of the right to control our bodies.” Both the male body and the female body are objectified, but unlike the male body, the female body is also a specific site of control: control by the ‘first’ sex. It is the female sexualised body that becomes controlled through additional regulations and technologies. Despite assertions to the contrary, modern sexual discourses do not liberate people to be themselves. Modern sexual discourses produce a new range of subject positions, and again, there is the difference of the sexes in the subject positions so produced. Current sexual discourses create desires - and in accordance with the laws of economy - the demand creates its own supply. Characteristic of our times is the greater access to the 'second sex', through a discourse that produces the need for greater access to the female body.

When Vishal enters the scene Roma is unsure of his motives and he reassures her by extending out his arm in a gesture of reassurance while she points to her bare arm exposed by the undoing of her sleeve. This clearly gives out the message that she could do with a little help from a good man equal in physical strength to combat her tormentor. Vishal picks up a pail of milk and draws a demarcating line with it to challenge the rapist. Another reference to the epics, which Bollywood just cannot do without, where in the Ramayana, Sita’s brother in law, Laxman marks a line with his arrow on the ground, the line of her chastity and the territory in which he is duty bound to protect her. Bollywood films emphasize tradition and family values as well as mythological stories, which are used to soften the impact of the transition to a more modern world. Indian movies offer tradition and family values to those wanting, as journalist for the New York Times, Pankaj Mishra, articulates, “emotional and material security within their increasingly modern and frail societies.” The moral themes of Indian films are welcome and common in countries with cultures that resist the American barrage of sex and what they consider immoral behavior. This broad viewing creates a worldwide culture providing something that people of all different backgrounds can relate to. Bollywood’s mythological films narrate the actions of gods and goddesses,
creating a unique Indian genre with moral themes where good triumphs over evil. "These traditional and ethical ideas carry over to perspectives of women as well."\textsuperscript{17}

In traditional Indian society, women have only three roles: the daughter, the wife, and the mother. During childhood, females are subjects of their father, during youth they are subjects of their husband, and upon death of their husbands, they are subjects of their sons. If a woman attempts to separate, or becomes somewhat independent from her father, husband, or sons, she is shunned and reprimanded. These roles govern the lives of women in traditional Indian society, and later, are articulated in Indian popular cinema.\textsuperscript{18} This connection is shown in the ancient and influential text \textit{Manusmriti}, a text of classical ethical codes whose laws are the roots of Hinduism, and central to traditional Indian beliefs.\textsuperscript{19}

According to authors K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, the \textit{Manusmriti} "had a profound effect on shaping the morals of Indian society," especially regarding women.\textsuperscript{20} This text is adamant about not letting a woman attempt to split from her father, husband, or sons.\textsuperscript{21} Indian popular cinema is greatly influenced by classic Indian theatre as well as the two literary epics the \textit{Ramayana} and the \textit{Mahabharata}. The Ramayana and the \textit{Mahabharata} define Hindi culture, even today, and have influenced the narrative structure of Indian films, giving them endless digressions, detours and plots within plots.\textsuperscript{22} They also introduce the idea of the goddess "Sita" as the ideal wife and woman. There is a strong emphasis on the "goddess Sita, who is always loyal to her husband and obeys his wishes unquestioningly, in both Indian society and films."\textsuperscript{23} The goddess Sita also represents purity and chastity, and imagery of her in this context can be found in many Indian films. Sita symbolizes wholesomeness, careful control of sexuality, and the feminine ideal. In Indian cinema, the integrity and wholesomeness of women is equal and representative of the integrity and wholesomeness of the nation. As expert author Anjali Ram explains, "woven through many cinematic texts is the synecdoche relationship between the purity/ sanctity of women and the
purity/ sanctity of the nation." For Indian women to abandon the traditional, pure sense of women and mothers is like abandoning the nation's character. In films, chaste heroines represent this purity. One common plot in Bollywood films has the villain threatening to violate the heroine, but being foiled by the hero. This device in films re-establishes the moral order, including preserving the precious chastity of women.

Women in popular Indian cinema are not forbidden from love - that is, as long as it is pure. Heroines in Bollywood movies are allowed romantic love only if it is all consuming, untainted, and eternal. The women who live by this standard of romance are happy, but those who do not are punished and victimized for their taboo type of love. An Indian woman's shame, patience, and sexual loyalty signify her "Indian-ness" in both movies and real life. This Indian-ness is thought of, and acts, as a separation and definition of Indian women from others. Indian women consider themselves more pure because of the demands of this Indian-ness. Part of this definition is the strong presence of the mother figure in Indian movies and culture, much more so than in the West. An important contradiction exists in Indian cinema between the portrayal of an accelerated process of modernity and the woman who identifies with this modernity being portrayed as decadent and punished. According to the author and expert on Indian women's communications studies, Anjali Ram, Indian women consider their immersion in a life led by patriarchal values and systems to simply be part of their Indian-ness. They think of their subservience to men as their duty as an Indian woman. This belief began during "colonialism when there was an evident separation between home and the outside world." During this time, home remained as the true Indian self: pure, unadulterated, not materialistic and represented by women. This association continued through films that portrayed modern women as not a pure Indian woman. The mother is characterized and revered in films as a vital force in society. However, Indian films do not give as much respect to wives, who are represented as stereotypical and one-dimensional.
Traditionally, a mother is so devoted to her sons that once they die she has nothing to live for. For example, in the movie “Aurat” (1940), (mother) directed by Mehboob Khan, “after the son leaves home the mother becomes distraught and dies because she has no reason to exist anymore.”29 Women in Indian traditional society are so bound by their devotion to men that normally their lives are shown as having no purpose without these men. However, this movie also represents a woman taking control and acting for herself when she shoots and kills one of her sons because he is trying to kidnap a woman. Instead of always backing her son, no matter what his actions, she acts on something her son is attempting to do which she believes is wrong.

The culprit is trashed and tamed while Vishal gains the sympathy of Roma by becoming her savior. The cinematic interruptions of the fantasy-scape are the scenes of a female about to be raped and either rescued by the hero to remain the untainted ‘star’ actress, or to become in that moment a real woman, the completion of the rape narrative of the male spectator, the voyeuristic sense of sexual fulfillment — yet leave the film’s subsequent drama unavoidably ‘troubled’. Finally of course, female sexuality would take form of not-the-naked-body in address but of constant changes in costumes-or complete eroticisation that allows the traditionally heterosexual male voyeur to take upon tantalizing fantasy with each costume change/ with a stark different costume in contrast to the others in the frame. Thus each cinematic interruption via a woman, is fully intentional or via a covert sexual drive in the form of multiple erotic song and dance sequences that lead to a build up.

And thus begins her search for truth of a man defeated by the law and by his fate. As the main female protagonist in the film, Roma is a journalist and is in a position of power of sorts. Working for a newspaper called Samadhan (literally meaning solution) implies that she is an investigative journalist. Her suggested activism and moral rectitude that it suggests along with her enterprising nature (she lands up at her father’s house without even informing him of her arrival and is not daunted by the idea of roaming around in the prison unescorted) are the initial attempts to establish her as the
modern woman, spirited and independent. The underlying motive of her visit is not her assignment but to meet up with her father whose job has distanced them. Her professional life, the source of her progressiveness is trivialized by the implication that she is just using as a springboard to strengthen her familial relationship, making her an opportunist of sorts. The operating assumption is that a professional woman’s work is not be taken seriously and nor she the individual herself.

Throughout the film, Roma’s share of accolades for unearthing the mistrial of Vishal is due to the intervention of her powerful boss Jindaal, who favors her every move. Her access to the police and the media are all because of the power Jindaal wields. Though no one view this as a gender-neutral manifestation of the power-portals that is common in our society, in Roma’s case, her competency is never allowed to be established. Her defense of Vishal’s offence is turned down by the second trial arranged by Jindaal. In fact Vishal is let off after Jindaal practices his oratory skills and manages to get him a reprieve. After Vishal’s acquittal, Roma is never shown to get back to her office or take up any fresh dare devil assignments. Instead she teams up with her lover Amar Saxena, masquerading as a dancing damsel to help him nab a bunch of petty drug peddlers. Her meeting with Amar is on the behest of Jindaal again and she tries to use her sexual prowess in order to get her work done. However Roma’s move, as the forthcoming and sexually aggressive female does not violate the mindset of the viewer because Amar is seen as the potential lover and ultimately the husband that she seeks.

Susan Faludi (1991) says that a backlash has occurred in history that attempts to oppress women and turn them into a state of powerlessness. She claims that just when women get into positions of power and have made some progress, they find themselves in crises. She states that these so called female crises have had their origins not in the actual conditions of women’s lives but rather in a closed system that starts and ends in the media, popular culture and advertising, “an endless feedback loop that perpetuates and exaggerates its own false images of womanhood.”
Her short lived professional life and her presence in the song and dance numbers and as a hapless hostage only prove how women are blatantly used to sell profits. The eternal debate on whether films reflect life or life imitates films can be resolved by looking at the current portrayal of urban Indian women in Bollywood films. Despite the fact that about 26 per cent women in urban and rural India work, (India Census 2001), the films ignore this reality. For years, Indian women have made their mark as bureaucrats, surgeons, writers, pilots, businesswomen, bankers and astronauts. But none of these achievements are reflected in Hindi films. Instead, our films are increasingly depicting heroines only as homemakers, albeit educated ones. At the most, they are 'allowed' professions like doctors, teachers and journalists. But in general, the heroines are college-going teenyboppers who settle down to matrimony by the end of the film. Though the fifties saw the romantic potboilers also, bit around the same time, filmmakers like K. A. Abbas, Bimal Roy and Guru Dutt did portray strong women characters in their films. Their characters though bound within the patriarchal framework, did manage to raise their voices and had an earthy resemblance to the status of women in that period.

During this time, Professor A. B. Bose of Lucknow University did a content analysis of 60 Hindi feature films, at a time when films like 'Aag', 'Awara', 'Baazi', 'Daag', 'Jaal', 'Anarkali', 'Devdas', 'Insaniyat', 'Kala Pani' and 'Sadhana' were produced. He found that most films dealt with the unmarried and educated young men and women of the upper and middle classes living in cities. In roughly half the films, the hero had no occupation; in almost two-thirds of the films, the heroine had no occupation. If a similar analysis were to be done of films in the last decade, the results would be very different. In most of the films, the hero has an occupation (usually a dynamic one) while the heroines have almost none or their work is not important to them once they meet their hero. All ends well with a happy matrimony or a peaceful reconciliation. Actor Kareena Kapoor says of her character in 'Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon': "She is a girl of today, like me. She knows her mind and knows what she wants. At the same time, she has traditional values. She is a modern
desi (typically Indian) girl. She is the kind of girl every man would want as his wife."

So, somewhere down the line our sensibilities remained the same or even metamorphosized through the glitzy approach, which has been deemed as being modernistic. According to most filmmakers, it is the audience that continues to demand such stereotyping. Obviously, the audience here is largely male.

Certain actors are cast according to box appeal; actors who have the potential to ring the cash registers are often cast in leading roles. Having her name on the opening and closing credits of a film certainly do not mean the importance of the role in the narrative itself. In an interview with a leading magazine, the star of the film Raveena Tandon says that:"I am not only recognized but synonymous with songs and dance routine at every nook and corner of the country." "I am aware that there are many serious actresses who are dying for such attention." Writing in G, an Indian film magazine, Monica Motwani states.... "The heroine may have metamorphised (sic) over the years, but she still cannot break away from the shackles of certain norms set by Hindi cinema years ago." On the other hand there are some who posit a major progressiveness in attitudes towards women. Bhawna Somaya, writes, "in the process of performing her roles as a mother, sister, wife, daughter or girlfriend, [the woman of today] most often, no longer forgets the importance of her most vital role... as herself." While this may be an extremely optimistic point of view as the analysis of certain aspects of Mohra here shows, the doom saying that Motwani articulates may not be warranted either.

Sexuality and the Objectification of Women: Films as an Agency of Representation.

Tip Tip Barsa Paani (literally meaning pitter patter fall the raindrops) is perhaps one of the most explicit seductions songs to bypass the Indian Central Board for Film Certification's notice. The opening shots of rain drenched Roma writhing in a desolate construction site brings one to Mulvey's claims that film is a system of representation that raises questions of
how the unconscious structured ways of seeing operate. The song opens with camera lingers on a heaving bosom moving with the music in the background along with shots of the actors low back blouse and her swaying hips. The camera is positioned at a slightly lower than head on position, rendering the emergence of the actress out in the rain and that too at night more dramatic and framing her figure in the center of an almost empty mise-en-scene, while her face is averted in a clearly objective manner. She is being watched without her knowledge: the female is subjected to the male gaze by both Amar and the audience. Halfway through the song Amar who valiantly resists the temptation till now relents and takes over the sexual energy. Despite superficial alterations, reassuring the male public that the hero is still the same symbol of male sexual dominance, a fantasy figure of the man's man, and that the films still "produce images, however preposterous, of male sexual desire and dreams of fabulous, uninterrupted sadism."35.

Roma's role is represented as fetished and stereotypical. Mulvey takes the word fetish from Freud who defined the concept as the act of attributing excessive value to objects, which are generally considered valueless by society. Mulvey also states that the woman exists in the patriarchal structure as a signifier of the male other. She lives in the stereotypical world where men fantasies impose images that are silent and make her bearer, not the maker of meaning. The frustration in this phallocentric order brings women closer to their oppression. This line of thought helps us to understand the rape victims of the film and so also the lead's character's role as a woman in the film. In other words, realizing that woman (as a character in the film) bearer the meaning in this system helps women in the society, or the audience, to understand their oppression and yet be insensitive towards it. Bollywood cinema like Hollywood is most skilled at manipulating visual pleasure. Here signifier means that woman is a sign of male fantasy developed by the male psyche.
Mulvey talks about one particular form of pleasure, scopophilia, which is defined as taking pleasure in looking. She takes Freud's definition here stating that he associated scopophilia with making other people objects, "subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze." This gaze becomes the basis for erotic pleasure. The pleasure is found in looking at another as an object. Mulvey states that objectifying can be taken to the extreme in the case of an obsessive voyeur, who gains satisfaction from this controlling gaze. The voyeuristic capability is also supported by the venue of cinema. The dark theatre and seating pattern promote voyeurism. Even though the look is pleasurable, its content can still be threatening. It is the representation of the woman that is in the middle of this.

One aspect of Mulvey's theory that is not fully developed is an examination of the female protagonist in mainstream dramatic roles. A new approach is warranted that addresses leading roles for women and how she is gazed upon. She may be gazed upon as Mulvey describes it and becomes objectified. In terms of 1990s film, though, there is a new phenomenon: she becomes abused. This new idea, being contextual, also needs to look at leading roles for women in a certain time to see how women's roles in society reflect or are reflected by the cinema. As men in patriarchal society have set women up on pedestals, and thereby constructed them as oppressive and restrictive figures, they have developed a strong desire to knock them down again.

Robin Wood says "the financial structure of the industry and how women's roles have generally been portrayed within this ever-changing system is significant." One might think that desire for more films would increase the variety of opportunities for women's roles. This is partly the case. While roles that are more diverse are arising, women may still be abused in these roles.

Film scholar Hilary Radner finds that woman's roles though in Hollywood films at this time produced what she calls the "psychofemme." These are traditional femme fatales who now refuse the violence of men as in
films like *Terminator 2* (1991) and *Alien 3* (1992). Women in these movies now have an ethical imperative, such as Sarah O’Connor’s fight to save humankind and Lieutenant Ripley’s struggle to rid the universe of the alien or our very own rape revenge sagas. It appears that women’s roles, in a general sense, have changed but only slightly in the 1990s. Women still need to be rescued by their men and still may be abused; otherwise, these psychofemmes would have nothing from which to fight back. What is the connection between portrayal of women’s roles in the 1990s and abuse of women in society? The literature on abuse of women discusses issues such as why women are abused, how they are abused, how much they are abused and how abuse is handled in society. Much of the literature supports a connection between abuse of women and patriarchal oppression. The same connection is used here to question possible incidents of violence against women in film as linked to patriarchal oppression.

One perspective on why women are abused comes from Susan Basow. She claims that gender stereotypes have, in some cases, allowed for violence against women. She states, “although males, in general, do seem to have a greater disposition toward aggression, aggressive behaviour is definitely learned.” What she means is that while men already have it in them to be aggressive they also are taught and sometimes encouraged more than girls how to display that aggression. The three main male characters in the film are physically aggressive and violent in their own surroundings other than the already confirmed bad men in the film. The prisoner and potential rapist of Roma is already shown to be violent by nature and so is Vishal who is a wronged man with revenge on his mind.

*Amar* too is endowed with violent characteristics with the uniform to legitimize his actions. The only one who is the least violent of the lot is Kashinath Sahu (Paresh Rawal) who provides the common comic relief but is an insensitive buffoon who masquerades as a prostitute complete with a drag queen’s costume. He takes his own share of denigrating women but letting lose his female accessories with the help of which he tries to entice the villains
in their lair. As the men lustfully eye her figure, she tells them to be patient and strike a deal first. When asked to show her stuff first she retorts back saying, "Pehle thanda lekar aa, baad mein jo dekhnaa hai sab dikha doongi". When the deal is finalized she takes out a 100-rupee note out of her blouse when the tennis balls pop out. The act over, the men begin to disrobe his sari while he shouts, "Meri izzat maat looto..... tumahare ghar mein maa bhen nehin hai kya? Don't rape me......don't you have mothers and sisters at home? He is saved by the dramatic entry of a real man, policeman Amar who crash-lands dramatically through the roof.

According to Unberto Eco, ... the comic effect is realized when: (i) there is the violation of a rule......; (ii) the violation is committed by someone with whom we do not sympathize because he is ignoble, inferior, and repulsive (animal-like); (iii) therefore we feel superior to his misbehavior and to his sorrow for having broken the rule; (iv) however in recognizing that the rule has been broken, we do not feel concerned; on the contrary we in some way welcome the violation; we are, so to speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule (which involves no risk to us, since we commit the violation only vicariously), (v) our pleasure is a mixed one because we enjoy not only the breaking of the rule but also the disgrace of an animal-like individual; (vi) at the same time we are neither concerned with the defense of the rule nor compelled towards compassion for such an inferior being.39

Basow cites that the masculine mystique in America is where these attitudes are learned. In one study, she found that males with traditional attitudes toward women have turned out to be more aggressive than males with non-traditional attitudes. Non-aggressive behavior has always been associated with being feminine. For instance, boys could be teased for not fighting or being called a sissy, which by traditionally, she refers to the view that women primarily exist to be domestic, or "barefoot and pregnant."40 is usually seen as feminine. Therefore, aggressive behavior is associated positively with males.
E. Ann Kaplan states:

Women in film thus do not function as signifiers for a signified (a real woman) as sociological critics have assumed, but signifier and signified have elided into a sign that represents something in the male unconscious. 41

Only if Roma's image stands in for disavowed castration, either of mother for men or self for women, does the psychoanalytic model fit. Put simply, fetishism is when some body part or inorganic object (here an image) is either needed to achieve the sexual aim or replaces it altogether. When Roma's face is taken as the face of a woman that can be taken as an object of desire (object or fetish) her cinematic appeal traverses into the actual where the signifier is all about the male gaze, male unconscious and male-aligned heterosexual desire. The actual for traditional cinematic desire is woman as signifier, not of woman, but of male unconscious projection, as Slavoj Zizek claims: "[in film] woman merely materialises a male fantasy." 42 That it has taken Zizek so many books to come to this conclusion is staggering Roma as the beautiful creature who can dole out pleasure and pain in equal measure." 43

David J. Hogan, in Dark Romance (1986), reduces the gaze to masochistic, sadistic or both... read through traditional cinematic theory male viewers can have their cake (the male gaze as a form of masochism, hence temporarily 'feminised') and eat it (sadism which re-establishes male dominance). At best this cinematic sado-masochism shows cinema to shake up gender roles altogether by merging two sexual pathologies that belong to entirely phyclic orders. Sadism and masochism, like fetishism, annex pleasure to established systems of desire. Embracing the peculiarly cinematic desire for images as images, not as virtual representations of an actual, opens the body to the attraction of the possible only in the world of images rather than attraction for the body as subject in the world. Ironically fetishism was theorised most elaborately by Freud simultaneous with the advent of cinema. Pure desire for cinema as something to be added to Freud's perversions was not evident enough to achieve its own pathologisation (remembering Freud's treatise on perversions was descriptive not judgmental).
Men must repress their pre-oedipal attachment to their mothers and avoid bisexuality in order to assume their 'proper' place in the symbolic order. In 'Masochism and Subjectivity' (1980), Kaja Silverman, reexamines Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and Freud's discussion of the 'fort/da' game, on which Lacan's theory is based, and concludes that in decisive moments of the history of the subject, the individual learns to find pleasure in pain and loss. *Fort* is the body, *da* the desire. Cinematic activity replays these moments of loss, which are as pleasurable for the *male* as for the *female* spectator. Theories of cinematic suture show a "constant fluctuation between the imaginary plenitude of the shot, and the loss of that plenitude through the agency of the cut." The experience of the male viewer is not just sadistic - as Laura would have it - it is rather part of a sadomasochistic dialectic: Female protagonists, which occupy a passive position, enact *on behalf of the male viewer* "the compulsory narrative of loss and recovery." This displacement allows the male subject simultaneously to experience and deny an identification with passive, victimized female protagonists by smothering certain 'feminine' aspects of himself and projecting them exclusively onto the woman, who does the suffering for both of them.

The project of feminine visions is a dual one, encompassing both the art scene as well as theoretical and conceptual work. In 'Sexuality at a Loss': The Films of F.W. Murnau (1986), Janet Bergstrom, reviews the male protagonists in the films of Weimar director F.W. Murnau, who have been criticized for bearing feminine aspects, for lacking virility. Femininity here, insofar as it is associated with eroticism and sexuality, has been displaced from the women's body to the men's and to other, more generalized substitutes. In understanding the moment of desire in films like Murnau's, Janet calls for a less object-oriented approach without assigning fictional characters fixed sexual identities that correspond to gender. Quoting Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) she recalls the fundamental distinction between sexual object and sexual aim: Sexual identity is defined not only by the choice of love object (male/female) but also by the preference of sexual aim (active/passive); the 'choice' being characteristically unstable, both in object
and in aim.46 The contemplative look that seems so central to erotic pleasure might therefore be conceptualized in such terms of a passive sexual aim, and libidinal investment need not be tied to any single or gendered object. Unlike Mulvey's character-centered analysis, Janet proposes "to free the erotics of looking from the exercise of lining up spectators or characters to a male/female dichotomy."47

Women and Rape: The Eternal Spectatorial threat in Hindi Films.

Looking at the real rape scenes, Bollywood cinema has perennially used the services of the naïve sister of the leading man, as its favorite victim. So here we have a young college going sister- in- law of Vishal who is reprimanded by her sister for dressing inappropriately to college. Jitni baadi ho rahi hai, iske kapde utne hi chote hote ja rehsein hai, meaning that her clothes are getting shorter by the day. This is also the project her as a potential victim of sexual assault because as widely believed that women with provocative dresses entice men to rape them. So when she enters the college, potential rapists eye her and remark that.....Kya cheez hai, par haath tak lagane nehin deti hai yaar!! (she does not even allow us to touch her). So they embark upon a plan to fulfill their lust and trap her drug addict boyfriend to lure her into their trap. As one defines the rape threat scene, it runs the gamut from the stalking scene, to rape threat, to bondage and imprisonment, to the violent murder of women. Its characteristics are misogyny and a spectatorial frisson, in which the spectator feels the threat in an eroticized way. The scene has a play of force and consent. It depicts threat, forced sex, or murder to which the female character does not consent but to which the audience does consent.

For any social group, violent threat is a way to establish its members' fixed identity (especially that of its less powerful members) and to impose a behavioral code. The warning is, "Stay in your place." Violent threat also establishes a mental construct, a location in representation. In terms of
psychic identity, this location in representation is fantasized both by oneself and by others.

For a woman, rape threat is an admonition. It warns her about the relation between gender roles, public and private space—especially in the city, dress codes, and safety. These aspects of daily life are all coded, and for a woman in one-way or another, these social codes are reinforced by the commonness of rape. Rape threat exists in every woman's consciousness. In the rape threat scene in cinema, the threat against the body of a woman, against her sexuality, is the inverse of woman's rage for her subordinate sexual and social position. Such rage is taboo to enact openly or even to represent, especially in its mundanity and commonness, so it's inverse is constantly depicted in a highly eroticized special moment.

Many women have rape fantasies as part of their mental process of pleasurably representing sexuality to themselves. These fantasies have to be distinguished both from the cinematic rape threat scene and the social reality of rape. What characterizes the rape fantasy is the masochist's pleasure in, control over, and prolonged staging of the imagined scene. Such fantasies stand in stark contrast to real rape, with its loss of control and erasure of identity.

The cinematic rape threat scene derives in part from ordinary male privilege to stalk. Man can stalk women, especially with a car in a city, making comments. This privilege is limited by a man's race and class in terms of the neighborhood stalked. Men can stalk a room with their eyes, openly picking out the object of their desire. Narratively, in cinema, male protagonists are the most common subjects of social acts, mobile and active, penetrating space, and in control of the glance.

That particular kind of male sadism which characterizes the psychology of rape is, "I do it because I can"—the thrill of that act of power. This kind of sadism is marked by the need actually to destroy personhood. The rapist destroys the other's social reality and her ego in favor of establishing his authority. And as Freud indicated in "A Child Is Being Beaten,"(1919), women
fantasize about violent threat scenarios from inside the scenario or as spectators at close range. The male's relation to such fantasies is to see one's self as outside the action, with a strong element of disavowal.

The social authorization and coding of legitimate sadism has a relation to the existence of rape. That legitimimized sadism, bloodletting, and unleashing of rage is the right to kill and the military's encouraging of a strong desire to kill. Susan Brownmiller, in *Against Our Will: Women and Rape* (1976), demonstrates how rape has historically been one of the spoils of war, an implicit promise to soldiers and a common humiliation inflicted upon a subjugated (female) population. From the point of view of the subjugated, the license and power to kill is curative. Frantz Fanon postulated that picking up the gun and killing the oppressor was the cure for socially induced masochism, the cure for the colonized mind. Since the armies use women mainly in non-combat positions and since many women philosophically eschew returning violence for violence, socially legitimimized bloodlust can be read cross-culturally and trans-historically as a gender-assigned role.

To return to Freud's notion about the kind of male disavowal at work in fantasies about violent threat, one could add another kind of disavowal. Dennis Giles (1977), mentioned it while discussing potential spectatorial positions for male consumers of pornography. The deep structure of the rape threat scene, under its surface story of adult genital intercourse, offers another kind of spectatorial pleasure. It re-presents an aspect of infantile aggression and rage, the dismembering and devouring of the mother's body in an effort at joining and fusion. For the male spectator, this dismembering-on-the way-to-fusion may have as its object the remembered maternal body and also the man's own female aspect. The femininity of the male viewer is also something both represented and disavowed in the rape threat scene as he feels the frisson of attack against someone who is by her gender safely "not me."

In *Wit and it's Relation to the Unconscious* (1898), Freud analyzed the structure of smut, specifically from the point of view of the man narrating a
sexual incident. Freud said that for the storyteller, when that man's libidinous impulse confronts a hindrance, it becomes distinctively hostile and cruel. The libido, I would say the man's libido, then utilizes the sadistic components of the sexual impulse against the hindrance. For Freud, the hindrance as he saw it was the unyieldingness of the woman. A smutty story would function to pull the woman into a sexual narration, if only by forcing her to listen to it. In a face-to-face encounter, this sexualization works most effectively if witnessed by a third person who acts neutral.

In cinema, this mechanism functions well because of the apparent neutrality of the "third person" aspect of film narration. Everyone seeing a rape threat scene—like listening to a smutty story—thinks of genitalia and the sexual act. Shame in listening to smut or a reaction of fear or embarrassment in seeing a rape threat scene means that the female spectator is reacting with excitement. The scene denudes the woman on screen and the female spectator. It enlists all viewers in the sexual scenario. This kind of spectatorial frisson also occurs when watching/hearing news about sexual violence and rape—from news stories of Jack the Ripper in the last century to stories about the concentration camp in Europe in the 40s to the media coverage of rapists in our country today.

Furthermore, again drawing on Freud's *Wit and the Unconscious*, much of which can be applied to art, the mechanisms of displacement and condensation allow there to be a surface story, which keeps people from having to recognize or undo resistances. The surface story can either liberate pleasure from its repressed sources or it can put itself directly at the service of the repressed tendencies. In this sense, high culture hides direct expressions of cynicism or of taking pleasure directly from pain. But in fact, that is what the rape threat scene in narrative cinema does. It is acutely cynical about women and rape, and it provides pleasure from women's sexual pain. The third person validates enlisting everyone into the smutty story. In film, it is the objectivity of the flow of the realist narrative, moving in a character-centered way toward the climax, that does the same thing. If central characters are usually men of action, then hero/villain becomes a needed
division of traits. The hero has a unitary, recognizable, social/sexual identity and consciousness. Within his consciousness, he often has the kinds of problems a romantic hero or anti-hero might have (e.g., paralyzing indecision). The villain can be deviant, and is often a person of color or a foreigner. This person is transgressively, amoral or immoral.

Both villain and hero have causal agency. The hero has the duty and the right to enact social and private morality and is marked as a character by his separateness and distinctiveness. Even in his appearance he has an uniqueness and is not filmed to bring out the timeless, universalized beauty elicited by close-ups of the heroines. It is perhaps no accident that the 'masculinization' of the rape victim is accompanied by a 'normalization' of the rapist (that is, the decline of the rapist-as-psychopathic-creep and the rise of the rapist-as-standard-guy). In contrast to male agency, female characterization and feminine, domestic space in narrative cinema is more of a locus, a boundary, a site, a territory. The body of a woman is the site of a morality play--about family or about being a moral refuge, especially for the man. Because the female body and domestic space take on this metaphoric meaning that is one of reasons they so often have to be violated and defended in film. What is disavowed in this common metaphorical association of woman's body and home is women's responsibility for childrearing and domestic labor and the emotional process whereby women, especially in their bodies, become the object of male power plays and male rage. Disavowed, too, are the most ordinary social manifestations of sexual harassment, such as the office masher or even more common, the constant intrusion of women's personal space.

Within film narratives, the rape threat sequences often seem strangely discontinuous. After the threat occurs, as the narrative gains force moving toward its climax, the woman saved from rape seems miraculously to recover. Most significantly disavowed in the common use of the rape threat scene is the reality that a woman faces after sexual aggression, including the repetition of the traumatic moment over and over in her conscious mind and in her dreams and unconscious reactions to daily life. The rape threat scene, in its
narrative function, is not ironic. It provides a straightforward anticipation of pain, of the punishment of a woman. It is naturalized by the narrative structure. The rape threat scene functions to "explain" the narrative conclusion. It guarantees that the major conflicts are intensely developed at this point. It makes the scene totally sincere (vs. "spatter" films, at which the adolescent audience laughs). Viewer's pay little attention to the acting and performance of the villain or woman, just to the tension and threat.

In the rape threat sequence the pursuit is all. As Gaylyn Studlar explained this kind of narrative mechanism in film, the scene offers viewers a frozen moment. In some ways it is a romantic moment, poised at the edge of tension. It is a moment of suspension, waiting, repetition, fragmentation, pathos, and objectification. It is often shot like the death of the rabbit in the hunt sequence in *Rules of the Game* (1939). Furthermore, the scene provides a ritual, something constantly and predictably evoked, symbolized, epitomized, and selected as a moment of cultural importance. As Studlar describes a frozen moment of suspense, images hang in the air like tableaux vivantes. In this case, there may be the actual suspension of a body; certainly we often see a body of a woman in bondage. A knife may be poised at her throat; the interior space frozen, fixing the woman in her space. Though a real weapon is not used in the sequence, the victim is doubly threatened by the fact that she has been unknowingly drugged; here is a concentration on the details of the imprisonment and suffering, a fragmentation, and a representation through concrete, small details. That comes through the presence of semi clad women adorning the walls of the bathroom where she has been ultimately cornered and her white minimal dress soaked by the water of the bathtub where she is finally gang raped. As Laura Mulvey, states,

> 'the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men . . . always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. The male unconscious has [as one of] two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: . . . complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous'.

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Her later work, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996), is an anthology of essays published, of lectures delivered; and it is remarkable, given this background to the book's production, that the chapters cohere so well. They convincingly unite around the theme of fetishism, perhaps a little less so around that of curiosity, which is best explored in the 'Pandora's Box' chapter.

Her principal concerns are to elucidate Freud and Marx's understanding of fetishism, and, more challengingly, delineate the commonalities between what superficially appear to be their entirely different uses of the term. Broadly, she understands the fetish as a psychological and social structure, which allows belief to take precedence over knowledge. It is, for her, on the cusp of consciousness, 'a metaphor for the displacement of meaning behind representation in history'. It halts time, being 'fixated on a thing that artificially resists the changes that knowledge brings with it'. The fetishist 'overrates his object and . . . secretly attaches mysterious powers to it'. Furthermore, the fetish "materialises the unspeakable, the disavowed, and the repressed." Significantly, she identifies the source of the word in what she calls 'proto-colonial exchanges', starting in the mid-15th century, between Portuguese merchants and inhabitants of the West African coast. The Portuguese feticio ('witchcraft'), derived from the Latin facticium ('something made up to resemble something else'), produced, in pidgin, fetisso. The concept of fetisso, with its refusal to engage with the beliefs and practices of the inhabitants, was inherited by Dutch traders towards the end of the next century.

In Freud, value is 'over-inscribed onto a site of imagined lack, through a substitute object'. In other words, an object is valued as substitute for 'the [non-existent] maternal penis'. In this way, the psyche substitutes beauty and desire for the ugliness of the bleeding wound, the mark of the (mis)perceived female body's castration. Marx, on the other hand, attempts to answer the question of how the sign of value comes to be marked on a commodity. For Marx, the commodity's value resides in the producer's labour power. Yet, that value in the world of bourgeois economics is, instead,
established by exchange. Thus arises commodity fetishism, or 'the disavowal of the source of its [the commodity's] value in labour power'.

Possibly the most daring element in her book is Mulvey's double stroke. On the one hand, she has detected correspondences between Freud and Marx in their use of the term. On the other, she contends that 'Western' (more particularly European) intellectual history was thus stamped by these thinkers as retaining the imagined primitivism from which European merchant traders believed that they had distanced themselves when they pronounced it 'other' through their use of the term fetisso. According to her reading of Marx and Freud, bourgeois economics and the bourgeois psyche were steeped in irrationality.

The very concept of fetishism, used by both in ironic manner, is the clearest link between them. Both, according to Mulvey, have recourse to the term to explain a blockage -- produced in the phobic psyche by one reckoning, demonstrated by the other in the ability or refusal to comprehend a symbolic system of value. Her linking of the two apparently distinct uses of 'fetishism' is indicated with particular economy in the following passage, arising from discussion of Monroe: 'Glamour proclaimed the desirability of American capitalism to the outside world and, inside, secured a particular style of Americanness as an image for the newly suburbanised white population. In this sense the new discourse of marketed sexuality and the new discourse of commodity consumption were articulated together, reinforcing each other as though in acknowledgment of a mutual interest.'

Her definition of 'curiosity' is as follows: 'a desire to know, as a counterpoint to the blindness of fetishism'. Referring to the mythical Pandora's fetishistic surface image, her interpretation of Pandora's box is that it 'contains everything that fetishism disavows', so that her curiosity 'appears as a desire to uncover the secret of the very figuration she represents'. In this way, Mulvey illustrates her point that there is a dialectical relationship between fetishism and curiosity, and that belief and knowledge can coexist simultaneously.
The particular strength of the book is Mulvey's insistence on history's relevance, for example, even when, paradoxically, the genre of melodrama seems to pose as ahistorical in the 1950s. In relation to this, she claims the advisability of understanding its ahistoricity 'as a historical phenomenon'.

The 1970s is a decade, incidentally, of particular importance to Mulvey since that most famous of all Screen articles, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', appeared in 1975. She characterises it as a period when, by means of anti-fetishisation, wholesale exorcism was aimed at -- in the contexts of cinema and feminism, her particular concerns at the time (and, clearly, subsequently too).

However, it is her insight into the 1950s, which is most impressive. 'Fifties-ness' is explained as a collective fantasy -- 'the time of everyone's youth in a white and mainly middle America setting, in the last moment of calm before the storms of civil rights, Vietnam and finally feminism'.

The relevance of the book to philosophy should be evident by now, surely. It is made most explicit, though; when Hegel is mentioned as making Oedipus's answer to the Sphinx's riddle 'the founding moment of a subjectivity that is centered on human consciousness'.

The riddle is aligned by Hegel with coded, obscure meanings; Oedipus's answer with 'man's ability to think philosophically'. It should be obvious that fetishism, so fundamental to Freud's and Marx's accounts, contradicts Hegel's conclusions. Thus, for example, 'Freud transforms Oedipus from a figuration of human reason into a figuration of the human subordination to unreason'. And yet she can still see in psychoanalysis a rational theory of the irrational!

Researchers have long been drawn to the work of Laura Mulvey, since their initial acquaintance with it through 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Her study would be of crucial concern to film studies if for no other reason than the massive use made of it within the subject over the last 24 years. The massiveness of its use must surely be owed, though, to universal recognition of the fundamental importance of its analysis. No account of specularity, of looking relations in cinema (or, for that matter, in the fields of, say, television or art) seems to be possible without a re-examination of her.
position in 'Visual Pleasure'. That position, declaring that man is the subject, woman the object, of seeing, and that such seeing is a key to cinema's erotic pleasures, has been challenged, most notably perhaps by Kaja Silverman. (Silverman argues for masochism against Mulvey's sadism in cinema's erotic viewing, and draws attention to the strong possibility of the secret identification of males in the diegesis (and audience) with the suffering female object.)

In their attempt to analyze film theory, critics have devoted entire modules to the exploration of Visual Pleasure and Discourses of Misogyny, with Mulvey's most celebrated articles at the base. In their research, they have reacted against what seemed in those same articles to be a serious underestimation of the possibilities of male objectification and of 'reading' as an important political intervention in the apparent tyranny of dominant meanings. Perhaps because of the multiple readings and close analysis of her 'Visual Pleasure' and 'Afterthoughts' essays in particular, the impression sometimes forms that her thinking is set in concrete. One suspects that it has, for many disciples. Yet, for anybody forming such suspicions, this new book must be taken into account. Both the ideas and the communication of the ideas mark a sometimes-breathtaking advance on those of her earlier work.

Several researchers have one or two reservations about even such a brilliant achievement as this book represents. It may not be Kristin Thompson alone who wants to apply a corrective to Mulvey's 'overly binary argument' here. Her lack of interest throughout 'Visual Pleasure' in exploring the (disavowed) objectification of men on screen has been commented on extensively in Uneasy Pleasures. Again, for example, is domestic melodrama primarily for women in the 1950s? Barbara Klinger's paper, 'Local Genres: The Hollywood Adult Film in the 1950s', supplies a useful corrective here. And can we still explain the anorexic girl unproblematically as 'tragically act[ing] out the fashion fetish of the female'?
Despite these niggles, Mulvey is no dilettante, whatever she claims. The pleasure of the book lies in its constant audacity and sheer breadth and clearly confident mastery of argument. It has most definitely enriched it with new ideas and a recharged notion of the interconnectedness of things. It has certainly changed our views of her as the writer. As indicated above, 'Visual Pleasure' and, to a lesser extent, her, Afterthoughts' paper have acquired the status of holy writ in some quarters. It might be tempting, but on this evidence quite myopic, to lose sight of the sheer range of her insights and her openness to revision and reconsideration. When she describes Jean-Luc Godard's stranded avant-gardism, it seems as if she may well be talking of herself, although she never admits as much. If her theoretical stance as a film practitioner in 1975 seems dauntingly austere to this reader, perhaps that is how it is for her too now. The apparent puritanism of her final words in 'Visual Pleasure' seems to have been replaced and situated from a 1990s vantage point within a 1970s worldview.

There is also a disruption of temporality and the time sense. Directorially, the scene isolates the rhythmic pulsations of the threat's narrative movement with gesture shots or expressive use of the mise-en-scene. The formal treatment breaks up the sensual moments into its parts. The whole sequence functions like the fort/da game where the future is made present in the anticipation of punishment and loss. Repetition and a kind of slowing down freeze, for a moment, the syntagmatic rush of the narrative.

Similar to the way Freud analyzed the meaning of fantasies and dreams, Gaylyn Studlar and, elsewhere, Janet Bergstrom discuss how film scenes establish the possibility for multiple spectator positions. As the rape threat scene is placed in the narrative, it sets out a map of desire, an order of events, a site of enactment, and a delineation of actor/acted upon. As a trope within film narrative, the scene has a history, which demands a certain set of predictable structures of response. It imagery make a direct erotic connection to the spectator so that it establishes a libidinalized, eroticized moment of viewer positioning. This is hard to escape. However, elements of the scene often become realigned in the spectatorial viewing/fantasy/thrill process. One
can look at considering some possibilities for spectator positioning and consequent play of identities.

Both male and female viewers must submit to this scene and its narrative function. It is similar to submitting to the social and psychic rule of heterosexuality. The scene is a condensed emblem of that submitting. That the surface story is about rape as the rule of force indicates the relation of social force and psychic violence to heterosexuality as an institution.

In terms of spectator positions provided for men, it is important that male characters be demarcated between hero and villain, especially in the rape threat sequence. Villainy guarantees spectatorial disavowal and distance; it masks the guilt that might otherwise accompany the frisson (no man after all admits to being a rapist). The scene often depicts the desire to protect wife and daughter, yet it also always shows how woman's space must be circumscribed. The scene gives permission to kill the rapist. This is very important. It validates the structure and pleasure of pater familias, and as mentioned earlier, such validation lies behind the military, patriarchal permission to kill. The scene also lets men experience the female position while guaranteeing that they are not female. In the frisson, male spectators can both rape and be raped, dissolving into the flux, into a masochistic desire for dissolution into and union with the woman, in intercourse, or with larger figures of the female, the mother. Meanwhile, in the surface story, not only is this spectatorial position disavowed, but also the female is obligatorily and satisfyingly punished.

For the female spectator watching the scene, she may have a sense of doubling, of being both in and outside the scene. The scene may provide a sense of mastery of being able to watch aggression against the female body from a controlled distance. In the narrativized terror, sometimes the woman character is saved; sometimes the female viewer's identification shifts over to that of the hero, who moves on to conquer. The scene always makes the female spectator not only into fear the harm but also expect it, the expectation accompanied by suspense and thrill. The female viewer's genitalia become
invested with the frisson of threat. The scene provides a cruel fantasy, which makes the woman spectator consume female objectification and so eat her own flesh. The female spectator will probably also feel anger at this spectacle of threat and humiliation. The scene lets her feel the force of that anger by letting her participate in male bloodlust which only in spectatorship can become her own bloodlust since socially it is not a permissible emotion for her to claim. There is aspect of ideology, as Marx explains, by which issues which the dominant culture disavows or represses find social expression as their inverse [e.g., the welfare queen, the pervert, the terrorist]. In this case, the commonness of the rape threat sequence indicates the commonness of hostility against women but it also contains within it, in its inverse, which is both alluded to and disavowed, a powerful effort to contain that most common unexpressed emotion, women's rage.

The rape threat sequence is so common that female consumers of the media can hardly avoid it. And they have not risen up in protest against it since it is so naturalized. The rape threat sequence places women into multiple positions of identification and also into a movement of identifications. During a film viewing, this movement of identifications, often ambivalent, can be successive and/or simultaneous. Furthermore, women may react differently at different moments in their life histories.

To summarize, below the surface structure of the rape threat narrative, spectatorial positions can alternate between binary poles--active/passive, masculine/feminine, aggression and victimization or submission. For women especially, there is a movement back and forth between outside and inside, receiving and penetration. The rape threat sequence is emblematic of heterosexuality because it enacts a violent dance of spectatorial viewing positions at the boundaries of the female body. The rape threat is about limits and liminalities. It shows the border it states. Its dance embraces pleasure, pain, threat, safety, murder, rescue, thrill, participation, warning, and prohibition.
The female body is available for common narrative pleasures. The rape threat scene sexualizes the world of women, intruded upon by the world of men. It is about women's availability, stated to the extreme. It functions like a puritan preacher's fire and brimstone sermon, using the pleasure and pain of the frisson to teach a core structure by which we live.

In her classic essay on rape, Susan Griffin points out that "in our culture male eroticism is wedded to power." The superiority that men feel when they see a woman being dominated in some way on the screen is then, merely an extreme exaggeration of the sex roles that our culture considers normal. "Not only should a man be taller and stronger than a female," Griffin notes, "but he must also demonstrate his superior strength in gestures of dominance." A boy, so the myth goes, may become a man by taking either a life or a woman. And to take the life of a woman (like in this film, after raping her) becomes the penultimate masculine act. This is not to say, of course, that on a conscious level all men want to rape women and cut them into spare ribs. But when they see women being brutalized on the screen, over and over again, they are being given, on a subconscious plane at least, graphic proof of their physical and sexual superiority.

At the very least, male viewers are being given the feeling that they are indispensable. If going to a party means the invitation of rape like in this film, then any woman who wants to go for an evening out is going to need a protector. As Griffin put it:

"In the system of chivalry, men protect women against men. This is not unlike the protection relationship, which the mafia established with small businesses in the early part of this century. Indeed, chivalry is an age-old projection racket which depends for its existence on rape."  

Interestingly enough, extreme graphic violence against women in the cinema has been coeval with the growth of the women's movement. One might well see in it a kind of conservative backlash against the real threat of female independence. Violence on the screen points out over and over again the
regressive moral lesson that women are basically weak, shrieking creatures
who should they venture too far away from a capable male protector, will
probably not just be raped (an old fear, no longer sufficient) but probably
murdered in some inventively ghastly way by a psychotic sex maniac

Yet, in the final analysis, outrunning your pursuer isn't really good
enough. Since violence against women in the cinema is, as we have seen,
often more a matter of power than of sex, the issue at stake ultimately is not
merely survival but control. Usually, of course, the control of the situation is
almost entirely with the male. On the screen men act, and women react.

The Moll in Films: Women as the Other in Narratives.

"Pandora, in the Greek myth, was a beautiful woman, manufactured by
the gods to seduce and bring harm to man."74

Flora, (Kunika), in a wasted and miniscule roll as drug baron, Tyson's
moll has four scenes in the film and is not a part of the main frame.
Sandwiched between the conversations of tow warring mafia dons her role is
of little consequence. She is the a decadent modern woman, who flouts
tradition and drinks and dresses in western clothes, a combination of what
Indian men would not like their women to do, whether it is the wife or the
sister. "She is portrayed as a morally degraded person and has come to be
associated with everything that is unwholesome about the west."75 Therefore
she must be reprimanded for this unacceptable behavior and is done to death.
Though more and more lead actors are opting for the negative character in
forthcoming films, the exclusive role of the vamp is fast disappearing. Women
essaying the grey shades in the narrative are shown to be normal modern
beings yet manipulating their ways to foster their careers and their dreams,
seducing the hero and reverberating with power. Again behind the facade of
power women like these have to rendered useless and are either done away or
are reformed in the narrative because to be a real woman one has to confirm
to the norms of patriarchy. More and more skin is shown to project their being
evil, of someone to be eyed and enjoyed and yet not acceptable in a respectable way.

Flora who cuts into the conversation after an agreement between the two cocaine lords, Tyson and Gibraan, asks about her role amidst all this, to which Tyson triumphantly replies that, “Chokri ki Jagah to Dil Mein Hoti hai.” Tyson pinches her bottom which invites a pleasurable shriek from her and laughter from the men who are present in the frame. Tyson, who is the typical grotesque villain in a suit end his dialogues with the....Dirrrty Mind!! stanza in another scene remarks that “Flora Tum Bomb Nehin, Sex Bomb Ho”. (You are not a bomb, but a sex bomb!! When she takes up arms to fight along with Tyson, she is one of the first few to die a dishonorable death.

If we look at a text which is a collection of Doane’s essays, ranging from 1981 to 1990, which deal with the task of theorizing the femme fatale we find that she argues that the rise of the Victorian femme fatale was borne out of a crisis of sexual ownership – when the male appeared to lose control over the female body, she came to “over-represent” herself. This view positions the sexually assertive woman as a fetish object, both to be feared and desired. The notion of fear also surfaces in Doane's reading of the femme fatale herself, who is subject to “uncontrollable drives, the fading of subjectivity” yet, concurrently is situated as evil.76 . Thus, the sexually transgressive woman is not a heroine of feminism, but a male production of fear. Thus, the fear of the precariousness of the familial moral and economic equilibrium is foregrounded through the use of the femme fatale as a narrative agent. She is no longer simply fulfilling her sexual desires, but is actively seeking promotion in terms of economic and social status – a promotion that can only occur via the conquest of a man of power. This historically informed view of the femme fatale synthesizes women's peripheral role and repressed sexuality.

Abel Richard's, Silent Film (1996), collection contains essays, which are of great use to the study of women and silent film. Rather than providing a textual analysis, Gaylyn Studlar attends to the issue of the popular press and its relationship to cinema. In “The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse
as Women's Commodified Culture in the 1920s, Studlar examines the state of silent film audiences when the vast majority of film-goers were women. Though these figures are disputable, it has been suggested that a great deal of women were intrigued by the motion picture, not solely due to individual films, but in part, because of the "extratextual cinematic discourse" found in women-oriented fan magazines. These publications not only aided in the development of a cult of personality, but also dictated the trinity of "marriage, romance and consumerism." This statement emphasizes the social conditioning of women to uphold matrimony as opposed to the unruly women who eschewed these values.

Studlar argues that these publications which targeted women also ushered in an epoch of sexual liberation, or a "new feminism." This growing preoccupation with the possibility of female sexual desire is articulated in a 1922 marriage pamphlet: "the opposite type of woman who is the greatest danger to the health and even life of her husband...the hypersensual woman...with an excessive sexuality." Studlar argues that it is these fears and the growing ability to discuss them in a public forum that fan magazines helped to disseminate to a large female readership/film audience.

Rape: Eroticisation and Feminist Readings of its Portrayal in Films.

Bell Hooks, in, Feminist Theory from Margin to Center (1994), makes clear that feminism is not an attempt to vilify men. She notes that the almost exclusive focus on "the ideology and practice of male domination" by some liberal feminists unfortunately made feminism appear to be "more a declaration of war between the sexes than a political struggle to end sexist oppression." The failure to call on men to aid in ending sexist oppression resulted in "the construction of all men as oppressors, as the enemy." Naomi Wolf has also criticized the men versus women stance of radical feminism, and in this regard she is in accord with bell hooks. For example, Wolf in Fire With Fire, 1994 critiques Susan Brownmiller's claim that males
are "natural predators" and females are "natural prey" and that some men's rape of women keeps all women subjected to all men. Wolf perceives this as an opening to "victim feminism," which she claims is a trap for women and an "identity of powerlessness." Wolf feels this arrests any movement toward gaining female power and exercising one's authority in both relationships and the marketplace. Thus Wolf calls for a move beyond critiques of male power structures and complaints over what holds women back to actions that allow women to actively take hold of what they want--economic power and sexual self-determination. In short, what Wolf and her contemporaries are articulating is a concern over the perception that many young women do not know the history of feminist movement, feel alienated from it, and thus are disempowered. The alienation is attributable to numerous factors: the presumed "man-hating" stance of feminism, the equation of feminism with lesbianism (for both of these the finger of blame is pointed at the radical feminism of Dworkin and MacKinnon), extensive media criticism, economic silencing (in which women with a modicum of success in the workplace have stopped themselves from advocating in fear of reprisal), and the relocation of feminist discourse into the university system and obscure rhetoric.

Though difficult to specify the depiction of women in rape scenes, two broad categories emerge into which female characters can be clubbed in. First there is the widely popular role of the victim, the ideal image of the submissive female succumbing to a dominant male figure. Or that of the near to be ravished victim saved in the nick of time by the hero. The method of death, the outcome of rape is unimportant; it is the idea of the abuse and the victimization of a typically young and attractive female, which is the core area of concern. This portrayal perpetuates the idea of the female figure as weak and helpless. In his essay, "Returning the look: Eyes of a Stranger" (1987), Robin Wood claims that is simply more frightening if the man attacks a female character; the male spectator can identify with the hero who finally kills the violator, thereby indulging his vanity as protector of the helpless female. This depiction of women as victims is perhaps the best example of the male voyeuristic tendencies in modern cinema. Young victims are often represented
as sexual objects who engage in activities that facilitate the spectator's voyeuristic enjoyment. Scholars have repeatedly argued that the entire basis of such films is the exploitation of the female characters and the picturisations that allow the audience their objectification and denigration.

*Mohra* has over a dozen shootouts resulting in deaths but the camera has a tendency to linger upon the pain of the female victims, especially in the rape threat scenes. The men typically die quickly and at a distance from the camera while the women die a slow and painful death, usually shown in a close-up or a medium shot. The viewpoint of the killer/rapist takes on a traditionally masculine position in these films, whereas the victims (caught on the manipulative gaze of the killer) are feminine. Italian horror film director, Dario Argeto once stated, "I like women, especially beautiful ones. I would much prefer to watch them murdered than an ugly girl or a man." With the abundance of such sexual imagery, be it rape or seduction, there emerge two distinctive gender roles. The masculine equivalent is the idea of the New Man, who if featured most prominently in popular cinema. He is the head strong and macho man who is bound by duty to protect the woman and is powerless sometimes, defeated by the law like *Vishal* in this film. Stubborn and irrational, he must decide to cling to his rational judgments or give himself over to the confrontation with the culprits. The male figure does not posses the openness of the female and is therefore less often the victim of such possession. When he chooses to give himself over to battle with the villains in the film, he gives over his structured, masculine role as the protector and thus becomes open and even feminine in a sense. Therefore the imagery preset within these films derives from the idea of the female body being open and violated. The dissection of the female body may indeed be yet another example of a dominant masculine force that drives our cinema.

*Vishal's* wife is the ideal woman who is chaste and is the epitome of sexual fidelity. As Richards (1995) observes, the Hindi film upholds the "traditional patriarchal views of society which, fearful of female sexuality,
demands of the woman a subjugation of her desires." Consistent with the cultural norms pertaining to the status of women in Indian society, the honour of the family is closely linked to female behavior. The need to preserve honour is expressed through "elaborate behavioral patterns that require a woman to remain secluded, confined to the domestic domain and dependent on the husband."

Since Vishal 's spouse too appears in barely three scenes, out of which one is a song with her husband professing her undying love, and the mentionable one being her attempted rape scene resulting in her death. The song here is analyzed to bring out the dutiful wife who prefers to kill herself than being dishonored.

Na kajre ki dhaar, na motiyon ke haar
Na koi kiya singaar phir bhi kitni sundar ho
Tum kitni sundar ho
Mann mein pyaar bhara, aur tan mein pyaar bhara
Jeevan mein pyaar bhara tum to mere priyavar ho
Tumhi to mere priyavar ho
Singaar tera yovan, yovan hi tera gehna -
Tu taazgi phoolon ki, kya saadgi ka kehna
Ude khushboo jab chale tu -
Bole to baje sitaar
Na kajre ki dhaar, na motiyon ke haar
Na koi kiya singaar phir bhi kitni sundar ho
Tum kitni sundar ho
Saari duniya harjaayi, tere pyaar mein hai sachchaai -
Is liye chhodke duniya teri aur kheenchi chali aayi
Thi patthar tune chhookar -
Sona kar diya khara
Mann mein pyaar bhara, aur tan mein pyaar bhara
Jeevan mein pyaar bhara tum to mere priyavar ho
Tumhi to mere priyavar ho
Tera ang sachcha sona, muskaan sachche moti-
Tere hont hai madhushaala, tu roop ki hai jyoti
Teri soorat jaise moo rat-
Main dekhoon baar baar
Na kajre ki dhaar, na motiyon ke haar
Na koi kiya singaar phir bhi kitni sundar ho
Tum kitni sundar ho

Cross-cultural variations in men's and women's personality traits had been widely publicised by the writings of Margaret Mead. But modern feminists drew new attention to the social use of visible, bodily markers, and of socially produced differences of the sexes. Gayle Rubin's reference to a sex/gender system, discussed both sex and gender differences as products of a specific social arrangement. Her innovative naming of the sex-gender system helped to authorise a new thought tool. Her theoretical essay discusses three institutions implicit in anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's analysis of the "social organisation of sex". That order she says, "rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality."86

Rubin explains those three foundations of the social sex system: "Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes," the product of a cultural process in which biological males and females are transformed into "domesticated" men and women.87 (Her domestication metaphor suggests wild females and males broken into docile women and men.) "Men and women (or as Andrea Dworkin writes, wo/men) are, of course, different," she says, but the "idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories"88 does not arise out of any "natural" difference. The sexes are not naturally "opposite". Opposite sexes are constructed socially by the "suppression of natural similarities," Rubin claims. Men must repress "whatever is the local version of 'feminine' traits." Women must repress "the local definition of 'masculine' traits."89 The social division of labour by sex, she explains, is the source of opposition between the sexes. The sexed division of work exacerbates the sexes' "biological differences," separating women and men into
"two mutually exclusive categories." The sexual division of labour "thereby creates gender," a fundamental contrast between women and men.

"Obligatory heterosexuality" is enforced by several means, Rubin argues. Her term innovatively names the systematic, coercive production of a different-sex eros called heterosexuality. The making of obligatory heterosexuality is tied to the earlier sex segregation of work, she argues. Inspired by the analysis of Levi-Strauss, Rubin says that the social purpose of the sexual division of labour is "to insure the union of men and woman by making the smallest viable economic unit contain at least one man and one woman." She quotes Levi Strauss: 'the sexual division of labour is nothing else that a device to institute a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes'.

Rubin questions the symmetry of each sex's dependence on the other, but their mutual dependence is a repeated theme. The sexed division of labour creates needs in each sex that can only be fulfilled by the other. This forges a strong social incentive for women and men to join forces in heterosexual relationships stabilised by legal marriage. Rubin warns ironically that Levi-Strauss comes dangerously close to saying that heterosexuality is an instituted process. If biological and hormonal imperatives were as overwhelming as popular mythology would have them, it would hardly be necessary to insure that heterosexual unions by means of economic interdependency. The production of heterosexuality as obligatory also produces a mandatory anti homo-sexuality, Rubin argues. For obligatory heterosexuality, involves the "suppression of the homosexual component of human sexuality" and the concomitant "oppression of homosexuals." But the social system that places heterosexuals over homosexuals produces, she says, figures more complicated than is suggested by any simple superior/inferior ranking. A close look at "specific sexual systems" indicates that the rules of proper human relations "do not merely encourage heterosexuality to the detriment of homosexuality." The rules incite "specific forms of
heterosexuality." For example, some marriage systems have a rule of obligatory cross-cousin marriage. A person in such a system is not only heterosexual, but "cross-cousin heterosexual."

Similarly, "particular forms of institutionalized homosexuality" are produced by difference in sexual systems. Rubin cites a Mojave custom which "permitted a person to change from one sex to the other." In this society sex was not thought of as anatomically determined. One's sex was socially constituted by one's adoption of the other sex's work, behaviour, and dress. In Mojave society, an "anatomical man" might "become a [social] woman by means of a special ceremony." An anatomical woman might become a [social] man. The changeling then took a wife or husband of her/his own anatomical sex and opposite social sex. These marriages, which we would label homosexual, were heterosexual ones by Mojave standards, unions of opposite socially defined sexes. Rubin questions the idea of an essential, always-the-same homosexuality and heterosexuality by stressing their substantially different social forms. She employs heterosexual and homosexual as transhistorical categories with particular historical manifestations. The "constraint of female sexuality" results from a social organisation in which women are, in effect, owned, controlled, and exchanged as gifts by men, a system with a profound effect on the social shaping of heterosexual relations.

If Rubin's "traffic in women" by men sounds like some rare native life, she suggests that readers recall the "curious custom by which a father gives away the bride, like the kanyaadaan in Hindu tradition which translates as when the father donates his daughter to the son-in-law. Even modern women are not encouraged to give themselves - to dispose of their own bodies and sexuality - as readily as do men. The relations of men and women are still asymmetrical. The exchange of women is an important analytical concept, says Rubin, because it "places the oppression of women within social systems, rather than in biology." Likewise, countering the dominant biological idea of heterosexuality helps to situate it within a particular historical system.
In a section on the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Rubin comments on the construction of female heterosexual desire. Here, she describes how notions of sex and gender, formulated first as external social rules, come to take up tenacious, internal residence deep within our minds. Freud's late recognition that the girl-child first loves a woman, her mother, challenges, says Rubin, "the idea of primordial [female] heterosexuality." Since a girl's libido is first woman-directed, a girl's eventual assumption of heterosexuality is something "to be explained." Freud and Lacan explain, she says, that a girl internalises the genital and power ranking system of her culture, realizes that she lacks the most highly prized, power-conferring genital, rejects her original mother-love, and takes up lusting after her father and other penis possessors. The "rule of heterosexuality which dominates the scenario," says Rubin, makes a girl's position "excruciatingly untenable." She is always dependent on a man for her own sense of power and worth. Rubin's account of the making of female heterosexuals stresses how destructive this process is to women's autonomous sense of themselves. She emphasizes, however, that this process is socially arranged and therefore changeable.

In a major essay published in 1984, Rubin revised and clarified her original concept of the sex/gender system. There she more emphatically distinguished between the social structuring of "gender" (masculinity and femininity) and the systematic ordering of eroticism (or "lust"). Distinguishing the different histories of womanhood and manhood and of sex-pleasure is central to the developing history of heterosexuality as a specific system. Rubin's 1975 description of a sex/gender system hostile to woman's development suggest that this order operates with a certain autonomy, apart from the economy and other major systems. Her sex/gender system can't be understood simply as determined by those other systems. Each sex/gender system has its own internal structure and unique operational logic. We need "to isolate sex and gender," she says, from the economic "mode of production." On the other hand, Rubin explicitly argues for "a political economy of sex" that will point us to the links between norms of intimate relations, marriage
systems, and larger "economic and political arrangements," for "sexual systems cannot....be understood in complete isolation." We require, she says, a political economy of sexual systems. We need to study each society to determine the exact mechanisms by which particular conventions of sexuality are produced and maintained. We need, she argues, a "systematic historical account: that recognizes "the mutual interdependence of sexuality, economics, and politics without underestimating the full significance of each in human society."92

According to Dasgupta's study, ideal women in mainstream Bollywood films tend to continually be depicted as long-suffering and submissive. Because their characters are "stripped of all realistic human and social complexities"93 women in Bollywood usually come across the screen as a small collection of stereotypes. The ideal female in these films tends to be chaste, surrendering to her duties as a daughter, wife and mother, and thus controlled within the confines of these duties. "Good" women sacrifice for the good of the family even, and usually, at the cost of their own happiness. Therefore, the not-so-subtle message female audiences receive is that individual happiness is fleeting, whereas, by fulfilling one's duties as a woman, marital and otherwise, she will achieve a more ultimate and lasting form of happiness. On the other hand, "bad" women are often depicted as individualistic, westernized, and sexually aggressive. The overarching message in the majority of these films is the female protagonist role is a martyr role. "The glory of ideal Indian womanhood lies in the tolerance she shows towards society and men, even when she is unjustly treated and brutally victimized."94

Molly Haskell, author of, *From Reverence to Rape*, points out, "According to society's accepted role definitions, which films have always reflected in microcosm, a woman is supposedly most herself in the throes of emotion (the love of man or of children), and least herself, that is least "womanly", in the pursuit of knowledge or success."95 These types of roles are so common we accept that these characters are distressingly naive and so fail
to stun audiences, yet again, with the shimmering intelligence and ingénue of an interesting female role in cinema.

The issue of representation has been fundamental in the rising awareness of the portrayal of women in film. It can be argued that roles such as Roma’s character in this particular film are confusing in their attempt to leave viewers with a fair impression of the way women are perceived in the movies. The suspicion of shallowness that goes hand in hand with the sexuality that is so loosely portrayed on screen, the crazed “power woman”-though an exception to the classic sexual connotation- and the deterioration and misrepresentation of womanhood and positive role models in cinema, are examples of the unforgettable imprint women could be leaving on the screen. Characters such as Roma do not necessarily aim to capture the shimmering intelligence and wisdom of the woman, solely for what it is and not what money making Bollywood has made women out to be but, can be interesting and even compelling nonetheless. Whether or not Roma Singh is perceived as the temptress or, the repressed waif, indeed weak and dependent, we can safely argue that these two extremes are not a great way to generalize women at all. Still, these narratives are often why we even bother watch film and for some of us, why we love film. It is important to remember that these images speak to our culture, the viewers and most importantly, each other. Ultimately we can only hope that in any context of femininity on screen, we pay to see these women because they are truly lovely in every sense, “and to experience an inner radiance that may find its form in outward grace.”
Notes and References.

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