Chapter 1
Men, Masculinity and Feminisms:
(Re) viewing the Relationship through the Tropes of Sexual Difference

The overall agenda of this thesis is to explore the contemporary representation of masculinity in Hindi cinema from a feminist point of view. In this chapter, I do not engage with the representation of masculinity but explores men’s relationship with feminist politics. Moreover, this chapter engages with feminist film studies, which are premised on the notion of sexual difference. Thus this chapter engages with two issues. Firstly it explores the complex relationship between feminisms and “men’s politics” and how far the process of gendering is crucial for both. To be precise I would deal with the question of feminism being a political move for the biologically male subject. Another issue that is addressed in this chapter is how feminist film theory explores the process of gendering in mainstream cinema. Here, my focus will not be limited to contemporary Hindi cinema. I would address mainstream cinema’s engagement with the question of gender in general. One of the crucial tropes to understand the feminist perspective in the case of mainstream cinema is the notion of sexual difference. It is important to know how the notion of sexual difference opens up new possibilities for gendering in mainstream cinema as such. Sexual difference is a crucial trope for both feminist film theory and mainstream cinema. The question remains how the notion of sexual difference is differently explored within mainstream cinema and feminist film theory. For feminist film theory, sexual difference may not be reduced to biological difference, it can be a more polymorphous difference. Mainstream cinema, on the other hand, works through the biological opposition of male and female within the filmic space and the field of spectatorship.

Feminism for Men: A Critical Enquiry

In this section, I would like to address the dialogue between masculinity and feminisms. How feminist movements constitute and collaborate in the formation of certain types of masculinity is one of the crucial engagements in this chapter. I would like to argue that feminist movements has provided new insights to the thinking of conventional forms of masculinity. But we should not consider normative masculinity as a static site which changes according to feminist interventions. Rather, for me conventional masculinity appear as a fluid
and porous field which negotiates with contemporary feminist interventions. Thus, we find multiple sets of representations of masculinity within the contemporary cultural field. “It has become increasingly clear that different masculinities are produced in the same cultural or institutional setting” (Connell: 1995, p36). But “to recognize diversity in masculinities are not enough. We must also recognize the relationship between the different kinds of masculinities: relation of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity” (Connell: 1995, p37). These processes of gendering are not solely the effects of feminist insights but also of socio-economic and cultural pulls of contemporary social reality. As far as my understanding goes, contemporary feminist interventions and contemporary social realities both constitute and contribute to the formation of masculinities. Moreover, gender is a social practice which is involved with other social practices (Connell: 1995, p75). But in this chapter, my focus is more towards the dialogue between feminisms and masculinities rather than the other socio-cultural attributes of the contemporary era.

In this chapter, the notion of masculinity is considered in two ways: sociologically and philosophically. Here I have followed the argument of two theoreticians, RW Connell (Connell: 1995) and Judith Butler (Butler: 1990) respectively. Both have dealt with the notion of masculinity in empirical and conceptual ways. However they are distinct through their specific theoretical trajectories. I have placed their arguments side by side and explored the potential of both theorizations, though my own position is more inclined towards Butler’s position. Connell has tried to understand the notion of masculinity as a socio-cultural process and argued that masculinities and femininities are relational concepts. But he does not posit the notion of masculinity and its relationship with femininity within the wider terrain of hetero-normative patriarchy. Though, it is difficult to argue that he distances himself from hetero-normative patriarchy. It is possible that he is proposing for a hetero-normative patriarchy in a different way. On the other hand for Butler, the socio-cultural construct of masculinities and it’s relation with femininities is effective in establishing and understanding the hetero-normative patriarchy. For her, masculinity is a crucial trope in the formation of heterosexual desire and its social manifestations. We can state that the way Butler theorizes the process of gendering, the power relation within such a process of gendering become explicit. Thus, following Butler, we can provide more nuanced accounts of hetero-normative gender hierarchy.
In this chapter one needs to understand what the conventional masculinities are and what the feminist attributes that engage and challenge the masculine conventions are. Conventionally, masculinities are considered as the cultural attributes of biological male bodies and femininities are proposed as the cultural attributes of biological female bodies. From this perspective masculinities and femininities should be understood as the binary opposites of each other. The binary between men and women further depends on the binary between the mind and the body. It is considered that the body does not play any role in the process of thinking and men give primacy to the mind at the cost of sacrificing the body. But, masculinity and femininity should be considered as relational concepts which means the notion of masculinity and femininity cannot be understood independent of each other (Connell: 1995, p44). According to Butler, “The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ”feminine” and “masculine,” where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (Butler: 1990, p23). To put it simply, the institution of heterosexuality poses both the gender in binary terms and privileges masculinity over femininity (Butler: 1990, p30). This way of understanding masculinities and femininities has its own limitations. In this formulation the biological male can never achieve femininity and the biological female cannot have masculine qualities. Thus, the culturally constituted bodies are predestined by their biological essence. Following this logic, feminine men and masculine women are impossible categories.

What is important for our understanding of conventional masculinities is that it proposes a certain kind of limit to male bodies. Following Foucault we may propose that through limiting, prohibiting, regulating and controlling, power produces the subject (Butler: 1990, p4). In this case power produces the ideal male subject through controlling the biological male bodies. According to Connell, there are three possible ways in which the body can be perceived. Firstly, the body as a machine, which is produced through gender difference. Secondly, body as a base on which gender is inscribed. The third one is the combination of these two (Connell: 1995, p45-46).

My perception is that the body does not produce gender, neither that the body is a surface in which gender is inscribed. A body does not pre exist gender and both the gender and the body is produced at once. Thus, the body is not a machine or the surface for gender inscriptions and of course not the combination of both. Following Butler I may argue that the body is a set of boundaries on individual and social being (Butler: 1990, p44). The limitation on male body
not only suggests that men cannot be feminine but it also proposes that male have to achieve the ideal form of masculinity which is context specific. In many cases, the specific form of gender identities which fail to conform the cultural norms, “appears as developmental failure or logical impossibilities from that domain” (Butler: 1990, p24). When I propose the term conventional masculinity, I actually wish to articulate the cultural convention of the male gender which is specific to our contemporary social reality. Masculinity should be considered as a part of the process of gendering. We can argue for the early modern period of European civilization to be the beginning of the contemporary form of masculinity, which goes hand in hand with early capitalist enterprise and the growth of colonial empire. This genealogy proposes that, generally, the men from the metropolitan countries are the main beneficiaries of this gender order (Connell:1995, pp200-201). Before the eighteenth century, men and women were not considered as bearers of opposite gender characteristics. “In this world the vagina is imagined as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles” (Laqeur: 1990, p4). Thus women were distinct from men but not opposite. Women were different in the sense that they were inferior to or incomplete with respect to men (Connell:1995, p68).

Apart from Connell and Butler, Kaja Silverman provides crucial clues to the understanding of the formation of masculinities. She is more inclined towards the conceptual understanding of masculinity through her engagement with the psychoanalytic dimension of dominant masculinity. According to her, “It is through ideological belief, a society’s reality is constituted and sustained” (Silverman: 1992, p15). This ideological belief is formed through psychoanalytical tropeS, which equates the penis with phallus and proposes “the pivotal status of the phallus” (Silverman: 1992, p16). Thus, the phallus plays the pivotal status in this theorization. Thus, dominant fiction is a fiction of masculine hegemony. According to Silverman, “Our dominant fiction calls upon the male subject to see himself, and female subject to recognize and desire him only through the mediation of images of an unimpaired masculinity” (Silverman:1992, p42). To be precise, dominant fiction is the psychological trope through which masculine domination and hetero-normative desires are played. Thus she contributes to the understanding of the larger terrain of hetero-patriarchal desire and its institutional pitfalls.

My proposition is that the contemporary notions of conventional masculinities are produced through a constant repetition of their naturalized ontology. This repetition is bound to persist
as the cultural reproduction of identities. In other words, certain cultural configurations of
gender appear as real because such configurations goes through the process of naturalization
(Butler: 1990, p43). The cultural conventions of male gender are multiple which negotiate
with contemporary feminist interventions. Thus the question of feminist interventions are
pertinent for our understanding of masculinities. The restructuring of sex and gender is
important to understand men and masculinities. If we consider both sex and gender as
cultural categories then we cannot identify male as a natural and masculine as a cultural
category. Thus there is no inevitable causality between male and masculinity and female and
femininity. It is only through the cultural dynamics that men are constituted as masculine and
women are constituted as feminine. According to Butler, “If it is possible to speak of a
“man” with masculine attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also
possible to speak of a “man” with a feminine attribute” (Butler: 1990, p32). Thus the cultural
dynamics can also propose new ways of gendering. We should remember that the category
called women is not a crystallization of a specific gender attribute but a manifestation of
multiple and contradictory identities of which masculine women can be of one variety. If
women can be masculine, then, following the same logic, men can be feminine too. Thus,
feminine male and masculine female become culturally intelligible categories\textsuperscript{2}. Not only this,
but men are also no longer needed to fit in the normative or conventional masculinities as the
norm or convention itself is challenged by the feminist interventions.

The form of feminism I am concerned with here, is the Post deconstructive feminism that
does not depend on conventional sex-gender distinction. In other words, this form of
feminism does not consider sex as a biological attribute and gender as the cultural inscription
on a sexed body. Post deconstructive feminisms consider sex and gender both as cultural
inscription. Thus, the distinction between the two needs to be rearticulated. Though, both are
culturally constituted, they are not constituted in the same ways. Sex is constituted as an
attribute of the body which is beyond constitution. And how is the gender constituted?
Following Butler we can argue, “gender is performatively produced and compelled by the
regulatory practices”. “Gender is always a doing, but there is no subject who might be said
pre-exist the deed”. In this sense there is “no gender identity behind the expression of gender”
(Butler: 1990, p33). If we perceive gender in this way, there remains no possibility of sex as

\textsuperscript{2} Feminities and masculinities both are the attribute of male and female body. This has been established within
the field of psychoanalysis much before the feminists assumptions. We can see Freud, where both femininity
and masculinity are the part of infantile sexuality.
predeterminer of gender. But, even this way of constituting sex and gender is problematic. According to Shefali Moitra, “Sandra Harding, Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Judith Butler reject the sex gender binaries by characterizing them as mutually interactive. Following this logic we can argue that there is no absolute divide between nature and culture. They argue that there is a two-way influence between nature and culture conditions nature and nature conditions culture. Man and woman are neither exclusively biological categories nor are they exclusively culture-determined categories”(Moitra: 2002, p25). The already stated notion of gender is further complicated by Sara Heinama. Though Butler critiques the conventional understanding of sex-gender distinction, Heinama argues that she retains the basic structure of sex/gender system. In conventional sex/gender system, females and males were treated as raw materials for gender production. This means that sex is the base for gender inscription. If we consider sex as a cultural product and that the male and female are not naturally distinct, we have to conceive a base on which sex acts as a cultural product. Thus, within this framework, there is a natural body that pre-exists sex. In this proposition, the logic of the sex/gender system is not rejected but rearticulated in a different way (Heinamaa: 1997a,p299). In this case, Butler falls in the theoretical pitfall that she critiques herself. In the article, “Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions” (Butler: 1989), she argues that though Foucault critiques the concept of natural body, he actually keeps the binary between the base where the forces of culture is inscribed and the forces that are inscribed. She, on her part, proposes a binary between the body that pre-exists sex and the body produced by the forces of sex and gender. Thus, we can cite that Butler, who wants to blur the distinction between nature and culture (if not sex/gender) claim that the production of sex is a process that generates its own raw material. (Butler: 1990a, pp37-38, pp73-75). According to Anirban Das, Heinamma proposes “that a focus on the ‘cultural’ construction of sex is not the way out for feminist theory. Her emphasis, based on a reading of Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, is on ‘styles of being’(Heinama: 1997a, pp300-3) This view,...starts from a notion of the body as the condition that makes objects possible for us”(Das:2010, p45). Thus, sexual identities should not be considered as attributes of the body but styles of being. Following Das we can argue that Heinamma proposes an alternative conceptual framework, where the body is not an object, but the condition of all objects and our knowledge.

We must be aware that the dialogue between conventional masculinities and feminisms opens up more than one possibility. This dialogue not only brings out the egalitarian forms of
gendering, which challenge the natural underpinning of masculinities and femininities, but also engages with much reactionary terrain. According to Connell the masculine politics operate in four distinct ways, which are: Masculinity Therapy, Gun-Lobby, Gay Liberation and Exist Politics. Masculinity Therapy concentrates on heterosexual men who had been effected by contemporary feminist demands. This form of masculine politics tries to heal the effected men. The hegemonic forms of masculinities are explored by the Gun Lobby which propose the gun as a symbol of the penis. The politics of Gay Liberation appears as the most politically correct form of politics which challenge the hegemonic masculinity. The last one is the Exist Politics, which opens up the possibilities for straight men to oppose the patriarchy. Thus it brings out the possibility for heterosexual men to distance themselves from hegemonic masculinities (Connell: 1995, p204-224). My own observation is that, the scholarship on masculinities have bifurcated into two ways as it engages with feminism. I have already proposed how the more politically correct form of masculinities emerge, where men do not need to fit the normative model. They can explore alternative ways of being which shatters the hegemonic model of masculinities. This is only possible because the biological male bodies are no longer the base for masculine attribute. The other form of discourse on masculinities works within the wider terrain of backlash to feminism. Within this discourse, feminist movements are the cause of contemporary masculine crisis. According to this scholarship, men who were so long privileged within patriarchy, now, face a crisis because the contemporary feminist movements contested the model of hegemonic masculinities. And it further argues that feminism is in no way beneficial for men. Not only so, but this scholarship also argues that the demand for gender equality has a negative effect on women too (Faludi:1991, p ix). Due to feminisms, women have come out from the traditional roles and now demand equality in every socio-political and economic field which have been not very helpful for women. Women, following feminist insights engage in the masculine power game and lose their feminine instincts. These two discourses are the result of their dialogue with feminist politics. Not only are they distinct practice, but they also propose two different politics. Here, we must remember that the backlash to feminism is a reactionary politics and a hindrance to feminist politics, in general.

Within these two responses to feminisms my own take is to explore the former, that is the feminist politics that encourages the alternative models of masculinities, challenges the normative models of masculinities itself and does not associate male bodies essentially with masculinities. Taking up a position is not a simple matter of choice, but it is also a political
act. As a response to feminism some men have left their socio-economic and politically privileged position. Though feminisms have affected men’s life largely, it is not always positive from men’s viewpoint. Thus, the reactionary argument that the crisis in masculinities occurs due to feminist influence has its own logic. Here I will cite Stephen Heath’s formulation. Heath argues that feminism is a movement of women as its aim is to empower women, not men. Thus women are the agents of feminist politics. According to Butler, “the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued” (Butler: 1990, p3). Thus it is obvious that feminist politics will favour women and insist men to change according to women’s convenience. Here, I must clarify that to consider women as the subject of feminism should not lead us to some sort of identity based politics. Women as a category is internally fractured and fragmented, that is women cannot be proposed as a singular category. The question remains then, why should men engage with feminist politics? We should remember that men do not always occupy a privileged position in our society. In different contexts blacks, dalits, lower classes, gay men are placed in lower ranks of the social ladder. The position of these men goes hand in hand with women’s situation in general. The oppressed men of the lower strata can also have a bond with women despite their biological difference. Thus, there is a possibility of solidarity among oppressed men and women in general. This form of solidarity can form a coalitional politics which cannot be assumed in advance. Within this form of politics, any form of identity is instituted on a contingent basis. Thus this form of politics cannot be co-opted by identity politics. But, the solidarity of men and women within the terrain of feminist politics requires a common ground of gender inequalities. Various other forms of inequalities cannot substitute for gender inequalities. Thus, to propose men as agent of gender politics (if not feminisms), men need to problematize the process of gendering itself within contemporary social reality.

We can argue that the contemporary processes of gendering not only oppresses women by situating them in a subordinate position within gender hierarchy but also places a section of men in such positions. For example, in patriarchy, gay men enjoy being in privileged position in contrast to women. They share a dominant position with straight men. But, gay men are also in a subordinate position within the institution of heterosexuality. These men have to challenge the notion of masculinity which is associated with heterosexuality (Kinsman: 2004, p 167). In this context, one should remember that there is no normal or natural sexuality. “Our biological capabilities are transformed and mediated culturally, producing sexuality as a
The revolution of sixties and seventies has led the feminist movement to explore how sexuality and social power are bound together and how sexuality has been socially organized in male dominated forms in this society. Sexual relations are, therefore, changeable and are themselves the sites of personal and social struggles. Within this discursive paradigm, we cannot assume that there is a natural sexuality that is repressed to maintain social and moral order. Both, homosexuality and heterosexuality, are not natural, but are culturally produced sexual practices. Thus, considering homosexuality as a natural sexuality, which simply needs to be released from social repression, is not a pursuable argument. Gay men are just an example of men who do not fit the normative standard of masculinities. There are other forms of masculinities which do not fulfil the norm. My point is that the section of men who do not fulfil the hegemonic or conventional norm of masculinity can be women’s ally in feminist politics of overthrowing masculine privilege. But what about straight, white/upper caste middle class men? Why should they engage in a politics that challenges their privileged position? These are the men who fulfil the norms of masculinity set by specific societies. How would they position themselves with respect to feminism? To ask the question more bluntly, is it possible for men (who fit the conventional masculinities) to be feminist?

It is not impossible for men to be a part of feminist politics. In fact, a section of privileged men do associate themselves with such egalitarian politics. But the problem is that it is not very easy to abolish the conventional forms of masculinities. According to Emmanuel Reynaud, “When it comes to abolishing patriarchy, the problem for men is not to create a new man but to destroy the “man” which we all have created and reproduced.” (Reynaud: 2004, p141). Men’s Liberation movement became active in USA by the mid 1970s. This movement being sympathetic to feminism engaged with the question of women’s liberation (Connell: 1995, p24). But mainstream feminist movement had been suspicious of such Men’s Liberation movement. According to a section of feminists, these movements benefit from feminism but do not give up their privileged positions. According to Connell, this form of men’s politics may not be an attack on patriarchy but a form of modernization of patriarchy (Connell: 1995, p 42). Thus, the relationship between feminism and men’s movement is much complex.

According to a section of privileged men, feminism gave certain agency to women and the critique of conventional gender formation has provided new possibilities for masculinities.
But this new situation has nothing to offer them as privileged men, despite a politically correct position. The politically correct position is what privileged men achieve through engagement with feminist politics. The question is what do privileged men get for themselves out of their cooperation with feminism. Here, I think we must problematize the notion of privilege itself. The privilege, based on biology (which works through both nature and culture), is the linchpin of patriarchy that feminism wishes to challenge. Thus, being a feminist is to challenge that privilege itself. For a privileged man to challenge his own privileged position may not lead to any materialistic reward but would be ideologically satisfactory. Thus, privileged men should try to come out from his pre-given social prestige.

Thus the pertinent question remains what can men get out of their engagement with feminism. For, dominant men engaging with feminism leads them only to a “self destructive utopia”\(^3\). The various self help group among white, heterosexual, middle class men have proved the point. For example, I have studied the working of Birmingham men’s group (1973-75) which actually practices a programme of men’s consciousness raising collectively. This Birmingham men’s group consisted of men from diverse backgrounds but were mostly within middle class social stratum. This group met once in a week for two years. Their educational backgrounds were also diverse. The common ground among them was that they were dissatisfied with their work, their relationship with others and had an overall dissatisfaction with their male identities. One of their common points was the feminist challenge to male sexuality. They attempted to negotiate with the feminist challenge by being allies of the feminists. As a response to the feminist challenge to the traditional gender role, these men have concentrated on domestic chores and child rearing to feel the pleasure and drudgery of such work. Such role reversal opened up new possibilities for these men but these new possibilities are not socially rewarded. This group of men actually found it difficult to go against the patriarchal system which had, till then, operated in their favour. Their experience opens a way of thinking whether feminism discursively constitutes masculinity in an abstract and detached way from men’s existential experience. A section of men do try to change according to feminist demands but the society do not reward men for

\(^3\) Andrew Tolson proposes this term to show the paradoxical situation of male feminists. According to him, men’s consciousness raising programmes tries to sensitize men in feminism. Thus the men who attended these feminist consciousness raising programmes, identified themselves as sexual oppressors, guilty and perceived themselves negatively. They tried to create a gender sensitive society which worked against their own privilege. See, Tolson Andrew (1977) \textit{The Limits of Masculinity}, London: Tavistock Publication .p144.
such a move. My point is that this does not lead to a situation where feminism is redundant for men’s politics. Feminism can offer ideologically something more important than social prestige and mere political correctness. It can offer a sense of justice etc., relatedness with gender politics etc.

Here I must clarify that hegemonic masculinity is not a static category and its attributes are not the same in every context. The term hegemonic masculinity implies that this form of masculinity occupies the hegemonic position within our social reality. The paradox of hegemonic masculinity is that it, in spite of being hegemonic, not many men occupy such hegemonic positions. To be precise, only a small section of men actually meet the normative standards of hegemonic masculinities. But a majority of men gain from the ways hegemonic masculinity is structured. This means that they gain from the patriarchal situation which subordinate women in general. Thus in general men produce the defence of patriarchy whereas women are the agents for the change in patriarchal situation (Connell 1995, p 82).

The question is to establish how women try to change the patriarchal situation. Here I want to engage in a debate that deals with women’s political agency within the phallogocentric linguistic and social reality. From a certain point of view, women are the agent of the politics for gender equality because they are considered as the internal other within the patriarchal system. Within this system, the phallus is the master-signifier and femininity is symbolically defined as lack. Thus, within our social and linguistic reality, women are put in a derogative position. To challenge this derogative position, women initiate feminist politics. Within this discursive paradigm only the feminine gender is biologically marked. Thus, the feminine gender is culture specific and masculine gender is conflated with universal persona (Butler: 1990, pp13-14). This means that men are the standard case and women are the deviant. But there are other perspectives too. Following the more radical path proposed by Luce Irigaray, one can argue that women are not the internal ‘other’ of a patriarchal system. They are unrepresented within social and linguistic reality (Butler: 1990, p14). Within this radical perspective, one cannot grasp women because they are beyond representation. The problem with such a formulation is that one cannot propose any form of agency for women. If one wishes to engage with any form of feminist politics, one needs to place women as internal other. To be precise, women should be represented as an unequal member of patriarchal gender equation. Thus my perspective regarding women’s position in patriarchal gender system is complex. I consider the importance of women as internal other but cannot limit
myself to that. Women, as unrepresented within social and linguistic reality also holds crucial importance. Thus women are not reducible to the internal other and also constituted beyond that. The proposition that men cannot be feminists or the relationship between men and feminism is an impossible one, can be argued as a biologically essentialist position. My proposition in this chapter engages with Stephen Heath’s position regarding male feminism. Heath’s opening phrase in “Male Feminism” proposes, “Men’s relation to feminism is an impossible one. This is not said sadly nor angrily (though sadness and anger are both known and common reaction) but politically” (Heath: 1987, p1). And later he explains “I believe, the most any man can do today: to learn and so to try to write or talk or act in response to feminism, and so to try not in any way to be anti-feminist, supportive of the old oppressive structures. Anymore, any notion of writing a feminist book or being a feminist is a myth” (Health: 1987, p9). According to Heath, to understand feminism as a theory or to be politically correct is not difficult for men. He questions men’s relationship with feminism beyond mere recognition. Thus for Heath, it is impossible for men to be a feminist. Here, I position myself to be a bit distant from Heath’s position. Heath argues that men cannot be feminist as feminisms do not offer anything socially valuable to men. According to him, feminism is a movement for women’s empowerment and men do not gain anything out of it. Thus, men can be allies of feminism and not feminist. Here, I think, one should problematize the distinction between allies of feminism and feminist. For me, to be an ally of feminism is to be a feminist in a different way. One should keep in mind that there are multiple ways to be a feminist. Men do not achieve social prestige in a patriarchal society through engagement with feminism. But men can achieve many other forms of satisfaction which I have mentioned earlier. We should remember that the ideological battle of gender equality can only be achieved through feminisms.

The overall argument of this section proposes biologically distinct politics for men and women. Here, I am not proposing biological essentialism but a biology which is a socio-cultural construct. This form of biological distinctness can be further explored within any body of text. Thus, we can propose a new analogy between biologically marked bodies and the sexuality of the text. Within this discursive paradigm, a body of text is also sexually marked. We have already argued that the sexually marked male and female bodies are retained within this discursive field and the distinction between them is not erased. This distinction can be explored within any form of text, specially within the written form.
Writing is a structure through which thought is inscribed in language. Writing is a structure which is mediated. Whatever we perceives comes through the structure of Writing. Here, we are talking about writing which is not empirical. Here, the operative term would be trace. The term trace is considered as the remanant of a previous moment or the past. Thus trace become the element of past within present. According to Spivak, trace “is in the possibility of always not being, the material suggestion that something else was there before, something other than it” (Spivak: 2005a, p104). Following this notion of trace, we can propose that any form of written text is haunted by the notion of sexual difference. Thus we can argue that the trace of the biologically marked body can be present within the body of text. The text may not follow the author’s intention but that does not ensure that the biologically marked writer has no control over his/her own writing. In this context, one can recall the seminal essay by Roland Barthes, “The Death of the author”. Barthes (Barthes: 1977) argues against the authorial control over a text. But this does not ensure that the text does not carry the nuances of the sexually marked author. To complicate the proposition further, we can argue that one should not confuse the author with the writer. Following the etymology given by Sibaji Bandyopadhyay (Bandyopadhyay: 2007), one can trace the origin of the word author in the medieval word Auctor. In Latin, the word Auctor has three origins. They are agere, which is a verb meaning to act or perform, auieo, which is also a verb meaning to tie and augere which is again a verb meaning to grow. In Greek, Auctor have a single origin, which is autentim. Autentim is a noun meaning authority. (Bandyopadhyay: 2007, pp 116-117) The word writer does not have such a baggage. A writer simply means one who writes but does not authorize the text. Thus the death of the author may not be seen as the death of the biologically marked body of the writer. The biologically marked writer is inserted within the larger structure of writing, which pre dates the writer. Not only does the writer speaks within that structure, but the structure also speaks through the writer. To be precise, the trope of sexual difference works in two ways. Through the process of writing, the author inscribes the notion of sexual difference within the text. Thus the written text is sexually marked. But the notion of sexual difference is also formative within the body of writer. This structure of writing is phallogocentric per se and the trace of that remains inscribed in any singular utterance. The biologically marked body is inserted within the larger structure of writing and the situatedness of male /female body cannot be erased. Here, I would like to argue that the logic of deconstruction works in two ways. It proposes a utopian future, where the equality is proposed in terms of sexual difference. In this form of gendering, male and masculinity, female and femininity has no ontological basis. But the politics of deconstruction is not
limited to this. The politics of deconstruction also addresses the socio-cultural construct of biological body. Following this logic the sexually marked female body can be considered as another within the patriarchal gender system. One cannot bypass this social reality by arguing that not only femininity but female bodies are also culturally constituted. Within this paradigm of deconstruction male-female, masculinity-femininity are culturally constituted. But they are constituted differently. The male and the female seem to be natural sexual bodies whereas masculinity and femininity appears as the cultural manifestations of sexual body. Thus, the real effect of sex and gender cannot be ignored. Deconstruction is a politics that works through biological and social determinism and goes beyond that. Thus following the logic of deconstruction, we do not negate the male/female distinction altogether. Within deconstruction, male/female distinction may be a cultural difference but that does not negate the importance of sexually marked male/female bodies in our everyday life. Thus a post-deconstructive reading of a text cannot exclude the role of biology altogether. Thus I am arguing for a certain form of biological and social determinism which proposes a distinct politics for men and women. I must clarify that if one cannot bridge the feminist movement and men’s movement through any common ground that must not be considered as a failure of the gender politics as a whole. If men’s movement blames feminism for its current crisis and feminism does not problematize hegemonic masculinity then only one can one perceive the failure of gender politics in general.

Sexual Difference and Feminist Film Studies

Now I will explore my second field of enquiry. I have already proposed that sexual difference is the a crucial trope to understand the mainstream cinema from a feminist perspective. This notion of sexual difference opens up new possibilities to understand masculinity itself. Thus, I will engage with the trope of sexual difference as is prevalent within feminist film theory. An overview of feminist film theory will be adequate to understand this trope of sexual difference. To start with we must engage with the invisibility of the woman. Claire Johnston, in “Women’s Cinema as Counter- Cinema” (Johnston: 1999) argues that women are not represented as women in mainstream cinema. They are considered as non-male. It means that women as a distinct social and sexual being are not addressed. In this formulation, the male is considered superior and women are considered inferior. Here, sexual difference is not a multiple polymorphous difference but is reduced to binary categories.
For Laura Mulvey (Mulvey:1999), the notion of sexual difference is the linchpin of her theorization. In “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, she explores the trope of sexual difference to understand mainstream narrative cinema. Mulvey gives central importance to the figure of castrated women who do not possess a penis. Mulvey works within a greater terrain of apparatus theory as proposed by Jean Louis Baudry and Christian Metz which draws on psychoanalytic theory. According to apparatus theory, cinema is both an institution and an apparatus. Since 1970s, the notion of cinema as an institution or an apparatus is influential in film theory. Barbara Creed, following Metz, argues that the cinematic institution is not limited to cinema industry. It also incorporates the spectator’s mental or psychic apparatus. Through the cinematic institution, spectators adapt themselves to the consumption of the film (Creed, 1998: 5).In fact, it is the apparatus theory which first argues that the cinematic institution constitutes a transcendental viewing subject who is the centre and origin of the meaning. It creates an illusion of images which effortlessly unfold before the eyes of the spectator. Mulvey’s contribution to this field is that she points out that the transcendental viewing subject projected through the apparatus theory is male. Thus, she points out that the hidden male bias is explicit in apparatus theory, in particular, and in film theory, in general. In 1975, Mulvey published “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Mulvey: 1999), which addresses the question of the female spectator. The article interrogates the visual pleasure by deconstructing it. For her the crucial question is how to combat male bias while still caught in patriarchy. She argues that there is no easy way out but we can examine patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is an important one. Mulvey introduces gender into apparatus theory by exploring Freudian theories of scopophilia, castration, and fetishism and Lacanian theories of the formation of subjectivity. According to Mulvey, in mainstream Hollywood cinema the male protagonist is the active agent of the narrative whose looks control the narrative and the woman is a spectacle, a passive figure to be looked at. Thus, the pleasure of the look is divided along gender lines, where one is invited to identify with the active male gaze, which reduces the female figure simply into an erotic object of gaze. Here, psychoanalysis is appropriated as a political weapon to address the unconscious of patriarchal society. Mulvey argues that the cinema offers the pleasure of looking, which is scopophilia. Both, the act of looking and being looked at, are a pleasurable acts. Scopophilia considers other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. Thus the cinema plays on voyeuristic gaze. Moreover, the darkroom of the auditorium helps to produce such voyeuristic fantasies. Condition of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking at a private
world. Not only does cinema satisfy the pleasure of looking, but also does it go further. It gives the pleasure of looking at the human form. Human face, human body, human relationship, human beings and their surroundings etc are the focus of narrative film. Along with scopophilia the cinematic medium provides the possibilities of narcissistic identification with the screen image. According to dominant ideology the male figure cannot bear the burden of objectification. Men are the active and controlling figures with whom the spectator identifies. He is not the erotic object of gaze but a more perfect counterpart of the spectator. According to Mulvey, the spectators are invited to identify with the male character in spite of their biology. Thus, female spectators appropriate the masculine position. How does this identification happen? It depends on the voyeuristic feature of cinema which plays on three different types of looks. These three looks are: one, that of the camera which records the filmic event; second, the look of the audience who watches the film; and third, is the look of the character. According to Mulvey, the conventions of narrative cinema deny the first two looks and subordinates them to the third. The first two looks are crucial for cinema but cinema is codified in such a way that these two looks seem to be absent. Thus the spectators are left without any choice but to identify with the male character who is the point of reference of the narrative.

The process of gendering is more complex in the case of mainstream narrative cinema. It not only provides a masculine spectator position for the viewers but also objectifies the female characters of the film. The male gaze which is now identified with both the male and the female viewer, projects its fantasy onto the female characters and objectifies them. The scopophilic drive, which is specific to cinema, produces the female image as passive. Thus, men have the command over his fantasies and impose them on to the images of women, who are the bearers of the meanings, not the makers. The female figure in response displays itself which can be said to-be-looked-at-ness. The female body appears to be the erotic object for the male character and spectator. Though the women are objects for display, this display of women poses a deeper problem. Her lack of penis implies a threat of castration. According to Creed, “Whereas Freudian and Lacanian theory argued that the castration complex was a universal formation that explained the origins and perpetuation of patriarchy, Mulvey demonstrated in specific terms how the unconscious of patriarchal society organized its own signifying practices, such as film, to reinforce myths about women and to offer the male

4In the next chapter I would propose that men can be the erotic object of gaze. Following Steve Neale (Neale: 1983) I would expand Mulvey’s theory to understand the male spectacle in mainstream cinema.
viewer pleasure. Within this system there is no place for woman. Her difference is represented through the term-‘lack’” (Creed: 1998, p11). Thus the castration anxiety among men make the image of female into un-pleasure. There are two ways to escape this problem. One is investigating the women, devaluing and demystifying her and punishing her or making her guilty. Or else making the image a fetish object and overvaluing the female figure and a complete disavowal of castration fear. It glorifies the physical beauty of female figure and transforms it into something pleasurable and complete in itself. The first kind of devaluation of female figure needs a narrative with a linear progression. At the end of the story, there is a victory/defeat and subjugation of the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. We can find such an example in Alfred Hitchcock’s movie. The second kind does not need any linear narrative progression. Fetishistic scopophilia on the other hand focuses only on the erotic spectacle. This is a style adopted by Josef von Sternberg. Thus, Mulvey makes her position explicit with respect to the trope of sexual difference within the field of mainstream narrative cinema. Mainstream cinema works through the male/female binary. Here, male and female are two indisputable categories which cannot be overlapped. My own understanding of sexual difference does not follow such binaries rather I prefer a polymorphous difference. Thus sexual difference should not be reduced to two.

Mary Ann Doane (Doane: 1999) explores the issue of sexual difference in “Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of Feminine as Absence”. For Mulvey the spectator position is essentially male but Doane argues for a feminine spectator position. According to her in the case of female spectatorship the distance between spectator and the screen is erased and the spectator over identifies with the image of female protagonist. Thus, the female spectator indentifies herself as an image. The division between subject and object so important for psychoanalytic film theory, is jeopardized here. Caught (Ophul:1949) and Rebecca (Hitchcock: 1940) are two examples which explores her point further. Both of the texts explore the confusion regarding subjectivity and objectivity. Unlike Mulvey, they explore both the visibility of female protagonist and the disappearance of female subjectivity. Mulvey in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, may address the complexity of female spectatorship, but she does not address the issue of the actual female protagonist. Doane further argues that through the image of an absent woman, disappearance of female subjectivity is exposed. Here the camera literally enacts the repression of the feminine.
Kaja Silverman (Silverman:1999) in “Lost Objects and Mistaken Subjects” proposes the notion of sexual difference within the discourse of psychoanalytic film theory. According to her the cinematic apparatus provides a sense of fullness which can be equated with the moment of infancy when there is no experience of separateness. It is only in the oedipal moment that both the male and the female subject experience a sense of loss or lack along with the notion of sexual difference. Both, the male and the female child realize that women do not possess a penis and are castrated. This realization has different effects on the male and the female subject. Thus Silverman explores how both the male and the female subject are formulated within the field of psychoanalytic film theory which is not the case for Mulvey (in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”) and Doane (in “Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of Feminine as Absence”). Women realized that they are already castrated and cannot be castrated further, but castration is a real threat for men. The figure of castrated women exposes a sense of powerlessness to men. According to Silverman this powerlessness or the notion of lack in the male subject is shifted onto women figures. The castrated female figures are manifestations of an un-pleasure or lack that men experience in themselves. Thus, the inferiority of castrated women is a male construct. The female figure endorses the lack in male figure and opens up the possibility for the male subjects identification with symbolic authority. Thus, within the mainstream narrative male subjects are situated in a position distant from the spectacle of lack, but women are asked to identify with such a spectacle of lack.

In “Women and Film: A discussion of feminist aesthetics”, Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B Ruby Rich, Anna Marie Taylor and the editors of New German Critique (Citron, Lesage, Mayne, Rich, Taylor and New German Critique: 1999) address the issue of sexual difference. According to them, women’s everyday reality and their experience in the film both can be explored through the tropes of spectacle. To be precise women are spectacles in everyday life and mainstream cinema, whereas men are considered as spectator with a controlling gaze within the film space and beyond. Mulvey had shown the invisibility of women within the screen and in the spectator position respectively. Writers of this article challenge such invisibility and engage with the actual female viewer. Thus, this article addresses the specificity of female audience. They argue that the male and female experience in the case of spectator position cannot be the same. Women can identify with the male spectator position but their relationship with the image cannot be same as men. The relationship between the female spectator and the female image is of overidentification. We
know Doane (in “Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of Feminine as Absence”) also explores such overidentification between female spectator and female image. According to the authors of this text both the image and the textually determined spectator position are divided through the tropes of sexual difference.

In ‘Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” inspired by King Vidor’s Duel in the Sun (1946)’ (Mulvey: 1999) Mulvey reviews her earlier position and further pursues two other lines of thought. The first question is of the woman viewer of the mainstream cinema. Earlier, she had concentrated on the issue of female spectatorship and not the actual audience of the cinema. She had argued that the spectator position, offered by mainstream cinema, is masculine, but now, she had further complications. The first one is about the female viewer. How does the female viewer engage with the film text? The other question is of melodrama. Mulvey clarifies that here she is considering only the films which revolve around the female protagonist. As there is no central male protagonist, this type of film only offers the possibility of identification with the female character. The question remains how such identification works. For the first issue, there are two possibilities. Female viewer may find herself out of key with the pleasure offered by the masculine viewing position. But it is also possible that she may enjoy the freedom of action and the control over filmic space through her identification with the masculine positions. Mulvey proposes that she is considering this second possibility in this article. And regarding the second issue, Mulvey argues that in such female centered films, we find that the woman protagonist unlike her male counterpart, is unable to achieve stable sexual identity and she is torn between passive femininity and active masculinity. In such films the heroine’s resistance to a correct feminine position and thus her oscillation between feminine and masculine position is the critical issue at stake. How does her libido accommodate such oscillations? Mulvey, following Freud argues that “there is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and the feminine function. To it itself, we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional equation of activity and masculinity, we must not forget that it also covers trends with a passive aim. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition ‘feminine libido’ is without any justification” (Mulvey, 1999:124). Following Freud, Mulvey argues that the women cannot be conceptualized as different. It can be opposite (passive femininity as opposed to active masculinity) or similar (the pre oedipal phallic phase, in which both the sexes develop similarly). This definition, in terms of opposition or similarity, provides the female character the possibility to shift between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ positions. Following Freud, Mulvey
argues “Regressions to the pre-Oedipus phase very frequently occur; in the course of some women’s lives there is a repeated alteration between periods in which femininity and masculinity gain the upper hand” (Mulvey:1999,p123). Thus for the female audience trans-sex identification can be a possible solution. Mulvey argues this is not something specific to the narrative cinema, but a tradition of story-telling common to other forms of folk and mass culture. Mulvey discusses how introducing women as a central character problematizes the issue of gender identification in different terms. It is distinct from the way Doane (in “Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of Feminine as Absence”) addresses the issue of women as a central protagonist. According to Doane, films with a female central protagonist explores the confusion regarding subjectivity and objectivity. Such films explore both the visibility of female protagonist and also the disappearance of female subjectivity. Mulvey, on other hand, explore the issue of female central protagonist within the genre of western differently. Here, Mulvey’s example is *Duel in the Sun* (Vidor:1946) which is a western but also a story of emotional tussle of the central female character. Before going into the details of the film text, Mulvey explores the specificity of the western as a genre. She points out, that while the social integration represented by marriage is an essential part of the folk-tale, it is only one of the possible narrative closures for western. In the western the hero can reject the proposal of marriage and thus resist the social demands and responsibilities. Through rejecting such social demands the hero celebrates the phallic, narcissistic omnipotence. In *Duel in the sun*, the female protagonist Pearl is caught between two men. They represent different aspects of her desire. They personify a split in Pearl. Jesse can provide the ‘correct’ path of femininity which is socially valuable while in Lewt’s world of misogynist machismo, she can explore her male side and be a tomboy. Pearl is unable to settle down and oscillate between these two paths of feminine development. This internal oscillation of desire complicates the situation of female spectator. The repressed masculine identification of phallic phase seems to be active once again. Thus for the female spectator the situation is beyond a simple mourning for a lost fantasy of omnipotence. According to Mulvey, “The memory of the ‘masculine’ phase has its own romantic attraction, a last-ditch resistance, in which the power of masculinity can be used as postponement against the power of patriarchy.”(Mulvey, 1999: 129) Thus, following Mulvey, we can argue that the female spectator either identifies with male gaze of mainstream cinema or takes the position of masculinization in the case of female centered melodrama. Here the character Pearl oscillates between the two positions. Her oscillation represents the actual position of the female spectator. The female spectator, like the female protagonist oscillates between her feminine and masculine desires.
Mary Ann Doane (Doane: 1999), in “Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator”, addresses the issue of both female image and female spectator. The question is how to place the question of female desire relative to the process of imaging within the field of cinema. According to Doane “My insistence upon the congruence between certain theories of the image and theories of femininity is an attempt to dissect the episteme which assigns to woman a special place in cinematic representation while denying her access to that system”(Doane:1999, p133). The theory of image inherited by the cinematic apparatus works through a certain notion of sexual difference. Following Mulvey, we come to understand that generally in main stream cinema men are the active agents of look and women only display themselves to male gaze which can be said to-be-looked-at-ness. The voyeuristic and fetishistic way of looking explores the pleasure in seeing the female figure, which was able to produce castration threat among men and, thus, was considered unpleasure. The woman not only seems to be an image of desire but also a desirable image. Thus, following Doane, “To ‘have’ the cinema is, in some sense ‘have’ the woman” (Doane: 1999, p134) If the woman is frequently the object of voyeuristic or fetishistic gaze, then how does the female spectator engage with such gaze? According to Doane, “the supportive binary opposition at work” here is not the active/male and passive/female. For her, the opposition between closeness and distance regarding the image is the real issue (Doane: 1999, p134). Mulvey argues that there must be a gap between the voyeur and the image s/he sees. The viewer should not sit either too close or too far from the screen. The relationship between the spectator and the screen is further explored through the tropes of sexual difference. As the female spectator is herself the image, there is certain over presence of the image. Such closeness with the image provides only one possible relationship between the female spectator and the screen- that is of narcissistic identification with the image (Doane: 1999, p135). Thus the woman cannot take a position similar to man’s within the phallocentric sign system. The female finds it difficult to assume the position of fetishist. The lack of the gap between the spectator and the image resists such fetishism and proposes an ‘overidentification’ with the image. How can the female spectator achieve a distance from the image? Through transvestism women adopt the sexuality of the other, become men and create a distance from the image itself. I have already argued the possibility for the female spectator’s oscillation between the masculine and the feminine position, and particularly, an identification with the pre-oedipal phallic phase. But there is another possibility. Masquerade or flaunting femininity is one such possibility, proposed by Doane. Masquerade appears as a mask which conceals a non-identity. According
to Doane “To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain *distance* between oneself and one’s image” (Doane:1999, p139, italic mine). By flaunting the excess of femininity, it challenges the “patriarchal production of femininity as closeness, as presence-to-itself, as, precisely imagistic” (Doane: 1999, p138). Thus, the excess femininity challenges the male bias embedded in the scopic field. This provides the female spectator the chance to identify with the viewing subject position and not to identify with the spectacle itself. Thus the masquerade manufactures a distance between the image and the spectator and makes the image readable and negotiable for the female spectator.

Annette Kuhn (Kuhn: 1999) explores the generic possibilities of women’s cinema in “Women’s genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera and Theory”. Like Claire Johnston, in “Women’s Cinema as Counter- Cinema” (Johnston: 1999) she proposes that the invisibility of women in the screen and the spectator position is a masculine construct. The article focuses on how the gender spectatorship is constructed through the notion of sexual difference and how the notion of sexual difference is contextually produced. The overall thrust of this essay is on the relationship of gynocentric text with feminine spectatorship. Laura Mulvey in ‘Afterthought on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, inspired by King Vigor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946), Mulvey (Mulvey:1999) points out that the female character in the narrative does not automatically provide a feminine spectator position. Kuhn points out that both, Pam cook (Cook:1983, p17) and Tania Modleski (Modleski:1982, p105) explores feminine spectator position. Pam Cook argues that the female point of view can subvert the conventional modes of spectator text relationship. Tania Modleski, on the other hand, proposes that the television soaps aimed to women audience also provide a feminine spectator position. The difference between spectator position and social audience is important for Kuhn. Spectator is the subject constituted through the interpellation of the film and television text and social audience is the real viewer, who actually looks at a film or television text. Female genres like the soap and the melodrama, both, address feminine spectators and engage with female representations. Here, one should distinguish between femaleness as a social gender and femininity as a subject position. Melodrama or women soap opera are not only popular among actual female viewers but also construct a feminine spectator position. These spectator positions challenge the conventional masculine subject positions and open up a possibility for feminine desire and female point-of view. Here, Mulvey’s insight seems to be productive. Mulvey in her reading of *Duel in the Sun* proposes that the female protagonist oscillates between two positions. According to her such oscillation represents the actual position of the female
spectator. The female spectator, like the female protagonist oscillates between her feminine and masculine desires.

In “Pleasurable Negotiations”, Christine Gledhill (Gledhill: 1999) argues that the meaning of a text is not given but acquired through struggle between various points of views. Within this discourse woman is a sign whose meaning is not fixed. It is a symbol whose meaning is acquired through various negotiations. According to Gledhill “The ‘image of woman’ has also been a site of gendered discourse, drawn from the specific socio-cultural experiences of women and shared by women, which negotiates a space within, and sometimes resists patriarchal domination” (Gledhill: 1999, p177). The single reading position held by cine-psychoanalysis, is challenged by Gledhill. According to her, feminist critics open up a reading position which engages with feminine way of looking at things. The problem with psychoanalytic film theory is that it encourages a single masculine spectator position though. Though the works of Mulvey, Doane etc problematize such masculine bias within spectator position. In generally psychoanalytic film theory follows Lacanian formulation of the symbolic and argues that the male child enters into the symbolic through repression of femininity. Gledhill further argues that the subject of mainstream cinema is produced through the repression of difference- gender, sex, class, race, age etc. Gledhill’s preoccupation is off course with the issue of feminine repression. Following Mulvey, we know that the look of the camera is male within the psychoanalytic framework. Thus, for the male spectator there is no gap between the subject position addressed by the text and the actual viewership. This is not the case for the female spectator. The gap between the spectator position and the social subject is crucial for the female spectator. Feminist critics explore the issue of female spectatorship and challenge the male bias in it. Female spectatorship elides two distinct aspects of viewership: the ‘feminine spectator’ proposed by the text and ‘female audience’ constructed through women’s everyday locations. The negotiation between textual and social subject is crucial to understand the female/feminine spectatorship. To be precise, we see that the negotiation between women as a patriarchal symbol and women as a socio-cultural reality. Gledhill thus distances herself from cine-psychoanalysis and proposes the socio-cultural context as productive of the formation of the viewing subject.

In “Feminine Fascinations”, Jackie Stacey (Stacey: 1999) explores the issue of identification from a feminist point of view. She points out that identification is a crucial trope for psychoanalytic film theory. Identification, in a common-sense term, refers to sympathizing
with a character or appropriation of protagonist’s point of view. According to Stacey we can explore the notion of identification in two ways. One way of exploring the notion of identification is to associate it with the spectator position. On the other hand we can address the issue of identification at the level of consumption. Here the real audience identifies with the screen image and is empowered through such identification. Stacey explores the second option. She placed an advertisement in two women’s magazine inviting the reader to write about their relationship with their favourite female star. Thus Stacey, engages with the politics of identification through reading fan letters. The notion of identification that she explores is based on both difference and similarity. To be precise, the process of identification not only addresses the feminine similarity between the star and her fan but also engages with the difference between them. According to her, identification assumed by psychoanalysis may produce a single subjective position but engagement with the actual viewer may challenge such a position and propose a polymorphous viewing position. Such viewing position is explored by Terresa De Lauretis. Following Lauretis (Lauretis: 1985), we would eventually see that women’s cinema or counter cinema looks at difference differently. Here, difference is not explored through binary opposition but proposes a polymorphous difference. Thus the trope of sexual difference is not limited to the difference between male and female but among women themselves. Lauretis propose that the spectator of women’s cinema is female in gender whose identity further intersects with race, class heterogeneity.

In “Her body, himself: Gender in the Slasher Film”, Carol J Clover (Clover: 1999) questions the convention of identification along gender lines in slasher film. According to her screen males do not represent real men nor does the screen female represent real women. She argues for a cross-gender identification of the spectator with the screen image. In the case of slasher film the killer is feminine men or transvestite, whereas the victim hero is masculinised female. Clover points out the female viewers’ cross gendered identification with male character has been critically acclaimed but male viewers identification with female character or female point of view is rarely addressed. For example, Laura Mulvey (Mulvey: 1999) has adequately engaged with the issue of women’s identification with the male character or male point of view. Clover here questions how we shall engage with male identification in the film genre which evolve around female victim hero? The characteristic of slasher film is that it provides the identification with female point of view. In this genre, the female victim take revenge and kills the male oppressors. Thus initially the spectator may oscillate between their identification with male and female characters but in the end the spectator is left with no
option but to identify with the victim hero of the slasher film. It is this masculine female who is alive at the end. We see the masculinity of the female victim hero while killing the oppressor and femininity of the oppressor while he is castrated literally or symbolically. Clover argues that slasher film may engage with the presence of female but hardly address femaleness. Though the female victim hero is biologically female but she works within masculine discourse. Thus they represent male fear and anxiety and do not engage with any feminist move. But the slasher film provides the possibility for the male audience to identify with the feminine spectator position. Thus they explore some shifts in terms of gendered representation. The female body of the slasher film is capable of both masculinisation and feminization. The biologically female victim hero also challenges the notion of heroism which is conventionally masculine. In the end the spectator is bound to identify with the female victim hero, who make spectacle while killing her oppressor. The positive side of the slasher film is that the categories of masculinity and femininity are conflated within a single character. The female victim–hero alternates between different registers. Such an oscillation reminds us the real position of female spectator. Mulvey has argued that female spectator like the female protagonist oscillates between her feminine and masculine desires. Further, I would add that, within the genre of slasher film, female victim-hero also oscillates between her feminine and masculine desires. Though she is biologically female, she possess both male and female qualities which gives her an ambiguous gender identities.

Barbara Creed (Creed:1999) in “Horror and the Monstrous- Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection” explores the issue of sexual difference in the context of horror films. According to her horror films represented primal fantasy in terms of the abject[^5]. Creed applies the term to explore the issue of exclusion. Here abject is something that does not conform to any borders and disturbs any coherent identity. She links this disorder with the pre-linguistic maternal realm. Through fixing a boundary, the child enters into linguistic and paternal realm. Creed further argues that the ‘monstrous feminine’ of the horror film does not represent the lack of female body but exposes her phallic possibilities. Thus, the monstrousness of the female body arrives through her self sufficiency and not due to her deficiency. This representation of the monstrous feminine figure reveals male desire and fear. The proposition by Linda Williams

[^5]: Abj**e**ct is a particular form of exclusion. It is an exclusion which constitutes what is included. Here inclusion is not possible without exclusion. Moreover such exclusion is forgotten. Anirban Das explores the notion of abjection by citing Butler. “Abjection is, according to Butler, a repudiation within sociality as opposed to a founding beyond the social that she calls, invoking Lacan, foreclosure. Yet, abjection is not a simple negativity. The negation of the abject is, at the same time, the founding gesture of interpellation of the subject.”(Das: 2010,p64-65)
(Williams: 1984) in “When the Woman Looks” seems to be productive here. According to her, the body of monster is freakish because of it’s symbolically castrated or overtly potent. It explores its difference from normal man and its similarity with women. Thus, the freakishness of the monster can be explored through the trope of sexual difference.

Linda Williams (Williams: 1999) in “Film Bodies: Gender and Excess” address what is called gross through the trope of sexual difference. According to her, three types of gross-gratuitous sex, gratuitous violence and terror, and gratuitous emotion are explored in the genre of pornography, horror, melodrama respectively. These body genres have a complex relation with femininity. They not only display human bodies but also have an effect on the bodies of spectator. In pornography the body of spectator is explored through portrayal of orgasm, in horror film, through the portrayal of violence and terror and in melodrama, through portrayal of weeping. In these genres the body of women works as an embodiment of pleasure, fear and pain. Williams is aware of other bodily genres such as thriller, musical, comedy but she focuses on pornography, horror and melodrama because these genres expect the viewers to mimic the sensations displayed through the female figures on the screen. Further, she argues that these genres lack a proper distance between spectators and the text and propose over involvement of spectators with the sensational images. These three genres explore the spectacle of female body, which, many feminists consider as a spectacle of feminine victimization. Williams further complicates the notion of pornography and melodrama by exploring lesbian pornography and male weepies. The importance of these three genres are that they construct a feminine subject position which explore power and pleasure within patriarchal structure. Here, I would like to propose how the feminine subject position is constructed within the discourse of feminist film studies. For example Doane in “Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of Feminine Absence” argues for a feminine spectator position where the distance between the spectator and screen is erased and the female spectator overidentifies with the image itself. Thus, women can identify with male spectator but their relation with the image cannot be the same as men. Mulvey in ‘Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema: Inspired by King Vidor’s Duel in the Sun(1946)” proposes a feminine spectator position which like the female protagonist ( within the genre of western) oscillates between her feminine and masculine desire. Further Doane in “Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator” questions that if the woman is the object of voyeuristic or fetishistic gaze, then how does the female spectator identifies with such a gaze. We already know the relationship between female spectator and the image is of
overidentification. There is no gap among two. But here, Doane proposes for a distance between two. According to her, it is through transvestism that women adopt the sexuality of the other, become a man. Thus it creates a distance between spectator and image. But there is another possibility, which is of masquerade. Masquerade, which conceals non-identity, actually produces a distance between oneself and one’s image. Thus we can argue that the spectator position is not gender fixed. These spectator positions may not propose ‘sexual freedom’, but propose the possibilities of feminine viewing position. Thus, these genres offer pleasures for both male and female spectator. Williams argues that the three genres discussed above may be violent and hostile towards women but they actually provide a feminine spectator position and hence cannot be dismissed totally for its misogyny.

bell hooks (hooks: 1999) explores the issue of race in “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectator”. She looks at the intersection of the issue of race with the question of sexual difference. She proposes that black people’s right to look is systematically denied both in film viewing practice and everyday reality. The spectatorship is a position produced through the race, class, gendered ideology of the text. The position where the actual viewer resists the ideological position of the film, is the moment of rupture. This rupture can be cited as possible resistance on the part of actual viewer. In general, the oppositional gaze of black people concentrate on the issues of race and not gender. Within the film viewing practice the look towards white female by black male may be empowering. But such an empowerment is not visible for black female viewer. Thus, the black male and female have different looking relation with the cinematic screen. Mainstream cinema is usually silent about the existence of black female. Following Jane Gaines we may argue that white feminists theorize the image of women through the process of objectification, fetishisation and symbolic absence which is not productive to understand the black female. The black female experiences their own annihilation while watching a film. If a black female is present in a particular film they only help to increase and maintain the white female as an object of gaze. Within this viewing practice, black females are considered as ‘unfeminine’. Thus the black female do not identify with female victims nor do they identify with the phallogocentric gaze of male subject. Thus, black feminist film scholars critique the psychoanalytical model which functions through male/female binary. They challenge the notion of male as the subject who looks whereas female as the image who is looked upon. According to them, it is an ahistorical discourse which can not address the complexity of black women’s relationship with the cinematic medium. The psychoanalytic model valorizes sexual difference at the expense of class, race
diversity of our society. When we consider women as a homogenous category, we actually address white women’s socio-cultural reality. The existence of real black female audience problematizes any homogenized notion of female identity, in representation and in spectatorship. According to hooks the alternative black cinema may open up the space for a critical assertion which is politically vibrant for the black female viewer.

Jane Gaines (Gaines: 1999) in “White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory” also focuses on the intersection of the notion of sexual difference with the issue of race. She problematizes the notion of masculinity and femininity within mainstream film theory. According to her, it is the lesbian feminist who questions the way mainstream feminist film theory engages with masculinity and femininity. They argue that the gaze of lesbian spectator should not be associated with the male gaze. They have challenged the psychoanalytical paradigm, which works through male/female opposition. They point out the limitation of such a model. Like hooks, Gaines also proposes that the psychoanalytic model valorizes sexual difference at the expense of class, race diversity of our society. The male/female binary also limits our understanding of black feminist film theory. Gaines says “Just as the Marxist model based on the class has obscured the function of gender, the feminist model based on the male/female division under patriarchy has obscured the function of the race” (Gaines: 1999, p294). Like hooks Gaines argues within mainstream cinema the black male achieve the privilege of looking in general, but their female counterpart do not master such a looking relation. White feminists theorize the image of women through the process of objectification, fetishisation and symbolic absence. But the black female has to engage with the ‘paradox of nonbeing’ which refer to the representation of black female as not women. Like hooks she rightly points out that the black female does not identify with the female victim nor do they identify with the phallocentric gaze of male subject. Gaines further challenges the psychoanalytical model which works through the trope of male/ female binary and proposes a historical model which includes actual black female audience.

Tania Modleski (Modleski: 1999) in ‘Cinema and the Dark Continent’ explores both the issue of race and sexual difference. According to her, the representation of racial difference is modelled on the Freudian notion of sexual difference. According to Luce Irigaray (Irigaray: 1985), Freud’s notion of woman as castrated man exposes sexual difference and also denies it. Psychoanalysis proposes woman as inferior man, and hence woman is the same and
different from real man. Following Bhabha (Bhabha: 1983) and Fanon (Fanon: 1952), Modleski argues that racial difference can also be explored through the tropes of sexual difference. Thus following this pattern of argument black men are same and different from white men. To be precise, “can we avoid a theoretical privileging of either racial or sexual difference but instead seek to understand how the two interact in popular culture”(Thornham:1999, p289). Modleski explores the different representation of women along with racial lines. According to her, if white women are objects of desire for male, in general, black women are considered as unfeminine maternal body.

Christine Gledhill (Gledhill: 1984) gives an overview of feminist film criticism in “Developments in Feminist Film Criticism”. The issue of sexual difference is crucial for Gledhill as it is with other feminist film scholars. Like the early feminist film scholars, she points out that women are not represented as women within the paradigm of cinema. The question remains as to why women are not represented as women and how fictional characters portrayed by women signify male discourse. According to her concentration on character and stereotype is less useful for contemporary film criticism. There seems to be a critical shift from interpretation of meaning to an investigation of the means of production. We must not consider film as reflection of society, nor shall we explore truth or falsity of such images. According to Gledhill, any claim to realism can challenge the stereotype but can also maintain status quo. That means that the challenge to unrealistic representation of women may not ensure egalitarian possibilities. Moreover exploring reality as opposed to stereotype may ignore the possibility of cinema as a form of entertainment. Within the conventional paradigm, women are outside history, they are ‘the other’- the opposite against which the definition of manhood evolves. What the audience perceives as real is not unmediated reality but the reality constructed through social codes. Feminist practices deconstruct such codes and expose the patriarchal ideology embedded within it. Though feminist movement cannot demystify the system of representation, they can explore assertive images of women. Ferdinand de Saussure (Gledhill:1984, p30) argued that there are no positive terms in language- but only a system of related differences and oppositions. Unlike hooks, Gaines, Modleski Gledhill proposes psychoanalysis as a force field to understand sexual difference. Within the field of psychoanalysis, the starting place in this relay of differences is the perception of sexual difference in the image of castrated women. Thus, sexual difference is the key term for psychoanalytic film theory. The complexity of race, class, caste is ignored within such formulation. Initially, the child experiences unity with its
mother and she seems to be the phallus for the child. This maternal identification is broken by the entry of father. Father prohibits incest and turns the perception of sexual difference into the threat of castration.

We can approach a different entry for the male and female child into the patriarchal order following Gledhill. Within this framework the penis equates phallus, which is the key signifier of patriarchal order. “Thus through the correspondence between his anatomy and the possibility of wielding language the boy can escape from the illusory unity of the imaginary and enter the symbolic”(Gledhill:1984,p31). The question remains what is the girls situation in patriarchy is. What is her relation to language as a speaking subject? Women anatomically play a crucial part in production of symbolic. But women achieve a negative relation with the language by the virtue of her castration. Women need to liquidate themselves within this system. The subject position from which such mastery of language is possible is male. Women may help to form such subject position but cannot operate it. The argument by Silverman seems to be productive here. We already know that the figure of castrated women exposes a sense of powerlessness to men. This powerlessness or the notion of lack in the male subject is shifted onto women figures. The castrated female figures are manifestations of an unpleasure or lack that men experience in themselves. Thus the inferiority of castrated women is a male construct.

Within the social forces and relation of production, sexual difference has become the key structural contradiction. This has a paradoxical consequence for women. On the one hand, they experience a total repression of femininity within patriarchal culture, on the other, they need an intensification of femininity for emancipation. She further proposes the relationship of the subject with social may be explored through the relation of penis with phallus. “The difference of having or not having the penis means in cultural terms, having or not having the phallus. Although this position is based on misrecognition, …it is nonetheless men, as possessors of actual penises, who are able to identify with this position of control”(Gledhill: 194, p33).

The contradiction between woman as independent woman stereotype and woman as patriarchal sign is a crucial issue for feminism. Following Molly Haskell (Haskell:1978, pp3-4) Gledhill argues that even though the independent women may be punished and humiliated in the end, she is represented as an aggressive character before her final defeat . Thus, the
character of independent women seem to be risky for patriarchal ideology. Further, she argues there are some images which must be rejected from the point of view of the Women’s Liberation movement. These images associate certain meanings, which are not positive from feminist point of view. Within this framework, femininity is associated with difference itself, a motive force keeping everything in process, which do not fix specific masculine and feminine positions. Gledhill following psychoanalytic film theory, argues that this difference is essentially sexual difference founded in castration, which is either projected on to female body or appear as a threat to male body. According to Gledhill, women are constructed differently from men in social formation. This difference seems to be the grounding on which we should work out further differences in a more egalitarian and productive way.

In “The Women at the Keyhole: Women’s Cinema and Feminist Criticism” Judith Mayne (Mayne: 1984) points out two types of cinema. The cinema produced by women directors and secondly, the cinema produced for female audience. She further explores these cinematic mediums through her understanding of sexual difference. We know that in mainstream cinema women occupy the space of spectacle and the relation of seeing is power bound. It is well established that women are represented falsely within mainstream cinema and film made by women directors may challenge those representation and present more accurate representation of women. Thus the representations of women are produced differently, according to the sexually marked body of the director. The question Mayne proposes is, what is the specificity of the work by women director? How accurate are their representation of women figures? She explores the tradition of female authors in the case of fiction writing, which seems to be a subculture within patriarchal literary genre. At the same time there are female writings which do not explore feminine specificity but follows the trope of masculine writing. Thus, films by female author, like female writings, can, both, explore and challenge patriarchal assumptions. Further, Mayne puts forward the argument that the viewing practice is divided along the line of sexual difference. We are already familiar with Mulvey’s argument that men are the bearer of look where as women are the object of the look. Thus, Mulvey proposes sexual difference along the trope of voyeurism. According to Mayne, the entire system of voyeurism is disturbing for feminist politics. Thus many women filmmaker have critiqued such a system of voyeurism. Women’s relationship to domestic space is further problematized. Women assume material continuity of daily life and species while men assume the function of discontinuity, discovery etc within the masculine system. Thus Craig’s Wife (Dorothy Arzner: 1936), The Smiling Madame Beudet (Germanine Dulac:1922)
and Nathalie Grander (Marguerite Duras: 1972) are examples of how films by women film makers can explore narrative space distinct from conventional cinema. Mayne proposes that the definition of women’s cinema is complex in itself. If we follow the authorship model for women’s cinema we might end up ignoring women’s involvement with cinema in other ways. Women have been actresses, script writers, editors which are neglected if we consider the authorship model solely. Mayne further argues if cinematic voyeurism works through the binary of active and passive, male and female, “bearer of the look” and “object of look”, then it will appear women are always alienated spectators. Specificity of the cinematic medium is that it works through the invisibility of women as women, though women are highly visible among its audience. Following Kuhn (1999), we can argue for a difference between spectator position and social audience. Kuhn further distinguishes between femaleness as a social gender and femininity as a subject position. According to Mayne, women’s film and feminist film are two distinct concepts. When women’s experiences are theorized to resist patriarchal structure, it became feminist politics. The relationship between production and consumption of a film text within its socio-political context is made by the critic. According to Mayne, the appropriate place for the critic is between the camera and the screen, which is the place of projector. The projector marks the distance between spectator and the screen which is essential for any voyeuristic pleasure of the cinema.

Linda Williams (Williams: 1984) in “When the Woman Looks” engage with the issue of sexual difference regarding spectator’s look. She explores the rare case of female look in mainstream cinema. The look of the vamp is one such example but Williams is interested in the look of the ‘good girl’ heroine. According to Williams horror film is one such genre where such look is exercised. But such look, on the part of the woman encourages her victimization. At the end of the narrative, she is punished for her curiosity. Thus we see that the looking relationship within mainstream narrative cinema is divided along gender line. Women are rarely encouraged to look within the filmic space and even if she looks, she is punished for her look. Williams proposes the affinity between the women who look and the monster within the horror film. They explore the similar status between woman and the monster. Barbara Creed’s formulation regarding ‘monstrous feminine’ of horror film is productive here. According to Creed, ‘monstrous feminine’ of the horror film does not represent the insufficiency of the female body but her self sufficiency. Thus the monstrousness of the female body actually exposes her phallic possibility. This seems to be the similarity between woman and monster in horror film.
According to Williams, the women onlookers do not maintain the proper distance between themselves and the object of their look. Thus, her situation is different from the male voyeur who maintains the proper distance with the object of gaze. The body of monster is freakish because it is either symbolically castrated or overtly potent. It exposes its difference from normal man and its similarity with women. Thus the trope of sexual difference is productive to understand the freakishness of the monster. The monster then exposes the power and potency of a different kind of sexuality. According to Williams the reception of such horror films is divided along sexual difference. Men fear the freakishness of the monster but the women express sympathetic identification between herself and the status of monster. The castrated self of the monster is not considered as lack but powerful in different ways. The fear of monster is similar to the fear of mother. For the male child, mother is not castrated but she is beyond castration. That means that he can be castrated, but the mother/monster cannot be castrated. Williams explore two films Psycho (Hitchcock:1960) and Dress to Kill (Brian De Palma: 1980) which explore the relationship between women and monster in different ways. The monster, who attacks, looks like a woman. The monster is a mirror for women within a patriarchal situation. Thus women identify with the monster which is distinct from male viewer, who fear the freakishness of the monster.

“In Dis-Embodying the female voice”, Kaja Silverman (Silverman: 1984) explores the issue of sexual difference along the line of speech. We already know that women are not subjects, but objects within cinematic discourse. Thus despite women being talkative within the filmic space, the male subject enjoys the linguistic authority and women are associated with unreliable doubtful speech. Further we see the male/female distinction regarding the issue of synchronization. Synchronization refers to the alignment of the human form with the human voice. The male voice is at times exposed as the transcendental voice, but female voice usually follows sound image synchronization. Thus for the female voice, it gives the illusion that the speech naturally evolves from the body. The crucial point made by Silverman is that the trope of synchronization is more effective for female voice and male voice can be disembodied. She point out that we hear disembodied male voice not only in documentary but also in police thrillers and prison dramas. In these genres, the disembodied male voice expose superior knowledge and justice. Silverman further explores the distinction of male/female within the trope of conventional cinema. In conventional cinema, the male subject seems to be authentic when he is heard and not seen whereas the female subject seems to be
authentic when seen and not heard. According to Silverman, there are almost no example within mainstream cinema where the female voice do not correspond with the female body. Further, she argues that when we see female voice- over it is mostly autobiographical. According to Silverman exploring the place of female voice within existing discursive field is more politically productive. Alternative cinema engages with the issue of female voice in diverse ways. For example, in Misconception, Mrjorie Keller (Keller: 1977) aligns the female voice with male image and male voice with female body. On the other hand, in the film Film About a Woman Who (Rainer: 1974) exposes a dialectical relationship between sound and image, a device to disassociate the female voice from female image. She uses further examples to expose the speech and image synchronization of the female subject.

Terresa de Lauretis explores the issue of sexual difference within the discourse of film studies through engaging with the issue of women’s cinema. She explore women’s cinema through two aspects. One is the documentation of actual films made by women and the other is the female artistic production. It explore two sides of which, one is of content and the other is at the level of language. Further the issue of sexual difference is drawn on the issue of spectatorship and female spectators are encouraged to identify with women on the screen within the domain of feminist film studies that Lauretis explore. Here, one may remember that according to Mulvey, the spectators are invited to identify with the male character in spite of their biology. According to her, female spectators appropriate masculine position. Thus, we can propose that within mainstream narrative cinema the viewing subject is male, which is challenged by Lauretis. Like Judith Mayne, she explores the female presence both in front and behind the camera. According to Mayne if we follow the authorship model for women’s cinema, women’s role as actress, script writers, editors etc may not be considered adequately. She further exposes a female or feminine aesthetic which is distinct from an aesthetic based on male subject hood. Following Mulvey we know that within the conventional cinema the look of the camera is male while the object of gaze is female. The question seems to be whether films by women can challenge this convention. We already know, according to Judith Mayne, films by female author like female writings, can both explore and challenge patriarchal assumptions. Thus, the trope of sexual difference within film making device may be productive to politically viable readings. Lauretis argues that we must rethink women’s cinema as feminist social vision. Women’s cinema or counter cinema looks at difference differently. Here, difference is not oppressive but liberating. The trope of sexual difference is not limited to the difference between male and female but among women

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themselves. According to Lauretis progressive film exposes discomfort for the audience. The audience are both invited in and held at distance with respect to film text. Lauretis propose that the spectator of women’s cinema is female in gender, whose identity further intersect with race, class heterogeneity. Lauretis makes us aware that women as women were unrepresented within the field of cinema before feminist intervention. Women’s cinema explore sexual difference to project feminine specificity and politically productive options regarding the process of gendering.

The overview of feminist film studies and its engagement with the trope of sexual difference gives us an overall understanding of film scholarship from a gendered perspective. The question remains how far the tropes of sexual difference are politically productive for feminist film studies. Conventionally, sexual difference means difference between male and female but here we have explored the notion of sexual difference which is a polymorphous difference. It is different from the way patriarchy proposes sexual difference. Within the patriarchal understanding of sexual difference, one of the two terms is privileged. To be precise it is the male self which is privileged at the cost of female self. The notion of sexual difference proposed by feminism is distinct from this formulation. “difference is seen not as difference from a pregiven norm, but as pure difference, difference in itself, difference with no identity”(Grosz: 2002, p93). It is a difference which refuses to privilege any of the terms. Following the logic of this chapter we can argue that there are two tendencies within the feminist film scholarship. First is the model of psychoanalytic film studies where male/female binary is the key signifier to understand sexual difference. Second is the sociological model where male/female are not just patriarchal sign but actual viewing subject intersected with other forms of differences. Here, I will explore the inter relation between these two tendencies. Within the first framework male/female distinction is the primary difference, which is further distinguished through the tropes of active/passive, reason/emotion etc. Here women are considered as spectacle and men as spectator. For women to be spectacle means that she identifies with the image itself. Thus, there seems to be no gap between women and the image itself. The relationship between the women and the image is of over-identification. Here male-female distinctions are not contextualized but operate as patriarchal sign system. Following this model, the notion of difference is primarily psycho-linguistic. The sociological perspective on the other hand engages with the actual viewer and hence engages with the race and class reality of our society. But the notion of actual viewer is problematic in itself. We can not map out the actual viewer empirically but have to depend on some form of
abstraction. The sociological model may address the actual viewer but it actually works through some form of abstraction where male/female distinction seems to be produce contextually. My preference lies with the first model of male/female distinction. One of the specificity of psychoanalysis is that it does not consider that the interaction with external socio-cultural field is the only element through which human subject achieves its specificity. Sexual identity is not a product of socio-cultural context but also a process of psycho-linguistic trope. Within the paradigm of psychoanalytic film theory the male-female distinction may have homogenizing tendencies, but it seems to be politically more productive. We should not minimize the importance of male/female distinction at the cost of caste class and other diversities of our society.

Here, I engage with the politics of deconstruction which works in two ways. It proposes an egalitarian future, which decodes the conventional trope of gendering but also engage with the biological and social distinction of male and female subject. We may conclude that women and men are constructed differently within a social formation. Thus the difference between male and female is socio-culturally marked. To be precise, the distinction between male–female may be culturally produced but they have a real effect in our everyday life. I have already argued that the notion of sexual difference proposed by the feminists of difference is distinct from the way patriarchy conceives difference. The politics of feminism not only addresses the issue of difference in more positive terms but also goes beyond the tropes of biological and social essentialism. From a feminist point of view, this form of sexual difference seems to be the grounding on which we should work out other inequalities—for example the race, class etc.

In conclusion I would argue this chapter address two issues which are related. The first section addresses the relationship between men and feminism and the second section engage with the trope of sexual difference as explored by feminist film studies. This chapter proposes a feminist politics for men which is premised on sexual difference. Here sexual difference is not between two binary terms but it proposes for a multiple difference. To understand the relationship between men and feminism, one needs to problematize the conventional trope of sexual difference based on male/female binary. Feminist film studies also addresses the issue of sexual difference which is polymorphous. To be precise feminist film studies addresses the question of equality in terms of difference within the field of representation and spectatorship. Thus, sexual difference is the link within these two sets of
discourse. I will eventually explore how this notion of sexual difference is related with other formative tools to understand further complexities of representation of masculinity in Hindi cinema.