

**VISUALISATION OF WOMEN IN
MEDIA, LITERATURE AND SCIENCE**

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BARTERED BODIES

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Women's bodies have since time immemorial served as a 'site' on which (metaphorically) war is fought and albeit conquest is sought. In this paper I seek to discuss the visualization of women in war literature. I will be looking at Rajwinder Singh Bedi's story, *Lajwanti* and Guy de Maupassant's *Boile De Saufe*. Although Bedi's short story does not respond to the generic classification of war literature yet it deals with a shared fate of women across borders and boundaries of time/ space that is stigmatization of Rape.

Ironically, in war crimes which are an emanation of conflict pertaining to boundaries, rape emerges as the inevitable insult thrust upon women irrespective of temporal, spatial, ethnic, nationalistic demarcations hence conforming that borders are mere "shadow lines" and that borders which serve to demarcate nations also serve to embroil and entwine nations. Violence done against women's bodies is as old as human civilizations, as Brownmiller states, "Violence, specifically rape against women, has been part of every documented war in history from the battles of Babylonia to the subjugation of Jewish women in World

War II”¹ In fact, Biblical references depict women as “spoils of war” and there are various accounts of the rape of Sabine women in Roman mythology. “The act of rape as a mechanism for “rewarding the troops” with “booty” has been a common feature in the representation of war.”² Because soldiers of antiquity were frequently not paid regular wages, sanctioning the raping and pillaging of the enemy served as a way to motivate them to fight. Rape had another purpose, “raped women were typically forcefully removed from their own culture”³. Also another purpose of infusing genetic variation into the population of the enemy was also fulfilled. It was seen as a natural consequence of war with little empathy projected towards the victims and hence it would not be an exaggeration to state that Rape as a crime against women has historically been downplayed. In fact, it has been seen as Snyder states as “an unfortunate, yet natural, by-product of war that would inevitably erupt but subside over time.”⁴ From this perspective, rape during war was normalized as a consequence and accordingly women having suffered rape were by social sanction invisible—absent from the historical records

¹ Living in the shadows of past atrocities: war babies of Bosnia Lina Strupinskiene Wagadu, v.10, 2012, Special Issue: Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: Gender, Society, and the State

² “On the Battleground of Women’s Bodies: Mass Rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina” Cindy S. Snyder, Wesley J. Gabbard, J. Dean May and Nihada Zulcic Affilia 2006; 21; 184
<http://aff.sagepub.com/content/21/2/184>

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

that inscribe the victories, defeats, and heroic battles that primarily reflect men’s experiences of war.

Temporally/ spatially/ culturally the trajectory of this paper ranges from literary responses to the Franco Prussian war, Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 against the theoretical framework of the recent rape camps that desecrated millions of women in Bosnia Herzegovina. What however marks the Serbian atrocities as different from the earlier instances is that it was not a spontaneous though heinous response towards the enemy rather “it was a systematic military policy conceived and planned before the outbreak of the war to achieve the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Serbian territory”⁵. The motivation however remains the same that is to use rape as an instrument of stigmatization, as “an attempt to kill the nation, kill it in the area of reproduction.”⁶

Rape then was/is used as an instrument of instigating terror. In communities where the notion of shame/honor in context of women’s bodies is ideologically very strongly invested, rape works as a dialectical tool of terror for it induces physical as well as psychological horror. As Oljuc says it would not work “as a policy of terror were it not for the cultural salience within the honor/shame complex generalized in the southeastern European cultural area”⁷. Rape as a moral attack against women is especially

⁵ Living in the shadows of past atrocities: war babies of Bosnia Lina Strupinskiene Wagadu, v.10, 2012, Special Issue: Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: Gender, Society, and the State

⁶ ibid

⁷ “Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina” Olujic Medical Anthropology Quarterly

devastating within several cultures, where female chastity is central to family and community honor. As Olujic observes in this regard, the mass war rapes can be understood as an element of communication—the symbolic humiliation of the male opponent. Thus, over and through the actual bodies of women who reproduce the nation, men define its physical limits and preserve its sanctity. Over the battleground of women’s bodies, borders are transgressed and redrawn.

In a similar trajectory, the desacralisation of the body of Mother India found its corollary in the violent inscription of newly forged national identities on the materiality of the human body. In doing so, Partition engendered a “...combination of physical violation with physical dislocation”⁸ so that “... not just the body, but also the body’s place in the world, became a site of trauma.”⁹ As Scarry says: during war, violence against bodies emerges as an unavoidable ‘by-product.’¹⁰ During wars ‘body’ is used as a semiotic expression – it is seen as a site on which conflicting factions express their wrath. Such carnage ensures that even though the war might end the body will continue to carry *it* within itself, since the “record of war survives in the bodies, both alive and burned...”¹¹ Similar to other instances of conflict Partition in

www.psicosocial.net/.../351-embodiment-of-terror-gendered-violence-in.

⁸ Kabir 179

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* 72.

¹¹ Scarry 113

its wake left millions of victims who continue to bear testimony to its violence through their indelibly scarred bodies. Luce Irigaray says that “...(a) body that has suffered is no longer the same. It bears the traces of physical and moral trauma, despair, desire for revenge, recurrent inertia.”¹² Thence it follows that the victims of physical violation during Partition riots were rendered incapable of overcoming their trauma. Moreover, unlike psychic trauma physical pain lacks a referential context, which adds to its unsharability. As Elaine Scarry explains, “Physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it.”¹³ This partly explains the silence of victims of Partition. The violence they had experienced resisted articulation through speech. In such a context the defiled ‘body’ became the medium of expression, as Veena Das says, “the surface of the body becomes a carnival of images...”¹⁴ ‘Body’ herein is used as a metaphor to relate how Partition ‘cracked’ the nation’s ‘body’ and in this process ‘carved’ the ‘body’ of innumerable victims. Each text explores and unveils how “... national territory becomes equivalent to the personal body; the body politic and the citizen become one.”¹⁵ Another consequence of millions of women raped during Partition or in

¹² Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference For a Peaceful Revolution*, 73.

¹³ Scarry 4

¹⁴ Veena Das, *Life And Words Violence And The Descent Into The Ordinary* 55.

¹⁵ Meira Weiss, *The Body of the Nation: Terrorism and the Embodiment of Nationalism in Contemporary Israel*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 75.1(2002):38.

rape camps in Serbia were the children that were born as a result of compelled sexual alliance. The community which fails to accept the stained women is even further reluctant to take into the fold children born of such a sexual assault.

Emphasizing this point in another context, Kathleen Mitchell says:

Despite the international attention placed on prevention of sexual and gender based violence and programs directed toward the victims, there appears to have been very little attention paid to invisible victims of this violence: the children born as a result of rape. While literature from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international human rights organizations recognize the existence of these children, little more than a brief mention of them and their needs is made in the documents published by these agencies.¹⁶

R. C. Carpenter while speaking on the fate of children born of raped women in ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia asserts: “Women were seen as the victims; children of rape were seen as irrelevant. Constructions of forced impregnation as genocide acknowledged and depended on the child's presence but treated the child not as a member of the victimized group but *as either a non-victim or a member of the perpetrating group*”¹⁷

¹⁶ Kathleen Mitchell, *Children Born from Rape: Overlooked Victims of Human Rights Violations in Conflict Settings*, 17/05/06

<http://www.jhsph.edu/academics/degreeprograms/mph/_pdf/Mitchell_Capstone_Paper_2005.pdf>

¹⁷ R. Charli Carpenter, *Surfacing Children: Limitations of Genocidal Rape Discourse*, *Human Rights Quarterly* 22 (2000) 428–477. 14

In India too post partition attempt was made to rehabilitate women who had been abducted, raped and compelled by their abductors to remain as concubines. The mutual exchange that followed is another tale of horror which the story *Lajwanti* beautifully captures. Returning to the fate of the women who were raped during Partition, official records inform that when some of them found themselves pregnant they either chose to abort the pregnancy or abandon their progeny. Damyanti Sehgal, a prominent social worker, reports that a majority of such ‘recovered’ women underwent abortions (though it was illegal at that time) to get rid of the undesired ‘illegitimate’ child. The government too was more concerned with the retrieval of Hindu and Sikh women from across the border, while children born to these abducted women were seen as liabilities. As Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin write,

Indeed, government policy in its implementation actively discouraged women from taking their children with them, and pressurized those who were pregnant to have abortions before they returned to their families. Of the children born to mothers in Pakistan and recovered by India only 102 had come to India as on July 21, 1952.¹⁸

At the time when the Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Bill was being discussed in Parliament the leaders of the nascent nation (India) while discussing the future of the children born to abducted and raped women, callously stated, “...such children if they are to live in India will remain as dogs...”¹⁹ The state acting as *parens patriae*, finally ascertained that “...children born after March 1, 1947 would not be welcome in the

¹⁸ Ritu Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women In India's Partition*, 120

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, op.cit., 119

original homes of these abducted persons when they go back...in 90 cases out of 100.”²⁰ Indeed such children entered a ‘troubled space’²¹ and were condemned to live a life of anonymity, “the ‘disappearance’ of thousands of such children is one of many tragedies of Partition history.”²² Thus forsaken these children became children “...of history, without a history.”²³

While the two stories discussed herein do not cover the entire gamut of issues brought forth yet they do subtly bring forth the apathy of society, the pathos of the victim’s situation in a highly nuanced and aesthetically refined manner.

The story *Boile De Suif* in an extremely nuanced and subtle manner expresses the pathos of the most heinous of crimes committed against women during wars. Maupassant has situated the story during the Franco Prussian war through the fate of “Boile Du Suif” a lowly courtesan whose sense of honor is far more dignified than those of her country who do not think it morally reprehensible to barter her as a commodity for consumption for ensuring their own safety Maupassant drives home the moral laxity of the supposedly moral custodians of the society. The story opens with the scene of occupation of France by the Prussian army and how the residents of Rouen are trying to cope with the fear, horror and deprivations as a consequence of the siege. Of this town

²⁰ Ibid, 120

²¹ Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence Voices from the Partition of India*, op.cit., 270

²² Ibid. op.cit.,268.

²³ Ibid 288

ten travelers manage to plan to leave Rouen and flee to Le Havre in a stagecoach. Maupassant draws these ten travelers very interestingly from various walks of life. So while there is the bourgeois merchant class being represented by Monsieur and Madame Loiseau and Monsieur Carre-Lamadon, and both are renowned for their unethical trading practices to the extent that “the very name of Loiseau became a byword for sharp practice”,²⁴ nobility is represented by the aristocratic Comte and Comtesse Hubert de Breville who hail from “one of the noblest and most ancient names in Normandy.”²⁵ The political revolutionary, democrat Cornudet, is described as “the terror of all respectable people.”²⁶ Along with them are two nuns devoted to service of God and amongst these “respectable people” much to their disdain is a woman of the courtesan class, Elisabeth Rousset known by the sobriquet “Boule de Suif”. This woman is seen by all the other occupants of the stagecoach as a “shameless hussy” and all of them try to keep themselves as far as possible from the place where she is sitting. As the story progresses Maupassant very engagingly and subtly illustrates the barely hidden disgust and contempt that all the passengers of the coach extend towards Boile De Suif. However, as the tediousness of the long journey starts setting in and appetite starts clamoring the hostility that the passengers bear towards the genial, cordial courtesan starts to decline and they one by one partake of the

²⁴5 Maupassant, Guy Di.

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/shortstories/UBooks/BoulSuif.shtml>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid.,6

sumptuous fare she has thoughtfully brought along with her to satisfy her needs during the journey. The conversation then flows freely and all start to engage with the courtesan sharing their experiences of the war. "Boile De Suif" shares her contempt and anger at the Prussian soldiers and recalls how when some of the soldiers were quartered at her house, how she as a woman who trades her "body" flew at him out of love for her country and would not entertain the enemy for it was a matter of honor. Upon hearing this her companions look at her with pride and "She was warmly congratulated. She rose in the estimation of her companions, who had not been so brave..."²⁷

The courtesan has to even ward off advances from the democrat which shows that for the men and women at large her calling made her an easily available commodity for partaking. This "thingification" of her identity is done without any credence given to what she as a woman desires. The journey however is abruptly halted and the passengers are made to leave the coach and their journey forward halted until Boile De suif agrees to comply to the demand of the Prussian officer to satisfy his carnal desires. Full of pathos the story highlights the "patriotic shame of the wanton" who refuses to sleep with the enemy but is compelled to do so by her fellow passengers. Eventually crumbling under duress she complies only to find that the attitude of her passengers whom she has provided succor not once by providing food but more importantly by compromising her honor has saved their lives do not feel shame in judging her and see her as someone to be stigmatized. The count ensconced in his distinguished

demeanor removes his wife from Boile De Suif's "unclean contact," while the rest of them wear the look as if their modesty has been violated. The courtesan then continues to be degraded and looks upon her companions enjoying food while she looks on. Thus, while she had offered sustenance which these men and women of "honor" had not found corrupted enough to refuse they forget her grace and upon seeing her weeping at their callousness condemn her "She's weeping for shame." The story is an extremely sensitive dealing of the notion of 'honor'. The courtesan who by profession uses her body as a site, has honor enough not to fulfill the desires of the enemy but those who are attested as custodians of virtue do not think twice in using her as a bait to further their interests. The stagecoach then which serves as a metaphoric rendition of society fails to accept "Boile De Suif".

Rajwinder Singh Bedi's short story *Lajwanti* deals with a similar trajectory, the fate of woman whose honor has been violated. Both the stories engage with the idea of "shame", "violation" and "acceptance" into the folds of society. Set in the backdrop of "Partition" the story relates the fate of a woman Lajwanti who had been abducted during the riots and violence that ensued post Partition. Lajwanti was married to Sunder Lal and regarded herself as happy, for while her husband beat her on the slightest of pretexts she saw it as an expression of his "manliness" and his regard for her. Abducted during partition she is amongst the few of millions of Hindu women who are "exchanged" in lieu of "Muslim" women abducted during the Partition and whom now the governments on both side want to "rehabilitate". Thus, Lajwanti is "reinstated", her husband "accepts" her and though she bears the "stigma" of having been tainted by her

²⁷ Ibid.,12

Muslim abductor, Sunder Lal is emancipated enough to “accept” his wife. He takes good care of her, treats her with respect however, it is Lajwanti alone who realizes that her husband is incapable of accepting her, that his attempt to take her back into the family is a mirage. She knows this for Sunder Lal no longer beats her, rather addresses her as a Goddess “Devi”. She is promised by Sunder Lal that he would never again beat her, in her innocence she takes it as a sign of goodwill little realizing that its Sunder Lal’s antipathy towards her. It is only eventually that she realizes this, “Sunder Lal made her feel like something fragile, like glass which would splinter at the slightest touch. Lajo took to gazing at herself in the mirror. And in the end she could no longer recognise the Lajo she had known. She had been rehabilitated but not accepted.”²⁸

Thus, the two stories in a very nuanced manner bring together (across spatial/cultural/temporal borders) on a common platform the misery of women whose bodies are used as pawns.

²⁸ Pg.3 Bedi, Rajendra Singh, “Lajwanti”

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/29294276/Rajendra-Singh-Bedi-Lajwanti>

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**FORMATION AND REFORMATION OF
FEMININITY: DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN
INDIAN SOAP OPERAS**

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Visual media affects the collective consciousness of a nation. And in an age where modalities and dimensions of gender and sexuality are constantly shifting, the visualization of women in diversified media become instrumental in constructing the identity of woman in a society. Since the airing of India's first Hindi serial *Hum Log* (1984), Indian soap operas have proved their mettle by their tremendous fame and popularity. Hindi soap operas can be regarded as a visually strong medium because it replicates a New India, its culture and most importantly its people. With the aim of blending various information and suggestion along with entertainment, these soap operas have emerged as a powerful genre designed for presenting a credible image of women in contemporary society. Contradictorily contemporary serials are now being severely spanked by the critics for their regressive thoughts, on materialization of women and the exploitation of the "Great Indian Joint Family". This paper seeks to explore the veracity of these portrayals and seeks to scrutinize if these images are credible. It also makes an attempt to see if the female characters are mere socio-cultural constructs or rise above their traditional moulds to forge new and independent identities for themselves. Daily soaps are visual narratives and represent a slice of life. Dramatizing the female and her femininity can be difficult in a melodramatic backdrop, and that is what most daily soaps are. Hence the delineation of female characters within this framework is more often than not larger than life rather than life-like. Hence Soap operas tend to exploit the collective psyche of a society by creating gullible and naive rather than identifiable and substantial female characters. Soap operas thus fail to form a genuine reproduction of contemporary society, people, and emotions. Many of these shows tend to compromise their sense

of aesthetic portrayal of femininity because of lucrative and soaring TRPs. They are mostly sadistic and voyeuristic in nature.

Since *Hum Log*, Indian soap operas have come a long way. There has been a paradigmatic shift in the depiction of female characters from the new age drama *Swabhimaan (Self-Esteem)*, to the contemporary *Saas Bahu* (Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law) sagas of Ekta Kapoor's "K" Revolution in the early 2000s. The portrayal of the Indian women has been seriously flawed- the housewives are dumb, good looking, decorous and the working women are viragos- power-hungry, predatory and loud. The present-day soap operas have become a narrative for stereotyping women and their body politic. It can be noted that distortion of female characters is becoming recurrent in visual narratives. In the Indian patriarchal context, the stereotyped discourse of sex and gender are significantly available in various modes of visualization. Therefore, the linking of race, colour, and gender- a very colonial construct- in the portrayal of women becomes an extremely regular occurrence. Though touted to be the most identifiable among Indian women, the protagonists of these shows eventually reach a point of sheer contempt, mockery and disdain of womanhood. The typecasting of women is a typical characteristic of the shows where the Indian *Bahus* are docile, submissive, adorned in heavy embroidered saris, thick jewellery with a forehead filled with vermillion. They are the protagonists of the serials and are a complete contrast to the antagonists who are usually cast as the antihero, wrapped in western clothes, shrewd and without a conscience. As Meenu Anand observes

These role stereotypes reflect the typical patriarchal mindset; where the housewife is favored while the women in power (power hungry and full of vices) are often depicted as villains. Men are showing going to office

while women stay at home (not that anyone ever does any work). The vamp is the antithesis of the protagonist; portrayed as ultra modern, mostly working (the boardroom woman), with a plunging neckline, short hair, bold, conniving, heartless, ruthless, and perfect in the art of seduction. Here again "modernity", or "Westernization" as it is commonly called, is co-related and confused with debasement of morals and ideals (Anand 3).

The most popular serial of Indian television *Kyon ki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi (Because Mother-in-Law was a Daughter-in-Law Once)* in 2000 though marked a new era in terms of Indian soap opera, ended by glorifying the typical 'pativrata' woman and showcased her as the archetype of beauty. Shows like *Kahani Ghar Ghar ki (The Story of Every Household 2000)*, *Kasauti Zindagi Ke (The Test of Life 2001)*, *Pavitra Rishta (The Sacred Bond 2009)* and *Saath Nibhana Sathiya (Be with Me My Love 2010)* confirmed the fact that Indian audience was being fed a repetitive dose of shallow aesthetic and exaggerated theatricals embodied by women. Ekta Kapoor, the brain behind these serials, justifies her work,

The day the audience demands something else I will make different TV shows. If you check the last 10 years TRP's then you will realize that people don't want to see any other stories except love stories, saas bahu saga etc. I am more than willing to break free from all these age old topics but I don't have an option ... TV is about masses and I have maintained a connection with my audiences. I understand what they want and it is usually so that what I like they like it as well. Me and my audience share the same thinking and liking (Kapoor web).

Ekta Kapoor and her ilk are certainly not the collective consciousness of the viewer's psyche nor do they affirm the idea of a new India and a reinvented female identity. They have failed to meet the psychological and emotional demands of their audience- irrespective of gender.

The archetypal casting of women characters such as Tulsi, Parvati, Archana and Gopi as the protagonists comes as a sharp contrast to their antagonists Komolika, Payal, Pallavi and Rashi. All the female protagonists of these shows are literal photocopies of each other. The visual depiction for the antagonists is equally skewed, and are,

... the kind of dames who can wear floor-length gowns and look completely naked. The kind with hair piled up on their head like compliant serpents, or falling down in smooth lustrous waves. Dames with hard faces and mocking smiles and eyes that sized you up and found you wanting . . . but you'd do, for now (Lileks web).

Though shown as educated, their actions go tangential to their urbane upbringing and thinking. Most of them are portrayed as conniving damsels in distress, who want to persecute everyone around them for no reason at all. In the 21st century, when India has emerged as a superpower, and the call for women empowerment is at its peak, with the participation of women in the workforce a frequent phenomenon, such a regressive and backward visualization of women in a powerful media like television definitely sounds the bell of intellectual regression. While giving an absolutely distorted image of Indian mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws, these shows tend to manipulate the Indian family value system. They recreate a pseudo feminist society where a twisted form of matriarchy is presented. These

shows present half baked truths about empowerment and femininity which does not necessarily believe in sidelining men. They represent an unbalanced picture of female domination where women emerge as the exploiters of other women and men simply operate as puppets. The visualization of women in these serials is enormously radical and extreme while representing an exaggerated and twisted version of the contemporary woman. The stereotyping and commodification of women and the endorsement of superficial beauty have unwittingly become the central themes of these so called "women centric" soap operas.

In a postcolonial nation like India, the media is still unable to rise above the racial body politic. One is meted social, political, moral, and ethical privileges in the society based on their skin colour, facial features, and body types. In the contemporary soap operas, the female body symbolizes commodities to be taken over or to be taken care of. With the tremendous demand for various fairness creams and the incredible popularity of the Barbie doll, she has been oriented to treat her 'self' and her persona as, "a passive object ... an inert given object" (SEP web). It is imperative that she please everyone. Herein lies the genesis of the process of materialization of the woman and her physicality. The trend has become such a powerful phenomenon that it has crept into the present-day serials unnoticed and has become a significant imagery. While discussing the visualization of women, one cannot ignore the protagonists and antagonists of these shows who though indisputably gorgeous are always conscious of conforming to a socially approved look. Directors often end up in delineating them as extremely corporeal manifestations of their otherwise normal and natural feminine forms.

The trend began with the highly popular show *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin* (No one is like Jassi 2003) inspired by the American

comedy-drama television series *Ugly Betty*. Jassi is an unattractive bore, bespectacled, with braces over her teeth with a terribly odd dressing sense. This girl-next-door image of Jassi was loved by millions of Indian viewers who could identify themselves with the plain looking yet intelligent career woman. Being a sharp contrast to the then reigning *Saas-Bahu* serials which also claimed a sense of relevance and identifiability with the Indian middle class, *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin* gave these shows a run for their money. It showed the proverbial tussle of beauty and brains. It portrayed the Indian women from different perspectives while dealing with various long held societal norms about female body and beauty. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) observes that

By regimes of dieting, makeup, exercise, dress, cosmetic surgery, women, and increasingly men, try to sculpt their bodies into shapes which reflect the dominant societal norms. Such disciplinary practices attach not only to the production of appropriately gendered bodies, but to other aspects of the bodily identity subject to social normalization. Hair straightening, blue tinted contact lenses, surgical reconstruction of noses and lips, are practices in which the material shapes of our bodies are disciplined to correspond to a social ideal, reflecting the privileged position which certain kinds of, usually, white, always able, bodies occupy (SEP web).

Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahin was a critique on artificial beauty and its vapidness. The alterations of body may signal at a social acceptance or the availability of female selves on a broader societal spectrum but it is definitely not the road to emancipation. Shows like *Saat Phere - Saloni Ka Safar (Seven Circumambulations-The Journey of Saloni 2005)* and *Sapna Babul Ka...Bidaai*

(*The Wedding Farewell: The Dream of a Father 2007*) highlight the colour prejudice prevailing in Indian Society. These shows introduce protagonists like Saloni and Ragini who fight against the extensive Indian chauvinism of favouring fair skin against dark skin. Serials such as *Baba Aiso Varr Dhoondo (Father, Search for Such a Groom 2010)* and *Rakt Sambandh (Related by Blood 2010)* also bring in the theme of physical disability. The female protagonists here are Bharti and Sandhya. Bharti of *Baba Aiso Varr Dhoondo* is a midget; Sandhya of *Rakt Sambandh* is visually challenged. Both characters do not conform to the existing norms of being 'ideal Indian beauties'. They are marginalized women in a predominantly "good looking" society. These shows capture the struggle of the women-in-the-fringes trying to seek the acceptance of society. Their characters wish to be treated as a 'normal' human being and not to be pushed away as a peripheral 'Other.' Shows holding such issues undeniably bring novelty and credibility into the visualization of women, but one would like to pause and consider if these shows can persist to uphold their vision in the long run and not succumb to the lure of TRPs.

Though these shows mark the renovation of the Indian television scenario at this point of time, one might reassess the fact by analyzing the use of body as a cultural text in these shows. In *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin*, the makeover of Jassi where she transforms from an ugly duckling to a beautiful swan and her reformation as a woman sadly reaffirms the fact that beautiful body is the ticket to social acceptance. Abhijit Roy in his essay *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin and the Makeover of Indian Soaps* affirms that

Advertisements, in this era of atomization of brands and fragmentation of desiring consumer-subjects, always address the consumer as somebody who is special. The

pleasure that the consumer is expected to derive from such mode-of-address is of 'exercising my individual choice' and of 'not being influenced' by advertisement. This is like a fallacious statement: 'since you are upright, self-made, not so easily impressionable, and hence different from other consumers, you will buy this'. Valorizing multiplicity and difference surely amounts to a logic of enhancing consumption. I think JKN is the first major Indian television serial that overtly engages with the typical mode-of-address of the post-liberalization advertisement, thereby making each of the 'millions of middle-class Indian girls' identify with Jassi in one's own 'exclusive' way, virtually raising the impression 'there is no one like me' (Roy 21).

Saat Phere – Saloni Ka Safar and *Sapna Babul Ka...Bidaai* which exploit the politics of body in the form of progressive melodrama have made an attempt to engage with the audience in a dialogue to bring to the fore the myth of "white skin". Unfortunately these serials have a tendency to divert from their key premise and fall into the typical Saas-Babu mould. The protagonists of the serials like *Baba Aiso Varr Dhoondo* and *Rakt Sambandh* are supposed to be strong women fighting for their rights, but end up being made-up dolls waiting to enter matrimony at a cost of their self esteem. With the twisted portrayal of women, these shows end up being puzzled sagas of pseudo relevance and identification and finally are terminated, abruptly or prematurely.

Daily soaps shape, reshape, construct, and reconstruct the portrayal of human emotions and especially the female consciousness because they are dominated by strong patriarchal system, the perception and visualisation of people. Moreover,

female visualisation in Indian soap operas goes back to the date of airing of *Hum Log*, *Buniyaad* (*The Foundation* 1986), *Nukkad* (*The Street Corner* 1986-87) and *Udaan* (*The Flight* 1989 – 91) where the women characters are the representatives of various class, rank, group, status, and position. While the character of Bhagwanti and Imrati of *Hum Log*, Chai Ji of *Buniyaad* represent the typical Indian mother, always affectionate and supportive, the characters of Badki, Majhli, and Chhutki, and their sister-in-law Usha Rani of *Hum Log*, Mangla, and Rajjo of *Buniyaad*, Teacherji aka Maria of *Nukkad* and Kalyani Singh of *Udaan* represent the bright young optimistic women of 80's, full of hopes, dreams and aspirations. The character of Lajjoji of *Buniyaad* played brilliantly by Anita Kanwar can be regarded as one of the foremost female characters to represent women's liberation in a male dominated society. These characters are educated, well-informed, and seek to break the so-called social norms and conventions. When the character of Majhli aspires to be an actress, Chhutki wants to be a doctor, Badki is a social activist, Maria is a teacher and Kalyani is a sophisticated police officer. Introducing such characters during a period when India was still suffering from a sturdy patriarchal mindset and would not accept women to be in higher authority or to follow any unconventional career pursuit, these serials brought about a wave of dynamic changes in the stereotyped image of women.

In the later years, India witnessed various soap operas that challenged the stereotyped image of Indian women. These serials focused on women's liberation and dared to talk about rape, extra marital relationship, divorce and remarriage. Priya Tendulkar in her highly acclaimed serial *Rajani* (1985) essayed the role of an aggressive liberated woman who fought against the clumsy civic system, corruption and injustice. *Tara* (1993), *Shanti-*

Ek Aurat ki kahani (Shanti: The Tale of a Woman 1994), *Hasratein (Desires 1996)*, *Saans (1998)* and *Astitva-Ek Prem Kahani (2002)* are few of the other shows who join the league to celebrate womanhood rather than succumb to stereotype the female persona. *Tara* can be considered as the first Hindi serial to be based on an urban working woman balancing her personal and professional life, whereas *Shanti* emerges as a strong independent woman seeking her roots and fighting for her rights as an illegitimate daughter. *Hasratein* was one of the boldest Hindi serials ever dealing with the issue of sexual attraction, sexual pleasure and the extra-marital affair of a married woman, *Saans* also dealt with the trials and tribulations of a wife whose husband is involved with another woman. *Astitva-Ek Prem Kahani* depicted the struggle of a sophisticated doctor Simran who goes against the so-called conventional rule- she falls in love and marries a man ten years younger to her. These shows become a cornerstone of multiple forms of feminist thought and their portrayal of women reconstructs the modern female identity in the Indian context.

Contemporary shows like *Balika Vadhu*, *Na Aana Is Des Laado*, *Officer Bitiya* and *Diya aur Baati Hum* have come up with a solution of sorts. They are a healthy mix of stereotypes and the multidimensional in handling their female characters. There are strong characters such as Kalyani Devi aka *Dadisa*, Bhagwani Devi aka *Ammaji* and Santosh aka *Bhabo* who bear the Indian heritage with a pinch of orthodoxy, but the depiction of the characters of Anandi, Sia, Krishna and Sandhya in the above-mentioned shows come as an answer to the eternal tussle between tradition and modernity. These soaps have successfully addressed social issues such as dowry, child marriage and female infanticide, through female characters who are an ideal mix of modernity and

tradition. So much so even the depiction of these characters in traditional attires has helped in breaking the cliché of connecting sari-clad woman with narrow-mindedness. Moreover, the gradual transition in the thought processes of *Dadisa*, *Ammaji* and *Bhabo* in these shows also offers a kind of solution to the firm, rigid, and twisted portrayal of women on Indian television, who are often highlighted as ever-scheming, ever-plotting, conniving females- making a mockery of femininity.

Nevertheless these soap operas have emerged as a powerful genre designed for presenting a credible image of contemporary society and its inhabitants. But it will not be fallacious to state that Indian social prejudices affect the visualization of women in soap operas. The popularity quotient is definitely a factor- that affects the depiction of femininity- resulting in the recreation of a twisted form of the female self. The idea of a daily soap is to address feminine issues. But instead we find them making an agenda of her so-called weaknesses and her relatively downgraded position in the society. Having said that it will also not be wrong to say that daily soaps are thinking out of the 'idiot' box and venturing into uncharted vistas of social paradigm where women are the focal points in matters of lineage, hereditary, parentage and inheritance- the regular playground of masculinity. Soaps are cultural constructs and have a restrictive framework. However they have the flexibility to adapt. It is their duty to offer therapeutic measures to rid the society's perceptions of the female as mere anatomy and a product of beauty. It should make space and provide exclusivity to express the voice of the millions of women whose fantasies, desires and anxieties it airs.

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Voyeuristic Active Male Gaze vs. Passive Mechanism of Female: A Stereotypical Representation of Women in the Context of Television Commercial¹

-DILARA HOSSAIN

The history of advertising and women has been tumultuous and closely intertwined. There has been a persistent tendency to represent women in diversified roles in commercial advertisement, where the approach was often offensive. The advertising industry has come under fire repeatedly for exhibiting women as strikingly thin and pretty, which controversially suggests their definitive standard of beauty and endorses that their worth comes from their appearance. Advertisers however, counter that they make ads to sell products, and these types of ads are effective. But analyses of television advertisements have shown that many ads contain gender-stereotypic ideas and pictures, where women are frequently presented as a product for male pleasure and consumption. The pleasure male audience extract from the representation of women in numerous controversial and sexist commercials could often be compared to

voyeuristic attitude, where the female models play a passive role; patronizing male gaze in the guise of consumerism.

According to Laura Mulvey, there are lots of pleasures which the human race experience through the power of sight. One of them is scopophilia, the pleasure in looking. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Freud associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. Another pleasure Mulvey detects is through a process of identification that parallels Lacan's famous mirror stage where we derive pleasure from recognizing an ideal image on the screen. In her essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey very nicely asserts that the "pleasure in looking has been split between the active/ male and the passive/female", (Mulvey 837) which describes the present condition of the advertisement in the context of women's representation, although their presence is seldom regarded as active. Women had long been the sexual object of image in the visual media, connoting the female form's quality of "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 837).

Stressing on 'Scopophilia' and 'Identification' as mentioned by Laura Mulvey, the first arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. "The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido" (Mulvey 841). By watching these ads males literally get

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scopophilic pleasure and the girls start to identify themselves with that image on the screen and then they do/ use the same thing as the girl does in the screen to create their "self". Therefore, the augmented form of seeking pleasure and identification play on male and female alike; whereby an advert fulfills its principal objective of attaining popularity. It is possible here to apply semiotics and Stuart Hall's theory of representation in order to analyze the ads. Thereby it could be conceivable how the voyeuristic active male pleasure and the passive mechanisms of female works out, arguing that the concept of beauty represented in media is nothing but myth and is being applied in commercials as a boisterous tool to market ideas/products through a sharply discriminatory and often defamatory manner.

On a different note, it is possible to explore female as material through the sight of male by giving the semiotic explanation of some ads. It is also important to evaluate the images/signs referring to female, where their presence or the ways they are exposed are equally questionable. Semiotics is the study of signs or a sign system and how they make meaning. It is a method used to decode an image. The image or sign is the signifier and the signified is the concept brought to mind by the images and sounds. Signs help produce meaning when put into a logical order or relationship with something. The semiotic placement of fashion advertisement found the distorted

perceptions that are placed on women of a hyper-sexualized and submissive female gender role.

There is a basic difference between presentation and representation. Stuart Hall says that an image can have different meanings. But there is always a sign which is associated with an object. By evaluation and association we try to give an image a preferred meaning and this meaning is obviously shaped by our ideologies and power. This is the way how representation works and this is what the media uses to produce images in order to sell something, submitting to the power of advertisements. And often, a female model takes the center stage of this representation, overpowering the product itself.

Certain characteristics are evident in several advertisements where woman is usually the center of attention. Very often the female model is portrayed as an object of sex and lust. There would be instances where she is wearing something very revealing and the camera usually takes the view of the male eye, gazing at the female body all over. The woman is both childlike and raunchy, the object of desire for the man, or placed in a domestic setting. She takes care of the kids, cooks in the kitchen and happily waits for her male partner. She is often portrayed as ditsy, unintelligent, irrational, or demanding like a child. As Jean Kilbourne points out the message to females is, - Don't grow up - stay passive, powerless and dependent.



Individuals are shaped by the culture and environment which they grow up in. If we live in a society that is constantly showing woman in a certain way, that becomes the accepted norm and ideological belief of how woman should act and behave. If a woman is always portrayed as a desirable object seeking male attraction through personal beautification, then that is what she will explore herself as. Eventually this is interpreted and transformed into relentless efforts to expose enough of their body and boost their looks, even at the expense of several modes of enhancements in a bid to look desirable enough. As we can all conclude, this has been the winning formula in most soap powder, fairness cream and body spray ads. These ads feature women either in objectified situations (such as being admired by men for their appearance) or being told that they need a certain product in order to improve their attractiveness. Unconsciously this creates a hidden inferiority complex within females. They start to believe that they need to be fairer and like the image of the girls on screen otherwise their life will be a total failure against the

accepted norm of beauty. This is the message which today's seemingly gullible commercials try to convey.

Woman have been trying for ages to break the shackles of stereotypically being barefooted, pregnant and in the kitchen waiting for the man, but this seems also to be a common practice that is held and seen in advertisements. If a woman's figure is not being used as the focus of attraction, then woman is usually doing something in the private sphere, such as taking care of the children or the household.



For instance, an advertisement shows a woman sitting her kids down in front of the television and giving them food and toys while popping in a video. She then gives her husband a “look” and they head upstairs to their private sphere, simply because he bought her a diamond ring!

Again, ads for automobiles have long featured women but their presence leaves a great question mark on our mind. Women are shown in car and motorcycle ads decoratively posed in the passenger seat, or leaning against a car, very much seeking male libido. They are presented in these types of ads in such a way it seems that the women will be sold out with the car.



The Axe body spray ad entitled “Women-Billions” is also a very clever advertisement. It is very well made with well-timed music and excellent cinematography. As is the case with most Axe commercials, it pushes the limits of what is accepted in advertising and is at least mildly insulting to both men and women. In this ad we see a great number of girls, wearing bikini and running towards a man who is using Axe body spray. And this ad ends with a very sexy female voice saying “Spray more, get more,” where “more” has a very sexual connotation. It indicates

the more this product is sprayed on, the more sex the user will get. Women here are used as nothing but a sexual object.



Most traditional category of advertisements depicts women as a typical housewife, fulfilling the demands of a major gender stereotype. These characters radiate sweetness, warmth and passion. For example, the advertisement of commercial laundry "Bryza", underlines washing up to be totally women's responsibility. In the advertisement the man is singing about children and stains and then addresses women with the words "Now You have Bryza". Such an attitude implies that only women can and must be interested in laundry and other issues connected with the house.



"Radhuni" is a very popular and commonly used brand for powdered spices in Bangladesh. But this brand name itself which means female cook, is strikingly gender-biased. In a TVC of this spice we see a son appreciating food prepared by his mother who has used Radhuni spices. At the end the mother tells her son to bring a "Radhuni" (by the word Radhuni the mother signifies her son to get married). So the suggestion here is evident: not only is the responsibility of cooking specifically bestowed upon the female, but they are only meant to be seen as performing the duty of preparing food for the family. This stereotypes women who believe that if she wants to be successful in her married life she needs to cook well and make her husband happy. Even the packaging of the product contains a female figure.

Examples are multiple and there are dozens of advertisement where women act as typical housewives during one commercial block. Such attitude humiliates a woman's dignity and strengthens the engrained social stereotype about her as a homemaker only. There is nothing bad in being a good housewife or taking care of the husband and children, but such kind of ads

are detrimental to women's rights and capabilities. Voluntary or not, with the advent of these ads women are reduced to playing specific roles, which the society wants them to be viewed as.

Women are often presented in a dehumanized way in advertisements, their humanity sacrificed to display the artificial ideal. Women are not only turned into a thing, but the thing is broken down into components, each of which also represents an ideal form like a fetish. She is dismembered. Hence we get numerous images of lips, legs, breasts, butts, torsos - female body parts. Frequently in such images the head is missing, emphasizing that women are not valued for their intellect, but for their external form, their curves. Sut Jhally points out that presenting women as fragmented and disconnected body parts detracts from thinking about women as real people with their own intellect, feelings, dreams and desires, whereby women become objects for consumption.



There have been instances where a visual association is made between the female and the product. Both of them become equivalent and interchangeable, and are promoted as a pleasure objects. Women are presented as a commodity and in doing so their humanity and subjectivity is denied. Their role is to cater to others' needs and desires, and men are persuaded to think of women as their pleasure providers. The following image from Slice ad is a great example of this commodification. In this image we see the model is inside a bottle of slice. The suggestion in this special promotional ad is, if anyone drinks slice, s/he can win the opportunity to take out the model to spend time together. Through this, the company actually offers double pleasure only to sell their product where the woman is nothing but the substitute/equivalent to that product.



Advertisements of sanitary napkins have women being shown in embarrassed and awkward situations. In these types of ads it may be far less important what the girl is doing, whether she is walking, running or sleeping, the camera has been found busy focussed on their backside; essentially describing the efficiency of the product and frequently failing to depicting her fear, anxiety or insecurity which she suffers due to purely natural causes.



From childhood when a girl listens to the story of Cinderella from her parents, the concept of beauty is injected into her mind. It becomes her inherent creed to be beautiful and this

is used very cleverly by the commercial industry which subjects the girls to the concept of beauty unconsciously. This is called 'Cinderella Complex', which is inherent in all women more or less. The commercial industry actually tries to set a standard of beauty and the girls run after it without knowing that it is a myth. Naomi Wolf claims that the institutions that are restricting women are making over sixty billion dollars in diet, cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, and pornography industries. This capital has arisen from the unconscious anxieties of women and is helping to perpetuate these negatives through their influence on mass culture. Additionally Wolf claims that the beauty myth is not about women at all, but the institutions of men and their power. The advertisements of cosmetics offer 'beauty' for women and identify stereotypes relating to beauty. Adverts in modern times are still 'maintaining their (women's) patriarchal subordination' (Wolf cited by Gough-Yates, 2003, 37) as we see in *The Beauty Myth* (Wolf 1991). Advertisements represent a utopian view of the world and sell the product by selling stereotypical aspirations to attain the lifestyles or the looks represented in their texts.

Companies use their female audience's insecurities and fears about ageing and looking ugly to sell their products. According to some, the beauty industry plays on the fear of looking ugly as much as the pleasure of looking beautiful. Some of the ads creates scenario showing that if you have any spot/wrinkles in your face you will not be happy in your married life or your husband will avoid you. When you will start using any anti-aging cream or anti marks cream your husband will give you special attention. Cultural ideology implies that without being physically perfect like the women in ads, the audience is undesirable and will not be loved by a man. It is the positioning of

the women in the ads that maintain this ideology that beauty is a necessity to gain physical pleasure and therefore love.



Jean Kilbourne points out that consumers are surrounded by a benchmark female beauty which is impossible to achieve because it is artificial. This is artificially-created and pervasively marketed idea of beauty. Naomi Wolf argues that women's insecurities are heightened by these images, and then exploited by industries. Every day new products are introduced to "correct" inherently female "flaws," drawing women into an obsessive and hopeless cycle built around the attempt to reach an impossible standard of beauty.

In countless advertisements especially in South-East Asia, we find that black color of the skin becomes a continuous source of anxiety and inferiority complex not only for the "poor" girl but for her parents and everyone around as well. The use of a particular cream or whitening agent suddenly transforms her into a "fair magical girl" and all her problems are instantly solved; be it

marriage or a promotion or getting a good job in company. At the same time, this constant reinforcement of the accepted culture of thinness and standardized 'plastic' beauty intends to send a message to ordinary girls and women, that in order to look beautiful and 'presentable' they will have to constantly work on their external looks and appearances, irrespective of the cost associated.

Media is one of the most powerful tools of business in today's world. Unfortunately, the media bigotry that prevails within the industry objectifies and almost trades off women with the product, justifying their position in the stereotypical patriarchal society'. The unnecessary glorification of fair skin is questioning the scientific principles concerning health care and promotes false notions of 'beauty' and 'superiority'. It is at the same time highly insulting to the innate human values of love, truth and wisdom, and makes a mockery of the worldwide struggle against racial discrimination. It is a struggle of womanhood on the backdrop of consumerism and cut throat business. On the other hand, the artificial display of female beauty and glamour that is extravagantly and relentlessly overpowering the male senses only intensifies the kamikaze position of women, their everlasting struggle for empowerment and freedom.

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**Influence of 'Female Gaze' on the Re-
Construction of 'Masculinity' and Re-Vision
of 'Femininity' in Catherine Breillat's Films
Romance and Anatomie De L'ennfer
(*Anatomy of Hell*)**

-IMRAN HOSSAIN

Films have always been a strong medium of influence in voicing subjectivity as well as social message. The way characters, plots and dialogues are set, gives away more information or message rather than what films present at the apparent level. The way scenes are depicted (through different kinds of shots-POV, long take, close up, etc) in a film, conveys a certain sort of message that the director wants to convey. Films have evolved a great deal from the time of the 'talkies' (motion pictures without dialogues) when films were only meant for entertainment. Starting from family drama, western theme based films, thrillers, science fiction films, etc have been produced over the last few decades with the intention to entertain and sometimes educate the audience. However, the current paper will not be concerned with the entertaining or educative purpose (which aims at reforming the society directly) of the films rather it will focus on the 'gaze' that fixes the male or female roles on silver screen through which the audience identify with the characters.

However, whether any reformation is possible by challenging 'masculinity' in cinema is beyond the scope of this paper.

In her phenomenal article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* written in 1973 and published in *Screen* in 1975, Laura Mulvey argued that the controlling gaze in cinema is always male. Spectators are consciously encouraged to identify themselves with the look of the male protagonist and "...the heroine as a passive object of erotic spectacle" (Chaudhuri 31). According to Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, the audience is always assumed as male and heterosexual. The 'male gaze' defines the roles of female characters as submissive but the male ones as dominant, to serve women as the object of 'pleasure of looking' in mainstream films (Edwards). This gaze is further defined in two ways firstly by the way the male character looks at the female character and secondly, through the male character the audience looks at the female figure in the film. That is how the silver screen has always been: a medium of projecting the male voice where women are there to be rescued by the chivalrous knight in armor or rich man awakened by love saving the prostitute from a degraded life—living the fantasy that women are supposed to be rescued—they are the weaker sex and the subalterns always depending on the stronger sex.

This current study looks at 'gaze' but not the traditional male dominated gaze that has been established by most mainstream film rather it looks at Catherine Breillat's two controversial films *Romance* and *Anatomie de l'enfer (Anatomy of Hell)*. Unlike the traditional films, the female character of this film is choosing her spectacle herself. This action itself turns around the table of objectification of female by male gaze as Mulvey has argued in her phenomenal essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. *Romance* has the same focus point. In this film, the central female

figure, Marrie embarks on a journey towards her sexuality and chooses her sexual partners and discards them according to her choice. In both films, the central female figures choose their own spectacles to look at themselves and others.

This paper initially analyses the influence of the 'female gaze' on the re-construction of 'masculinity' in two films in particular, *Romance* and *Anatomie de l'enfer (Anatomy of Hell)* by Catherine Breillat. This paper will make an attempt to show how the director (Catherine Breillat) of the concerned films establishes the 'spectacle of female' by which the female characters are individualized, challenging the existing 'male gaze' to identify themselves (which is contrary to traditional films). Thus this paper will examine the sketch of patriarchal 'masculinity' that the films have attempted to show through the critical eye of 'female gaze' (with an underlying effort to re-construct 'masculinity' and revise 'femininity').

Gaze is a psychoanalytical term used by Jacques Lacan as the anxious state that comes with the awareness of how an individual can be viewed (Lacan). The psychological effect, Lacan argues, is that the subject loses a degree of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. Mulvey uses Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory to support her theory on 'gaze'. Mulvey uses her theory to unmask the dominance of patriarchy in films (Clifford). Patriarchal influence is found in cinema primarily in 'pleasure', to be more precise 'in pleasure of looking'. By her theory Mulvey opens up, and indeed disrupts, the patriarchal unconscious that marginalizes female and feminine into an abject 'other' (De Beauvoir). Once the power of patriarchy to control cinematic pleasures has been revealed, Mulvey suggests it may be possible to create a new form of cinema.

In her essay (where she coined the term male gaze), she has argued that the visual pleasure through narrative cinema is essentially two fold: "...first, scopophilia or the voyeuristic pleasure derived through looking; and narcissism or the pleasure developed from recognition and identification." (Edwards103). That means the viewer (while watching a film) acts in a two-way process simultaneously. Firstly, he looks through the 'spectacle of male' and secondly, he identifies with the male figure on the screen. The basic idea is that throughout the film there is an unspoken and underlying assumption that the viewer is male and heterosexual. The scenario also remains the same (men as watchers and women as watched) in the films that feature female protagonists. As Mulvey states:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been spilt between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (Mulvey11)

In films a gaze is portrayed in the way the scene is shot (which functions on how an audience views the people presented). Gaze mainly functions to objectify and expose the 'Other' (through the course of taking voyeuristic pleasure in looking). The types of gaze are primarily categorized into male and female by who is doing the looking (though types of gaze may prolong by the types of holders of the look such as gay gaze, lesbian gaze, bisexual gaze, etc).

In that sense, anybody can have the control of 'gaze' and can change the use of 'gaze'. As already mentioned earlier, the gaze actively controls the social portrayal of gender role in films. If a woman's role can be objectified by the male character in a film with the power of 'gaze', in similar theory, a male can also be objectified by a female protagonist when she owns the 'gaze'. Keeping this argument at the backdrop this paper analyses Brailat's films to argue how patriarchal 'masculinity' has been challenged by the 'female gaze'.

Let us look at 'masculinity' theoretically. I would begin with two core questions about 'masculinity': who creates it (or how is it created) and where does it come from? "...there is no single or simple origin to 'masculinity', and it cannot be isolated as beginning in a single place or at a single point. Rather, it is continuously created and challenged in numerous ways" (Reeser 18).

The male body is seen the principle carrier of 'masculinity'. But other groups outside the patriarchal domain of 'masculinity' also demand that 'masculinity' can even be practiced by women, gay men and lesbians. According to Reeser, 'masculinity' has an important role to play in the application and distribution of power because there are always certain advantages attached with it. Masculinity is often viewed to create hierarchal power which generates the concept of what is general or normal or accepted within a given social context. This process eventually creates 'femininity' (as opposed to 'masculinity') as the other, something which is 'not normal'. As a result of this unequal power distribution women are viewed as the 'Other' (De Beauvoir).

As long as the power is concerned 'masculinity' will be better understood in terms of binary opposition existing in the social context. As Reeser argues : "The binary opposition of male/female or of 'masculinity'/ femininity maps onto a binary notion of power since binary oppositions often arise because one element of the hierarchy needs opposition to impose (or continue to impose) its patriarchal on the other"(38).

Let us return to the questions that I posed at the beginning who creates 'masculinity' and where does it come from? However, there is neither any single creator of 'masculinity' nor any original form of 'masculinity'. 'Masculinity' seems to infuse everything and is too complicated and widespread to be created by any single person or single group. Apart from that, it may come from many different places, as coming from everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

In this regard a good example should be the concept of six or eight pack abs building as a case in point. Many consider (after watching Ghajni, a Hindi film) Aamir Khan (a major artist in Bollywood) the pioneer of the concept of eight-pack abs in male body in Hindi films. Since the release of that film his ribbed body has made a great deal of influence on the idea of what an ideal male body (a hero) should look like. Many teenage boys, young men (his fans) or bodybuilders might pin photos of him up on their walls and impersonate other portions of his brand of 'masculinity' (from his films as well). So, the persons who are influenced by his paradigm of 'masculinity' might replicate him and consider him a model, but they themselves then become new copies of Aamirian 'masculinity' (which is essentially different from the original form). Thus each form is different in its own hybrid way than the other. One man may become Nepalese version of Aamir Khan, another- a gay male version, another- a

female version, etc. Those people in turn gain power over the concept of 'masculinity' of others because they might influence other men or boys (whom they come across in their day-to-day interaction). So, we see copies of 'masculinity' come to replace what might be seemed the more original.

Even the seemingly unique forms of 'masculinity' themselves are not original in concepts. They are already crossbreed or hybrid forms based on a mixture of other previous forms. Aamir's 'masculinity', for instance, may rely on precedent images of 'masculinity' (such as image of the male body of contemporary action heroes in Hollywood). Interestingly and seemingly the most stable form of 'masculinity' might refer to other forms of 'masculinity'. The system of 'masculinity' is like an endless chain of linked but dissimilar masculinities. Interestingly, a person can be influenced by so many brands of 'masculinity' at the same time.

'Masculinity' may be considered as an ideology, a series of belief that a group of people believe in and that influences their lifestyles (how they lead their lives). As I stated in the beginning of this section, no single class or single group can be considered to generate 'masculinity' (ideology) though some groups work as more major forces in its articulation and its propagation. In this way, "Various institutions clearly have a self-interest in 'masculinity': the government needs soldiers to protect itself, so it promotes a military version of 'masculinity'; the business world needs a capitalistic 'masculinity' to make money, so it makes its version of gender appear ideal" (Reeser 20).

Besides, men's day to day various actions which they carry out on a regular basis might be linked to the internalization of any dominant ideology of 'masculinity'. These performances might

include even sports, games and cultural participation. For instance, men (heterosexual) in Bangladesh play football and cards but do not do gymnastics and classical dance (in general). The dominance of 'masculinity' can even be seen in primitive or unconscious levels of human psyche as boys play with toy cars but not dolls. Apparently, these aspects of ideology influence practices and eventually these practices become expected norms in cultural domains and again serve to construct 'masculinity' (ideology). Eventually, some materiality or commodity take the shape of ideology and gets celebrated and inscribed in daily life with these practices, and transcend language and signs.

Myths also play roles as a way to make convinced forms of 'masculinity'. Biblical reference, (may be considered examples of myth because of their widespread influencing status) for instance, makes Adam (the original form of man) a heterosexual figure. Even certain scientific data on 'masculinity' (how men are biologically something more than women regarding strength, sexuality, etc.) may also turn into mythology as they are considered to be essential truths.

Images, when become widespread also develops into myths. Especially when a culture takes those images for granted or fixed as a description of 'masculinity' they are taken as universal on a cultural level. The cowboy's popularity as an American cultural icon and the popularity of men with moustache in Tamilnadu in India can be taken as instances of ideals of 'masculinity' in cultural domains.

'Masculinity' is formed and exercised through language as well. In fact, we understand 'masculinity' through the ways in which it is talked about. In different languages, "This link between language and 'masculinity' exists on the word level"(Reeser 30).

For instance, etymologically, an impotent man is one without power (*impotens* Latin means 'not powerful') which implicitly suggests and asserts that the man who cannot get an erection lacks power. Interestingly enough, there are certain social concepts of 'masculinity' that are in apparent level not linguistically related but voiced and spread through language. One such perception is regarding men's facial hair. The concept of men's 'manly' ('masculine') look with facial hair is voiced through language. The following section will shed light on the cinematic Representation of 'Masculinity'

Different brands of 'masculinity' leave the realm of the flesh and become representational in film, an audio-visual means for the masses, for a great majority of men and women. "In media studies of the last decade we have come to understand 'masculinity' as "...both a product and process of representation" (de Lauretis 5). At an apparent level, in films, 'masculinity' may appear as a simple image of male psyche and body. But if we think of that represented image outside the patriarchal patriarchal , it turns out to be the most crucial tool to build male-female chemistry or relationship in films, based on the given power structure by patriarchy. On the silver screen, analysing specific masculinities, Connell argues for the need to consider two types of relationship, "...patriarchal, domination/subordination, and the complicity on the one hand, marginalization/authorization on the other"(81).

In traditional male dominant films where the protagonist is inevitably male (though some films may feature female protagonists) the spectatorship belongs to man. In films, the male gaze is essential for portraying male ideology (like sexual objectification of women) as well as 'masculinity' (where Man is in control; he makes things happen). Thus the 'male gaze' and

patriarchal 'masculinity' function like two units of a whole complex in films. It is 'male gaze' that portrays patriarchal 'masculinity' with layers of glorification in the arena of films. The patriarchal 'masculinity' is structured around 'male gaze' through the process of 'narcissistic' or 'fetishistic' identification which is "...characterized by the central position occupied by notions of control, power, aggression, domination, emotional poverty, the preoccupation with order and mastery and a resistance to looks that objectify and eroticize the male body..." (Eleftheriotis 235) From the above argument, it seems to appear that the paradigm of constructing patriarchal 'masculinity' is grounded in domination.

Trujillo has expanded the definition of patriarchal 'masculinity' by identifying four major features that define when 'masculinity' is patriarchal in the U.S. media culture: (1) "when power is defined in terms of physical force and control" (particularly in the representation of the body as discussed in the earlier part of this section), (2) "when it is defined through occupational achievement in an industrial, capitalistic society," (*i.e* by the success of a man in his occupation or business or how much money he is capable of earning) (3) when it is represented in terms of familial patriarchy (as established in the social domain), and (4) "when heterosexually defined" (as a man's sexual competence tested against women)" (299).

Based on the theories discussed, the paper will now analyse both the films chosen. Both the films are scripted and directed by Catherine Breillat. Breillat's films has always been at the centre of controversy and she "...has been a leading light among an ever increasing number of French female directors who are using the medium of film to explore women's desires" (Keesey 151). In doing so she exposes the 'masculinity' in crisis as well.

Though her films have been criticized for being sexually graphic and containing hard-core elements (erection, penetration, ejaculation, etc.), intellectual fibers of her films have made her a "...genius against the world" (Keesey 3). The concerned films along with her most, focus on women's struggle to throw off their internalized subordination and gender role (sexual identity) and challenge "...certain taboos accepted by the preceding age particularly, those which denied women's sexual autonomy" (Keesey 2) to adopt affirmative view about the world.

In both films the characterization of men interestingly remains same. While *Romance* is about how men treat women, *Anatomie de l'enfer* is about how men view women. Both of the films attempts to investigate men or the male image which is rare because in mainstream films, in its assumption of male form, look and perspective, "...it constantly takes women and the female image as their subject of investigation, it has rarely investigated men and the male image in the same kind way" (Neale 15-16). In *Romance* the plot develops with the journey of a woman towards the revelation of her sexual identity and fantasy while understanding male psyche regarding both of their sexual stance in 'gendered role'. This journey aims for her integration of body and soul, not for degradation of flesh. In *Anatomie de l'enfer* (*Anatomy of Hell*) Breillat, through her female character "...challenges certain taboos accepted by the preceding age, particularly those which denied women's sexual autonomy" (Keesey 2). In both the films women consciously make an attempt to go beyond the notion that sex is associated with sin and suffering (Keesey). Each film maps on a woman's journey toward fulfillment of her desire.

The opening shot of *Romance* is very important to understand its difference from traditional film (male dominant). Through the very first shot the point is clearly made that the spectatorship belongs to a patriarchal male psyche as Breillat here “constructs Paul as the object of the camera (and Marrie’s gaze)”(Keesey 123).



Fig 1: The opening shot of the film, *Romance* where Paul is seen as an object of the camera and Marrie’s (the protagonist) gaze.

In that scene, Paul is seen to pose as a macho matador for a commercial photo shoot. He is seen to be instructed by the director within the film to stand on his tiptoe so that he can grow up in size and tower over Clara, the female model (interestingly, taller than him) : “Look at me Paul, make yourself taller. And be rejective,..Clara lower your eyes, be a bit more subservient...A

little bit subservient, he is the man.” (Quoted from subtitle *Romance*)



Fig 2: A snapshot from *Romance* where Paul and Clara are seen listening to instructions from the photo shoot director within the film, where Paul is told to act ‘macho’ (taller, rigid and rejective) and Clara is told to act ‘feminine’ (submissive).



Fig 3: A snapshot from *Romance* where Paul is seen towering over Clara (standing on tiptoe, and Clara, inclining her head back toward Paul, as per the instruction of male director within the film.

Breillat shapes this scene of advertisement to present it as a replica of the real world ruled by patriarchy. This scene conducts on the bodily representation of the sexes based on patriarchal hierarchy. This scene gives us the idea of expectation of patriarchy from a woman which feminine and submissive (metaphorically, the way Clara, the model inclined her head back toward Paul). In this shot, Breillat's critical view about patriarchal 'masculinity' shows how men tend to be 'macho' even by having it faked in an image of hardness for creating submissive 'femininity', an 'Other'. "So some of Paul's hardness toward Marrie can be understood as a defence against femininity, which he fears might undermine his precarious gender identity" (Keesey 123).

The instruction given to Paul in that photo shoot (which we overhear) is very consciously chosen for sketching a brief but subtly appropriate picture of patriarchal 'masculinity'. How men get influenced by the notion/s or brand/s (like being 'taller' stronger, sharper, 'rejective', etc) of 'masculinity' is very cleverly shown, as we see how Paul inherits the influence of this ideology ('masculinity') and expects Marrie to submit to him as the dominant one all through the film (the ways of constructing of 'masculinity'-previously discussed in theorization of 'masculinity').

In *Romance* the plot is structured on the story of a woman's search for fulfilment of body and soul (Keesey). Here we see that Marrie seeks fulfilment of her female desire for sex and sentiment in a man who would help integrate both her body and soul. But the men she meets are incompetent and incomplete-emotional, physical or intellectual but not all three combined. If Marrie's steady boyfriend Paul is heart, then her lover Paolo is body and her schoolmaster Robert is head.(Keesey)

In the film, Marrie's search for fulfilment of body and soul draws a paradigm of Other's(women's) view of 'masculinity' which consistently challenges the prevailing patriarchal 'masculinity' as masculine identity is inextricably linked, not only to the social image of femaleness, but also to the image of men that femaleness (in all its variety) projects (Goddard). Given that men's identities are intimately tied to their view of what they think women expect of them, men's failure of understanding a woman's body and soul, clearly fails the 'masculinity' here and tends to re-construct it.

Marrie is engaged to Paul. They live together in an apartment. At first, when Marrie was a strange body to be conquered, Paul used to find her sexually attractive. But now that

they have been together for few months he can only think of Marrie as his future wife and mother of his children, and as a spiritual being who must not be degraded by sex (Keeseey).

We see for Paul sex and sentiment are two different things. That is why, he cannot imagine spoiling his future spouse by having lustful sex with her. Freud argues that there are many men like Paul:

Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love....There are only a few educated people in whom the two currents of affection and sensuality have become properly fused; the man almost always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexual activity and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object. (Freud 397-399)

Marrie tries to work it out by talking to Paul about his sudden lack of libidinal interest in her. But Paul's unwillingness suggests us that being her marital partner meant the end of her as a sexual partner. Paul's apartment is painted white in color that brings in the aura of purity as represented in the sacred ideal of marriage and Marrie always wears white around Paul, as if she has to live by the expectations of virginal purity as expected by Paul (Keeseey). We find Paul and Marrie virtually motionless in their bed, in the scene they are side by side in the bed. The shot is taken with a long take to emphasize on both their bodily and spiritual isolation. Paul's understanding of respecting his lady is not debasing her with erotic desires. On the contrary, according to Marrie, "...true love and respect must include the physical along

with the spiritual" (Keeseey 122). Thus Marrie articulates her feelings and frustration by saying:

"On dit d'un home qui baise une femme qu'il l'honore. ...Paul me déshonore'(One says of a man who fucks a woman that he honors her... Paul dishonours me") (Quoted from the subtitle, *Romance*)



Fig 4: A snapshot from *Romance* where Breillat (director) takes a long shot to emphasize on the bodily and spiritual isolation of Paul and Marrie.

The characterization of Marrie including her reference to the Bible (the Virgin Marie) is very crucial here as we see Marie(biblical) stands for the standard of good woman (virtuous wife and sacred mother).Here Breillat boldly challenges the ideals of patriarchal 'masculinity' regarding the conception of good

women- bad woman by constructing/ reconstructing Marrie/Marie. Breillat cleverly portrays how:

Under the male gaze, a women is not allowed to develop her own identity as physical and spiritual being but instead she is 'cut in two', her body severed from her soul, as she is forced into a stereotyped gender role- either the asexual 'good girl'(virgin, wife , mother) or 'bad girl'(mistress, whore)(Keesey 1)

As Paul considers Marrie a good woman figure (wife, future mother of his children) when she persists on stroking and sucking him in bed, he can barely even watch what she is doing. We see though sometimes Paul allows Marrie to stroke him for a while he never allows himself to climax. This also may suggest Paul's unyielding 'masculine 'nature to remain hard and dominant over women.

Later on, Paul goes to bars to dance seductively with loose women leaving his 'virginal' Marrie behind in the apartment. He intends to do that to show his male friend Ashley that he can 'conquer' them. By making women submit to 'degrading' sexual advances Paul finds his pleasure and sense of being 'masculine'. He finds Marrie in a way repellent as much as the same way Paolo (Marrie's lover) finds used condom: "When they are used, I find them disgusting. Unasthetic (Paolo). Guys find everything disgusting. And afterwards you have to reuse it again (Marie)." (Quoted from the subtitle). Breillat attempts to show how women become objects of sex, commodities to men influenced by the notion of 'masculinity'.

But Paul gets excited by Marrie when he assumes that she might be cheating on him. Her 'bad girl' behavior makes him want

to 'conquer' her again. But when wearing a red dress Marrie positions herself right on top of Paul and expresses her desires actively, he throws her off and onto the floor.

Paul cannot stand the active expressive Marrie who puts him in passive 'feminine' position as "...the male and the masculine cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification (Mulvey 12). In that scene, Breillat shows how male psyche presumes women, the passive female object who is supposed to serve the purpose of providing erotic pleasure alone.

Anatomie de l'enfer (Anatomy of Hell)'s opening shot begins at a gay nightclub. As a solitary woman, Amira is seen standing at the corner of that club in the midst of gay men. Interestingly, she is taken to the gay nightclub by "...her ostensibly hetero boyfriend, who has gone there to flirt, dance and have oral sex with other men."(Keesey 137)



Fig 1: A scene from *Anatomie de l'enfer* where Amira is seen standing at the corner of gay nightclub staring at her boyfriend who is dancing and flirting with a gay boy.

With this first scene Breillat seems to set up the context for her film that whether men are homosexual or heterosexual, they prefer the companionship of other males to that of female species, because of their disgust and fear of female sex.

To unpack and understand the complexity of her sexuality and complexity of men's fear and disgust for women's sex, Amira pays Rocco to watch her where she is 'unwatchable'. Amira is used to seeing herself negatively through hetero male eyes, but in Rocco she hopes to find a man with a positive view of femininity, to gain a respectful regard for herself through him (Keeseey). Here Amira seems to seek Rocco's approval as if Rocco is a substitute of her boyfriend just like Marrie turns to Paolo as a substitute for Paul in *Romance*.

I believe Breillat's idea here is that, unlike heterosexual men who admit to love women but beneath the surface of their love deep down fear and loathe women (Paul in *Romance*), a gay man's indifference to the female sex would enable him to look at her with fresh eyes.

However, things turn out much more problematic when Rocco fails to appreciate Amira. Moreover, he becomes eventually more violent, fearful and repulsive regarding her 'womanhood', which seems to be linked to his notion of homosexual 'masculinity' for he says: "The fragility of female flesh inspires disgust or brutality" (Quoted from the subtitle, *Anatomy de l'enfer*) when he see Amira naked at night. Towards the first half of the film after spending the night together, Breillat reveals his (Rocco's) monologue, when he was standing up at shore by the ocean: "The Ocean, despite its misleading male image, rolled in the darkness like a bitch in heat. This ocean, like a woman, could engulf you and make you vanish into its loins... So I felt trapped by

a kind of sorcery of the signs and obscene sounds of nature." (Quoted from the subtitle, *Anatomy de l'enfer*).

On the basis of Breillat's construction of male image (Paul in *Romance* and Rocco in *Anatomy de l'enfer*), it seems that she is suggesting that the hatred or disgust for female sex is a crucial part of 'maleness' regardless of men's sexuality. Both kinds of 'masculinity' (hetero and homo) tend to inherit misogynistic nature from the domain of the patriarchy. As patriarchy has lack of complete control over the women's sex, it holds a repulsive view about women's sexuality and teaches women to hate their own flesh as well.

In conclusion it can be said that a woman judges the men she comes across. In *Anatomie de l'enfer* a woman makes a man bound to look at her to be 're-observed'(re-gazed) by man, while in turn, the man being gazed by the woman as "Object and subject of the gaze are in a binary relationship -- to some extent even depend on each other for their identity. No gaze is, therefore, a gaze in isolation, and every gaze is as much a gaze at the self as it is a gaze at another/an other." (Goddard 31)

In both films men's 'masculinity' has been re-examined through the 'female gaze'. The men in both films (as straight and gay) seem to have stereotypical knowledge of women and are unwilling to approach women from a fresh perspective. The reasons of their unwillingness may be the fear of redefinition or re-construction of themselves which will definitely challenge the prevailing notion of 'masculinity'. While theorizing masculinity, I brought in how Mulvey's(1975) theory exposes the power dynamics shown in films, I also brought in the definitions provided by Trujillo (1991) where he demonstrates 'masculinity' as heterosexual and socially constructed notion. It is seen as a notion

which puts women in the subordinate position by taking the voice out of women. The films that I have discussed, very distinctly challenges the notions used by Mulvey and Trujillo as in both films we see that women are given the freedom to make their choices of how they want themselves to be watched or who they choose as their sexual partners. They are given the freedom to explore their sexuality which is seen as a 'taboo' across cultures and nations.

We have seen masculinity as opposed to femininity. When we see that the 'gaze' that holds the power to create hierarchy is shifted to women through which they explored their sexuality, this entire phenomenon then changes the existing notion of femininity. With this shift, femininity no longer remains as the 'other' rather merges with the 'one' and becomes the 'one'. When femininity changes its position, it influences and thus changes the position of 'masculinity' as well. This change is the challenge and the challenge thus becomes an attempt to re-construct 'masculinity'.

As far as the notion of binary opposition is concerned, which is seen as the core of hierarchical distinction between men and women in the society, it can be argued that- if power is exerted through the gaze of the beholder (man) then if the beholder is changed from his position, the centre of power is also changed and challenged. In this entire gamut of challenging the core of patriarchy, Breillat attempts to give the viewer or the audience with a new look towards 'masculinity' and femininity.

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THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE FEMININE DISGUST IN VISUAL MEDIA

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Films enforce the normal body, but through a strange process. The body on screen is neither the body ideal nor the body normal. "It is the commodified body of the eroticized male or female star... the fantasized, hypostatized body of commodified desire."

– (Lennard J. Davis 2420)

The availability of visual media enforces the normalcy on the ordinary viewer by showing the ideal nude which makes the viewers fantasize the body as a commodified desire (Davis 2420). This standardizes a norm for the body and when people eroticize this desire, they try to bring that norm in their own reality even if it may not be necessary always. If this expected normalized perfection is not met, the viewer begins to feel bad about his/her own body which may lead them to believe that the body s/he owns is malfunctioning.

It is in human nature to search for minority to prove its superiority in the world of normalcy. Sometimes they victimize a particular race or sometimes even their own body parts. According to Jacques Lacan's mirror phrase (Ryan 99), people can never see their body as a whole. From childhood, they learn to see

fragmented parts of their body through the care giver until they find a whole image of their body through the mirror. So, it is their common fear of fragmented body which makes the disabled body too persistent. From that point of view, our dithered body parts works as an abnormal or disabled organ to think from the perspective of ideal normalcy. The problem arises when this issue is sexualized on the electronic media by showing the ideal image of normal body especially in the case of women.

Visual media has become one of the major sources of entertainment in our life especially for the South Asian women and it is more available than any other form of entertainment. Most of these women do not look for entertainments out of their home or they are manipulated to remain inside their own territory formed by the society. So, they are more dependent on easily availed electronic media rather than men and for that reason Indian TV series are more popular among them where the particular gender they belong to is always dominated. Ironically, some popular series are produced by woman, because by being a woman, a person can understand the masochistic desire of being dominated in their lives. More or less this self-disgust among women is created by men in the society. That is why, the producers or advertising agencies knows how to sell products in a society like ours where women are constructed to be entertained by the domination of male dominated society. So, for the sake of consumerism, visual media is selling female disgust or suppression by a male in a masochistic way. And the inconsistent fear of gaze is always even if there is no viewer.

The video commercial of "New Dove Whitening Deodorant" (Doveindia) visualizes a bunch of female models hesitating to show their underarms. It undoubtedly portrays the shame of having dark skinned underarms in the woman's psyche.

Those women seem to hide their underarms for not being perfectly white like their face and when they get the perfect underarms which they can easily show on TV screen, they seem more confident and cheerful to show at off. This creates an idealized image or standard for women to have a perfect underarms in order to wear sleeveless and show off the perfect skin. Otherwise the darkened skin is considered as a taboo akin to the feminist psychoanalytic theories of Julia Kristeva where women are considered negative, dark and taboo (Ryan 99). This dark skin symbolically reminds women about their lack as a weaker human being and this low feeling is universalized inside every woman through the visual media. "According to Freud, 'penis envy' is universal in women and responsible for their 'castration complex'" (Selden 138). Many feminist would adopt the "phallogocentric" theory of Freud to criticize the psychological domination of patriarchal society which is hidden inside every woman to feel low about her own self. At this crucial point, these visual representations are added to Derrida's 'phallogocentrism' which is dominated by patriarchal discourse (Selden 138). A female child is brought up with this idea of castration complex in the society so that she can define herself negatively and the male dominated society can take all the advantage from a woman as a body. Every representation of media is there to remind her about her own castration. Moreover, this darkness of skin should be hidden as this concept of media representation would go against black feminist criticism, because it would remind us of imperial domination in the Dark Continent. So, this visual media dominates the race of women by creating the masochistic idea of castration and darkness.

Another example can be found from the video commercial of "Nivea Whitening Deo TVC" (NIVEA) which shows

the exposure of fairer underarm towards (against) the male gaze. The young inspiring actress Anuska Sharma exposes this particular body part to impress the male model in this advertisement and she does so because she does not hesitate to show off her beautiful underarms. The main slogan of this famous advertisement is: "go sleeveless on him", which gives more importance to the spectacle of the male chauvinist society. Women are represented in the visual media to-be-looked-at (Mulvey 837). This can be considered as a pleasure of spectacle for the male as well as female. Though the male determines the value of a woman on the basis of male gaze, female audience can get this male gaze inside them in a narcissistic form, because if everything is visualized for male audience a major part of female audience would have denied this visual media. But the female audience does not deny this exposure on screen, rather they accept this narcissism inside their libido and increase the product sale with the sale of the women's body. Keeping that in mind, these advertisements are made to increase the sale of this product among women because they are the main consumers of this product. But the advertisement of Nivea shows the product use on the male model rather than the female, when the exposure of fairer wider underarm or the exposure of a perfect body is working on the man. If, only a fairer and wider underarm can bring the attention of the male lover, while only her perfect body can determine her identity as a confident smart woman, it is natural for the female audience to increase their narcissistic desire in their ego libido (Mulvey 837).

If we look at those advertisements we would find the post-industrial crisis of expansion of consumption. It has become "pastiche" (Jameson 15) to target women by showing off an explosive beautiful body to increase the marketing policy. Even

where the male product should be the main concern, female models are used in an offensive way to increase the lucrativeness of a man. This capitalist society can definitely increase the consumption of the product either giving the price of women's dissatisfaction over their own body or representing them as an object where man is the subject. Inside every woman they create dissatisfaction for the sake of consumption where everything becomes a commodity including knowledge, because it develops a particular type of knowledge which can determine ideology in a society. At the end of the day this ideology would matter even more than the product or consumption. The society of spectacle would change with this ideology which is directly connected to visual media. According to the Marxist critic Althusser, "Ideology is a system of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society" (Barry 157). So, the system of representations at the heart of a given society can create any definition from these representations which can define a whole culture. It is alarming for our own society where women are represented in such a discourteous manner.

When it comes to the representation of women, the power politics of message plays an important role, because at some point this message would turn into knowledge and gradually a discourse. These visual representations would give a message in our culture and would affectively change the female point of view about the "ideal normal" body which creates a stereotyped knowledge about women as well as determining their identity. These advertisements successfully create a visual normalcy inside all the women as well as males in South-Asia which would mean fair and perfect underarms. According to Foucault's "power/knowledge" relation: "a discourse produces, through

different practices of representations (scholarship, exhibition, literature, painting etc.), a form of racialized knowledge of the Other (Orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of power (imperialism)" (Hall 260). So, this message creates knowledge and knowledge is able to create the power to dominate the racialized other in this male dominated society as male is considered more powerful than women.

These advertisements show that dithered body parts are unusual and not to be shown off. While every body part combines the whole body, every part should be equally valued. But we like to categorize these parts by ranking them on the basis of spectacle. Just like the concept of good body or bad body, we like to categorize our body parts as good or bad body parts. Whatever looks good on us or whatever makes us beautiful is to be exposed and the others ignored. Sometimes we try to imagine, that those parts do not belong to our body. As Davis mentioned, 'wholeness is a hallucination' (Davis 2410), the ideal normal is also a hallucination. On the basis of this hallucination women are being victimized on the television media where the perfect nude determines a female identity and this identity is determined most of the time by a man.

Visual media is considerably available among any type of people in the world and to add to this visual media, cyber is also there to increase this availability. Through this mass media, any kind of message can be given to the world. So, it is the responsibility of a particular culture or society to see what they want to represent to the world. The representation of women, through this power politics of male dominated capitalist society can make profit, but the price is paid by that particular culture where female identity as well as the cultural identity is at a stake.

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POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION OF GENDER VIOLENCE

-VIDYA M JOSEPH

One of the recurring images of the year 2013 has been that of hundreds of young people holding candle light vigils across the country praying for the life of the victim of a horrendous gang rape which occurred in the streets of Delhi on Dec 16, 2012. The valiant girl battled on for a few weeks before succumbing to her injuries in Singapore. However, her torture at the hands of the five men and her subsequent death united the Indian middle classes like few issues had done before. The television media, always on the hunt for 'good' news and desperate for their TRP ratings, took the issue on to another level altogether, focusing intensely on the issues of sexual harassment, molestation and rape in Indian society. The gang rape and the brutality with which the woman was abused shocked the international media as well with major television channels around the world doing special interest stories on the plight of women in India. The online social networking sites

and news portals continued to carry stories relating to the rape and the treatment of women in the 'conservative' Indian society for months after the incident. Out of curiosity, I googled 'Delhi Gang Rape 2012' and the total matches ran up to 4,910,000!

The gang rape, according to author and activist Eve Ensler was a major turning point not just for India but around the world. She pointed out that "having worked every day of my life for the last 15 years on sexual violence, I have never seen anything like that, where sexual violence broke through the consciousness and was on the front page, nine articles in every paper every day, in the center of every discourse, in the center of the college students' discussions, in the center of any restaurant you went in. And I think what's happened in India, India is really leading the way for the world. It's really broken through. They are actually fast-tracking laws. They are looking at sexual education. They are looking at the bases of patriarchy and masculinity and how all that leads to sexual violence."¹

While no news media worth its name could afford to lose out on the opportunities offered by the spontaneous protests

¹ Excerpt taken from Eve Ensler's statement quoted in www.democracynow.org retrieved on 30.11.2013.

which broke out in the capital city following the gruesome incident, the reactions from Western feminist scholars, can only be termed 'cautious'.

In an interesting insight into the manner in which the Delhi gang rape and the subsequent anger in the streets of India was represented by Western feminists, Swati Parashar in her article "The Delhi Rape Case: Rethinking Feminism and Violence Against Women"² talks about the strange silence of Western feminists while addressing feminist concerns of the Global South. She points out that in the case of Savitha Halappanavar, the western feminist scholarship actively engaged with the anti-abortion laws prevalent in the predominantly Catholic Ireland and the outrage that Savitha's death sparked off in the First World resulted in Ireland changing its laws on abortion. However, when it came to the gang rape in Delhi, or even the shooting of Malala Yousoufazi in Pakistan, the response of Western feminists was muted. She notes that the "case brought to the fore India's culture of misogyny and yet Western feminists, in a concerted effort to avoid their oriental/racist gaze, were hesitant to take a position calling on the Indian state to do more to protect women or to analyse the (in)securities of Indian women. Clearly the Indian experience has been rendered different; a 'difference that is difficult' to bridge." Parashar goes on to point out that with its strength and vitality and its refusal to back down, Indian feminism needs no western support. However, the question of 'difference' and thereby of 'silence' of western feminism needs to be understood with all its ramifications.

² Parashar, Swati. "The Delhi Rape Case: Rethinking Feminism and Violence Against Women." *www.e-ir.info*. E-International Relations, 11 Feb. 2013. Web. 16 Nov. 2013.

Even while this paper was being written, another mega story of sexual molestation, legally amounting to rape, was seized gleefully by the media. Gleefully, because the accused was none other than the enfant terrible of the Indian media, the one man who had broken new ground in journalism and had established 'sting' operations as the norm of investigative journalism in India – Tarun Tejpal. Tejpal's *Tehelka* magazine and its brash stories were welcomed by the Indian middle classes, tired as they were of the rampant corruption and double speak of politicians and bureaucrats. The reception within the media itself was guarded to this new wave of bold, brave, break-all-norms kind of journalism. As senior journalist Bachi Karkaria pointed out in her blog *Erratica* "as an old-fashioned journalist, I was uncomfortable with stingfests passing off as investigative reporting"³ Another noted journalist Sevanti Ninan pointed out that *Tehelka* "seized upon sting entrapments to create sensational journalism, even if it meant recording private conversations of cricketers, or hiring sex workers to entrap officials, or thinking up an imaginary piece of defence equipment to supply."⁴

What is interesting is the manner in which this particular episode has been virtually ruling the media space over the past one week. While on the one hand, there is unbound amusement on the part of the BJP and the RSS, whose activities were consistently targeted by *Tehelka*, it is the way in which the media has highlighted this particular episode that is raising pertinent questions. The Delhi Gang Rape of Dec 2012 saw unprecedented

³ See *Erratica*, Times of India blog by Bachi Karkaria.

⁴ See *Tehelka's Achilles Heel* by Sevanti Ninan in *livemint.com* published 28.Nov, 13.

number of people on the streets of Delhi and elsewhere in India demanding safety of women in public spaces. The Tarun Tejpal 'saga' as CNN editor in chief Rajdeep Sardesai chose to put it, is on the contrary, completely media-driven. Bachi Karkaria correctly raises the question in her piece 'Stinkfest, Slugfest' that in this "clamorous pursuit of justice for the violated girl, our strident demand for the severest punishment, in our counter-expose of Tehelka's own murky revenue model, have we turned into a lynch mob?"

The question of representation becomes very important here. Why is it that the Tarun Tejpal issue is being taken up for 24/7 news, with continuous updates throughout the day? Why was it that the media chose to under-represent the gang rape of a minor girl in a moving car in Delhi on October 24 or bury the brutal questioning of another minor rape victim by a Delhi cop, who is said to have asked the girl to 'show' how she was raped? The two other cases, which were reported from the national capital in October were taken up for routine coverage by television channels and were forgotten within no time. The question, therefore, is not about violence or gender, but more about location, class, one's proximity to power and of course, visibility. The selective blindness of the mainstream media is especially glaring when it comes to representing events in places located away from centres of power. During a recent visit to Shimoga, (which to people living here is certainly the centre of the world!) Rajdeep Sardesai and Sagarika Ghose exclaimed in astonishment about the *intellectual rigour* in *mofussil* towns (italics mine). During the question and answer session that followed Rajdeep's lecture, the astonishment on the part of the two media personalities was once again on show, with both expressing appreciation about the 'quality' of discussion which

according to Rajdeep surpassed the ones held in metros. For those of us who have chosen to live in so-called mofussil towns, such patronising astonishment is a matter of scorn, since it is just a pointer to the short-sightedness of the 'elite' classes. The joke ends however when it comes to representation of gender violence in mainstream media because all that goes unreported is also forgotten in our media-driven society. A glaring example of media blindness about gender violence in places away from the metros is the rape and killing of a 13 year old minor girl in Thirthahalli taluk of Shimoga district in 2005. The girl, who used to walk through a long stretch of forest and a hamlet to reach her school, was watched by a young man, Chethan. After learning her schedule, Chetan followed her into the forest, raped her and murdered her using the ribbon which she had used to tie her hair. Though the boy was arrested, he was sent to a remand home by the court on the ground that he was a minor at the time of committing the act. Though newspapers in Shimoga carried the report extensively,⁵ very little coverage was given to the incident either by the state papers and certainly not by television news media. Following the court's decision several protests were taken out in Shimoga city by women's activists demanding that the Juvenile Justice Act be revoked and juveniles indulging in adult crimes be treated as adults. Perhaps it is in instances such as this that the class nature of the media and also of public protests emerge.

Another example which shook the collective conscience of the people of India, but to which lip service was paid by mainstream television media, was the acquittal of members of the Ranveer Sena by the Patna High Court for lack of evidence on

⁵ See 'An Incident of Shame and Disgust', Deccan Herald internet edition dated 27.10.2005

charges of massacring 58 Dalits in Laxmanpur-Bathe village in Bihar. The victims included 27 women and 10 children. While 'Who Killed Jessica Lal' hit headlines for weeks together, similar questions raised by kin of those killed in Laxmanpur-Bathe remain unacknowledged. The victim in the Tarun Tejpal case has asserted, in a letter, that "rape is not about lust or sex, but about power, privilege and entitlement. Thus this new law should be applicable to everybody – the wealthy, the powerful, and the well connected - and not just to faceless strangers."⁶ The same argument holds good for representation of gender violence. Representation and justice should be applicable to everybody. Not just to the wealthy, the powerful and the well connected but also to faceless strangers.

Gender violence and its increased visibility in India is a concern that is being analysed in all its complexity in recent years. There are divergent views about whether violence has increased or whether the visibility of violence has increased in Indian society. In 2011, more than 24,000 cases were reported in India. In Delhi alone from January to August 2013, 1,121 cases were reported, the highest in 13 years. There is no doubt that the number of incidents which are being reported have sharply increased since the 80s. Social scientists have tried to answer this paradox of how on the one hand women have access to better education and increased opportunities in the public sphere and on the other violence has continued to increase. The questions of power, the fear of woman's sexuality, the loss of control coupled with cultural stereotypes are all seen as reasons for violence. In a survey conducted by the medical journal 'The Lancet' in countries

⁶See 'What Tejpal did to me falls within the legal definition of rape', *The Hindu* dated 30.11.2013. p 12.

in Asia and Pacific, men who had forced unwilling partners to have sex (the term 'rape' was not used in the survey) cited reasons like punishment, entertainment, being drunk and sexual entitlement as reasons for their actions. Not surprisingly, more than 70 per cent said that they had raped because they felt 'entitled' to do so. ⁷ Clearly, violence, especially sexual violence, has deep patriarchal roots. As feminist scholar Jacqui True points out in her book *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women* "relatively poor access to economic social and political resources for women and men is associated with being both perpetrators and victims of violence." (2012, 183).

Incidentally, the nature of representation and visualisation of women in the media, especially the new media, has thrown up several challenges to women. Though there is as yet no conclusive proof to link watching pornography to increased violence in society, metaanalysis conducted in 2010 suggested that there is a link between consumption of violent pornography and rape-supportive attitudes in certain populations of men. ⁸ In conservative societies like India, where interaction with the opposite sex is limited, the impact is likely to be far greater and far more violent. With little or no internet protection, information or advice, juveniles and school children are getting addicted to watching porn. Three years ago, a teacher in a government school in the remote village of Arabilachi in Bhadravathi taluk told me that high school teachers were now asked to check the pockets of

⁷Jewkes, Rachel, Emma Fulu, Tim Roselli, and Claudia Garcia-Moreno. "The Lancet iPad App: Articles in a New Light." *TheLancet.com*. Elsevier Ltd, 10 Sept. 2013. Web. 16 Nov. 2013.

⁸ See Wikipedia: Effects of pornography.

boys to discover micro SD cards since several students had been caught watching porn during school hours! For such children, when their knowledge of women and sexuality comes from commercial porn sites, the effects can be far-reaching. According to *TheNew York Times*, the number of people searching for 'porn' in India had increased fivefold from 2004 to 2013. The report goes on to say that Delhi had the highest worldwide percentage of searches for 'porn' in the year 2012.⁹ As Ranjana Kumari, director of the Centre for Social Research, New Delhi points out watching porn can create heightened sexual desire and aggression in young men, because society in India is highly segregated and young men have very little normal interaction with women.¹⁰

While analysts have consistently pointed out that rape is not about sex or sexual gratification, but about entitlement, a planned assault on human rights, a reiteration of power and dominance, the fact remains that in a complex society like India, which is in a stage of transition, the issues to address are numerous. Patriarchy, gender roles, women's empowerment and its consequences, fear of sexuality, domination, the economic and financial fall-outs of a rapidly globalising society are all contributory factors for the gruesome incidents of violence in society. Arundhati Roy in one of her essays pointed out to the schizophrenic nature of Indian society wherein one world, a glittering world of wealth and opportunities, was rushing headlong towards a global stage and the other, disadvantaged, ill

⁹Thirani, Neha, and Heather Timmons. "India Considers Banning Pornography as Reported Sexual Assault Rises." *NYTimes.com*. NY Times, 22 Apr. 2013. Web. 16 Nov. 2013.

¹⁰ Ibid.

prepared and uncomprehending, was moving towards an empty, dark world¹¹. It is in this context that the representation and visualisation of women have to be examined very carefully. On the one hand, women's achievements in society are either misrepresented or under-represented. On the other, distorted representations of woman, as an object of sexual gratification, are being furthered in the public sphere leading to devastating violence. The other aspect is the cynical politicisation and commercialisation of gender violence, especially by the visual media, disregarding not just notions of ethics and propriety but also of justice. In the case relating to Tarun Tejpal, in an open letter to the media, the woman journalist who was sexually molested by Tejpal pointed out, "(T)he struggle for women to assert control over their lives and their bodies is most certainly a political one, but feminist politics and its concerns are wider than the narrow universe of our political parties. Thus, I call upon our political parties to resist the temptation to turn a very important discussion about gender, power and violence into a conversation about themselves."¹²

¹¹ See Arundhati Roy's article *Shall We Leave it to the Experts* in *Outlook India*, January 2002.

¹²See 'What Tejpal did to me falls within the legal definition of rape', *The Hindu* dated 30.11.2013. p 12.

Jewkes, Rachel, Emma Fulu, Tim Roselli, and Claudia Garcia-Moreno. "The Lancet iPad App: Articles in a New Light." *TheLancet.com*. Elsevier Ltd, 10 Sept. 2013. Web. 16 Nov. 2013.

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(FE)MAL(E)ICIOUS REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN CYBERSPACE

-MOHAMMED MIZANUR RASHID

It was characters like Shakespeare's sister¹ and her maker Virginia Woolf who dared to dream of a world which would be equal to its human inhabitants. It must be said that much has changed since then. It seems that women all around the world are much more respected than before and they have almost leveled up to their male counter-parts. Except for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, women of almost all the countries in the world can boast about voting rights. In the United States of America every woman makes about 77 cents for every 1 dollar made by a man². These are of course signs of progress. But the very notion of the word progress reminds us of what we previously were and all those cannibalistic features of the chauvinistic man cannot be so easily wiped out. For it is so inherent in our minds, thoughts and ideas that even if we eradicate those prejudiced judgment, somehow it always tends to come back. These are great changes in the outside world today when women are more positive, more outgoing, sharing workload with men and men who help their female counterparts in household matters. But a dark force is working just around the corner and more than ever, women with

¹*A Room of One's Own* (1929)

²Infoplease.com, society and culture, gender issues, the wage gap.

all their rights and existence are facing a great threat. Throughout the history of male domination, men never truly wanted the shift of power to happen, to let go of the fruit of Eden that was in their hands and even now, when women have fought for so long for their freedom, men have just come up with another form of tool in order to break their spirit, to make them vulnerable so that they could be dominated once more. Yes, with the development of information technology and with the upbringing of cyberspace³, men have taken the war to a whole new level. They might have lost the battle on earth, but they still might have a chance to regain some of their lost pride and chauvinism in cyberspace.

The research is founded on the idea that the power struggle between the sexes, still resides despite the many attempts of abolishing it. It not only resides but it has evolved, it has grown to a whole new level, a level of cyberspace. We need to understand the scenario thoroughly because it is a very delicate issue and our very next move on this critical concern might be our last. My paper wishes to find out in what ways women are being mis/represented throughout cyberspace, possible provide a solution to what might be done.

Primarily, in my study I have found that women are misrepresented in cyberspace in two ways. One, of course is advertisement and the other is through social networking sites as a namesake for entertainment. I will detail my study on the role of advertisement later in the paper but first I would like to focus on

³ The space which has emerged from the use of computer networks for communication, entertainment and business. Millions and millions of terabytes used by the different social networking sites and other websites create cyberspace.

the many social networking sites and the part they play in demeaning women.

In recent years the many social networking sites like *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Hi5* have become very famous not only for their appeal for networking, keeping in touch with distant friends, finding long lost friends with just a click of the mouse but also for the different kinds of entertainment they never fail to provide. Now, keeping in touch with friends and family is never a problem. The problem begins with the entertainment part. Just as T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer has prophesied that in order to keep people on the correct side of work, you need to provide the promise of entertainment that after hard work, entertainment will be provided⁴. The social networking sites seem to be built on this principle. They are bent on providing entertainment regardless of how much you can take it. And in the process of providing entertainment they often seem to be crossing their limits of gender and sex. There are hundreds of images uploaded every week on various pages and groups of *Facebook* that demean women and which pick on the topic of their sex for fun and entertainment. And as if the image itself was not enough, the comments that follow are even more horrible.

An image posted on *Facebook* illustrates a female teacher coming in class making a complete fool of herself to her student who happens to be a boy (see Figure 1.1). In the image the teacher asks her class to answer a question and whoever would answer first, would be allowed to leave her class. A boy(!!!) throws his bag outside the window and when the teacher notices

⁴ "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." By Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

that and asks who threw the bag the boy answers that it was him and goes home. This is just an example of one of the many ways women are shown as dumb throughout the internet which happens to be very humiliating. Another image (see Figure 1.2) ridicules women's high heel shoes because they make too much noise and the image even makes an amalgamation of the woman and the horse taking away her human attributes degrading her condition to that of an animal.

Now, to comprehend the full potential of the threat that it possesses which is rather social and psychological than physical, we need to understand another very important fact. I call this the facelessness of cyberspace. In cyberspace there is little room for class/gender/race difference and conflict because here every user holds a persona that hides his or her true identity and even if someone is not hiding his/her true identity it becomes really difficult for someone else (who actually does not know that particular person) to find out who he/she really is gender/class/race-wise. Each individual can choose whom they want to be for example, a boy can be a girl, an aged woman can be a young woman, a middle aged man can choose to be a young girl or they can always be anonymous. Therefore, the line between sex, age and race are being transgressed. This was supposed to be a positive phenomenon and we were so close to having a place which was free from gender discrepancies called cyberspace. But the very place that was supposed to give us our salvation became the ultimate pit of our damnation. We can always change who we want to be in cyberspace fooling others. But deep down inside we know who we truly are and one can never fool him/herself. So, when a woman, tired of being threatened by chauvinistic men decides to take on a persona of a man in cyberspace to be free, she might enjoy for the time being

because none might abuse him(!!!) for he(!!!) is a man(!!!). But the moment he(!!!) sees an image or a comment in cyberspace which is making fun of women for who they are, it becomes twice as hard for that individual to devour that shame. In real life it could have been a stench that slowly goes away or a wet cloth that dries up, but in cyberspace it is like a mirror that shows you who you truly are or a shadow that never lets go no matter what the circumstances may be.

Now that we have an idea about the devastating effects of cyberspace on the identity of women and their representation as well, we can come to the understanding that it is doubly painful to know that the place which could have given us the escape itself has become the cage.

The second way in which women are misrepresented in cyberspace is advertisement. Many would say that it is an old idea and women are being demeaned through advertisement since a long time now. As much as I want to agree to this fact, I must also suggest that in cyberspace these advertisements hold more appeal and there is an important aspect called ‘manufacturing consent’ that I would like to bring into attention.

From the images of *Facebook* to the walls of *4chan*⁵ and *9gag*⁶ image-based sites have become very famous nowadays. It is

⁵*4chan* is an English-language image-board website. Users generally post anonymously. The most recent posts appear above the rest. *4chan* is split into various boards with their own specific content and guidelines, while registration is not required.

⁶*9gag* is an image-based social media website which centers on user-uploaded, comical images dubbed “fun”. The site had 1 billion monthly page-views as of Dec 2011. Similarly to websites like *Reddit* and *Digg*,

easy to see how these sites with their images use shock value to demean, humiliate or embarrass women, mostly by false representation. The worst practice about these social networking sites is their constant struggle to advertise or sell products and often these products or their advertising techniques and strategies featuring women involves stereotyping them, use of female body images as well as their emotions and they are all considered as marketing policies or tactics. We also more or less know that social networking sites such as *Facebook* is one big ‘Panopticon’ where everything a person is doing, is being watched over by someone.

This explains how, advertisements of certain products offers pop up on your homepage when you talk about something related to that product or service with a friend either via messaging or posting on his wall.

One of the many advertisements that seem to prefer a man than a woman when weighing them on the scale of smartness could be found in *Facebook* on the page of Al Rifai, a popular brand of Lebanese nuts who also claim to be Lebanon’s finest (see Figure 2.1). There are two images here, one is the picture of a mixture of grinded nuts which is given a shape of human brains and below that, the words explains, “Because he’s got the brains”. And in the picture beside that we have an image of a curved nut and the words that explain reads “Because she’s got the curves.” In both the images we have one common statement and that is “happy valentine). So, should we consider the image promoting the idea that men should be judged by their

users can vote and comment on images, with the most recent image appearing first.

brains and women by their looks (curves)? It is very hard to digest that even in the 21st century we judge nuts (human being) in such sexist ways. Another advertisement that has been quite famous on social network sites was the concentrate girdle and little fibber bra from The Warner Brothers Company (see Figure 2.2). In this particular advertisement, a big fat pear appears on top of the image and the writings on top of it say, "This is no shape for a girl". Then there is another image below that of a girl lying half bent wearing the advertised girdle and bra and an explanation and information beside that about the company and its product. The advertising agencies should know better that it must be up to the girl to decide what her shape should be like and not them.

Now, getting back to the idea of "manufacturing consent" which is the idea that I am mostly concerned about because once we understand how it works we will begin to comprehend how harmful it is for differences that we already have in our gender roles. Firstly, the humiliating images or texts that are often found in social networking sites are slightly different than the actual advertisements, keeping in mind that both of them humiliate and are a disgrace to women in general. Siva K. Balasubramanian⁷ pointed out that organisations often relied on two non-personal communication devices in order to expose media audiences to product-related information. The devices are advertisement and publicity⁸. The difference between the two devices could be derived from their very definitions. Advertising is that type of a

⁷ Siva K. Balasubramanian is the Associate Professor of Marketing at the College of Business and Administration, Southern Illinois University.

⁸ "Beyond Advertising and Publicity: Hybrid Messages and Public Policy Issues." Siva K. Balasubramanian

communication which is made to advocate a product or person but communications are paid for and which clearly recognise the sponsors. On the other hand, publicity signifies messages that are not paid for and which never recognises the sponsors⁹. Keeping the advertisements apart, the images which are found in social networking sites also administer an ideology of their own, in some cases to demean and degrade women. Since the messages that are transmitted through the images of social networking sites, are done by users for personal pleasure, it could be understood that they are not paid for it. Since they are not paid for it, they are not basically advertisements but publicities. And these publicities on cyberspace lead us towards another politics called manufacturing consent. When the audience looks at an advertisement which is paid by the sponsor, they view the advertisement with scepticism since the advertisement is paid, and therefore the message content and format is controlled by the sponsor. On the other hand, when the message content and format is not controlled by the sponsor, the sponsor is not identified by the audience and thus, the message appears credible to them. This whole scenario aids to the process of instilling new ideas into the audience's mind and to ultimately manufacture consent.

So, from Figure 3.1, it is readily understood that, the publicities which are not sponsored or paid by the sponsors are subject to more admiration from the audience because they seemingly think that they have the freedom to think and their thoughts are not controlled by the messages of the sponsors. By doing this they develop a liking for the publicities which in turn manufacture consent. Since, the ones who develop these images on social sites are not sponsored by anyone and they do it for

⁹ Cohen 1988.

their own pleasure, the messages transmitted from the images have a trustworthy effect on the audience. The audience think that they are not controlled by the advertisements which are driven by sponsors and that they are free, following their own will. What they do not realise is that the non-sponsored publicities are controlling their minds all the same. They are manufacturing consent all the same and this is even worse because now, the audience are not even aware of being mind-controlled. It is more like the "Empty Gesture"¹⁰ which Slavoj Zizek had advocated, which talks about fantasy making people think that they are given a choice where actually they are not. This does not stop there. Relating Naom Chomsky's idea of "Engineering Opinion"¹¹ to the attempts of these image makers and we get a completely new politicized phenomenon. Chomsky talks about how important it is to 'whip the population' in order to fix their thoughts. He gives us the example of the peace loving people of the United States of America and tells us that the people do not have any affection for war but they are forced into thinking about going to war by 'Engineering Opinion". And in order to engineer opinion the people need to be frightened and that is exactly what the western media does. They depict the people of United States as unsafe and under threat so that they are afraid and are easier to manipulate, easier to convince about going to war. The exact same idea could be used here to understand that a group of people are at work day and night advocating these images and ideas over cyberspace so that women can never fully have their freedom and rights. For every two women who are becoming conscious about their rights every day, we might be looking at

¹⁰ The Seventh Veil of Slavoj Zizek's "The Seven Veils of Fantasy".

¹¹ "Engineering Opinion" is a chapter in Naom Chomsky's *Media Control*.

one, who is becoming the victim of such images or advertisements over cyberspace and losing her confidence going back to the place where the male dominating class want her to be since in the case of a woman, ideology goes far because their minds and bodies become the product of that manipulation¹².

It is a matter of sorrow and grievance that a day has come when we have to talk about these issues where the very utterance about these topics should not have taken place in the first place. We should think twice when talking about these problems, even tagging these issues as problems because to some people it is not giving them respect but questioning again and again the very base upon which the issue of giving respect was born. If it was not for the history of gender discrimination, we would not even have talked about the issue of respect because mutual respect between the two genders would have been there. That takes us to the age old statement of where you put a barrier on the first place, the question of uprooting that barrier comes in place. Where there is no barrier, there is nothing to uproot. We treated women as objects of visual pleasure¹³. We need to get over it.

On the other side of the river, the grass does look a little greener. Because the history that tells us about male domination, also speaks greatly of woman perseverance, their will to go on and their power to fight back. They have overcome mountains of troubles before and I strongly agree they will overcome the war of cyberspace. Time brought them together before, the arrow that quit the bow, although seems to be making its way into the

¹² "One Is Not Born a Woman" – Monique Wittig

¹³ "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" – Laura Mulvey

sheath¹⁴. We cannot let that happen. They will not be demoralized, defeated and dominated easily not only because they have the spirit to go on, but because they have it in their name. They are 'Fe'-males. They are exactly the same as their male counter parts, but with a will which is as strong as iron¹⁵.

Illustrations:



Figure 1.1 – Female teacher humiliated by a male student.

¹⁴ Referring to Helen Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa" where Cixous differentiated between the 'Old' woman and the 'New'.

¹⁵ Fe is the chemical sign for the Latin Ferrum also known as Iron in English, a very strong and hard metal often used as a metaphor for strong will.



Figure 1.2 – An image on Facebook making fun of high-heel shoes that women use amalgamating the woman with a horse.



Figure 2.1 – The advertisement of famous Lebanese company Al Rifai, an example of demeaning women only to their physical attributes

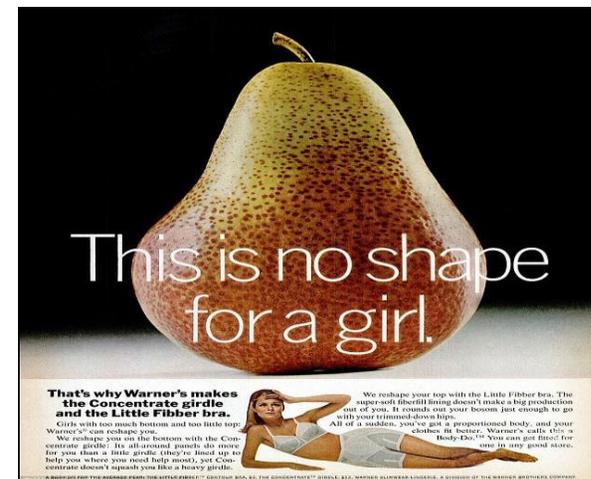


Figure 2.2 – The advertisement of Warner Brothers Company advocating the idea that women should not look like fat pears.

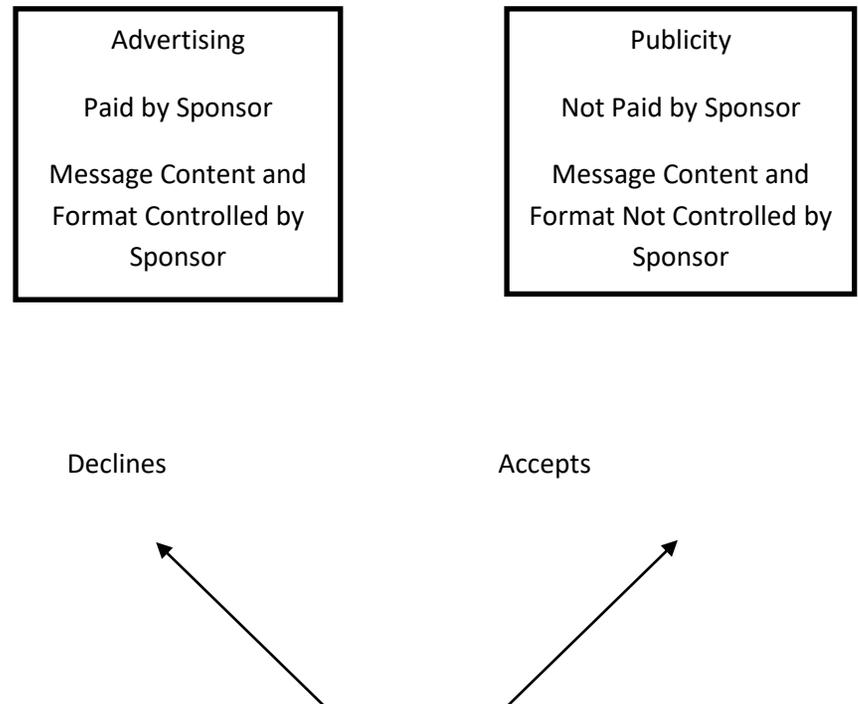
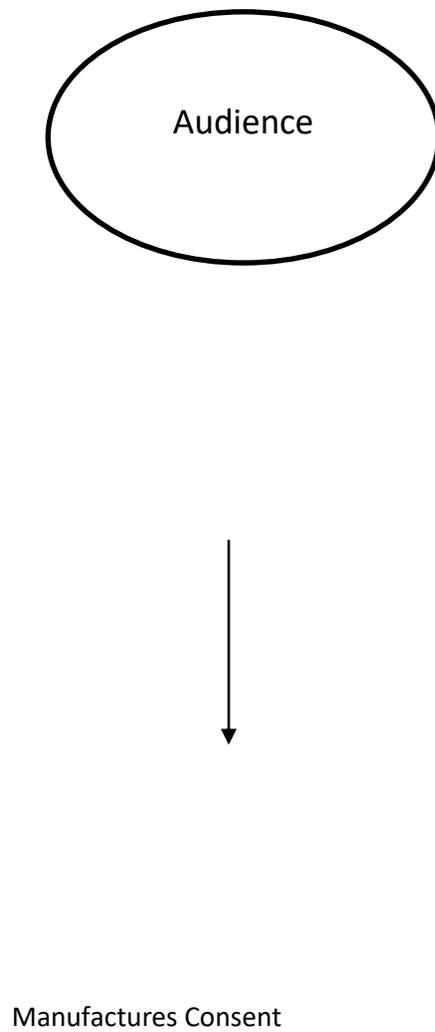


Figure 3.1 – Difference concerning advertisement and publicity in relation to manufacturing consent.



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THE CULTURAL IMAGES OF WOMEN IN MEDIA

- DR. SHUBHA MARAVANTHE

Talking of the present scenario, there is no doubt that the position of the Indian Women has changed drastically. Today Indian women walk hand in hand with men in every field of life and have also held high positions as the President, the Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha and also the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha. However, if we look at the other side of the progress, the condition of women is very pathetic. Gender discrimination is deep-rooted in the society. Daughters are considered a burden and are killed before birth in many cases. The birth of a daughter is viewed with less joy and more pain. Women continue to face so many atrocities such as gang rape and murder, female infanticide, molestation, dowry death, honour killing (maryada hatya) etc in their day to day life. The atrocities on Dalit Women are more severe than others. There are a large numbers of reported atrocities on Dalit women that can be found in various newspaper articles, journals, and government reports in India. Most of the cases are not reported in the news papers. Thus, the status of women in India is indeed paradoxical and contradictory. After the gang rape in Delhi on December 16, 2012, many more such incidents have been reported.

The last few decades have seen tremendous changes in the lifestyle of men and women mainly due to the effect of media. Over the years, cultural images concerning women in society have changed *dramatically*. Thus, the woman we see in current

newspaper advertisements is presented in a different perceptiveness: more powerful, more self-confident, energetic, and dominant. However, in spite of all these changes the media has not managed to overcome the typical stereotypes that are associated with women in India. They still have the eternal image of a woman who is confined to the boundaries, duties and responsibilities of her home and family. The representation of women in the media has always been exploitative in nature. It has, throughout the years, reduced women to being nothing more than objects to be won, prizes to be shown off, and playthings to be abused. The media has also created a definition of beauty that women compare themselves to. Also, men compare the women in their lives to what they see on television screens, in magazines, and on billboards.

What are the messages that the media is trying to convey of a new emancipated woman? Or does it define women's questions through 'event oriented' rather than 'issue oriented'? Does media reflect society or is the society shaped by media images? We need to ask that basic question. *Whose News: The Media and Women's Issue*¹ a classic book of Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma, which addresses a set of questions that has arisen in recent years concerning women's access to the media and to information as users, their participation in media and communication structures, and their portrayal and perspectives in media content.

¹ *Whose News: The Media and Women's Issues* Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma, 2nd edition, Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd. New Delhi 2006

Women issues in Print Media:

In the past few years there has been an improved and increased reportage of issues related to women in the media, particularly in the print. News related to women though still marginal have started to occasionally occupy important slots like the editorial, feature news, front-page news etc. However, women's visibility in the news is still dominated by sensational stories of glamour, sex, domestic violence and other forms of violence. Stories like women coping with adversity or building their lives are largely missing. Issues affecting women, their vast experiences and their lives, barely find their way into the mainstream media. Many other studies have also established that when women appear in the news, they are mostly projected as passive victims or passive reactors to public events in news media.

Most of the newspapers provides space to glamorous image of women in news stories feature or advertisements. The coverage of women's issues in terms of sexual harassment is higher than other types of issues like health, education, status/equality, violence / crime and police atrocities. We can say that the rate of sexual harassment against women is higher than developmental issues and newspapers give this issue higher coverage than other issues. The space given to other issues like equality, health, education of women etc is negligible. Newspapers do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

Portrayal of women in Visual Media:

Media plays an important role in community development. Television has become both a boon and a bane of our contemporary society. It plays on the psychology of the viewers and literally mesmerizes them. "The life styles of upper-class are mostly portrayed in the entertainment contents to create a sense of desire and aspiration amongst the viewing public towards such life styles"²

Fifty years ago, they depicted women as essentially "Good wives and mothers". But today when women have undergone radical changes, the media refuses to abandon their blinkers about women. Most of the Indian serials depict the woman as an obedient servant rather than a professional. Negative stereotypes have been identified. The most important asset of women is physical beauty. Women's place is in the house, their energies and intellect must be directed to finding the right man and in "retaining" him. Women are women's worst enemies. In most of the television serials, women are portrayed either as helpless victims suffering silently or as tough and cunning, out to take revenge for their sufferings by resorting once again to violence.

A notable Kannada serial director Late. Vaishali Kasaravalli in an interview regarding her famous serial *Muttina Torana*. says that she tried to change the previous images of women through her serials. " *Muthina Thorana* is a story of four sisters belonging to a middle class family. Kalavathi, Madhuvanthi, Purvi and Savni, are the main protagonists who are the daughters of Vamanrao Joshi and Anasuya. I wanted to tell the world that it is just not male children who are capable of supporting a family but girls too. Through this serial we have shown how four daughters take

² Dr. Saswati Gangopadhyaya: Seminar Paper presented at 3rd Refresher Course on Women Studies at ASC, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

the responsibility of their family. In Kannada, *muthu* means pearls, while *thorana* refers to a decoration that is put at the front door of our homes to bring peace and prosperity. Thus, we in this serial consider daughters to be as precious as pearls and as those who ensure peace and happiness in the family. Female characters are generally typecast as weak human beings and not as those with strong conviction and someone who can face life boldly. I have tried to break this image through *Muthina Thorana*. But it's not that all women are the same. In this serial too, there are an introvert, and extroverts girl too. If one is strong willed, the other is somber and soft-hearted.’’³ This is what we expect from the serial director.

Advertisement not only promotes the commodities for commercial gain but it is also a medium through which culture can be promoted, demoted or redefined.⁴ In most of the advertisements, a woman is either washing clothes or utensils, cooking, serving food to family members or trying to make her husband feel better who would be reading a newspaper or suffering from cold. A woman does all this even when she has headache or backache. These advertisements arguably encourage physical beauty. Shoma Chatterji, the freelance writer says, one of John Abraham’s underwear ads shows a number of females with pseudo-coy expressions on their faces coming out of a toilet. The camera

³ Interview with Vaishali Kasaravalli by Shruti Indira Lakshminarayana on the occasion of her serial *Muthina Thorana* which aired its 500th episode. “Serials were good before the entry of Balaji Productions” <http://www.rediff.com/movies/report/tv-vaishali-kasaravalli-on-muthina-thorana/20100409.htm> 2010

⁴ Portrayal of Women in Indian Media: In the era of Neo Liberal Economy, by Subhas Singha Roy, Global Media Journal- Indian Edition Summer Issue-June 2012

captures a shot inside the toilet where a handsome male model lies prostrate with the telltale lipstick marks across his body. Images in the media today project an unrealistic and even dangerous standard of feminine beauty that can have a powerful influence on the way women view themselves. From the perspective of the mass media, thinness is idealized and expected for women to be considered "attractive." Images in advertisements, television, and music usually portray the "ideal woman" as tall, white, and thin, with a "tubular" body, and blonde hair. They reinforce the old belief that a woman is supposed to forgo her own comfort and keep on doing household chores tirelessly. A woman’s place is in the home, Women do not make important decisions or do important things, women are dependent and need men's protection, and men regard women primarily as sexual objects. As far as showing women in advertisements is concerned, things seem to have only worsened over time. Advertisements have consistently confined women to traditional mother-, home-, or beauty/sex-oriented roles that are not representative of women's diversity

Dr. K. Durga Bhavani rightly remarks that “There is a basic connection between a woman’s experiences in visual media, which essentially forms the relationship between the spectator and spectacle. It is assumed that women are generally thought to be objects of spectacle in their everyday life and they have something in common with the images of women on the screen/visual media. The women enter into the mediated world of film or television with a context that is structured wholly for her absence/invisibility, which of course, often mirrors her real life’⁵

⁵ Women as the spectator and spectacle. Essays on Women and Media: Edited by K. Durga Bhavani, C. Vijayasree, Foundation Books Cambridge University Press India Pvt.Ltd.pp40, 2010

The need of Media Literacy:

Only 22% of the news makers in print, radio and television news in India are women. All over Asia only 20%.women's related news are covered. According to GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project) report 2010, it is a significant improvements since 1995.The report for India is based on data gathered from sample of 20 dailies, 11 TV news bulletins and five Radio bulletins which together represent 9 languages. The main reason for this situation is lack of media literacy among the women. The media literate person can describe what role media plays in his or her life. She can analyze, evaluate and produce communications in a variety of media like print, TV, computers etc.

A woman holds utmost importance in the Indian culture and household. Women are making outstanding achievements to the progress of modern society. The amount of coverage women get overall is also much less that men do. Further, the GMMP report reveals that men are provided with a large number of opportunities to present their view points in diverse roles like administration, law, business, science and technology which perhaps is denied to woman.

Women empowerment in India is still a distant dream. There still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other hand. India is fast developing but women in India continue to be discriminated. The declining sex ratio in India amply portrays the discrimination shown towards women at the stage of birth. They are victims of crime directed specifically at them, rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related crimes, molestation, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, etc.The struggle against violence is actually the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between

the sexes. It is the root cause for the subordinate status of women in the Indian society.

Media is a cultural commodity. It has transformed our social and cultural environment. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. Self regulatory mechanism for media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender based programming. The main purpose of media is to inform, educate and motivate the community to accept new ideas and technologies so as to enhance their living conditions. This will be strengthening their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally. Women therefore need to be involved in decision making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully on their growth and impact. It is high time to portray women in mass media as progressive, positive, and very creative.

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WOMEN IN VACANA LITERATURE¹

-DR. UJWALA HIREMATH

The 12th century multi-dimensional revolution which was a protest against the polluted religious and social environment is one of the most unique events in the religious history of perhaps any country in the world. This was a revolution involving religious, economic, social and literary reforms aimed at establishing a casteless and classless society which included gender equality as a valued aim.

This multi-faceted socio-religious movement, also known as the Sarana Movement originated under the charismatic,

¹ The vacanas are the sarans's songs of experience. Hence and therefore are as significant as the upanishads. Because these songs talk about religion, they are religious literature, because they discuss philosophy, they are philosophical literature, and because there is poetic quality in them they are literature. A.K.Ramanujan says "Vacanas are our wisdom literature. They have been called the Kannada upanishads" in *Speaking of Shiva*, Penguin books, New Delhi, 1973, p. 12

inspiring and dynamic leadership of Basaveshwara, popularly called Basavanna, who preached a practical form of spirituality which was characterized by personal devotion. He propagated a religion in which everybody could participate, a religion which did not necessitate renouncing secular life in order to attain the highest level of mystical experience. In fact Allama Prabhu, a great mystic of the 12th century, who was the President of *Anubhava Mantapa*,² Hall of Experience established by Basavanna said that devotion done by husband and wife was very dear to Lord Siva:

When a couple stand with their hearts made one,

As in sun-vision the twin-eyed look,

There's dedication to Guheshvaralinga

O Sangana Basavanna!

Every human being was potentially divine, and the ceremony of *diksha* (initiation) by a competent Guru, prepared

² Anubhava Mantapa : A parliament where men and women from all strata of society met every day and through sharing and exchange of views and ideas made contributions to the development of Virasaiva Philosophy and its doctrine. Unlike Plato, Basavanna did not divide society into classes of intellectuals and the mass of manual workers. Basava's Anubhav Mantapa was composed of 'Scholars and Philosophers' hailing from the rank and file of the populace.

the disciple to realize his true identity, his divinity. Both men and women were eligible for *diksha*. Basavanna advocated complete equality for all devotees. It was Basavanna's new religion Virasaivism that insisted on the equality of the sexes, in mundane as well as spiritual matters, and kept open the doors of his *Mahamane*³ for all castes and creeds.

It is a unique achievement of the 12th century Sarana movement that many women found their rightful place in society in the field of religion and literature. Even the Vedic period which was considered to be the golden age when women had equal status and had earned scholarship, cannot boast of so many women poets, philosophers and thinkers. Though names like Gargi and Maitreyi are still remembered for their scholarship, the 12th century women saints who were poets were no more than thirty. Basavanna gave women an honorable existence. The religion he preached liberated men and women from "the shackles of deeply entrenched social and religious superstitions and awakened them to the spirit of self-reliance self-confidence and free-thinking."⁴

The Sarana movement came as a great blessing to all women who were hitherto bound by unsympathetic orthodox traditions and rigid codes of conduct that had made their

³ *Mahamane* Basavanna's house which also like the *Anubhava Mantapa* gave women, high-born as well as low-born access to intellectual debates, to listen, to participate and to contribute to the development of Virasaiva Philosophy.

⁴ Justice P.B.Gajendragadakar, "Homage to Basava" in *12th Century Revolution for Equality and Social Justice* ed. R.H. Chandragoudar, Bangalore 2003, p. 55.

condition miserable by denying them any kind of freedom. This was also a time when *Manusmriti* had ruled out freedom for women by saying that "woman was not fit for freedom. In childhood she is taken care of by her father, in youth she is looked after by her husband and in old age by her sons." The lot of lower-caste women was worse than cattle because of the tyranny of the *Varnashrama Dharma*, which had caused the division of society into low born and high-born and as for woman, she was the low-caste *sudra* and was considered impure. It was at such a time that Basavanna arrived on the scene and brought about healthy changes in society. Social equality was the very breath of Basava's philosophy.

Basavanna's saranas were very vocal about the equality of women. Allama Prabhu silenced all those who accused women of being sirens and temptresses. He said that it was not woman who was a temptress Maya but desire.

They say wealth is Maya, but wealth is not Maya

They say woman is Maya, but woman is not Maya

It is desire that is Maya,

Which rides before one's mind.

Mark O Guhesvara.

Again, a misconception that had shackled woman was the belief that woman as long as she menstruates, is impure. But Allama Prabhu said

Once a wife becomes a devotee

She should not fear

The impurity of menstruation.

Siddharamayya, the saint from Solapur said that woman was Kapil Siddha Mallikarjuna Himself!

The woman He Himself had created

Adorned His head;

The woman He Himself had created

Adorned His lap;

The woman He Himself had created

Adorned Brahma's tongue;

The woman He Himself had created

Adorned Narayan's chest;

Therefore

Woman is no woman,

Nor is she a demon,

Woman is verily

Kapila Siddha Mallikarjuna Himself look.

Jedara Dasimayya who was a weaver by profession and one of the earliest to write vacanas (songs of experience) is

contemptuous of those who are ignorant enough to consider woman less than man. He says

If they see

Breasts and long hair coming

They call it woman,

If beard and whiskers

They call it man

But, look, the self that hovers

In between

Is neither man

Nor woman

O Ramanatha!

In another vacana he points out in a very telling manner how all are equal in the eyes of God, man, woman, high-born and low-born. He asks

Did the breath of the mistress

Have breasts and long hair?

Or did the master's breath

Wear sacred thread?

Did the outcaste, last in line,
 Hold with his outgoing breath
 The stick of his tribe?
 What do the fools of this world know
 Of the snares you set,
 O Ramanatha?

In yet another of his songs of experience, he with an analogy of a 'bamboo' cut in 'two' explains how one is not more important than the other. He says

Suppose you cut a tall bamboo in two;
 Make the bottom piece a woman,
 the headpiece a man;
 Rub them together
 till they kindle
 tell me now
 The fire that's born,
 is it male or female,
 O Ramanatha?

Another sarana of Basavanna's century, Ambigar Choudayya with mature understanding says how it is foolish not

to consider men and women equal, since the soul (atma) is neither male nor female. Everybody is born in the same way.

Birth everywhere is in the same way
 In blood and uterus and foetus,
 Mind, breath, life are held
 With the eight-fold cage of the body.
 It's woman if one develops
 The breasts and grows long hair
 It's man if he grows moustache
 But the soul is neither male nor female
 If one makes any attempt
 To know why this is so,
 It's beyond the ken of even Srtutis

Women too voice their protest against the inequality of sexes. For Goggave, the question is how they could be any difference between man and woman, when the knowledge they possess is asexual, neither male nor female. Very upset over the discriminating yardsticks to judge men and women, she questions conceptions of a distinctively female and male socio biologically determined difference between them. She shakes patriarchy's complacency about women, the patriarchal ideology that exaggerated biological differences. She even poses questions about the complexity of the relationship of feminism and philosophy – she raises questions concerning woman's autonomy,

the power to think herself into the fullness of her being, by raising questions of the relation between the knower and known – questions about human knowledge and human reason like Satyakka, Jedar Dasimayya, Allam Prabhu, Siddharameshwar etc. Valourizing gender neutral humanism over gender specific feminism, she bluntly says

If breasts and plaits of hair appear on a person,

People call her female

If moustache and beard appear on a person,

People call him male

But is the knowledge in the two

Female or male.

Goggave aware of the double standards, she had great appreciation for all those who were broad-minded enough to accept women as equal to men and knew how to respect them. She says, she would be so pleased with such people that. “I will call him a perfect being”. This intensity of feeling shows how socially deprived women were. Goggave gives vent to her ‘depressed’ views about women who were expected to adjust their behaviour according to social expectations. Society had stereotyped gender roles. She points out that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary constraints in the vacana quoted below.

If a man is enamoured of a woman and loves her,

She will be his property.

If a woman is enamoured of a man and loves him,

You should know the answer

If a person could be happy

By eliminating the feeling of duality,

I would call him a perfect being

For Ayyadakki Lakamma the difference between the sexes is superficial – only physical, that too for a reason. She tells

Husband and wife are but two for union

Are they two for sharing Knowledge? She asks

Satyakka, a sweeper by profession has gained so much confidence because of the sarana movement which made equality for women and respect for them its primary concern, that she is bold enough to declare that the wise do not differentiate between male and female souls, and going a step ahead of Goggave and Jedar Dasimayya she says “when it has not been ‘proved’ that those who develop ‘breasts’ and ‘plaits’ alone are female, then why the difference?

It’s not testified

That a person having breasts

And plait alone is a female

And that a person wearing a lion-cloth

Crowing moustache and carrying a dagger alone male

She quite emphatically says

That is the way of the world,

And not of the wise.

She further explains

Whatever the fruit,

What matters is its sweetness;

Whatever the flower, though ugly,

What matters is its fragrance,

You yourself know its secret

She reminds her God – ‘O Sambu Jakkeshwara’

This sophisticated approach to the question of gender by Satyakka, a sweeper with no education, makes one wonder at the ‘midas’ touch of the Sarana movement. It is amazing how far-sighted the low-born sweeper was! What she said about nine hundred years ago, India started thinking about gender seriously, only when the second wave of feminism hit the shores of India in 1960s. It is only after the 1960s that the government of India became aware of woman’s subordinate status and appointed a committee to look into the matter. The committee headed by Vina Muzumdar submitted its report in 1975 which confirmed

woman’s low status at home and society Satyakka, in a very subtle fashion questions and in dismisses Freud’s theory of biological determinism, she dismisses outright the enslaving – objects of women’s biology. She challenges patriarchy’s, construction of gender. She rejects gender polarity and questions conceptions of a distinctively female perspective which are sometimes linked to a belief in biologically based differences between men and women. Feminism should be understood as a way of being that needs no external reference point. Satyakka too like Goggavve implies gender is a social construct. She also raises a philosophical question about human knowledge and human reason.

Nilambike the wife of Basavanna called herself his ‘*vichar patni*’ i.e. his intellectual wife and *Agadakki* Lakamma and *Moligeya Mahadeviamma* with their depth of understanding of the Virasaiva philosophy, were able to guide their respective husbands in a moment of spiritual crisis. *Moligeya Mahadeviamma* was the queen of Mandavapura (Kashmir) and *Ayadakki Lakamma* was the wife of a poor rice picker. But the *Anubhava Mantapa* had given them equal scope and teaching that all differences, were wiped out, and their thinking had risen to a level in spirituality which very few in life could attain.

Akka Mahadevi wins the praise of Allam Prabhu, Basavanna, Cenna Basavanna Siddharama, Madival Machideva and several other saranas and shivasharanas (women saints) by her moral and spiritual strength as well as for her intelligence.

Cennabasavanna overwhelmed by Akka’s depth of knowledge and her sense of poetry says

The Ancients’ sixty vacanas are worth

Twenty of Basavanna’s,

The great leader's twenty,
 Prabhudeva's ten;
 Prabhudeva's ten are worth Ajaganna's five,
 Ajaganna's five in Lord Kudala Cennasanga
 Are worth one in Mahadeviakka'
 See that, Siddharamayya!

In the dialogue that takes place between Allama Prabhu and Muktayakka on the occasion of her brother Ajaganna's death, one comes across an intelligent, confident and courageous Muktayakka, who in argument rises to the level of Allama Prabhu and is on an equal footing with him. She has the courage to tell Allama Prabhu, who was recognised as the greatest mystic that a person who has grasped knowledge must not 'traffic with words'. In this dialogue the vacanas have attained poetic height, and are the finest example of philosophical poetry. What is remarkable in this is that in the 12th century women were given such a status that she could without fear face, confront and discuss with anybody she liked. Because of the respect and freedom given to them, they could think high and write vacanas full of irrepressible charm. For example this is how Muktayakka expresses pointing to the mystery of experience as well as remembering the height of Ajaganna's yoga and understanding the glory of sarana

He has a watery doll
 And about her feet

He has tied anklets
 Made of all space
 And he has given her
 To a doll of space,
 For her to fondle...
 He has raised a throne
 Made all of fire,
 For a camphor doll
 How strange, the fire
 Has melted away,
 The camphor remains!
 Strange, too, indeed,
 Ajaganna's Yoga

Bontadevi, the princess of Kashmir having come under the influence of the sarana movement wrote vacanas which express her love for humanity and her faith in equality Bontadevi in the vacana quoted below indicates the irrationality of divisions, differences and discriminations.

Is there such a thing
 As a void within a village
 And void outside a village?

Is there a Brahmana's colony within a village

And a pariah's colony outside a village?

Wherever you go, the void is the same.

It is because of the dividing wall

That there is inner void and outer void

Bontadevi very clearly suggests that divisions are man-made, therefore unnatural. These different colonies based on caste differences are meaningless, because 'void' is the same. There is no difference in the space that occupies a pariah's colony and that of the Brahmana. She speaks of common brotherhood, one humanity. It is one of the most significant achievements of *vacankaras* that they used *vacanas* as a medium to free society of the numerous social ills caused mostly by creating inequalities at various levels. This is their greatest achievement, their unique contribution. The beauty of this *sarana* movement was the unity of thought in favour of the downtrodden, the deprived and women.

Vacana literature introduces one to several women who through Basavanna's emancipatory revolution were able to write and ensure for themselves a place of honour in society and literature.

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TIME UNRAVELS: A STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *A MATTER OF TIME* (1998)

-VIJAY SHESHADRI

“Recognizing ourselves in art affirms our lives and struggles and helps us make connections with each other”

-Daphne Reed with Rosemary Donegan and Liz Martin.
Canadian Feminism Today (P295-296)

In the contemporary global situation, Feminism as a movement has made one to grapple with issues of women such as a lack of universal identity due to biological determinism, oppression in various spheres like socio-economic, political, and domestic and in work spaces. Incidentally this marginalization of women in a sexist culture has in a way provided the necessary impetus for women to assert and index themselves and the society in a matter of fact manner. In fact, “it was the denial of this endowment to live the whole of human life that brought the women’s rights movement into being. Feminism born of humanism”. (Beauvoir,1983) Such an endeavour has paved way for the surfacing of a large number of women writers and critics in the latter half of twentieth century and the first decade of twenty first century,

The term Feminism was first employed by the French Dramatist Alexandre Dumas, the younger in 1872, in a pamphlet *L’*

Homme-femme. The feminist movement of the 1960s all the world over attempted to locate and reshape cultural practices that ushered in suppression of women. The movement emphasized that phallogocentrism was a cultural construct which was viewed by both male and female as natural and had to be deconstructed. It is quite obvious here that Feminism is a socio-political movement critiquing the subaltern status of women essaying a change. It is not necessarily against men but any social set up which subordinates women.

Simone de Beauvoir’s proclamation in *The Second Sex* “One is not born a woman, one becomes one” is very much apparent in a “non-first world” country like India where conventional mores, social and religious practices intrude on individual’s psyche whether she or he and shapes their individuality. In such a situation, gender demarcated roles inscribe society’s views about wo/men. Angela Carter’s comments are pertinent in this context:

There is the unarguable fact of sexual differentiation but separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally defined variables translated in the language of common usage to the status of the universals. (Carter 6)

Such being the situation, as the societies all the world over predominantly operate under androcentric prerogatives, for an Indian woman, to uphold the traits of archetypal images such as Sita, Savitri, Shabhari, Gandhari, from the ancient Indian Classical lucubrations as consecrated and sane becomes immanent. History has shown us that the Women Question of the Victorian Period subsequently led to the Suffragette Movement in England where women started asserting their right to vote. For

the Indian Women, perhaps it was the Indian National Movement which provided the initiative for them to know and explore their capabilities. This in a way paved way for women to chart out a “space” for themselves.

My attempt here is to explore Feminism- its normalcy or deviance and there are no attempts to establish a paradigm since to establish a paradigm is to defeat the very purpose of such an exploration which interrogates the ideology behind such paradigms.

Psychological traits no doubt play a pivotal role in sex determination. Due to a platonic notion of femininity which is prevalent in majority of the societies the world over, defining femininity poses a problem or is itself problematic. For instance W. Liepmann says that femininity is vulnerability (Klein, 1963). G. Heyman is of the opinion that the basic quality of femininity is emotionalism (Klein, 1963). Gina Lombroso views femininity as androcentricism. To Freud, the essence of femininity is a preference for passive aims. According to Bronfenbrenner, the feminine type is physically and in a certain sense mentally nearer to infantile type than man. For Otto Weininger, woman’s natural inclination towards sexuality results in mendacity, hypocrisy and disposition to hysteria (Cape: 1925). Alfred Adler’s feminine character is based on women’s marginal space in an androcentric world. It is apparent here the definitions are as variegated as the minds. Perhaps the best way is to view feminism as a movement is the resultant factor of women’s concerted efforts against patriarchy from the past two hundred years or so. In the words of Shoshana Felman “Feminism can be defined as a reaction against the western phallogocentrism which becomes manifest in man’s claim” (Felman, 3). J.R. Richards is of the view that “Feminism is a belief in the unjust treatment of women by the society” (Richard,

1-2). The complexities involved are evident here in attempting at a precise definition of Feminism.

Critics have striated Feminism into First Wave, Second Wave, Third Wave and Postfeminism. Perhaps it is better to view Feminism as First World Feminism and Non-first World Feminism. “First World” feminism attempts to locate the alliances, blindness and successes of the early feminist practices/texts and attempts to negotiate other practical ideologies and discourses of gender. Women in the first world perhaps enjoy better privileges than their Indian counterparts regarding personal decisions such as choosing a career, husband, jobs, academic career, motherhood and so forth. Perhaps scientific advancements have paved a way for sheer professionalism and proliferation of education prompting the individual to respond quickly and positively to the parities and disparities, in a system governed by norms and regulations. The suffragette and Feminist movement are testimonies to this having their roots in Developed countries. A Majority of the issues related to women’s emancipation such as abortion, child bearing, Lesbianism, Marriage, M/otherhood, the Fe/male body, Femininity and its construction, Sexuality, Gender construction and bias, have all been dealt with in the first world. Such preoccupations can be witnessed in the body of Anglo-American, French, and Canadian Writings. For instance Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1968) Mary Ellman’s *Thinking About Women* (1968) Elaine Showalters’ *Toward a Feminist Poetics* (1979), Helen Cixous’ “Laugh of the Medusa”, Luce Irigaray’s “This Sex Which Is Not One” , the English-Canadian and French-Canadian writers like Barbara Goddard, Donna E Smyth, Susan Jackel, Anne Pratt, Nicole Brossard, Jovette Marchesault, have all attempted to redefine women’s goals and activities from a

gynocentric view point, driving home the point that women's culture should not be mistaken for a sub-culture.

Interestingly, various other feminist discourses that have surfaced in the First World are Liberal Feminism which argues for equal job opportunities and pay for women in a sexist culture, Cultural feminism prescribes "an alternative women's culture" to eradicate problems related to women (Therapy movement, Meditation, Women-bonding, cults of Matriarchy, Goddess Worship, Women in Literature) and they are branded as "inward looking" and "contemplating their navels". Academic feminism having its moorings in educational institutions tends to be individualistic and elitist in nature. Lesbian feminism views heterosexuality not as being "natural" and "innate" but as a construct-an institution onto which women are coerced and recruited by various means. In fact, Lesbian feminism helps one to heal the rifts between Lesbianism and hetero feminism vis-à-vis feminist movement.

The ideologies and preoccupations of the Non-first world feminisms are as interesting. In a developing non-first world scenario (like India for instance) the double standards vis-à-vis women, still persists and the dice is heavily loaded against them. Such a situation in fact poses a problem for the rapid proliferation of the popularity of the feminist movement. The reason could be lack of scientific thinking, education and last but not the least, anchoring to the static in the traditions and cultures. In spite of sixty six years of independence and fifty three years since feminist movement, India is still registering a marginal change. Issues like virginity and menstruation still persist as taboos. A place like "Sati Sthal" at Deorola is still revered. Why is it so? Probably, the reason lies in the fact that a large number of women in India, especially the rural women are illiterate (62%) (Sheshadri,1997).

In spite of such odds, a general atmosphere of liberalism has percolated into the Indian society with respect to the urban educated women- from a touch-me not or Devi Image to a dynamic career oriented woman. Many career women are finding that they can do without the institution of marriage. For instance, Mona Ambegoankar, a TV serial director observes: "Men have to fit into woman's life styles than vice-versa". Shubanghi Parkar, a doctor at KEM hospital at Mumbai declares: "I am enjoying my single status. I feel like a free bird" Ravina Raj Kohli, a creative director of Sony TV opines: "Men are weaker sex. I don't need a man hanging on my shoulder to feel complete". Farah Khan, a choreographer observes: "I am willing to lose out on marriage, but not on my career" (The Week, PP39-45). All these comments stand as a testimony to the shifting attitudes of women towards phallogocentric norms. Incidentally, the works of Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, Rajeshwari Sunderajan, V. Geetha, Tejaswinin Niranjana, Kum Kum Sanghari and Sudesh Vaid, Romila Thapar, Gayatri Spivak, Vandana Shiva, Medha Patkhar, Arundathi Roy and scores of women writing in regional literature can definitely argue for an existence of non first world feminism. It is quite apparent here that the non-first world feminist enquires and ideologies or preoccupations are a rather recent entrant on the literary and critical scene echoing Marcia Holly's words:

A tentative beginning in the development of a feminist literary aesthetic-one that is at odds with masculinist value standards measuring literature against an understanding of authentic female life (Holly 46)

While one is conscious of the difficulties in summing and homogenizing the preoccupations that affect women in various parts of the globe, one may comprehend certain variegated patterns. Of course in any attempt to draw distinction between

Feminisms, one should be careful not to homogenize either first world or non first world feminisms, since the process of indexing, in each instance need to address various considerations such as class, colour, religion, sexuality and politics which have striated women's movements. For instance there is a cry against non first world women that they have not attempted to establish indigenous roots for the women's movements and they are only influenced by their western counterparts. Such an argument appears skeptical since globalization has spawned an international "women's development" network. Today, non-first world women's movement attempts to negotiate the dynamics of globalization on the one hand and of the postcolonial nation state on the other. Such an attempt definitely provides the necessary impetus for women to get out of the "Sisyphus Stratum" (Basu 147) and helps them in their empowerment. Since the non first world feminism has begun to address and articulate both the specificity of women's issues and their profound nexus with the community at large, their predictions appear to be coming true.

Being parochial is to attempt at reading a minuscule history in a universal light. The diverse and overpowering landscapes (outer as well as inner) and sharply etched moods dominate works written by women in contemporary times. Indian feminine sensibility registers itself quite exhaustively in fiction today. It is marked by a compelling and authentic sense of space, place, which in each case describes and defines a circumscribed particular geographic and psychic space. Such a preoccupation is witnessed in Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*, the range of place being limited as her field of focus is deep. Deshpande observes: "No idea comes from a single source. My stories are always set within the context of my surroundings" (Femina, 124)

Shashi Deshpande's novels succinctly delineate the travails of a literate bourgeoisie woman entangled in a web of phallographic norms. Saritha of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu of *Roots and Shadows*, Jaya of *That Long Silence*, Urmi of *The Binding Vine*, Madhu of *Small Remedies* (2000), Manjari of *Moving On* (2004), Devyani of *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) stand as exemplars. But *A Matter of Time* is a novel with a difference in the sense that the reader is forced to comprehend and view things through a male character Gopal unlike other novels of Shashi Deshpande where everything flows through the consciousness of a woman protagonist. Shashi Deshpande's comments are relevant here: "Identifying myself with a male character was a first for me" (Femina, 124)

A Matter of Time is undoubtedly a feminist oriented fiction which attempts at an androgynous vision where the registering of experiences of wo/men get inextricably intermixed. It is a novel which explores and provides insights into the complexities involved in human relationships. Set against a North Karnataka setting, *A Matter of Time* charts the lineage of a family who were advisers to Peshwas.

The novel circles round Gopal who deserts his wife and three daughters for reasons he himself is unable to explain, perhaps on his way to *Sanyasa*. This forces Sumi, Gopal's wife and mother of Arundathi, Charulatha and Seema to perform a *nostros* (return to maternal home) temporarily. Interestingly, Sumi's return to her natal house provides her mother Kalyani the necessary impetus to explore her persona, her fiasco as daughter, mother and wife drawing parallels with Sumi to perceive a common footing. In fact, Kalyani herself is imprisoned in a marital solitude for thirty years by her husband Shripathi—a reward by the God of phallography for having lost their deranged son. Much of

the action the novel takes place in the ancestral home “a living presence” for its dwellers. The novel opens with a graphic description of the ancestral home ‘Viswas’ a class structured edifice:

The family entrance is obviously at the side of the house, where stone steps, eroded with use lead through a wooden wicket-gate to verandah. The house is the Big house to its inhabitants, getting its name from the comparison to an out house built for the live-in help of Cook. Renovated since then and rented out to a family, the outhouse now looks as if it has been placed there to show off the size and grandeur of the house (AMT 4)

The first section of the novel “The House” very effectively delineates the existential ‘no exit’ predicament. The clown’s song “*jeena yahan, marna yahan, kiske siva jana kahan*” (AMT 8) heard from the Television against the background of Gopal’s conversation with Sumi highlights the monotony of life, the impingement of societal constructs on her or he, not allowing an individual to act according to his or her own accord. Both wo/man are “trapped into inactivity by the greatest fear of all- the fear of losing face” (AMT 13). Interestingly, Gopal and Kalyani are two versions of existentialism. While Kalyani like the Christian existentialists feels that in God (Patriarchy!) wo/man may find freedom from tensions, Gopal emphasizes the loneliness (like Beckett and Kafka who are proclaimed atheists!) of man and believes that it is only by exercising his free will, that a man acquires being or reality:

If it is indeed true that we are bound to our destinies, that there is no point struggling against them, even then this remains- that we do not submit passively or cravenly, but

with dignity and strength. Surely this, to some extent frees us from our bonds (AMT 246)

Again, “life is a battle against death, a battle that we ultimately lose” (AMT 216). Sumi’s rational mind on the other hand realizes that “Destiny is us”.

Sumi realizes that the husband wife relationship is no longer holy and marriages are not made in heaven in an age governed by speed, information technology and science. She comes to terms with the situation quite convincingly:

-We can never be together again. All these days I have been thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living, his life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged. They move separately, two different streams. (AMT 85)

The second section “The Family” traces the lineage of Sumi’s family to Viswas Rao who was advisor to the Peshwas in 1766. The section chronicles three generations of the family- Vittal Rao- Manorama, Sripathi-Kalyani, Goda- Satyanarayana and culminates in Gopal- Sumitra, the main characters of the novel. In this process of tracing the history, History manifests itself as His Story since women do not figure at all:

Of women, there is nothing. They are only an absence, still waiting to be discovered, something that only Aru will notice later. But that is altogether another story, it has no place here (AMT, 95)

Along with the chronicling of family history, the squabbles, and the domineering patriarchal set up with its

patriarchal prerogatives, the othering of mother, marginalization of women comes to a full circle in Sumi realizing that, “We are all of us, always strangers to one another” (AMT 180)

The third section “River” metonymically designates that things just go on without any interruptions ending on a note of advice to wo/men to dwell harmoniously creating a peaceful world:

If it is indeed true that we are bound to our destinies, that there is no point struggling against them, even then this remains –that we do not submit passively, or cravenly, but with dignity and strength (AMT 246)

The section “River” serves as a metonym for life signaling the flow or river/water and revealing the inevitability of movement and change that one has to confront in life. Flowing is part of one’s life. “Either you choose to move, to do something in life or live a life of selfishness, greed, and self centeredness. And these two are the only alternatives. To reject both these alternatives, is to let in despair” (AMT, 183)

The coercive effect of sexual colonialism is brought to the fore in *A Matter of Time*. In statements like Kalyani enduring everything since “she is a wife and not a widow? The fact that she has the right to all the privileges of the wife of a living husband?” what is life without a husband? (AMT, 167) Nagraj, the realtor’s advise to Sumi, “safer for you and your daughters to be with your parents. The world is not a good place for women to be on their own” (AMT, 195) “Seema herself was born when I didn’t want a baby. And it’s no use anyway? (AMT, 159) and “Daughters don’t belong” (AMT, 198) stand as testimonies.

An interesting aspect of *A Matter of Time* is the fact that the novel impressively delineates this issue- that males also suffer from a lack of fulfillment, travail and so forth. Dwelling in a sexist culture. Gopal’s comment, for a woman, from the moment she is pregnant, there is an overriding reason for living, a justification for life that is loudly and emphatically true. A man has to search for it, always and forever,” (AMT, 68) highlights the fact that women have a sense of completeness in life-pregnancy, childbirth nurturing and so on. Gopal’s preoccupation suggests a serious lacuna, of non-fulfillment in life: “Woman and child. And I was outside. A man is always an outsider” (AMT,68)

A note on the technique of narration in *A Matter of Time*. The actual narrator of the novel is Time “*Aham Kalosmi*” juggling the reader between time present, past and future. The concentric movement of the narrative, the coalescing of the Author, Time and Reader gets registered in statements like:

And yet, if you cannot expect constancy, on what do you base human relationships? (AMT 198)

“We leave them there” (AMT 346)

In sum, Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time* can be read as a careful sociological study of the gradually changing status of the Neo-woman in India on account of her educational development and its consequent economic independence. Yamunabai and Arundathi stand as exemplars. To Yamunabai, “Education was the tool with which she would work for the realization of her dream” declares the omniscient narrator” (AMT 187) while Arundathi take after Eric Jong’s words “To name oneself is the first act of both the poet and the revolutionary” (AMT 143) Sumi in *A Matter of Time* conducts a number of

experiments dwelling in a world that is not readily conducive to such a spirit of experimentation and exploration of life. *A Matter of Time* attempts at an important dimension- Wo/man as a normal healthy human being with a spiritual depth, a moral vision a potential that helps a woman to transcend worldly intellectual experiences enabling her eventually to emerge as an independent free human being first and a woman next. The politics of a family is seen in a microcosm as the politics of a nation (here a non-first world country like India) vis-à-vis the 'space' occupied by a woman in a sexist culture. *A Matter of Time* thus is a fine instance of Time is the greatest healer! (for Wo/men) and goes on to throw light on the future things to come, that is women would definitely in the course of time to come, achieve economic, social, political independence by emending the balance which is tilted towards patriarchy for harmonious dwelling in a androgynous world. It is just a matter of time!

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Sisyphus Stratum consists of people "endlessly toiling at the bottom of the socio-economic stratification. See Gloria Joseph's article "Caribbean Women: The Impact of Race, Sex and Class" in A. Basu Ed. *Women's Movements in Global Perspective*. Boulder Co. Westview Press, 1995, Print

THE NEW WOMAN IN THE EARLY INDIAN NOVEL

-PARVATHI G. AITHAL

Literature has normally constructed itself around man-woman relationship in its multi-dimensional aspects. When the novel in India developed as a prose narrative in the 19th century, it began to present man-woman relationship not only as it had been projected in the Romances and the Epics of its traditional literature, but also carried forth the sociopolitical concerns of gender. Hence it is possible to obtain valuable insights into the woman question, and the way in which society looked at it, if we place the early Indian novel against the backdrop of the historical forces that moulded it.

'The early novel, in almost every Indian language is woman-centered, and situations are created that they are left to themselves, have to act independently, and take their own decision. Two distinct patterns emerge: one in which women are removed from their families, and the second in which they remain situated within them. Dislocation takes place through acts of kidnapping, abduction, war or other such events. From the

narrative point of view, this initial dislocation frees them from social constraints and compels them to draw upon their own resources. In the second pattern, women proceed to dislocate family structures and alter them through questioning and departure from the accepted norm. There is, at times, some overlapping, but in the main, these two patterns project them as individuals in their own right.'

(Jain 27-28)

The age old traditions of the Indian society exhibit obvious gender discriminations in such a way that all powers were centred in the hands of men, and women had no other alternative but remain subservient throughout. Discrimination starts even before a child is born. All the conventional blessings showered upon a pregnant woman mentioned only sons. The institution of marriage also boosted the procreation of sons, where women were simply made instruments to fulfill the lives of men. Manu's *Dharmashastra* always argued in favour of men, who saw the advantages of observing the laws made by Manu and kept women under their control, making patriarchal feudalism an institute by itself. That was how an Indian housewife came to be expected to subordinate her own needs to those of her family, vastly prescribing an all-encompassing bondage. Hers became a thankless round of service- demanded but unacknowledged. 'According to Manu, no female- whether girl, young woman or old woman- was to be allowed independence of action. A woman was to be under her father's control in childhood, her husband's once married, and her son's when widowed'. (Nabar 66). 'The assumption that women should willingly submerge even the desire for food until everyone else in the family has eaten has been developed into an imperative which the Indian woman learns to accept from a very early age. A girl-child's share is

therefore less than enough in a family where there isn't 'enough' anyway. Her own mother, having been lulled to sleep each night on the song of deprivation, is conditioned to regard this as a female legacy which it is her duty as a concerned mother to impart to her daughter'. (Nabar 57-58)

It is this power-structure which continued for centuries, and which saw substantial changes with the revolutionary ferment of the Reformist Movement in India, with the efforts of a few sensible men-who wished to see women's identity from a different light. The advent of colonial modernity, blended with the regional modernity augmented the efforts of the Reformists. The narrative of the dislocation of the women's position in the family as well as the society naturally became the focus of the early Indian novel.

In the Indian context, the emergence of the novel as a new genre in all regional languages coincided with the incorporation of the corresponding societies into the Victorian project of modernity. The Victorian period in England was an age noted for its conflict between religion and science where the discoveries and inventions of science gave rise to the development of economy. There were several social and political factors which brought about a shift in the space provided for women in the society. Domesticity and motherhood were seen as perfect ways for emotional fulfillment of women, thus preventing them from getting lured by public sphere. One of the primary functions of women was to attract men by their beauty. In the domestic world they were asked to be perfect managers, well trained in the household duties and soft skills, and equipped to control and direct the servants.

The Victorian modernity came to India with the intention of shifting native societies from their traditional moorings. The traditional socio-cultural and political systems of the Indian society, at variance with the Indian system, were considered outmoded and unfit for progress. In order to uphold and glorify the Western culture, India was said to be barbarous. However, though the colonial modernity resulted in the birth of new things, since the blending of the traditional aspects was inevitable with it, there were regional and local variations of this modernity. Colonial modernity was built upon discrimination, and naturally sexual discrimination became a tool for the construction of inequalities. The colonizers, at first created racial discrimination, and women in turn, were doubly enslaved. Nevertheless, space was provided for women through the impact of Victorian modernity on colonial modernity. In the Indian context, the emergence of the novel as a new genre in the vernacular coincided with the incorporation of the corresponding societies into the Victorian project of modernity.

Domestic space was one of the focus areas for the discourse of colonial modernity too. Man was the embodiment of rationality and woman was categorized as governed by natural forces and hence requiring domination and control. Thus girls were trained right from the beginning to consider domestic space as theirs, as it was considered feminine. However, male domination and domestic bondage were familiar to the age old practice in India too. But English education and socialization of women were the additional advantages provided to the Indian women through modernity.

In the early Indian novel, women were placed in a conflictual situation because of the contradictory ideologies which governed their position in the society. The questions before

them were whether their education was to be a liberating agency for them, whether they were valued as women or individual citizens. The patriarchal structures were still prevalent in the society, and they were not the traditional structures. They did not have any independent status, in their struggle for power between their own men and the imperial rulers. But, despite these hurdles, women's emancipation was approached in several ways.

Women's emancipation was the main agenda of some of the reformists like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Gopalakrishna Gokhale and several others. However, women's education was not there in their priority list. Breaking women off from the constraints of tradition was their objective, because it was necessary to place them as ideal wives in the nuclear family of the Victorian model. The new educated woman was expected to be the true companion and support for the reformist Indian man, seeking professional advancement. Besides, they were expected to accept the division between the public and the private. The men's patriarchal notions about women did not undergo any change in spite of their Western education. However, female education was focused on creating a new identity for women within the household.

The print technology was introduced in Bengal in 1800. The first Bengali newspaper was *Samachar Darpan*. The print culture paved the way for an easier cultural transference and faster dissemination of the colonial discourse. It led to the fusion of tradition and modernity. The Manuals printed in Bengal following the British model, advised and guided the women as to how to establish themselves in the domestic space. All the writings in the Manuals were in the form of husband's advice to his wife. The issues discussed in these Manuals were contextualized within the Bengali domestic scene. The women

were to be taught only those subjects which were feminine like developing their soft skills of sewing, knitting, embroidery, sketching and drawing. Almost all the early Indian novels are women oriented and the female characterizations in them incorporate these qualities in them.

Child marriage, suttee system, widow suffering, purdah, prostitution, denial of education etc. were the various ways in which women were exploited in those times. Therefore, along with the introduction of modernity, these issues also were taken up by the early Indian novelists, with the intention of reforming the society. They presented the dislocation of power structures by looking at women from a new perspective. An attempt to free women from the constraints of child marriage, the confines of widowhood and purdah, dowry harassment, cruel treatment at the in-laws, ostracism in the name of protecting honour and chastity, contempt for the prostitutes and courtesans etc. seems to be the strategy exercised in all these novels. This article presents a theme wise profile of the major early novels in Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam and Kannada with regard to the dislocation of women's status in the society.

The Urdu translation of the Persian novel *Nashtar* appeared in 1893. Its English translation came in 1992 under the title 'The Nautch Girl'. Its heroine is a courtesan, and so stands outside the domestic relationship. But the male-female binary is paralleled by the white-black relationship within which the control and exercise of power is fixed. We find a triangular relationship in the novel. Khanum Jaan is dislocated from her parents' house because of her mother's walking out of it. She is stuck to the ideals of chastity and honour. Mir Sahib, who is Munshi to the British officer Ming, falls in love with her. Khanum makes Mir Sahib arrange a secret marriage because she is afraid that he

might keep her as his mistress. But her plans do not work. As they prepare to elope, Ming, who exercises his power over Mir Sahib, detains him in order to divert him. At last, when he casually reaches her, he finds her dead. Here we can see that the novel represents two issues- one is Khanum's deep concern for honour and chastity, and the other is her failure to keep it safe. The novelist, nowhere in the novel, looks down upon the life of the courtesans. Khanum's attachment to honour and chastity shows her strength of character against the common impression that the courtesans lead a life of promiscuity.

Mirza Mohammed Hadi-Ruswa's *Umrao-Jan-Ada* is another important novel which came originally in Urdu itself. Ruswa finds a new technique to narrate the story. The author begins it, and Umrao continues it. Thus the perception of her situation is both male and female. When Umrao hesitates, Ruswa prompts her by reminding her of what happened in the past. Umrao had been engaged to be married to her cousin. But she was abducted at the age of nine. She had to undergo a period of imprisonment and semi-starvation before she was sold. She becomes a courtesan, and is deprived of a permanent relationship, motherhood and family life. However, as a courtesan, she has the freedom for education, learning of art and poetry. She is free to develop relationship with the men of her choice. The entire novel runs through the description of the different relationships she has entered into. She freely expresses her opinion about the various emotional and physical requirements of a woman. Her life is what she has made of her choices at every stage. She is different from other courtesans in her spirit of independence. She sets up a house of her own and lives there alone without the help or support of a man.

The Hindi novelist Premchand (1880-1936) was strongly influenced by the Reformist Movement. His novels establish the pivotal role of a woman in the development of the society. He glorifies the institution of marriage, saying that it is very essential in the life of an individual for the fullness one's personality. Especially, a woman should never be deprived of the opportunity of becoming a mother. Premchand has never given a positive picture of a woman who speaks against marriage. A character called Malathi in *Godan* decides not to marry, and simply lives together with her lover Mehta. The author's disapproval of this is obvious in the novel. That is why, he brings a change in her at the end. However, he is displeased about the polluted atmosphere in the system of marriage in India, where women have been made victims to the cruel dowry system, early widowhood, and mismatched marriages. The freedom of choice also had been curbed for girls by their parents, who make undue fuss about caste, creed, family lineage, status, horoscope etc. Many of Premchand's novels refer to these problems of women.

Influenced by the principles of *Aryasamaj*, Premchand believed that a woman's chastity should be protected at any cost. In the novel *Pratijna*, the heroine Prema, when she finds that her chastity is at risk, fights for protecting it like a she-lion. Suman, in *Sevasadan*, though a dancing girl and prostitute, is deeply conscious of her chastity. In *Karmabhoomi*, poor Munki is heartbroken when she is molested and raped by the Whites.

Premchand describes a woman's desperate condition due to a mismatched marriage in the most touching manner in *Nirmala*. Because of poverty, her father gives her in marriage to Totaram, who is as old as her father. Unfortunately, she becomes a victim to his suspicious nature. Life becomes a constant struggle for her and she dies, being unable to put up with the mental

torture. In the novel *Rangabhoomi* Indu gets a husband who never loves her. In *Karmabhoomi* Naina's fate also is the same. However, both of them constantly oppose the wicked deeds of their husbands boldly, even though they had to suffer for it throughout. In *Godan*, Khanna's wife Govindi is an educated woman. When her husband neglects her, she comes out of her family. Normally, Premachand believes that an ideal woman is the incarnation of sacrifice, selfless service and purity. He does not approve of woman breaking the family relation by coming out of it. But, if a husband is cruel and inhuman, he does not hesitate to make the wife break from him. He gives the picture of an ideal couple in *Godan* through Hari and Dhania. In Premachand's opinion, a woman can take any amount of freedom, but she should not forget her responsibility of keeping her home. She can revolt, protest and oppose, but only within the limit of her duty to her family.

Premachand is firmly against the society which suspects the character of a woman. If a man gives shelter to her in her desperate condition, the people spread scandals about them (*Godan*). He condemns this narrow -minded mentality of the society. About prostitution, he says that it is not the fault of a woman, but that of her circumstances. In *Sevasadan* Suman becomes a prostitute because of her helpless circumstances. Her father takes bribe and goes to jail. So, she was forced to marry a poor man. Her tender beauty and Gajanand's inability and poverty do not go together, and the result was a mutual suspicion. Suman runs away and becomes a prostitute. Because of this stigma, her younger sister's marriage was stopped. The reaction starts from here. The younger sister turns out to be different from Suman. She accepts Sadan as her husband. Gajanand becomes a recluse and leads a life of penance. Suman also leads a chaste life by

establishing *Sevasadan* for reforming the life of prostitutes. Suman's character makes the readers feel sympathetic towards her. At first she had a feeling that there is freedom in the life of the prostitutes. But later she realizes the pains and tormentations suffered by them. Premachand's attempt here is to investigate the new possibilities in the life of the prostitutes.

Among the Bengali novelists Bankimachandra Chatterji's name comes first. After receiving English education he worked under the British government as Deputy Collector. His source of inspiration to write novels was his reading of English literature. Since he was well-versed in English language, he wrote his first novel called *Rajmohan's Wife*. Its theme and plot were almost like that of a detective novel. But in his first novel itself Bankimachandra has given a very bold picture of a female character called Mathangini. This eighteen year old girl, though born and brought up in a village, though wearing a *ghosha* to cover her face, exhibits a lot of courage and wisdom, in making the plot of the dacoits meet with a tragic failure.

In his later novels also, women characters are adorned with rare qualities. In *Vishavriksha* he discusses the problem of lust- how it destroys the happiness of the married couples. Bankim's idea of an ideal married couple is seen in Shreeshha and Kamalamani. Sooryamukhi is another character who is very affectionate and loving to her husband Nagendra. But she loses her peace of mind because of Nagendra's lust for Kundanandini. The problem of polygamy also is indirectly discussed in the novel.

Bankimachandra's novel *Indira* addresses the problem of child marriage. Indira, the heroine, gets married as a child. Her departure to her husband's house is delayed under the pretext of her husband's limited earning capacity, the fact being her father's

social pride. Indira's wishes to join her husband and live with him are sandwiched between the confrontation of the two male egos. When finally the longed for journey is undertaken, fate intervenes in the shape of dacoits, who snatch all her jewels and clothes away, along with her 'social identity'. But surprisingly they do not cause any physical harm to her. Retaining her virtue like this may be a technique used by the author from the narrative point of view. All her escorts run away from her, and she wanders alone. Fortunately, she finds the house of an old Brahmin who takes her as a servant to cook in his house. Through her expertise and sincerity in her work, she wins the heart of all. The Brahmin's son Raman and his wife Suhasini try to trace her family, and find out her husband Upendra. They invite him to their house without the knowledge of Indira, who had changed her name as Kumudini. After Upendra's arrival, Kumudini behaves at two different levels. Outwardly she behaves like a maid who falls in love with him. At the second level she she shows the need to do so because he is her husband, who, she fears, would not accept her if he hears her story. The drama continues till they are united. Of course, Indira feels unhappy when her husband responds positively to her advances. But she decides to correct him later. Here the author projects the male superiority by making Indira's husband not feel guilty of falling in love with another woman and eloping with her. But he is full of admiration for the boldness, intelligence and will power of Indira.

Rabindranath Tagore's first successful novel *Chokerbali* presents the story of a young widow who fails in her love. Being a widow she is deprived of the right to love. During the early period of her association with Mahendra, she simply tries to tempt him, without being sure of what she wants. When, in the end, she realizes that what she wants is a man's love, to her shock, she

fonds Bihari at her feet. She feels tired and says to him: 'I shall pray and do penance that I may have you as mine in our next life. In this life, I dare not hope for more. I do not deserve it.' (*Choker Bali* 126) Binodini is presented in the novel as 'the eternal feminine, trudging through the ages in quest of her lover- weary with pain, distracted with longing, bursting with the throb of desire, trudging through poetry, through song, until there she stands on the other shore crying 'ferry me across o boatman'.

In his novel *Yogayog* Tagore depicts the glory and greatness of a very sensitive woman called Kumudini. She is the wife of a rugged, uncouth man called Madhusudan who treats her very cruelly, taking for granted that she is just a piece of property. But later Kumudini manages to bring about a transformation in him through her intelligence and will power. At first she looks like a beautiful, ineffectual angel, but later turns out to be a very strong character with the spiritual armour within her. She walks out of her husband's house, just like Nora of Ibsen's *Doll's House*. At this, her husband loses his temper, and develops a contact with a widow. Kumudini hears about this, in spite of which she returns to the 'Bear's Garden'. 'One hopes that the mother will be even more successful than the wife in humanizing and spiritualizing the rugged Madhusudan'. (Iyengar 25)

Gora is acclaimed as Tagore's masterpiece. Krishna Kripalani compares this to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Though the revelation of Gora's identity is the main complication on which the novel works, the role played by Sucharita, whom Gora loves, is equally a major one in the novel. Tagore weaves her character with a wonderful dexterity. Normally, the two types of women in such stories are –one motherly and another a loving mistress. The mother looks after the children, gives them milk and love. She illuminates the house as Goddess Lakshmi. The mistress arouses

desire in man's heart and challenges his manly power. She makes him feel a kind of pride. The mother gives him energy and mistress inspiration. A man needs both. And Sucharita supports Gora in both these capacities.

Tagore's oft-discussed and most controversial novel is *The Home and the World*. He wrote it at the time of the division of Bengal in 1905. The Bengalis thought that the dividing of Bengal was an attempt to break the national feeling which was filled with the fire of protest. This commotion has been effectively depicted in *The Home and the World*. There are only three principal characters here- the husband Nikhil, the wife Bimala, and the friend Sandeep. Bimala has lived the sheltered life of a Hindu wife. Suddenly she hears the call of the outside world where the hypocritical Sandeep inspires national feeling in her. She gets caught between the pull of the home and that of the world. Her husband Nikhil, who is the symbol peace and security, gives her the freedom of choice. But Sandeep's luring words promise her a world of excitement and adventure. She is simply carried away by the 'Krishna call' of Sandeep. It was a time of trial, error and failure for Bimala. But at last she works out her salvation diligently through tribulation and experimentation, suffering and disaster. She goes through fire and brimstone, and at last realizes the difference between gold and tinsel. 'She realizes that Nikhil has more strength and courage to face crisis than the rajasik Sandeep, who takes to heels the moment when difficulties start'. (Iyengar 31)

In Punjabi, Bhai virasingh's *Sundari* (1878) and *Satvanth Kaur* (1928) foregrounded a woman's control over her body and mind, and the channelizing of her desires. 'One significant side effect of this approach was to impart a sense of dignity to the woman character, free her from the role of a helpmate and

comrade'. (Rajan 36) But when this approach is not modern because, it emphasizes on the woman's chastity, and gives her a sense of agency, both within man-woman relationship, and in the larger discourse of society and its concern for survival.

In Kannada also, the first few novels were titled after the names of women. The first realistic novel in Kannada was Gulvadi Venkata rao's *Indirabai*. Though it claims that it is the story of young widow called Indirabai, a considerable part of the novel is intended to bring reformation in the life of the society which has forgotten all values of living. Indirabai's parents are corrupt. She is given in marriage to one Vittalraya, who leads a life of promiscuity, and becomes a victim to venereal diseases. He dies and Indirabai becomes a widow at a very early age. Instead of living with her parents, she goes to live at Amritaraya's house. There she meets Bhaskararaya, who has returned from England after his higher studies. Bhaskararaya, with his progressive views, marries the widow Indirabai with the intention of giving a new life to a widow. However, we cannot call it a revolution because, it said that Indirabai, had not lost her virginity. That means a widow is allowed to remarry keeping the concept of chastity intact, which is only a bias with regard to women.. The author adorns Indirabai's character with the ideal qualities of a Victorian modern lady, with English education and acquisition of soft skills. She is often found reading novels and manuals which exhort about the qualities of a *Bharateeya Nari*.

Gulvadi Venkatrao's second novel *Bhagirathi* also traces the construction of gender in societies across ages through the multiple rendering of the story of woman in India. It goes one step further by capturing the nuances and even the silences of the historical background. The novel does not say anything about the reformation of the society. But it draws our attention towards

women's exploitation in the family. The novel is in the form of an autobiographical narrative, where Bhagirathi herself tells about her sufferings. At the same time, the reader is made to understand what an ignorant she is, with her silly superstitions. Nevertheless, the novel gives vent to the agonies of a woman in the male dominated society. The author makes it more authentic by making the woman herself the narrator.

The early novel in Malayalam also have the names of heroines as their titles, and it renders credibility to our belief that the voices of women as they went through the process of regional modernity in Malabar could be captured through a gender specific reading of these texts. *Indulekha* is the heroine of Chandu Menon's first novel bearing the name of its heroine. She has received English education which was rare among the heroines of the times. She has a progressive outlook towards the customs and conventions of the society. That is why she raises her voice against the exploitation of women in the prevalent custom of *sambandham*- the kind of sexual relationship between a man and a woman without any legal security of marriage. Indulekha takes her own decision in this regard, and establishes her identity by choosing her own husband. The effect of colonial modernity on the domain of Kerala is very much present in *Indulekha*. Very frequently Indulekha is shown to be reading fictional works in English. The charm of modernity makes her prefer themes that she can visualize in daily lives.

Indulekha gives us a picture of women's liberation, at the same time pointing out the restrictions on women. The love between Indulekha and Madhavan collapses when Madhavan suspects her marriage with Suri. This shows that there is a lot of communication gap between men and women as the women were confined to the four walls of the house. Since they were not

expected to take public roles, they were trained through advice manuals to be good house wives , and so denied of university education.

In his second novel *Sharada*, which he left incomplete, Chandumenon articulates his displeasures about the despicable nature of the Karanavars(Masters) of Tarawads. The Karanavar Koppu Acchan gives away the beautiful young girl Kalyani to a rich old man, who was very ugly looking. He arranges this *sambandham* much against Kalyani's wishes. But Kalyani runs away to Benares, and marries an artist called Raman Menon. Sharada is their daughter. The events that take place after they return home-like how they suffer, what problems they face etc-are described in the novel. Both these novels of Chandu Menon have received a special recognition in Kerala because at that time none of the writers dared to write about the problems of women.

Thus, the early Indian novel introduced the variety of faces of the New Woman which were moulded by the Victorian notions of femininity. But, at the same time, we can find the drastic overhauling of the existing system with the intention of correcting its anomalies, which may be seen at any moment in any society. In all the early novels in the vernacular, we can see that both the English educated and the native characters contribute to the spirit of the New Woman who deconstructs the binary between tradition and modernity.

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MORALITY, MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD: VISUALISING THE UNCONVENTIONALITY OF THE POST-MODERN WOMAN

-MANISHA MISHRA

Aristotle said: "The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities; we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness" (qtd. in *Forbidden Fruits: Taboo and Tabooism in Culture*, 49). To him, the very mark of a woman is her deficiency of the (implied) essential qualities of a man. Clearly, Aristotle here sees women to be the 'other' who is not self-sufficient, probably hinting that without the existence of

men, women have no identity. The 'other' as we know, is an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Any stranger becomes the other. Time and again, feminist literature has tended to bring out these kinds of grouping of women by men. And contemporary popular feminist literature reinforces as well as dismantles some of these stereotypes.

Popular feminist fiction in the Indian market has successfully gone on to ape the Western Chick Lit genre. [Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*](#), Lauren Weisberger's *Devil Wears Prada* and [Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City*](#) spurred up in India Swati Kaushal's *Piece of Cake*, Kavita Daswaani's *Salaam Paris*, and Nisha Minhas' *Chapati and Chips, Saris and Sins, Brides and Bindis*, and *Passions and Popaddams*. Though these Indian Chick Lit genres deal with the life of a young, smart, metropolitan-based, career-oriented woman, it mostly talks about her triumphs and woes of love and marriage. On one hand, it seems to be a category of fiction about emancipated woman. However, the category that transgressed beyond the 'female-as-victim' genre is often perpetuating certain kinds of 'othering' of women. Firstly, the very genre to have been labelled as 'Chick Lit' is derogatory and perceives women as the other. If there are books for urban, socialite, young women, why not an equivalent for that category of men? By perceiving them as a marketable subject by the publishing world, this hip, classy, rich women are seen as a group alienated from the urban men. They become the 'other' not only to the urban men but in a sense also to the women who are traditionally rooted. These 'chick lit' women often seen to be 'immoral', aping Western values and with little regard for the so called old-fashioned beliefs of parents or traditional practices.

In a text like *Almost Single* by Advaita Kala, we find a familiar recipe. The protagonist Aisha Bhatia is a 29-year-old working for a leading hotel in New Delhi. She's smart, scorns Indian traditions, is not comfortable in saree though she is forced to wear one to work, has an all girls' group with whom she goes pubbing, and is not ready for marriage. Most importantly, she is pressurised by her mother and relatives to marry but she does not succumb to the pressure. Advaita Kala creates prototypes of three kinds of single urban women- one group who do not want to get married out of choice (Aisha), one who cannot get married (Misha) and the third category who get divorced as quickly as they take the plunge (Anukshka). Throughout the novel, the apparent theme is the lookout for a 'perfect relationship' that is illusionary. However, below the surface, the book makes and breaks age old notions about marriage and single women. On one hand, it reinforces the stereotypical notion that appearance is the most important factor for a woman for her matrimonial prospects. Single woman Aisha observes:

The finest and most honest indicator of one's market value, I've discovered, is the street urchin or peddler. Here's how it works: you start out being called *didi* and then the *respectful didi*, then comes the biggest and most traumatic transition, from *didi* to the dreaded *aunty*; and finally, the truly god-awful *mataji*. But in today's botoxed world, if you get to the *mataji* stage, you probably don't care anyway. I've been called *aunty* on some rare occasions, but mostly *didi*, so I figure I'm still good to go.(11)

But quite unusually the category of women who cannot get married do not conform to the usual stereotypes of being ugly or miserable looking. Misha is described as 'cute' and cherubic

with 'gorgeous dimples and twinkling eyes.' Here, the parameter of beauty or physical appearance transgressing age is projected.

Paradoxically, age gaining over appearance is also suggested in the novel. Misha and at her behest Aisha, register on an online matrimonial website. But the proposals they receive are either from men who are divorced, have children, live in small cities or are simply pathetic looking. Here, Kala tries to portray that single women in India beyond 25 have no choice; they get the leftover stuff. For instance, the guy that responds to Aisha's proposal is Rakesh: "He's thirty-three, lives in Bhilai...where's dat? Anyway, he's a divorcee with two children. He's looking for a 'bold' girl and thinks you might be a match."(36) Interestingly, the category 'bold' again others out women who are perceived as lacking confidence. But Kala also breaks this clichéd idea that single women are losing out something in life by having to choose among divorced men. Aisha is open to date the newly divorced men, whom she calls the 'second sherwani guys' because "...people with a track record of marital failure are far more motivated to succeed than those who've never been married."(17)

Similarly, various problems of single 25+ girls are described- they are seen as just flesh, not beings, they are disparaged by double-income-no-children groups, and have to constantly bear the nagging of their relatives and 'well-meaning' parents. People are constantly reminding single women what they are losing out on life. Aisha calls the challenge of being a single woman to walking the 'tight-rope everyday'. However, the tight rope does not seem too tight. Aisha and her friends seem to be living life to the hilt, partying, without any one commanding them how to go about their lives. They are always ready to give back to the men what they deserve. For instance: If men gape at her rating her

‘ass’ and ‘face’, she has fun doing the same to them with her friends.

Whatever goes wrong in a single woman’s life, it is due to her unmarried status, says Kala in her book, perpetuating the stereotype through the character of Aisha’s mother that marriage is bliss for women and should not be postponed for a long time: “According to my mother, whenever something is not right with me, it’s because I live in a big, bad city on my own and did not get married when I was supposed to.” (98)

However, through Misha, Kala goes on to deconstruct this popular notion when she says that sometimes a single girl away from home can be a saving grace for her parents because they do not have to keep explaining to everyone why she is not married yet: “For Misha, this job in Delhi means a release from the shackles of small town living and gidda soirees, and not the money or the career prospect it offers...her parents are happier with her away. They don’t have to keep explaining why their kudi is still not married.” (85)

Kala also creates the run-of-the-mill idea that single Indian women are ultimately a burden to their parents. Taking about one of her nosy relatives, Aisha says: “Between impotent dog and unmarried daughter, Mamma Bhatia’s social future is sealed. If she is not dodging the ‘when is your daughter getting married’ question, it’s ‘why don’t you mate your dog, he’d have such cute puppies?’ As though this round of questioning isn’t enough, in a cruel twist of irony, the dog gets more proposals than I do.” (99)

But in stating that the dog is getting more proposals than her, Aisha has no regrets. Secretly, she is happy. In fact, she is happy not to be parcelled off when she isn’t ready.

Kala’s protagonist Aisha Bhatia is not affected by the so called challenges of an unmarried woman. She feels getting desperate to marry by registering on a matrimonial website is nothing but ‘a drunken mistake’. The central message in the story is the triumph of ‘progressive’ single Indian women not getting trapped by the shackles of marriage as soon as the society and their community feel they are ready to be married off. Lata Didi who earlier in the story was after Aisha to get married later on confesses:

“Marriage is not all that’s cracked up to be. After a while, it’s just two people living under the same roof. And you find yourself accepting things you never thought you could...Aisha, it’s a good you’ve waited. You have a job, a life, friends, an identity...you know something, you will never be lonely.”(276)

Quite unconventional to the clichéd idea that a single woman is lonely, Aisha also stresses on Latadidi’s notion that she has never been lonely: “I have not felt lonely in the longest time, that’s true. I bemoan my single status with my friends, but that’s just ‘habitual banter’, a Greek chorus, more for entertainment than an honest expression of misery. I am not discontented or lonely- in fact, far from it.” (277)

Though she projects in her story that single women marrying late have limited options, putting words into the mouth of her protagonist Aisha, she also breaks a commonplace idea. She says: “...I’m okay with being the oldest bride in India just as when I do get to be a bride it is to the right man.” (281-282).

Like Advaita Kala’s *Almost Single*, JaishreeMisra’s *A Scandalous Secret* also makes and destroys certain conventional

ideas perpetuating through Indian feminist fiction. Neha, an 18-year-old student at Oxford gets infatuated by Professor Alastair Henderson and gets impregnated by him. The book emphasises on the usual blame-the-victim syndrome when Prof. Henderson refuses to marry Neha and says: "It was a mistake- a one-night stand! You threw yourself at me and I succumbed, as simple as that; the oldest story in the world." (233)

Here, the earlier stand on morality of women is deconstructed where a one-night stand is no longer seen as immoral. The woman is not blamed and projected as someone who should undergo punishment due to the sin she had committed. Rather, the woman is shown sympathy. Neha's companion Arif reasons:

"Come, Neha. All that stuff about him playing the uninterested professorial type and keeping you guessing with his erratic behaviour. Imagine inviting you to his lair and then holding an innocent tutorial instead- he was building up the anticipation, can't you see? Deliberately manipulating you into doing exactly what he wanted. There are hundreds of men like that, Neha. Men too clever to be accused of actively seducing a young woman but, all the while, getting girls exactly where they want them to be. I bet, if you'd asked around, you'd have found his tactics had succeeded with many other girls around the college too. It's about power, for some men. Power and the thrill of deceit- two elements that cause men who have everything to forget that they have everything." (188)

Here, the pregnancy is not the chief issue at stake. The challenge for Neha is to convince her daughter (when she grows

up) that it was not a mistake, but something that might have happened to anyone. And surprisingly, Neha's daughter Sonya also forgives her because she realises she could also have been ditched by Keshav, just as Neha was by Prof. Henderson: "Sonya had learnt a lot in these past few days, not least that no one had the right to blame anyone else for the circumstances of their own life." (342). But what stretches the story too far is JaishreeMisra surmises that the tendency of the daughter Sonya philandering might be genetic because of that nature of her mother Neha. But why forget Prof. Alastair Henderson? Does not Neha possess his genes too?

Despite both the *chick lit* novels trying to pave a way for the emancipation of urban women, they unconsciously see women as the 'other' when they introduce men to save them from their state of helplessness. In case of Aisha, it is Karan Verma who sweeps her off her feet and resolves her issues of singlehood, thus catering to the image of the knight-in-arms and damsel-in-distress. This shows that Aisha is somewhat deficient in her wit and intelligence to survive in this world and that a man is necessary to sort things out perhaps because a woman is always muddled in emotions and refuses to see reason. And in the case of Neha, it was Arif whose shoulder she needed to cry on. Neha was always constantly looking up to Sharat for approval of her behaviour. Sharat is also projected as a victim throughout the book despite the pregnancy projected not as a mistake. Both Aisha and Neha try to live up to the expectations of Karan and Sharat respectively. They want men in their lives to tell them what is right or wrong. The question is if the *chick lit* Indian fiction is trying to prove that it is a bad man's world in which women are trying to brave it all, why present men as saviours? And why should these so called 'independent-minded' women feel they

should succumb to the pattern given by men. In a bid to make modern women seem free, they have in reality catered to echo D.H Lawrence's idea: "And so, poor woman, destiny makes way with her. It isn't that she hasn't got a mind- she has. She's got everything that man has. The only difference is that she asks for a pattern. Give me a pattern to follow! That will always be a woman's cry." (1)

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THE SEPARATED SELF – NNU EGO, IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD

- **BABITHA B.E**

"I don't know how to be anything else but a mother. How will I talk to a woman with no children? Taking the children from me is like taking away the life I've always known, the life I'm used to." (222).

There has been a strong voice for the equal rights for woman all over the world since a long time. It cannot be denied that a new wave of female consciousness swept through the western world with the rise of women's movements for the fight for an equal status in the society. What really is feminism? Is it a question of thought?

Maggie Humm sums up the change in the dimension of the thought of feminism in her book *Feminism, A Reader* that – “Feminism radically questions our understanding of men and women and the social structures which maintain their differences” (xi, 1992).

The studies related to women and their status led to the cross-cultural and cross-border issues in the later years. The cross border studies led to the studies in the women studies of the third world countries. The assumption that all women are alike has impeded the study of third world women, who are sensitive to cultural specificities. The determining factors of the third world women studies are predominantly race, class and sexuality which are to be evaluated in detail. The literary texts of the writers of the third world, precisely point at this genre when women stand astray when encountered with foreign culture and standards.

Buchi Emecheta (1944-) provides ample scope for understanding the social and cultural location of women in the West African Igbo society of Nigeria. The thought behind this paper is to discover the position of Women in the third world with the aid of Buchi Emecheta’s *Joy of Motherhood*. Emecheta’s courage lies in the fact that she questions the deeply entrenched patriarchy in the West African religious and ontological traditions. Emecheta rightly affirms in her widely read fiction *The Bride Price* –“If a girl wished to live long and see her children’s children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her people...” (168).

In the *Joy of Motherhood*, the difference in attitude towards life and the spiritual life of the Igbo society is elaborated in detail. The text acts as a denunciation of the reproductive practices of the Igbo people, the practices which harmed women by promoting them to be a proper wife the condition being able

to beget an offspring. The different ways in which woman is perceived in the hierarchy of the Igbo society is understood not by starting with the woman but with their relations to men. Women are examined as she is seen in respect to men. The text acts as a historical record of the African women’s experiences of the Igbo society. The cultural collision between the institutions of traditional Igbo society and the western European institutions are elaborated in detail.

The status of woman in every society either in western or eastern, the third world nations, anywhere is always disturbing. Emecheta, through her fiction portrays the tragic struggles the Igbo women face in the neo-colonial encounters. She emphasizes on the economic exploitation, the urge for motherhood and the dignified life a woman aspires for in the Igbo society with a man. It is rightly stated that, “If one wants to understand anything about woman, don’t a start with women but with their relations to men” (1995, 19).

Emecheta urges her women to come out the patriarchal docket surrounding them. Emecheta addresses topics such as women’s education, inequality between genders and the role of women in the contemporary world. It is rightly observed by critics that, “Education ...is the crucial liberating force in the lives of Emecheta’s heroines, and in fact their degree of servitude is inversely proportional to the amount of education they receive”. (Death 481).

The realities of the woman in their mundane life of Nigeria are elaborated with the illustrations of Buchi Emecheta. The fact that they have to do with becoming a mother or that they are otherwise involved with the male gender seems not to cause a great contradiction. The protagonist’s simple dream of becoming

a mother – a dream rooted in the cultural values of Igbo society which is one of the largest ethnic groups of Nigeria, where motherhood is the primary source of a woman’s self-esteem and public status is happily realized several times in *The Joys of Motherhood* where Nnu Ego exclaims- “[Nnaife] has made me a real woman – all I want to be, a woman and a mother”. (53)

The problems of a childless wife in a society which honors fertility, the problems of women married to weak men, the problems of widows are the areas where Emecheta dwell upon. We can see an ambitious woman who wants to be a mother sacrifice herself completely for her children: protecting her children from their father’s wrath, correcting her children and suffering because of their absence, and accepting silently their revolts against traditional customs, their needs but finally dies an orphan by the side of the road. Nnu Ego, the protagonist of the *Joys of Motherhood* is one such woman. At the end of novel, titled, *The Canonized Mother*, “One night, Nnu Ego lay down by the roadside, thinking that she had arrived home. She died quietly there, with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her”. (224)

Born to an Igbo Chief Agbadi and his mistress Ona, Nnu Ego enjoys an unusual childhood. She is never forced or pressurized into marriage like other girls in the village. But the failure of her first marriage with Amatokwu increases her frustration of not being a mother in the right way which marks a return to her maternal home with all the bride price given during the marriage. Later with the second marriage to Nnaife, her dream of being a mother is accomplished but she fails to sustain her independent identity which she pursued as a daughter of a chieftain. Nnu Ego’s migration to Lagos with Nnaife devalues her relationships with her family. The traditional norm of the Igbo

society where extending the family was priority is contrasted with the culture of Lagos which strongly emphasizes money and individual materialistic success. Having many children is not appreciated as it can cause financial burdens Men compete for jobs and families compete for housing.

The *Joys of Motherhood* was a response to male idealizations of motherhood in the Nigerian society. The inappropriate adherence to values results in continuous degradation of a mother at home as well as in the society. The rural backdrop of the Igbo tribe haunts Nnu Ego whereas the Lagos culture shatters her identity. Nnu Ego becomes the epitome of cross-cultural contradictions. Frustrated with the unacceptance Nnu Ego Prays – “God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody’s appendage...what have I gained from all this? Yes, I have my children, but what to do. I have to feed them on my life. I have to work myself to the bone to look after them; I have to give them all.” (118).

Nnu Ego is promoted as a senior wife when her husband Nnaife marries Adaku. Polygamy was accepted by both men and women in the Igbo culture; which is seen as an oppressive structure by Westerners. In the Igbo culture polygamy was seen as a conglomeration of women to exercise power over the husband by ensuring equality in workloads and sufficient food supplies.. Nnu Ego tries to acquire Adaku, but fails. She makes poor decisions with regard to the community, family, economy, and most importantly, motherhood and her decisions show the symptom of her displacement rather than mere personality traits.

Nnu Ego could not form a conglomeration as she saw the other women as her competitors.

Teresa Dickinson points that, "...in urban Nigeria, however, where financial hardship places a space at a premium and where the newly imported capitalist ideology of the nuclear family enforces cohabitation of spouses, Nnu Ego is left without rewards. Her predicament as a woman is exacerbated therefore, by the fact that the capitalist system she lives under still requires her to play the role of responsible senior wife without offering her small privileges and benefits that once accompanied that role under the former tribal sphere." (47)

Nnu Ego resents being called the senior wife. Her resentment goes deeper for the lack of physical power....of Nnaife and also for the beauty of Adaku. She is unable to adjust to the new values.

Though polygamy, however different, is a constant state in both the cultures, economics is not. The differences in economies between the Igbo village life and the life in Lagos confuse Nnu Ego. The economic instabilities of the families make the women to work. Traditionally, Igbo women make their money through farming and selling their produce in the open market. Women are subjected to new forms of exploitation as they are asked to assume traditional duties and responsibilities under a newly imported economic system unlike their native system which fails to validate or reward them for such work. The texts trace the destructive influence of western capitalism and its associated ideologies on the relative power and autonomy of Igbo women. Contrasting enough with the traditional Igbo society, the women in Lagos are forced to become independent entrepreneurs who lack support of their community and are faced with selling

products they know nothing about, such as cigarettes and paraffin. Nnu Ego suffers here, in order to get rid of her poverty she loses her son Ngozi, a few months old, working and selling unknown products at the market. Nnu Ego is reminded of an old saying that money and motherhood cannot go together. In the *Joys of Motherhood*, she reminds in a monologue that, "...if you spend all your time making money and getting rich, the gods wouldn't give you children; if you wanted children, you had to forget money and be content to be poor". (80)

Nnaife, a man devoted to changes as per the circumstances, is a slave of capitalism. Unlike an Igbo man in the village who does not spend money on luxuries, Nnaife spends all the income on palm wine, toys and alcohol. His addiction to alcohol becomes symbolic of how capitalism corrupts the traditional Igbo man. The status of women in the Black-Britain society are determined by the deficiencies like poverty, capitalism, sexism which are identified with the characters of Nnu Ego, Nnaife.

Women have a crucial role to play in the society. She attempts to be bread-winner and also a home-maker. As a bread-winner she is suppressed financially whereas as a home-maker the respect she receives after giving birth to children seems to be infinite. A woman is taught to be what is traditionally expected of her. It cannot be denied that things have changed drastically over the years due to globalization or the westernization of the lifestyle, but the situations at the lower levels of the society are alarming. Ironically, the upbringing is mostly carried out by mothers, who still sustain the vicious circle of female hardships. The lack of education to women at the lower levels of the societies are responsible for the degraded position of the women who adhere to the traditional customs and values blindly.

Women were active participants in the dual-sex political system of Igbo society, a system in which Igbo men and Igbo women governed themselves separately, both sexes selecting their own set of leaders and cabinet members to legislate issues relevant to the members of their respective constituencies.

Theodora Ezeigbo, states that, “women were allowed self expression and this was very crucial in determining their position, for they could voice out their grievances and even take action when necessary to safeguard their rights when infringement on the part of the men”. (149-165)

The overall effect of the cultural confrontation between Igbo traditions and morals and the Western traditions and morals are registered most profoundly in the decline of women’s political agency within the domestic sphere.

However, at the same time women’s role seems to be so central in the maintenance and reproduction of this society- with many wives -that it seems almost impossible to transform it. In addition to the cultural prestige conferred upon those associated with such a union, polygamy protected the economic interests of women by ensuring that a given family had enough members, that is, sufficient manual labor to produce and harvest a bountiful crop. Emecheta clearly sees the possibility of Igbo women’s ability to reach self-fulfillment without the rigid relation to man. Emecheta dreams an African dream –“...a future without men”.(*Destination Biafra*, 28).

The irredeemable antagonism between the African woman’s identity as an immigrant coping with the new cultural backdrop makes Nnu Ego a tragic heroine who merely copes with her victimization and as a stubborn woman contributing to her

demise. “*In order to be free and fulfilled as woman she must renounce her African identity because of the inherent sexism of traditional African cultures. Or, if she wishes to cherish and affirm her ‘africanness’, she must renounce her claims to feminine independence and self-determination*”. (*Frank ‘reintegration’, 175*)

Emecheta’s portrayal of motherhood is one that does not provide prestige or comfort but rather one that continues to rob Nnu Ego of tools to cope with her new colonial surroundings.

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SCIENCE NEEDS WOMEN...

-DR. SUDHA

It is a well-documented fact that women have contributed to several disciplines of science since last 4000 years and are continuing to do so. In spite of their responsibilities as wives, mothers, home makers their achievement in all walks of life, and in particular to the development of Science, the highly rational academic field, is indeed remarkable. There are several role models of women scientists who have shouldered the responsibility of pursuing a scientific career and performing on par with (sometimes excelling) their male counterparts. In this article, I take up the issue of how women scientists and their contributions are perceived by the scientific community and how the gender issues have affected this perception.

Throughout history, social/academic life has been gendered and constructed on the basis of perceived differences between the sexes. Formal education was not open to women even in the West. While 11th century saw the emergence of first universities in Europe, women were, for the most part, excluded from university education. Still there are some instances of women breaking this barrier and being successful. Despite the success of some women, cultural biases affecting their education and participation in science were prominent in the Middle Ages. For example, St. Thomas Aquinas, a Christian scholar, wrote, referring to women, "She is mentally incapable of holding a position of authority"⁶⁶ ! Margaret Cavendish, a 17th-century aristocratic woman, took part in some of the most important scientific debates of that time. She wrote a number of works on scientific matters, including *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* and *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*. She was however, not inducted into the English Royal Society, although she was once allowed to attend a meeting! Maria Winkelmann was the most famous of the female astronomers in Germany and she did not have any formal university education. She was educated by her father, uncle and received training in astronomy from a nearby self-taught astronomer. Her chance to be a practicing astronomer came when she married Gottfried Kirch, Prussia's foremost astronomer. She became his assistant at the astronomical observatory operated in Berlin by the Academy of Science. She made some original contributions, including the discovery of a comet. When her husband died, Winkelmann applied for a position as assistant astronomer at Berlin Academy, for which she was highly qualified. As a woman – with no university degree – she was denied the post. Members of the Berlin Academy feared that they would establish a bad example by hiring a woman. "Mouths would gape", they said⁶⁷. Winkelmann's problems with Berlin Academy reflect the obstacles women faced in being

⁶⁶ Whaley, Leigh Ann. *Women's History as Scientists*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, INC. 2003.

⁶⁷ Schiebinger, Londa (1992). "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy," in *Gendered domains: rethinking public and private in women's history : essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*. (Ithaca: 1992). 65.

accepted in scientific professions, which was considered to be chiefly for men. No woman was invited to either the Royal Society of London nor the French Academy of Sciences until the 20th century. Most people in the 17th century viewed a life devoted to any kind of scholarship as being at odds with the domestic duties women were expected to perform. Overall, the Scientific Revolution of 16th and 17th century in the West did little to change people's ideas about the nature of women. Male scientists vehemently tried to spread the view that women were by nature inferior and subordinate to men and suited to play a domestic role as nurturing mothers

In the developed world, school education is universal and educational opportunities at college level are more or less similar for both the sexes. However, traditional mindsets internalised over generations prevent women from opting for courses like science and technology, which are perceived as being more in the male domain. Numerous studies show that even in the advanced countries there is tremendous sexual nepotism- conscious or unconscious. Women who seek a career in science have to face the triple burden of professional work, domestic work (including child rearing) and fighting male chauvinism!

Fighting for equal status—An effort in vain?

Till the late 19th century, women had very few opportunities for involving themselves in a scientific profession. Towards the beginning of 20th century, some of them broke through the gender barriers and entered the laboratory but had to be content with subordinate status. Nobel laureate Maria Geoppert Mayer was a research associate in her husband's university laboratory until the shortage of male scientists during World War II allowed her to emerge as a researcher in her own right. Also she did not get an appropriate academic appointment till she was about to be honoured with the highest scientific award, the Nobel Prize⁶⁸. Lise Meitner, an Austrian scientist who was a prominent part of the team that discovered nuclear fission, was literally relegated to a basement laboratory! [3]She worked without salary as a 'guest' in the Radiochemistry laboratory of Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute (KWI) in Berlin. While her colleague Otto Hahn got the Nobel Prize (Chemistry) for the discovery of Nuclear fission, Meitner was ignored despite contributing significantly to the discovery by providing the theory of Nuclear fission supporting Hahn's experiments. She is often mentioned as one of the most glaring examples of women's scientific achievement overlooked by the Nobel committee. It is said that Otto Hahn himself downplayed her role in the discovery after her exile from Berlin to Sweden during World War II. There was no dispute to the fact that he needed her creative genius in interpreting his experiments as well as planning for new set of experiments confirming nuclear fission. There are records stating that he clandestinely met her in Copenhagen during November 1938 and this meeting resulted in fruitful experiments being conducted at KWI, Berlin. While the result of this set of experiments was published in January 1939 issue of *Nature*, in February 1939 Meitner published her physical explanation for the results of these experiments and it was she who termed it as 'Nuclear Fission'!! She was nominated for both Physics and Chemistry Nobel prizes. She did not share the chemistry prize in 1945 with Otto Hahn because of "a mixture of disciplinary bias, political obtuseness, ignorance and hasteAs

⁶⁸ Henry Etzkowitz, Stefan Fuchs, Namrata Gupta, Carol Kemelgor and Marina Ranga, 'The coming of gender revolution in Science' in *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (3rd Edition, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachuset, London)

for the physics prize of 1946, it was concluded by a study in *Physics Reports* (Sept. 1997) that Meitner's omission was "a rare instance in which personal negative opinions apparently led to the exclusion of a deserving scientist from the Nobel"⁶⁹

Ruth Lewis Sime, author of *Lise Meitner, A life in Physics*⁷⁰ describes the difficulties that she had to face in the Manne Siegbahn's institute in Stockholm after her exile from Berlin. "Neither asked to join Siegbahn's group nor given the resources to form her own, she only had laboratory space but no collaborators, equipment, or technical support, not even her own set of keys..." Over the centuries, female researchers have had to work as "volunteer" faculty members, seen credit for significant discoveries they have made assigned to male colleagues, and been written out of textbooks according to a National Geographic article. "They typically had paltry resources and fought uphill battles to achieve what they did, only "to have the credit attributed to their husbands or male colleagues," said Anne Lincoln, a sociologist at Southern Methodist University in Texas, who studies biases against women in the sciences⁷¹. There does not seem to be any rational answer to the question "Why is Science, the quintessentially rational profession pervaded by seemingly irrational gendered social arrangements?" raised by Henry Etkowitz et.al in their article 'Coming of Gender Revolution in Science'⁷²

I would like to briefly describe here the story of Rosalind Franklin, a British Biophysicist and X-ray crystallographer, whose contribution to the formulation of double helix model of DNA had been relegated in spite of the fact that it was her X-ray photographs that allowed James Watson and Francis Crick to conclude about their model of DNA. Being an excellent X-ray crystallographer she had obtained 'beautiful' X-ray photographs of the DNA and she had even classified them into two forms which itself was a remarkable achievement. She was the first to photograph the B form of DNA and to measure the spacing between the bases and the cylindrical repeat distance. She wanted to delay her final decision about the structure until she and her junior Gosling were completely convinced by the data. But that was not to be. Maurice Wilkins, her superior in the DNA project laboratory of King's College, London, handed over the crucial photograph and the data to James Watson of Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, without the knowledge or approval of Franklin!! James Watson and Francis Crick were working already on a theoretical model for DNA and Franklin's X-ray photographs gave a clear confirmation to them that their double-helix model of DNA is the correct model. They published their work in the April 1953 issue of *Nature* in which Franklin's work also appeared. Though it was written one month earlier, Franklin's paper appeared to be merely confirming the results of the theoretical paper by Watson and Crick. Franklin's crucial role in this important discovery has thus been relegated. The 1962 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Watson, Crick and Wilkins. In their Nobel Prize lecture neither

⁶⁹ SCIENCE-WEEK, A Free Weekly Digest of the News of Science, October 17, 1997

⁷⁰ Ruth Lewin Sime, 1996: *Lise Meitner: A Life in Physics* (University of California Press).

⁷¹ Six Women Scientists who were snubbed due to sexism'

⁷² See Foot Noting No

Watson nor Crick thanked Franklin for making their discovery possible! Her story is a real testimony to the injustice meted out to women scientists by the scientific community.⁷³

It is worthwhile analyzing the reasons behind Rosalind Franklin not getting the due credit for her important discovery. For this purpose, here is a brief portrayal of her scientific journey. Franklin belonged to a well-educated and socially respected British-Jewish family and her family was open to lively discussions and vigorous debates. Rosalind had thus learnt to argue and to be determined about her views. In ``The Dark Lady of DNA''⁷⁴, an award winning biography of Rosalind Franklin, well-known biographer Brenda Maddox describes her as a lady who understood her capabilities well and was forthright about speaking up. She also adds that this confident personality of Franklin might have been an unexpected and unwelcome trait in the scientific community dominated by men. That was proved to be so when Rosalind moved to Kings' college, London after her much appreciated doctoral work in Paris. Having been posted to work in the DNA project, Franklin got into work with lot of commitment and addressed the issues of importance skillfully. She carefully refined, adjusted and focused the new fine focus X-ray tube and micro camera ordered by her superior Maurice Wilkins. She was even able to efficiently manipulate the critical hydration of her specimens which was a difficult issue to deal with before her arrival to King's. The cool superiority with which she was pursuing her work and her confident persona might have sidelined Wilkins. Franklin's habit of intensely looking people in the eye while being concise, impatient and directly confrontational unnerved many of her colleagues, including Wilkins. In contrast, Wilkins was very shy and slowly calculating in speech while he avoided looking anyone directly in the eye. Her strong personality and added to it, her status as a woman scientist, are perceived to be the major sources of Franklin's difficulties at King's College. According to Prof. C. Uberoi⁷⁵, "Even to this day, as many women scientists will agree, a forthright and strong personality is tolerated in a man but not when demonstrated by women".

In spite of being immensely helped by Franklin's DNA photographs and data, both Watson and Crick, failed to give her due credit .As an effective device to avoid acknowledgment to her, Watson promoted the idea that she was unable to interpret her own data and that it is they who rescued the DNA data from her. In his book *The Double Helix, A personal account of the structure of DNA*⁷⁶, Watson makes such gender sensitive comments as "...it was quite easy to imagine her the product of an unsatisfied mother who unduly stressed the desirability of professional careers that could save bright girls from marriages to dull men. . . . Clearly Rosy had to go or be put in her place. The former was obviously preferable because, given her belligerent moods, it would be very difficult for Maurice [Wilkins] to maintain a dominant position that would allow him to think unhindered about DNA. . . . The

⁷³ See Foot Noting

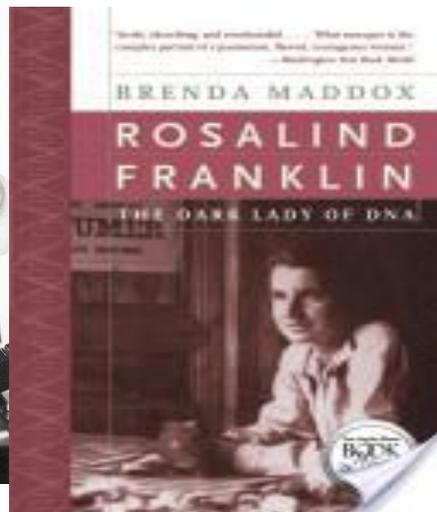
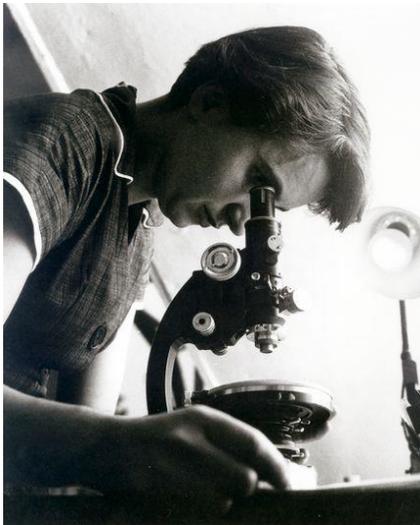
⁷⁴ Brenda Maddox, 2002, *The Dark Lady of DNA* (The HarperCollins Publishers)

⁷⁵ C. Uberoi, *Rosalind Franklin: The Woman Scientist of DNA*, Resonance, 2004 (March)

⁷⁶ James D. Watson, , 1980, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA* (Atheneum)

thought could not be avoided that the best home for a feminist was in another person's lab." He denigrates her work and frequently refers to her in patronizing terms as "Rosy", a name she never used. Brenda Maddox, biographer of Franklin, refutes the infamous nature of the personal description of Franklin which was given by James Watson. She also brings out a fact, not generally known, that *The Double Helix* was originally scheduled to be published by Harvard University Press. The outcry from eminent scientists and from Franklin's family was so intense that Harvard's board of overseers asked the Press to drop the book. Atheneum published it later!

Franklin continued her brilliant scientific career contributing to the understanding of the tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) after she left King's College in disgust. Prof. C. Uberoi feels that it was the attitude of her male colleagues at King's College that denied her of her warm and affectionate personality traits and the glory for the intense impact her work had on understanding of DNA structure. He laments that it was Wilkins and not Franklin who was nominated for membership in the Royal Society even though, at the time of his nomination, Franklin was famous for her TMV accomplishments. He rightly mentions that 'even in the present day, women scientists the world over are familiar with such irreverence and injustice to their work and to themselves!' Franklin passed away during 1958, at the age of 37 due to cancer, four years before Watson, Crick and Wilkins were awarded Nobel Prize. Nobel Prize is not given posthumously, but even if Franklin were alive, she may still have been overlooked for the award [6]. Like many women scientists, Franklin was robbed of recognition throughout her career.



Franklin at work with her microscope

The Changing Situation in Asia

Asia, with its kaleidoscope of different cultures, is seeing significant changes in the prospects for women scientists. Even in countries like Pakistan, girls are coming forward and are doing very well, getting into universities on merit. Shazia Anjum is an inspiring example for young women in Pakistan. She was only three years old, living in Bahawarpur, when her father died. Her mother—who had little education and who worked as a clothes maker—struggled to bring up two young girls and was sad that she had no son to bring success to the family. But Shazia’s grandmother would not accept the situation, insisting that Shazia’s mother break with tradition—and risk her family’s opposition—by going to school and then working as a school teacher to allow her to bring up her two girls with dignity. Shazia then followed the wave of change and became the first girl in her family to live away from home, in a hostel, in order to attend high school. “My family is very religious—they never allowed girls to study much. So I had to prove myself better than a son. After me, it has changed. Now I’m an example to the mall and my mother is proud of me.” Now an assistant professor at the International Centre for Chemical Sciences in Karachi, Shazia has a higher qualification, a Ph.D., than any of the boys in her family, and more publications than any other assistant professor at her research center. Shazia’s story reveals how attitudes have changed in Pakistan, as they have in other Asian societies [10]. “I hope there will be a day when we will be known as scientists who also happen to be women, rather than women scientists,” [10] says Vijayalakshmi Ravindranath, the only female director of a national research laboratory under the science ministry in India—the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC) in Gurgaon, near Delhi [10]. But it may take many more years before her hopes become a reality across Asia. Despite being obvious high-achievers in their scientific work, few women in India are in top posts or on appointment committees and no woman has ever become head of a science academy. The real breakthrough for Asia, according to Vijayalakshmi Ravindranath, will come only when women scientists have a say in selections for senior positions. “We need to develop a critical mass of women scientists in the decision-making process to make a dent,” she says⁷⁷.

“In India, it is not difficult to attract girls toward learning and teaching science. The real difficulty lies in attracting them to *do* science,” observes Rohini Godbole, professor at the Centre for High Energy Physics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The social and cultural character of South Asia means that parents tend to discourage girls from pursuing a Ph.D. out of fear that they may not find “better academically and professionally qualified” grooms for their daughters, says Rohini. Vijayalakshmi and Rohini are among the few who swam against that tide. “We have to make tough choices because of our multiple roles and responsibilities at home and office, and we have to face the consequences of our

⁷⁷ `Asia, *Shaking up Tradition*’, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2008

choices,” says Vijayalakshmi. Masako Bando, a Japanese scientist was the first woman physicist to join the faculty at Kyoto University in the 1960s, before moving to Aichi University 20 years ago. She was determined to prove wrong the professor who told her, “You shouldn’t do physics if you want to be a mother.”. Masako was still in graduate school when she had her first child. But with no nursery available, she was forced to set one up at home, with a group of other working mothers. “Before then, women would ask their mothers or grandmothers for help. But most gave up work.”. Masako now sees huge differences in Japan. Many universities now provide maternity pay and child care facilities, and equal opportunities are enshrined in law. The University of Tokyo, for example, offers fellowships to women scientists to return to work after career breaks. The number of women physicists in Japan is now increasing—but slowly. In the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia, women scientists have enjoyed more liberty and are less likely to be held back by male chauvinism, according to Jurgenne Primavera, scientist emeritus at the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center in Tigbauan, central Philippines. Definitely Asia is shaking itself out of the traditional belief that women cannot do science. The trend should continue for still better opportunities. There is a growing realisation that by not allowing the creative talent of women from being expressed through their involvement in research and development, society is missing out and something needs to be done to make scientific research more gender friendly. In India, efforts are being made in this direction by the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore. The Indian Academy of Sciences (IAS), Bangalore has set up a panel on Women in Science (WiS), to examine and address issues of relevance to the participation of women in the sciences. As a part of this initiative, ‘Lilavati’s Daughters: The women scientists of India’ a book detailing the achievements of contemporary women scientists and the hardships that they faced in their journey, has been released during 2008 by IAS, Bangalore. The Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi constituted a committee in 2004 to investigate the issue of Science Career for Women and suggest measures to increase women’s participation in study and practice of science. As a result of this report and several other initiatives of the academies and also with the help of measures by Government of India, more women are presently doing well in several Science Research Institutes across India and abroad.

Recent controversies:

The change in attitude of male community towards women doing Science is definitely a positive trend but this change does not seem to be universal. There still are men, both in the higher and lower positions of scientific professions nurturing the opinion that women are not capable of doing science. In January 2005, American economist and President Emeritus of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers sparked a controversy when, at a Conference on Diversifying the Science & Engineering Workforce, he made comments suggesting that lower numbers of women in high-level science positions may in part be due to innate differences in abilities or preferences between men and women. He noted that the generally greater variability among men (compared to women) on tests of cognitive abilities, leading to proportionally more males than females at both the lower and upper tails of the test score distributions⁷⁸. His comments were protested by Women’s organizations all over the world but the controversial

⁷⁸ Archive of: Remarks at NBER Conference on Diversifying the Science & Engineering Workforce at the WaybackMachine(archived January 30, 2008). January 14, 2005.

statements only indicate how, even in this developed world, the participation of women scientists is being looked at by the male community, at large.

In 2012, a journal article published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) reported a gender bias among science faculty. Faculty were asked to review a resume from a hypothetical student and report how likely they would be to hire or mentor that student, as well as what they would offer as starting salary. Two resumes were distributed randomly to the faculty, only differing in the names at the top of the resume (John or Jennifer). The male student was rated as significantly more competent, more likely to be hired, and more likely to be mentored. The median starting salary offered to the male student was greater than \$3,000 over the starting salary offered to the female student. Both male and female faculty exhibited this gender bias⁷⁹. This study suggests that gender bias is one among the main reasons for the persistent deficit in the number of women at the highest levels of scientific fields.

Future Directions...

Many women over the past century have worked hard to gain equal representation, equitable advancement, and fair recognition for their work in the male-dominated scientific world. They have had the courage to quietly- and sometimes not so quietly!—challenge those who told them that they could not do science because they were not clever enough ... or because they were not men. It is on the shoulders of these women that the next generation of women scientists now stands. There is a clear need to bear in mind the saying “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” (Eleanor Roosevelt, reformer, journalist, diplomat (1884 - 1962)). The most dangerous thing for women is to believe that they are inferior as is being proclaimed by the male community. They should believe in themselves and understand that there is no scientific rationale behind the proclamation that they are inferior to men in intellect, creativity and expertise. There are innumerable instances of women excelling in their scientific pursuits, on par with men. They have achieved their goals in spite of the hardships they suffered as women. The changing scenario of the present is definitely making these hardships lesser (if not nullifying them!) and making scientific careers more feasible to women.

A better use of this opportunity is to be made by women across the world. Before concluding I would like to mention a recent article in the reputed journal *Nature* [13] regarding the underrepresentation of women in science. According to this report, though men outnumber women in many fields of science, it is women who are academically more productive than men. The authors confirm this through a thorough bibliometric analysis. At this juncture this fact is heartening to know and should encourage more women to firmly believe in themselves and travel with authority through this supposedly male bastion. The World should not be deprived of the contributions of women in all fields, especially in Science, at any cost. Science needs women and their critical thinking abilities to enrich it.

⁷⁹ Moss-Racusin, "[Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students](https://doi.org/10.1073/iti4112109)" PNAS 109 (41): 16395–16396. doi:10.1073/iti4112109 PMID22988126