

Embedding the Male in Female Body: A *Qissa*

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‘How a “man” is sculpted out of a “docile female” body?’ is what the paper intends to explore and analyse through ‘*Qissa – The Tale of a Lonely Ghost*’, a film by Anup Singh, of which the Partition of India forms a backdrop. The paper fuses Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘docile body’ with Meenakshi Thapan’s insights and arguments on identity, embodiment and resistance to inspect and assess how a girl’s body – right from her birth – is disciplined, regulated and transformed into a socially acceptable ‘man’. The insights of Foucault and Thapan, two temporally and spatially disparate critic-thinkers are woven together into a critical frame to augment, argue and coalesce with our reading of the film. The paper highlights how the image of “metamorphosed man” underlines and presents the varied forms of disciplinary techniques that patriarchy manoeuvres to re-construct and contain a female body in its image. In the process the paper also seeks to put into perspective the dynamics of violence, both physical and mental, that the film tries to capture and critique through a feminist lens. At the same time, The Partition – i.e., the splitting of the whole into parts – that becomes a metaphorical leitmotif and patriarchal process of/in the film, has also been problematised and analysed through the character of Kanwar, a female body that is sought to be ‘accultured’ into that of a ‘man’.

Qissa is a story of a patriarch Umber Singh played by Irrfan Khan, who takes control of his life after being denied the opportunity by the partition history. He sets up his timber wood business in India after leaving his homeland in Pakistan. Everything seems settled in his life, except one thing, and this is his desire to have a son who would carry forward his family lineage and his business. Umber Singh’s desire to have a male child echoes a typical patriarchal setup and sensibility.

Failure/inability to produce a male child is a direct challenge to the masculinity. For Umber Singh too, the three daughters and not even a single son come in as a blot on his masculinity. Determined not to lose at the hands of fate, Umber declares his fourth newborn daughter – a son. He announces with delight to his wife Mehar (a role played by Tisca Chopra): “Dekh Mehar dekh! sadeghar putt aya. Munda hoya munda!” (look Mehar look! A son has come to our house. We have had a boy!). Sceptical of Umber’s delight, Mehar tries to

uncover the baby to check the gender, but is prohibited from doing so. The denial to let the mother see her newborn becomes an incipient subjection of the female body to blatant forms of patriarchal power controls. Mehar realises that the newborn baby is not a boy as declared by Umber Singh. She requests him not to tag the newborn as a “son” and better kill rather than burden the baby with his aspirations. Umber pays no heed to appeals of the mother and keeps calling the baby girl as “My son! My son!” This repeated assertion regarding the child’s gender can be seen as Umber Singh’s declaration that the power lies in his hands and it is he who has the hold over every ‘body’ in the house. The announcement, thus, becomes the primary disciplining act, wherein, no voice should be heard except that of the patriarch. According to Foucault:

A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’, was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so they may do what one wishes, but so they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. (138)

The “political anatomy” here corresponds to Umber Singh, the patriarch and the “docile bodies” are the female subjects of the house including the son. Umber Singh uses the disciplining techniques to construct the docility of his fourth born child Kanwar. Patriarchy, for long has been constructing docile female bodies within its disciplining tactics. However, herein *Qissa*, this docility construction is not within the given female body but forcing the exterior masculinity over a female body. He hires a local wrestler to train Kanwar with an aim to construct a male out of a docile female body. A cloth is wrapped tightly around Kanwar’s chest to contain her feminine growth to prove his own manhood to the world and sustain the image of male body’s usefulness/male heir. The layer covers all signs of femininity in/of her body. Rigorous workouts are planned for her so as to suppress her femininity and to build a man out of her docile body. The narrative thus problematises the very construction of docility.

Power is disciplinary in nature and does not solely target the body (155). Rather, it seeks to invade the body of the subject by controlling its movements and its thoughts. Power is not something that is acquired, conferred, or seized; but it is what is exercised. Power is not exercised from above; rather it is, as Foucault says, “circulate[d] through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions”

(qtd. in Bartky 147). The process of gaining access to Kanwar's body has started through physical training; what remains of her now is her mind, which needs to be controlled so that it works not in a feminine manner but in a masculine fashion. Thapan asserts that the psychological element remains an integral component in the formation of gendered selves. She brings in Elizabeth Grosz's argument that the body must be "psychically constituted in order for the subject to acquire a sense of its place in the world and in connection with others"¹ (Thapan 5). This means Kanwar's movements and thoughts have to be disciplined simultaneously for her to convert into what Umber Singh aspires her to become.

Another important technique in disciplining a body is 'separation'. Elisheva Sadan argues, "Separation is a more complex kind of lack of knowledge. It expresses itself in lack of information about others who share the same fate, with whom it's possible to create an alliance in order to resist the power" (47). Umber Singh's house becomes a microcosm of the divided subcontinent. Unseen borders are drawn within the family by the authoritative power to curtail any kind of solidarity or resistance. Umber Singh does not allow much interaction of Kanwar with the women of the house, be it Mehar, her mother or the other three girls, her sisters. According to Thapan, "the family is a crucial site for the development of gender identities in relation to both the familial perceptions as well as to those emerging from the social and public domain" (31). To deter the development of conventional gender identity in Kanwar, Umber Singh puts off any togetherness and mingling of Kanwar with the other female family members including her mother and sisters. Umber Singh does this by being a close and constant companion to Kanwar, to an extent that Kanwar too feels at ease with this companionship. When Kanwar experiences her first menstruation period, she runs out to her father only and not to her mother or any of the sisters. Umber Singh instructs Kanwar not to share the incident/experience with anybody. Determined not to be outfoxed by her biology, Umber Singh takes advantage of Kanwar's lack of knowledge and tags the incident as Kanwar's first step into manhood, much like the partition being tagged as the 'independence'. The lack of camaraderie with the womenfolk leads to the lack of knowledge about female bodily functions, which ultimately serves the aim of Umber Singh.

Often, during the teenage years, Kanwar is seen looking heartily/longingly at her mother, admiring her own reflection with hair down in the mirror, or longing to join the sisters in their games. These mediations highlight the perplexed state of Kanwar who seems vacillating between the imposed masculinity and

'fascinating' natural femininity. The confusion, however, subdues over the period under constant vigilance and discipline by Umber Singh.

Gender traits – masculinity and femininity are not the casual result of biological identity formation – male and female. In other words, there is no constant, homogenous continuity between the sexed bodies and culturally constructed gender. According to Judith Butler:

When the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as female one. (148)

Masculinity and femininity are socially constructed, i.e. they are the disciplines of body that require work. From birth, the traits such as domination and aggression to reinforce their masculinity and superiority are inculcated in men. Women, on the other hand are taught to be submissive, kind and gentle thus making them a subordinate gender. These 'natural' [sic] behavioural traits are engrained in the individuals through a dominant culture which consolidates to make a regime of truth. Cultural and social values in varying social contexts contribute to the development of gender identities. For Thapan those values "include an emphasis on female submissiveness and passivity and particular role-specific identities", thus creating "gender asymmetry and a classical femininity that is continuously looking to the external, social world for its own nurturance and sustenance" (31).

Umber Singh at every possible instance makes sure that the masculine traits such as aggression and domination are infused into Kanwar so that she becomes an absolute 'man' that he wants her to be. During the family kite-flying event, Kanwar's elder sister Kulbir runs away with Kanwar's spool. Unable to catch her sister, Kanwar comes to her father and starts crying complaining about the sister's act. Umber Singh loses his temper on seeing the 'girlish' behaviour of his 'son' (Kanwar) and warns, "I don't ever want to see you crying like a girl." He goes on, "Be a man! Pull your sister's pony and get your spool back." Socio-culturally 'crying' is taken to be a feminine trait. In a patriarchal setup, one becomes a man only when one shows toughness of emotion, violence and aggression. This is how Umber expects Kanwar to behave – with violence and aggression.

As an act of revenge from Kulbir for snatching the spool, Kanwar decides

to pee in her bed, leading to an altercation between the two the next morning. Frustrated with subaltern treatment, Kulbir tries to pull down Kanwar's pants just to find out as to what is so special about Kanwar for which she (for the sisters Kanwar is a brother figure as they have no clue about her real biology) enjoys all the privileges. However, during the conflict Kanwar falls off from the mud hillock and suffers a minor fracture. The possessive father that Umber Singh is about Kanwar, he unleashes his fury on all his daughters to showcase the consequences of challenging his authority, which in this case is his son. Violence against the women of the house, thus, becomes the agency through which Umber Singh maintains his illusion of power. This display of violence against women is done in front of Kanwar, making sure that she imbibes in the patriarchal traits of aggression and domination, and at the same time, it further detaches Kanwar from her sisters.

Patriarchy is not a rule that has descended from the heaven giving men the power to rule and tame women. Rather, it is exercised through the finer channels of dominant discourses and violence is an integral part of this dominant discourse. According to Bourdieu, "the main mechanism of domination operates through the unconscious manipulation of body" (qtd. in Thapan 166). The power, which initially directs itself towards the disciplining of the body, steadily takes possession of the mind. Kanwar successfully exercises the taught traits of machismo as she grows up. Her embodiment is therefore experienced in her everyday life as, what Thapan calls, a "lived and communicative body", to an extent that she articulates her embodied experience through language, memory and speech and uses her bodily senses to both perceive and give voice to her experience (3).

On being insulted by a free spirited gypsy girl called Neeli (played by Rasika Duggal), who happens to be a friend, Kanwar (grown up Kanwar played by Tillotama Shome) makes sure that the insult is avenged. (I would use the male pronoun 'he' for Kanwar from now on, as Umber Singh has successfully disciplined Kanwar into a 'man'). Kanwar takes Neeli to an isolated cottage amongst the hills and locks her there alone for a night. The act is carried out to assert his domination over the other i.e. the feminine gender. The "lived experience" (Thapan 3) which is premised on hegemonizing the other (read as woman) is articulated through the act of kidnapping Neeli.

Preoccupied with the ego satisfaction, Kanwar becomes ignorant of the repercussions that his act of kidnapping Neeli would bring upon both the families.

Essential to patriarchal ideology is the notion of honour that is presumed to reside in a woman's inviolate body. The patriarchal honour is not just limited to the moment of choosing the partner, but it seeps down to every moment of a woman's life. The normalization and internalization of the notion that a woman embodies a man's honour is imbibed by both the genders right from the childhood (Gupte, 1). Neeli's absence for one whole night is seen as a departure from the said norms of chastity.

"Woman's embodiment is the true repository of purity, sacredness and honour thereby suggesting that in one way or another, the female body needs to be appropriated for a sense of national, racial, or community identity to persist" (Thapan, 11). Women are the storehouses of honour, whereas men are the regulators of their conduct as per the existing Indian social norms. Neeli's absence and later her retrieval alongside Kanwar is deemed to bring dishonour to her father's position, since honour seems to be an entitlement, the loss of which can bring humiliation and banishment from one's community or group. Neeli's father fears the denouncement for not being able to defend (read as control) Neeli enough. Taking advantage of Neeli's vulnerable position, Umber Singh proposes the marriage of his son Kanwar to Neeli. Neeli's father readily accepts the proposal because when someone is perceived to have broken the honour code, especially related to sexuality (which in Neeli's case has in reality not been broken, but is perceived otherwise), a marriage may be arranged to 'solve' the problem.

Neeli does not oppose the prescribed solution as she seems to have developed a liking for Kanwar. Ignorant of the foul play, she enters the disciplined domestic set-up where every body is converted to Umber's cause. Having saved Neeli and her family from public humiliation and denouncement, Umber Singh assumes an automatic submission from her. However, the happiness soon turns into rage as on the very first night Neeli realises Umber's forgery of tricking her into the marriage with his son. Oblivious to the fact that Kanwar is biologically a female, Neeli thinks of him as an impotent man. Umber tries to pacify Neeli with promises of buying her clothes, jewellery and whatever else that she wishes to have. Mehar too is made to play along in appeasing Neeli to stay back. Confused between her fondness for Kanwar and rage at being conned into marrying him, Neeli does spend few days with Kanwar. Nevertheless, this does not stop her from asserting her stand and she decides to run away one night. Neeli resists this patriarchal repression of her female sexuality since sexuality is indeed central to women's experience of their

embodiment. She admonishes Umber for duping her into marriage with his son and at the same time wishes to come out of the shackles of this forgery without thinking of the consequences that might befall her once she crosses that threshold. Neeli becomes an epitome of feminism; she not only resists the patriarchal power but also aims to liberate herself from it. The resistance here is symbolic of Neeli's awareness of her condition.

In spite of all the precautions by Neeli, Umber Singh busts her escape. He tries to plead her to come back but when she refuses, he attempts to rape her in order to contain her resistance. It is Umber Singh's phallogocentric self which under the threat of disclosure resorts to violence to assert his subjectivity. The entire process of disciplining Kanwar's female body into a man comes out as a facade – a facade to carry forward the family lineage by consummating with the son's wife which would not only fulfil his desire to have son but would also legitimize Kanwar's existence as a 'man', thus validating Umber Singh's constructed narrative.

Hearing the commotion, Kanwar rushes outside just to find his father trying to rape Neeli. Umber tries to reason his act and tells Kanwar that it is the only way to have a son in the family. To save his wife's honour, Kanwar shoots his father. Foucault in *Politics, Philosophy and Culture* sees the resistance as a potential resource of power, "as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy" (123). The elements or the material upon which the power works, are never rendered fully docile. There always remains something which evades the diffusion of power and expresses itself as indocile and resistant (Pickett 458). The firing of gun at Umber Singh for his apparent rape attempt highlights the indocility of Kanwar to accept his father's action and the resistance, which is "concomitant with the process of subjectification" (Pickett 458).

Howsoever, with the fall of Umber Singh comes the fall of Kanwar's existence which falls into crisis when Umber Singh utters his last words – "tumeru putt hai.tumerachanga putt hai. Par hai tan tu Janani. Tu kudi hai kudi" (You are my son. You are my good son. But, you are a woman after all. You are a girl, a girl). Umber dies with the unfulfilled wish of having a son. Betrayed at the hands of his dead father, Kanwar questions his mother for her silence, after all he too was her child. The anguish seems just, as throughout the course of Kanwar's upbringing Mehar remains a mute spectator. True to the reality of majority womenfolk, Mehar is portrayed as an involuntary author to her child's

destiny, the one who has to play voiceless to the violence that Umber has been ushering on Kanwar's body. There are instances where Mehar shows her resistance, but without any action, unravelling the asymmetric relationship between the phallic subject and the other. It is not only Kanwar who has been disciplined to behave in a set manner; rather all the women of the house have borne the brunt of the unreasonable ways of an oppressive patriarch.

Post the murder of Umber Singh, Kanwar and Neeli are forced to flee to Mehar's abandoned maternal house. The unexpected identity crisis leaves Kanwar baffled. The body, which until now was conditioned to be a male body suddenly realises its falsity – the partition of the identity strikes hard. His reality becomes a chaos. Confused about his identity, Kanwar is once again compelled to establish a dual identity. One, as that of a husband to Neeli in front of the society (as the society does not accept two women living together for the fear of lesbianism), and the other, that of a woman trying to embrace the newfound womanhood in the privacy of the home. Thapan asserts that an important aspect of gender consciousness and identity is body image (106). Kanwar sheds his Sikh male attire along with the turban and puts on the female attire (salwar-kameez). He also lets his long hair open in an attempt to re-self-construct. Thapan says, "The body image is not just about how one is seen by another but also how one sees oneself and would like others to see us. The element of self-construction is therefore always present in both perception and practice" (106). He stands in front of the mirror while Neeli puts a dupatta on his head in an attempt to identify his body as that of a female. The mirror in that sense "constructs the 'looking-glass self' through engagement with the image reflected in the mirror" (Thapan 10). The attempt is to visualise and perceive himself "with a particular embodied image, or recognise it as a familiar shadow" (Thapan 106).

Kanwar tries to accept and adapt to the new identity but does not feel at home with it. Whenever he puts on the feminine clothes, he feels as if he has scorpions all over him. He seems torn between the two identities, "kuchnisamajhaundaki main kaunhan? Main kihan?" (I don't understand who I am? What I am?). Kanwar's discombobulation is similar to what Umber Singh and many thousands other experienced during the partition of India. There is a split and a rupture in the 'partition' of Kanwar's identity, which is consonant to what the country felt in 1947. He is a constructed male and man, but also a biological female. First, the father converted him into a man and now Neeli wants him to accept his biology and try to become a woman. The migration

from one identity to other causes a discord in Kanwar's life; he does not feel at ease with any of the prescribed identities and remains in a constant state of turmoil. Kanwar in this sense becomes a diaspora as, "it is not possible however to simply erase the known and in that sense the border between this state of lived experience and the other, the unknown, the potential for newness, change, always remains"(Thapan 171) .

An important characteristic of a diasporic experience is a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-preserved homeland (Clifford 305). Confused of his state, Kanwar longs for his mother, which in Kanwar's case is his 'homeland'. He thinks only she can bring him out of the current crisis because "it is both necessary to resist as well as very difficult to surmount or transcend the obstacle" for Kanwar. The much-awaited trip to the homeland also does not bring any solace to Kanwar. When he reaches back to his paternal home, he finds a burnt down house, with a dead mother and a grief-stricken sister. Apart from this, Kanwar encounters his father's ghost who from then onwards starts following Kanwar everywhere. The ghost of the father is a reminder of the circumstances – i.e., the cause and consequences – of partition of Kanwar's identity.

Umber Singh's ghost represents the violence and power that characterises the panoptic function of patriarchy². Foucault employed the idea of Panopticon to demonstrate the effects of surveillance. According to him, surveillance induces in the subject "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (*Discipline and Punish* 201). A chief factor to uphold the inexorable control is 'surveillance', or rather more precisely 'self-surveillance'³. Kanwar on visiting his father's room becomes conscious of his identity and finds himself in a state of flux. His docile self becomes visible to the patriarchal ideology that intends to conquer and discipline him again.

According to Louis Althusser, the ideology infiltrates itself into the lives of individuals and transforms them into subjects against their will. For him, the ideology corresponds to "misrecognition" which makes an individual submit freely to his/her subjection (196). The ghost of Umber Singh is manifestation of Kanwar's patriarchal interpellation, which becomes visible once his self starts deviating away from the prescribed system. The ghost is Kanwar's alter ego. It is because of Kanwar's internalization of his transgression that he starts seeing the ghost. This is exactly how panopticon works – inducing in the subject a sense of surveillance which ultimately transforms into self- surveillance. This

self- surveillance in the form of ghost keeps haunting Kanwar wherever he goes.

One of the high points of this cinematic text comes when the two identities come face to face – Kanwar’s biological-self against the constructed-self. On one side is Umber’s ghost, an embodiment of Kanwar’s own patriarchal consciousness injected into him right from the birth by his father Umber Singh, hence making the ghost look like Umber, which is constantly trying to force the manhood on Kanwar again. On the other side is the biological identity, the one of a woman who wants to break the shackles to come free. The state of aporia is reached to “indicate a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself” (Harmon and Hugh 39). Sitting at the window in a woman’s garment, Kanwar tries to confront this aporia to the ghost (who Kanwar thinks is his father himself). He says, “Dekho apne putt nu. Kudi hai vopapaji. Mainu kade tussivekhya hi nipapaji. Hun ta mainuvekhna hi paega.” (Look at your son father. This son is a girl, father. You could never see me as I was. You will have to see me know). In this moment of crossing impossible passage, in the sense, “it is both impossible to pass the border and necessary to transcend it . . . [for Kanwar that] the edge is overrun, contradictory imperatives and opposite gestures from both sides [masculine and feminine] are fully awakened and thereby bring pressure for an answer” (Wang 46). Kanwar removes the garment top to reveal his augmented identity, he says:

Dekho apnidhi nu. Besharamdhi nu, behayadhi nu. Ang mein nangi piyo apne samne khadi hai. Is bedzaat aurat da main ki kara papaji? Main uhnu horni lukho sakda. O hun horni lukhna chaundi. Ae meri gal nisundi, bilkulnisundi. Main ki kara besharam da? Ainu kithe le javan? Aenu te marr hi jana chaiyeda. Ae ta bohot shokhi hai. Hun ki kara main papaji? Tussi ta mainu sada hi dasde ho te hun kyuni? (Look at your daughter. Your shameless daughter. Standing naked in front of her father. What should I do with this disgusting woman? I cannot hide her anymore. She does not want to remain hidden anymore. She does not listen to me, not at all. What do I do with this shameless? Where should I hide her? She should just die. She deserves to die. What do I do father? You always tell me what to do. Tell me now what should I do?)

However, a full aporia is not reached/allowed “because it refuses the arrival of

the final destination” (Wang 48). Following the confrontation, the villagers discover that Kanwar is a biological female. Furious at such a revelation, villagers come to punish Neeli and Kanwar for breaking the moral codes. Neeli succeeds in sending away Kanwar to escape the wrath of the villagers. The ghost (now a constant chaperon) warns Kanwar that if he does not go back to Neeli the villagers would kill her and if he does then they would kill him too. The ghost says that the only way to save Neeli is when both Kanwar and ghost assimilate into one. The surreal scene of the assimilation brings out the reality of society where only man can protect a woman and a family. How a docile female body as that of Kanwar gets engulfed by his own patriarchal alter ego. Her natural self fails to assert its existence. Kanwar with this new body of masculine superiority guided by the ghost of the father saves Neeli from the villagers.

The new Kanwar is Umber Singh from outside and inside but with a little tinge of Kanwar. He takes Neeli back to their burnt down house and promises to build a new house for her where they would start their life afresh. Notwithstanding, this new identity of Kanwar becomes alien to Neeli. Unable to make peace with her destiny being guided by the patriarchy, Neeli chooses to end her life. Neeli’s suicide becomes symbolic of the revolt against the ‘intolerable’.

In *Qissa*, the crisis of identity, triggered by a violent chapter of history goes beyond religion. It confronts a disturbing fact; violent histories push masculinity to a dominant position. At a time when family’s ‘honour’ is attacked, is it only the male who can protect it? The resonance of violence haunts, it colours relationships and society in disturbing shades. At a time when women are empowered and independent, why does the ghost of patriarchy survive in certain sections of society and make its presence felt in all walks of life, not in families alone? The film underlines the need to confront these echoes. (Shukla)

With Neeli’s death comes the death of the desire – the desire to have a son. The film ends where it started from, in Umber Singh’s ancestral house in Pakistan, where the unbridled ambition to have a son had initially sprouted. All that is now needed is “maafi” (forgiveness) and “rihai” (freedom) from the “srapaqissa”, the cursed tale. Thapan affirms that, “crossing border from this condition of existence to another are not only fraught with contradiction and struggle but always contain, within the act of crossing, the possibilities for a transformed existence, unknown newness and change” (172).

Conclusion

Simone de Beauvoir famously said that one isn't born a woman but becomes one (*The Second Sex*). Gender is a construction of civilization; it is a reflection not of "essential" differences in men and women but of differences in their situation. The docile female bodies are discursively manipulated, constructed, and schooled to uphold the authorization of their natural femininity. They have been subjugated and ensnared primarily through their biological bodies. The ceaseless biological judgement of women and their anomalousness from the canonical male standards have rendered them biologically inferior, i.e. naturally inferior to men. The male/female, *mind/body*, active/passive, rational/irrational, and more such binaries have denigrated and detracted female bodies in relation to male bodies. This opposition of self and other leads to an intense policing of the other's body. The women then become the repository for male desires - an incubator for honour and babies.

Over the course of centuries, the disciplining forces aimed at women have become so normative and anonymous, in a sense that, though there is no specific establishment to regulate their behaviour yet, the internalization is such that they perpetually stand before the patriarchal judgement. This form of domination is symbolic in nature and is not something that is imposed but as Bourdieu says, "is something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from that is difficult" (qtd. in Thapan 166). The discourse has become an agent of victimization as well as control. The disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is institutionally unbound, the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular (Bartky 143). In the mixed space of emotions, embodiment and selfhood, Thapan succinctly notes, "both within and outside . . . women engage in the twin process of compliance and resistance, submission and rebellion, silence and speech, to assert their identities as women in what they clearly and assertively recognise as oppressive contexts and situations" (170). Resistance is not just marking a course or waving of flag; it is rather posing the question for the future, thus opening new possibilities vis-à-vis cinema, literature, politics etc. The film has been breakthrough in this context, filled with meaning and openness for a progressive future.

Endnotes

1. Refer to Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

2. A Panopticon is a model prison, where cells arranged in such a way that all (pan-) prisoners could be observed (-opticon) at all times without them being able to tell whether they are being watched or not.
3. The inability of the subject to decipher the moments as to when s/he is being surveyed leads the subject to self - regulation, i.e. the subject becomes his/her own supervisor making it the most effective way to control the subject.

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