

Female Body as Thing: Locating the Patriarchal Gaze, Visual Pleasure and Gendered Role as Represented in Bollywood Item Songs

Abhijit Maity

Lecturer, Dept. of English, Mahishadal Girls' College(W.B.)
(amengvu@gmail.com)

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the ways in which female bodies are represented in Bollywood 'item' songs. Highlighting the relationship between the act of representation in some of the popular Hindi songs and the way they impact on the audience, this study discusses how the entire existence of female identity is reduced to an object of scopophilic and voyeuristic pleasures. This objectification of female bodies in visual media has relation to Marxist notion of commodification of the subject. However, using Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze, I argue that such act of objectifying the female body as sites of entertainment has a metapatriarchal function within it, something which not only becomes part of a continuous process of gender victimization in India but also adds a special dimension to it by selling/buying the victim's labour/body within a neo-liberal capitalist system. By demonstrating some scenes (read sexualised body) as represented in recent item songs, this paper discusses "the way(s) the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured the film form" (Mulvey 803).

Keywords : Female bodies, item songs, neo-liberal capitalism, patriarchal gaze, gender in India.