

The Ultimate Lady Nemesis: Depiction of the Villainess in Hindi Films Released during 2000-2019

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Abstract: Hindi films have always been dominated by the presence of a larger than life male villain. Male villains were the core part of the films without them the life of a protagonist can not be imagined. Females if they were present, only to play an innocent, saccharine sweet heroine or the close friend of a male villain. Like the 'jungle billi' of Don or 'mona darling'. But with the beginning of 2000 decade hope comes in as 'Nimmi' in Maqbool. Such a strong and powerful villainess character. Nimmi can act as the catalyst for the industry. Before her, an obsessed lover Ria in Pyar Tune Kya Kiya set the bar for the 'anti-heroine' role in 2001. The character of Ria tried to break the mould since people had seen only anti-hero. Femme fatales rule the silver screen and actual 'female villain' somewhere lost behind the seductress model. No doubt that fatales also dominate the story line and use the male protagonist for her motives. The representation of female villains does not see any change in the past many years. Their characters are not three dimensional like the male villains. There is a lack of studies on 'female villains' in the Indian academia. This research is carried out to fill this gap. The research focuses on: studying the socio economic background of female villains, reasons for transformation in villainess in the Hindi films released during 2000-2019. It was observed that depictions of female villains still follow stereotypical roles. But some positive changes also happened in the recent years with the release of movie Andhadhun (2018). 'Simi' the lady macbeth, a character which is unpredictable, deceptive, and strong enough to control her surroundings. A major theme that deals with the categories of female villains was observed. Apart from the cliched femme fatale, there are sympathetic villain as well as badass female villain.

Keywords: female villain, male villain, protagonist, femme fatale, Hindi films.

Introduction

(McKee, 2001) writes in his paper on textual analysis, whenever cinema is referred to as a text, it is assumed that there are going to be a lot of interpretations of the text; and there is no single accurate interpretation of a text. These interpretations and perceptions are heavily influenced by the society that the audiences are living in. Whenever we talk about the villains in hindi films, usually the male villains come to our mind and mostly the iconic ones like 'Gabbar' of Sholay or 'Mogambo' of Mr. India. It is very difficult to imagine females as iconic villains. Mostly females are portrayed as the love interest of males and have to be sophisticated due to stereotypes in our society. A villain is the antagonistic character.

Before moving forward to understand the depiction of lady villains, it is important to look at the representation of male villains. Ghosh himself explains how the dacoit Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan) in Sholay (Ramesh Sippy 1975) or the underworld dictator Mogambo (Amrish Puri) in Mr. India (Shekhar Kapur 1978) outplayed the film heroes and did not forfeit their popularity among the film audiences until today. The film critic and author Anupam Chopra recalls that 'Amjad Khan became a legend— Hindi cinema's first advertising icon: Gabbar Singh, the gravelly-voiced, unwashed villain who sold both records and biscuits equally well.' (Chopra 2000: 2). The actor Ajit, who was a top villain of the 1970s, 'triggered a

spate of popular jokes and has several dedicated websites' (Gahlot 2001: 256). And the recent Telugu film *Gabbar Singh* (Harish Shankar 2012), featuring an unusual hero (Pawan Kalyan) who blends *Gabbar's* style of villainous madness with that of the honest police officer, is a tribute to an obviously appealing image of villainy, a phenomenon that transcends linguistic and historical barriers. (Rajamani, 2014)

Vamps in Bollywood cinema have been quite popular since the advent of talkies in India. There has been a certain love/hate relationship between the vamps on celluloid and the Hindi cinema audiences. Women playing negative characters in Hindi films during the 1950-1970s, such as Lalita Pawar, Manorama and Nadira, were despised by the audiences for their mean and shrewd characters in cinema. Whereas, vamps such as Faryal, Helen, Bindu, Padma Khanna and Shashikala though were hated for their cold-heartedness but, on the other hand, they were also adored because of their seductive dancing and hyper-sexualised appearance. Vamps in Bollywood cinema were modelled on the French *femme fatale*, who would exploit their sexuality to manipulate others. Most of the vamps in the 1940s through to 1980s played the part of gangsters' and smugglers' moll. Bollywood cinema delineated the characters of the heroines and vamps in strict compartments, having specific traits: heroines were pure, and vamps were impure. (Kishore, 2014)

The lady villain has been studied to a greater extent in the Western Context. However, when it comes to Indian media and context, there has not been much research on this specific subject. The researcher came across papers (Kishore, 2014) and (Moss, 2008) highlights the depiction of lady villains in Hindi films more closely.

Contemporary Hindi films are moving towards a powerful, independent lady villain. Sumitra of *Gulab Gang* and Simi of *Andhadhun* are presenting the examples of such portrayal of villainess. As happened in the early 2000s that lady villain is given a clear objective with a tragic backstory. It was a two dimensional characterisation. Now the perspective of the lady villain matters and she dominates the storyline much more strongly as compared to the older lady villains. She does not require a male protagonist to survive. This very change is analysed in the study.

Literature Review

Difference in the depiction of male and female villains

There are various reasons behind the differences in the depiction or portrayal between male and female villains. The varieties of female villains are much less than the wider varieties of male villains. Among female villains the most attractive yet cliché typed is *femme fatale*. The other clichés are wicked stepmothers, witches, evil queens, sorcerers etc. Some critics even say that, "*femme fatale* remains an example of female independence and threat to traditional gender roles" (Paglia 1992. *Sex, Art and American Culture: New Essays*). (Tuli, n.d.)

The male characterization is obviously diverse, complex, interesting. By analyzing the various male evil characters in literature and films, one can perpetually be interested in each unique/fascinating character. There are various male characters that are the villains of the story but are almost superior, powerful as the hero of the story. In some cases the male evil characters are the main protagonist. Sometimes, the male villain has a tragic death or is portrayed in such a way that, anybody will feel sympathy for him. It becomes important to know how he has turned into the villain or how he had a tragic fall that made him completely evil. Another category of male villain is that they are so intelligent, so cunning, so genius, and learned men that the audience envy them or get impressed. (Tuli, n.d.)

Researchers Sharmin and Sattar (2018) found that Disney villains offer a problematic pattern through their appearance and behavior. They found that while the male villains were portrayed in a variety of ways, female villains were portrayed similarly in terms of looks, noting three out of four female villains are shown as old, ugly, and unattractive (Sarmin & Sattar, 2018). Sharmin and Sattar (2018) argue many female villains become villains for trivial matters, finding the top motives for female villains are jealousy/vanity (28%) and inherent evil (27%), compared to 4% and 8% of male villains, respectively. Comparatively, most male villains are driven by obtaining wealth (38%) and power (35%) (Sarmin & Sattar, 2018). The study argues these depictions of the differences between male and female villains indicate the continuation of problematic messages within Disney (Sarmin & Sattar, 2018). These stereotypes have numerous implications for the reinforcing of current gender roles embedded in American society. Ultimately, the portrayal of women in Disney indicates a stereotypical picture of gender roles, which have the potential to reinforce current societal structures. (Wellman, 2020)

There is much more of a male dominated evil, however the introduction of a female villain in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* shows growth. That being said, Nurse Ratchet is evil mainly because she is a woman with no qualities that are deemed womanly. She is harsh and severe and controlling, all of which are traits acceptable for a man but definitely not a woman. This could be said to be reflective of a time where fights for equality were not just for race, but gender as well. (McClure and Hasseler, 2014)

Depiction cater to male gaze

Bollywood cinema has exploited the vamp's character in almost every film, characterising them as mean, seductive, coquette and vixenish, characterless and promiscuous. Since the lead actresses in the early Bollywood cinema were mainly shown as virtuous and morally upright people, the vamp characters fulfilled the requirement of the eroticised, fetishised and sexualised imagery for the male gaze. If the need to represent a sanitised heroine was required to fulfil the desire of the family-oriented conservative audience, then the eroticised and sexualised vamps were represented to appease that male gaze, which lacked sources of sexual satiation. Films in some way fulfilled these male fantasies and desires through these overt sexual representations of the vamps. While most of the negative characters were portrayed in a hateful manner, the vamp characters, which epitomised a fetishised persona, were designed in a carefully crafted manner that were able to arouse passion and desire among the audience, especially the males. (Kishore, 2014)

According to Amy Davis, Disney saw women as essentially childlike and therefore, by designing soft adorable characters, appealed to women's maternal instincts and, by reducing low humour and slapstick comedy, he kept his female audience interested in his films. The idea of a gendered spectatorship and the importance of female viewers add to the complexity of this phenomenon. Many feminists have argued that in popular cinema, aside from the scarce number of women in the process of filmmaking, the female audience has also been mostly disregarded. In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, for example, Laura Mulvey discusses phallogentric and patriarchal ideas that surround movies that overlook the female viewer. In part of Mulvey's analysis, the spectator who has a repressed position in the cinema projects her —repressed desire onto the performer. (Farahbod, 2016)

What made the nautch popular (and ultimately unpopular) with British colonizers is just what makes Basu, Chopra and their ilk so sought after today: the combination of beauty and talent, focused on the body and consumed by the spectator. While those spectators are still predominantly male, their number has grown enormously with the accessibility of film making each big screen nautch girl available for private performances at any time, day or night. Though while the original nautch maintained power over such an intrusive gaze by retaining her ability to choose her partner at the end of the evening (if she chose one at all); the new nautch has freedom from even such a choice, the distance of the screen providing her with a

sufficient barrier to the attentions of her patrons. The body on which those patrons focus forms the Bollywood aesthetic, drawn from the legacy of the nautch. It is a strange, lude and oddly convenient agreement between spectator and performer, which ultimately leaves the new nautch, the Siren, on top. (Moss, 2008)

Stereotypical depiction of lady villains

When it comes to the representation of women, Bollywood/Hindi Cinema has followed certain stereotypical norms in most of the films: woman as mother, lover, spouse, sister or woman as vamp, prostitute, and cabaret dancer. Bollywood cinema has exploited the vamp's character in almost every film, characterising them as mean, seductive, coquette and vixenish, characterless and promiscuous. This stereotypical approach to portraying vamps and heroines witnessed some changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the advent of new age Westernised Hindi cinema heroines, such as Sharmila Tagore, Dimple Kapadia, Parveen Babi and Zeenat Aman. The vamp characters of the post 2000s are wicked because of narcissistic, self centered needs. (Kishore, 2014)

Siren sexuality puts an emphasis on the body, making it a matter of vital importance to her livelihood. Within the domestic space, the Siren is especially treacherous. She offers the comfort of hot sex and a warm bed to men unaware of their price. The penetration of this space in the domestic genre is best depicted in Jism's seduction scene between Sonia and her ultimate victim Kabir (John Abraham). After bidding him goodnight, Sonia teases him from within the house, the all-glass doors of the lower floor providing a widescreen view of her ample body, just out of reach. (Moss, 2008)

Both Sonia in Jism and Sonia in Aitraaz first appear to their future lovers, wet from the ocean, their already close-fitting garments transformed into a second skin by the pounding waves. This type of double reading is common in any culture whose public morality remains restrictive and it is something of which the Siren, in her quest for dual cultural authority, takes full advantage. It is interesting to note that, though this type of representation is scopophilic in tendency, the male body is just as often objectified as the female in Bollywood, particularly in Siren cinema as it is her control of her male victim sexually, and so physically, that gives her initial power. This is particularly true as each Siren chooses her victim. (Moss, 2008)

Merger of heroine and anti-heroine

In Bollywood cinema the heroine still reigns supreme, following the old paradigm of the pure, sanitised, model woman, which echoed loudly in the 1993 film Khalnayak (Villain). The protagonist Ganga represents the embodiment of the ideal woman, based on Hindu norms. Ganga is modelled on the Hindu religious beliefs of river Ganges, which is sacred and chaste. No matter if Ganga, in order to catch a hardened criminal, has to put on a decoy, sing and dance to double entendre lyrics and live with a criminal; she has not made herself impure by giving herself to the villain. Two of the leading actresses of the 2000s, namely Bipasha Basu and Priyanka Chopra, led the way for this new avatar of heroines that merges respectability and wickedness in such films like Jism (Body) (2003) and Aitraaz (Objection) (2004). However, their evil often overshadows their goodness. (Kishore, 2014)

Ghosh locates the beginning of the fusion of morally good and bad in female characters already in the 1970s, while he observes the similar change in the image of the hero only in the 1990s— an interesting point which deserves further proof and investigation. The actress Helen is clearly in the focus of the chapter. Her acting and dancing style infused the vamp with both 'sex and sensibility' (p. 141), which earned her screen characters a great deal of recognition and fascination. With the strengthening of the villains since the late 1960s the vamps also became stronger, sometimes even to the extent of embodying 'the other self of the

villain'. When the vamps' sex appeal became increasingly integrated into the images of heroines, the vamp had to be given a new place in the films' narrative strategies and appeared as the 're-vamped vamp' (p. 150), like for example in *Jism* (Amit Saxena 2003). (Rajamani, 2014)

Dearth of lady villains

For a brief period it seemed like the vamps were being resurrected in the late nineties and early 2000s with music video starlets such as Rakhi Sawant and Meghna Naidu making their foray into Bollywood through these raunchy song and dance sequences and playing small vampish roles. But this was short-lived as the fashion models turned 'item' girls soon joined the bandwagon led by Malaika Arora Khan and Yana Gupta. By the end of the 1990s, 'item' numbers became so popular that Bollywood superstars also started appearing in these racy song dance sequences. Filmmakers brought in these superstars to attract larger audiences and capitalise on their established fan base. These 'item' numbers were shown on music entertainment channels, as risqué promotional music videos, months before the film was actually released. These dance numbers directly reflect how vamps have become outdated in Bollywood films. (Kishore, 2014)

It is easier to understand about the influence in constructing heroes or heroines. The men are bound to perform on the basis of masculine power or masculinity whereas the heroines, princess are the ones to be saved and are almost bound to stay within a limit instead of exploring. The females should perform as being meek, submissive, and careful about household functions only. So, the notion of femininity will not go with the adventurous, chivalrous identities. But actually a woman can perform other things rather than just what she is supposed to do according to traditional gender roles. The women have been protesting from long before and now entering almost all the sectors that men are exploring. So, performance of female gender is limited within some specific boundaries and that is why the imagination of the creative process of evilness in case of women happens in limited or non-divergent ideas. (Tuli, n.d.)

The female villains within Disney films are often portrayed as ugly, overweight, or nonsymmetrical while simultaneously exhibiting characteristics of power and strength. The princesses, on the other hand, are shown to be extremely beautiful which contributes to their overall success in life. This may lead to children watching the Disney movies and associating powerful women with attributes society views as negative. (Wellman, 2020)

Research Question:

How have the lady villains been depicted in Hindi cinema?

Objectives:

To study the socio-economic background, transformation in villain and behavioral attributes

To identify the different categories of lady villains represented such as femme fatales, sympathetic villainess, badass villainess

Methodology

As the study intends to examine the films as a text, Textual Analysis was primarily applied to the text. Textual analysis is a methodology: a way of gathering and analysing information in academic research. (McKee, 2001)

Textual analysis is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences. Visual, written, or spoken messages provide cues to ways through which communication may be understood. (Allen, 2017)

The basic assumption of textual analysis is that there is no simple, single representation of reality against which you could measure the newspaper story, or the film, against in order to judge how 'accurate' a representation it is. Every version of 'reality' that we might measure our text against is always – inescapably – another representation – another text. (McKee, 2001)

Data Collection and Sampling

After considering the objectives of the study, it was found that the Non-probability purposive sampling technique was the best fit for In-depth Textual Analysis. The purpose is to study the portrayal of lady villains.

Whilst a sample selected by the random sampling method can provide structural, quantitative insight into the data, a sample selected by non-probability sampling can be used in the research that follows qualitative research design. The latter was necessary as researcher is interested in the intricacies of the sample being studied.

An important characteristic of non-probability sampling is that samples are selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher, rather than random selection (i.e., probabilistic methods), which is the cornerstone of probability sampling techniques.

Purpose of Sampling

The data collection and sampling process were carried out in order to fulfill the following purposes:

1. Films which have females as villains were considered and released during 2000-2019.
2. Storyline focused on female villains.

Sample

Name of the film	Release Year	Director
Pyar Tune Kya Kiya	2001	Rajat Mukherjee
Makdee	2002	Vishal Bhardwaj
Raaz	2002	Vikram Bhatt
Armaan	2003	Honey Irani
Jism	2003	Amit Saxena
Maqbool	2003	Vishal Bhardwaj
Aitraaz	2004	Abbas Mustan
Ishqiya	2010	Abhishek Chaubey
7 Khoon Maaf	2011	Vishal Bhardwaj
Raaz 3	2012	Vikram Bhatt
Ek Thi Daayan	2013	Kannan Iyer
Krrish 3	2013	Rakesh Roshan
Gulab Gang	2014	Soumik Sen
Alone	2015	Bhushan Patel
Andhadhun	2018	Sriram Raghavan

List of selected sample of texts

Analysis

Major themes as interpreted through text

Theme 1: Socio economic background

The socio economic background was a dominant theme in the selected sample of films. It is a key determinant of success and future life chances. It plays an important role in the completion of the objective of the lady villain. Socio economic background acts as the first pillar of strength of lady villains. In the selected sample of films, most lady villains are shown to belong to upper class families. They have money, power and status in society. Some belong to business class as well like Ria in *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya*, Sonia of *Jism*, wife of travelling millionaire, Sonia of *Armaan*, Shanaya of *Raaz3*, Sumitra of *Gulab Gang* and Simi of *Andhadhun*. All of them have a strong social status which they use to achieve their villainous motives. Socio economic background is basically the position or standing of an individual in a society. It is determined by the combination of social and economic factors.

Example: Sonia's business background



Theme 1- Example 1- Image 1: Sonia using her social background

In one of the scenes, Sonia threatens Neha's mother that she will get her daughter murder. She goes on to the extent that she will throw the acid on her face and make sure to completely destroy her life. Sonia uses her background to directly hit at her objective to remove Neha from Akash's life. Her father is a business tycoon in London. She is very well aware of the fact that her father can do anything to accomplish her demand. The business class background gives her strength to go the way she wants.

Example: Susanna's Ancestral Home

After her father's death, Susanna is left with an enormous amount of wealth and the old big bungalow. She uses her bungalow for the execution of the husbands one by one. For the killing of Nicolai Vronsky, the Russian spy, the third husband, Susanna utilizes the well in the premises of her house. She feels empowered in her bungalow and uses that to achieve the purpose. Due to her background, she also uses the servants in the murder of husbands. Her socio economic status acts as a shield in committing the murders.

Example: Shanaya, an established film actress**Theme 1- Example 3 – Image 2: Shanaya**

Shanaya is shown as a successful actress but for some years she is not able to compete with the newcomers in the industry. Then, she starts using black magic against Sanjana, her step sister. For giving her poison daily, she manipulates and seduces a director Aditya. One day, when he refuses to give Sanjana the dose of black magic, Shanaya snubs him. Her body language becomes aggressive and reminds him that she is responsible for his successful career. Due to her name and reputation, he got the work not because of the talent. It is clearly visible that she is using the background as a tool to seek revenge from Sanjana.

Theme 2: Transformation in the villain

Reasons for transformation in the villain can be many. In the selected sample of films, the researcher comes across a few reasons responsible for transformation. The reasons that were analyzed in films could be broken down into two parts: 1. Villain by nature i.e. greedy and jealousy, 2. Villain due to instincts i.e. anxiety

Villain by nature i.e. greedy:

Example: Sonia's greed for money Kabir gets to know the past of Sonia from her husband's sister at a club. Sonia killed the first wife of Rohit. But he does not believe at first. Then, he calls her to move away from Pondicherry as police get the clue against him. Kabir wants Sonia to transfer half of the property to Rohit's sister and finish off the matter. But she refuses to do so. Her body language changes suddenly and dominates the space.

Villain by nature i.e. jealousy:

Example: Shanaya and her jealousy

When Aditya comes to know that Sanjana is feeling the after effects of black magic. He wants Shanaya to stop the black magic. Then she tells him the background story that Sanjana is her step sister from her step mother. Her father gave everything which was hers to Sanjana. Her mother died due to Sanjana's mother. She can not tolerate her success anymore. Here Shanaya's jealousy is not limited only to Sanjana's success in present time but also towards the resources her father gave to Sanjana during their childhood days. Her becoming a villain is directly related to jealous nature with which she can go to any extent be it killing of her step sister. Shanaya controls Aditya emotionally that she wants the return from him. His career is due to her not because of his talent. Shanaya is not ready to accept the fact that her time is gone and Sanjana is younger than her. The use of black magic over Sanjana is a part of the objective to kill her finally.

Villain due to instincts i.e. anxiety:**Example: Ria's eccentric behavior****Theme 2 – Example 1 – Image 1: Ria and her obsession**

There are many instances when Ria is not able to control her emotions. She started suffering from anxiety disorder slowly and unknowingly. Her obsession to get Jay in her life becomes the first step towards self destruction. Even after knowing that he is married she deliberately wants Jay to break the relationship with wife and come along with her. The eccentric behavior is seen in many scenes. When she is calling Jay again and again, sitting in front of the phone for the whole day. She even calls him at midnight when she wants to talk to him. This series of events eventually led to a major step by Ria. She plots a plan to kill the wife of Jay.

It is quite visible in other selected films also that females are transformed into villains due to non serious or trivial reasons. Most of them have jealousy against others which comes out as a major reason of becoming a villainess.

Theme 3: Objective of villainess

Objective or intention is the aim of the villainess, she wants to achieve at any cost. The objective can be a major one; killing of the protagonist (male or female). It is the ultimate or final step to get the desire fulfilled. Minor one can be; seducing the male protagonist to complete the major objective.

Example 1: Nimmi

Maqbool, an underworld don's henchman, falls in love with Don's wife, Nimmi. In a sequence, where everyone is busy in the arrangement of the marriage of Don's daughter. Nimmi and Maqbool away from the eyes of people have sex one night. The next day, she warns Maqbool that he has to choose one person to kill amongst Don and her. Maqbool chose Don to be killed. It is evident from the earlier scenes also that Nimmi wants her husband to be killed by Maqbool and he takes his place as don. Her major objective is to somehow remove her husband from the position of leader and place her lover at that. To accomplish the objective, she instigates Maqbool on many occasions. She even tries to control him emotionally as how she has been living with a person of her father's age. At last, she convinces Maqbool to hatch a plan of killing her husband. Nimmi goes step by step by achieving the minor objective first to charm Maqbool and dominate him. Then, she hits at the major aim by killing the main obstacle of her desire. But the killing of don is shown in positivity as Nimmi and Maqbool are young and don is very old. Nimmi's objective is free from jealousy or greed about someone. She only wants to live with her lover and see him holding the position of boss.

Example 2: Sumitra Devi's fight with Rajjo**Theme 3 – Example 2 – Image 1: Sumitra**

In the film *Gulab Gang*, Sumitra Devi, head of a political party. Rajjo, a member of the gulab gang who fights against the injustices with women. In a sequence, Sumitra invites Rajjo to fight elections on her party symbol. Rajjo rejects the offer because in her scenes, it is revealed that Sumitra is a corrupt politician. Rajjo stands in the opposition of the Sumitra in elections. Sumitra decides to do anything to remove Rajjo from elections. This becomes her objective. She calls her henchmen to do whatever they want with her but outside the village. She even includes the police in her political game. The villainess carries forward herself by achieving the minor steps and the final step when circumstances are favourable to her.

Example 3: Simi

In the film *Andhadhun*, Simi is the wife of a Bollywood hero of older times. Accidentally, her husband gets to know about her affair with a person. He is shot by her while she was explaining things to him. Suddenly a boy who pretends to be blind sees all the happenings. He is not blind in real life. In the subsequent scenes, Simi decides to do something of the boy, Akash. She goes to the residence of Akash and gives him sweets which have poison. She even mixes poison in the coffee of Akash. He sees all her doings. Now, it is evident that murder of Akash is the objective of Simi. Simi becomes a villainess due to circumstances and she keeps on removing the obstacles by doing murders. Simi's final objective to kill Akash to hide her reality remains the same throughout the film.

Films like *Raaz*, *Armaan*, *Jism*, *Aitraaz*, *Ishqiya*, *Raaz 3*, and *Alone* have straight and clear objectives given to the lady villains. Their intention gets highlighted in the very beginning of the film. They have a tragic backstory or present. Objectives are not very strong since they become villainess due to trivial reasons like greed and jealousy.

Theme 4: Space and Gestures

All of the villains also utilize space and gestures in order to express their power over others. When they walk somewhere, they walk slower so that the amount of time it takes them to get from one place to another is longer than other characters. Ultimately, a large portion of the villains utilize space and gestures to nonverbally portray their power. (Wellman, 2020)

Example 1: Makdee (witch) controlling the space**Theme 4 – Example 1- Image 1: Witch and her gestures**

In the film Makdee, the witch is shown inside the bungalow watching the people coming inside. She comes downstairs near a window. Her movement is slow and quiet, only her boots are making sound. She is moving her fingers as if waiting for them to come inside. Her fingers are not normal, they are very long and have big nails. The body language is intimidating and controls the space around her. Witch nonverbally tries to intimidate the girl. Gestures are more specific in scenes where the witch is alone and moving, dancing in the bungalow. Such scenes specifically add more power to the witch.

Example 2: Sonia and her gestures in film Armaan**Theme 4 – Example 2 – Image 1: Sonia's body language in front of Neha**

Akash comes to know about the deal between his father and Sonia's father. He says to Neha that he is going to marry Sonia. Sonia gives the invitation card to Neha. On the day of marriage, Sonia makes Neha one of the witnesses of the marriage. Neha is deeply broken and crying. Sonia deliberately makes Neha witness and shows her the wedding ring. Her body language suddenly changes and she tries to tease Neha in front of Akash. Sonia takes the benefit of the occasion and hits at the Neha's weakness. Since the space belongs to her and the situation is favorable to her, she nonverbally shows her evil nature to Neha.

Sonia as a villainess does what she wants whether kicking out Neha out of Akash's life or pointing finger at Akash's character. Her gestures do that all. She acts like a dominating person by following an erratic or unpredictable behaviour.

Example 3: Sonia

In the film Aitraaz, Sonia from the beginning lures Raj by her gestures. She wants Raj back in life knowing the fact that he is married. It is visible in many scenes where she is seducing him by touching or catching attention through eye movement. This theme is mostly highlighted when the lady villain is alone and hatching the plan to achieve her objective. Non verbally she conveys her thoughts going on in mind. It can be through a cunning smile, eye movement or her walking style. In this way, she tries to intimidate the person with an eccentric behaviour and takes control of surroundings or space.

Theme 5: Costume and Makeup**Example 1: Sonia of Jism**

Theme 5 – Example 1 – Image 1: Sonia’s revealing costume to charm Kabir

In one of the scenes, Kabir is in look for her as he gets attracted to her. He has seen Sonia on a beach. She was wearing a white bikini with a plait. Dark eye makeup. Another day, he reaches a cafe where she is standing on a terrace. Again this time, he gets lured by her dress. She is wearing a black backless gown. Bold eye liner. It is quite visible from her first appearance and second also that she is deliberately dressing up herself in a way to charm Kabir. It also highlights her intention that she wants Kabir for some reason. In other sequences also, Sonia is wearing different gowns of bright red color or white basically to have Kabir around herself.

Example 2: Krishna

In Ishqiya, she is shown wearing a saree in a traditional village style. Her first encounter with Khalujaan and Babban when she tries to hide her upper part with a shawl mainly to lure them. Another instance when she goes to the washroom deliberately says in front of Khalujaan. She removes her saree knowing the fact that he is looking from the door. Her makeup is very light as she belongs to a village. A deliberate attempt for the motive.

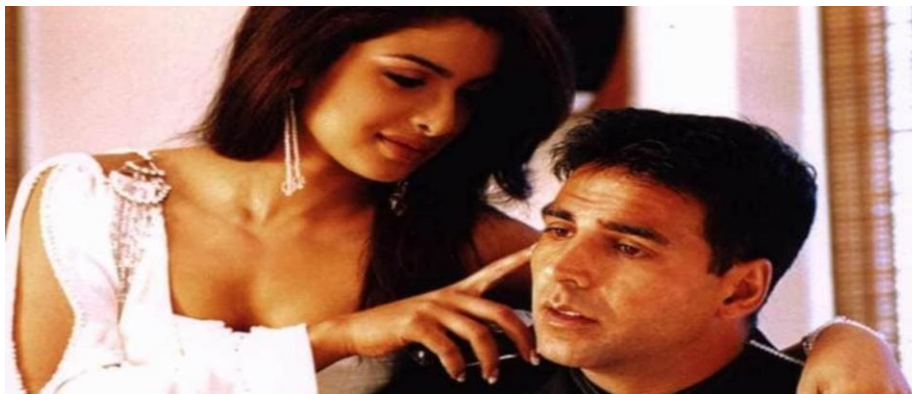
Example 3: Susanna**Theme 5 – Example 3 – Image 1 - Susanna**

Susanna falls in love with a Muslim poet, Wasiullah Khan aka Musafir, her third husband. Wasiullah is a soft-spoken, kind-hearted, thoughtful poet by the day; however, this facade falls apart during the night as the sadomasochist beast in him is awakened at night. Another night, she deliberately removes her gown and reveals her body in front of him. She is sexually arousing him. She now wants to take revenge from him for his mistreatment.

Costumes and makeup are like an asset for lady villain. They help her in moving towards the objective. Ria of *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya* wear tops which expose her body. Later, she charms Jay with dressing and dark makeup. Similarly, Malini of *Raaz*, Sonia of *Armaan*, Sonia of *Aitraaz*, Shanaya of *Raaz3* and Anjana of *Alone* have used this asset to control the male protagonist. Their aim is to use the male protagonist either to reach the objective or dominate male protagonist to cause harm to the female protagonist.

Theme 6: Interaction with Men**Example 1: Sonia in Jism****Theme 6 – Example 1 – Image 1: Deceptive Sonia**

There are many instances in the film where Sonia's interaction with Kabir is manipulative and seductive. Sonia wants the complete will of Rohit to be transferred on her name. She tries to manipulate Kabir that he is a lawyer. He is shocked at her. He denies to do anything which can catch the eyes of police as they are going to murder someone. Kabir arranges the bomb and meets Sonia in a clothing showroom. There he explains the plan to Sonia. She drags Kabir and starts kissing him and says that she loves him the most. Sonia emotionally controls Kabir to do the way she wants.

Example 2: Sonia in Aitraaz**Theme 6 – Example 2 – Image 2: Sonia’s overt demand for sexual pleasure**

In a scene, where an annual day celebration is going on and everyone is promoted to their expected post but Raj’s name is not announced and the CEO post is given to his friend. Sonia is looking constantly at Raj and then announces his name in the board of directors. Raj is very happy and thanked Sonia as Mam. She puts her hand for handshake and says to call her only ‘Sonia’. Raj feels uncomfortable.

Example 3: Shanaya in Raaz 3**Theme 6 – Example 3 – Image 1: Shanaya doing sexual moves**

In a scene, Sanjana is sitting at her home and thinking about her servant’s proposal. Meanwhile, Aditya comes in and gives his award to Shanaya as hers. She throws the award and gets angry with Aditya taking the side of her enemy, Sanjana. She says that Sanjana has been defeating her for the past two years. She will slowly take the place of Shanaya. Aditya asks her to get married. She says that she does not want to destroy her brand by getting married. She will take the decision of her life and that she wants to hold on. In the whole sequence she is dominating over Aditya and wants to hide their relationship as she has done for the past three years. Shanaya is only using Aditya for her gains. Her objective is to ruin the life of Sanjana. Due to this, her interaction with Aditya is mostly dominating, threatening and sensuous.

Theme 7: Femme Fatale

Vamps in Bollywood cinema were modelled on the French femme fatale, who would exploit their sexuality to manipulate others. (Kishore, 2014)

Femme Fatales are a different category of villains. They are criminal women or lethal women. Seductress, do not undergo marriage and motherhood, mean are some qualities of a femme fatale. In the selected films,

almost every lady villain is a femme fatale. Except Simmi of *Andhadhun*, she is not seducing any character or telling lies to manipulate others. As visible in most films, they are glamorous, sassy and possess strong will to achieve. Mostly they are self centric.

Example 1: Malini's vicious attempt



Theme 7 – Example 1 – Image 1: Malini wants sexual satisfaction

In the film *Raaz*, Malini enters as a second protagonist. She abandons her family and one night due to bad weather takes shelter at Aditya's home. She is unaware of the fact that he is married to Sanjana. Malini seduces Aditya and both start loving each other. One day, she gets to know about Sanjana. Malini is broken by heart angry at Aditya for deceiving her. She wants him to break the marriage with Sanjana. But he doesn't want that, one night she commit suicide. She gives a threat to him that she will return soon. Malini returns as a spirit. First she kills a girl in whose body she entered. Then start haunting Sanjana to such a level that she enters in her body as well. Now, Malini as Sanjana is present in front of Aditya. Malini seduces him again and then shows her ghostly face.

Example 2: Sonia

Sonia in *Armaan* is jealous of Neha. She wants her husband, Akash, to stay away from her. She thinks that he is still in a relationship with Neha. in a sequence, Neha's mother is admitted in hospital and she needs immediate attention. Her medical reports are at Akash's home. Neha calls Sonia but she denies that Akash is busy. Sonia makes sure that Neha cannot even reach their home. Next day, Akash gets to know her mother is dead. Sonia is behind Neha's mother's death. She threatens that Neha will be murdered by her. Her villainous actions do not stop here. She gives a threat to Akash also that he can not give him divorce as the whole hospital is revamped because of her father's donation. But this time, Akash leaves her and goes to live with Neha. Sonia cannot control herself and takes the gun of her father. She drives with the gun in hand to kill him. From above situations it is clear that femme fatales can go to any extent to fulfill their desires. They are portrayed as witches and ghosts. But the major crux remains the same. They take extreme decisions without any fear of repercussions.

Theme 8: Sympathetic Villainess

Sympathetic villains can be defined as those villains which become evil due to circumstances present at that time. They do not want anything in return. But they indulge in villainous acts to achieve the desire.

Example 1 – Nimmi: villainess with positive intent**Theme 8 – Example 1 – Image 1: Nimmi’s masterplane**

It is a story of a lady who is the wife of her father’s age husband. She loves the husband’s most loyal henchman, Maqbool. He too loves her the most. But the situation is such that they can love themselves freely openly in front of people. Maqbool cannot go against his father like figure Don. Nimmi in one of the sequences, instigate Maqbool to do something for their love or serve the whole life before the don like a dog serves his master. She goes to the mosque to pray barefoot. Maqbool with the permission of Don follows her. Nimmi deliberately wants him to go with her so that she can put the thought about Don in his mind. Maqbool puts forth his situation that Don has taken care of him since childhood days, he cannot go against him.

‘Krishna’ of Ishqiya and ‘Susanna’ of 7 Khoon Maaf are also sympathetic villains because the society in their life becomes evil for their survival and at last they have to transform into lady villains for their rights and correct the wrong done to them. The person they love the most in life turns out to be their killer. This shakes both the females and they take the charge in their hands to live life for themselves.

Theme 9: Badass Villainess

This category of villains whether male or female are the strongest and fearless. Being fearless makes them tough. This toughness is often equated with a badass character. Out of all the lady villains analysed in this study, Simmi bags the top position as a badass character.

Example 1- Andhadhun’s Lady Macbeth: Simi**Theme 9 – Example 1 – Image 1: Simi- a deviant woman**

In Andhadhun, Simi is married to a veteran superstar, Pramod Sinha. Her husband gets killed by her lover, a police officer. Simi tries to cover the crime. In the first situation, Simi and her lover are cleaning blood and packing the body of Pramod in a suitcase. Meanwhile, Simi mimics as if Pramod has come back and he

suddenly goes to some work. Simi tells Akash, the piano player to leave now. Akash is blind but not in reality.

Simi is very different from other lady villains in one aspect i.e. she doesn't know what she is going to do next. She has not made any plan for her objective. The objective is also not clear to her. She moves with the happenings and tries to save herself from the antagonistic actions she has done. She is dominating over male protagonist (Akash) and her lover, Manohar like other villains. On the other side, she is a very skilled villain also. She knows how to deal with obstacles like use of the internet for poison to make Akash completely blind. Throwing the old lady from the building, killing the doctor using the syringe needle. She is sometimes expressionless which confuses the audience what will be her next step? Sometimes she speaks in a positive and calm tone as if now she will do no wrong. But suddenly she comes out like a ferocious person or a wild beast. These aspects of her personality makes Simi stand out among other lady villains.

Conclusion

After doing the in-depth textual analysis of the selected Hindi films, it is clear that most of the lady villains are in the age group of 25-35 years. The exceptions are Mausi (Makdee), Sumitra (Gulab Gang) and Simi (Andhadhun). These are in their late 40s and it is visible from the costumes and makeup. Age factor is an important characteristic. The young lady villains attract male protagonists through sexual advances while the older ones depend more on themselves. Lady villains manytimes do not have real justifications for their negative actions. From the selected films, greed and jealousy come out as the prominent reasons for transformation in villainess. While carrying out the research on the topic, it was observed that the decade of 2000 witnessed this kind of representation of lady villain. Most of them either have a greed for wealth or are jealous of their opponent which is mostly the female protagonist. Sonia (Jism) only wants money and uses the male protagonist, Kabir. Shanaya (Raaz3) wants to ruin the professional and personal life of Sanjana, female protagonist out of jealousy and she also uses male protagonist, Aditya.

But this decade also saw the coming of anti-heroine who were accepted by the audiences in a time when anti-heroes ruled the screen. Ria in *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya*, Malini in *Raaz* and Sonia in *Armaan* are examples of early anti-heroines. Shanaya in *Raaz3*, Sumitra in *Gulab Gang*, Anjana in *Alone* are the latest anti-heroine characters. There is no merger of heroine and anti-heroines visible in the selected sample. Anti-heroine is a separate entity in itself which works parallel to the heroine. They are a category of lady villains. A different way of representation of an antagonist and it is evident from the selected films that anti-heroines are much more dark as character than a lady villain against the hero.

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