

“You Are Unique, The Way You Are”: Policing the “Fat Female Body” in *Fanney Khan*

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Abstract. In South Asia, the fat female body is accorded narrative prominence to construct different synonyms of beauty and power. It is frequently consigned to the edges of fictional realms in visual representations and popular cultures. The standards of beauty (i.e., slender body, seductive dress, skin colour, make-up, etc.) are colonising the brains of women by dividing them and forcing them to adhere to the beauty norms by limiting their performance to the erotic subject. The article analyses the film *Fanney Khan* (2018) as an imperative study to understand how the concept of “fat body with ability” is subjugated to the conventional idea of “fat = inabilities, unhygienic, unhealthy, diseased and disabled” by the hegemonic society through the protagonist and eventually dismantling the same. This article investigates how juvenile fat subjects parley through numerous discursive interactions in the film *Fanney Khan* (2018). It illustrates how the female lead in the film confronts, resists and ultimately debilitates the conventional notions of the fat body and beauty standards. Although fatness is represented in this film as either a source of extreme animosity and conflict or a matter of desexualised femininity and conventional clothing choice, it nonetheless serves as a counter-hegemonic ideal that destabilises fatphobia (Singh 2021).

Keywords and phrases: fat female body, standards of beauty, body shaming, hypervisibility and hyper(in)visibility, fat to fit

Introduction

The policing of women’s bodies in the contemporary era is the subject of global concern. Women’s bodies, when under surveillance by society and culture, lead to distress and catastrophic collapse in women’s psychological and physiological

conditions. The policing of women's bodies constantly forces them to be ashamed of their "out of place bodies" (like fat, dark skin, disabled), leading them to conform to the "standards of beauty" dictated by the hegemonic patriarchal society (Winch 2016). These predetermined standards of beauty often lead mainstream society to hate women who do not conform to these norms.

Beauty, according to feminist ideology, is embedded within broader systems of meaning that demonstrate cultural practices, gender norms and most significantly, power. The patriarchal society places considerable emphasis on women's bodies and appearance in exercising control over them. Women are less inclined to explore more real pathways to empowerment if they regard appearance as a method of defining who they are. According to feminist analysis, women are indeed subjected to socio-cultural and relational experiences in which the woman's body is interpreted as a commodity that stands for the enjoyment and usage of people, to be scrutinised and appraised (Tiggemann and Boundy 2008). Chernin (1981) in his book *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* proposed the "tyranny of slenderness", a popular contemporary obsession promoted by the media, television (TV), films and beauty pageant competitions. For instance, in the 1980s, Bollywood film star, Rekha, launched a book, *Rekha's Mind and Body Temple*, that conveyed her weight loss regime. Rekha, who had always been overweight, rebuilt herself via self-starving as well as training and became one of Hindi cinema's most famous and lasting models of body transformation. Losing weight to befit in the film is a fundamental necessity to perform the central character in Bollywood. This narcissistic, captivating and slender body of actresses, models and television personalities is on exhibition to satisfy the audience's gaze. Instead of dismantling fat body shaming, the Indian Bollywood industry has added to and broadened its scope, allowing and preferring a slender body to perform the central role. A TV producer told Bennington (2013), "When an actor auditions for me, it doesn't matter whether they can act or not; if they are beautiful, that is enough; the rest will be taught on set". Hence, body and beauty are imperative tools in the patriarchal cultural milieu that internalises the concept that a woman's body is "an item, a commodity, a sex object", and that one's body is "not her own" (Jovanovski 2017).

The body becomes an important avenue for female actors to perform femininity and is subject to self-identification. The fact that fashion trends have seized the industry, resulting in size-zero trends and a prevalent gymnasium culture, demonstrates Bollywood's preoccupation with the perfect body that endeavours to conform to the Western beauty standard. Kareena Kapoor, the size zero (Singh 2018) trailblazer actress, whose preferences altered from acting "simple Indian"

to “glamorous beauty” when she asserted, “I recognise I can’t be compensated for being wrapped from top to toe. I ought to be glitzy and enticing. That is what it requires to be a modern-day marketable heroine” (Jha 2012). Individualism, personality and a size-zero figure became extremely popular, conventional and common among the prominent actresses in the Bollywood industry when Western conceptions about body size and beauty rose to prominence in India’s urban areas. On the other hand, Manjrekar’s film *Fanney Khan* (2018) attempts to destabilise the conventional process by casting an obese adolescent girl to play the central role. The irony lies in when the fat girl’s picture was eliminated from the promotional poster to confuse the mainstream and captivate audiences by portraying only one glamorous body and obscuring the fat body. The article analyses the film *Fanney Khan* (2018) as an imperative study to understand how the “fat body with ability” is subjugated to the conventional idea that “fat = inabilities, unhygienic, unhealthy, diseased and disabled” by the hegemonic society through the leading character Lata and eventually dismantling the same. Obese teenage character Lata desires to be the star of India. In the process, she replicates the glamorous singer Baby Singh and then gushes with haunted remarks about her body. We demonstrate the two different feminine perspectives drawn in the film. On one hand, the representation of Lata’s fat body is categorised as “fat woman = ugly body”; on the other hand, the representation of Baby Singh’s body is demonstrated as a “slender woman = beautiful body”. The definition of a woman’s “beauty” is attached to her physique and skin colour, prompting radical feminism to challenge society’s misogyny. However, this approach is sometimes challenged but mostly accepted by the Bollywood industry. The obese female body is offered discourse significant to establish a different vocabulary of beauty, prosperity and power in South Asia, where it is frequently consigned to the fringes of narrative spaces in pictorial representations and popular cultures. Fatness is portrayed as a source of resentment and insecurity; therefore, in this article, we attempt to dismantle the prejudice and stigma related to the fat body of women through Lata in *Fanney Khan*, asserting that Lata’s body is hypervisible and hyper(in)visible at the same time. It nonetheless promotes an antagonistic archetype that impoverishes mainstream concepts of body size (Singh 2021), adhering to fatphobia and the standards of “beauty” in society despite desexualised femininity and conventional clothing choices.

Is Bollywood Vilifying the Fat Body or the Spectators?

A troll tweeted on Bollywood famous actress Sonakshi Sinha’s Twitter account, “Please go on a hunger strike, Madam; you will drop weight and procure more roles as a reward” (Budhiraja 2019).

Sonakshi was body-shamed for years and admitted to losing 66 lbs before her 2010 Bollywood debut, *Dabangg* (Fearless). In an interview, she asserted that “losing weight is an organic process. Though I weighed 209 lbs, I never struggled with confidence. Fitness cannot be a whim; it is a mindset”. Initially, she was outraged by unfavourable remarks on her body, “cow on the catwalk”, “fatso”, “buffalo” and “elephant”, and often retorts, but now she chooses to ignore them. “To heck with it”, Sonakshi said in response to online users’ nasty remarks about her body, “I will continue to be myself; I was bigger than them...pun intended” (Budhiraja 2019). The online interactions and confrontations between a Bollywood actress and internet trolls are inextricably embedded in a civilised society and modern ideologies.

Vidya Balan, a Bollywood actress with performances in female-led films, is known for pioneering a revolution in the representation of women by disregarding “out-of-place bodies” and is outspoken regarding her body weight and hormonal complexities. In an interview, she claims, “My body weight had become a national issue. I have always been a fat girl. For a long, I despised my physical appearance. It seemed to have deceived me. I would bloat up and be so furious and upset on days when I was under pressure to look my best” (Bhatia 2021). However, she finally states, “I eventually acknowledged that my body keeps me alive. The day my body quits operating, I won’t be around. Each day has brought me closer to loving and accepting myself, but it hasn’t been easy. You have to fake it till you make it” (Bhatia 2021).

Former Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai has been labelled “the most beautiful lady in the world” and was subjected to body shaming after post-pregnancy. Aishwarya Rai stated that “When an actress becomes a mother, the attention is on how instantaneously she dropped weight and not on health, but I am not concerned about this” (Sharma 2016).

Three prominent Bollywood actresses’ statements succinctly illustrate how the allegedly obese female star is often driven to safeguard or vindicate her body in modern South Asia. The compulsion to lose weight in the glamorous Bollywood industry often leads actresses to psychological and emotional distress. The presumption of body discontentedness is triggered by the activation of appearance-related concepts by certain situational indications that drive the usage of cognitive and behavioural coping techniques (Cash 2002). The hate trolls and remarks by the audience on the “bodies” of female actresses assert women as “objects rather than subjects” (Chatterji 2013). The real and reel life seems no different when it comes to bullying a fat woman. Since the Premillennial, Bollywood films have justified

the fat body as a source of jest, buffoonery, ridicule and unhygienic. Fat actresses like Tun Tun (Uma Devi Khatri), known as “the iconic fat woman” in the industry and Guddi Maruti have been cast in roles that stress fatness as a persistent source of amusement, contempt, opprobrium and humour throughout Bollywood history. In *Aabroo* (Honour), 1968, Uma Devi opens the door for her on-screen spouse, who leans on it and collapses. Hence, he murmurs, “At least I could get up. If you had fallen, we would have needed a crane to pick you up” (Mazumder 2017). Shyam, the lead character, is shocked and horrified because he is being chased by a fat and dark-skinned female in a famous song titled *Ho Nahin Sakta* (It Cannot Be) (Singh 2021; Shemaroo Filmi Gaane 2016) from the Hindi film *Diljale* (The Burning Heart) in 1996. Raj (Salman Khan) misidentifies Priya’s (Rani Mukerji) sister-in-law as the lady his family has picked for him in *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke* (Secretly and Stealthily) (2001). When he visits her, he fat-shames her by remarking on her cheeks and referring to her as *chaar bachchon ki maa* (mother of four children), as well as comparing her to the slender and beautiful Priya. In 2003, Karan Johar directed *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (Tomorrow May Never Come), a film in which Sweetu (Delnaaz Irani), an obese young lady, was ridiculed openly for wearing skinny clothes and hooking up. Her friend, Naina (Preity Zinta), advises that “Unless she loses weight, she will never find a man”. When Rohit (Saif Ali Khan) spots Sweetu in the mirror, he screeches in terror, asserting that overweight women are scarier than the demon in *The Conjuring* (2013). Varun Dhawan in *Judwaa 2* (2017) is fleeing from a fat woman cop who fails to grasp him and later he affirms, “Wait for it, fat women can’t run!” However, Rani Mukerji, through her film *Mardaani* (2014), asserts that “Irrespective of gender, a cop is identified by his or her skills and talent” and endeavours to accentuate Indian women’s autonomy and leadership skills. The ridiculous remarks by male superstars of Bollywood on fat bodies to date are a matter of concern and shame. Bollywood tends to brazenly utilise fatness as a subject of laughter, self-deprecation and vilification even in the post-millennial setting, where concerns regarding racial prejudices and body shaming traditions in India are progressively gathering traction.

However, a couple of Bollywood films endeavour to raise the concern of body shaming, but sarcastically. As in *Dum Laga ke Haisha* (Give in All Your Energy), 2015, the fat actress Sandhya, longs for her husband’s love, who humiliates her and vociferously adds derogatory remarks on Sandhya stating, “I don’t feel like touching her” and “Sleeping with her is similar to experiencing hell”. The film destigmatises the body-shaming movement by stereotypically shaming Sandhya’s body. *Ujda Chaman* (Destroyed Garden) (2019) employs societal fatphobia as a strategy through the leading character Chaman, who is hesitant to date an overweight girl. The film is not concerned with understanding the concept of body

positivity but with perpetuating it for amusement. Similarly, in *Ghoomketu* (2020), the titular protagonist has no qualms in expressing strong feelings of repulsion towards his obese wife and is only able to embrace his predicament after she sheds a significant amount of weight through rigorous fasting. Hence, slender women are desirable and attractive to the male community. It is imperative to lose weight before being cast as a central character in a Bollywood film, as demonstrated by Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha, Sonam Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan, who strengthened the concept of “tyranny of slenderness” and “thinspiration” (Winch 2016). Hence, both the spectators and Bollywood have contributed to the humiliation and vilification of the fat body, sometimes by dictating them to be slender or obese according to the demand of the character. Pihu Sand, who played Lata in *Fanney Khan*, was urged to acquire 44 lbs for the role and then compelled to lose it all in order to sustain in a business where beauty standards are strict (Shaikh 2020).

You are Unique the Way You are

Fanney Khan (2018) is a musical comedy and an adaptation of Dominique Derudder's *Everybody's Famous* (2000) Belgian film, which was nominated for an Academy Award. Prashant Sharma, also known as “Fannee Khan” among his pals, aspires for his daughter, Lata, to be the next Lata Mangeshkar (Singh 2021). Lata was continuously body-shamed for her overweight. Hence, the body comes into play first and later her singing skills. Every time she sings, the audiences ridicule her based on her fat body, making derogatory remarks like *moti* (fatso), elephant and buffalo. Prashant abducts Baby Singh, a singing superstar and compels her manager to ensure that his daughter, Lata, performs on the reality programme *India ki Awaaz* (Voice of India). On the other hand, Singh's manager, Karan Kakkad, uses the power of the deadlock to boost his TV channel's target rating point (TRP) by divulging the identity of the abductor in the midst of the broadcast, where Prashant claims “If his daughter is not allowed to perform, he will shoot Baby Singh”. Despite these impediments, Lata manages to impress the audience with her singing skills, dismantling the conventional idea that “fat = (in) abilities”. Her father was liberated from prison because Baby asserted that she was never kidnapped and was instead on vacation with Adhir (Fannee's buddy who had assisted him in a felony). Prashant desired to make his daughter a superstar singer, a modern Mangeshkar of contemporary India. However, her fat body marked a great obstacle in the process, which was always subject to amusement and insensitive remarks. Hence, being fit mattered more than being skilled in the post-feminist era.

When it pertains to Michelangelo, Beethoven or Shakespeare, the name speaks for itself. Lata Mangeshkar’s brilliance is embodied in her name. “There are no words that can describe her”, Javed Akhtar once stated. *Meree Aavaaj Hee Pahachaan Hai* (My Voice is My Identity) sung by Lata Mangeshkar, an evergreen singer who has sung umpteen songs in 36 languages throughout her eight-decade profession. It is a voice that has seized the Indian mind and served as a benchmark for musicians and fans for multiple generations. Lata Mangeshkar is identified as the idealised and archetypal voice of Indian femininity. Prashant names his daughter “Lata” and believes she will excel in singing like Mangeshkar. However, in the beginning scene, Lata was bullied and became the victim of derogatory remarks on her fat body when she performed the sensuous song *Sheila ki Jawani* (Sheila’s Youth), an item number sung by Sunidhi Chauhan that featured Katrina Kaif (Singh 2021). Sunidhi’s nasal, high-pitched and recurrently erotic vocals contrast sharply with Mangeshkar’s spartan vocal approach (Sundar 2008), who strenuously refused to perform songs she assumed were indecent (Majumdar 2001). Both Chauhan and Kaif have slender figure; this too segregates them from the sort of femininity Mangeshkar symbolise. In fact, the audience’s contemptuous and discourteous reaction demonstrates that Lata Sharma’s decision was inadequate, as Chauhan is acknowledged as the “queen of item songs” in the media and Katrina’s varied dance routines are often marketed in the film as “item numbers” (Kumar 2017, 340). As per Bollywood culture, most films have an “item song” that is supposed to be performed by toned body actresses who expose their body parts to the maximum, hence fitting the male gaze and arousing sensual desire. The scenario is distinct for Lata, as she is in a precarious position; neither her voice nor her body meets the standards of the official version of the item song or its composer. The song *Meree Aavaaj Hee Pahachaan Hai* is paradoxical and dichotomous in the case of Lata, as a woman’s identity is defined by her toned body, which is desirable for males and later comes the abilities. Though Lata performed efficiently on the stage, she was body-shamed by the spectators. It questions the feminist movement that is supposed to protect and advocate for the rights of women who are either fat or skinny or of any “body” shape.

Hence, the three “stage” sequences where Lata was performing and her body was subjected to amusement by the anti-fat mindset generate a series of questions: “What is in the name, or body?”, “For a singer, is it not the voice that counts?” and “Or is it not the abilities that matter?”. Manjrekar’s film follows a similar narrative structure, as Lata Sharma’s ostentatiousness is a real hindrance on two occasions, thereby distracting her fatphobic audience from acknowledging the genuine brilliance of her voice. In the beginning, the scene when Lata was stopped in the middle of the performance on *Sheila ki Jawani* by the anti-fat spectators

who laughed and spat remarks on her figure. Her confidence deteriorated, marked by her confused and shocked reaction. She was interrupted by the host, who asked her to place the microphone and move backstage. In the second stage performance, Lata chose to sing Baby Singh's song *Hazir Hai Husn Ishq ki Mehfil Mein* (Presenting This Beautiful Body in the Gathering of Love). The contradiction between the chosen sensuous song, dress and Lata's fat body provoked vexation and lampooning among audiences. Amidst the performance, she is precluded by the panellist, who abuses Lata, claiming, "Have you checked yourself in the mirror?". Reinforcing the rationale that was apparent before, Lata now begins internalising the obese biases and clichés that her panel of judges and viewers wanted her to be cognisant of. Spectators frequently screamed, then mocked and guffawed as they saw her figure illuminated by light in a vibrantly coloured Western dress that exposed her legs and arms. Fat women are ardent feminists who use their bodies to challenge traditional notions of femininity. "[F]at represents a resistance against the woman's helplessness, against the demand to appear and behave in a specific manner and against being assessed on her capacity to construct an image of herself" (Orbach 1978). The same tenacity can be observed in Bollywood actress Vidya Balan, who spoke against fat-shaming and defied sexist culture by refusing to reduce weight to play the central character, paving the way to "fat positivity or body positivity" (Darwin 2017). Due to the economic interests of beauty corporations, the Body Positive Movement is susceptible to the frame augmentation of "false feminism" and "weak feminism" (Johnston and Taylor 2008). The "standards of beauty" (like slender body, seductive dress, skin colour, make-up, etc.) are colonising the brain of women by dividing them and forcing them to adhere to the beauty norms by limiting their performance to the erotic subject. Plato (1998) stated that "Women have always suffered for beauty" in his *Symposium*, a famous discourse on eternal and unchanging values. Beauty ideals are comprised of emotional distance, politics, economics and sexual suppression and they are not about celebrating women. As demonstrated in the case of Lata, who was not admired for her singing skills but humiliated for her fat body which does not fit the beauty standards of anti-fat spectators. Anti-fat mindsets are pre-programmed to be immune to change. However, the film attempts to mutate the anti-fat and fatphobic attitudes by theorising the body of Lata in the last stage show. She was at last appreciated by the heteronormative audience for her talent. Lata here destigmatises the misogynistic norms by being unwilling to change her body from "fat to fit" to befit the audience's gaze.

As per Prashant's perspective, in the beginning scene, Lata does not fit into the stage performance because of her choice of sensual song. In the second stage performing scene, she was not appealing to the audience because of the seductive dress that mismatched her body. When the audience bullied her, he targeted Lata for choosing the wrong song and dress. As demonstrated in the film:

Women are supposed to appear and dress in ways that disenable them. These prohibitive criteria are assumed to have been introduced by women alone. If women do not comply with these criteria, men perceive them to be unattractive or wicked. (Rothblum 2016)

Lata’s dress immobilises her confidence and singing skills that persuade hegemonic audiences to presume her to be “ugly” and “undesirable”. However, Rothblum and Solovay (2009) stated that an “assumption to invent prohibitive criteria on women by women” challenges the feminist “standard of beauty” ideals that are demonstrated by Lata through “fat body” and Baby Singh’s “slender body” in the film. According to Love and Helmbrecht (2007, 51), prominent feminists who attain popular cultural appeal often tend to abide, to some extent, by repressive patriarchal norms; thus “feminist sentiments are marketed”. As in the film, women in large numbers intimidate and castigate Lata due to her physique; on the other hand, Baby Singh was appreciated for her beautiful appearance, which asserts women’s double standard in perceptions of beauty. The “body”, an imperative part of the self is annihilated by the spectator if it is not toned because the fat body is commonly perceived as “undesirable” (Murray 2004) and “asexual” (Thomas and Wilkerson 2005). Orbach (2006) claims that “Fatness equals asexuality and it can be interpreted as a subtle endorsement of policing body discourses”. Some bodies are very conspicuous, visually examined and turned into a display, while others are discriminated against or erased due to social stratification. Fat appears to be a dichotomy as it is seen and examined in public; it is hypervisible in this regard. Fat is likewise shunned and erased; making it hyper(in)visible. According to Foucault (1995), visibility is deceptive. Being seen may be a source of respect in certain situations, but it can be a sign of “othering” when it culminates in glances of contempt. Love and Helmbrecht (2017) state, “When women or anybody else is ‘othered’, [they] are given visibility. Surveillance, voyeurism and the desire to own someone are often associated with this visibility”. Foucault addresses this visibility through the contexts of power and discipline when he incorporates Bentham’s panopticon to demonstrate how perpetual visibility—under vigilance—generates injustice and a punishment mechanism. When implemented in the modern era, Foucault’s emphasis is on regulating and normalising the gaze that occurs when individuals are under continual observation. Tischner (2013, 45) asserts that “Increased individualisation within a disciplinary system tends to be associated with permanent visibility while power itself becomes invisible... and those who are exposed to it become more prominent”. Being visible is a type of acknowledgement – that one exists or counts. However, it may also signify that one is distinct and susceptible to criticism. For instance, queer, LGBT people, fat individuals and disabled people are subject to visibility in a socially repressive sense. However, visible they are perceived and considered, they witness invisibility in a variety

of social circumstances, hence, leading to hyper(in)visibility. They are frequently confronted with unfavourable gazes and have a pronounced “onstage” sense as if they are being scrutinised and mocked at every moment. Lata’s body suffers from both “hypervisibility and hyper(in)visibility” (Gailey 2014). Lata endures hypervisibility as her body requires a large visible and physical space, susceptible to outrageous criticism from others and she might not conform to “standard” sized clothing. Her body does not fit the sensual and glamorous physique of Baby Singh’s body. This paves the way to blocking her midway from the stage performance with bitter comments from the judges. This hinders her from “body acceptance” (Miller 2016) and drags her to hate her body that does not fit the size zone of hegemony society. Lata suffers from hyper(in)visibility, which occurs when her necessities, ideas and abilities are overlooked or quashed, validating the male gaze. The first time Lata is reprimanded, her father points out that her song selection was both defective and inappropriate as it failed to include one of Mangeshkar’s timeless successes and was also a cause of dissatisfaction for the spectators. The erotic nature of item number purportedly lacking in Lata’s performance exposes her father’s qualms that “his daughter’s corporeal body should not be a part of”. To put it another way, her father embodies the same fat preconceptions and stigma that Lata is working hard to overcome. Prashant refrains from offering remarks in the second scenario; however, the fact that he expresses his displeasure with the western attire that Lata has selected for herself exemplifies the concept of conventional femininity he holds.

In the last stage performing scene, Lata was able to astonish the audience with her abilities and voice by singing a relatable song, *You are Unique, the Way You are*, only because of her father, who forced the concerned people of the show to let his daughter perform, or else he would shoot the famous singer, Baby Singh, opting a violent way and exaggerating his masculinity. His masculinity was satisfied in both cases; first, when he attempted to accomplish his dreams through Lata and second, to quench his desires, he abducted Baby Singh. His masculinity was authoritative over Lata, his daughter and Baby, the famous star. This asserts the view that “masculinity is performed by squashing femininity” irrespective of the relations a man holds with a woman. Authority, dominance, competitiveness and violence are ideals predicated on hegemonic masculinity, whereas emotional connection is undervalued. Masculinity, thus, is a “homosocial enactment” (Kimmel 1997); males engage in actions that conform to the hegemonic paradigm for other men to acknowledge their masculinity, thus validating their status as “real men” (Connell 1987). Hence, Prashant was labelled under the umbrella of a real man, with the audience’s applause for expressing his masculinity on Lata and Baby Singh.

However, the film addresses body shaming while focusing less on the character Lata and more on the glorified beauty. The film is looked up with two dimensions, first, the portrayal of Lata, an overweight, talented singer and second, Baby Singh,

a glamorous singing star. The film itself showcases the beauty standards set by the Bollywood industry as Lata too copies Baby Singh and desires her glamorous look without asserting the sensitive issue of body shaming. However, the infantilisation of Baby Singh as demonstrated in the film is problematic as we sense the existence of a rudimentary discrepancy between her experiences and words. She assures Fannee (Prashant) that if his daughter has the competency, no one can prevent her from achieving stardom as a singer. However, the fact that Lata’s somatic abundance could be disregarded if she adheres to the already-established ideals of conventional femininity is indeed a substantial concession in and of itself. The manager of Baby informs her that the producer demands her to cooperate and submit to the wardrobe malfunction on a stage show for monetary purposes. For instance, the wardrobe malfunction scene in *Fashion* (2008), performed by Kangana Ranaut, epitomises the truth behind the glamorous misogynist industry that uses women’s bodies for the sake of the male gaze. The body of a female plays an imperative role in earning success in Bollywood, as demonstrated in this film by Baby Singh, while the same is destigmatised by Lata’s fat body. In this film, Lata contributes to the fat-acceptance standpoint by resignifying and sexualising her fat female body, which operates as a crucial counter-discourse in challenging and debilitating the conventional perspective that fat women are asexual bodies in a cultural environment. Her activities like wearing glamorous dresses that expose her body, performing on stage and gaining accolades from the audience break Orbach’s (2006) concept “Fat equates to psychopathology or asexuality” and reject traditional, idealised conceptions of femininity by demonstrating and expressing sexual power through her fat body.

Conclusion

In India, gender disparity is replicated in the film business. Women, especially protagonists, are frequently depicted in powerless or subservient roles in most Indian films, even though they adhere to the slender body performance by being beautiful and attractive. Susie Orbach in her work *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (2006) asserts that “the prism of sexual objectification, motivates women to subscribe to a feminist standpoint that recognises, examines and challenges detrimental traditional strategies that refer to slenderness as an appropriate state of woman’s identity”. Female sexuality has been inextricably connected to the “object” of the male gaze, both inside and outside of the film industry. However, there is a substantial number of psychological research that supports the premise that “objectification” is destructive (De Vries and Peter 2013). As to surprise, the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was reprimanded for a tweet that situates women as objects. An obese woman symbolised non-vegetarian and refined foods and a slender woman symbolised vegetables and fruit, questioning the public, “What is your choice?” (Rao 2018). The tweet was removed from the site due to widespread

criticism on social media. However, the removal of the tweet holds a view that the hegemonic spectators are asserting that “fat ≠ inabilities, unhygienic, unhealthy, diseased and disabled”, which was stabilised by Lata when she opted not to mutate her body by “self-acceptance”. However, one can argue that she was stipulated to lose 44 lbs in order to conform to Bollywood’s hegemonic ideals as followed by other stars, leaving a gap between fat acceptance and self-acceptance. Since she embraced her fat body and self on command and subsequently modified her physique on demand. In the same way, Bhumi Pednekar was compelled to gain 66 lbs to fit into the character of the movie; later she shed 77 lbs to fit into mainstream Bollywood (Kaur 2018). For instance, Bernstein and Matilda (2009) demonstrate how women are misled by their celebrity idols. However, their later frenzied endeavours to lose weight, as well as their deceptive statements about excess fat, both nullified their apparent good influence, leaving their fat supporters feeling exploited, tricked and abandoned. As per the Indian Fortis Healthcare (2019) survey, 90% of females state fat-shaming is a prevalent practice, 84% of women agree that they are subjected to body shaming at a higher rate than men, 76% of females believe that representation of beauty standards by the media contributes to body-shaming, 90% of women assert that films and TV programmes mock fat as they did not fit in beauty standards. Body shaming is a subject that 97% of women believe should be communicated in educational institutions to modify the mindsets (India CSR Network 2019). A serious discourse to remake and strengthen the feminist network in order to destabilise the hegemonic ideal should be framed in South Asia and other parts of the world throughout popular culture. A significant effort must be generated for the improvement and modification of conventional mindsets in regard to body shaming.

Regardless of how competent and restricted the sublimation is, the obese girl’s physique gets aesthetically sublimated into the narrative framework. At the least *Fannee Khan* does attempt to confront and challenge the invisibility and elimination of obese women from the mainstream Bollywood film business. As it reassesses fatness as a topic that requires critical research and reading by emancipating it from the archetypal paradigms of obscurity and obliteration. Lata engages in events that have historically been designated for slender and sexually desirable females like Baby Singh and resists the stigma accorded to fat by hegemonic organisations such as the film industry, the media and the medical profession. The concluding song, *Tere Jaisa Tu Hai* (You are Unique the Way You are) (Manjrekar 2018), emphasises the uniqueness and beauty of all body shapes. In a limited context, the film’s final episodes purposefully sidestep the predictable trap that Bollywood employs, which is to make a show out of the obese female lead. As they destigmatise the mechanism that establishes the borders between

the fat and normal body and acknowledges in a restrained manner, how “the performance of the fat body affirms and consolidates the identity of the normal body” (Huff 2001, 52) at their climax moments. The song’s sturdy proponents of uniqueness and pluralism stand in sharp contrast to the disdainful and disparaging stereotypes that are frequently presented by mainstream cinema. The film tends to advocate body acceptance to mainstream media and society with the help of Lata’s character when she refuses to accept the ideal standard concept of “fat to fit”. We believe that a feminist network must be established to adhere to self-acceptance or weight satisfaction (Dhillon and Dhawan 2011) and not to follow the standards of beauty dictated by the hegemonic society.

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