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Corporeal Deviance and Narrative Power in Ashraf Hamsa's *Thamasha* and Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a simultaneous examination of deviant bodies in the Indian- Malayalam film, *Thamasha*(2019) written and directed by Ashraf Hamza and the Indian novel, *Animal's People*(2005) written by Indra Sinha. It examines the body narrative within the given texts as subtle and enlightened space. It also explores body space in the world of commercial cinema as well as literary convention. The paths taken in the problematization of the subjects are similar to a great extent, as they project and circumvent the particular disfigurements and disabilities that they represent, through subjective and self -conscious choices. The narratives take on a series of subversions aimed at breaching the cycle of body prejudice and dominant gender perception. The discussion focusses on theorizing the idea of body image, body consciousness and objectification with respect to the narrative trajectories of the film as well as the novel, looking at the constitutive subject positions of the protagonists vis- a- vis the societal perceptions of an evolving postcolonial world and its history. An examination of the sequence of counter-narrative strategies, leading to the textual construction of agency of the deviant bodies presented, is attempted here.

Key words
Body Narrative, Disability, Disfigurement, Subversion, Body Prejudice, Body Image, Objectification, Subjectivity, Agency.

The 2019 Malayalam film, titled *Thamasha,* had a successful run in terms of commercial mileage as well as its impact in driving home a point about society's treatment of "deviant" or "imperfect" bodies and the dynamics of body consciousness. The film presents the everyman experience of body shaming with perhaps minimal interventions of cinematic technique and craft, by foregrounding its body narrative as subtle and enlightened space. The film, comprising a series of amusing encounters, re-casts the body space against the world of commercial Indian cinema, replete with smart one-liners and crass wise- cracks about underprivileged body constitutions such as obesity, shortness, baldness, skin color and so on. Within the generic framework of light-hearted humor and the comic situations there by, the film challenges its viewers to get under the skin of people who are targets of such mindless comedy on screen and in real life. Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's people* (2005), in a similar vein, presents a character who defies stereotypes and cliches that have marred the representation of a great deal of disabled characters in fiction, and proceeds further to highlight sociopolitical consequences that emanate from, but stretch beyond the realm of corporeal polemic. Sinha's novel is set against a poverty- stricken town in India, bearing the fictional name "Khaufpur" and presents a disabled subject , directly embedded in global politics, as he is a victim of a man -made disaster caused by a multinational pesticide plant- a historical testament. The narrator is a teenage boy called "Animal", disabled from infancy because of a chemical explosion that caused his spine to contort in such a way that he cannot stand upright and has had to walk on his hands as well as his feet. As his disability prompts him to feel inhuman , he chooses to refer to himself as "Animal".(3)

This paper sets out to examine the paths taken in the problematization of the subjects, namely the victims of

body shaming, in projecting, and finally circumventing their objectification in societal interaction and how this recourse, involving a series of subversions, results in breaching the cycle of body prejudice and dominant gender perception, while also perpetuating some of the ideological paradigms they are founded on. The paper will also attempt a theorization of the ideas of body image, body shaming, body consciousness and objectification with respect to the narrative trajectories of the film and novel, and the subject positions of the protagonists who constitute their textual canvas.

The film, *Thamasha* (2019), presents its concern with body consciousness, and its dynamics in contemporary Kerala society through the lives of two protagonists who dwell entirely different zones of body deviance, as they are male and female, but are brought to encounter each other out of societal design, the mutual search for a marriage partner. Sreenivasan, is a soft-spoken college Professor, living out a complex consciousness about his premature baldness. His subdued personality is contrasted with moments of acute awareness of this shortcoming, as when he poses before the mirror and quiffs up all of the hair that remains on his head to camouflage his baldness. As against this, is presented the female protagonist, Chinnu, a supremely confident youngster, who is aware of people's attitude towards overweight women like herself but is unfazed by the attendant burden and will not allow anything or anyone to eclipse her spontaneous smile. The socially awkward Sreenivasan, is anxious to be married but cannot find a woman who will accept him with his baldness, while the ebullient Chinnu, socializes unrestricted, just as she decides not to be restricted by a food regiment and does not apparently have the thought of marriage as an expedient matter, though she is in her "marriageable" prime as the society around her perceives. The presentation of both the characters throw light upon societal stereotypes, in that they break out of clichés. If bald men are either villainous or comic in their stereotypical portrayal, Sreenivasan the character, is neither. It is rather the sensitive sidelines of his professional and personal life, and the resulting awkwardness of his societal personality that are foregrounded. Similarly, Chinnu the bright, self-assured, positive woman is decidedly unlike the "fat" women characters of Indian Commercial cinema, screen written and cast almost invariably for their comic or villainous effects. Bollywood has even the infamous history of evolving the iconic name, "Tun Tun", a referent for over-weight women, after the well-known actor of the 70s and 80s , Uma Devi Khatri, who was tagged with the vaguely onomatopoeic sobriquet by the film industry. To have introduced a female protagonist who is more than an object of sexual desire, in a cinematic paradigm where for long, there had only been two incarnates- the helpless Madonna or the scheming whore, is in itself a progressive turn as far as the characterization of the film is concerned. The film instead, chooses to articulate the glitches in the experimentations of the woman as a maker of meaning, against what society perceives as a deviance in her body constitution and body image.

Sreenivasan's body consciousness and resulting communicative awkwardness are artistically underplayed contributing to the mild hilarity of the sequential encounters in the film, and become statements of body-shame, body-surveillance, body-dissatisfaction, and materialism at the same time. The choice of laying out Sreenivasan's narrative first, projects one of the initial moves of destabilizing gender perceptions in society, for it may be expected that in a patriarchal structure, the woman's instance of body shaming is the more obvious one and would hence lead the narrative sequence of the film. Further, it is not his "anti-hero" physique, quite the opposite of the ultra- muscular, body perfect, ideal for men in a consumerist culture, that is the cause of his body dissatisfaction, rather, it is his premature baldness that is subject to societal and professional surveillance. That he is of marriageable age, is made much of by his family, struggling to find a girl who might not be averse to the idea of baldness, while it is ignored or mocked at, in the professional-public space where his identity is critical. The twin incidents of the student who has cat-called in his class during a lecture and is presented before the college Principal, along with the caricature of Sreenivasan that he has drawn is illustrative of this. The Principal's advice to the student that he must not "make fun of" a teacher "his father's age", has Sreenivasan cringing in dismay, clarifying his age as nowhere near the father of an adolescent. A counterproductive cycle of the man's inclinations and determinations of marriage and his thwarted attempts to attain them, throws light on how the globalized city spaces and communities, in spite of their emergent and transitory cultures (seen in the rebellious styles of dressing and body language of the students and Sreenivasan's younger brother), is hostile in its engagements with yet more "deviances" that do not directly correspond with their immediate protestations. With every attempt that he makes to overcome his awkwardness and move closer to finding a female partner, his baldness is taken more notice of. Thus unfold the negative psychological consequences of his body dissatisfaction and appropriated body image.

Sreenivasan's first attempt at finding a possible match in his young colleague, Babitha, a new teacher in the college, and second one, in the young Muslim girl Safia, who is a manager at a hair fixing clinic, systematically

push and corner his body image, as these encounters posit the constant presence of rivals(contestations) and conditions(surveillance). The societal ideals of comparison appear in the form of the smart "English" professor (as against the Malayalam Professor that Sreenivasan is) or even his yuppie younger brother, more confident and comfortable in the company of female friends. "Babitha teacher", though an apparently open-minded young woman, who even calls Sreenivasan a "gentleman" is taken in by, and draws closer to the charms of the taller, "English speaking" Professor who does not suffer from baldness and has therefore a prior edge in what seems like the battle of nerves against Sreenivasan. Sreenivasan gives up and ends up in yet another possible relationship with a young professional, who he later learns, is a manager at a hair fixing clinic and was only looking to a business proposition through her friendly and self-initiated meetings with him. His body image takes a complete beating and he decides to "fix" his hair by donning a wig thereafter. While at the narrative level, the plot continues to take a hilarious turn, at the semiotic level the links between materialism, patriarchal codes of gender definition, body dissatisfaction and body shame are played out through artistic correlation. Though as a professor of Humanities, often prone to the dreamy and aspirational throes of poetry , Sreenivasan is not an overtly materialistic person , he is however attracted by the idea of a marriage endorsed by the community around him, and sees it as an opportunity to establish life on his own , as his job has been declared permanent and he earns substantially. In a later sequence, while settling the hospital bill accounts with Chinnu, he proves to be a man of precise calculation. The divergent cultural capitals of material good life," Englishness", style and sociability as represented in the rivals who serve to highlight Sreenivasan's body shame are critiqued as hegemonic seams in a pervasive consumer culture. To borrow from Alexandra Neagu's Anthropological essay " Body Image; A Theoretical Framework,"

> A consumer culture impact model is often used to explain the relationship between materialism and body image concerns- consumer culture and its predominant ideals of the body-perfect-ideal and the material good life-ideal- ultra thin for women – ultra muscular for men typically shown together in the media. (33)

It is interestingly, at the moments of encounter with advertisements of hair oil and hair fixing that Sreenivasan begins to enact his body consciousness, by attempting his own remedial measures for baldness in front of the mirror. The narrative thus makes its entry to explore the mediating processes underlying body image, materialism and body dissatisfaction.

To quote from Neagu's essay again,

> Body image is a multidimensional, subjective and dynamic concept that encompasses a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her body. Body image is not limited to the aesthetic characteristics of the person, taking also into consideration his or her state of health, skills, and sexuality. (30)

The film's multiple narratives, through Sreenivasan, Chinnu and the minor character Rahim, track the circuits of self-objectification in the making of the body image. Body image reflects the biological endowment of the individual or the feedback received from the significant others which go into the experience of body satisfaction, but more significantly, as the narrative progression demonstrates, it is the way the body is experienced and evaluated by the subject herself/himself that becomes decisive in their actions and negotiations.

The breach of social stereotypes as a narrative turn, is continued in the resistive presentation of the female protagonist, Chinnu. As a visual construct, her figure critiques the extreme and pervasive tendency to equate women with their bodies. Her resistance to body surveillance is also a reaction against the negative consequences for women's body image, until the critical moment of her "undoing," when Sreenivasan vehemently decries her act of posting a picture of them together. The relationships she enters and negotiations she employs, show no sign of self-objectification as she suffers from no signs of anxiety and is ready to strike up a relationship with a male without the concomitant expectations of the idealized body image. Her stance works against a number of perceptions, namely, that body dissatisfaction is more common among women and that such women are also prone to eating disorders. In the introductory scenes of Chinnu, the viewer gets to see her defenses against body surveillance and self-objectification, as she makes unreserved orders for the food type and variety of her preference and much of her sociability emanates out of the attendant interactions. Occasional jibes are rebuffed and a comfortable circuit of family and friendships cover them up. Even her friendship with Sreenivasan, hovers around sharing the uniquely flavored cakes served in a particular restaurant.

Chinnu's "undoing" , mentioned earlier ,is the moment of breakdown when she is forced to withdraw the picture

of her and Sreenivasan that she has posted on social media , following the negative responses ,uncalled for caricatures , smart one-liners and vivid innuendos that she might have ignored, but for their effect on Sreenivasan who is shaken and wants it withdrawn for the sake of his staid profession and reputation. This turn provides a moment of sharp contrast between the heightened matrix of self-objectification that Sreenivasan lives out, as against Chinnu's calculated defenses against it. She withdraws the picture as per Sreenivasan's wish, but not without taking on the perpetrators of her body shaming. This confrontation is a powerful counternarrative to the hegemony of body image in society and a plea for personal spaces that need to be upheld against societal surveillance, invasion, and demonization. However, it is the implications of the nexus of social media, body image and food choices for the subject's health, wellbeing and longevity that brings into question a retro effect of the process of subjectification here. The networking sites where Chinnu sets out to conscientize people against body-shaming, are also the media of her food choices of quantity and variety, seen in the introductory scenes of the film. Flanked by a consumerist culture, the food industry and the social media, Chinnu's agency borders on an eating disorder even as she resists it or is unaware of it.

Chinnu's performative acts of self-esteem are effective signs of subjectification within the text of the film, and yet they succumb to the objectifying lure of a materialist/ consumerist model and medium that threatens her health and well-being. When women are objectified, they are evidently treated as physical bodies rather than personalities, and this is a message effectively conveyed in the dynamics of her body, her comfortable gestures and her exuberant demeanor, captured in subversive modalities of the movie camera. An instance in point is that the camera never prowls at the woman, and hence, the close shot introducing Chinnu focuses on the meticulousness with which she dons her shoes, with a protective padding for the sole, emphasizing her resolve to be on the move. What Chinnu the subject steps into however, even as she steps out of socially hegemonic boundaries, is a world of culinary lure and gratification which is a negation of ideas of sustenance and well-being and thereby, survival, the very principles upon which her subjectivity and liberatory discourse are founded. Thus , the problematic of her identity remains an appropriated one. Theoretically, this explains the rationale that determines the constitution of the subject in cultural practice. As Judith Butler states ,

> The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through substantializing effects….it is only through within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. The injunction to be a given gender produces necessary failures, variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated. (198-199)

A similar appropriation happens in Sreenivasan's slow triumph over bald-shaming and societal hegemony in the making of body image, for it consists of a series of exclusions and inclusions in dealing with subjectivity, that is, the decisive way the body is experienced and evaluated by the subject herself/himself. As far as the configurations of the film are concerned, the very presentation of Sreenivasan as a candidate of body distress works against general assumptions, just as Chinnu's exuberance and resourceful actions subvert the modern notion of fat as suggestive of laziness and impulsiveness. The sociologically backed notion, that it is the female subjects who express lower levels of body satisfaction in comparison with their male counterparts is undermined in the choice of Sreenivasan's narrative as the first, more distressed and ironically, more hilarious. What psychologists have identified as among "other important facets" (NEAGU,32) of male body image, and is often neglected in sociological research, is the constituent of the subject and his body complex here, namely, the absence of capillary hair as the source of discontent for the male body image, chosen to be represented as the opening note of the film. His friendship with Rahim, the college peon, at first seeming to be an expression of his social awkwardness, goes to focus on the deflections and value constellation of the society that he and Rahim are members of. While Sreenivasan struggles with his own internalized body distress, he is able to see himself positively only in the company of Rahim, the endorser and escaper of societal expectations.

Sreenivasan's friendship with Rahim heralds his foray into the rigid circles of his professional and personal life and this serves not only as his release from social isolation from the plot perspective of the cinematic text, but opens up further subversions of gender and professional stereotypes from the point of view of its semiotic significance. The well informed, observant, and sensitive Rahim breaches the stereotype of the office peon, the "gossiping underdog", just as his house- hold role subverts the stereotype of the woman as the cook of the house-hold (typified by the character of Sreenivasan's mother) in demonstrating his culinary expertise and interest. One

of the most subversive and aphoristic statements Rahim makes, in his tutelage of Sreenivasan about courting his female colleague is as follows, "the way to a woman's heart is through her stomach." The statement stands out as a singularly effective subversion of the food metaphor against gender assumptions. It mocks the "norm" of training a girl to be a good cook to win the heart of a man through his stomach. Mildly hilarious, Rahim's pronouncement goes a long way in adding to the broader statement of the film about body, and its weight and shape ideals as products of patriarchy and phallocracy.

The appropriation of Rahim's stance, however, is effected when he springs up the surprise about his mute wife at the end of the film. He also justifies and poetizes his natural rapport and frequent "conversations" with her and shares his defenses against society's prying eyes, presenting them as models for Sreenivasan to overcome his social isolation and identity crisis. A vacuous bind, as in the case of Chinnu's understated eating disorder arises in the body discourse here. Rahim homogenizes his wife's disability (and higher socio-economic status) with Sreenivasan's body dissatisfaction, failing to acknowledge the distinctiveness in the two varied psycho-pathological realities and experiences. Sreenivasan's objectification is derivative of the relativity of beauty norms while Rahim's wife's disability calls for medical intervention and societal interaction, which he impedes by "normalizing" her. The negotiative trajectories of Chinnu, Rahim and Srinivasan, offer an illustration of Foucauldian power as a "mechanism for life" that includes strategies of self that both constrain and enable agency. These paths then demonstrate the necessary polemic of a narrative that critiques the production and reception of cultural stereotypes while also positing corrective entertainment. They address society at large, and children in particular who grow up as part of a youth and appearance oriented, globalized culture that glorifies a number of hegemonic body ideals.

Indra Sinha's novel presents the character of "Animal", the nineteen-year-old crippled survivor of the industrial holocaust in Bhopal, who loses his human agency due to his disabled and vulnerable body and drifts between the human and non-human animal world as a result. As the speaking voice of the narrative, he surprises and challenges the reader by a series of subversions of the expected. The "victim perspective" in its stereotypical paradigm is subverted through his brash and bawdy world view and the language in which he speaks that view. His subjectivity rests outside the realm of human nomenclature to begin with, as his body lacks the generic specifications of the human world. What is critiqued in the novel primarily is the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984, caused by the negligence of a multinational company, as a result of which, the narrator has become disabled, with irreversible spinal damage caused by the toxic gas. The presentation of his vulnerable body serves multiple purposes in the novel, namely, that of reconstituting the relationship between the human and the non-human world, societal reactions to disability, the resistance to industrial multinational corporate hegemony and debates of normality vs abnormality. As seen in the broad scheme of the film, *Thamasha* , the narrative strategies involved in this subject position, and the symbolism of disability , leads to an unsettling of social perceptions, offering crucial insights into morality and disability, and thereby suggesting ways of overcoming the vulnerability of the body, rather than yielding to its challenges and 'limitations'.

The opening pages of the novel introduces the protagonist as a non-human prototype, challenging most of the normative perspectives of human rights, that mandates a "victim" story to be told from a witness point of view. Animal, who has a physical deformity and does not remember being otherwise, celebrates the persona of being "non-human", and shocks all those around him by rejecting any gesture of empathy or intimacy. The protagonist's introductory remarks amount to a growl, asserting that he is an "animal" and has no wish to be human. As he negotiates with the foreign journalist who comes to interview him, he lays out his conditions for future reference, in a language laced with expletives. Animal bursts out to the agent Chunaram, who elaborates the procedural formalities of the story to be published, "Well I am in a shining , fucking rage…Tell mister cunt big shot that this is my movie he's in and in my movie there is only one star and it's me". (9) The invective offers a scathing critique of media interventions upon disability and policies around deviant bodies, as self-seeking and short lived. What is found in Animal's speech is vituperative bargaining with the local agent Chunaram, who has brought in an Australian Journalist ("Jarnalis ..from Ostrali" p.3) to record the experience of the disaster. The narrative, thus declares as its objective, a polemic of mediation in the narratives of history, specifically when interceded by a disabled subject. The historical event here is the industrial disaster of Bhopal, the lethal gas leak at the Union Carbide India Limited Pesticide plant in Bhopal, on the 2nd and 3rd of December 1984, that killed around ten thousand people instantly and exposed half a million people to severely toxic gas, the report of which demands the intercession and agency of bodies and voices that were subject to the calamity and its aftermath. As a

dehumanized youngster, the narrator walks on all fours, as his spine is permanently twisted and calls himself "Animal". The protagonist/speaker dislocates the "able" world of the reader into the disrupted world of the vulnerable body, wherein the former is forced to encounter a set of larger questions about the human body and its environment.

In the novel as well as the film, the disabled characters are implicitly compared to the able-bodied characters sharing their spaces. Th *Animal's people* as well as *Thamasha* , the domestic setting is familiar and populated with "normal" human bodies that stand upright have working fore and hind limbs, or have normal body weights. The normal/abnormal binary, as a predominant lens through which readers, viewers and scholars read narratives is recast in to a multi-dimensional view in the reading presented here. The presentation of a protagonist who has to walk on all fours, much like an animal, attempts a radical change of perspective, in the reading of the human being against his/her society and environment. With his "feet on tip toe, head down below, arse en haut" (16), it is clear that Animal's vision is limited to the waist-level only, and his twisted spine will always have his head hanging down. Along with the other victims of the tragedy, such as the poisoned dead foetus with two heads, named "Kha -in -the Jar" or the classical singer with damaged lungs who cannot sing any more, or the abortions of pregnant women on that fateful night, a world of toxic violence is charted out as a portender of the vulnerability of the human body, implying that the human body is ever subject and subservient to the dangers of the toxic world that it is a part of. The novel also foregrounds the irony that the very poisons that were manufactured to protect and sustain human lives- by killing the insects that pose a threat to humanity , and salvaging the agricultural produce for human consumption, ultimately hurt humankind. When it comes to the effects of such toxic environments, there is no difference between human and non-human corporeality.

Sinha's protagonist, Animal, makes a number of choices, that draw attention to the importance and persistence of disabled and vulnerable bodies in the discussions of life and environment. He decides to call himself by the generic name, "Animal" and chooses to stay in the poisoned premises of the company factory after the disaster, so that he can be a partaker of the silent war between its toxic environment and the human- nonhuman corporeality. Animal's choices are primarily aimed at deconstructing the understanding of disability, but eventually lead to the establishment of a whole new philosophy of eco-ability- a sphere that focuses on the confluence of disability, animal advocacy and ecology. In the instances of the characters in the film as well as the novel, the "flawed" or disabled bodies retract from the role of a moral lesson. Their "flaws" are not perceived as reigning obstacles (of the plots) that the subjects must overcome, as this view is seen as seeking change of body constitution, and simplistic therefore. The characters envisage their disabled bodies as encompassing all the aspects that humanity entails, whether negative or positive, wherein they should be able to exist as they are, without needing to overcome their deviances/disabilities. Christina Minaki, the disability studies scholar, comments on the need to create literary characters who do not need to overcome their disabilities in her observation here,

> Many of the difficulties related to disabilities stem from society's prejudices towards it. These prejudices come from fear(…) ignorance, misunderstanding(…), and general avoidance of it. Portraying disability means portraying valuable difference, not bodies or minds 'gone wrong' (n.pag)

The film and fiction considered here, highlight in visual and verbal terms, the reaction to deviant bodies and disability, that is commonly meted out in modern, developing societies. Society often regards such bodies as abnormal and thus it is such a judgement , rather than reality that makes deviant bodies "different" as individuals, from other people. The auteur and author of the texts here, adhere to the dictum of scholars such as Minaki who emphasize the need for creating "disabled" characters who are just as complex as the able-bodied characters. I In both the narratives the underlying deformities in themselves, do not precipitate the problems which ensue. It is rather the societal reactions to the vulnerabilities of the body, the makers and markers of inherited prejudice and discomfort, that lead to its constriction and problems. How society "progresses" in a vicious cycle is highlighted thus. The protagonists of the texts of seemingly disparate artistic genres (namely, film and fiction) seem to reverse the "normal" aspirations of cure, as they shun dietary and surgical remedies in the crucial narrative moment of reckoning. This direct challenge of societal norms stands as the most integral part of both texts. This is in keeping with the representational dictum put forward by Tobin Siebers, a disability scholar, in his book *Disability Aesthetics*(2005). Siebers points out the impact of physical appearances through aesthetics against societal reactions and the persistence of society's age-old desire to cure or "put in order" an alleged impairment. Chinnu, Sreenivasan and Animal refute the beauty of a "Perfect" body and incorporate disfigurement and disability as

workable functionalities at the climactic moments of their stories. Animal's decision to forego surgery and treatment in America is also an expression of his identification and solidarity with fellow victims of the disaster and is hence an act that intersects with the post-colonial stance of the novel. The retention of his disability, therefore, not only challenges the "normal", but converges with the postcolonial refusal to be show-cased or salvaged. The narrator's refusal to receive corrective surgery that could fix his spine and allow him to stand upright works as a parallel acknowledgement of the happy and complete lives that he and his neighbors lead despite their destitution, and allows for an empowering end in the face of uncertainty, thus establishing his character and agency. The protagonist of *Thamasha,* Sreenivasan, indulges in a similar act of reclamation, wherein he re-establishes his friendship with Chinnu, setting the terms for it through a body neutral consciousness that he has learned from her, about which he is no longer diffident.

The film and the novel, through the presentation of their body-deviant characters, move such subjects from the margins to the center and legitimize their condition as individuals possessing cultural value of their own, offering and engineering a critique of the social status quo around them. Each character struggles against isolation, but negotiates with her/his disability by amplifying the processes of their individuation, by resisting established forms of moralizing. The idea of "normal" is thereby rendered complicated and challenged to a socio- political critique within the specific settings of the narratives. In presenting mutually transforming trajectories of how the disfigured and the able-bodied characters react against each other, the all-important exigencies of culture, with regard to disability and disfigurement are highlighted. The expressions of disfigurement vary considerably, but the issues of ethics and morality, posited to conscientize or shock the viewers and readers, strike a nuanced note in considering morality and ethics in a broader compass and at a global level. The auteur, Ashraf Hamsa and the writer, Indra Sinha succeed in creating characters of depth and complexity who elude societal expectations of becoming vehicles of morality, but challenge the existing moral codes of "normal" society all the same, by resisting, maneuvering and even dismissing them. The one thing that commonly drives the determinations of the characters, in the film as well as the novel, is the reactions of society at large. By placing the premium on society's beliefs and ideals, and admitting to its power, the texts appeal to its volition and ability to adapt. The film's apparent narrative objectivity, is surpassed by the specificity and directness of the first-person narrative in the instance of the novel. How ever, the film, as well as the novel exhibit a progressive step in understanding and advancing an appropriate representation for disabled and stigmatized deviant bodies.

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